Losing By Winning: America's Challenge Waging Counterinsurgency Warfare

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Department of Political Science

LOSING BY WINNING: AMERICA'S CHALLENGE WAGING COUNTERINSURGENCY WARFARE

A Case Study Analysis of the American Experience with Counterinsurgency Warfare in the Philippine-American, Vietnam and Iraq Wars

A Thesis

By LEE A. LUKOFF

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Master of Arts

Abstract: *Losing By Winning: America's Challenge Waging Counterinsurgency Warfare* is an analytical study of America's experience waging counterinsurgency warfare in the Philippine-American, Vietnam and Iraq Wars. In each war, counterinsurgency warfare was applied to achieve the strategic objectives of American Foreign Policy as outlined by the President of the United States at the outset of each war. Initially, large swaths of the American electorate and political class favored achieving the strategic objectives of each war studied. Over time, as counterinsurgency tactics were put to use, and made headway towards achieving the strategic objectives of the conflict, public support for each war precipitously declined over time and either jeopardized the ability of the United States to complete its counterinsurgency campaign or lose them altogether. This occurred because images of atrocities and perceptions of violations of the laws of warfare (both real or imagined) were formed in the minds of Americans which created a political dynamic where the American public and their elected leaders in Washington D.C. could no longer legitimize continuing to support the ongoing war. The analytical insights drawn from this study give one an understanding of the unique challenges that confront the United States in employing counterinsurgency warfare to achieve the strategic objectives of the United States in the wars its fights.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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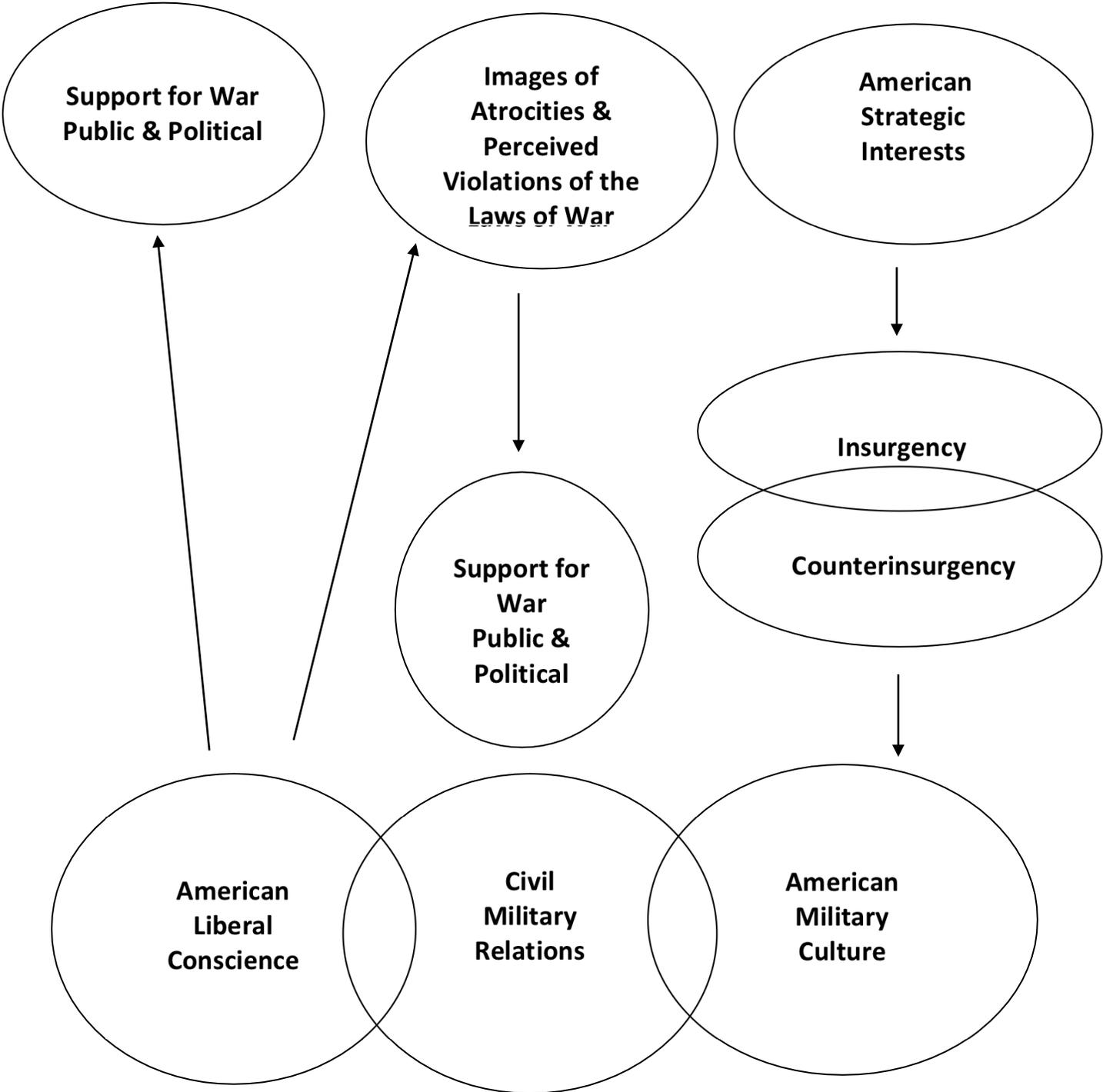
Theoretical Framework Description

To succinctly explain my thesis in a clear and coherent manner, I created a theoretical model to explain the existential factors that make it so difficult for the United States to fight and win wars against insurgencies. In totality, the analytical framework of my thesis describes a process that plays out in each case study. The model explains the reasons why it is so difficult for the United States to win wars against enemies that wage asymmetrical warfare in order to achieve their political goals.

I trace a process that starts by explaining the nature of the military adversary (insurgency) and how the United States chooses to fight the insurgency in war (counterinsurgency). Descriptions of the insurgency describe the political and military nature of the insurgency and its military and political objectives in war. Counterinsurgency, a military and political strategy designed to pacify the insurgency, is the tactical approach applied by the quash the political and military goals of the insurgency. The reason the United States fights counterinsurgency wars is because policymakers deem them to be necessary to further the interests of American Foreign Policy.

To defeat an insurgency, the United States employs its military to do so (although other government agencies oftentimes assist in the process). The Armed Forces of the United States is an institution with multiple service branches (Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines). Each has its own unique history, organizational culture, standards of protocol, leadership and strengths and weaknesses in employing counterinsurgency warfare. All of these aforementioned factors, and many others, embody American military culture and shape the fighting force that will confront the insurgency on the battlefield

The American military doesn't act autonomously in wartime. The President of the United States and Congress directly control the operational decisions made by the military. As

Commander in Chief, the President of the United States has to rally public opinion to support the war. In crafting policy, the President of the United States can choose to either adopt a hands-on or hands-off approach to overseeing the counterinsurgency operations. This is done by making executive decisions that will shape the behaviors of the civilian and military leaders responsible for managing the conflict. Without Congress providing authorization and financial support, the military cannot employ a strategy to defeat the insurgency. Without rallying public support for war, the President and Congress cannot maintain legitimacy to continue counterinsurgency operations while the war is in progress. If the counterinsurgency campaign loses political legitimacy before it ends on terms favorable to the United States, the entire mission runs the risk of failure. Such a situation means that the United States will fail to achieve the strategic objectives set forth in the beginning of the conflict and could set back the strategic interests of the United States and diminish its standing in the world. For these reasons, maintaining control over the levers of power that control wartime decision-making is crucial for the counterinsurgents if they hope to pacify the insurgency they are confronted with fighting.

On the civilian side of the equation, American political leaders and the general population view counterinsurgency wars from within the framework of their *Liberal Conscience.* Broadly speaking, the *Liberal Conscience* is an explanation of a worldview that, while not mutually exclusive to Americans, explains how a great number of them think on matters pertaining to war and peace. The *Liberal Conscience* is a product of American values, beliefs and political culture. In wartime, the *Liberal Conscience* leads civilian leaders and citizens alike to support fighting wars to advance noble causes and defeat ill-liberal enemies. However, once war ensues and the true nature of the war is revealed, the *Liberal Conscience* leads American civilian leaders and citizens to ultimately recoil from supporting war. This problematic dynamic is explained in detail in each case study of my thesis.

I argue that aforementioned state of affairs exists due in part to the fact that images (both real and imagined) from war play a decisive role in molding public perceptions of the utility of fighting the war. In the beginning of a war, when events sending off troops are occasions of great pomp and circumstance, support for war is at its highest levels. Once grisly images of dead soldiers, perceived violations of the laws of war and massive destruction make their way back to the United States, politicians and citizens' alike turn against the war and push policymakers. to end the same conflict they once thought was so important to fight.

This model attempts to explain a unique phenomenon that takes place each time the United States chooses fights a war against an insurgency. I explain how the aforementioned theoretical model has played out in American wars against insurgencies in the Philippine-American War of 1898, Vietnam War and the Iraq Wars. The analytical conclusions drawn from my study shed light on the hurdles and challenges the American military faces in winning wars against insurgencies.

Introduction

The United States has had a long and controversial history with employing counterinsurgency warfare. The most ardent proponents of counterinsurgency warfare call it a benevolent form of warfare whose purpose is not to kill as many of the enemy as possible but instead to "win the hearts and minds" of the host population. The purpose of the counterinsurgency is to offer the host population a better standard and quality of living from what they'd experience from living under the insurgency. Critics of counterinsurgency warfare, such as Col. Gian Gentile and Douglas Porch and many American Cultural Anthropologists argue that it is indistinguishable from any other form of warfare and that its culturally insensitive predispositions are derived straight from the playbooks of colonial powers. These critics see counterinsurgency warfare as a sugarcoated military doctrine that is indistinguishable from any other form of warfare. Debates of the utility of counterinsurgency warfare have raged throughout American history. Nonetheless, the American public and their elected representatives in Washington have, at times, called upon the American military to implement it to defeat insurgencies deemed to be a threat to American national interests. In my study, I do not intend to take sides in the ongoing debate surrounding counterinsurgency warfare and its utility. Instead, I set out to examine the ways in which the United States wages counterinsurgency warfare and how the American public perceives the conduct of the American military in its implementation of it.

Key questions arise from in the debate over the utility waging counterinsugency warfare. Should the United States invest the time, resources, blood and treasure to alter the internal political dynamics of another country? Can the United States advance its strategic interests by engaging in such an endeavor? There is no question that

policymakers should ponder these important questions in deciding whether or not to wage a counterinsurgency campaign against an enemy employing asymmetrical tactics on the battlefield.

Throughout the 19th Century the United States waged a number of small-scale counterinsurgency campaigns against Indian Tribes throughout the American frontier. The lessons learned from these campaigns forged an understanding of what it would take to perform counterinsurgency warfare in the minds of officers would come of age to lead America's first sustained counterinsurgency operation in the Philippine-American War (1898-1902). Did a sense of invincibility give political leaders such as Theodore Roosevelt a sense of overconfidence that their Filipino adversaries would be easily defeated? Would the possession of overwhelming firepower and military resources jaundice the eyes of American military leaders in Vietnam and Iraq to the danger of employing conventional methods of war against an insurgency?

The difficulties in waging counterinsurgency warfare have reared their ugly head in each case study I examined. The most important factor that has impeded the ability of the United States to wage counterinsurgency warfare is the revelation of unsavory behavior in combat (or the perception of it) by the American military. Such circumstances alter public and political support for a war that was initially popular with policymakers and the general alike. For the military, the challenge of employing counterinsurgency warfare is not repeated tactical failures on the battlefield. Instead, the biggest challenge to winning counterinsurgency wars lie in the inability of the military to create positive perceptions of their conduct in war and to keep the hearts and minds of policymakers and civilians supportive of their mission.

A lively debate surrounding counterinsurgency warfare in the United States continues today in military, academic and political circles across the country largely due in part to the publishing of the *US Army & Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual FM-324* and its subsequent employment during the Iraq War. Was FM-324 a revolutionary new invention or did it derive its intellectual foundation from previous American wars? Books and journal articles on counterinsurgency warfare, have been supplanted with more publications in recent years. These have subsequently reopened old debates surrounding a peculiar form of warfare oftentimes misunderstood or ignored in the highest quarters of the American military. Questions regarding the morality and effectiveness of counterinsurgency warfare are now regularly discussed amongst defense policy wonks. One burning question inspired me to conduct this study. Why has the United States been so ineffective at winning wars against insurgencies despite the fact that the military is so good at performing counterinsurgency operations tactically?

In this study, I examine the reasons why the United States chooses to fight wars and why policymakers and citizens alike oftentimes choose to end them prematurely. Upon the outset of military conflict, the American liberal conscience provokes policymakers and citizens to support war to advance noble causes. In this study, I showcase exactly how this scenario played out in three separate wars. It is important to understand how Americans think about war as we approach understanding why they oftentimes recoil from supporting counterinsurgency military campaigns.

To undo strong pro-war sentiment in the United States, many politicians, media elites, and civilians today would probably agree that an increase in casualties incurred by the American military would bring about such circumstances.   *In Choosing Your*

Battles: American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force, Peter D. Feaver and Chistopher Gelpi argue that the American public will accept casualties if a mission is defined by a nation's leadership.[1] I intend to add a corollary to this argument. I believe that the American public will support incurring casualties in a counterinsurgency war if Americans perceive their soldiers to be acting within the acceptable boundaries of the laws of warfare. Such a supposition implies that the American public is phobic to the *manner* in which the United States fights, or is perceived to be fighting, counterinsurgency warfare.

If insurgencies are deemed to be a threat to American national interests (as they are in all three case studies) why is that the United States has been so hesitant to embrace a military strategy capable of defeating them? My findings reveal that when called upon by policymakers to implement counterinsurgency warfare, the American military is successful in achieving the tactical objectives of counterinsurgency operations. However, wars are not won solely on the field of battle. They must be won in the hearts and minds of the American public and their elected representatives in Washington D.C. After all, it is these latter individuals who control the levers of power, purse strings, and the authority to order the military to continue or end war. This study will showcase factors that mold public perceptions of counterinsurgency warfare and how these perceptions (either real or imagined), can work to undermine the ability of the United States to achieve its strategic objectives in counterinsurgency wars. The implications drawn from my study provide grist for those who believe that existential factors, outside of military tactics, play a

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[1] Gelpi, Christopher, and Peter Feaver. *Choosing Your Battles : American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004. Pg. 7

decisive role in determining the outcome of counterinsurgency wars in the American experience.

Chapter 1 – Are Counterinsurgency Wars Legitimate

To wage war legally the President of the United States and his subordinates in the Department of Defense must make a compelling case to the American public and its representatives in Congress if they are to authorize, appropriate and initiate a war on behalf of the United States of America. In each case study, the President of the United States laid forth a set of defined strategic objectives to accomplish, by means of war, and the American public and Congress achieving them. By authorizing war, both the American public and Congress entrusted the military and its commanders to develop a strategy to achieve the strategic objectives of the United States. In the beginning of the Philippine-American, Vietnam and Iraq Wars military intervention was initially viewed as legitimate. Counterinsurgency warfare was but one possible strategy the military had at its disposal. Since the United States faced insurgencies in each conflict (Aguinaldo's Nationalist Forces, the Vietcong and Sunni/Shiite extremist groups), it was only natural that the United States would employ a strategy best suited to defeat these adversaries – counterinsurgency warfare.

Following this train of logic one comes to the conclusion that counterinsurgency warfare is a legitimate form of warfare the American public and its representatives in Washington see as a viable option to defeat insurgent movements deemed to be a threat to the foreign policy interests of the United States. Critics of counterinsurgency warfare, most notably Douglas Porch, the Distinguished Professor of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School and Colonel Gian Gentile, a History Professor at the

United States Military Academy at West Point (and former soldier who commanded counterinsurgency operations in the Iraq War) see things differently. Their views, along with those of many cultural anthropologists, see counterinsurgency warfare as an illegitimate form of warfare. They lambast its proponents for sugarcoating what is, in reality, a brutal form of fighting indistinguishable from other brutal methods of combat. Due to its brutal nature, they argue, counterinsurgency warfare is incapable of accomplishing its stated objective of "winning the hearts and minds" of indigenous populations deemed to be vital to protecting and earning their support. Furthermore, these critics see counterinsurgency warfare as a weapon of American imperialism brought down upon indigenous populations enmeshed in civil wars the United States has no business in participating in. Understanding the arguments of counterinsurgency critics, and the logic behind them, is necessary because critics of counterinsurgency offer useful insights into the problematic nature of counterinsurgency warfare. The criticisms they describe advance the narrative that counterinsurgency warfare has been ineffective and that historical revisionists have used it as a tool to sell war to the American public. While I disagree with their supposition that counterinsurgency warfare has been tactically ineffective, I do believe that their criticisms are quite useful in understanding how counterinsurgency warfare can mold negative perceptions and images of war. After all, it is these images and perceptions which shape the views of the American public and Congress. Since the continued prosecution of the counterinsurgency wars I examined were contingent on maintaining positive perceptions, and images, in the eyes of each party, it is important to understand the factors that led to the negative perceptions of counterinsurgency warfare that came about during each conflict. For it is these

perceptions and images of war which played a defining role in undermining the ability of the United States to achieve its stated strategic objectives in the Philippines, Vietnam and Iraq Wars.

Unlike many military historians and political scientists (myself included), Col. Gian Gentile saw counterinsurgency operations up close and personal in the Iraq War. He commanded a cavalry squadron responsible for executing counterinsurgency operations in Baghdad in 2006. His personal experiences in Iraq spawned the belief that the simplistic counterinsurgency doctrine described in the Army's Counterinsurgency Manual FM-324 was incapable of defeating the insurgency he was pitted against in Iraq in 2006.[2] In *Wrong Turn: America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency Warfare*, Col. Gentile advances the argument that American counterinsurgency doctrine as described in FM-324 creates a misleading narrative about the true nature of counterinsurgency warfare. He claims that one section in the manual "was a jumble of dreamy statements that bordered on some mixture of philosophy, theory, and military operational history."[3] Gentile felt that this gobbledygook of military terminology embodied in FM-324 flew in the face of what he witnessed in Iraq and that its implementation was useless in what was, from his perspective, a pure civil-war between Sunni and Shiites.

Not only is Gentile critical of counterinsurgency strategy as described in American doctrine, but he is critical of the entire underlying historical narrative that has been advanced throughout the years that has framed counterinsurgency warfare as capable of "winning the hearts and minds" of local indigenous populations caught amidst

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[2] Gentile, Gian P. *Wrong Turn : America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency*. 2013., xvi
[3] Ibid.

sectarian conflicts. He criticizes counterinsurgency proponents such as David Galula, Kimberly Kagan, John Nagl, Samantha Power and even the co-author of FM-324, General David Petraeus for using counterinsurgency and its subsequent nation-building operations as a tool to justify American intervention abroad.[4] As a trained Historian, Col. Gentile argues that counterinsurgency advocates have created a false revisionist historical narrative to justify the legitimacy of counterinsurgency doctrine and its purported successes throughout history. In an article published in the *New York Times* in 2005, Gentile rebutted columnist David Brooks for arguing that counterinsurgency warfare helped the British win in Malaya and the United States turn the tides of the war in its favor in Vietnam:

> The myth is built on certain historical "lessons" or "models," like the British in Malaya. But if you look at the case of Malaya, you will see a context that is radically different from Vietnam and, more important, present-day Iraq. The example of Malaya is often cited by those who believe that there is a template to follow for "winning" in Iraq . Such reductionist templates are seductive because they offer easy-to-understand solutions for complex problems.[5]

To round out his well-written and forcefully argued indictment of counterinsurgency warfare as implemented by the United States in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, Gentile advances the argument that a failure in strategy and policy spawned America's problems in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan and not, as some argue, the wrongheaded military strategies employed by generals neglecting the virtues of counterinsurgency warfare.[6] Gentile's experience commanding soldiers in Iraq, and the images of the war he describes, provide grist for critics of counterinsurgency warfare who see it as indistinguishable from other types of war where lives are lost, physical and

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[4] Gentile, *America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency,* 7.
[5] Ibid*.,* 23.
[6] Ibid*.,* 98.

mental wounds incurred, property destroyed, and money lost to achieve strategic objectives based on false narratives and unachievable strategic objectives.

Douglas Porch sees counterinsurgency warfare as a tool of Western societies to justify the legitimacy of their imperialistic campaigns of military conquest. Like Gentile, Porch sees counterinsurgency operations from the nineteenth century as influencing subsequent counterinsurgency campaigns in the 20th and 21st centuries.[7] He dubs counterinsurgency proponents as "COIN-dinistas" and states that they are:

> basically romantics, whose strategic communications target politics and society at home while they profess to apply paternalistic theories onto biddable populations required to show gratitude for their improved conditions by outing pistoleros, bandits, terrorists, and insurgents in their midst.[8]

Porch also sees "COIN-dinistas" as historical revisionists claiming that a well-crafted counterinsurgency strategy could have won the Vietnam War. Such views, he claims, are premised on:

> assertions that victory is sabotaged by silent anti-COIN conspiracies struck among unimaginative conventional soldiers wedded to their big war bureaucratic interests, cowardly politicians, and a general public whose stamina for the sacrifices required for national greatness has gone soft under the influence of democratic institutions that corrode popular will.[9]

Porch sees America's failure in Vietnam as being the result of an American failure to truly understand the dynamics of the Cold War strategic environment it was confronted with during the Vietnam War era.[10] As a result of being in a strategic position incapable of achieving American interests, Porch sees counterinsurgency tactics in Vietnam as being incapable of changing the outcome of the war in America's favor.

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[7] Porch, Douglas. *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013., 318.
[8] Porch, *Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War,* 319.
[9] Ibid., 201.
[10] Ibid., 202.

Porch's distaste for counterinsurgency warfare rears its head in his description of it. He sees counterinsurgency as a form of fighting which spawns indiscriminate killing, human rights abuses, violations of the laws of war and reinforcing of an imperialist mentality that can spawn views of racial superiority and even foment genocide.[11] In his manifesto decrying counterinsurgency warfare in all ways, shapes and forms, Porch rounds out his critique with an insightful observation warning political scientists and historians about the dangers of perpetrating historically revisionist narratives to justify counterinsurgency warfare:

> Assertions of COIN success based in shoddy research and flawed and selective analysis of cases are not only an historical error. Such an abuse of the record of the past as the basis for professional and institutional imperatives can lead to people getting killed because they fail to convey that each insurgency is a contingent event in which doctrine, operations, and tactics must support a viable policy and strategy, not the other way around.[12]

Altogether, the arguments elicited by Douglas Porch, Col. Gian Gentile are important to understand as they shed light on a narrative being advanced by former soldiers and scholars highly critical of the historical premises and the accuracy of claims by counterinsurgency proponents that such a form of warfare is benevolent in nature and capable of "winning the hearts and minds" of indigenous populations if properly executed by an outside occupation military force.

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[11]Ibid., 340.
[12]Ibid., 337-338.

Chapter 2 – The Logic of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

The Logic of Insurgency

In the Philippine War of 1898, Vietnam and Iraq Wars, the United States has found itself confronted with enemies that were neither visually identifiable nor centrally assembled on the battlefield. With inferior numbers and resources to wage war, the enemies of the United States strategically avoided taking on the larger and better equipped American military in head-to-head confrontations on the battlefield. Instead, America's enemies chose to adopt guerilla tactics that played to their strengths and exploited the weaknesses of the conventionally postured American military. By changing the nature of fighting on the battlefield and dictating war on their terms, insurgents altered the trajectory of war to terms favorable to their political and military interests rather than that of the United States.

Military leaders and policymakers responsible for planning, training and executing America's wars would have benefited from understanding the organizational dynamics of insurgent movements. Understanding the nature of insurgencies requires a concrete definition of what they are and what they embody. Many different scholars and dyed-in-the-wool revolutionaries have attempted to capture the essence of insurgencies by identifying their political goals and operational tendencies in a manner that encapsulates the dual nature of insurgency warfare. Oftentimes, the term *insurgent* is used synonymously with the term *guerilla*. According to Robert Taber, "a guerilla war is

a revolutionary war, engaging a civilian population, or a significant part of such a population, against the military forces of established or usurpative governmental authority."[13]

Insurgents fight a war that is at its heart a political struggle but oftentimes conducted militarily. For an insurgent, earning political support from the host population is far more important than killing the enemy on the field of battle. Fidel Castro and his successful guerilla campaign against the Batista Regime in Cuba in 1959 is but one example of a guerilla war that was conducted successfully without a large number of casualties on either side during the conflict.

Douglas Porch focuses his definition of insurgency on the military nature of the conflict by arguing that insurgency is "a much older tactic by which relatively diminutive groups of fighters utilized surprise as a force multiplier to carry out ambushes, sabotage, and raids to harass and forage on the margins of large clashes of armies."[14]. The US Army Field Manual FM 3-24 describes the term insurgency by relaying the ways in which political and military tactics are combined by insurgents:

> An insurgency is an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. Stated another way, an insurgency is an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control.[15]

In its definition of insurgency, the Rand Corporation adds the additional caveat that in modern-times, insurgencies have blossomed into multinational movements that

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[13] Taber, Robert. *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare*. 1st [Brassey's] ed.. ed. Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2002., 7

[14] Porch, *Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War,4*

[15] United States. Department of the, Army, and Command United States. Marine Corps Combat Development. *"Counterinsurgency."* Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Dept. of the Army : Headquarters, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Dept. of the Navy, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 2006., 1-2

have grown in size, scope and prominence around the world and are not confined to the borders of one specific nation-state. The advent of globalization and global interdependence has allowed for insurgencies to expand their scope of influence beyond the confines of individual nation-states.

> All types of insurgencies have common characteristics. They are organized movements to overthrow existing ruling structures by a combination of force and popular appeal. Their grievances, be they political, religious, ethnic, or economic, usually have some resonance in the population. While the traditional definition of insurgency has stressed armed opposition to national governing systems and authorities, with globalization has come the growth of insurgencies that are multinational in identity, reach, and aims.[16]

Movements such as Marxism and Islamism are well-known examples of globalized insurgencies that aim to overthrow an existing political order in favor of their desired ideology. These movements cross borders and have shown the ability to recruit members from all corners of the world. By doing so, they made substantial progress in advancing their ideological and political goals.

A war that is a political struggle and a military conflict seems like a novel concept that is a product of the enlightened thinking on behalf of the world's modern military strategists. In reality, insurgent warfare is nothing new. As John Nagl argues "The essential features of guerilla warfare- the tactics of applying weakness against strength and the clever use of terrain to conceal guerilla forces from the enemy's main body- have barely changed since the days of the Romans and Persians."[17]

[16] Gordon, John, and David C. Gompert. *War by Other Means : Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency*. Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp., 2008, xxix

[17] 16: Nagl, John A. *Learning to eat soup with a knife: Counterinsurgency lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. 2005, 16

Since insurgency warfare has been around since the dawn of western civilization, the world's most prominent military scholars have long been aware of its presence. The first documented reference to insurgent warfare occurs in Sun Tzu's famous treatise *The Art of War*.

All warfare is based on deception. Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity; when active, inactivity. When near, make it appear that you are far away; when far away, that you are near. Offer the enemy a bait to lure him; feign disorder and strike him. When he concentrates, prepare against him; where he is strong, avoid him. Anger his general and confuse him. Pretend inferiority and encourage arrogance. Keep him under a strain and wear him down. When he is united, divide him. Attack where he is unprepared; sally out when he does not expect you. These are the strategist's keys to victory.[18]

Insurgency was also mentioned by the famous Prussian Military Theorist Carl von Clausewitz. In *On War*, Clausewitz argues that "guerilla war is the extension of politics by means of armed conflict."[19] The most successful insurgents have been those that have combined politics and armed conflict to achieve their political objectives. Whether its successful revolutionary figures such as Mao Tse-Tung, Fidel Castro or Ho Chi Minh, each of these successful revolutionary leaders understood the concepts of insurgent warfare in theory and were able to apply it in practice.

The Logic of Counterinsurgency

One might think that the American military, the best equipped and most powerful military in the history of the world, would understand how to fight a form of warfare that is, perhaps, as old as western civilization itself. Except for a brief period during the Indian Wars of the 19th Century, the United States has oftentimes struggled mightily to defeat insurgencies decisively in sustained counterinsurgency campaigns. In the Philippine War of 1898, Vietnam and Iraq Wars, America's failure to efficiently

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[18] Cleary, Thomas F., and active th century B. C. Sunzi. *The Art of War*. 1st ed.. ed. Boston : [New York]: Shambhala ; Distributed in the United States by Random House, 1988., 168
[19] Taber, *War of the Flea*, 16

dismantle the political and military infrastructure of its insurgent opposition cost the United States a great deal of blood and treasure that need not have been spent if counterinsurgency warfare was understood by the military hierarchy and its soldiers.

In the case of the United States, failing to pacify insurgencies in a timely fashion and with precision had devastating consequences for the counterinsurgency campaigns in the Philippines, Vietnam and Iraq. There is little room for error in a struggle that is, at its core, a political and military campaign for winning the 'hearts and minds' of the host population. Carl von Clausewitz adds further understanding to the state of affairs that will ensue if counterinsurgents do not swiftly dismantle the political and military infrastructure of the insurgents:

Since it needs time to be effective, a state of tension will develop while the two enemies interact. This tension will gradually relax, if the insurgency is suppressed in some places and slowly burns itself out in others, or else it will build up to a crisis: a general conflagration closes in on the enemy, driving him out of the country before he is faced with total destruction.[20]

Conducting a successful counterinsurgency campaign is contingent upon convincing the host population that the counterinsurgents offer a better life for the host population than under that of the insurgents. Scholars of counterinsurgency have attempted to encapsulate this broad goal by honing in on the specific tactics and strategies that need to be employed by counterinsurgents to do such a thing. Robert Thompson argues that there are five core principles of counterinsurgency that must be employed if the government hopes to achieve its strategic objectives in a counterinsurgency campaign:

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[20] Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993., 479-480

1) The government must have a clear political aim: to establish and maintain a free independent and united country which is politically and economically stable and viable
2) The government must function in accordance with the law
3) The government must have an overall plan
4) The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerillas.
5) In the guerilla phase of an insurgency, a government must secure its base areas first.[21]

Frank Kitson believes that counterinsurgency tactics can be successfully employed by defeating the insurgents if three distinct tactical objectives are achieved. Kitson uses the analogy of dividing a fish into three separate parts (head, body and tail) to relay his ideas on counterinsurgency:

In attempting to counter subversion it is necessary to take account of three separate elements. The first two constitute the target proper, that is to say the Party or Front and its cells and committees on the one hand, and the armed groups who are supporting them and being supported by them on the other. They may be said to constitute the head and the body of a fish. The third element is the population and this represents the water in which the fish swims. Fish vary from place to place in accordance with the water in which they are designed to live, and the same can be said of subversive organizations. If a fish has got to be destroyed it can be attacked directly by rod or net, providing it is in the sort of position which gives these methods a chance of success. But if rod and net cannot succeed by themselves it may be necessary to do something to the water which will force the fish into a position where it can be caught. Conceivably it might be necessary to kill the fish by polluting the water, but this is unlikely to be a desirable course of action.[22]

Other scholars have been more succinct in their description of counterinsurgency warfare. General David Petraeus describes counterinsurgency as "the military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat an insurgency."[23] David Kilcullen, a contemporary of General Petraeus who

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[21] Lindsay, Kennedy, and Robert Grainger Ker Thompson. *Defeating Communist Insurgency : Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam*. 3rd imp.. ed. London: Chatto & Windus, 1967. ,50-60
[22] Kitson, Frank. *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peace-Keeping*. London ; Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991., 49
[23] US Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 1-2

served as his Senior Counterinsurgency Advisor in the Iraq War, describes counterinsurgency as:

> An umbrella term that describes the complete range of measures that governments take to defeat insurgencies. These measures may be political, administrative, military, economic, psychological, or informational, and are almost always used in combination.[24]

David Ucko adds further clarity to the definition of counterinsurgency by describing three key features of counterinsurgency that he argues must be employed by the counterinsurgents if they hope to defeat their unconventional adversaries on the field of battle:

1) A medium-to-high level of hostile activity targeting the stabilizing forces, whether foreign or local; this is also known as a *nonpermissive operational environment.*
2) An underlying state-building initiative, of which the military stabilization effort is but a subset. State-building is here loosely understood as primarily nonmilitary assistance in the creation or reinforcement of state structures, culminating in the formation of a government that is, at very least, able to maintain stability in the territory under its jurisdiction.
3) The deployment of ground troops to conduct operations in the midst of a local civilian population.[25]

David Galula describes counterinsurgency as a more process-oriented campaign that must be conducted efficiently and effectively if it hopes to succeed in its goals: In his book *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* Galula argues that counterinsurgency 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."[26]

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[24] Kilcullen, David. *Counterinsurgency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2010., 1

[25] Ucko, David H. 2009. *The new counterinsurgency era: transforming the U.S. military for modern wars*. Washington, D.C.: Washington, D.C. : Georgetown University Press.,10

[26] Galula, David. *Counterinsurgency warfare: Theory and practice*. New York: Praeger.1964., 4

Colleen Bell elaborates on the nature of a more process oriented campaign of conducting counterinsurgency operations by focusing on the importance of "Economic development, institutional development and the gathering of cultural and ethnographic intelligence in an effort to become better acquainted with the host culture and its societal needs."[27]

Altogether each scholar mentioned adds something different to the multifaceted definition of counterinsurgency warfare. Despite being an age-old concept, few scholars have written extensively about the nature of counterinsurgency warfare as conducted by the United States military. It was not until 2006 that counterinsurgency as an academic study made a comeback in academia and the think-tank community. A plethora of academic studies have been conducted since then on a wide array of aspects surrounding the dynamics of counterinsurgency warfare. With violent insurgencies raging throughout the Middle East, Africa and across the globe it appears that for the foreseeable future counterinsurgency warfare will maintain itself as a viable military and political option for nation-states seeking to bring stability to states enmeshed in sectarian strife or civil war. Understanding the unique dynamics of counterinsurgency warfare and the United States' experience employing, adds further clarity understanding three of America's most defining military struggles of the 20th and 21st centuries.

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[27]Bell, Colleen. Civilianising warfare: Ways of war and peace in modern counterinsurgency. *Journal of International Relations and Development, 14,* 3, 309-332. Jan 1, 2011., 312

Chapter 3 –Strategic Interests & Counterinsurgency

A laymen's definition of the term *strategy* would likely entail an answer of something along the lines of "a plan to accomplish a goal or specific task." However, this definition doesn't encompass the entire picture needed when defining the subject in the context of international relations. Strategy is a multifaceted term that simultaneously describes the interconnected nature of diplomacy and war within the context of a given countries' foreign policy. Such views are reflected by military theorists such as Prussian soldier and scholar Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831). Clausewitz described strategy as "the connecting ligament between war and politics."[28] Contemporary definitions of strategy within the field of Political Science fall along similar lines. In *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* Carl H. Builder defines strategy as: "a concept for relating means to ends."[29] In foreign policy, all strategies have a purpose, which is to achieve the end goals (whatever they may be) of a country's foreign policy.

The United States has always employed a strategy (for better or for worse) to achieve its foreign goals. A more descriptive definition of the nature of the term strategy is needed to encapsulate the true meaning of the term within the context of American Foreign Policy. To secure its foreign policy objectives, by means of employing counterinsurgency warfare, the United States simultaneously employs three specific and distinct levels of strategies:

1) National Security Strategy
2) Doctrinal Strategy
3) Tactical Military Strategy

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[28] Reus-Smit, Christian, and Duncan Snidal. *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*. International Relations. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008., 559

[29] Builder, Carl H. *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989., 49

Studying America's implementation of counterinsurgency warfare within the context of each strategy sheds light on the successes and failures (both real and imagined) of America's implementation of counterinsurgency warfare during each war examined in my study. The implications that can be drawn from understanding the multifaceted nature of counterinsurgency warfare will shed light on the problematic nature employing it to achieve the strategic objectives of American Foreign Policy. The results garnered from my study will be of great importance to scholars, policymakers, soldiers and students alike who seek to gain a greater understanding of the factors which have undermined the ability of the United States to perform textbook counterinsurgency strategies in wars where its employment was deemed to be necessary to achieve the strategic interests of American Foreign Policy.

Counterinsurgency & US National Security Strategy

The United States protects its national security interests at home and abroad by means of employing a national security strategy premised on deterring its adversaries and utilizing the capabilities of the United States to project its power in order to safeguard its national security interests and objectives.[30] Hard power, or military force, is but one tool the United States has at its disposal. The United States can also employ soft power to persuade its adversaries through coercive diplomacy and foreign aid payments rather than by force. Despite the dichotomy between these two competing strategies, both are employed towards the same end; achieving the strategic objectives of American Foreign Policy.

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[30] US Army, *Field Manual 100-5. Fighting Future War*s. New Edition: Published with the Institute of Land Warfare Association of the US Army. Brassey's (US). A Maxwell MacMillan Company. Washington, New York, London., Pg. 1-3

World events and shifts in the global balance of power routinely alter national security threats to the United States. Throughout American history, great powers have come and gone and wars have started and finished almost without pause since the United States declared itself a nation-state. When the United States declared independence from Great Britain in 1776, it took nearly a century before the United States was free of national security threats from within its own borders. After the Civil War and periodic border skirmishes with Native Americans during the latter portion of the 19th Century, the United States found itself for the first time lacking a domestic threat to its national security.

New threats to American national security emerged. The leading colonial powers of the 19th Century (Great Britain, Germany, Spain, France and Russia) saw the United States as a newfound peer on the world stage and thus a potential threat to their national security interests. The United States pivoted its national security strategy to counter the challenges posed by their newfound international adversaries. In 1823, President James Monroe articulated what became known as The *Monroe Doctrine* in his State of the Union Speech. *The Monroe Doctrine* set forth the guiding principles of American national security strategy in the years leading up to the Spanish-American War and the outbreak of hostilities in the Philippines. The Monroe Doctrine warned European powers to cease their colonial pursuits in Latin America and stay out of the Western Hemisphere.[31] When the Spanish failed to heed this warning the United States had no qualms with declaring war and expelling her presence from the Western Hemisphere. As a result of this policy, the United States took control of Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico and the

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[31]United States. US Department of State. *Monroe Doctrine: 1823*.
https://history.state.gov/milestones/1801-1829/monroe. Washington, DC. 2013

Philippines. When an insurgency developed in the Philippines posing a threat to American rule of the archipelago, the military was sent in to perform counterinsurgency operations in order to protect the strategic interests of the United States in, what was believed to become, a geopolitical location of great importance to American economic and military interests in the South Pacific.

By the mid-1960s, the multi-polar world of the pre- World War II era was no more. The United States faced a newfound strategic adversary in the Soviet Union. After World War II, the Soviet Union was seen by the American political establishment as the biggest ideological, political and national security threat to the United States. No other world power at the time could rival the economic, political and military clout of the United States and the Soviet Union. Soviet style communism posed the most pressing political and economic threat to the United States and its allies abroad. The Truman Administration calibrated its national security strategy in NSC-68 to contain the spread of communism before it could do further damage to American interests. At the root of *Containment* was a calculated strategy to support and defend noncommunist regimes around the world vulnerable to falling under the Soviet sphere of influence. As communist-backed insurgencies erupted throughout much of the Third World in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the United States found itself confronted with a political challenge in the French colony of Vietnam. After Ho-Chi Minh led a successful communist insurgency and expelled the French from the peninsula in 1954, the United States took a stand in Vietnam to prevent the country from falling to communism and into the Soviet sphere of influence. The United States cemented an alliance with Ngo Dinh Diem and propped up a noncommunist political regime in South Vietnam under his

leadership. The Americans robustly supported Ngo Dinh Diem, a French-educated Catholic with strong anti-communist political leanings, to serve as a bulwark against their communist adversary in the north. The United States sent inordinate amounts of economic and military support to the Diem Regime over the course of the next decade as it was believed by many policymakers at the time that a failure to do so would embolden the Soviet Union and cause a cascading effect of falling dominoes where surrounding countries in Southeast Asia would fall into the Soviet sphere of influence.

Eventually, Cold War tensions dissipated and the Soviet Union fell apart under the weight of its own economic policies. The United States emerged from the Cold War as a sole global hegemonic power with the world's largest economy and most powerful military. To fuel its economic and military machine, the United States depended on a steady flow of oil from the Middle East. As a result, the Middle East grew in strategic, political and economic importance to the United States. In the Shah of Iran, the United States had a key ally in the region to enable its economic pursuits in the region. The United States failed to understand the fragile nature of his political regime and was caught flat-footed when the Shah was deposed in the Islamic Revolution of 1979. After storming the American embassy and kidnapping American diplomats, Iran became a regional adversary of the United States in the Middle East. To quell the threat from the Islamic Republic, the United States provided diplomatic, economic and military support to regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq in his war against the Iran. Having cemented a temporary alliance with the United States in the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam Hussein believed would have American backing and political support going forward. Saddam Hussein miscalculated the political posturing of its ex-ally and found himself fighting his   former

ally in the Gulf War of 1991. The United States subsequently saw Saddam Hussein as a madman hell-bent on gobbling up territory in the Middle East and destabilizing the region. The United States believed Hussein had a massive stockpile of chemical and biological weapons at his disposal. Having used such weapons in the Iran-Iraq War, and on his own civilians, policymakers in the United States believed there was a high degree of likelihood he would do so again. Saddam's game of cat and mouse with UN Weapons inspectors confirmed this belief in the eyes of officials in the Bush Administration. To preemptively dispel the future threat Saddam Hussein allegedly posed to geopolitical stability in the Middle East and to the national security interests of the United States, the Bush Administration made the case for war and invaded Iraq to topple Saddam's regime in 2003.

Counterinsurgency & Doctrinal Strategy

Throughout American military history counterinsurgency warfare has been but one small component of the overall makeup of American military doctrine. The United States crafts military doctrine with the intention that the principles outlined in the treatises will serve as a sort of guiding light capable of regulating the behavior, and mindset, of all soldiers involved in the war effort. More specifically, the United States Army defines military doctrine as:

> The statement of how America's Army, as part of a joint team, intends to conduct war and operations other than war. It is the condensed expression of the Army's fundamental approach to fighting, influencing events in operations other than war, and deterring actions detrimental to national interests. As an authoritative statement, doctrine must be definitive enough to guide specific operations, yet remain adaptable enough to address diverse and varied situations worldwide.[32]

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[32] US Army Field Manual 100-5. *Fighting Future Wars*. 1-1.

The first time counterinsurgency warfare was described in American military doctrine was in the context of General Order in 1863. General Order served as the guiding doctrine of counterinsurgency warfare for the United States in the Civil War, Indian Wars and in the Philippine-American War. After America's counterinsurgency campaign in the Philippines, the doctrine and the practice of counterinsurgency warfare were effectively forgotten both by the military establishment and left to the purview of Special Forces performing unconventional war tactics.[33] Counterinsurgency warfare was described intermittently in *The 1980 Marine Corps Guide* and the *Marine Corps "Small Wars" Manual* before its first official canonization in American military doctrine in *the US Army & Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual FM 3-24.* Prior to the implementation of FM 3-24 counterinsurgency warfare strategy was interspersed within the context of conventional military doctrine rather than as an altogether separate form of warfare. Since insurgents hide within the civilian population, and derive their legitimacy from their ability to exert control over the host population, a military performing conventional military operations involving cavalry charges, artillery shelling and aerial bombing raids will be ill-suited to fighting an asymmetrical conflict. American soldiers trained to believe that superior military power could defeat any enemy would grapple with the unintended consequences of this conviction in the Philippine-American, Vietnam and Iraq Wars.

Counterinsurgency & Tactical Military Interests

The Army defines tactics as the specific execution of battles and engagements.[34] Tactical operations are designed with the ultimate goal of making progress towards

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[33] US Army, *Counterinsurgency*, XXIII
[34] US Army, *Field Manual 100-5*, 1-3

winning a war and achieving the strategic objectives in the conflict. FM 3-24 describes counterinsurgency tactics as a combination of offensive, defensive and stability operations.[35] The nature of these tactics could be as simple as building roads and schools or as complex as conducting cordon-and-search operations in a dense urban environment or executing a targeted propaganda campaign geared towards ending a sectarian conflict. In theory, all counterinsurgency tactical operations are all conducted with the intent that they will lead to the pacification of the insurgency and the achievement of the strategic objectives in the military conflict. The problematic nature behind achieving this ideal is at the root cause as to why it is so difficult for the United States to achieve its strategic objectives in counterinsurgency wars and why the American public has so often relinquished its support for counterinsurgency warfare despite the fact of its tactical success in pacifying insurgencies deemed to be a threat to the national security interests of the United States.

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[35] US Army, *Field Manual 100-5*, 34

Chapter 4 – Liberalism & the American Psyche

When the United States conducted counterinsurgency warfare in the Philippines, Vietnam and in Iraq, the fighting itself directly influenced a number of key constituencies in the American public. American soldiers, policymakers, and civilians alike were personally impacted by the nature of the counterinsurgency wars themselves. Americans tend to view counterinsurgency warfare as an act distinctly separate from political life. Insurgents pitted against the United States think differently. They see their military tactics in a strategic context; as being part of a broader political conflict against the United States. In each war examined in this study, insurgencies fighting the United States conducted targeted propaganda campaigns designed to turn the American public against supporting the war effort. By turning public opinion against the war, insurgents believe they will limit the ability of the United States to continue performing counterinsurgency operations. Once the United States reneges from its counterinsurgency campaign commitments, the strategic objectives of the war (which were initially supported overwhelmingly) are compromised and the insurgents win political control over the host population.

The logical conclusion a student of military affairs can draw from this dynamic is twofold. First, the United States needs to wage counterinsurgency warfare more efficiently if it hopes to have a fighting chance in defeating insurgencies on the battlefield and in the hearts and minds of the populace they hope to secure loyalty from. Secondly,

the US military needs to be cognizant of the fact that fighting counterinsurgency campaigns in a heavy-handed manner will cause American public opinion to turn against the war effort which will ultimately undermine the popular strategic objectives the military was sent to accomplish at the outset of the conflict. The best way to understand why Americans will turn against counterinsurgency wars can be done by exploring the manner in which Americans view war. The values of liberalism provide a strategic context in which one can understand this enigma.

Historically, the United States has been a country reluctant to fight wars. Diplomacy has always been the preferred course of action to achieve America's foreign policy objectives going all the way back to the earliest deliberations of the Continental Congress in the 1770s when numerous diplomatic overtures were made to King George III asking him to give the colonists representation in Parliament. It was not until all diplomatic channels were exhausted that the colonists took up arms against the British. The United States has never been a society, like Caesar's Rome, or Napoleon's France, whose societal instincts favored war over diplomacy to achieve its foreign policy objectives.

From its earliest days, the American psyche has been molded by thinkers that preached peace instead of war. Thomas Paine, one of the leading liberal thinkers of the American Revolution, saw war as a defective practice that would inevitably stunt American political development. Instead, Paine proposed that war could be mitigated through constructive activities like commerce and trade.[36] Other liberal thinkers, such as Jeremy Bentham, articulated policies that urged diplomacy, trade, arms reductions and

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[36] Howard, Michael. *War and the Liberal Conscience*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1978. 29.

the abandonment of colonial ambitions to usher in an era of peace rather than conflict.[37] Paine and Bentham's strain of liberalism was a continuation of the school of thought advocated by thinkers such as Kant and Montesquieu and their ideas were held in high esteem by the founding fathers and their contemporaries in positions of power in the United States.

In the years after the American Revolution, political leaders in the United States continued articulating beliefs reminiscent of earlier liberal thinkers. Most Americans at the time practiced a progressive version of Protestantism that preached liberal values such as individualism, economic self-sufficiency and rationalism. Behind the liberal veneer that dominated the public sphere, a state of affairs emerged that posed a serious threat to the post-revolution liberal order: power politics. The United States was a growing superpower in a world dominated by *realpolitik*. The Atlantic and Pacific Oceans created a buffer that allowed the United States to cast a blind-eye to the continental wars that engulfed Europe throughout the 19th Century. By the dawn of the 20th Century this state of affairs would quickly change. The United States adopted a more proactive approach to foreign affairs by growing its navy and increasing its trading partners abroad. If it were to survive in a world defined by great colonial powers like Great Britain and Spain the United States would need to develop an outward looking foreign policy that was capable of positioning the country in position where it could stand toe to toe with its strategic adversaries who happen to be actively working to extend their spheres of interest in the Western Hemisphere.

Political leaders such as Secretary of the Navy Alfred Thayer Mahan, and his Deputy Teddy Roosevelt, urged a call to arms to counter the new threat emanating from

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[37] Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, 33.

Spain. These leaders, along with a compliant press, blended liberal values like anti-colonialism and freedom from oppression to push America into war. The United States began to act more like a colonial power and not a liberal nation. Its leaders had repackaged Thomas Jefferson's *Manifest Destiny* and applied it to foreign affairs in order to establish regional hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. Despite its success as a domestic ideology, the liberal movement was void of a thinker at the time that could effectively articulate the liberal position in foreign policy debates. As Samuel Huntington argues, liberalism failed as an ideology of foreign affairs for three reasons:

1) It was indifferent to foreign affairs.
2) Its application of domestic solutions to international affairs.
3) Its search for objectivity in foreign affairs.[38]

The brutality and carnage that played out in the Philippine-American War struck a chord which awoke the sleeping American liberal conscience. As it became clear that the United States was fighting a bloody counterinsurgency campaign in an effort to civilize our "little brown-brother," liberal voices began to emerge critical of war as a tool of foreign policy. When the United States Senate convened the hearings on war crimes in the Philippines in 1899, a myriad of newspapers, politicians, organizations and intellectuals spawned a liberal awakening which culminated in the founding of the Anti-Imperialist League. To these liberal elites, who occupied positions of powers in American social, political and economic circles, the United States of America was a country founded upon the principles of peace, tolerance and self-determination as opposed to conquest and colonialism.

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[38] Huntington, Samuel P. *The Soldier and the State; the Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957., 149

In the years following America's first experiment with colonialism abroad and its first liberal backlash at home, a new trend would emerge in debates over war and peace. Liberal thinkers, embodied in such figures as Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson preached an end to war through international organizations and treaties while at the same time supporting wars against enemies whose very presence on the world stage was anathema to the liberal creed. Whether it was fighting the Quadruple Alliance, Axis Powers, Global Communism or Islamic fundamentalism, the American public has not been hesitant to support going to war to defeat its illiberal enemies.

Rather than see each war through its conclusion before a judgment was rendered on its legacy, the American public has oftentimes recoiled from war during its implementation. This schizophrenic state of affairs in the United States has been problematic for the American military. On one hand, the American public demands that they go to war to defeat their illiberal enemies but on the other they are told that the way they fight the war is inconsistent with American values. The United States is supportive of going to war, naturally against war in perpetuity, and prone to start wars for the greater good of humanity all at the same time. These inherently contradictory positions define American thinking as it pertains to matters of war and peace. This state of affairs is problematic for every policymaker, soldier and citizen in the United States who must make a decision as to whether or not to authorize, fight or vote to support the war effort.

Understanding America's liberal intellectual roots, its support for wars against illiberal enemies, and its general aversion to warfare, provides one with an analytical framework to understand the problematic nature of employing counterinsurgency warfare to achieve the strategic objectives of American Foreign Policy. It is within this

framework that I will explain *why* the American public recoils from supporting a form of warfare that has been described by its advocates as benevolent and by its detractors as imperialistic, brutal and ill-conceived.

Chapter 5 – American Military Culture & Civil-Military Relations

In order to understand why the United States has oftentimes failed in its quest to create positive public perceptions of its tactically successful counterinsurgency campaigns, a further analysis of American military culture is needed. In *The American Culture of War*, Adrian Lewis advances the argument that a nation's culture "decisively influences the way a nation conducts war."[39] Understanding the state of American culture, and its impact on the military, is a prerequisite to understanding the mindset of American military leaders and the troops under their command responsible for performing counterinsurgency operations. Another important aspect of American military culture is impact of the most recently fought war on the mindset of top military brass and the troops under their command. Officers who cut their teeth on the battlefield as Second Lieutenants and Captains eventually become Colonels and Generals as time goes on. The lessons they learned from fighting in previous wars plays a decisive role in shaping the organizational culture of the fighting force they train and command on the battlefield. In *The Professional Soldier* Morris Janowitz alludes to this state of affairs in his study of American military culture*:*

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[39] Lewis, Adrian R. *The American Culture of War : The History of U.S. Military Force from World War II to Operation Enduring Freedom*. History of U.S. Military Force from World War II to Operation Enduring Freedom. 2nd ed.. ed. New York: Routledge, 2012., 2

Dogmatic doctrine is a typical organizational reflex reaction to future uncertainties. What has happened in the past becomes a powerful precedent for future engagements. Military leaders who have experienced combat develop prestige and reputation…..[40]

In addition to shaping military culture, leaders of the military establishment shape national security strategy, military doctrine, civil-military and congressional relations. They also play a role in international diplomacy by means of their military attaches abroad and multilateral institutions and treaties to which the United States is a signatory party. Moreover, the military establishment is also intimately involved in an ongoing public relations campaign in order to maintain good relations with the media and broader civilian populace. A good public relations image is of the utmost important to the military establishment. If the military establishment is incapable of maintaining credibility in the public sphere, they risk alienating the elected officials whose support they need in order to authorize and fund their military campaigns. Civilian leaders oftentimes share the brunt of this burden. They are the ones responsible for answering to the President and Congress and the American public. The actions of the soldiers below them in the chain of command are just as much their responsibility as they are of the individual soldiers themselves. When it comes to molding public perceptions of counterinsurgency warfare, and the images of this form of warfare which molds these perceptions, the American public has come to view the images of civilian leaders responsible for starting the war just as much representative of the war effort itself as the images of the individual atrocities committed in the counterinsurgency campaign themselves. In the United States, civilian leaders responsible for drafting and

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[40] Janowitz, Morris. *The Professional Soldier, a Social and Political Portrait*. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960., 24

implementing military policy and strategy are more often than not seen as symbols of war by the broader American public rather than the individual military outfits, their officers and the names of individual soldiers performing the actions which civilian personnel are held responsible for. Despite working towards achieving the same strategic objectives, civilian leaders and soldiers underneath them in the chain of command have uniquely different experiences and theories of how the military should perform counterinsurgency operations in practice. The clashing of these two diametrically opposed organizational cultures is at the root cause as to why the United States has yet to perform a textbook counterinsurgency campaign; perfect in every measurable metric, and perceived as a success throughout the duration of the entire campaign itself.

In the American military, the culture of each military service branch is distinctly unique. Each separate culture has a profound influence in shaping the psyche of the soldiers in it. The organizational culture of each service branch subsequently yields a different type of soldier. Soldiers are trained differently in each service branch in order maximize their performance and efficiency within the broader context of their own service's mission. Despite serving under the same organizational umbrella in the Department of Defense, the psychological mindset of an Army infantryman fighting in face-to-face combat in the swamps of the Philippines ends up being much different from that of a Navy technician monitoring signals intelligence from a base in the United States. Soldiers serving in uniquely different service branches develop different opinions on how best to carry out their orders in order to achieve the tactical military objectives of the war. Despite sharing commonly held values such as honor, bravery, valor and patriotism, servicemen and women in different Services and branches of the military are far from

uniform in their behavior and approach to fighting counterinsurgency warfare. They tend to believe that their particular service branch, and the capabilities of it, is best suited to achieve the strategic objectives of the war itself.

The psyche and worldview of an individual soldier, even within the same military branch, is far from uniform. According to Morris Janowitz, each soldier falls within one of three categories within the military establishment: heroic leaders, military managers and military technologists.[41] Heroic leaders are nationalistic, patriotic and strongly embody the archetypical "warrior type". They are typically (but not exclusively) enlisted soldiers that will fight in infantry units where combat will be fiercest and most dangerous. Without heroic leaders within its ranks, a military may lose morale when times are tough undermining the ability of the military to fight and win on the field of battle. Troops who are the antithesis of the warrior ethos may be prone to go MIA or defect to the enemy camp based on their own narrow self-interests rather than doing what's best for the military whose uniform they bare. The historic image of George Washington enduring the elements at Valley Forge and training his men to fight on through the brutal weather of 1779 is but one example of a "heroic leader" embodying the warrior ethos.

Military managers have a different set of character traits. Military managers think strategically and are concerned with conducting war in a rational and methodical way to further the political interests of their country. They play a major role in formulating the chain of command and building the institutional structures in which the military operates. President William McKinley's Secretary of the Navy Alfred Thayer Mahan is the quintessential "military manager." His role in shaping the national security strategy,

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[41] Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* , 21

doctrine and naval tactics in the 1890s played a significant role in shaping the modern American Navy. The navy's subsequent victories in the Battle of Santiago de Cuba and Manila Bay in the Spanish-American War would not have been possible if Mahan, and his subordinates in the US Navy, had not performed their duties as military managers responsibly.

Military technicians are a different from their warrior and managerial counterparts in that they are not naturally creatures of the military establishment. They are typically professionals in their own right with training in areas such as computing, engineering, and the biological sciences. The military technician is employed to research and develop technology that will help the military modernize its fighting force in order to fight its wars more efficiently. Historically, military technicians have played a major role in developing new weapons systems, armor, mechanized vehicles and communications technology for use in each distinct service branch in the military. Without the cultivation of astute military technicians, in programs such as the Manhattan Project, the United States military wouldn't have been able to develop the atomic bomb that allowed it to defeat the Japanese and end World War II. Superior weaponry and technology is a game changer in war which determines the nature of the war itself and the fighting which takes place within it.

As classically liberal values changed the face of American society, so too did they change American military culture. Since its founding, the United States has adopted more progressive social policies. Changing public perceptions on matters of civil rights and gender equality have reflected themselves in American military culture. During the times of the founding fathers, inalienable rights articulated in the Declaration of Independence,

and later codified in the Constitution, were possessed exclusively by white men of privilege. By the dawn of the 21st Century, those same liberal values were guaranteed to all segments of society regardless of an individual's wealth, race, religion or country of origin. Racists that justified segregation in the military oftentimes argued that minorities were less capable then their white counterparts on the field of battle. Such sentiments were patently false. Soldiers of color have played decisive roles in every single war fought by the United States and proved to be as capable as their white counterparts even during times when they were fighting to preserve freedoms for others that they themselves were denied at home.

During the Philippine-American War of 1898, minorities served in segregated units and were relegated to the lowest levels of the chain of command receiving the least desirable assignments. They were treated as second-class soldiers for no other reason other than the color of their skin. Harry Truman brought about a profound change to American military culture by desegregating the Armed Forces in 1948. Over time, the military adapted its policies to reflect changes in American public opinion on matters pertaining to race. At the dawn of the Vietnam War, the military had grown into a fully integrated institution that had already seen the pinning of its first African-American Four-Star General. Three decades later at the outset of the Iraq War, women and minorities played a major role in every aspect of the preparation and execution of the war effort.

Over time, the Armed Forces changed its approach to fighting war altogether. The military that fought the Philippine-American War had a much more expansive view of the use of force than did their counterparts in Vietnam and later Iraq. Changes and adaptations to military doctrine reflected an evolving view of the utility of force and how

best to employ it. Over time, the military as an institution adopted stricter enforcement of the laws of war and tighter regulations governing the rules of engagement in combat. Harsher penalties for violating the Uniformed Code of Military Justice and a more thorough and robust judicial system were developed. Despite all of the legal mechanisms and additional safeguards meant to make war less inhumane, counterinsurgency warfare has continued to elicit strong feelings of resentment in the eyes of the American public in lieu of the fact that the military has adapted more progressive internal and external policies to its approach of employing counterinsurgency warfare. America's reticence to embracing the nature of counterinsurgency warfare, even if proven successful, has remained a constant throughout American military history.

I.   Images of Atrocities & Perceived Violations of the Laws of War

Visual imagery has a profound impact in molding perceptions of war in the minds of the American public. Prior to the invention of the camera, an individual's imagination, drawings and portraits were the sole means for one to visualize images of warfare. Popular images of warfare included the gallant pose of George Washington leading his men in a rowboat across the Delaware River. Photographer Matthew Brady changed these perceptions through the lens of his camera. Artistically embellished portraits were replaced with gruesome images of dead bodies overflowing from trenches and wounded soldiers hobbling from the battlefields in Antietam and Gettysburg. Such images elicited strong emotions from Americans. Media elites found that they could employ visual imagery to forge a certain viewpoint or reinforce a particular position on a given topic based upon the visual images they relayed to their audience. As Time Magazine writer Lance Morrow argues: "still and video images are mainlined into a democracy's

emotional bloodstream without the mediation of conscious thought."[42] With the ability to selectively filter the images coming into the homes of average Americans, the media found itself emboldened with a newfound power to shape public perceptions of war throughout the United States. This state of affairs put added pressure on policymakers responsible for crafting national security policy. Instead of debating issues of war and peace over long periods of time, elected officials were expected to act more rapidly in order to meet the demands of their constituents. As Political Scientist Andrew Bacevich notes, "by exacerbating fears and stoking passions, the news media create   public predispositions for action (or inaction) that take precedence over any calculus of long range policy considerations, thereby making it impossible for elites to play their accustomed role."[43] By eliciting strong emotional feelings in the minds of its viewers, the news media can instantly impact how an individual feels towards a particular event. This situation causes an individual to make an immediate conclusion about an event that is complex in nature and deserving of a thorough analysis in order to fully grasp the circumstances behind the image and its context within the broader war itself.

In each of war documented in this study, specific images from each war molded public perceptions of utility of the war effort before, during and after each war. As previously stated, images have the ability to both encourage and discourage the use of military force. They can spark a military conflict or prevent one before its starts. More importantly, images have the ability to change public perceptions of the perceived status of the war while it's taking place. Regardless of the success or failure of the tactical

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[42] Perlmutter, David D. *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy: Icons of Outrage in International Crises.* Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998, 4

[43] Bacevich, Andrew.J. "*Out of Touch: The U.S. Foreign Policy Elite in Crisis*," America 171, December 10, 1994, 8

military operations taking place at the time, images of war never lose their ability to alter the trajectory of a military conflict. In fact, the insurgencies the United States was pitted against in each war were consciously aware of this dynamic and attempted to calibrate their military operations to alter public perceptions of the war in the United States at strategically planned time periods of their choosing. The perceptions created from these images, both real and imagined, have historically undermined public support for tactically successful counterinsurgency operations making progress on the battlefield in achieving the strategic objectives set forth by the American public and Congress in the beginning of the war.

Case Study 1: The Philippine War of 1898

By the dawn of the 20th Century the United States had effectively established political control over the entirety of the North American continent. It appeared as if the founding fathers vision of *manifest destiny* was complete. Hostile Indian Tribes had been defeated and the western frontier was awash with settlers looking for economic opportunity in the rugged frontier of the American West. The United States now stretched from sea to shining to sea. Having consolidated its power domestically, the United States found itself quickly rising into a global power alongside the likes of established colonial powerhouses such as Germany, Great Britain, Spain, France and Russia.

Having annexed Hawaii under questionable legal circumstances in 1898, the United States found itself in a strategic position to expand its economic opportunities in Asia. Corporate interests and their enablers in Washington saw access to Chinese markets as a boon for business. The only roadblock that stood in the way of the United States and its newfound ambitions in the Far East and in the Western Hemisphere was the aging and declining Spanish empire. Finding themselves mired in a costly occupation in Cuba, which later turned out into a full throttled war against the United States, the Spanish found themselves ill-prepared to bolster their paltry naval contingent and

occupation forces in their colonial outpost in the Philippines. The McKinley Administration soon realized the war with Spain would soon come to an end if the United States finished off the last remnants of their pacific fleet in the Philippines. Upon the guidance of Assistant Secretary of the Navy Teddy Roosevelt, the United States jumped at the opportunity to take advantage of the Spain's vulnerability in the Philippines. Spain maintained a presence in the Philippines largely due in part to the fact that few other global powers wanted to expend the resources necessary to govern the country. The United States saw this as a perfect opportunity to establish itself as a world power and a strategic player in the Pacific.

At the time, the American public was eager for commercial and territorial expansion abroad. Politically, the Spanish-American War and the spoils reaped from it benefitted the McKinley Administration, congressional republicans and their big-business allies eager for a springboard in which to access economic markets in Asia. The jingoistic version of American nationalism supported by the electorate and reinforced by the policies of the McKinley Administration and its enablers had its intellectual roots in a deep-seated belief in American exceptionalism. Proponents of American exceptionalism in both major political parties saw the American experiment with democracy and individual liberty as beacon of light and hope in a world occupied by a world of imperial powers. Proponents of American exceptionalism honestly believed that if American values were spread abroad (to less civilized nations like the Philippines) the world would become a better place.

Proponents of American exceptionalism included political elites such as Alfred Thayer Mahan and future presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. When

the American public saw images in Hearst Newspapers of Spanish concentration camps in Cuba, it was seen as an affront to the United States, and its values, in its own backyard. The American public was outraged and demanded action. The spark that ignited the flames of war took place on February 15, 1898 when the *U.S.S. Maine* exploded in Havana Harbor. Quickly thereafter, the United States declared war on Spain and sent a formidable military contingent to fight the Spanish occupation force in Cuba and naval fleet stationed throughout the Western Hemisphere. From the beginning of the Spanish-American War, the United States exerted its military prowess with reckless abandon against an inferior Spanish fighting force. After winning a bloody war in Cuba and decimating the Spanish fleet in Manila, the United States supplanted Spain as the leading world power in the Western Hemisphere and reaped the bounty of its conquest (Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines) when Spain surrendered its colonies upon the ratification of the Treaty of Paris on April 11, 1899.

During the Paris Peace Conference with Spain, President McKinley was urged by his hawkish advisors to annex the Philippines (despite concerns from cabinet members such as Secretary of the Navy John Davis Long and Secretary of State John Day).[44] Conventional wisdom among pro-annexation or as they were referred to in the media as "imperialist" politicians, at the time, held that possession of the Philippines would lead to trade expansion and an improved strategic capability of the U.S. Navy in Pacific Ocean. It was also good politics. The American public was overwhelmingly pro-imperialist and Republican gains at the ballot box in 1898 reinforced this state of affairs. Republicans in Congress were the biggest supporters of American expansion at the dawn of the 20th

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[44] Keenan, John. *Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American & Philippine-American wars*. Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO. 2001, 200

Century. Their leaders in Washington pushed for full annexation of all of the territories seized in the war with Spain. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA), the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was among the biggest advocates of annexing the Philippines to advance America's economic interests. Lodge believed that if the United States was to become a global superpower it need not worry about the views of its global adversaries. For Lodge and his allies in the McKinley Administration and Congress, the United States was to pursue a foreign policy of trade expansion regardless of the concerns of its foreign colonial adversaries.[45]

Swayed by his hawkish advisors and their Republican enablers in Congress, McKinley pushed for complete annexation of the Philippines at the Paris Peace Conference and sealed the deal in the final treaty negotiations with the Spanish. The only concession of any significance the United States made during the negotiations was a payment of $20,000,000.[46] Unable to sway McKinley from annexing the Philippines, Secretary Day quietly advised McKinley that if he were to colonize the Philippines, the United States would face stiff resistance from the Filipino populace and their nationalist leader Emilio Aguinaldo.[47] Secretary Day's critical views of annexing the Philippines were premised on a popular belief that the archipelago was ungovernable and that further military intervention would prove to be a costly endeavor. Prophetically, Secretary Day was spot on with his assessment. Estimates show that the Philippine War cost the United

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[45] Blount, James H. *The American Occupation of the Philippines, 1898-1912*. New York ; London New York and London: G.P. Putnam's sons G. P. Putnam's sons, 1913., 123
[46] Ramsey III , Robert. OP-25 : *A Masterpiece of Counter guerilla Warfare: BG J. Franklin Bell in the Philippines, 1901-1902*. The Long War Series. Occasional Paper 25. Combat Studies Institute Press, US Army Combined Arms Center Fort Leavenworth, KS. 2007., 13
[47] Ramsey, *A Masterpiece of Counter guerilla Warfare* ., 134

States $300,000,000; which today would amount to approximately $8,690,000,000.[48]&[49] Secretary Day's views critical of intervention of the Philippines were challenged by media elites such as William Randolph Hearst and his popular newspaper of record *The New York Times*. Other regional papers such as *Inter-Ocean, The Troy Times and The Call* parroted such views in regional markets across the country. American entry into the Philippines marked the beginning of a tit-for-tat battle between pro-imperialist and anti-imperialist newspapers, intellectuals, public figures and politicians that would dominate American political discourse over the next four years.

Upon sending an occupation force to the Philippines, President McKinley instructed military and civilian officials under his command to proceed with the utmost caution in their execution of the war. McKinley was uniquely aware that a military campaign outside the American continent could be construed as a war of conquest and colonialism if not executed with caution and restraint by its practitioners. McKinley's orders were laid forth in a foreign policy vision which he called *Benevolent Assimilation*. McKinley was acutely aware that a carefully executed war was critical not only establish American rule over the Philippines but also to maintain public support for the war. McKinley articulated his views of the nature of benevolent assimilation in a memorandum carefully designed to inform military leaders of his desire to see the military act cautiously in their execution of military operations in the Philippines.[50] In his proclamation, McKinley ordered the Philippines to be managed under military rule until a civilian commission could stand to provide stable governance of the country. Success   in

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[48] Crow, Carl. *America and the Philippines*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company Doubleday, Page & company, 1914., 39

[49] "Measuring Worth" *Purchasing Power Calculator*. http://www.measuringworth.com. August, 2014

[50] Keenan, John. *Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American & Philippine-American wars*. Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO. 2001, 38

this mission would be contingent upon pacifying Aguinaldo's insurgency and starting a nation-building operation in earnest. McKinley wanted to convey the image to the American public that the United States decided to go to war in the Philippines "not as invaders or conquerors, but as friends, to protect the natives in their homes, in their employments, and in their personal and religious rights.**[51]**

The views articulated in McKinley's *Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation* would serve as policy guidance to achieve the strategic objectives of the United States in the Philippines. With McKinley's views in mind, America's military and civilian leaders in the Philippines found themselves tasked with the responsibility of crafting a military strategy and an accompanying civilian governing model that worked in conjunction with each other. This meant that civilian and military leaders in the Philippines had to adopt a multi-pronged approach to achieve the strategic objectives of the United States in a way that had never been done before in the history of the American military. Not only would US commanders be responsible for using conventional methods to counter the Aguinaldo's insurgents when necessary, but the military would also be responsible for executing a counterinsurgency strategy to convince the Filipino natives that they would be better off to side with the United States rather than Emilio Aguinaldo and his nationalist followers. McKinley felt this goal was obtainable. The Spanish had done little to bring the comforts of western civilization to the Philippines during their time controlling the country. This meant that the United States had to essentially rebuild the Filipino society from scratch and create a system of governance conducive to their needs

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[51] American Conflicts: A Chronicle of America's Domestic and International Conflicts. *McKinley's Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation*. http://americanconflicts.com/blog/2012/12/benevolent-assimilation proclamation/#Text_of_the_Benevolent_Assimilation_Proclamation. Accessed April 2, 2013.

as a people. By showing the Filipinos that the United States was committed to rebuilding their country, McKinley's best hopes were that the United States would be welcomed with open-arms for their benevolent efforts to rebuild their country and that the citizens of the Philippines would accustom themselves to accepting the clear benefits of being a protectorate of the United States.

For the United States, victory in the Philippines would come about if the conflict was short in duration, low in cost, politically expedient for Republicans and the McKinley Administration and economically beneficial to corporate interests with stakes in American acquisition of the archipelago. All of these goals were contingent upon successfully winning the trust and support of the Filipino populace. In a letter to General Elwell Otis (Second in Command to Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt at the outbreak of the war), McKinley articulated a desire for the United States to accomplish these goals with the utmost care:

Am most desirous that conflict be avoided.... Time given the insurgents cannot hurt us and must weaken and discourage them. They will come to see our benevolent purpose and recognize that before we can give their people good government our sovereignty must be complete and unquestioned. Tact and kindness most essential just now.[52]

President McKinley was astutely aware of the potential for a hostile war to occur. His decision-making process and public statements with regards to the use of military force show that he wanted a pinpoint operation that served both American and Filipino interests simultaneously. This idealistic goal failed to come to fruition in the years to come.

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[52] Linn, Brian McAllister, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899-1902.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989, 11

Despite initial expectations that the Philippine War would be conducted in a professional and compassionate manner, a troubling ideology was being advanced within the US military that would undercut the ability of the United States to wage a benevolent campaign. A famous army song called "Civilize'em with a Krag" revealed the views that many in the military held at the time. "The "Krag", short for Krag-Jorgensen, was a standard issue military rifle used by American soldiers at the time. This song articulated the belief that many American troops believed that the Filipino people were savages and could only be tamed through sheer force.[53] Such views were reinforced in political discourse at the time and in the eyes of journalists who saw the United States as force for good and a beacon of light to a people from a dark and savage world. Such views were expressed in publications such as *The National Geographic* whose writers argued that the United States was fighting in the Philippines as "fit representatives of humanity, invincible in war yet generous to fallen foes, subjugators of lower nature, and conquerors of the powers of primal darkness."[54] Views of cultural superiority held by many prominent elites in the United States at the time provide context in which to understand why some American servicemen may have felt little remorse about waging indiscriminate warfare against a civilian population unlike themselves. A climate hospitable to racism spawned a military culture where such views became commonplace. This mindset of cultural superiority had a tremendous impact on the behavior of the American military in the Philippines. Given the state of Jim Crow Laws and segregationist policies in the United States, and even in the Armed Forces, it isn't very surprising that the military

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[53] Keenan, *Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American & Philippine-American Wars* , 82

[54] Silbey, David. *A War of Frontier and Empire : The Philippine-American War, 1899-1902*. 1st ed.. ed. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007., 96

became an institution where discriminatory attitudes and beliefs festered. What surprised the average American was how these beliefs actually influenced military conduct in the war and how these views would later create a climate where violations of the laws of war, acts of indiscriminate killing, property destruction and torture were performed in an attempt to achieve the primary strategic objective of *benevolent assimilation*. To the elites of the day who shaped the views of the country such a state of affairs seemed counterintuitive and contradictory. Their perceptions of the behavior of the American military in the Philippines was precisely the type of actions they expected from authoritarian regimes and colonial empires and not from a country founded on the ideals of liberty and justice for all.

Views of cultural superiority prevalent in the military at the time did not negate the fact that there were officers in the chain-of-command that opposed the heavy-handed approach to employing counterinsurgency warfare favored by some elements in the media and political elite. One such commander was Brigadier General J. Franklin Bell. Bell believed that a more peaceful and conciliatory approach to counterinsurgency warfare would be more effective in winning the war in the Philippines. His views on counterinsurgency strategy more closely resemble those of contemporary military theorists in the United States who meticulously devise and implement their counterinsurgency campaigns within the confines of the laws of war. Reports from Brig. General Franklin Bell's personal papers corroborate his belief that a more careful approach to counterinsurgency warfare was needed if the United States was to achieve its strategic objectives in the Philippines:

We have got to continue to live among these people. We have got to govern them. Government by force alone cannot be satisfactory to Americans. It is desirable that a

Government be established in time which is based upon the will of the governed. This can be accomplished satisfactorily only by obtaining and retaining the good will of the people…Our policy heretofore was calculated to prevent the birth of undying resentment and hatred. This policy has earned for us the respect and approval of a large majority of the more intelligent portion of the community. We cannot lose their support by now adopting measures as may be necessary to suppress irreconcilable and disorderly.[55]

Likewise, General Arthur MacArthur articulated similar beliefs. He explicitly ordered American troops under his command to refrain from engaging in acts of violence against the native population. Instead he ordered his subordinates to practice cordial relations with the local inhabitants.[56]

The guiding military strategy that was employed throughout the Philippine War was premised on the ideals set forth by leaders such as McKinley, Bell and MacArthur. However their best intentioned efforts were undermined by lower-level military officers who received near full autonomy over counterinsurgency operations in their regional spheres of command. As a result of this state of affairs, counterinsurgency operations designed by leading policymakers and generals at the highest levels of the chain of command were oftentimes undermined by the soldiers executing the commands in the field. To an extent, coercive methods can defeat an insurgency in theory if the counterinsurgents are successful in killing all of the insurgents and establishing their political authority over the population. However in doing this, the counterinsurgents run the risk of alienating the same people whose support they need to in order to maintain the legitimacy of their political authority. In the process of a counterinsurgency campaign waged with excessive force, the successive nation-building operation becomes compromised. The more physical destruction a military commits in the process of destroying the insurgency, the more likely it will be that the counterinsurgency campaign

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[55] Ramsey, *A Masterpiece of Counter guerilla Warfare,* 4
[56] Ramsey, *A Masterpiece of Counter guerilla Warfare* , 16

will increase in cost, yield more casualties, and provide visual and rhetorical propaganda for forces opposed to the goals of the counterinsurgents. The destruction that occurred by the United States military in its execution of counterinsurgency operations in the Philippines served the interests of Aguinaldo's insurgency and the forces opposed to the war (despite the fact that to an extent the harsh methods oftentimes worked to root-out and defeat Aguinaldo's insurgency). The political forces opposed to the war both in the Philippines and in the United States gained momentum as perceptions of atrocities both real and imagined trickled into the media echo chamber back in the United States. Tactical achievements on the battlefield in the Philippines meant little if they undermined political support for the war needed to achieve the strategic objective of *Benevolent Assimilation* in the Philippines.

How could it be that crushing an insurgency with overwhelming force as the United States did in the Philippines actually worked in favor of the insurgency? Such a question leads one to ask whether or not killing the insurgents is in fact the best way to defeat the insurgency. Clearly, the United States viewed a Philippines governed by Aguinaldo as a threat to its strategic interests. Initially, the American public saw a war to defeat him and his followers as a worthy endeavor. It is quite clear that the war became less popular each day it continued. When the nature of counterinsurgency operations in the Philippines came to light back home, the media painted a portrait of an American led colonial conquest of pillage and plunder waged upon a hapless people incapable of standing up to the superior might of the dominant American military. This view came to personify America's excursion into the Philippines in the minds of many of its citizens as well as in the American media, Congress and in a burgeoning "anti-imperialist" political

movement made up of prominent members of social, political and media elites and many average citizens back home in the United States. The growth of this movement played into the hands of Aguinaldo. For Aguinaldo, the war was just as much a political as it was military. His strategy in the conflict was contingent on surviving long enough to change the political tides of the war back in the United States to turn against the conflict.

Analyzing the political and propaganda war waged by the opponents of American intervention in the Philippines gives one a clear understanding the flaws of American counterinsurgency operations in the Philippines. It sheds light on how the practices of the anti-imperialist camp gained political momentum and how Aguinaldo nearly won the war despite the fact his insurgency was outmatched militarily by the United States and defeated on numerous occasions in face-to-face combat. This provides context to understand how the McKinley and Roosevelt Administration's inability to control public perceptions of the war contributed to undermining the strategic objectives and foreign policy goals of the United States in the Philippines.

The gory details of the fighting, and the perceived actions of the U.S. military during combat, altered the trajectory of political debate over the utility of the war in the United States almost as soon as the conflict in the Philippines started. The war was a political winner at first but later became a major roadblock to President McKinley's re-election in 1900 and the Republicans chances of winning seats in the midterm elections of 1902. One need only look at the evolving political views of the era's most prominent political figure, Theodore Roosevelt, to understand how the fighting in the Philippine-American War impacted politicians responsible for sustaining and managing the war effort. As Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt played a major role in

formulating policies that set in motion the chain of events that led to American annexation of the Philippines in the Treaty of Paris with Spain. Roosevelt was ardently pro-war and once remarked that during the Spanish-American War there was "not enough war to go around."[57] He approached fighting the insurgency in the Philippines with the same aggressive mindset he employed leading his band of "Rough Riders" against Spanish forces in Cuba. Such views were reflected in letter Roosevelt penned to Secretary of State John Hay in August of 1899 where he argued a policy of brute force to defeat the enemy. Roosevelt wanted the United States to "assume aggressive operations and…harass and smash the insurgents in every way until they are literally beaten into peace; entertaining no proposition from them save that of unconditional surrender."[58] A strong pro-war sentiment became the hallmark of Teddy Roosevelt's career in the McKinley Administration and in his future years as President of the United States.

As the war progressed, Roosevelt found himself in a tenuous political position. Having ascended to the presidency upon McKinley's assassination in 1901, Roosevelt was now in full control of the American war effort in the Philippines and managing a positive public relations image of the United States in order to maintain public support for the war. Throughout the duration of the war, as the nature of the fighting percolated into the media echo chamber, disapproval with the war reached a fever pitch. Media reports of indiscriminate killing and acts of cruelty toward Filipino civilians led the United States Senate to convene The Lodge Committee; a Special Select Committee tasked with investigating the actions of civilian and military leaders in the Philippines. In

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[57] Miller, Stuart Creighton. *"Benevolent Assimilation" : The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982., 69

[58] Roosevelt, Theodore. *Greene Papers: Theodore Roosevelt to John Hay*. July 1, 1999., Box 2

the hearings, Senators such as Henry Cabot Lodge and William Hoar relentlessly lectured civilian and soldier alike on allegations of unseemly behavior in the execution of the war. During the hearings, which were more an interrogation then a friendly exchange of questions and answers, Senators prodded the Roosevelt Administration to reveal all of the illegal practices employed throughout the war. Tempers flared upon hearing allegations some in the military had either condoned or participated in violations of the laws of war. In the minds of the American public, such actions were anathema to a country that bound itself to the rule of law and prided itself as being part of a unique experiment in democracy, individual liberty and adherence to a strict moral code premised on Judeo-Christian values.

At one point in the hearings, the Governor General of the Philippines William Howard Taft admitted that American troops regularly punished insurgents by whipping them and by implementing a form of torture known as *The Water Cure*.[59] The water cure was a form of punishment that would make contemporary methods of interrogation used during the Iraq War (such as water boarding) appear benign in comparison. Pvt. Evan Wyatt of the 8th Infantry Unit U.S. Volunteers, a soldier familiar with the practice, described the practice in the following way:

Water cure…consisted of laying a prisoner on his back and pouring water down his throat until he looked like a pregnant woman." If the initial application did not work, the prisoner would be forced to vomit the water up, sometimes by having a soldier step or jump onto his stomach, and the process would be repeated.[60]

Allegations of torture in the Philippines were not levied solely on low ranking enlisted personnel. In the media, reports later surfaced that implicated Generals Adna

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[59] United States. United States Senate. *Hearings Before the Committee of the Philippines of the US Senate.* 57th Congress. First Session. Doc No. 331 Part 1, 74

[60] Wyatt, Evan . *8th U.S. Infantry, Army Service Experiences Questionnaire*, Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA.

Chaffee, J. Franklin Bell, Frederick Funston and Brig. General Jacob Smith with authorizing and condoning war crimes. Brig. General Jacob Smith was brought before a military tribunal for his role in sanctioning war crimes. The court martial was initially brought forth to prosecute Col. William Waller, a subordinate under his command. As the hearings unfolded, Waller made a stunning revelation as to why troops under his command acted as they did. He stated the orders came from his commanding officer Brig. General Jacob Smith. Waller stated Brig. General Smith had "instructed him to kill and burn, and said that the more he killed and burned the better pleased he would be; that it was no time to take prisoners, and that he was to make Samar a howling wilderness."[61] Such allegations stunned the American public and revealed to them the horrors of the nature of fighting in the Philippine-American War.

Ordering troops to flagrantly violate the laws of war was a serious offense; even in a day when the military regularly waged campaigns against Indian Tribes employing tactics reminiscent of such behavior. The Smith-Waller court-martial was rooted in allegations that the military failed to uphold standards of conduct outlined in General Order 100. General Order 100 set legal guidelines on the acceptable rules of war for the American military. Among its many statutes were laws forbidding torture, indiscriminate killing, property destruction and harsh treatment of civilians.[62] General Order 100 was written during the Civil War and was later used as a source of legal doctrine for compliance with *The Hague Conventions*- a treaty signed in 1899 by the United States to establish norms for acceptable military conduct in combat. The irony that the United

[61] Los Angeles Herald, Volume XXIX, Number 190, April 9, 1902
http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=LAH19020409.2.3
[62] Lincoln, Abraham. *General Order 100: Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field.* April 24, 1863. http://lawofwar.org/general_order_100.htm

States had already violated a treaty it signed just two years previously was not lost on irate politicians, journalists and anti-war dissidents back home in the United States.

Upon conviction, Brig. General Smith was punished by the Roosevelt Administration with a proverbial slap on the wrist. He was sentenced into early retirement without a fine or prison sentence for the crimes committed under his command. Roosevelt's benevolence towards Brig. General Smith was due in part to the fact that he didn't particularly see anything wrong with his actions in fighting a war against an enemy he deemed to be savage in nature. The Roosevelt Administration advanced the argument that Smith's actions were understandable given the barbaric character of the insurgents and their style of fighting. Such views were reflected in the public statements of Roosevelt's Secretary of War Elihu Root:

> The enemies by whom they were surrounded were regardless of all obligations of good faith and all limitations which humanity has imposed upon civilized warfare. Bound themselves by the laws of war, our soldiers were called upon to meet every device of unscrupulous treachery and to contemplate without reprisal he infliction of barbarous cruelties upon their comrades and friendly natives. They were instructed while punishing armed resistance, to conciliate the friendship of the peaceful, yet had to do this with a population among whom it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe and who in countless instances used a false appearance of friendship for ambush and assassination.[63]

Despite its best efforts to counter the heaping criticism of its policies in the Philippines, the Roosevelt Administration was unable to ultimately shape the legacy of the war in its favor in history books written in subsequent years. The historical legacy of the Philippine-American War has largely been one focused on the post-war debacle over war crimes and the brutal realities of combat in the Philippines. The allegations, public admissions, sworn statements and historical documents that exist provide near

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[63] Creighton-Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 253-254

indisputable evidence that atrocities were committed by American soldiers during the war. It is these images that endure.

The tragedy of the war, and the severity of the acts committed by some, does not negate the fact that a great deal of good was done by the United States in its implementation of counterinsurgency in the Philippines. In fact, many positive aspects of contemporary Filipino society today are a direct result of the counterinsurgency operations waged by the United States during the war. Policies and programs put in place by the United States have had a long lasting positive legacy on the Philippines. A once neglected Spanish Colony made up of disparate ethnic groups turned into a sovereign nation with a market economy, democratic values, stable central government and an enduring national identity. The positive results of the seemingly brutal American military campaign in the Philippines lend credence to the argument that the United States actually accomplished its strategic objectives in the Philippines. Such a situation implies that on the tactical level the military achieved success in completing its mission. In many circumstances in the Philippines, effective counterinsurgency policy actually protected innocent civilians from violent insurgents who showed no qualms about using force to coerce innocent civilians to acquiesce to their political authority. Police forces, schools, roads, bridges, hospitals, sanitation systems, economic development projects, communication systems and municipal governance structures were created by the United States in its implementation of counterinsurgency in the Philippines. Best practices learned in the Philippine-American War have served as a model for policymakers and military leaders tasked with drafting counterinsurgency doctrine, training programs and battlefield tactics to implement the strategic objectives of their contingencies today.

Despite coming across as heavy-handed and immoral, American military operations in the Philippines were tactically successful and in retrospect achieved American strategic objectives in the war. Understanding this reality requires an explanation of the conditions faced by the American military in the Philippines and the nature of the war they fought. Such a description is prerequisite to understanding how the United States fought the type of counterinsurgency campaign it did during the Philippine-American War how why it was tactically successful but perceived as a failure in the eyes of history. The war itself was not conducted in open-air territory as it had typically occurred during most of the major battles in the American Revolution and Civil War. The Philippines is a country whose climate and topography compound the difficulties in fighting a war against an asymmetrical opponent. The Philippines archipelago is composed of mountainous terrain, winding rivers, swamps, and thick brush. The weather was brutally hot in the summer months. During the rainy season, hurricanes and monsoons occurred regularly and made sustained military campaigns during that time period all but impossible. Suffocating heat and humidity from the tepid environment led to exhaustion, dehydration and a climate hospitable to tropical diseases such as Dengue Fever, Malaria and Cholera. Altogether, the conditions on the ground impeded military logistics, transportation, and timely communications between civilian leaders in Manila and troops stationed throughout the archipelago. Such a situation forced the regional leaders on the ground to make tactical military decisions without guidance from the military and civilian leaders in chain of command stationed in Manila. The situation impacted every facet of the war and provided context in which one can understand why

the nature of counterinsurgency operations in the Philippines varied in different military districts.

The geographical terrain of the Philippine archipelago forced the military to split its troops into separate commands in order to pacify the insurgents throughout the countryside. The United States conducted counterinsurgency operations in the Philippine War in four different military districts on the main island of Luzon where the insurgents were strongest. It also had garrisons stationed on the islands of Samar, Leyte, and the Visayas. The United States occupation force was at times as high as 70,000 troops but was estimated to be on average composed of nearly 40,000 troops.[64] Some believed that this number was not nearly enough to do the job. Others believed that early success in the war would render an oversized occupation force moot. Since each military district was faced with a differing degree of insurgency, it was hard for military planners to accurately gauge how many troops were needed in each theatre. In areas where the insurgency was weak, American soldiers found themselves with little or nothing to do leading them to spend their time gambling, drinking or terrorizing the locals. One American estimate found that in nearly 44% of the Provinces of the Philippines there wasn't a single occurrence of fighting.[65] In other situations, American troops would find themselves ambushed, and outnumbered, by larger insurgent cadres hiding within the civilian population. When the Americans were confronted by an insurgent ambush, the attacks were strategically planned and oftentimes conducted in the most brutal fashion possible. It was a common occurrence to see the Filipino insurgents hack American G.I.'s

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[64] May, Glenn Anthony. *Social Engineering in the Philippines : The Aims, Execution, and Impact of American Colonial Policy, 1900-1913*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980., 356
[65] Linn, Brian McAllister. *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000., 185

to death with long bolo knives in surprise ambushes. The brutal methods of killing were meant not just to instill fear into the minds of American soldiers, but also to send a message to natives supportive of the Americans and their war effort- they would suffer a similar fate if found to be providing material support to the Americans.

The United States did not intend to see much resistance from the Filipinos at the outset of the war and as a result didn't initially plan to fight a sustained counterinsurgency operation from start to finish. The Americans knew that they had vastly superior weaponry and military training in comparison to their Filipino counterparts. As a result of this imbalance, the United States inflicted heavy casualties on the separatist insurgent forces led by Emilio Aguinaldo as soon as fighting commenced. According to one estimate, 3,000 Filipinos died on the first day of war compared to only 60 Americans.[66] Early decisive victories by the Americans reinforced the belief that the war would quickly end. After inflicting heavy casualties in a number of face to face battles, Aguinaldo and his men realized that they couldn't defeat the Americans by employing conventional methods of warfare against their larger and better equipped adversary. As a result, Aguinaldo and his insurgent forces recalibrated their strategy and retreated hastily into the Luzon Provinces to wage guerilla warfare against the Americans by hiding amongst the civilian population and picking and choosing their battles on their own terms.[67]

After recalibrating his military strategy, Aguinaldo began his own campaign to secure the loyalty of the local population. He recruited soldiers, procured supplies and established political control over the native populace by means of creating a shadow

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[66] Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 68
[67] Linn, *Philippine War, 1899-1902,* 32

government loyal to his subordinates. Like the Americans, Aguinaldo also hoped to earn the support of the local populace in order to establish his own claim to power. Support from the populace was critical if the insurgents hoped to achieve their goal of expelling the Americans from the Philippines and setting up their own self-governing state. This tug-of-war for winning the hearts and minds of the populace would occur in each province and village of the Philippines. The outcome of the war would subsequently be determined by the side whose tactics and strategy could best accomplish this end goal.

As the war shifted paradigms from conventional to guerilla warfare, the United States found itself faced with the reality that a quick and decisive victory wouldn't occur as originally planned. The military did not train its troops in the style of warfare it was now confronted with. The soldiers fighting in the Philippines were volunteers and enlisted personnel without previous combat experience. In 1899, there were very few professional soldiers in the ranks as the nation had largely demilitarized in the aftermath of the Civil War. Many of the leaders who had fought in the Civil War were old and gray and ill-prepared to lead units into combat. As a result, American soldiers were typically young and inexperienced. Psychologically, they yearned for combat, were deeply nationalistic and, to a certain extent, virulently racist. Trigger happy, they were all too eager to wield their skill with their newly acquired Krag-Jorgensen rifles. These factors worked against conducting a war intended to foster support from the civilian population.

Fighting against a band of insurgents hiding amongst the civilian population meant there were typically exceedingly long periods of calm between military engagements with the insurgents. This fomented the creation of a military itching for combat and oftentimes had the effect of making the engagements which came about more

brutal and heavy-handed then they ideally ought have been to achieve their tactical objectives. The troops that fought the Philippine-American War had neither the military, cultural or educational training in the art of counterinsurgency warfare needed to fully understand the impact of seeking combat and instigating warfare. A lack of proper training meant that they were unaware of the fact that the more damage and carnage that took place under their watch, the more likely their actions would undermine, rather than encourage, the ability of the United States to achieve its strategic objectives in the Philippines. In an era of growing empires, the United States saw the establishment of a colony in the Philippines as a chance to establish themselves as a blossoming world power to be reckoned with. This goal couldn't be accomplished without tactical success on the battlefield and the portrayal of a public relations image back home framing the war as a necessary short-term endeavor to achieve long term strategic objectives beneficial to the United States in the future.

The soldiers were not the only ones unprepared for combat. Civilian leaders in the Philippines were just as guilty of incompetency in their operational methods. The First Philippine Commission, the civilian governing body responsible for managing the war, was a bureaucratically deficient organization ill-equipped to perform civilian oversight of the military in the Philippines. There was no historical precedent for how military and civilian leaders should jointly combine to manage a nation building operation and counterinsurgency war at the same time. Harvard Professor Jacob Schurman was appointed by President McKinley to serve as the first civilian Governor of the Philippines Commission. From the outset, Schurman clashed with the commanding military leader Brig. General Elwell Otis. They battled over policies regarding war planning, military

strategy, diplomatic relations with Filipino leaders, municipal governance, supply and manpower logistics and political communication with their superiors in Washington. A breakdown in communication between Otis and Schurman had major consequences for the war effort. It spawned inconsistent communication within the chain-of-command, relaxed legal oversight over military affairs and stunted the creation of a unified military strategy. More importantly, squabbling in the ranks impeded a coordinated public relations campaign needed to justify the war back home in the United States. As a result of this state of affairs, anti-imperialist newspapers and their allies back home controlled the propaganda war and successfully chipped away at public support for a war that had had skyrocketing levels of approval upon when it first started.

The leader of the Filipino Insurgency, Emilio Aguinaldo, was keenly aware of this situation and he took advantage of it as best as he could. Writings in his personal papers reflect great knowledge of American Politics and the value of political propaganda as a tool of insurgency. Aguinaldo calibrated his strategy to influence the American public to turn against the war and abandon it altogether. He did this by documenting American excesses and atrocities against the civilian population and publicizing them for domestic and foreign consumption:

> But the abuses of the Americans were now becoming intolerable. In the marketplace at Arroceros they killed a woman and a little boy under the pretext that they were surprising a gambling den, thus causing the greatest indignation of a great concourse of people in that vicinity.[68]

The best chance for Aguinaldo to defeat the Americans was to defeat the will of the American public to continue supporting the war effort. Aguinaldo understood that the

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[68] Aguinaldo, Emilio. *True Version of the Philippine Revolution*. Tarlak: P.I., 1899., 30

best way he could accomplish this feat would be to sway the American electorate to favor the anti-war presidential candidate Democrat William Jennings Bryan in the 1900 presidential election. Aguinaldo undoubtedly felt that Bryan's anti-imperialist platform would work to his political advantage. It was unlikely that four more years under the President McKinley, whose policies were supportive of American intervention in the Philippines, would lead to American withdrawal and an abandonment of their counterinsurgency campaign against Aguinaldo's insurgency. To create political conditions favorable to his cause, Aguinaldo had to appear that the United States was failing to defeat his insurgency, even though in reality, his forces were near defeat and constantly on the defensive:

> In order to help the cause of Philippine Independence in the coming presidential election in the United States of America which will take place in early September of this year, it is very necessary that day comes, that is to say, during these months of June, July and August, we should give the Americans some hard fighting.[69]

Aguinaldo was not the only military leader trying to influence American Politics. In order to maintain domestic support for the war back home in the United States, Brig. General Otis had to stay on the right side of public opinion to maintain a steady stream of funding from Congress. In the beginning of the war, Americans cheered the prospect of war with Spain and were supportive of the foreign policy of President McKinley which had acquired the Guam, Puerto Rico and the rights to the Philippines from the hapless Spanish in the Treaty of Paris. Though no official survey data exists to measure public opinion at the beginning of the Philippine-War in 1898, a *Literary Digest* poll of 192 newspaper editors at the beginning of the conflict showed that that a solid majority of the

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[69] Taylor, John R.M., *The Philippine Insurrection against the United States: A Compilation of Documents with Notes and Introduction* (Pasay City, Philippines: Eugenio Lopez Foundation, 1971), 5:106

media elite (newspaper editors) from across the country backed the war effort.[70] Likewise, President McKinley also felt the public supported the war effort and its goals. In a letter to his friend Charles Dawes, McKinley voiced his personal opinion on the matter which corroborates the belief that a large swath of the electorate supported annexation of the Philippines and its accompanying strategic objectives: "You and I don't want the Philippines, but it is no use disguising the fact that an overwhelming majority of the people do."[71] The successes the United States achieved at the outset of the war, and the public support in favor of annexation of the Philippines in the United States, paint a picture that clearly shows that the mood of the American public and its support for the strategic objectives enunciated by the McKinley Administration to justify American intervention in the Philippines.

Once fighting commenced in the Philippines, public opinion in favor of the war steadily declined. An antiwar faction emerged sharply critical of the war effort and the McKinley Administration's handling of it. A proxy war back home in the United States emerged between allies of the McKinley Administration and "anti-imperialist" peaceniks. As the grim reality of a bloody counterinsurgency campaign came to light in the press, two competing factions organized themselves. On one side, the McKinley Administration, Republicans in Congress, religious leaders and pro-war newspapers pitted themselves against, pro-peace advocacy groups, intellectual and social elites, congressional Democrats, anti-war newspapers and their strange bedfellow ally- Emilio Aguinaldo and his Filipino nationalist insurgency. Throughout the duration of the Philippine-American War, these two diametrically opposed parties would engage in

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[70] Literary Digest *Volume 17.* 1898, 307-308
[71] Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 23

intense political warfare. Each camp worked assiduously to sway public opinion and their elected representatives in Washington of the righteousness of their cause. Each side calculated that the conflict would come to a head with the presidential election of 1900. Leading anti-war groups such as the Anti-Imperialist League believed that the election of Democratic Senator William Jennings Bryan would end the war and America's colonial expedition into the Philippines. Supporters of the war saw the re-election of McKinley as a justification of American exceptionalism and the mandate of a foreign policy grand strategy that would cement the United States as a global power. Supporters of the Philippine-American War realized they could seize the political and moral high ground by linking the enemy (Aguinaldo) with William Jennings Bryan. Aguinaldo had been vocal in American media outlets at the time and it was well-known that he favored the Democratic Party's candidate. William Randolph Hearst, a newspaper editor whose *Morning Journal* was famous for pro-war bombastic rhetoric against America's enemies throughout the duration of the Spanish-American War, was more than happy allow his newspapermen to link America's enemy with their anti-war adversaries in the Democratic Party:

Is there not material here for some pretty solemn reflections? What do Democrats think of the sort of management that has enabled the enemies of their country to greet their party as an ally…? The Democratic Party is as patriotic a party as ever existed. Its only trouble is indiscreet leadership. Aguinaldo's proclamation is a cold shower bath that ought to bring the inebriated leaders to their senses.[72]

On the surface, it appears that General Otis knew that a negative view of the execution of the war would compromise ability of the military to achieve the strategic objectives of the United States in the Philippines. He knew that if the American press turned against his leadership and the behavior of troops under his command,

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[72] Creigthton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 142

congressional support and a steady stream of resources for the war would soon dry up. Critiques of his leadership poured into the press almost immediately. In an article written in the San Francisco Chronicle in 1898 journalist E.W. Harden wrote a scathing critique of Otis and his military leadership: "(Otis) was too weak a man for the important office he fills and exhibits his incompetency by struggling with little matters of detail to the detriment of matters of graver importance."[73]

As a result of the drafting an article critical of his leadership, General Otis banned Harden from reporting in the Philippines. Newspapers critical of his leadership in the Philippines, such as *La Democracia,* and *Freedom,* were banned and accused of providing political cover to the insurgents.[74] Otis saw censorship as a means to protect American soldiers and their leaders from further examination of their conduct by the press. Newspaper articles critical of American policy in the Philippines would undoubtedly decrease political support for the war effort. Such censorship was also needed to mask the brutal nature of the war that was unfolding on the ground. Even in an era where communication and media censorship were easier to practice then they are today, leaked stories of atrocities made their way into the press in the United States nonetheless. Soldiers wrote letters home and troops cycling in and out of the theatre found ways to tell their story to the press. Otis took a beating in the media for his ambivalence to such behavior. Otis fought his critics by issuing unabashedly optimistic reports that victory was on the horizon and the insurgents led by Emilio Aguinaldo would soon be defeated. Upon resigning his position as commander in the Philippines in May of 1899, Otis relayed an upbeat and optimistic assessment back home stating the war would soon end in victory:

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[73] Otis, Elwell. *Otis to Adjutant General, Jan. 20, 1899* in Correspondence, vol.2, p.884; San Francisco Chronicle, Nov. 11, 1898.
[74] Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 87

"The War has terminated. Leading Filipinos express confidence in early pacification of the islands…leading insurgents surrendering."[75] As he sailed back to the United States, General Otis was optimistic that his policies would lead to the full pacification of the insurgency. He put forth a public relations image that sugar coated the nature of the fighting and the prospects for a quick and decisive victory. His half-hearted efforts to censor media reporting during the war sowed questions of doubt about the nature of the war and its execution.

In a span of a year, both General Otis and Jacob Schurman resigned from service in the Philippines. McKinley appointed future President William Howard Taft to lead the Second Philippines Commission and General Arthur MacArthur to lead the military outfit. Taft was responsible for issuing orders to the regional commanders and coordinating supplies and manpower to the troops in the field in order to accomplish their military objectives. The civilian leadership in Manila decided to give commanding officers in the field a great degree of leeway to implement their preferred tactics and strategies in order to counter Aguinaldo's insurgent forces. This would prove to be big mistake. The lack of oversight of military operations by the Philippines Commission allowed lower-level officers to decide for themselves which tactics and strategies to employ against the enemy. In addition this state of affairs, the mountainous terrain and winding rivers of the archipelago hampered the ability of commanders to communicate with central command in Manila. As a result of this challenge, General MacArthur left his subordinates to decide for themselves on the best means to pacifying the insurgency to achieve the strategic objective of *Benevolent Assimilation*. McKinley's strategic objectives in the Philippines could only be accomplished through a pacification campaign

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[75] Otis, Elwell, *Otis telegram to Adjutant-General, May 4, 1900* in Cosmas, ed., Correspondence, 1165.

that could establish military dominance over Emilio Aguinaldo's insurgents, earn the trust and support of the natives and prop up a civilian government capable of providing basic public services to the Filipino populace.[76] The really of the situation on the ground meant that the nature of counterinsurgency operations in the Philippines was neither uniform nor directly controlled by civilian authorities, who were in theory, responsible for managing the war effort.

Creating a politically stable pro-American colony in the Philippines would not come easily. The United States quickly found itself being pulled into a nation-building operation of epic proportions. In addition to pacifying the insurgency, Americans had to rebuild the Filipino society from scratch. The enemy was not to be underestimated. Prior to losing a conventional war against American forces, the native Filipinos had previously finished fighting a war against Spain. They were willing to continue fighting at all costs to achieve their independence. In order to expel the Spanish, Aguinaldo and his men worked alongside the United States to expel their former colonial masters. A period of successive wars decimated the Philippine economy, its public infrastructure and its political system.

The United States assumed the burden of rebuilding the Philippines into a society cast in its own image. This meant that American soldiers trained to fight conventional wars became tasked with conducting national building operations where they had to train police forces, build public infrastructure and municipal governing systems capable of carrying out basic public services such as public education, sanitation, mail distribution, medical care, food distribution, agricultural management and tax collection services.

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[76] Gates, John Morgan. *Schoolbooks and Krags; the United States Army in the Philippines, 1898-1902.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973., 84-85

These tasks were compounded by language and cultural differences which inhibited communication between American soldiers and the Filipino civilian population.

Under Brig. General Otis's command, American soldiers lacked adequate resources, manpower, intelligence, knowledge of the theatre terrain, and most importantly, tactical guidance on how to implement President McKinley's *Benevolent Assimilation* strategy; all of which are prerequisites to pacifying the insurgency successfully. Otis had subdivided the theatre into four departments (Northern Luzon, Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao-Jolo) giving each commander a region to oversee their own separate counterinsurgency operation. These jurisdictions would later change when Arthur MacArthur assumed leadership and the insurgents traversed the archipelago in search of more favorable terrain to wage guerilla warfare against the Americans. As it became clear to Otis that the United States could only pacify the insurgency with a substantial military presence, the McKinley Administration sent more troops into combat. In November of 1899, the United States had 53 garrisons stationed throughout the Philippines. By March of 1901, that number increased to 639.[77] The United States was heavily invested in the Philippines and the success of the war on the ground depended on the ability of American troops to improvise and adapt to conducting a successful counterinsurgency campaign instead of a conventional war. Even if the war could be won tactically, the Americans wouldn't have achieved their strategic objectives if McKinley and Roosevelt couldn't sell the utility of their foreign policy to the American people in the presidential election of 1900. This provided incentives to both the military and civilian leadership in the Philippines to get their act together quickly.

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[77] Linn, *The Philippine War*, 199

Perhaps the best case study of tactical success in conducting counterinsurgency operations in the Philippines came when Brig. Gen. Samuel Young assumed leadership of the First District of Northwestern Luzon in 1898. Brig. General Young effectively accomplished his goals and implemented a model counterinsurgency strategy that stands as proof that that McKinley's *Benevolent Assimilation* strategy was not an idealistic goal that was impossible to achieve. The counterinsurgency doctrine that guided military operations in the First Luzon District was robust and comprehensive. When Brig. Gen. Young issued General Order 43, tasking his subordinates with creating a stable civilian government in the First Luzon District, it was clear that he had an idea as to what he wanted to do and how he wanted to accomplish his tactical objectives in the First Luzon District.[78] Surprisingly enough, Young's goals were accomplished quite efficiently and effectively. In an effort to restore normalcy to the lives of citizens in the First Luzon District, American troops in the First Luzon District created nearly 63 towns with town councils, police forces and a combined 203 schools by early 1900.[79] They also brought desperately needed medical supplies, foodstuffs and economic aid to the native Filipinos who had been deprived of such things ever since their country became engulfed in war against the Spanish in the year's immediately preceding American entry into the Philippines.

The counterinsurgency strategy in the First Luzon District was not implemented without its fair share of trouble along the way. As the Americans integrated their troops and resources into the Filipino populace, they were initially not greeted as liberators and

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[78] Linn, Brian McAllister. *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899-1902*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989., 35
[79] Ramsey, *A Masterpiece of Counter guerilla Warfare, 47*

encountered stiff resistance from locals who were skeptical of their presence.[80] Many of these individuals saw the United States as a colonial power and not a benevolent force with good intentions. In some situations, Filipino natives served as spies and even volunteered to give aid and shelter to members of Aguinaldo's insurgency while at the same time they were claiming to support American rule. Upon entering the First Luzon District, American troops quickly learned that the insurgent forces were well organized and had made strides toward infiltrating the local populace and establishing a shadow government.[81] The insurgents engaged in psychological warfare and cut off supplies and resources from villagers that aided the United States. In some cases they performed assassinations of key leaders and destroyed entire villages where they felt that the natives were openly aiding the United States.[82] The insurgents were brutal fighters. They wielded long machetes called bolos that they used to hack their opponents to death in surprise ambushes on US troops stationed in the area. They would even use locals as human shields and felt no qualms in burning or destroying the property of those who did not support their cause or acquiesce to their demands. Finding the insurgent leaders and convincing (or coercing) them into supporting American rule would prove to be the main roadblock towards effectively implementing a successful counterinsurgency in the First Luzon District.

The American troops were able overcome these hurdles by building a sophisticated intelligence network within the First Luzon District. This allowed the US troops to preempt Aguinaldo's strategy before it could be implemented. By striking with

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[80] Ibid, 48

[81] Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War* , 47

[82] Marston, Daniel, and Carter Malkasian. *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*. New ed.. ed. Oxford: Osprey, 2010., 45

brutal force, American troops crushed Aguinaldo's insurgents in brutal face to face combat when they could selectively engage the enemy. In one mission, Lt. Col. Robert Howze and his soldiers killed over 520 insurgents when they attempted to engage Aguinaldo's loyalists in a surprise attack.[83] To the chagrin of soldiers desperate to fight in face to face combat, the insurgents oftentimes chose to engage Americans on their own terms. They employed sneak attacks and surprise ambushes that were best suited against a larger and better equipped occupation force. In order for the United States to effectively defeat Aguinaldo's insurgents in the First Luzon District, it had to find ways to root-out insurgent elements from the civilian population. The only practical way to separate the insurgents from the civilian population in the First Luzon District was to gather intelligence on the extent of the insurgent networks within it.

General Arthur MacArthur who became the commanding officer after General Otis exited the conflict, tasked Lt. William T. Johnson with collecting intelligence on the insurgents. Johnston authored a report entitled: "*Investigation into the Methods Adopted by the Insurgents for Organizing and Maintaining a Guerilla Force*" to accomplish this goal.[84] Lt. Johnson's report was based on intelligence gathered from an insurgent defector named Crispulo Patajo. Patajo was well aware of the insurgent infrastructure in the First Luzon District. By coming to the side of the United States, he was granted amnesty and spared the inevitable death sentence that awaited belligerent insurgents. Patajo's knowledge of the insurgents and their agents within the civilian governments set up by the United States proved to be an invaluable resource to the United States in

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[83] Ramsey, *A Masterpiece of Counter guerilla Warfare* , 48

[84] Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War* , 43

counterinsurgency operations in the First Luzon District.[85] This intelligence coup allowed the United States to root out the insurgents and establish full control of a major portion of the First Luzon District in five months.[86] After tracking down many of their fellow comrades, forces loyal to Aguinaldo began to renounce their allegiance to him. Instead, they decided to join forces with the Americans in hopes that they would offer them a better standard of living under their political rule. This would have never been possible without an amnesty policy towards for Aguinaldo's ex-comrades. On June 5, 1900 Brigadier General Arthur MacArthur made such a request:

Propose immediate issue of amnesty offering complete immunity for past and liberty for future to all who have not violated laws of war and who will renounce insurrection and accept sovereignty of the United States…[87]

An amnesty policy towards former insurgents ensured that Aguinaldo's followers wouldn't fight until the bitter end. It also fit perfectly into America's plans to assimilate the insurgents back into civilian life. By offering the insurgents better opportunities and converting them to the Americans side rather than killing them, General MacArthur was able to achieve tangible tactical battlefield successes in his counterinsurgency campaign in the First Luzon District. In the First Luzon District, the United States military was able to implement an effective counterinsurgency campaign by adapting and improvising its approach to defeating the insurgents. By crushing Aguinaldo's insurgent forces when confronted, gathering intelligence on infiltrators hiding within the populace, rebuilding the local economy and infrastructure and offering former belligerents a pathway back into

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[85]Linn, *The Philippine War 1899-1902*, Pg. 261-262
[86] Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War* , 45
[87] Simmons, Major Crayton. *The Philippine-American War: A Model for Declaring Victory in Iraq: A Monograph.* United States Army. School of Advanced Military Studies. 2011., 21

civilian life, the United States was able to achieve its tactical objectives in pacify the insurgency in the First Luzon District.

The successful implementation of counterinsurgency strategy in the First Luzon District served as a model example for successful counterinsurgency campaigns throughout the Philippines. However, many commanders chose to adopt more heavy handed measures to their counterinsurgency campaigns. The most notorious case of heavy-handed counterinsurgency tactics came on the island of Samar in the Fourth District of Southern Luzon. In this campaign, General Jacob H. Smith ordered his troops to "kill everyone over ten and turn the interior into a howling wilderness."[88] In a reprisal attack for a surprise ambush on American soldiers, Smith's troops blockaded the island, destroyed crops, burned its villages and waged unrelenting warfare on the local population in an attempt to crush the insurgency once and for all. William Keene, a participant in the campaign, recounted that: "We did not take any prisoners. We shot everybody on sight."[89] In the aftermath of the conflict, when the American public and Congress realized what had happened, Brig. General Smith found himself court-martialed for violating the laws of war.

Well intentioned counterinsurgency tactics in the Second District of Southwestern Luzon turned into a public health fiasco ending in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians. Brigadier General J. Franklin Bell repatriated civilians from their homes and into concentration camps in an effort to physically separate the friendly civilians from the insurgents hiding amongst them. By concentrating large numbers of civilians and all of their possessions into cramped living quarters, Brig. General Bell fomented a cholera

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[88] Linn *The Phillippine War 1899-1902*, 306
[89] Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire,* 196

epidemic and the subsequent deaths of nearly 11,000 Filipinos.[90] Ironically, the American public felt compelled to fight the Spanish-American War after seeing ghastly newspaper images of Spanish concentration camps in Cuba. By adopting coercive measures to pacify the insurgency, the United States performed tactically successful operations at the cost of losing the moral high ground it held at the beginning of the war. By adopting near identical war measures as their Spanish adversaries in Cuba, the American public withdrew its support for the war effort and pushed Congress to investigate the unseemly behavior of its civilian and military leaders in the Philippines.

By 1903, the United States had effectively accomplished its strategic military objectives in the island. Emilio Aguinaldo was defeated and the Americans were able to establish civilian rule and establish military bases and trading outposts throughout the archipelago. The Philippines went on to become an American colony before receiving its independence on July 4, 1946. The Philippines adopted democracy and free-market capitalism and its leaders allied themselves with the United States in World War II and throughout the Cold War. For all intents and purposes, America's counterinsurgency expedition in the Philippines was tactically successful in that it achieved the strategic objectives of President McKinley's *Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation.* Scholars such as Brian McAllister Linn, the foremost expert on counterinsurgency warfare in the Philippine-American War, have called the Philippine-American War "the most successful counterinsurgency operation in US History."[91] As a military campaign the war ended in victory. Politically, the war was a failure. The McKinley and Roosevelt Administrations' execution of the war effort was conducted in such a heavy-handed fashion that a war

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[90] Linn, *US Army & Counterinsugency in the Philippine War*, 155
[91] Marston, & Malkasian, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare* , 39

supported by large swaths of the electorate in 1896 lost nearly all of its public and political support by 1902 when the war conveniently ended. If a more charismatic candidate had been nominated by the Democratic Party in 1900 and defeated President McKinley, there is compelling evidence to believe that the Democrats would have followed their party platform and withdrawn American troops from the Philippines immediately. The counterinsurgency campaign in the Philippine-American War will go down as one of tactical success but political failure. Despite making strides towards achieving a popular strategic objective, the nature of the counterinsurgency campaign and the images of wartime atrocities (both real and imagined) led to noticeable decrease in public support for the war effort throughout the entire duration of the war. Instead of ending in pomp and circumstance and parades and pageantry, as many wars do, the Philippine-American War instead ended in the most embarrassing of circumstances in congressional investigations, court-martial hearings and public recriminations of the Roosevelt Administration, its top generals and the very notion of American exceptionalism and manifest destiny abroad.

Case Study 2: The Vietnam War

Stopping the spread of Communism was a top priority of American Foreign Policy in the years leading up to the Vietnam War. There was a growing belief in the early 1950s that the communist menace would spread country to country around the globe. As more countries fell under the Soviet sphere of influence it was believed that freedom and prosperity would stand little chance of surviving. In a press conference on August 7, 1954, President Eisenhower advanced the argument that losing the entire Asiatic region to communism would be a defeat that the United States could not afford to incur. Allowing Southeast Asia to come under the Soviet sphere of influence was seen as anathema to the values of President Eisenhower who felt passionately that the United States should advance freedom, democracy and capitalism to all corners of the world:

But when we come to the possible sequence of events, the loss of Indochina, of Burma, of Thailand, of the Peninsula, and Indonesia following, now you begin to talk about areas that not only multiply the disadvantages that you would suffer through loss of materials, sources of materials, but now you are talking really about millions and millions and millions of people.[92]

According to Paul Warnke, a former General Counsel in the Department Defense in the Johnson Administration, the fall of China to Mao Zedong's Communist Party in 1949 had spooked the foreign policy establishment in the United States into believing that country after country in Southeast Asia would fall into communist hands unless the United States actively committed itself to preserving non-communist regimes in the region.[93] In 1954, the French suffered a humiliating defeat at Dien Bien Phu to a communist insurgency led by Ho Chi Minh. In an effort to counter what was believed to be a spreading communist disease in Southeast Asia, the Eisenhower Administration attempted to halt the falling dominoes in Southeast Asia by propping up a non-communist regime in South Vietnam under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem.

With the Domino Theory as its justification for action, the United States gradually committed its financial and military forces to the fledgling regime in South Vietnam. Soon thereafter, critics emerged that questioned the validity of the Domino Theory and the intellectual argument made in favor of committing American resources to South Vietnam. In 1964, Political Scientist Hans Morgenthau argued in a *Washington Post* Op-Ed that the Domino Theory was drafted "neither by reason nor by historic experience."[94] Domino Theory critics such as Jerome Slater emerged in Security Studies literature in the

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[92] Eisenhower, Dwight. *Domino Theory Principle*. Public Papers of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. 1954. http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/domino.html

[93] Appy, Christian G. *Patriots : The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*. New York: Viking, 2003., 280

[94] Morgenthau, Hans,. *The Case against Further Involvement.* Washington Post, (March 15, 1964) reprinted in Morgenthau, *Vietnam and the United States*, 38–42

years after the conflict. In *The Domino Theory and International Politics: The Case of Vietnam* Slater debunks the Domino Theory and takes its criticism a step further arguing that:

> Even if the premises had all been true (of the Domino Theory) it is doubtful that the Vietnam War would have been justified, for the consequences of the fall of Southeast Asia (the most plausible version of the domino theory) would not have been so threatening to U.S. national security or other truly vital national interests as to require a major war.[95]

The underlying belief that the Vietnam War was unjustified spawned the anti-war movement that would ultimately undermine the ability of the United States to fight the conflict long enough to achieve its strategic objectives in Vietnam. The primary strategic objective of American intervention in Vietnam was to preserve a viable non-communist regime in South Vietnam that could serve as a bulwark against further communist infiltration into Southeast Asia. Images of self-immolating Buddhist monks protesting against the Diem Regime caused great concern within the Kennedy Administration. After much frustration, President Kennedy famously declared that: "We're going to have to do something about that regime."[96] Shortly thereafter, Ngo Dinh Diem was overthrown in a military coup and killed backed by the United States.

The anti-war movement provided some of the most vivid images which altered public perceptions of the utility of continuing to fight the Vietnam War. In the beginning of the Vietnam War, the anti-war movement was a barely noticeable blip of leftist organizations and intellectuals on college campuses. Over time, its impact would ultimately grow to the point where it played a decisive role in cutting off political support for the war in the halls of Congress. Melvin Small argues that when the war began in

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[95] Slater, Jerome. *The Domino Theory and International Politics: The Case of Vietnam*. Security Studies no. 3 (2):186-224. 1993., 216

[96] Associated Press, & Hamill, Peter. *Vietnam: The real war: a photographic history*. 2013

1964, the American public was preoccupied with Civil Rights rather than the escalating war that was taking place in Vietnam.[97] This accurate assessment of the limited impact of the anti-war movement on American public opinion at the outset of the Vietnam War was reflected in a Gallup Poll in 1965 which revealed that only 25% believed it was a mistake to send troops to fight in Vietnam.[98] A unanimous vote in the House of Representatives and a near unanimous vote in the Senate confirmed initial American political support for fighting the Vietnam War in order to achieve the initial strategic objectives set forth by The Johnson Administration in Vietnam.[99] Despite the fact that the United States had boots on the ground in Vietnam during the Kennedy Administration, the American public saw August 7, 1964 as the beginning of the Vietnam War. At this moment of time, the American public and their elected representatives in Washington believed that fighting the Vietnam War to achieve the strategic objective of preserving a viable non-communist regime in South Vietnam was a worthy endeavor.

Hawkish national security advisors surrounding President Johnson gradually escalated America's commitment in Vietnam due to their belief that Vietnam was of great strategic importance in the broader context of the Cold War. Alongside the hawks in his cabinet was one lone dissenter that urged a different path in Vietnam. The leading critic of employing conventional methods of warfare in Vietnam was Undersecretary of State George Ball. On July 1, 1965, Ball penned a memorandum to President Johnson entitled *A Compromise Solution in South Vietnam.* In this memorandum, Ball was highly

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[97] Small, Melvin. *Antiwarriors : The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds.* Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 2002., 13
[98] Gallup Polling Organization, *Timeline Of Polling History: Events That Shaped the United States, and the World The Gallup Poll: 65 Years of Polling History.* http://www.gallup.com/poll/9967/timeline-polling-history-events-shaped-united-states world.aspx
[99] Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. *Public Law 88-408.* August, 10. 1964. http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-78/pdf/STATUTE-78-Pg384.pdf

critical of American military strategy in Vietnam. Ball's recommendations in *A Compromise Solution in South Vietnam* have come to represent the historical narrative portrayed in the post-Vietnam era among many historians that argue that the United States could not win the Vietnam War by employing conventional battlefield maneuvers such as aerial bombing campaigns and search-and-destroy missions.[100] Ball's main criticism of American intervention in Vietnam was premised on the belief that conventional methods of warfare could not achieve victory in a guerilla war against an enemy that hid within the native population:

> No one has demonstrated that a white ground force of whatever size can win a guerrilla war--which is at the same time a civil war between Asians--in jungle terrain in the midst of a population that refuses cooperation to the white forces (and the South Vietnamese) and thus provides a great intelligence advantage to the other side.[101]

It was readily apparent to Ball that the United States could not win the Vietnam War because of the strategy that it was employing. While this was indeed true, Ball's views on military strategy in Vietnam have morphed into a revisionist historical narrative that some use to argue that the United States was incapable of winning the Vietnam War *regardless* of the strategy that was employed on the battlefield.

Modern Vietnam War historians such as David Fitzgerald agree with the revisionist historical narrative. Fitzgerald is quick to point out the reasons *why* the United States lost the Vietnam War without focusing on *how* the United States could have won the war. Fitzgerald's opinion is buttressed by three points:

1) The United States was ill-prepared to fight the war.
2) The South Vietnamese government was weak and corrupt.

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[100] Cable, Larry E. *Conflict of Myths : The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*. New York: New York University Press, 1986., 269

[101] Ball, George. *Memorandum for the President: A Compromise Solution in South Vietnam.* Source: *The Pentagon Papers*, Gravel Edition, Volume 4, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 615-619. July 1, 1965.

3) The Vietcong and the North Vietnamese were well equipped and better organized.[102]

Each of Fitzgerald's criticisms of the United States and its battlefield conduct in Vietnam raise broader questions about the military strategy that was employed in the war. Why was the United States military not prepared to fight a winning war in Vietnam? Why was the Government of South Vietnam (GVN) incapable of supporting itself? What made North Vietnam, an impoverished third-world communist country, and their Vietcong allies, capable of defeating the world's most powerful military? What factors inside the United States spawned such views within the broader American population? What images created a perception that the United States was losing the Vietnam War? Each of these questions raise the possibility that an alternative scenario may have been possible in the Vietnam War if circumstances on the ground developed differently.

By following the popular revisionist narrative that has been advanced since the Vietnam War ended, one can find an easy way to logically infer that the Vietnam War was unjustified and doomed to failure from the beginning. This has been the lasting legacy of Vietnam in the eyes of historians that crafted the post-war narrative. Yet if one takes a closer look at *how* the Vietnam War was fought one can see a plausible and clear causal path that can lead one to the conclusion that the Vietnam War *could* have played out differently and subsequently led to the achievement of American strategic objectives laid forth in the beginning of the war. I intend to showcase how images of atrocities and perceptions of violations of the laws of war by the United States in Vietnam created a domestic political dynamic which stunted the ability of the United States to achieve its strategic objectives, in spite of the fact that the military itself was performing tactically

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[102] Fitzgerald, David. *Vietnam, Iraq and the Rebirth of Counter-Insurgency*. School of History, Clinton Institute for American Studies, UCD. Irish Studies in International Affairs, Vol. 21 (2010), 149-159, 38

successful counterinsurgency operations making progress towards achieving the strategic objectives set forth in the beginning of the Vietnam War.

Scholars such as Guenter Lewy, Mark Moyar and Andrew Krepinevich examine the nature of fighting in the Vietnam War from a perspective that places a greater emphasis on policy, strategy and the tactics employed by the US military in Vietnam. Each of these scholars focuses their analyses on the major policy decisions that were ordered by top civilian and military commanders throughout the duration of the Vietnam War. Learning about the nature of military operations conducted in Vietnam helps one to gain a better understanding as to why the United States performed the way that it did on the battlefield throughout the course of the Vietnam War. Collectively, each of the aforementioned scholars paint a different picture as to why the Vietnam War turned out the way that it did for the United States. Scholars that focus specifically on military strategy contribute to the historical narrative of the Vietnam War by painting a picture that shows that individual political decisions, rather than tactically successful military operations, led to the dynamic where the United States failed to achieve its strategic objectives in Vietnam.

In *America in Vietnam*, Guenter Lewy advances the argument that a seemingly endless supply of facts can cause one to come to many different conclusions about what transpired on the battlefield in the Vietnam War:

Like pieces in a kaleidoscope the "facts" of the Vietnam War could, and still can, be put together in a multitude of configurations which in turn lead to different political and moral judgments and conclusions.[103]

Lewy goes on to argue that many historians formed their opinions on the Vietnam War by selectively cherry picking primary source documents from the *Pentagon Papers* that

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[103] Lewy, Guenter. *America in Vietnam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978., vii

justified their predetermined ideological belief that the Vietnam War was unnecessary and unjustified. Lewy reiterated the claim that many of these historians: "have rejected as tainted and unreliable documents from the same source which they deemed inconvenient and out of line with their political views."[104] A selective sampling of primary source documents designed to avoid an uncomfortable historical truth is troubling to scholars that seek to understand whether or not the United States employed tactically successful military strategies that were making progress towards achieving the strategic objectives set forth in the beginning of the Vietnam War. Lewy leads one to logically infer that a further analysis of the policies and strategies that were employed throughout the Vietnam War is needed to find the answer to this question.

According to Lewy, one such strategy that may have changed the outcome of the war was the deployment of US Marines into the population centers of Vietnam in order to perform counterinsurgency operations. He believes that this decision should have been made instead of sending the Marines into the countryside in order to conduct search and destroy missions against VC outposts that were believed to be providing the lifeblood to the insurgency (but were really not). Lewy argues that this strategic decision was "a watershed moment in the American involvement in Vietnam that was made in haste and without careful deliberation.[105] He cites the importance of Johnson's signature to NSAM 328 on April 6, 1965 as the turning point in which the United States decided to employ search-and-destroy missions into the countryside rather than engaging in counterinsurgency operations in the population centers along the coast of   South

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[104] Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, vii
[105] Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 42

Vietnam.[106] This decision undermined the American war effort by stunting the pacification of the VC insurgency by shifting American troops away from providing security and stable governance to the citizens in the hamlets and villages where they were most needed in order to pacify the insurgency in a timely fashion. This dynamic changed the nature of the fighting from a more cautious counterinsurgency strategy to a more brutal form of conventional warfare that led to more killing and destruction for both parties. This state of affairs worked against establishing a stable and viable noncommunist regime in South Vietnam. It created a political dynamic in the United States where more gruesome images of war were created because of the nature of the war being fought. These images were then sent into the American media echo chamber and progressively changed public opinion against the war. As Lewy reveals, "no headway could be made against the insurgents until their presence in the populated areas was effectively challenged."[107] Failing to protect the population centers from insurgents caused the United States a great degree of blood and treasure throughout the first four years of the Vietnam War that arguable shouldn't have come about had the United States employed a sustained counterinsurgency approach. It was this failure to do so which turned the American public against the war effort to such a high degree that tactical progress being made in the aftermath of the Tet Offensive was irrelevant to the broader American electorate which had by that time had just elected a president who promised to end the Vietnam War.

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[106] National Security Action Memoranda, *NSAM 328.Presidential Decisions with Respect to Vietnam.*. The White House. Washington, DC. April 6, 1965.
http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/nsams/nsam328.jsp

[107] Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, 53.

Lastly, Lewy advances another crucial counter-argument that may have changed the result of what transpired on the battlefield in Vietnam earlier in the conflict. If the goal of establishing a viable noncommunist regime in South Vietnam was to be accomplished, the United States needed to ensure that troops in South Vietnam's Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) could work side-by-side with the United States to effectively defeat the VC and establish political order and stability within South Vietnam. Lewy argues that this goal could have been accomplished if the United States had decided to bring ARVN troops under their command rather than allowing them to act autonomously. He cites the fact that this view was held by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. However, the decision to integrate ARVN and American troops was ultimately rebuffed by General Westmoreland and the GVN.[108] Lewy goes on to argue that the historical record shows that President Johnson himself believed that the United States and ARVN troops should have been integrated. However, he ultimately decided against implementing such a policy at Westmoreland's insistence.[109] A consequence of not bringing ARVN troops under the command of the United States was that it allowed ARVN to operate autonomously and without American oversight. It was well known that ARVN and the GVN political leadership were corrupt and privy to fighting in a fashion where war crimes and torture often went unpunished. These allegations fueled the antiwar movement and fed into the narrative that the United States tacitly supported committing atrocities by casting a blind eye to the behavior of their battlefield allies. It was also one more crucial tactical error which prolonged the war and turned it into a more bloody conflict then it had to be had General Westmoreland heeded the advice of

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[108] Ibid., 47.

[109] United States. Department of Defense.. *The Pentagon Papers; the Defense Department history of United States decision-making on Vietnam*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1971., II, 475

his superiors. If the decision was made by President Johnson to bring ARVN troops under American control, Lewy implies that is likely that the heavy-handed tactics ARVN troops employed on the battlefield would have been mitigated. Such a situation, would have made it easier for the United States to win the "hearts and minds" of the South Vietnamese as it would have shown to the local population that the United States and South Vietnam could offer the population better political, economic and security support then their VC counterparts. Lewy leads one to conclude that changes in policy and strategy at key points during the war may have changed the nature of the war from a conventional to a counterinsurgency style war. The logical conclusion one can gather from Lewy's arguments are that American perceptions of the nature of the fighting in Vietnam would have been different if a counterinsurgency war was employed by General Westmoreland earlier in the war when it would have been more effective against the VC insurgency.

In *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam,* Mark Moyar describes the nature of counterinsurgency operations that took place in Vietnam and the development of their implementation throughout the duration of the Vietnam War. In this compelling study, Moyar describes specific counterinsurgency programs implemented during each phase of the Vietnam War and their effectiveness in pacifying the Vietcong Insurgency. By and large, counterinsurgency tactics implemented throughout the Vietnam War were narrowly focused and oftentimes conducted solely by Special Forces and their South Vietnamese counterparts.

Moyar's most useful analytical observations come in his assessment of counterinsurgency programs such as the Strategic Hamlets, Civilian Irregular Defense

Groups, Revolutionary Development Cadres, Combined Action Platoons and the Phoenix Program. The development and implementation of each of these programs showed that counterinsurgency efforts at different points of the Vietnam War were, contrary to the opinion of its critics, effective at defeating the Vietcong and securing the loyalty of the South Vietnamese populace to the South Vietnamese Government (GVN). One such example, the joint Marine-ARVN Combined Action Platoons showcased the ability of the United States and the GVN to work alongside each other to achieve their shared military objectives by employing counterinsurgency strategies against the Vietcong:

CAP platoons inhibited guerilla and shadow government activity in the hamlets rather effectively, and they improved the fighting capabilities of the territorial forces. They allowed the Allies to engage the enemy more often than did most American units involved in search-and-destroy operations.[110]

Moyar's most poignant arguments to buttress his belief that counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam were effective come from interviews he describes with former VC guerillas, NVA soldiers and their political leaders. He points out that Former VC Minister of Justice Truong Nhu Tang believed that: "In some locations…Phoenix was dangerously effective. In Hau Nghia Province, for example, not far from our old base area, the Front infrastructure was virtually eliminated."[111] Likewise, he points out that Maj. Gen. Le Van Duong, Deputy Director of the National Defense Academy, stated that: "In some regions, the people on our side suffered heavy losses because of Phoenix."[112]

Moyar argues that the United States gained the upper-hand over the VC in the rural villages and hamlets after the Tet Offensive. As the United States began to actively assist the GVN in nation building efforts, living conditions for the civilian population

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[110] Moyar, Mark. *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey : The Cia's Secret Campaign to Destroy the Viet Cong.* Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997.,44
[111] Ibid.*,* 245
[112] Ibid.

improved and the people welcomed the US-GVN presence in their areas which they had

failed to do earlier in the war:

> In the latter stages of the war, the GVN had a great deal more to offer, including economic prosperity, Land to the Tiller titles, relative freedom from destructive military encounters, and the possibility of serving in the territorial forces near one's family.[113]

Moyar's conclusions imply that at the end of the Vietnam War, at precisely the

time the United States was withdrawing from the conflict, the Vietcong had lost political

support from the civilian population and were severely weakened due to their tactical

defeat in the Tet Offensive. This was due in part to effective counterinsurgency

operations. The United States and their South Vietnamese allies employed

counterintelligence operations, economic reforms, psychological warfare, bribes and even

extortion to pacify the VC insurgency. Moyar's citation of a captured VC Directive from

Quang Nam Province supports this conclusion:

> The enemy has tricked and bribed the youths in our liberated areas to side with him and has poisoned the minds of the students and teenagers in his areas and debauched them in an attempt to enroll them in his anti-revolutionary forces. Recently, in our province which is one of the enemy's accelerated pacification priority areas, the enemy has implemented these plans, met with some success, and caused a number of difficulties….[114]

Moyar's description of a demoralized and nearly-defeated Vietcong leads one to

believe that the United States had the chance to make a major breakthrough in defeating

the Vietcong insurgency after the Tet Offensive due in part to its effective employment of

counterinsurgency. Yet despite the recorded success of American counterinsurgency

programs in Vietnam, the war ultimately ended in failure for the United States and the

GVN. Instead of hearing about the positive political developments counterinsurgency

tactics had brought about in South Vietnam, the American public saw images of naked

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[113] Ibid., 322

[114] Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey,* 317.

children running from napalm attacks, public executions and congressional testimony from former soldiers in groups such as the Vietnam Veterans against the War. One soldier who was highly critical of counterinsurgency warfare in Vietnam was Kenneth Barton Osborn. Osborn served as a military intelligence officer near Da Nang from 1967-1968. He claimed during his time working within the Phoenix Program in Vietnam the United States and its GVN allies murdered and tortured the VC suspects they detained in an effort to coerce them into giving up more intelligence on their guerilla infrastructure:

> I never knew an individual to be detained as a VC suspect who ever lived through an interrogation in a year and a half, and that included quite a number of individuals. There was never any reasonable establishment of the fact that any of those individuals was, in fact, cooperating with the Vietcong, but they all died and the majority were either tortured to death or things like thrown from helicopters.[115]

Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam is an insightful analytical study of American military strategy in Vietnam. It provides specific details of counterinsurgency operations that often receive little attention in contemporary discussions of the Vietnam War. Moyar's use of primary sources and interviews with participants in counterinsurgency operations throughout the course of the Vietnam War provide a compelling argument in favor of the opinion that counterinsurgency warfare worked on the battlefield in the Vietnam War when it was employed. Moyar's claims that counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam made tactical progress in the latter portion of the war lead one to conclude that the Vietnam War may have ended differently if the United States had continued employing counterinsurgency tactics instead of withdrawing from the conflict before they were completed.

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[115] United States House of Representatives. House Committee on Government Operations, *US Assistance Program*s, 321, 357.

If counterinsurgency operations were tactically successful in Vietnam then why were they so often supplanted by conventional military tactics instead? Andrew Krepinevich argues in *The Army and Vietnam* that the United States implemented a losing strategy in Vietnam because: "the Army was well trained in conventional wars but inefficient and ineffective in defeating insurgent guerilla forces in a "low-intensity" conflict."[116] He is quick to fault the military and its overreliance on *The Army Concept* which fostered a culture that favored conventional methods of warfare as opposed to counterinsurgency. From the Pentagon brass to the boots on the ground, *The Army Concept* is described by Krepinevich as a deeply entrenched organizational culture in the military that believed superior airpower, heavy artillery and conventional tactics best suited for a war against a large army in continental Europe could fight and win any war. General William Westmoreland, the Commander of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam, was the biggest proponent of *The Army Concept* as described by Krepinevich. His decision to employ conventional methods of warfare throughout the entire duration of his command inhibited the ability of the United States to pacify the insurgency that was undermining the legitimacy of the GVN.

Krepinevich argues that the belief that VC and NVA troops could be defeated through a conventional war of attrition was false. Yet this was precisely what Westmoreland's strategy in Vietnam entailed. Westmoreland, he argues, continued to employ search-and-destroy operations, aerial bombing campaigns and large-unit warfare despite the fact that these tactics were not successful in pacifying the VC insurgency and caused unnecessary civilian casualties and bloodshed. Such tactics were employed because leaders in the military establishment believed that the United States could win

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[116] Krepinevich, Andrew F. *The Army and Vietnam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988., 4

any war where it had superior firepower. As Krepinevich reveals: "U.S. military leaders believed in the morale-raising and life-saving value of massive firepower whose success they had witnessed in World War II and Korea."[117] Westmoreland's approach to military strategy reflected this deeply entrenched view of how wars were fought and won by the United States.

Krepinevich reveals that Westmoreland undermined America's ability to fight counterinsurgency warfare effectively by creating a flawed military strategy to fight the war. Not only had the United States purged counterinsurgency warfare from its military doctrine and training programs, but ARVN troops responsible for "the other war" as counterinsurgency was known, were corrupt, inadequately funded and led by military commanders that were poor soldiers.[118] Despite having influence over ARVN, Westmoreland never integrated their units into the MACV to improve their flawed fighting abilities. This state of affairs was noticed by astute military observers such as General Matthew B. Ridgeway, the American military commander who led a joint US-Korean military apparatus in the Korean War. Upon analyzing the behavior of the MACV and ARVN he quipped: "I could never understand why they had a dual command in South Vietnam. Why in hell didn't they put the ARVN under Westmoreland?"[119]

The American military employed a flawed military strategy at the outset of the Vietnam War due to the fact that the military establishment came of age in a post-World War II era where conventional methods of warfare were successful in defeating powerful military adversaries. Nations such as Germany and Japan had larger and better equipped militaries then the ragtag band of VC insurgents and their NVA allies. By the 1960s

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[117] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 164
[118] Ibid., 131
[119] Ibid., 196

America's biggest strategic threat, the Soviet Union, had begun funding insurgencies in the third-world in order to broaden their sphere of influence across the world. One of President Kennedy's closest advisors, Walter W. Rostow, advanced the argument that the Soviets actively worked stoke insurgencies in the third-world in the years preceding the Vietnam War in order to topple their western backed regimes. If the United States intended to stop democracies from falling to communism, Rostow argued that action was required to preserve regimes friendly to the United States.[120] In the years preceding American intervention in Vietnam, communist backed insurgencies in the Philippines (1948), Malaya (1951), and Vietnam (1954) confronted western powers. As a Congressman and Senator, President Kennedy had traveled abroad and personally saw first-hand how the French failed to pacify communist insurgencies in Algeria and Vietnam.[121] Upon inheriting America's commitment in Vietnam in 1961, President Kennedy was well aware that a war against a communist backed insurgency was on the horizon in Vietnam if the United States continued to back a noncommunist regime in South Vietnam against its Soviet backed communist neighbor North Vietnam.

President Kennedy's early actions in office show that he endorsed the concept of preparing the military to fight insurgent movements that posed a threat to the national interests of the United States. Kennedy relayed these beliefs in a commencement speech at West Point on June 6, 1962:

This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origin--war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins, war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him. It is a form of warfare uniquely adapted to what has been strangely called "wars of liberation," to undermine the efforts of new and poor countries to maintain the freedom that they have finally achieved. It preys on economic unrest and

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[120] Porch, *Counterinsurgency Exposing the Myths*, 204
[121] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 29

ethnic conflicts. It requires in those situations where we must counter it, and these are the kinds of challenges that will be before us in the next decade if freedom is to be saved, a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.[122]

Kennedy's speech marked the beginning of a policy initiative designed to integrate counterinsurgency warfare into American military doctrine. Kennedy personally ordered Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to add counterinsurgency training to the curriculum at West Point and the Army War College.[123] At that moment in time, it appeared that the United States was preparing to alter its military doctrine in an effort to train its next generation of military officers in counterinsurgency warfare. America's growing commitment in Vietnam, and the prospects of a future war in the country, would be the likely battlefield for these young officers if President Kennedy's desired policies were put in place in the military at that time.

It was quite clear that President Kennedy believed that the growing conflict in Vietnam would be best fought using a counterinsurgency strategy. On February 3, 1961 President Kennedy signed National Security Action Memorandum 2. This executive action instructed Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to prepare the military for counter-guerilla warfare.[124] However, the Army brass stonewalled Kennedy's orders to include counterinsurgency warfare in its military doctrine and training programs. At the time, the military hierarchy was opposed to reshaping its doctrine and force posture in order to accommodate a large-scale use of counterinsurgency warfare. Army Chief of Staff General George Decker rebuffed Kennedy's policies by arguing that: "any good

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[122] Kennedy, John F, *Remarks at West Point to the Graduating Class of the U.S. Military Academy*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8695. June 6, 1962
[123] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 32
[124] Bundy, McGeorge, *National Security Action Memorandum #2. Development of Counter-Guerilla Forces*. https://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsam-jfk/nsam2.jpg. February 6, 1961.

soldier could handle guerillas."[125] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Lyman Lemnitzer stated that the Kennedy Administration was: "oversold on the importance of counterinsurgency" and subsequently leaked a story to the press expressing these views.[126] Lieutenant General Lionel C. McGarr, the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group from 1960 to 1962, argued that the United States could successfully use conventional methods of warfare to defeat the Vietcong and their unconventional guerilla tactics.[127] Lieutenant General Harold K. Johnson, later Army Chief of Staff from 1964-1968, was critical of President Kennedy's efforts to mold the Special Forces into counterinsurgency specialists. He publicly opposed their use in the Civilian Irregular Defense Group and Strategic Hamlet Programs (despite their success in pacification operations).[128]

The views of the aforementioned military leaders were undoubtedly present in the mind of President Kennedy on January 28, 1962 when he received *The Howze Board Report*. The Howze Board was set up to assess the Army's readiness to engage in counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam. The findings in *The Howze Board Report* showed that the military was failing in its efforts to include counterinsurgency into its doctrine and training programs:

The tactical doctrine for the employment of regular forces against insurgent guerilla forces has not been adequately developed, and the Army does not have a clear concept of the proper scale and type of equipment necessary for these operations.[129]

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[125] Porch, *Counterinsurgency Exposing the Myths*, 206

[126] Nagl, John. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam.* Chicago, IL & London, UK. University of Chicago Press. 2005., 124

[127] MAAG-V, *Memo from Lt. Gen. Lionel C. McGarr to Senior Advisers, "Anti-Guerilla Guerilla",* CMH. December 10, 1960

[128] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 74

[129] Howze, Lieutenant General H. H., *Special Warfare Board, Final Report* (Fort Monroe, VA: Headquarters USCONARC). January 28, 1962., 12

It was at this decisive point in time that President Kennedy should have fired the aforementioned military leaders and replaced them with capable civilian and military officers that were well schooled in counterinsurgency warfare in theory and practice. The situation was so bad that the Army Director of Special Warfare, William E. Depuy, later admitted that at the time of his command that he didn't know anything about counterinsurgency warfare.[130]

Kennedy's reluctance to exert his executive authority over the military establishment was a sign that civil-military relations were dominated by the military at that moment. Less than a decade before, President Truman fired the legendary General Douglas MacArthur when he failed to obey his orders in the Korean War. President Kennedy would have been successful in selling his counterinsurgency program had he made a bold statement by firing the military leaders that were undermining his executive authority. Unlike President Truman, who had abysmal public approval ratings during the Korean War, President Kennedy had approval ratings as high as 83% during his short time in office and had proven that he could use the bully pulpit to enlist public and congressional support for his New Frontier political agenda.[131] If Kennedy had dismissed the generals that were opposed to his counterinsurgency program, none of which were as beloved by the general public as General MacArthur, Kennedy would have sent a clear message to his own civilian and military leaders that he was serious about implementing a counterinsurgency program in the military during his administration.

President Kennedy had a number of prominent counterinsurgency advocates in the chain of command that he could have given political power and support to lead his

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[130] Brownlee, R. L. and Mullen III, W. J., Changing an Army: An Oral History of General William E. Depuy, USA Retired. Washington, DC: USGPO. 1988, 117
[131] Kennedy, J.F., Job Approval

counterinsurgency initiative. These leaders included George Ball, Sir Robert Thompson, General Creighton Abrams and Robert Komer. Each of these leaders advocated for the implementation of counterinsurgency warfare in Vietnam. The public statements and private opinions of each of these leaders has been captured in the historical record and clearly show that they would have moved the military away from conventional methods of warfare in Vietnam had their expertise been employed to make executive decisions during the Kennedy Administration.

George Ball served as the Under Secretary of State for both President Kennedy and Johnson. He had a minimal impact on military policy formulation during his tenure at the State Department. He was known to be more of a devil's advocate rather than an advisor entrusted to craft major policy initiatives in Vietnam. Despite his status as an outsider, Ball's understanding of the nature of the war being fought in Vietnam was superior to the military establishment and the civilian advisors that kowtowed to their wishes. While he was known for being the lone voice against escalation in Vietnam, if Ball had been in a position where he was entrusted to make strategic decisions during the Vietnam War, his leadership would have saw the implementation of a counterinsurgency program rather than the conventional approach to fighting the war. Ball criticized the employment of a conventional war in Vietnam and argued in an 18 June 1963 Memorandum that the United States would find itself engaged in a guerilla war rather than a big-unit war as the military establishment believed.[132] Ball's deep understanding of the nature of the warfare that had to be employed in Vietnam clearly shows that he could have implemented a counterinsurgency based approach to fighting the Vietnam War if he

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[132] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 156

had been entrusted with the proper authority to do so. His recollection of the state of the war in Vietnam after his advice was ignored reflects such an opinion:

Ever since 1961-the beginning of our deep involvement in South Viet-Nam- we have met successive disappointments. We have tended to overestimate the effectiveness of our sophisticated weapons under jungle conditions. We have watched the progressive loss of territory to Viet Cong control. We have been unable to bring about the creation of a stable political base in Saigon. This is no one's fault. It is in the nature of the struggle.[133]

Another civilian advisor that could have been employed to work in a more substantial fashion on counterinsurgency strategy in Vietnam was Sir Robert Thompson. Thompson gained notoriety in military circles after employing a robust British counterinsurgency strategy in Malaya in the 1950s. Internal Kennedy Administration deliberations reveal that in 1963 Thompson was worried that the Vietcong were infiltrating the populace and sowing the seeds for future armed conflict and political duress.[134] His warnings went unaddressed by leaders in the Pentagon. In April of 1963 he was employed by South Vietnam's President Ngo Dinh Diem to operate the Chieu Hoi Program. The program was designed by Diem to bribe and coerce the VC into laying down their arms and declaring allegiance to the GVN. According to Pentagon Analysts, the program was cost-effective and proved that seeking out VC defectors would cost less than killing them in search-and-destroy missions.[135] His wisdom was recalled years later by Robert Komer in an interview with the Rand Corporation:

His (Thompson's) prescriptions could have been decisive (and he was prescribing it then) from 1957-1963 when the insurgency was mostly Vietcong and mostly a guerilla and subversive operation.[136]

[133] Ball, George., "*Memo to the President: Keeping the Power of Decision in the Viet-Nam Crisis*," CMH, 2, 4-6. June 18, 1965
[134] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 88
[135] Hunt, Richard A. *Pacification : The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1995 , 24
[136] Komer, Robert W., Rand Limited Document: *Organization and Management of the "New Model" Pacification Program- 1966-1969*.The Rand Corporation. May 7, 1970

Yet the Chieu Hoi Program was never incorporated into a broader counterinsurgency strategy due to a lack of funding and poor coordination between the GVN and the United States and its incompatibility with Westmoreland's overall strategic plan in Vietnam. At the time of its implementation, the military establishment was dead set against an integrated approach of combining American and Vietnamese troops into one cohesive fighting unit. Such a commitment would have meant a much deeper commitment in resources than either Kennedy or Johnson was willing to commit at the beginning of the war. Johnson's opinions were documented in the Pentagon Papers on the importance of keeping the fighting of American troops to a minimum: "Our committing a good many American boys to fighting a war that I think ought to be fought by the boys of Asia to help protect their own land."[137]

The advice and guidance offered by counterinsurgency experts such as Sir Robert Thompson was altogether ignored at the time when fledging counterinsurgency programs such as the Chieu Hoi and the Strategic Hamlets Program were beginning to make tactical progress in the early 1960s. When these programs needed resources and attention from the most important policymakers in the Pentagon, the military establishment fought tooth and nail against further efforts to bolster these limited but tactically successful attempts at employing counterinsurgency tactics in Vietnam.

If the advice of consultants such as Sir Robert Thompson was adopted, a military leader such as General Creighton Abrams would have been the perfect candidate to employ the counterinsurgency strategy. A native of Massachusetts, General Creighton Abrams became the Head of the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam in 1968.

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[137] Johnson, Lyndon, quoted in Neil Sheehan, ed., The Pentagon Papers (New York Times Edition. New York: Bantam. 1971, 311

Before he took over the reins of the MACV in 1968, General Abrams had worked closely with military advisors in Vietnam that worked alongside the South Vietnamese. He was well aware that a guerilla war was being waged by the Vietcong within the villages and hamlets of South Vietnam. General Abrams served as deputy to General William Westmoreland until he obtained command of the MACV in 1968. For much of the war, his opinions on military strategy were bottled up due to his strong loyalty and affinity for General Westmoreland and his belief that his best advice could not change General Westmoreland's steadfast commitment to conventional warfare.[138] Abrams oversaw an investigation on military strategy in 1966 that culminated in the publication of the Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam (PROVN) Study. According to John Nagl, the results of General Abrams' study showed that only a military strategy premised on counterinsurgency warfare would allow the United States to achieve its strategic objectives in Vietnam:

> The conclusions of the study were striking; it repudiated the army's current emphasis on search-and-destroy operations and urged a move toward pacification through winning over the population to the government's cause.[139]

Another prominent proponent of counterinsurgency warfare was Robert "Blowtorch" Komer. Komer was known for his brash style and his forceful efforts to prod the military establishment into supporting counterinsurgency operations in the Vietnam War. Komer was appointed Special Assistant to President Johnson and his efforts to implement a counterinsurgency program in Vietnam came to fruition when the program known as Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS)

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[138]. Palmer, Bruce. *The 25-Year War : America's Military Role in Vietnam. Twenty-Five-Year War*. Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1984., 63-64
[139] Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, 159

was created in 1967.[140] If CORDS had been implemented earlier, and on a larger-scale, the successes that were achieved under the program would have come earlier in the war when the Vietcong were building the foundation of their insurgency and shadow government. If the successful implementation of CORDS occurred in 1963 instead of 1967, it would have stunted the growth of the VC and made training competent ARVN soldiers and GVN political leaders easier. These factors would have expedited the pacification of the Vietcong insurgency and fomented the creation of a stable and viable non-communist regime in South Vietnam. An October 1970 Memorandum to Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird reveals the effectiveness of CORDS in training ARVN troops and producing competent GVN leadership making this scenario altogether more likely to have occurred:

> Some progress has been made in improving RVNAF combat leadership during the past year. These changes should lead to improvements and MACV undoubtedly played a significant role in bringing them about…The MACV-CORDS system for having better provincial and district officials appointed works quite well, but no other MACV staff section uses it.[141]

Komer's personal recollections of CORDS show that the military establishment did little to train and equip its troops to engage in counterinsurgency warfare. This made its implementation more effective because the military had not poisoned the program with conventional military doctrine or battlefield tactics:

> There was no pacification program in a real sense before we got in the act. There was no doctrine already well laid down. We wrote the bible and made up the program as we went along. The very fact that nobody else had done anything in a big way made it much easier for us.[142]

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[140]Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, 165

[141] Thayer, Thomas C. *War without Fronts: The American Experience in Vietnam*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1985., 69

[142] Komer, *Organization and Management of the "New Model" Pacification Program*, 9

Under Komer's watch, a new counterinsurgency doctrine and a joint U.S.-GVN inter-agency civil-military organization was created. CORDS was composed of a diverse assortment of federal agencies including the MACV, CIA, State Department, USAID, U.S. Information Agency and even the U.S. Joint Public Affairs Office.[143] Komer's assessment of counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam and how they needed to be employed in order to be effective on the battlefield were published in *The Handbook for Military Support of Pacification* in February of 1968:

> Pacification, as it applies in the Republic of Vietnam, is the military, political, economic, and social process of establishing and re-establishing local government responsive to and involving the participation of the people. It includes the provision of sustained, credible territorial security, the destruction of the enemy's underground government, the assertion or reassertion of political control and involvement of the people in the government, and the initiation of economic and social activity capable of self-sustenance and expansion...The key to pacification is the provision of sustained territorial security. Territorial security is security from VC local forces and guerilla units and VC/NVA main force units, if any are in or threatening the area. It also includes the protection of the people within the hamlet from the VC infrastructure and bullies.[144]

If Komer had created CORDS during the Kennedy Administration, the United States would have also saved large sums of money in its war effort. Conservative estimates show that the United States spent an estimated $333 Billion (in 1986 dollars) in Vietnam by employing a military strategy premised on search-and-destroy missions and massive aerial bombing campaigns in order to defeat the enemy.[145] In one year alone, FY 1969, territorial forces performing counterinsurgency operations received only about 2% of a combined U.S. and GVN budget of $21.5 Billion Dollars.[146]

If these aforementioned leaders had been employed to shape policy and strategy from the outset of the Vietnam War it is plausible that a scenario would have occurred

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[143] Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey*, 48
[144] Long, Austin G., and William Rosenau. *The Phoenix Program and Contemporary Counterinsurgency*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009, 17
[145] Komer, *Organization and Management of the "New Model" Pacification Program*, 9
[146] Thayer, *War Without Fronts*, 24

where the added benefits of saving money and pacifying the Vietcong insurgency at an earlier time would have allowed the United States to fight the Vietnam War more effectively and efficiently. Such a scenario would have made it easier for the United States to achieve its strategic objective of preserving a stable and viable non-communist regime in South Vietnam. The positive results that would have occurred under a counterinsurgency based approach to fighting in Vietnam would have led to a different result on the battlefield that would have changed the trajectory of the war and allowed the United States to make significant progress at an earlier time in achieving its tactical military objectives.

Counterinsurgency warfare was not present in any way shape or form in Army military doctrine until tangentially described in the 1962 Army Field Manual FM-100-5. When it was described in FM-100-5, the Army had intertwined counterinsurgency and conventional tactics in a fashion that made implementing a purely counterinsurgency based approach in Vietnam impossible.[147] The only military organization properly trained in counterinsurgency warfare in the years preceding Vietnam were the Special Forces, whose overall presence in Vietnam paled in comparison to the number of Army regulars. The counterinsurgency structures that were employed early in the war like the Strategic Hamlets, Chieu Hoi and CIDG Programs were all dismantled or incorporated into conventional military units that rendered them useless in their stated purpose of pacifying the Vietcong insurgency.

The joint American-South Vietnamese war effort failed because the United States sent an Army into Vietnam to fight against a large conventional army, such as the Soviet

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[147] United States, Army. *US Army Field Manual 100-5. Fighting Future Wars*. New Edition: Published with the Institute of Land Warfare Association of the US Army. Brassey's (US). A Maxwell MacMillan Company. Washington, New York, London. 1976, 139

Union, rather than the VC insurgency and NVA forces it was pitted against. Understanding the policies, strategies and tactics implemented by these parties and their offshoots will help one to understand why the United States fought a style of warfare that made it impossible to achieve its main strategic objective of preserving a viable non-communist regime in South Vietnam.

The NVA was an Army of conventional forces subdivided into battalions, platoons and individual infantry units based in North Vietnam. For the majority of the Vietnam War, the United States did not fight conventional NVA units in head-to-head combat. Instead, the United States found itself confronted with an enemy, the VC, which was not readily identifiable nor organized into conventional military units that could be engaged directly in conventional terms. The VC were communist backed insurgents native to South Vietnam and loyal to North Vietnam's Premier Ho Chi Minh. The VC immersed themselves within the populace and waged guerilla warfare against MACV and ARVN troops. The political wing of the VC, the Vietcong Infrastructure (VCI) aimed to wrestle political control from the GVN and undermine its governing mandate over South Vietnam by establishing a shadow government. In the process, they sought to infiltrate, extort, and intimidate the local populace into submitting to their authority. Since it was difficult to distinguish civilian from enemy, the United States often razed entire villages or targeted large swaths of territory in hopes that it could defeat VC cadres. Images created from these heavy-handed operations made their into American households as war correspondents and television news anchors like Walter Cronkite reported on the status of the war effort on an almost nightly basis throughout the duration of the entire Vietnam War. Images of aerial bombing raids and Agent Orange defoliation campaigns led

Americans to see the nature of the war effort as being brutal, destructive and tactically unsuccessful in making progress towards achieving the strategic objectives of setting up a politically legitimate non-communist regime in South Vietnam.

A closer look at the opinions of President Johnson show that he wanted the South Vietnamese to assume as much of the fighting commitments in South Vietnam as possible. However, he also knew the importance of maintaining a cohesive fighting force in order to accomplish success on the battlefield. Internal debates within the Johnson Administration in 1965 show that he considered integrating ARVN and MACV units in order to allow the two armies to work alongside each other.[148] However, this decision was ultimately rebuffed by General Westmoreland at the Honolulu Conference   in If this decision had been made it would have forced the MACV and ARVN to adopt a unified strategy to fight the war. The United States would have been responsible for ARVN troops and their behavior on the battlefield. Instead of working in one cohesive unit alongside the South Vietnamese, high ranking military officials such as Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and General William Westmoreland showed more interest in tallying the body count of Vietcong insurgents and NVA regulars rather than measuring the outputs that were more consequential to achieving their military objectives, such as pacified provinces under GVN leadership. Metrics to gauge political support for the GVN from within the South Vietnamese populace were also ignored.[150] Gen. Westmoreland believed that the best way to win the war would be to: "hurt the enemy across the spectrum of his efforts until he concluded that he could not win and

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[148] Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, 153
[149] Pentagon Papers II, 475
[150] Connable, Brett, *Assessing freedom of movement for counterinsurgency campaigns*. Santa Monica, CA: Santa Monica, CA: RAND.2012, 106

thus seek and agree to a political settlement."[151] Gen. Westmoreland's own Chief of Intelligence, Lt. Gen. Phillip B. Davidson, later remarked that: "Westmoreland's interest always lay in the big-unit war; pacification (a term synonymous for counterinsurgency) bored him."[152] As a result of this decision, counterinsurgency warfare was given little attention and all but ignored until the failures of a purely conventional military strategy became evident in 1967.

After waging a predominantly conventional military strategy in the early years of the Vietnam War, President Lyndon Johnson convened a meeting in Hawaii in 1967 in an effort to craft a new strategy that would change the course of the war in favor of the United States and South Vietnam. After conventional tactics failed to bring about an end to the conflict in the wars earliest days, it was apparent that the United States needed to adopt an alternative approach if it hoped to achieve its tactical military objectives in Vietnam. In retrospect, it was a sign of progress that the US military showed an ability to adapt by changing its military strategy during the war. Gen. Westmoreland was a strong proponent of conventional warfare and even giving credence to the idea that the military should begin constructing a new military doctrine and counterinsurgency strategy under his leadership showed that even the biggest proponents of conventional warfare knew that they couldn't defeat the VC insurgency under their current conventional approach.

A counterinsurgency doctrine that was to be coordinated by the MACV, CIA, and ARVN troops began to take form under the leadership of Robert Komer. If the United States was to achieve its goal of preserving a non-communist regime in South Vietnam, it had to pacify the VC insurgency, dismantle its shadow government and build political

[151] Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, 198
[152] Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey*, 49

support for its preferred GVN leaders. It would also need to keep enough of a military presence in the country to hold off NVA regulars from invading South Vietnam. In order to pacify the Vietcong insurgency, the MACV needed to improve its intelligence gathering operations if they were to be successful in locating the VC infiltrators that were hiding in the villages and hamlets under GVN control. On July 9, 1967, the MACV issued Directive 381-41. MACV Directive 381-41 laid out the command structure and objectives for Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation (ICEX). Reliable and accurate intelligence was critical to infiltrating and undermining the VCI in South Vietnam. A comprehensive effort was made to create an effective intelligence network that could share resources with all of the key stakeholders involved in counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam. The coordinating committees which worked together to coordinate intelligence included:

> The National Police, the Special Police Branch, the National Police Field Force, the Chieu Hoi amnesty program, the RD cadre, the Military Security Service, the military intelligence and current operations staff, the PRUs, and others.[153]

Together these units would work side by side in an effort to purge South Vietnam of guerillas that were sympathetic to the VC.

MACV Directive 381-41 also created a command structure that could effectively place the intelligence gathered in the field into the hands of a fighting force capable of uprooting the Vietcong from their sanctuaries in South Vietnam. These forces became known as Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRUs).[154] A PRU was a security force composed of South Vietnamese natives tasked with the responsibility of capturing and

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[153] Long, Austin G., and William Rosenau. *The Phoenix Program and Contemporary Counterinsurgency*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009.. 7

[154] Headquarters United States Military Assistance Command,. *MACV Directive 381-41*.Vietnam. July 9, 1967., 2

soliciting information from Vietcong loyalists. PRUs extracted intelligence from captured Vietcong guerillas in order to undermine future attacks by the VC. This task was done quite effectively. PRUs were assigned to regions where the South Vietnamese knew the terrain and the people living in the area. PRU units often utilized their own knowledge and interpersonal networks in South Vietnam order to accomplish their objectives. The overall purpose of the PRU units were not to kill those who were suspected of being loyal to the Vietcong (although this happened regularly) Instead, they tried to capture and extract intelligence from the prisoners whom they believed were part of the VCI hoping that such intelligence coups could lead to even more in the future. The success of the PRU units were described by historian Thomas Thayer as: "the single most effective anti-VC forces...No other force came close to this."[155]

ICEX was but one component of what became known as the Phoenix Program. The Phoenix Program also had a political component to it that was crucial to the overall effectiveness of the counterinsurgency strategy that was employed. In addition to being a military conflict, the Vietnam War was also a political struggle between communist and anti-communist political ideologies. This made the war a political struggle. The goal of the political component of the Phoenix Program was to build support amongst the populace for the noncommunist GVN leadership. Winning the military war against the Vietcong was only half the battle in this endeavor. In addition to being fighters, the VC were also an extension of South Vietnam's Communist Party, the People's Revolutionary Party. The VCI operated as its shadow government and even had a functioning civil-military leadership, intelligence apparatus, tax levying system and political outreach

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[155] Thayer, *War Without Fronts*, 210-211

program.[156] It was an expansive insurgent network that up until the creation of the Phoenix Program, the Americans had been unable to infiltrate and dismantle.

The Phoenix Program was also a political tool for President Johnson to assuage the concerns of his Democratic supporters that opposed further escalation of the Vietnam War. In the 1964 presidential election, Johnson reassured the American public that he was against further escalation in Vietnam and that the United States was: "not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves."[157] His failure to live up to this promise as the war continued caused his public approval ratings to plummet from 83% at the peak of his presidency to 56% in his last days in office.[158] Johnson supported Komer's counterinsurgency strategy because doing so would mean that fewer Americans would die and more of the fighting responsibilities would be turned over to the South Vietnamese. In a best case scenario, a counterinsurgency strategy would help the Americans win the war and achieve its strategic objectives in Vietnam. Johnson was well aware of what was at stake politically. Each day, antiwar activists harangued him for not bringing about an end to the military conflict in Vietnam. Johnson's concerns are clearly displayed in a message he sent to General Westmoreland and Special Assistant Komer in which he told them to: "search urgently for occasions to present sound evidence of progress in Vietnam."[159]

[156] Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey*, 12

[157] The Miller Center of the University of Virginia*: Presidential Biography of Lyndon Johnson: Foreign Affairs*. http://millercenter.org/president/lbjohnson/essays/biography/5

[158] Gallup Polling Organization, *Presidential Job Approval Center: Presidential Popularity John F. Kennedy*. http://www.gallup.com/poll/124922/Presidential-Approval-Center.aspx. August 11, 2014.

[159] Hunt, Richard A. *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1995, 40

To Johnson's delight, the Phoenix Program showed signs of success in its implementation. The Phoenix Program was composed of a number of separate actors that had to coordinate and collaborate with one another in order for the counterinsurgency program to achieve its goal of pacifying the VC insurgency and establishing GVN political authority. Since no sustained counterinsurgency program had existed prior to its implementation, its development was done on the fly. As circumstances changed on the ground, so did the doctrine and implementation of the Phoenix Program. The Phoenix Program combined hard-power and soft-power tools to merge a diverse cadre of military and civilian units into one hierarchical command structure capable of pacifying the Vietcong insurgency and establishing GVN political authority in South Vietnam. The Phoenix Program became an effective tool in the battle to win the "hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese people. Its intention was to practice a: "rifle shot" rather than a shotgun approach to the real target: important political leaders and activists within the VC infrastructure."[160] The program encouraged VC to defect to the GVN and hand over intelligence about their sources in the VCI. It also helped the Americans and their South Vietnamese allies gain additional knowledge of future VC military operations and their spies present within the GVN political infrastructure. The Phoenix Program implemented effective counterintelligence operations to find spies and, as a result, was able to sway captured VC to relinquish their allegiance to the VC. A harsh reality of the Phoenix Program was that if VC infiltrators didn't renounce their loyalty to the VC, the faced the prospect of coercive interrogation, imprisonment or even death. Such counterinsurgency

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[160] MACV, *Dir 381-41*, 2

tactics worked. Estimates show that in 1966, 20,000 Vietcong defected and by 1969 that number had increased to 47,000.[161]

Successful implementation of the "rifle shot" approach envisioned in MACV Directive 381-41 was seen in a carefully executed pacification program that was undertaken in the Quang Dien District of Thua Thien Province in April of 1968. In this counterinsurgency campaign, MACV and ARVN troops worked in tandem with one another, without the use of aerial bombing or artillery support, to effectively pacify the VC and dismantle their political network. The accelerated pacification was able to convince many VC to surrender and to renounce their loyalty to the Communist Party.[162] This came about under the leadership of General Creighton Abrams who had assumed the leadership of the MACV in 1968 and was effective in waging the counterinsurgency strategy that he had been constrained from implementing as the deputy to General Westmoreland.

In addition to providing security for the local population, the Phoenix Program also encompassed economic development and public works projects that were just as important as the security component of the pacification plan. These projects were designed with the specific intent of shifting political support to the GVN and away from the VC. Without new roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, food storage warehouses and economic policies designed to sustain their agrarian lifestyle, the local populace had turned to the VC earlier in the Vietnam War when they felt that the VC offered them a

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[161]Brooks, Douglas J., THE PHOENIX PROGRAM: A RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT: A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.1989. http://www.hoosier84.com/phx.pdf., 30
[162] Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, 169

better standard of living than the GVN could bring them. Pacifying the VC insurgency wouldn't have been possible if these objectives weren't completed.

In an effort to address this challenge, Komer crafted initiatives such as the Joint Medical Program, Village Development Program, the National Highway Development Program and the Miracle Rice Program.[163] Together, these programs turned out to be a success in tackling issues that could not be accomplished without a coordinated government approach between the US, GVN and the local population. Without the creation of "hamlet schools," there never would have been: "18,178 low-cost classrooms built and over 20,000 teachers trained for 1.25 million students."[164] USAID played a major role in building and sustaining these new infrastructure development programs. The Land to the Tiller Program was another success that showed similar results. An independent study conducted by the Control Data Corporation stated that the program:

> Helped turn a once-disaffected, politically neutral mass of potential and sometimes actual revolutionaries (formerly providing rice, information, labor and military manpower to the enemy) into middle-class farmers in support of the regime.[165]

The accomplishments made in infrastructure and economic development programs were the result of counterinsurgency operations conducted under the Phoenix Program. Like a search-and-destroy mission, these programs had specific tactical objectives and benchmarks for success. These programs turned out to be far more effective in accomplishing American military objectives than were conventional military operations. Having been created years after the Vietnam War began, and devoted limited manpower and financial resources, Robert Komer reflected on the Phoenix Program as a lone bright spot America's Vietnam military strategy:

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[163] Komer, *Organization and Management of the "New Model" Pacification Program* , 123

[164] Komer, *Organization and Management of the "New Model" Pacification Program*, 129

[165] Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey*, 319

Given the small proportion of total U.S. resources we got, and the fact that the pacification was wholly Vietnamized from the outset, I'll contend that it was clearly the most cost-effective major U.S. sponsored program of the Vietnam War.[166]

The Phoenix Program undoubtedly improved the quality of living for the South Vietnamese. It also made great progress towards infiltrating and dismantling the VCI. Despite its achievements, the legacy of the Phoenix Program has been sullied by accusations of prisoner abuse and torture. These allegations came forth due to reports that revealed that captured VC were shipped off to interrogation centers where they were questioned by GVN agents and subjected to physically coercive interrogation techniques which were seen by critics of the Phoenix Program as acts of torture.[167] The fact that the American led Phoenix Program worked in such close quarters with violent South Vietnamese interrogators sullied the reputation of the Phoenix Program in the United States Congress. Allegations of torture spawned congressional hearings and fact-finding missions to South Vietnam from powerful politicians. Yet the fact-finding missions came up empty as it became evident that Americans were not engaged in the alleged acts of torture. Anti-war Congressman Jerome Waldie visited Vietnam on one such mission in 1971 and to the chagrin of his antiwar supporters, Waldie declared that he: "saw nothing in any of the (Phoenix Program) centers to which I had access that led me to believe that abuses, in fact, did occur in the province interrogation centers."[168] Despite this state of affairs, American perceptions of the nature of the war back home didn't change as the war continued to become more and more unpopular as it progressed despite the tactical successes being made on the ground in counterinsurgency operations.

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[166] Komer, *Organization and Management of the "New Model" Pacification Program*, 12

[167] Tovo, Lt. Col. Ken, *From the Ashes of the Phoenix: Lessons from Contemporary Counterinsurgency Operations*, USAWC Strategy Research Project. U.S. Army War College. Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. . 2005., 14

[168] Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey*, 90

The tactical achievements that occurred on the ground under the Phoenix Program reveal a state of affairs that show by 1968 the situation on the ground had for the first time in the war shifted in favor of the US and GVN. The Tet Offensive had been a major military defeat for the Vietcong. VC and NVA leaders, such as General Tran Van Tra, later admitted that they were severely weakened after the Tet Offensive.[169] Their multi-pronged attack in the population centers of South Vietnam surprised and shocked the American public and ultimately fed into the argument being perpetrated by anti-war activists that despite all of the blood and treasure spent in Vietnam, the VC were still strong enough to wage a major assault that surprised the military and its South Vietnamese allies.

It was precisely at this moment that if the United States had decided to continue its counterinsurgency operations in Vietnam that it would have finally turned the corner and pacified the VC insurgency allowing it to achieve its established its goal of leaving a viable non-communist regime in South Vietnam. Not only were the military ranks of the VC decimated in the Tet Offensive, but their political base of support from within the South Vietnamese populace withered away as well. Rather than securing the loyalty of the populace and improving the local economy, the VC were blamed for the spike in fighting and destruction that was incurred under their watch during the Tet Offensive. The locals took them to task for failing to live up to their promise of providing a better standard of living than the Americans and GVN could offer.[170] By 1968, the change in the South Vietnamese citizen's attitudes towards the GVN was 360 degrees different

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[169]Combat Studies, Institute, and Văn Trà Trần. Vietnam history of the bulwark B2 Theatre: vol 5-- concluding the 30-years War. In History of the Bulwark B2 Theatre. Fort Leavenworth, Kan.]: Combat Studies Institute. 1989, 35.

[170] The Rand Corporation, *Rand Vietnam Interviews, ser. V., no. 22*,1972., 4

from where they were in the beginning of the Vietnam War. The infrastructure and economic development projects put in place under the Phoenix Program were beginning bear fruit in the years following their implementation. American military leaders, such as Col. Walter Clark, began to notice the South Vietnamese people were shifting their loyalties away from the VC and to the GVN:

> In 1971 and 1972, as the GVN presence became stronger and the Vietcong became weaker in my province, there was considerable evidence that the villagers believed the mandate of heaven indicated that they should support the GVN.[171]

Even the VC knew that they were beginning to lose the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese. According to a captured VC document, COSVN Resolution 9, such feelings were clearly beginning to form in the minds of VC leadership: "The enemy constantly uses economic measures, psychological warfare, decadent culture, etc., to influence and dominate all political, economic and cultural aspects in the rural areas."[172]

With the Vietcong on the run, and their influence waning, the United States need only have stayed the course long enough to continue efforts to train competent and capable South Vietnamese political leaders. The United States had more than enough military power to hold off the main NVA units that posed a strategic threat to South Vietnam. Instead of following this course of action, the United States chose to withdraw from South Vietnam. In its place, it left a fledgling GVN that had yet to nurture viable political leaders capable of claiming their newfound political mandate. To add insult to injury, the United States withdrew its military forces completely. This allowed the NVA's main units to invade South Vietnam and squash ARVN and its political

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[171] Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey*, 317

[172] Lester, Robert, *Translation and Analysis of Significant Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Documents: Controlling Organization in South Vietnam: (particularly in III and IV CTZ) Resolution #9*. University Publications of America. 1992, 46

leadership. As a result of this situation, the GVN was destroyed and the United States failed in achieving its strategic objective of preserving a viable non-communist regime in South Vietnam.

Despite the clear tactical breakthroughs made in counterinsurgency operations in the aftermath of the Tet Offensive, the political situation back home in the United States would not allow the military to continue the war it had most recently turned to its favor. Near unanimous congressional support to achieve the strategic objectives initially set forth in the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964 by President Johnson turned into bipartisan outrage and calls ending the Vietnam War with "peace and honor" and "Vietnamization" upon the election of Richard Nixon by 1968. Images of college students staging mass protests, rioting, burning draft cards and chanting anti-war hymns became commonplace in newspapers, magazines, and television news shows each evening. The organizers of the protests conducted them in a manner in which they would receive maximum exposure from the media. Oftentimes, anti-war protestors would even resort to violence to create a maximum shock effect from their protests.[173] Though few probably knew it, anti-war protests concomitantly served the interests of Ho Chi Minh and the Vietcong. The North Vietnamese and their Vietcong allies had an ironclad will to win the war. As their leader Ho Chi Minh famously told the world: "You will kill ten of us, we will kill one of you, but in the end, you will tire of it first."[174] The Vietnamese endured far more casualties in the Vietnam War then their American counterparts. Even at a time when the VC were running for the hills in the aftermath of the Tet Offensive,

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[173] Landers, James, *The Weekly War, News Magazines and Vietnam*. University of Missouri Press. Columbia and London. 2004, 203

[174] Joyce, Adam, The Micropolitics of "the Army You Have: Explaining the Development of U.S. Military Doctrine after Vietnam." Stud. Am. Polit. Dev. 26, no. 2 (2012): 180-204.

North Vietnamese political leaders knew they would achieve victory in Vietnam if they could keep the political winds in the United States against the war and its continued execution. *U.S. News and World Reports* picked up on this development: "There is agreement among most thoughtful observers here [Saigon] that the Communists are very impressed by the anti-draft and anti-war demonstrations to affect the U.S., to fight."[175]

The My Lai Massacre was the defining event of the Vietnam War that personified American soldiers violating the laws of war indiscriminately. On March 16, 1968 American soldiers descended on Son My Village, Quang Ngai Province in South Vietnam in a routine search-and-destroy mission. Approximately 400-500 civilians were killed in a raid on the village. During the My Lai Massacre, un-armed civilians were indiscriminately targeted and killed. Tommy Lee Moss, a soldier witnessing the massacre, stated that he saw: "Vietnamese place their hands together and bow to greet the Americans, only to be beaten with fists and tortured, clubbed with rifles, and stabbed in the back with bayonets."[176]

After the event was revealed in the media by wartime journalist Seymour Hersh, a series of court-martial hearings ensued on members of the Charlie Company, 11th Brigade of the Americal Division. In the trial proceedings, 26 officers were charged with war crimes. However, only one soldier was convicted, Lt. William Calley. Calley was convicted of murdering 22 civilians after nearly 79 hours of deliberations and sentenced to life in prison. Due to the political brouhaha that ensured in the aftermath of the trial, President Nixon washed his hands of it by commuting Calley's sentence and ultimately pardoning him completely. In the eyes of the American public, the damage had been

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[175] Landers, *The Weekly War*, 208
[176] Sim, Kevin, and Michael Bilton. *Four Hours in My Lai*. New York, NY New York: Viking, 1992., 129

done. The Americans perceived, and rightfully so, that their soldiers had indiscriminately killed civilians in violation of the laws of war. Such acts of wanton destruction carried out by Americans in uniform served to undermine the ability of the United States to maintain the moral high ground over their communist adversaries. The My Lai Massacre shocked the American public and their political leaders. At precisely the time the Americans were making tactical headway against their VC adversaries, events like My Lai served the political interests of Ho Chi Minh in the battle to win the hearts and minds of the American public. Similar events as told by many former soldiers in groups such as Vietnam Veterans against the War corroborated viewpoints that the events of My Lai were not a single isolated incident. Collectively, the perceptions created from alleged war crimes committed at the behest of American soldiers in Vietnam served to undermine public support for the Vietnam War in the eyes of the American public and their political leaders. Such atrocities added legitimacy to the arguments anti-war protestors were making to end the war. As the last American troops exited Vietnam in 1975, America's quest to achieve its strategic objectives in Vietnam ended. For Ho Chi Minh and his VC allies, their insurgency officially ended as their communist movement took control over the entirety of South Vietnam.

The Vietnam War has been viewed by many contemporary historians as an unnecessary and unjustified war that was doomed to failure from the outset. Whether or not one agrees that the Vietnam War was a strategic blunder within the context of the Cold War is a debate for another day. The reality is that the United States fought the Vietnam War with the stated goal of preserving a viable non-communist regime in South Vietnam. Despite poor strategic planning and wrongheaded military strategy initially, the

United States surprisingly found itself in a position to accomplish its strategic objectives in Vietnam after the Tet Offensive. By the time that a carefully tailored counterinsurgency military strategy was implemented and began to have tactical military success, the American public had turned against the war and demanded that it be ended immediately. This occurred because images of a heavy-handed conventional war caused more killing and destruction then should have if a sustained counterinsurgency strategy was employed throughout the war.

Case Study 3: The Iraq War

The decision to invade Iraq in order to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein was initially supported by a plurality of the American public and their elected representatives in Washington. The decision was controversial at the time but it was nonetheless seem as a worthy endeavor based upon the promises made to the American public by the Bush Administration regarding the threat Saddam Hussein posed to the national security interests of the United States. History will judge whether or not the war was necessary and justified or if it was a strategic blunder. Nonetheless, the Iraq War had a dual purpose according to the principles laid forth by the Bush Administration. The stated strategic objectives laid forth by the Bush Administration.

1) To overthrow Saddam Hussein (for being a national security threat to the United States)
2) To build a stable and democratic Iraqi Government

Prior to the advent of the conflict, many Americans and their representatives in Congress were supportive of going to war to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein in order to bring democracy to Iraq. According to a Pew Research Survey conducted in October of 2002, 62% of Americans supported removing Saddam Hussein from power with 38% opposed.[177] The Authorization for Use of Military Force against Iraq Resolution of 2002 passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 297-133 and 77-23 in the United States Senate.[178] Despite overwhelming bipartisan support invading Iraq, and an approximate 2-1 majority in favor of deposing Saddam Hussein's regime, public support for the war steadily declined throughout the duration of the conflict. A failure to receive UN Security Council authorization for the use of force, the development of a post-invasion insurgency, a failure to find weapons of mass destruction or links between Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda were at the root of the decline in public support for the Iraq War. Mounting casualties, graphic images of slaughter by al-Qaeda militants, unseemly behavior by American defense contractors and prisoner abuse by American soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison molded new public perceptions of the utility of continuing a war to achieve American strategic objectives in Iraq. By April 2008, a Gallup Poll revealed that 63% of Americans believed that the War in Iraq was a mistake.[179] The steady decline in support for the Iraq War took place within the context of a tactically

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[177] Pew Research Center for the People and the Press & Council on Foreign Relations, *Early October 2002 Election Study*: *Americans Thinking About Iraq But Focused On The Economy. October 10, 2002.,12*
[178] United States Congress: 107th Congress (2001 - 2002). *H.J.RES.114: Authorization for Use of Military Force against Iraq Resolution of 2002* http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi bin/bdquery/z?d107:HJ00114:@@@L&summ2=m&. September 16, 2002
[179] Gallup Polling Organization. *Was the Iraq War a Mistake?* http://www.gallup.com/poll/1633/iraq.aspx April, 2008.

successful counterinsurgency waged by the United States in Iraq which clearly showed that the United States was making tangible progress towards achieving the initial strategic objectives set forth by President Bush at the outset of the conflict. Such a situation implies that images, perceptions (both real and imagined), played a role in shaping American public opinion and influencing and congressional support for the Iraq War despite the progress made by American soldiers in counterinsurgency operations designed to achieve the strategic objectives of the United States in Iraq. This case study will attempt to provide an understanding of the dynamics which created negative perceptions of America's tactically successful counterinsurgency operations in the Iraq War and how these images undermined public and political support for achieving the strategic objectives set forth at the beginning of the Iraq War.

In areas such as An-Bar Province, Ninewa Province, and later Baghdad, the United States made significant strides towards training the Iraqi Security Forces, decreasing violence, eliminating Al-Qaeda in Iraq and conducting democratic elections. Successful (and effective) counterinsurgency operations designed to create security, economic growth, public infrastructure, healthcare and education systems were all inherently positive tactical accomplishments from counterinsurgency operations conducted throughout the course of the Iraq War. Positive images of quelling violence, training police, building schools and holding free and fair elections are not the images which ultimately influenced American perceptions of the Iraq War. Instead, images of enhanced interrogation techniques like water boarding, the prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib, trigger happy defense contractors and President Bush's pre-emptive "Mission Accomplished" speech aboard the *USS Abraham Lincoln* have endured. These images,

and the nature in which they played a role in diminishing public and political support for continuing the Iraq War, ultimately played a significant role in electing anti-Iraq War Senator Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election. Obama campaigned against the Iraq War and favored withdrawing American troops from the country in order to focus on the ongoing war in Afghanistan. By 2011, Obama's policies were consummated and the last American combat troops returned home from Iraq.

In both the Philippine War of 1898 and in the Vietnam War, American military commanders' literally crafted and implemented counterinsurgency based strategies on the fly. In both of these wars, military regulars were not thoroughly trained nor schooled in the intricacies of conducting counterinsurgency warfare. Yet in each case American soldiers improvised counterinsurgency tactics that were successful in achieving tactical objectives throughout the course of each war. Despite the fact that the US military had institutional experience and had successful employed counterinsurgency operations during the Vietnam War, the military establishment wanted nothing more than to wash its hands of the practice. This Pentagon made the strategic decision to promote generals favorable to conventional methods of warfare after Vietnam. This had the effect of wiping out the institutional memory of counterinsurgency warfare from the Armed Forces altogether. After failing to pacify the Vietcong Insurgency, policymakers and military leaders shifted their focus to the conventional threats posed by the Soviet Union. Since the Soviets postured and trained its military to fight conventional wars, it was only natural that the United States would continue to follow suit as the Cold War progressed. This meant that American military training programs, research and development projects

and contingency planning maintained its focus on finding better ways to employ conventional methods of warfare.

As a result of this strategic choice, thoughts of engaging in large-scale counterinsurgency operations abroad were given little consideration throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In 2000, George W. Bush argued in debates with Vice President Al Gore that if elected to the presidency he would not engage in nation building projects abroad.[180] At the dawn of the 21st Century, it appeared that the military was no longer concerned about counterinsurgency warfare. This would prove to be problematic as the United States would eventually find itself fighting a war in Iraq where conventional methods of warfare proved to be ineffective in achieving the tactical and strategic objectives in the war. If the United States wanted to quell sectarian strife endemic throughout the country in the aftermath of the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime, it would have to adapt to the circumstances on the ground which required a new strategy and form of warfare to be employed if the United States wanted to accomplish the tactical and strategic objectives it set forth in the beginning of the Iraq War.

Despite warnings from some quarters of the political spectrum, policymakers in the Bush Administration did not feel compelled to prepare the military to prepare for and fight anything other than a purely conventional war to destroy Saddam Hussein's Army and Republican Guard. After destroying Saddam Hussein's military was defeated in a swift and decisive campaign, President Bush and his closest military advisors believed the war in Iraq would soon end. President Bush went so far as to address the world from an aircraft carrier under a banner that read *Mission Accomplished*. This event was a major

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[180] Bush, George W., Gore, Al. *The Second Gore-Bush Presidential Debate of the 2000 Presidential Election*. Wake Forest University. Winston Salem, NC. http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-11-2000-debate-transcript. 2000.

turning point in the Iraq War. It marked the end of a conventional war which the United States was trained to fight and subsequently won in a swift and decisive campaign. It also marked the beginning of another war the United States military was not prepared to fight; a guerilla war against insurgent groups hell-bent on displacing the United States as the governing authority in Iraq.

Instead of being greeted as liberators as Vice President Cheney famously proclaimed on *Meet the Press* on March 16, 2003,[181] American troops were greeted with overt hostility in Iraq by Sunni, Shiite and the Al Qaeda militants that gravitated to the conflict to claim political power for themselves. An unforeseen spike in conflict in the post-Saddam era shocked American military leaders. The Pentagon brass was in denial that a guerilla war between multiple insurgencies was taking root in Iraq. These views were reflected by General Tommy Franks who noted on July 10, 2003 that: "Guerilla and insurgency operations are supported by the people, and I've demonstrated to my own satisfaction that the people of Iraq do not support the violence that we're seeing right now."[182]

Sunni and Shiite militias saw the post-Saddam power vacuum as a chance to vanquish their ethnic rivals and the United States military quickly found itself in between a sectarian struggle that had been bottled up under Saddam Hussein. At first, the United States chose to adopt conventional tactics to quell the violence. Historians, such as Matthew Flynn, argue that the belief that conventional tactics could be employed to quell

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[181] Cheney, Vice President Richard. *Transcript: Meet the Press.*
https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/cheneymeetthepress.htm. Washington, D.C. March 16, 2003
[182] Hammes, Col. Thomas X. *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century*. St. Paul, MN. Zenith Press. 2004., 173.

a sectarian struggle between opposing insurgencies was based on a false understanding of how insurgencies can be effectively pacified:

> An examination of history reveals that conventional military force alone seldom if ever defeats an insurgency. Yet history is replete with examples of great military powers trying to do just this-that is, use conventional military force to defeat an insurgency.[183]

One lesson that the United States should have learned from Vietnam was that conventional warfare could not be used to effectively pacify an insurgency. In Vietnam, aerial bombing campaigns and search and destroy missions only strengthened the resolve of Vietcong insurgents instead of crushing their will to fight. In Vietnam, the United States refused to abandon conventional tactics until it was too late to win the war. This was partly due to the fact that American military commanders, such as General William Westmoreland, were trained exclusively in conducting conventional warfare style operations and had the utmost confidence in employing conventional methods to beat their enemies. Historian Adam Joyce notes this observation: "For decades, since at least 1976, the institution (Army) had formally resisted involvement in asymmetric conflicts, defining its central mission as defeating conventional enemies on the field of battle."[184]

In order for the United States to pacify the growing insurgency in Iraq, they had to kill, capture or co-opt the insurgents by separating them from local population, establishing governing institutions, train police forces, earn the trust of the civilian population, and provide a higher quality of living than could be offer under the rule of the insurgents seeking to exert their political authority. Early efforts by American military commanders in Iraq made these goals difficult to accomplish. Like their predecessors in

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[183]Flynn, Matthew J. *Contesting History: The Bush Counterinsurgency Legacy in Iraq*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger Security International. 2010., 117.
[184] Joyce, *The Micropolitics of the Army You Have*, 181

Vietnam, Lieutenant Commander Ricardo Sanchez, General Raymond Odierno and General John Abizaid chose to adopt heavy-handed wide sweeping search and destroy missions in order to quell insurgent forces.[185] As was seen when such conventional tactics were applied in the beginning of the war, the American military made little headway in pacifying the insurgency.

The failure of conventional military tactics was most clearly evident in *Operation Vigilant Resolve* in the city of Fallujah in al-Anbar Province. After Saddam Hussein was overthrown, the citizens of Fallujah attempted to negotiate a political settlement with the Americans. Tribal leaders in Fallujah wanted to be afforded self-governance over their own affairs. They wanted the Americans to leave their city as soon as possible. This warning implied that the Iraqis would turn against the Americans if they continued to maintain a military presence in the city. According to a Gallup Poll conducted in March and April of 2004, only a third of the Iraqi people believed that America's presence in Iraq was doing more good than harm and 71% of the nearly 3,500 respondents stated that they viewed the U.S.-led coalition as "occupiers" rather than "liberators."[186]

The terms set by tribal elders in Fallujah ran contrary to the governing plans Ambassador Paul Bremer had for post-Saddam Iraq. Bremer wanted to establish a strong central government in Baghdad capable of controlling the entire country. Self-governing political entities be they cities, provinces or regional ethnic enclaves ran contrary to his strategic plans. Bremer's opposition to self-governance enraged tribal leaders in Fallujah whose political support and trust were needed in order to establish civilian rule over the city. In Fallujah, tribal leaders had a great deal of sway over their constituents.

[185] Marston & Malkasian, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, 289
[186] Soriano, Cesar & Komarow, Steven. *Poll: Iraqis Out of Patience*. USA Today. http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2004-04-28-poll-cover_x.htm. March 28, 2004.

Throughout the duration of the Iraq War, political and military leaders in Iraq would soon realize earning their support was essential to defeating al-Qaeda in Iraq and other extremist elements making up the insurgency.

During the spring of 2004, Fallujah was a tinder box ready explode. The spark which started hostilities came when Sunni insurgents brutally killed four Americans defense contractors and dragged their dead bodies through the city streets of Fallujah. The Marines responded by waging an extensive conventional reprisal attack designed to squash the insurgency and assert American authority over the city. The conventional response by the United States had the opposite effect of its stated intention. It was noted that after *Operation Vigilant Resolve,* attacks throughout the country jumped from 200 per week in the first three months of 2004 to over 500 per week in the summer.[187] Conventional tactics designed to pacify the insurgency actually created more hostility and antagonism towards the United States. The ferocity of the insurgency in Fallujah led many Americans back in the United States to call into question the utility of the war effort and raised questions as to whether or not the United States could achieve its strategic objectives in Iraq.

During this time period, two key images from the first Battle of Fallujah played an important role in altering American perceptions of the Iraq War. The first image was the site of four dead American defense contractors being dragged through the streets of Fallujah. This ghastly image sent a message to the American public that the Iraqis didn't see the Americans as liberators and implied America's nation building efforts designed to bring democracy to Iraq were neither welcomed nor appreciated. The second image which molded American perceptions of the Iraq War from this time period came from

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[187] Marston & Malkasian, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare* 292.

leaked pictures of American soldiers abusing inmates at the Abu-Ghraib detention facility. Rick Rowley argues that the appalling images from Abu-Ghraib prison played a major role in turning the Fallujans against the American presence and directly led to the uptick in violence experienced shortly thereafter:

Fallujah boiled with anger. The marines were reentering the city at the same time that stories of prisoner abuse and torture at Abu-Ghraib prison had begun to circulate in the press. Thousands of Fallujans had sons, brothers, and fathers in American detention centers and were humiliated and outraged at the treatment their families were subjected to. Rocket and mortar attacks, roadside bombs, and ambushes became daily occurrences for the marines.[188]

Americans were beginning to turn against the war in greater numbers. Political activists such as Cindy Sheehan emerged to protest the war. The anti-war movement was largely successful in prodding Democrats such as John Kerry, Joe Biden and Hillary Clinton, who had supported the war initially, to turn against the conflict. It was noted by Rachel Kleinfield that by 2006: "over thirty thousand Iraqis had died in what had become a communal conflict, Iranian-funded proxy war against America."[189] Many Americans believed violence was spinning out of control and images of Americans killed or wounded in combat reinforced these views with visual evidence. This had the impact of convincing Americans that coalition forces could not achieve the strategic objectives set forth by the United States in the beginning of the war.

Throughout the entirety of Iraq, coalition forces were met with hostility, especially in al-Anbar Province. Between September 2003 and September 2004 the 1st Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Division suffered 500 casualties in an attempt to pacify

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[188] Gurman, Hannah. *Hearts and Minds: A People's History of Counterinsurgency*. The New Press. New York & London. 2013.,143

[189] Kleinfeld, Rachel. *Petraeus the Progressive: The Surge in Iraq is a success, and we must claim it as our own.* http://democracyjournal.org. Winter 2009. 108.

the insurgency in al-Anbar Province's capitol city of Ramadi.[190] A post-mortem of the political security situation al-Anbar Province published in September of 2006 by Marine Corps intelligence officer Colonel Peter Devlin raised further questions of America's military and political strategy employed to defeat the insurgency in Iraq. *The Devlin Report* revealed that the Americans were losing the battle for the hearts and minds of the Iraqi populace in al-Anbar Province and that they had proven themselves incapable of preserving security and resolving political differences between Sunni tribal leaders and the Shia led government in Baghdad.[191] The failure of the United States to control the political and security situation had also created a void being filled by al-Qaeda in Iraq:

Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) has become the "dominant organization of influence in al-Anbar Province, surpassing nationalist insurgents, the Iraqi Government, and the MNF (multi-national forces) in its ability to control the day-to-day life of the average Sunni." AQI had become "an integral part of the social fabric of Western Iraq," and the people of Anbar had come to "see it as an inevitable part of daily life and, in some cases, their only hope for protection against a possible ethnic cleansing campaign by the central government.[192]

The failures experienced by the coalition forces to bring peace and stability to Iraq spawned a shift in the tactical approach to fighting the insurgency. Over the course of the next three years, coalition forces executed a robust counterinsurgency campaign in al-Anbar Province which ultimately ended with the expulsion of al-Qaeda in Iraq, a decrease in violence and new political and economic opportunities for the civilian population. Understanding the dynamics the counterinsurgency campaign al-Anbar Province provides one with a better understanding as to how tactically   successful

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[190] Fitzsimmons, Michael. *Governance, Identity, and Counterinsurgency: Evidence from Ramadi to Tal Afar*. Strategic Studies Institute. Washington.D.C.2013., 25
[191] Linzer, Dafna & Ricks, Thomas E., *Anbar Picture Grows Clearer, and Bleaker* http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/27/AR2006112701287.html. November 28, 2006.
[192] Russell, James A. *Innovation, Transformation, and War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa, Iraq, 2005-2007*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Security Studies, 2011., 54

counterinsurgency operations, making strides towards achieving popular strategic objectives, can exist within the context of a war viewed negatively by large swaths of the American public and their like-minded allies in Congress.

With the insurgency growing in al-Anbar Province, American soldiers on the ground shifted tactics to adjust to the new dynamics on the ground. At this time, military commanders began to take seriously the idea of employing a sustained counterinsurgency strategy to change the political and security dynamic on the ground. Between August 2005 and July 2006, the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team stationed in Mosul and Tal Afar in Ninewa Province improvised an effective counterinsurgency scheme to restore stability and security. In early 2004, violence was rampant in Mosul with nearly 150 insurgent attacks per week.[193] Coalition forces reacted to their task at hand by first sealing off the porous border with Syria which had served as an avenue for al-Qaeda to funnel in weapons, supplies and foreign fighters into Iraq. They employed the brilliance of Special Forces units to apply their cultural knowledge, foreign language expertise and diplomatic skills to extract intelligence on the insurgency from the local population. They did this by setting up telephone hotlines where information on the insurgents could be transmitted confidentially.

Receiving greater amounts of intelligence from the civilian population was a direct result of the public relations campaign the Americans waged in order to explain to the civilian population why their presence was preferable to that of al-Qaeda. Coalition forces invested a great deal of their efforts in training the Iraqi Army and police forces. Placing the Iraqi's in control of their own security was a prerequisite for achieving

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[193] Hulsander, Lieutenant Colonel Robert, *The Operations of Task Force Freedom in Mosul, Iraq: A Best Practice in Joint Operations*. Joint Center for Operational Analysis Journal, JFCOM, Norfolk, VA. September 2007.

America's strategic objectives in Iraq. Without being able to protect their own country from threats both foreign and domestic, a free and stable self-governing Iraq would cease to exist. Such efforts bore fruit shortly after their commencement. Significant progress was made towards quelling violence in Ninewa Province and transitioning power back to the Iraqi people during this time. In September of 2004, there were nearly 300 mortar attacks in Mosul. By the time coalition forces withdrew in 2006, that number had plummeted to 6 per month.[194]

Coalition forces improvised a brilliant campaign to change Iraqi perceptions of their presence in the country. They operated television shows, radio programs and distributed leaflets explaining the purpose of their presence in Mosul and the scope of their mission. Coalition forces backed promises made to the citizens of Ninewa Province by creating the Ninewa Reconstruction and Development Management Cell. This outfit rebuilt aging public infrastructure and spurred economic growth by utilizing the expertise of the Army Corps of Engineers in order to rebuild Mosul's dam, airport and government run companies.[195] Schools, roads, sanitation programs, public parks were also constructed. These counterinsurgency tactics were successful. They were but one facet of a new approach to fighting the Iraq War which relied less on heavy-handed conventional methods of warfare and more on counterinsurgency tactics better suited to achieving America's strategic objectives in Iraq.

Success in counterinsurgency operations in regional areas such as Ninewa and al-Anbar provinces occurred in the absence of a centralized counterinsurgency strategy from top leaders in the Pentagon. When the United States began military operations in Iraq   in

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[194] Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War*., 146-147
[195] Ibid., 167

2003, Austin Long of the National Defense Research Institute pointed out that current version of the Army Field Manual being utilized in the field provided few specific details on how to conduct an effective counterinsurgency operation.[196] Despite Robert Komer's efforts to craft a viable counterinsurgency doctrine during the Vietnam War, his efforts were effectively forgotten by the military establishment in the years thereafter. Such views were reinforced by contemporary scholars such as James A. Russell, an Associate Professor in the Department of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School:

> Despite the pressure on (General) Casey, however, no school solution materialized a la Vietnam that allowed systemic biases at senior levels to impose themselves on commanders leading engaged forces. Ironically, the lack of a school solution can be explained partly by the lack of a doctrinally approved joint approach to fighting an insurgency before 2006, when the Army and Marine Corps jointly released a draft of FM-324 *Counterinsurgency*.[197]

When Army Field Manual 3-07.22 was published in 2004 it correctly observed that the overwhelming use of firepower by the United States caused the civilian population to join forces with the insurgents and disengage from any sort of diplomatic efforts to reconcile with American forces on the ground.[198] In order for the United States to achieve its strategic objectives in Iraq, a military doctrine was needed which could effectively guide the military's behavior throughout Iraq. During a time period when American military strategists were busy drafting a new joint-military counterinsurgency doctrine at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, a chorus of counterinsurgency proponents outside of the military coalesced around the employment of such a strategy.

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[196] Long, Austin G., & Rosenau, William. *The Phoenix Program and Contemporary Counterinsurgency. Santa Monica*, CA: RAND, 2009.,20-21.
[197] Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War*, 7
[198] Long, Austin G., and William Rosenau. *The Phoenix Program and Contemporary Counterinsurgency*. 20.

The movement for a new approach to the war came from a diverse assortment of academics, military historians and think-tank scholars. Academics, such as Tufts Professor Greg Mills, argued that in order to change course in Iraq the United States needed to adopt a successful counterinsurgency strategy that could effectively build a civilian governing system based on an effective intelligence gathering system predicated on learning the nuances of Iraqi culture.[199] After these conditions were met, he argued, an atmosphere would be created that would allow the United States to work alongside the native Iraqis in rebuild their society.

A watershed moment towards the implementation of a counterinsurgency strategy came after a group of Army and Marine Corps scholars drafted *The Counterinsurgency Field Manual* in 2006.[200] One of the scholars playing a major role in drafting the Counterinsurgency Field Manual was General David Petraeus. General Petraeus came to prominence when President Bush appointed him to serve as the head of coalition forces in Iraq. He became the face of counterinsurgency in Iraq and received most of the public accolades for the results of the counterinsurgency campaigns which took place prior to, during and after his tenure as head of the coalition forces in Iraq.

Upon taking command, General Petraeus immediately went to work on reducing acts of violence prevalent throughout much of Iraq. In order to stop Iraq from falling into a state of civil war, Petraeus oversaw the creation of an Iraqi Police Force within the Multi-National Security Transition Command.[201] By September 2007, the Multinational

[199] Mills, Greg. *Better with the UN? Searching for peace and governance in Iraq*. (Global Insights). v10 i3 p281 (8). Lynne Rienner Publishers. July-Sept 2004., 2
[200] Ucko, David H. The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009., 103
[201] Mockaitis, Thomas R. *Iraq and the Challenge of Counterinsurgency*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2008., 137.

Transition Command had trained over 160,000 individuals at a price of nearly $19 billion dollars.[202] Petraeus dealt with challenging scenarios in the management of the Iraqi Security Forces. Cases of desertion and even treason were prevalent amongst the ranks of the Iraqi Security Forces throughout the conflict. Despite these challenges, General Petraeus effectively oversaw a campaign which led to noticeable decreases in violence throughout Iraq. This development was indisputable and was even acknowledged by critics of counterinsurgency such as Michael A. Cohen: "There is little question that civilian casualties in Iraq declined in the latter end of 2007 and 2008. And U.S. military doctrine (at least nominally) did shift in the direction of outreach toward the Iraqi population."[203]

Understanding how coalition forces effectively accomplished a reduction in violence is contingent upon understanding counterinsurgency warfare itself. During General Petraeus's 2007 confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, he argued that a successful counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq would only come about through the establishment of regional and federal political institutions that could effectively disperse oil revenues, develop the economy, establish the rule of law and provide basic public services for its citizens.[204] Petraeus believed that these goals could be accomplished. The United States had the resources and manpower to accomplish to wage a counterinsurgency campaign. It was noted by astute military observers such as Colonel Thomas X. Hammes that as early as 2004, the coalition forces

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[202] Ibid, 134

[203] Cohen, Michael. A*., The Myth of a Kinder, Gentler War*. World Policy Journal. 27, no. 1: 75-86. 2010.,82

[204] Petraeus, David H., Transcript: General Petraeus on the Way Ahead in Iraq. Opening statement before a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on his nomination to be the commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq. Military Review. ProQuest Political Science. Mar/Apr 2007,3.

in Iraq had the ability and the institutional resources to rebuild the Iraqi economy and deliver public services such as sanitation, water and power.[205]

General Petraeus was able to effectively change the previous conventional strategy by utilizing the vast resources that were at his disposal in an efficient and effective way. He engaged in diplomacy with former insurgents and would even broker agreements with militiamen and tribal sheiks that had fought against the Americans earlier in the war. In exchange for their loyalty, Iraqis promised to help the United States expel Al Qaeda from Iraq. Al-Qaeda had brought nothing but death and destruction to Iraq since they funneled into the country after the deposition of Saddam Hussein. Tribal leaders were more than happy to broker agreements with the Americans in return for cash bribes and promises of political power.[206] Turning tribal leaders and the local population against al-Qaeda became known as the "Anbar Awakening". Despite its controversial nature, the deal brokered by coalition forces was tremendously effective in quelling violence and establishing civilian rule of law in Iraq.

The lynchpin which allowed for the United States to achieve tactical success in its employment of counterinsurgency in Iraq was the creation of its intelligence gathering apparatus. C.E. Caldwell once famously stated that: "In no class of warfare is a well-organized and well-served intelligence department more essential than in that against guerillas."[207] His writings in the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* show that General Petraeus was well aware of the value of good intelligence. His approach to intelligence gathering was premised on the creation of a bottom up network that would serve as an

[205] Hammes ,Thomas, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century*, 185.

[206] Hasian, Marouf. *U.S. Military Perceptions of Victories in Iraq, the "Long War" against Terrorism, and the Enduring Rhetorical Power of the 2006 Counterinsurgency Manual*." Western Journal of Communication 74, no. 5.: 570-87.2010., 582.

[207] Joes, Anthony James. *Resisting rebellion: the history and politics of counterinsurgency*. Lexington, Ky.: Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky.2004.,145.

effective bridge between the local populace and the military.[208] To meet this challenge, Petraeus created the Human Terrain System (HTS). HTS brought social scientists and soldiers together in an effort to create a more effective intelligence gathering system that could achieve the goal of bridging the gap between the local populace and the military.[209] The effectiveness of the deployed Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) was noted by a Brigade Commander of the 56th Stryker Force:

> If someone told me they were taking my HTT (Human Terrain Team), I'd have a platoon of infantry to stop them. . . . The HTT has absolutely contributed to our operational mission. Some things we've looked at—solving problems in a lethal manner—we've changed to nonlethal options on the basis of the HTT information.[210]

HTTs played a critical role as the cultural intermediary between the Iraqi people and the US military. HTTs helped to explain the cultural nuances of the Iraqi people to soldiers on the ground responsible for learning who the power brokers were in the areas where they were trying to pacify the insurgents. Altogether, the decline in violence seen throughout Iraq would not have been possible without the Human Terrain System.

To some, the American experience with counterinsurgency in Iraq was a success. General Petraeus earned accolades from all corners of the political world for his implementation of an effective counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq. Republican Senator John McCain lavishly praised Petraeus upon his retirement from the CIA stating that he would: "Stand in the ranks of America's greatest military heroes. His inspirational

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[208] US Army & Marine Corps, *FM-324 Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, 117
[209] Besteman, Catherine Lowe, and Committee Network of Concerned Anthropologists. Steering. *The Counter-Counterinsurgency Manual; or, Notes on Demilitarizing American Society. Counter-Counterinsurgency* Manual. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2009.,2
[210] Montgomery McFate and Steve Fondacaro. *Reflections on the Human Terrain System During the First 4 Years* .Prism 2 Volume 4. Pg. 2file:///C:/Users/LukoffL/Downloads/Prism_63-82_McFate-Fondacaro-libre.pdf

leadership and his genius were directly responsible – after years of failure – for the success of the surge in Iraq."[211]

Likewise, Sen. Hillary Clinton, an opponent of *The Surge,* complimented Petraeus by calling him: "an extraordinary leader and a wonderful advocate for our military," shortly after the effective implementation of his counterinsurgency strategy in 2008.[212]

Despite accolades given from many corners of the political world, some analysts are still highly critical of the legacy of America's experience with counterinsurgency operations in Iraq. Austin Long is quick to point out that expelling al-Qaeda in Iraq from areas such as Al-Anbar Province happened independent of the doctrinal change from conventional to counterinsurgency warfare.[213] Critics of counterinsurgency, such as Michael A. Cohen, argue that the United States sanitized the military doctrine of counterinsurgency and hid its brutal nature under the guise of benevolence.[214] Voices in the media were also highly critical of the Iraq War and the utility of the war effort in which the counterinsurgency campaign was implemented. An article in Mexico's paper *La Journada* published in November of 2007 stated that: "the grotesque cultural mask of counterinsurgent anthropology does not change the brutal nature of an imperialist occupation."[215] While critics are quick to point out the flaws of counterinsurgency operations in Iraq, from my perspective, they fail to understand that the successful implementation of counterinsurgency in Iraq was the most effective way of bringing stability to the country at the time. Otherwise, Iraq would have turned immediately into a

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[211] McCain, John. *Statement on the Resignation of David Petraeus.*
http://www.mccain.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressOffice.PressReleases&ContentRecord_i
d=e7033065-f381-1d8b-ce33-4d59feb11bcd. Washington D.C. November 9, 2012.
[212] Healey, Patrick. *Clinton Praises Petraeus.* New York Times.
http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/03/19/clinton-praises-petraeus/. . March 19, 2008.
[213] Long & Rosenau, *The Phoenix Program and Contemporary Counterinsurgency*, 26.
[214] Cohen, Michael A., *The Myth of a Kinder, Gentler War*, 76.
[215] Besteman, *The Counter-Counterinsurgency Manual*, 101.

failed state with large swaths of the country falling under the control of extremist groups like al-Qaeda in Iraq. The tactically successful counterinsurgency operations in Iraq filled the political power vacuum by setting up governing institutions for the Iraqi's to settle their own fate. If counterinsurgency operations had not succeeded in achieving this goal, many more thousands of civilians would have inevitably died if a full-scale sectarian civil war broke out in Iraq in the aftermath of the deposition of Saddam Hussein.

The Iraq War was an event that forged a permanent impression on the American psyche that will last for generations to come. Political imagery of Vice President Cheney claiming that American troops would be "greeted as liberators" are oftentimes coupled with those of President George W. Bush in a flight suit declaring premature victory under a "Mission Accomplished" banner. Images of combat in Iraq are most typically personified in photos of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib or grisly depictions of American defense contractors violating the laws of warfare by indiscriminately killing civilians. However, the lasting images that will likely be replicated in history books of the future will be those of the faces of the nearly 190,000 casualties incurred by all parties in the war as well as the $2.2 trillion dollars spent by the United States to achieve its strategic objectives in Iraq.[216]

Few Americans (other than perhaps the soldiers who served in Iraq) conjure up images of The Counterinsurgency Field Manual and its defining impact on the tactical military turnaround that took place during *The Surge*. Nor do they remember images of soldiers working with Iraqi civilians in an effort to jumpstart the Iraqi economy and rebuild the schools, roads, bridges, sanitation facilities and hospitals destroyed in the war.

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[216] Brown University. *Costs of War Project. Iraq War: 190,000 lives, $2.2 trillion.* https://news.brown.edu/articles/2013/03/warcosts March 14, 2013.

The metrics of success in America's employment of counterinsurgency operations in Iraq will likely become statistics for military analysts and historians rather than long term benefits to American Foreign Policy or signs of increased regional clout for the United States in the Middle East. Regime instability endemic throughout much of the Middle East (as well as in modern day Iraq) Even the most powerful images that would justify the Iraq War from the perspective of the Bush Administration (purple stamped thumbs on Iraqi's voting in their first free and democratic election) will fail to endure the times of time as the defining moments of America's experience in Iraq.

The Iraq War will undoubtedly go down as a tragedy in the minds of many Americans. Still, there may be a silver lining to the dreary picture oftentimes portrayed by the war's harshest critics. The Iraq War proved decisively that the United States cannot employ conventional tactics and methods of warfare to win a military conflict against an insurgency. Conventional tactics such as the practice of search and destroy missions or massive aerial bombing raids did not accomplish the end goal of winning over the hearts and minds of the Iraqi civilian population needed to defeat al-Qaeda in Iraq and other extremist elements in the insurgency. America's employment of tactically successful counterinsurgency operations in Iraq proved that a military power can reduce violence, rebuild a nation torn apart by war and earn the support of the local population to establish a political regime suitable to the population's needs.

Chapter IX Conclusion

The three case studies that I have described show that the doctrine of counterinsurgency has been successful in its implementation in three separate wars throughout American history. In each conflict in some way shape or form, the United States employed counterinsurgency strategies in order to accomplish the following goals:

1) To root out enemy insurgents.
2) To build a successful intelligence gathering system capable of understanding imminent threats from insurgent forces within the native populace.
3) To create a civilian governing structure capable of managing economic development programs and public services that promote general welfare.

4) To earn the respect of the native populace in order to effectively carry out the strategic objectives of the United States in the region.

Despite the successful implementation of counterinsurgency strategies in each conflict studied, there was one trend that I noticed that came up in my research over and over again. For over a century, the United States military establishment has strongly favored the use of conventional warfare over counterinsurgency. A reluctance to embrace counterinsurgency warfare, and permanently incorporate its teachings into doctrine, training programs and integrate its leaders into positions of power in the military hierarchy, effectively caused the doctrine to become forgotten after each war. It was surprising to learn that after tactically successful counterinsurgency campaigns in the Philippines and in portions of Vietnam, the United States military establishment became even more adverse to the idea of employing counterinsurgency. Even after its successful implementation in Iraq, counterinsurgency critics still feel that the military is foolish to employ it.

From my study, I have concluded that despite tactical success, the media molded public perceptions of counterinsurgency warfare by focusing their collective efforts on bringing attention to images of atrocities rather than accomplishments of the tactically successful counterinsurgency operations performed by the military. It seemed as if the more success counterinsurgency methods had on the tactical level, the more controversial the doctrine became. Successful counterinsurgency operations such as the campaign to pacify the First Luzon District in the Philippine War, the Phoenix Program in Vietnam and *The Surge* in Iraq weren't able to rally the American public around to supporting a war at the levels they had when the United States chose to support the war deemed to be vital to the national interests of the United States.

Despite its failure to achieve widespread recognition within the American military establishment throughout the 20th Century, counterinsurgency made a comeback in the Iraq War with its successful employment in Iraq. The creation of the *Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual FM-324*, and its subsequent implementation in Iraq, renewed interest in a doctrine long ignored by the military, political and academic communities in the United States in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

For resuscitating the art of counterinsurgency warfare, General Petraeus is perhaps the most important figure in the history of American counterinsurgency operations. Without his tactically successful implementation of counterinsurgency in *The Surge*, it is likely that counterinsurgency methods would not have been used in subsequent wars, as it was shortly thereafter in the Afghanistan War. The successful implementation of counterinsurgency in Iraq spawned a renewed focus on the doctrine. Academics, military strategists, journalists and historians are now publishing a plethora of books, journal articles and policy papers on the subject. This state of existence will ensure that counterinsurgency teachings will become widespread within the ranks of the American military establishment for years to come. For the time being, the American military establishment has finally learned that conventional methods are not the most effective ways to address every armed conflict, especially in the 21st Century where no military can compare in size and strength to that of the United States. The military would be wise to never forget this lesson if it hopes to avoid the failures of the past.

Ultimately, tactical success in counterinsurgency cannot alone determine victory in war. The United States needs to be keenly aware of how its actions are perceived by the American public. Public perceptions of war ultimately shape the outcome of the

conflict. As we saw in the Philippines, Vietnam and Iraq, when images of atrocities and war crimes (both real and imagined) came to light in the media, the once overwhelming public support for war steadily declined. In each case study the idea of employing counterinsurgency warfare to defeat violent insurgencies deemed to be a threat to American national interests was condoned by large swaths of the electorate and their elected representatives in Washington. It was only after a grisly image of American behavior in war was forged in the minds of the American public and their political leaders in Washington that critics of counterinsurgency warfare gained the upper-hand and obtained an ability to paint tactically successful counterinsurgency military operations, making strides towards achieving initially popular strategic objectives, as being unworthy military endeavors worth ending altogether.

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