Chapter 5

Contributions from the Military Counterinsurgency Literature for the Prevention of Terrorism

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Military establishments have learned that insurgency and terrorism are part of a broader political struggle with the population as center of gravity. Therefore, the military's vast experience contains important lessons for dealing with terrorists in Western states. A key difference between counter insurgency (COIN) and counterterrorism operations is that insurgents rely on support of the populations whilst terrorists are individuals or isolated groups or cells without broad public support. The difference is that COIN requires a 'hearts and minds' campaign, whilst counterterrorism requires search and arrest or destroy tactics without causing too much trouble for the population. As the 'hearts and minds' campaign is a prerequisite for gaining the support of the population, this is an essential activity to prevail in a political struggle. It requires responsible leaders to abstain from harsh rhetoric stigmatization of sectors of society vulnerable to terrorist appeals and refraining from contributing to the polarization between majority and minority groups in society. Political leaders ought to respect group identities and grievances, and should take socio-economic measures to take away (some of) the grievances. At the same time, they should be aware that jihadists and other militants will try to deprive the population from a sense of security. As most insurgents and terrorists will make a cost-benefit calculus, they can be deterred. Thus, increasing the costs of action by the deterring side is important. The party which deters should hold something at risks which the adversary values. Deterrence by denial is relatively simple; deterrence by punishment is more difficult; here the analytical literature can cite only few successes. Deterrence can be a form of prevention in counterterrorism.

After the end of the Cold War, Counter Insurgency (COIN) operations and counterterrorism operations became the main focus of some of the armed forces of the West. With the threat of large-scale conventional and nuclear war seemingly belonging to the past, major Western powers prepared to fight "wars of choice" in distant places against insurgents, using unconventional war fighting tactics, exploiting weaknesses of the adversary.

Rebel forces seek to break the ties between the incumbent regime and the population. To achieve this goal, they apply asymmetric warfare tactics such as "hit-and-run" attacks and acts of urban terrorism. Western armed forces soon discovered that they were not prepared for this kind of warfare. Reaching back to the overseas battles France and Great Britain fought in their colonies in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, and using the lessons learned from the Vietnam war and other traumatic experiences, the military started drafting new COIN doctrines for dealing with complex contingencies. Military leaders relearned how to fight wars against insurgents, albeit with mixed success.

The first part of this chapter provides an overview of the making of contemporary military COIN doctrine.[1] As COIN is population centric, COIN doctrine may provide important lessons for any situation where authorities fight terrorists which have roots in sizeable segments of society, as is the case with jihadists. To the knowledge of this author, little research has been done on the application of COIN doctrines to domestic counterterrorism operations.

The second part of this chapter deals with deterrence and prevention and seeks to apply the lessons and principles learned by some Western countries which were affected by terrorist attacks. It is argued that deterrence is firmly embedded in modern COIN doctrine and that such a doctrine can provide important clues and offer "lessons learned" for counterterrorism operations in, and by, Western states.

It is important to remember that COIN was designed for *dealing* with an insurgency, *not* for *preventing* it. From a military perspective, prevention requires *deterrence*. Thomas Schelling defined deterrence as "persuading a potential enemy that he should in his own interest avoid certain courses of activities."[2] This requires persuading an actor that the costs of taking action outweigh the possible benefits. A cost-benefit calculus is at the heart of any deterrence strategy. This presupposes, however, that terrorists, like states, are rational actors.

Military Doctrine

Doctrine differs from strategy. Strategy is defined as a set of ideas implemented by military organizations to pursue desired goals. The Oxford Dictionary defines strategy in non-military terms as a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim. Strategy is considered to be the single most important factor for success. Without a clear strategy and a doctrine, any military operation is likely to fail.

Without a strategy, political, and consequently military, objectives cannot be defined and without doctrine the military does not know how to employ armed forces under its command. Doctrine spells out the fundamental principles that guide military forces as they pursue national security objectives. Many of its principles are rooted in the past and have been adapted over time to meet new needs. Without a sound doctrine and a correct strategy armed forces cannot be effective. The same holds true for national counter terrorist agencies and the units under their command. To be effective, they also need the right doctrine and the right strategy.

The military of the United States makes a clear distinction between COIN and counterterrorism. The US Army's Joint Publication 3-24 (2009, updated in 2018) deals with counterinsurgency operations (COIN doctrine), whilst Joint Publication 3-26 (2014) addresses counterterrorism (counterterrorism doctrine). The doctrine defines insurgency as the organized used of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region. This doctrine views insurgency as a form of intrastate conflict and COIN as a method to counter it.[3] counterterrorism doctrine defines terrorism as the unlawful use of violence or the threat of

violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political. Furthermore, the manual considers terrorism as a tool of irregular warfare while counterterrorism activities and operations are taken to neutralize terrorists, their organizations and networks.[4]

Most American doctrines are coextensive with the doctrines of other NATO member states. However, while NATO published an Allied Joint Publication on counterinsurgency (NATO counterterrorism doctrine AJP 3.4.4) in July 2016, it lacks a dedicated counterterrorism doctrine.

There two schools of thought on COIN and counterterrorism. The first school of thought believes that terrorists are clearly identifiable individuals and small groups or cells that are not supported by large parts of the population. Terrorists without deep roots in society - such as Anders Breivik, who was responsible for the Oslo and Utøya attacks (Norway, 2011), Brenton Tarrant, who killed 51 people in the Christchurch mosque attacks (New Zeeland, 2019) and other right wing extremists - may enjoy some sympathy among right-wing fringes within society, but lack broader public support. Doctrine explains how those individuals or cells should be neutralized when separated from the population. The F3EAD process is the heart of contemporary US counterterrorism doctrine. F3EAD stands for find, fix, finish, exploit, analyze and disseminate. This process explains how a counterterrorism operation is to be planned and executed. It is aimed at analyzing the situation and spot terrorists through intelligence (find); establish the location (fix); capturing or killing them (finish); questioning and screening those present at the target site and collect material on the site (exploit); and place this information (analyze) into the greater body of knowledge about terrorist organizations (disseminate).[5]

The second school of thought sees counterterrorism as part of counterinsurgency operations. Whereas counterterrorism doctrine sees terrorists as clearly identifiable individuals, cells or groups that can be identified and hunted down, COIN is focusing more on their environment - a population centric approach. COIN doctrine considers terrorists as being a part of a broader social movement. COIN doctrine explains how insurgents are embedded in society and how they try to find legitimacy from deeply rooted socio-economic and political grievances in society. In this school of thought, insurgencies are viewed as protracted politico-military struggles aimed at undermining the legitimacy of a government or an occupying power.[6] As a consequence, the operational method of COIN usually takes the form of "shape, clear, hold, build." Shape sets the conditions for the operation by either reassuring the population or by deterring and dissuading it; clear aims to remove or eliminate guerrilla forces from an assigned area; hold requires the friendly forces to secure the population and eliminate remaining fighters; build is aimed at restoring services and civil control, providing support to the rebuilding of infrastructure and economic development.[7]

The distinction between the two approaches goes back to the 1970s when terrorist groups, such as the Red Brigades in Italy and the Red Army Faction (RAF) in the German Federal Republic, were considered isolated cells lacking broad public appeal and support. The supporters of this school of thought argue that terrorist organizations cannot be disrupted through COIN-techniques and, conversely, that insurgents are resilient to counterterrorism-techniques.[8] As these are two models of conflict, the main argument is that insurgents and terrorists cannot be confronted with a one-size-fits-all approach. However, COIN and counterterrorism can to be mutually reinforcing. When insurgents are separated from the populace, they can be hunted down by units using counterterrorism-techniques.

Some theorists argue that a "neo-classical framework" underpins COIN doctrine. COIN doctrine has, as mentioned above, its roots in colonial and Cold War era insurgencies. As Matthew Cancian has argued, the COIN doctrine "frames insurgency as a contest between insurgents and governments over an undecided population, a contest whose outcome is principally determined by the relative capability of each side to govern people."[9] Consequently,

the struggle for the "hearts and minds" defines the outcome. Winning the "hearts and minds" should deny terrorists from achieving their political objectives. A successful "hearts and minds" campaign can also contribute to deterrence.

Unsurprisingly, American COIN doctrine mentions the lack of state capacity as an important reason for lack of popular support. This will have detrimental effects in revolutionary wars where the grievances articulated by rebel leaders are shared by larger segments of the population often independent of their particular religion, beliefs or loyalties. However, this is not necessarily the case in ethnic or tribal conflicts where the government is often seen as illegitimate. The strengthening of the state from the outside can then be seen as a violent act which runs against the interests of a particular minority group. In a federally organized state such as Iraq, the Kurdish minority will not accept a strengthening of the federal government at the expense of its relative autonomy. This raises the question whether COIN is applicable for ethnic or tribal conflict as well.

Where a distinction between insurgency and terrorism cannot be made, the difference between COIN and counterterrorism becomes blurred. The Taliban movement's campaign of violence in Afghanistan clearly is an insurgency. It is part of a broader Pashtun movement and deeply rooted in a large segment of the population. Its struggle is politically motivated and its strategic objectives are clear: remove the illegal occupying force from Afghanistan's soil and topple what they consider an illegitimate government. In achieving its objectives, Taliban insurgents fight an unconventional or irregular war that includes terrorist tactics.

What about terrorist organizations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda? They also fight against regimes they consider illegal. Both ISIS and Al Qaeda enjoy support among parts of the populations in the Muslim world. After the US intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, Al-Qaeda fled to the tribal areas in western Pakistan where it was hiding among sympathetic tribes. In Iraq and Syria, ISIS was initially supported by local Sunni tribes and anti-regime groups. In Europe, small parts of local immigrant diaspora populations support Muslim extremist and terrorists as well. In the case of religiously inspired terrorism, the distinction between terrorist groups and insurgency quickly became blurred. But the same could also be said about Catholic separatists in Northern Ireland or Basque nationalists in Spain. There is considerable sympathy and support among the population for terrorist organizations such as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Al-Qaeda and various separatist movements. The same holds true for their sympathizers in Western diasporas. Regarding Al-Qaeda, the American polling organization Pew concluded in 2013 that

> "a median of 57% across the 11 Muslim publics surveyed holds an unfavorable view of Al Qaeda. This includes strong majorities of Muslims in Lebanon (96%), Jordan (81%), Turkey (73%), and Egypt (69%). More than half of Muslims in Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia, Indonesia, and the Palestinian territories also view Al Qaeda negatively. In Pakistan and Malaysia, Muslim views of Al Qaeda are on balance unfavorable, but many offer no opinion."[10]

With hundreds of millions of Muslims living in these countries, those not holding unfavourable views still amount to tens of millions of people. For this reason, Al Qaeda might believe that it could still win the battle for "hearts and minds".

For ISIS, support was generally less. This is partly the result of the many atrocities perpetuated by the self-proclaimed Islamic State. The Doha-based Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies found that 85% of Arabs hold, to varying degrees, negative views of ISIS. This compares to only 11% of the Arab public whose views towards the group were either "Positive" or "Positive to some extent."[11] Nevertheless, the remaining 11 percent translates into millions of people which could serve as a sanctuary or support base.

The objective of both ISIS and Al Qaeda is a worldwide insurgency against "corrupt" leaders in the Islamic world and the withdrawal of Western support for them. The Doha Report revealed that important reasons for backing ISIS include its willingness to challenge the West and its opposition to Iran and the Syrian and Iraqi regimes. In other words, despite negative views about its methods, the objectives of ISIS have the sympathy of a sizable minority of Arabic populations. Winning more support looked, for a while, not like an impossible task as long the Islamic State had control over a large territory straddling Syria and Iraq.

In May 2019, a video was released showing ISIS leaders Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announcing wider geographical ambitions following the territorial losses in Syria and Iraq. Allegiance for ISIS has already been given by jihadists in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and other parts of the Islamic world. This continued loyalty demonstrates that despite the defeat of the Islamic "State" in the Middle East, the brand still possesses great attraction beyond the Arab region. ISIS's apocalyptic ideology and sectarian attacks on unbelievers such as Shiites and Christians did not disappear with the end of ISIS's "formal state." At the same time, the survival of its ideology and the organization of a worldwide network of franchises and cells mark the failure of the US-led coalition to destroy the organization. Even with the defeat of its "Islamic State" in Syria and Iraq, ISIS is not a small group of dedicated, clearly identifiable terrorists, but a broad-based terrorist organization with roots in the Sunni *ummah* around the world. To underscore its new strategy, ISIS claimed responsibility for the Easter bombings in Sri Lanka in 2019, which killed more than 320 people. ISIS claimed the bombers in Sri Lanka targeted citizens of the US-led coalition fighting ISIS and referred to Easter as an "infidel holiday."[12]

The conceptual challenge is whether the defeat of ISIS and Al Qaeda requires COIN or counterterrorism tactics or a combination of both. As has been argued above, a distinction is made between an insurgency and isolated terrorism. Isolated terrorists are lone wolfs or isolated cells and small groups. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to consider "terrorists" as derailed individuals while ignoring the fact that those individual terrorists or small terrorist groups may reflect grievances among larger parts of the population. In such cases, even an "isolated" terrorist may gain considerable support from a sympathetic segment of the populace.

In cases of foreign intervention, this ideological and operational support base may even grow bigger if the intervening force is considered an adversary. The support base of isolated terrorists in the West may also grow stronger if interventions, e.g. in the Islamic world, are considered hostile actions. This is one of the contributing factors for jihadism in the West. Consequently, the distinction between insurgency and terrorism is by no means always clear. Insurgency and terrorism are both political struggles for which the position of the population is crucial. How COIN and counterterrorism works out on the population has always been considered key to the success of any operation against insurgents and terrorists. If policy makers in the West can agree that terrorists indeed reflect deeper grievances among the population, COIN doctrine might provide some very important lessons for counterterrorism operations. Without the acknowledgment that a clear distinction between jihadists and insurgents cannot be made, a counterterrorism operation is likely to be based on the wrong strategy. Therefore, COIN and counterterrorism doctrine provide important lessons for combatting terrorism also in the West.

Another question is whether insurgents and terrorists will be deterred by the prospect of foreign intervention. Effective deterrence will require effective COIN and counterterrorism operations. However, in this regard, the track record of Western powers is bad. At the same time, the negative experience with foreign interventions can provide important Lessons Learned for domestic counterterrorism.

Not the Right War

Why is combatting insurgencies so difficult? One explanation is that the armed forces of liberal democracies have been traditionally trained and equipped for conventional interstate wars. The main preoccupation is relatively static defenses with large units, i.e. divisions and army corps. Those units with their focus on heavy firepower, technology, maneuverability and a state adversary with similar capabilities are inadequate for COIN operations.

After the end of the Cold War Western armed forces were deployed in complex contingencies, defined as "internal conflicts with large-scale displacements of people, mass famine, and fragile or failing economic, political, and social institutions."[13] Years of conflict and persecution, often fueled by selfish motives of political entrepreneurs, could cause a breakdown of government and chronic insecurity. Violent eruptions usually follow deliberate efforts of determined leaders in response to corruption, discrimination, economic failure, mal-administration, repression and poor economic conditions.

Complex contingencies tend to unfold in less developed parts of the world. Only very rarely do these involve regular armies on both sides. More often than not, regular forces on one side fight guerrilla forces, terrorists, and armed civilians on the other.[14] In those circumstances, low-intensity war will replace high-intensity interstate warfare almost completely, because opponents are likely to fight in an asymmetrical way.[15] However, "low-intensity" can be misleading. It suggests a low level of violence and limited numbers of casualties. But even in low-intensity conflicts, thousands, sometimes even million of civilians, can and have been displaced with many of them dying from hunger, diseases and cold.

Actually, this is nothing new. In 1898, in *Lockhart's Advance Through Tirah,* Captain L.J. Shadwell wrote about "savage warfare", also known as colonial or non-European warfare "that differed from that of civilized people."[16] Many areas in the world have not changed much since Shadwell's description:

> "A frontier tribesman can live for days on the grain he carries with him, and other savages on a few dates; consequently, no necessity exists for them to cover a line of communications. So nimble of foot, too, are they in their grass shoes, and so conversant with every goat-track in their mountains that they can retreat in any direction. This extraordinary mobility enables them to attack from any direction quite unexpectedly, and to disperse and disappear as rapidly as they came. For this reason, the rear of a European force is as much exposed to attack as its front or flanks."

For example, in Afghanistan, the biggest change was that army boots and Nike sport shoes replaced Shadwell's grass shoes. Local fighters of the Taliban and al-Qaeda generally possess only a limited number of advanced weapons, such as Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, which were acquired during the 1980s when the U.S. considered the mujahedeen to be freedom fighters who deserved support in their struggle against the Soviet occupation. Today's basic weapons platform is the Toyota pick-up truck, which carries fighters armed with guns; in mountainous regions horses and mules are still an important mode of transportation. The main innovation is the use of the Internet, cell phones and satellite communication for command-and-control purposes and social media for both winning the "hearts and minds" of sectors of the Muslim world and for deterring adversaries. The appalling videos of beheadings and other atrocities broadcasted by ISIS were, inter alia, meant to deter the adversary from entering a war against ISIS.

One might argue that ISIS succeeded to deter a ground war by the US lead coalition. Western leaders had already concluded that public - and consequently political - support would plummet if soldiers were to be butchered in front of video cameras. This was a hard lesson learned during the "battle of Mogadishu" at the end of which several US casualties were

dragged behind cars through the streets of the Somali capital in 1993 by local fighters in front of rolling cameras. This highly publicized incident led to the conclusion by policy-makers in Washington that the operation had failed and that American troops should be withdrawn. Since the "battle of Mogadishu", the preferred tactic of Western forces was the use of air power while conducting ground operations with the help of local proxies. This was the preferred choice during the Kosovo war (1999) as well and remained so in the war against ISIS where Kurdish fighters acted as proxies.

Insurgent Strategies

Revolutionary warfare is an insurgent strategy aimed at removing an "illegitimate government." Mao Zedong provided the first coherent theory of revolutionary struggle, using a mix of unconventional and conventional warfare techniques. He had a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of unconventional warfare. Therefore, his ideas are still important in understanding this kind of warfare. Mao wrote two books about the subject: *Guerrilla Warfare* (1937) and *Strategic Problems in the Anti-Japanese Guerrilla War* (1938) in which he maintained that the struggle is primarily a political one, rather than only military. The notion of a political struggle helps understanding both contemporary counter insurgency operations and domestic counterterrorist operations. Ignoring the political dimension can have serious consequences and lead to the choice of a wrong strategy and doctrine. Mao Zsedong outlined a seven-step strategy that any revolutionary strategy must follow:

1. Arousing and organizing the people;
2. Achieving internal unification politically;
3. Establishing bases;
4. Equipping forces;
5. Recovering national strength;
6. Destroying enemy's national strength;
7. Regaining lost territories.

Subsequently, Mao identified his famous three stages of insurgency:

- The first stage is one of the enemy's strategic offensive and our strategic defensive that would require guerrilla warfare.
- The second stage is one of the enemy's strategic defensive and our preparation of the counter-offensive.
- The third stage is one of our strategic counter-offensive and the enemy's strategic retreat. This would require conventional warfare.[17]

Mao's strategy has been described as *Protracted Popular War.*This strategy was developed to gain control over rural areas where government control was weak or absent. It was based on the assumption that the revolutionary cause would attract an ever-increasing number of supporters. Insurgents would then establish secure base areas, build parallel political and military structures and gradually expand their zones of influence. The strategy involves a mix of terrorism, guerrilla tactics, and political agitation. The political outreach, aimed at poor peasants, was the most important. Good social work was used to gain the support of the willing part of the population. Terror and intimidation was used to "gain support" of the unwilling part of the population. The local population was used for recruitment, logistics, and shelter. In its initial stages, rural insurgencies rely on small bands of men. Usually they carry out small-scale operations in remote areas, engaging in ambushes, sabotage, acts of terrorism, and assassinations. As the movement becomes more successful, its objectives become more ambitious, so that larger formations can be called into existence. The transformation of

irregular guerrilla forces into a regular army is, in Mao's thinking, considered necessary to gain final victory.

This is illustrated by the Maoist insurgency in Nepal and the establishment of the Caliphate in Syria and Iraq. By the end of 2002, Marxist rebels in Nepal were ready to move into the final stage of the insurgency. They launched a strategic offensive, with some 3,000-4,000 regular troops and some 10,000-15,000 men and women organized in local militias. Next to Mao's Chinese Communist insurgency, this is one of the very few examples of a rebel group that managed to transform itself into a conventional armed force. The Nepalese Maoists won the war, not because they were superior in numbers, but because the Royal Nepalese Army was demotivated, lacked combat experience, was short of necessary logistics, and had no effective counterinsurgency strategy based on good intelligence.

ISIS is the most recent major example of a movement following in Mao's military footsteps. ISIS considered the governments of Iraq and Syria as illegitimate and believed that both countries should be part of a newly established Caliphate. However, ISIS's revolutionary struggle failed in the end because the anti-ISIS coalition carried out relentless bombardments on ISIS positions. The ground war was fought by skilled proxies such as the Kurds. Consequently, ISIS was unable to implement the third stage of Mao's revolutionary struggle. The inability to conduct conventional warfare is an important explanation for ISIS's failure.

Mao's strategy is only one of several strategic recipes for insurgencies. For achieving their objectives, insurgents have also turned to the following strategies:

- Conspiratorial strategy: This strategy is designed for an urban environment. Small cells of leaders try to generate uprisings by means of armed action, and attempt to get media coverage. The strategy aims to seize key points and decapitate the governing regime.
- Military strategy: In this strategy, political action is secondary to military action. The assumption is that the population will choose the winning side. The strategy focuses on discrediting the government's security forces. Initially, the insurgents are likely to apply guerrilla warfare techniques with small mobile forces. As the movement is getting more successful and more men are available, conventional warfare techniques may be applied.
- Urban insurgency: This strategy involves applying tactics of organized crime and terrorism in a systematic manner. Insurgents try to disrupt city life through creating terror, ethnic cleansing, assassination of public figures, establishing no-go areas, and mounting attacks on public services. The aim is to undermine the credibility and the morale of authorities. For that reason, demonstrations can also be engineered. Insurgents will seek media coverage to generate panic. Violence is the catalyst for political change, e.g. by forcing a repressive military response that in turn will alienate the masses and move them to revolt. In contrast to the Popular War, the insurgents cannot use the population for recruitment and logistics, but he will use the population as shelter. Again, media coverage is crucial.
- Isolated terrorism: This strategy seeks to undermine society and government through assassinations, kidnappings, hijackings, sabotage, bombings, raids, and attacks on public facilities. This form of terrorism is considered a local or tactical challenge, which should be handled by the internal security forces, the police, and the intelligence communities.

In all cases, the struggle is political with the population at its center. The key challenge is how to get the support of the population. The insurgents' *constructive activities* involve the formation of cadres for training, the creation and development of areas for subversive activities, the organization of alternative police and military units to take over internal and external

security tasks, and the creation of an administrative machinery to raise taxes and replace the government's bureaucracy.

Insurgents will also seek extensive media coverage. First, they can use their own radio and TV stations and the Internet to promote their cause. Both Al-Qaeda and ISIS continue to make extensive use of the media, e.g. by posting videotapes. Second, they try to win the heart of the population. In some cases, insurgents have become popular because they provided a rudimentary welfare system, including health care and education. In the Islamic world, fundamentalist groups seek to develop a social and cultural infrastructure to build an Islamic civil society and fill a vacuum that their countries' governments have failed to fill. During the 1990s in Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian territories, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, radical movements sought to provide health care, education, and welfare for the poor. Radical movements such as Hamas and Al-Qaeda use nongovernmental organizations (NGO) extensively as fronts for such purposes. After the 1992 earthquake in Cairo, organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood were on the streets within hours, whereas the Egyptian government's own relief efforts lagged behind. Bin Laden was popular because of his "good works" in parts of the Islamic world, especially in Sudan and Afghanistan. Quranic study centers have become one of the important sources for recruiting new members for extremist movements. These types of activities have successfully undermined the legitimacy of governments, while gaining the support of segments of the civilian societies.

Destructive activities are usually aimed at undermining the political elite's authority and power base, including the internal security forces, the police, and the armed forces. By creating a climate of insecurity, the population is likely to loose faith in the authorities. Intimidation, sabotage, terrorism, information warfare, and guerrilla attacks are the most likely tactics employed. Insurgents will try to balance their political aims and the means of achieving them. If the means and ends mismatch, insurgents may lose popular support. In 2005, Al-Qaeda's number two, Zawahiri, accused Abu Musab al-Zarqawi Al Qaeda's leaders in the Levant of alienating Iraq's Sunni masses through their brutal campaign of beheadings and bombings. Years later, due to excessive violence, ISIS also lost much of its initial support in the battle for the people's "hearts and minds."

The Foundations of COIN

How to fight insurgents has been a problem for colonial powers for centuries. Great Britain, France and the Netherlands were among the major colonial powers which fought bitter wars against those who considered them as occupying forces. In the 1960s, the US learned similar hard lessons. Yet the Vietnam War (1965-1973) was considered an aberration and the lessons learned were soon forgotten. The disastrous performance of U.S. troops contributed to the neglect of unconventional warfare. As a result, a second, though minor disaster in Somalia (1994) followed. Preoccupation with conventional wars is equally strong in other armies. Soviet forces performed disastrously in Afghanistan (1979-1989).

The same happened to the Netherlands. With the loss of Indonesia in the late 1940s, the Dutch lost not only their experience in waging this type of war, but also their mental acumen for such warfare. Nevertheless, in 2001, when drafting a new field manual on counterinsurgency warfare, the Dutch army staff also consulted the old manuals of General Johannes van Heutz (1851 – 1924). In the Netherlands Indies (present-day Indonesia), van Heutsz had reorganized his conventional ground forces to confront insurgents, creating small units of a dozen men to carry out search-and-destroy operations. No distinction was made between combatants and non-combatants in those operations. The Dutch troops burned down entire villages in order to eliminate fighters' bases. Today, that type of counterinsurgency operations would be categorized as war crimes.

In addition to Van Heutsz's manuals, in drafting the new manual, the Dutch army staff also used the British counterinsurgency manual, which is one the most detailed for this type of warfare. Of the former colonial powers, the British – and to some extent the French - have not given up their colonial military skills and the mindset to carry out counterinsurgency operations. Especially, the counterinsurgencies in the Dhofar province in Oman (1965-1975) and "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland (1969-1998) have given the British first-hand experience. In Dhofar, strategic interests were at stake because Oman's leaders could control the vital oil route of the Strait of Hormuz. The Dhofar campaign was a classical, rural counterinsurgency campaign, while the one in Northern Ireland was a mix of rural and urban fighting. To this day, the most elaborate COIN doctrine remains the one developed by the British military.[18]

An important Lesson Learned has been that unconventional warfare is first of all a method of achieving asymmetry. Asymmetry is a key concept for confronting the adversary *not* on his own terms. It is often the tactic of the weak. At the strategic level, the opponent using asymmetrical tactics exploits the fears of civilian population, thereby undermining the government, compromising its alliances, and affecting its economy. To achieve this, the opponent uses unconventional warfare techniques at the tactical level to change the course of action in order to prevent the opponent from achieving political objectives. The tactics of unconventional warfare include guerrilla ambushes, hit-and-run attacks, sabotage, terrorism, and psychological warfare. Usually, rebels, terrorists and criminals with small, but well-organized forces or militias tend to adopt such tactics.

In unconventional warfare it is only through the physical *control* of an area or *isolation* of the opponent that military objectives can be met. This requires the use of small units. Advanced technology plays a supporting role at best. In conventional warfare, those operating at the strategic level provide the overall direction; those on the operational level are concerned with armies and army corps fighting campaigns; those operating on the tactical level are concerned with divisions and brigades fighting battles; those on the technical level deal with small units and the effects of weapon systems.

In unconventional warfare two levels are most important: the strategic level for overall direction and the technical level for the actual war fighting. The strategic level also deals with political influence operations and diplomatic actions. The operational and tactical levels oversee the operation in the target area and can play a supporting role, e.g. to provide air support for soldiers on the ground. Most importantly, the operational level will oversee the "hearts and minds" campaign, including psychological operations, carried out at the tactical level. Thus, in conventional warfare, doctrine deals with the interaction between the various levels of war. In unconventional warfare, the different levels fight different "battles." The different roles of the levels in conventional and unconventional warfare make it extremely difficult for commanders to conduct both types of operations simultaneously.

In unconventional warfare, skills are important factors for success.[19] Because the skills of Western forces are traditionally limited to a small part of the total war fighting spectrum, the chances of success are limited when facing irregular forces. This demands capabilities in the field of counter-guerrilla warfare, which most Western powers have not been trained for.

As conventional warfare in open terrain is the preferred form of combat for modern Western military forces, insurgents and terrorists seek to avoid open terrain. They prefer to confront the adversary in cities and mountains. This creates a fundamental problem for Western political and military leaders. Military history suggests that it is extremely difficult for modern forces to use their technological advantages in a "complex terrain." Mountains are no-go areas for tanks and armored vehicles. They can only be used to block roads and to provide fire sup-port. The actual fighting requires small units that carry out search-and-destroy missions. Troops hunt down the adversary and neutralize the enemy in close combat. They can call in air

power, but in practice there is a shortage of rewarding targets for bombing, because air power is unlikely to find and destroy small bands of fighters.

As a result of the wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq, a renewed focus on unconventional warfare has emerged as a priority in US military thinking. But only the 2003 version of the U.S. field manual *Operations* described the basic tenets of counterinsurgency operations in detail. The manual stressed that counterinsurgency was essentially a political task aimed at neutralizing the adversary. While there was no indication that the US Army embraced the concept with enthusiasm, the ongoing struggle with insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq forced its leadership to adopt an interim counterinsurgency manual.[20]

Given the poor record in counterinsurgency operations, major powers often seek a solution in fighting wars by proxy. Local fighters usually have a greater understanding of both the terrain and the adversary. Moreover, they are usually highly motivated, because they have an existential cause to fight for. In Mindanao, in the Philippines, US Special Operations Forces conducted joint operations with the Filipinos against the Abu Sayyaf Group, which was suspected of having close links with Al Qaeda. Some 600 US Special Operations Forces formed a joint team with the armed forces of the Philippines.

However, local fighters can be unreliable, because they might consider outside powers as a means to achieve their own ends. This happened during Operation Allied Force, when the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) considered NATO as its own air force. The KLA was convinced that NATO would support its cause, i.e. an independent Kosovo. If there is a mismatch between expectations and real interests, local fighters may turn against the intervener. For this reason, Western armed forces may at times have no other choice than to fight unconventional wars themselves.

Later, in Iraq and Syria, the Americans fought again proxy wars against ISIS. Kurds fought the ground war while the US-led coalition provided intelligence and air power. An important reason for proxy wars is the aversion for causing casualties among friendly state allies and the fear of committing war crimes or major collateral damage. However, breaches of the laws of war are an inherent risk of all COIN or counterterrorism operations.

There are two techniques for direct action to physically control an area: attrition or brute force. Straightforward attrition is based on absolute repression and destruction of the adversary. Firepower is the key to success. Mobility is primarily used to maneuver firepower into favorable positions. Relentless bombings and attacks with heavy weapons systems such as tanks and artillery and the systematic destruction of buildings by bulldozing or demolition are common techniques. The advantage is that it can be done with limited friendly losses; the disadvantage is the high level of destruction. The Russians leveled Grozny during the first Chechen War; in 1988 Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against Kurds in Halabja ; in 2002, Israeli forces destroyed parts of Jenin in an attempt to stop suicide attacks on Israel's soil; in 2004 the American military destroyed much of Fallujah in an attempt to crush the Iraqi insurgency. The US-led coalition came close to attrition during the battle of Mosul (2016 – 2017) to clear the city of thousands of ISIS fighters. Iraqi government forces and the Kurds carried out the ground operations while the US-led coalition forces provided logistical and air support, intelligence, and advice.[21]

Unsurprisingly, in all of these cases, military leaders were accused of barbarism and war crimes. In Mosul, the most widely covered incident was a March 17, 2017, coalition air strike on homes in the Jadidia neighborhood whereby at least 105 civilians were killed. A report by the NGO Airwars concluded that the "urban battles show a close correlation between intensity of munitions use and population density, and negative outcomes for civilians" and that the US-led coalition was responsible for civilian death tolls "not seen since Vietnam" in the fight against ISIS.[22]

In all of the conflicts just mentioned the intervener was in the end unable to win the "hearts and minds" of the population. Attrition is an inappropriate strategy for liberal democracies.

Moreover, the record of success for an "attrition only" strategy is generally poor. Insurgents will flee the city, regroup and continue the fight. Once more, ISIS is a case in point. After having lost the "Caliphate," its leader, al-Baghdadi, announce a new phase in the struggle against unbelievers and illegitimate regimes, based on IS franchises and sympathizers all over the world.[23] Nevertheless, armies trained and organized for conventional warfare may consider attrition as a tactic of last resort as was the case in the fight against ISIS. This, however, runs the risk of further strengthening the remaining fighters' resolve. Moreover, heavy civilian casualties will increase hatred among the population and turn people against the intervening force or against local authorities held responsible.

Maneuver

A counterinsurgency campaign is maneuver warfare in its most basic form. The Iraqi government forces and the Kurds in Mosul practiced this type of operation. Direct action to gain control over an area involved cutting off logistics (isolation), engaging in cordoning and search-and-destroy operations. A well-tested approach in combating insurgents is the *inside out* method of expanding secured areas. The aim is to consolidate areas. First, a bridgehead inside the area is established. Second, friendly and local loyal forces are used to secure the surrounding area in order to release regular mobile troops to secure the next area. Securing adjacent areas can be done with specialized troops, such as air-mobile and air-maneuverable troops as well as Special Operations Forces. Combating insurgents usually requires deploying small patrols into the terrain that insurgents consider their own. Surprise, speed and simultaneous actions are used to overwhelm the adversary, bringing about a collapse of will and ultimately helping to create conditions for a political solution. Nevertheless, force should be applied in a selective and controlled manner. Limiting collateral damage is extremely important in order to spare the lives of non-combatants.

Typical operations are *search and destroy*, and *cordon and search*. Both operations are difficult to execute. First, the search part is usually a lengthy affair. Second, cordon operations are difficult because closing a cordon quickly and effectively is nearly impossible. Maneuver warfare theory assumes that shattering the adversary's moral and physical cohesion is more effective than achieving his destruction. Consequently, the strategy focuses on people and ideas rather than military victory.

Therefore, minimal use of force works best, because the insurgents will attempt to demonize intervening forces or local authorities when these use excessive force. In addition, intense media coverage could also undermine the effectiveness of the operations in the case of excessive force use. Media coverage can also undermine support for the operation if there is a widespread feeling that international law is not being obeyed or injustice is done. In other words, excessive force runs the risk of losing the support of the people.

Operations in urban areas pose the greatest challenge for modern armed forces. As Ralph Peters put it: "The future of warfare lies in the streets, high-rise buildings, industrial parks, and the sprawl of houses, and shelters that form the broken cities of the world."[24] In most parts of the world, but particularly in Europe, urban and industrial areas continue to grow in number and size. More than half of the world's population lives in cities. Almost 70 percent will be living in urban areas by 2050.[25] The biggest cities already have populations in excess of 30 million.

Consequently, most political and social unrest is likely to occur in urban areas. Urban warfare can be extraordinarily destructive, especially if a strategy of attrition is applied. Fighting in urban environments also places many restrictions on allied operational commanders, as they are responsible for protecting civilians and their property. Indeed, one of the most notable differences with open terrain is the great number of non-combatants in the combat zone. Thus, limiting collateral damage is crucial. Yet at the same time, limiting

collateral damage is extremely difficult, because urban warfare usually requires cordon operations, followed by systematic house-to-house search-and-destroy operations. Fighting in cities requires small groups of dismounted soldiers engaging in close combat. The rifle and the machine gun are the most common weapon in urban warfare.

As the liberation of Mosul from ISIS has demonstrated, close air support with fixed-wing aircraft in an urban environment is challenging. Targets are difficult to locate and identify, and enemy and friendly forces tend to be be intermingled. Furthermore, low-flying aircrafts are vulnerable to shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles and even to rocket-propelled grenades. Aircraft and drones will be useful for surveillance and reconnaissance, communication and liaison tasks, the insertion of special forces and troop lifts as well as for psychological operations (dropping leaflets, broadcasting from airborne radio and TV stations), close air support, and interdiction.

Small-scale urban operations   involve traditional *policing operations* to prevent the outbreak of violence. Raids can have different objectives, for example evacuating nationals, rescuing hostages, or seizing key facilities such as airfields. The key to success is surprise and the use of overwhelming force. The insertion and extraction of forces is the hardest part in such operations. Good intelligence is the key to success.

Instead of conducting a direct assault on a city, the attacker should first establish a loose cordon around the city and control the surrounding countryside. This was the first phase of the US-led siege of Baghdad in 2003.American troops blocked all avenues, controlled the airfields in and around the capital, took control of the sources of electrical power, water, and food, and carried out air strikes against leadership targets in the city. This technique was also applied after the withdrawal from Fallujah, Iraq, in March 2004.

But to take a city, units have to enter it. There are three different tactical concepts for large scale urban operations.

- Urban penetration: This tactic is designed to quickly maneuver to the target area and establish control in a dispersed and non-contiguous area.
- Urban thrust: This tactic is focused on achieving an assault against the adversary on a narrow axis of attack. As this attack is occurring, the axis of advance is defended in order to hold the flank against potential enemy attacks.
- Urban swamp: This is similar to the tactic used by police forces responding to an emergency that requires backup. The concept requires numerous small teams operating in a dispersed, non-contiguous fashion.

Of crucial importance is the "hearts and minds" campaign, which seeks to win the support of the population, accompanied by psychological as well as information operations. The objective is to separate enemy fighters from their base. Such an effort, often combining several approaches, including humanitarian aid and propaganda, must be made in parallel with diplomatic measures and military operations. From 1985 until 2000, Israel carried out a counterinsurgency campaign in Southern Lebanon, while at the same time providing assistance to the Lebanese population, including projects to rebuild the infrastructure and programs to provide health care. In Afghanistan, during Operation Enduring Freedom, food was used as a weapon. C-17 air lifters dropped tens of thousands of packets of food and medical supplies in Afghanistan in 2001. Each package contained the message that it was a gift from the people of the United States of America. In addition to food rations, U.S. aircraft dropped leaflets and small transistor radios to enable Afghans to receive Washington's message. It was part of a dual strategy of diminishing the Taliban regime's hold over the population and gain popular support.

Planning an Operation

The planning of a counterinsurgency operation, requires first an analysis of the type of conflict, its implications, and the method to stop, neutralize or reverse actions of the opponent. To achieve the desired end state, clear political objectives must be defined. During the campaign, civilian political authorities will keep overall responsibility, while delegating implementation to military authorities. The way to rein in rebels, terrorists, and gangs is to separate them from their bases, either physically or politically. This is done by denying them information, logistics, recruits, funding, safe havens, and popular support through physical separation and "hearts and minds" campaigns aimed at winning the support of the local populace. The latter is important because the strategic center of gravity is the support of the mass of the population. Consequently, in contrast to conventional warfare, unconventional warfare seeks to avoid attacking the center of gravity. Military victories will therefore never be sudden and spectacular. Rather, victory will be achieved by a sequence of small successes.

The aim of COIN is to secure the population and to neutralize the insurgents. This requires the commander to pursue four military objectives that contribute to the successful attainment of political goals:

1. secure the population;
2. isolate the insurgents from their support;
3. neutralize the insurgents' subversive strategy and armed organization; and
4. support other organizations in planning to create unity of effort.[26]

The objective is to deny insurgents and terrorists from achieving their political objectives and neutralizing them and their support systems with limited force while at the same time winning the support of the population. This is a universally valid approach that can be utilized both in open war zones and in densely populated urban war zones.

Lessons Learned

During the United States's involvement in Iraq, urban warfare turned out to be the main challenge. The battle for Fallujah demonstrated what could go wrong. Operation Vigilant Resolve was an unsuccessful attempt by the U.S. military to capture the city of Fallujah. Unable to control the situation, on the night of 4 April 2004, American forces launched a major attack to "re-establish security in Fallujah."[27] In the opening days of the siege approximately a third of the population fled the city. Hospitals had to close and fighting broke out in large parts of central Iraq. On 9 April 2004, the U.S announced a ceasefire and called for negotiations between the Iraqi Governing Council, insurgents and city spokespersons. For the American troops the siege was a disaster because the use of "brute force" backfired poltically. American forces only managed to gain a foothold in the industrial district to the south of the city, but on 1 May 2004, American troops withdrew.

Operation Al-Fajr was the second American attempt to take Fallujah. The battle involved the heaviest urban fight since the Battle of Huế City in Vietnam in 1968. Some 13,500 US, Iraqi and British troops were deployed outside the city. Some 3,000 – 4,000 insurgents who prepared spider holes, dug tunnels and trenches, built a large number of IED and booby-trapped buildings and vehicles, in defence of the city. By 13 November 2004, most of the fighting had ended, but sporadic fighting against pockets of resistance continued until 23 December. Operation Al-Fajr demonstrated that (short-term) military success in conquering a city is possible with brute force and search and destroy operations.

The second Lesson Learned was that after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein indigenous security forces and leaders could still play a crucial role. Prompted by Shiite and Kurdish leaders, the American president of the Coalition Provisional Authority, Paul Bremer, decided

to dissolve the official Iraqi armed forces and start a program of de-Ba'athification. As the entire Iraqi security apparatus and bureaucracy (mostly Sunnis) were dismantled, the responsibility for Iraq's security was left entirely in the hands of the coalition forces. Sunni Arabs who are a demographic minority in Iraq believed that these measures were attempts to impose domination over them. This was a powerful incentive to start the insurgency.

The third Lesson Learned was that early planning for conflict termination by the stabilization and reconstruction forces of a country is a prerequisite for success.[28] In Iraq the decision not to plan for a stabilization and reconstruction phase was based on the wrong idea that Iraq could pay for the reconstruction through its oil revenues. During the counter insurgency phase, stabilization and reconstruction measures were supposed to be used to win the support of the people. However, the American occupation force did not anticipate an insurgency when it invaded Iraq. Consequently, deployed forces were unprepared for the full-fledged insurgency that followed soon after the overthrow of the regime. The poor execution of operation Iraqi Freedom left the U.S. military with no other choice than to develop a new counter-insurgency doctrine. It became known as the "Petraeus Manual."[29]

A final Lesson Learned was that Western templates of state building did not take the dynamics of local conflicts into account. In Iraq, the Americans tried to create a stable, secure, democratic and functioning state. This attempt failed completely. As too few troops were initially deployed, the stabilization operations failed. Reconstruction was difficult if not impossible because of the dissolution of the old security forces and the old bureaucracy. Political power passed from Sunnis to Shiites and these, in turn, were looking to Iran for guidance and support.

Field Manual 3–24

These Lessons Learned provided a context for major doctrinal innovations. In conjunction with a U.S. Marine Corp team, General Petraeus and his staff produced Field Manual (FM) 3–24 on counterinsurgency operations. The new COIN manual drew heavily on the work of classical thinkers, including the experiences of Sir Robert Thomson in Malaysia and the French in Algeria in the 1905s. The French military theorist Galula had written *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* in 1964. It built on Mao Zedong's observation that "revolutionary war is 80 percent political action and only 20 percent military." Contemporary Anglo-Saxon thinkers, such as John A. Nagl and David Kilcullen, were influential as well.[30] Army Lieutenant Colonel Nagl co-authored the new counterinsurgency manual as part of a team overseen by General David Petraeus and led by his old West Point classmate Conrad Crane. Kilcullen was the Chief Strategist in the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the U.S. State Department and later became a counter-insurgency advisor to General Petraeus.

The new Petraeus manual was built around two ideas, which were both drawn from doctrines of European colonial warfare.[31] First of all, was the insight that protecting the population is key to success in any counterinsurgency campaign. At the same time, there is the recognition that insurgents will try to deprive the population of any sense of security. Second, was the insight that to succeed in counterinsurgency, armed forces have to learn and adapt more rapidly to changing circumstances than the enemy. America's new counter-insurgency doctrine dramatically increased the performance of its troops in Iraq. A new clear, hold, and build approach was already showing some results before Petraeus arrived in Iraq, but as a new commander, Petraeus decided to apply it in all Sunni regions. Petraeus called this approach "the Sons of Iraq," which consisted of recruiting, equipping and paying former militiamen for the fight against the local franchise of Al Qaeda. The Sons of Iraq approach spread the "Sunni Awakening" to other Sunni areas where the Americans and local leaders shared the same interests, i.e., the defeat of Al Qaeda.

The new Petraeus manual called for a different mindset and counter intuitive action. The manual observed that the admonition "Sometimes, the More Force Used, the Less Effective It Is" does not apply when the enemy is "coming over the barricades." However, that thought is applicable when increased security is achieved in an area. In short, these paradoxes should not be reduced to a checklist; rather, they should be used with considerable thought.[32] Other insights are "sometimes, the more you protect your force, the less secure you may be" and "the more successful the counterinsurgency is, the less force can be used and the more risk must be accepted."

The original Petraeus manual from 2009 inspired subsequent publications like NATO's *Allied Joint Doctrine for Counterinsurgency* of February 2011 and its update in 2016. The NATO publication introduced the new thinking on counterinsurgency to America's allies. The doctrine emphasized the political nature of the counterinsurgency as well, by defining counterinsurgency as "the set of political, economic, social, military, law enforcement, civil and psychological activities with the aim to defeat insurgency and address any core grievances."[33] This aim can only be achieved by a comprehensive approach to crisis management.[34] The Petraeus manual has been updated again in 2018. Other doctrinal innovations include the Comprehensive Approach and the "whole-of government" approach.[35] The latter integrates the collaborative efforts of US departments and agencies to achieve unity in effort towards a shared goal. The former integrates those efforts with partners, civil society (NGOs) and private sector activities. Both approaches are consistent with population centric operations, which require the harmonized use of economic, diplomatic, political and military instruments. Conceptually, this approach has some relevance for counterterrorism operations at home. As mentioned above, when fighting against individual terrorists or small cells in American or European cities, the use of excessive force might turn (parts of) the population against the authorities, whilst winning the "hearts and minds" requires a "whole of Government approach" for addressing justified grievances.

Unfortunately, doctrinal innovations are no guarantee for success. As the Afghan insurgency turned out to be more complex than the insurgency witnessed in Iraq, the American COIN doctrine developed for Iraq could not be easily transferred to the Afghan conflict theatre. A number of factors explain the failure of COIN in Afghanistan. First, Al Qaeda and the Taliban were intertwined and elusive adversaries. Second, compared to Afghanistan the sectarian and tribal divides were more complex. Because of this, local and allied leaders shared few common interests with the United States and its NATO allies. Consequently, as Fred Kaplan observed: "the problem (…) was that Afghanistan was not susceptible to COIN."[36]

Prevention Through Deterrence

The events that took place during the Battle for Mogadishu in 1993 demonstrated that terrorists and insurgents could deter an intervening force. When no vital interests are at stake, Western powers may choose to stay away from intervening in complex contingencies. Libya is a case in point. In 2011 NATO tried to achieve its objectives with airpower alone. After the fall of the Libyan leader Gaddafi, the country sunk into chaos, and there was no appetite to carry out an intervention with ground forces. France and the United States could have taken responsibility for the country after the regime change, but they did not do so because of the risks involved in fighting insurgents and terrorists.

The choice for air power and the use of proxies indicates that terrorists and insurgents can at times deter certain risky operations. However, there is no evidence that terrorists and insurgents can always deter an intervention. If vital interests are at stake for the intervenor, he is willing to take action and run considerable risks. This happened after the attacks of 9/11. President George W. Bush concluded that the Taliban provided Al Qaeda with a safe haven in

Afghanistan and that this constituted a security risk that could not be left unanswered. Consequently, he initiated *Operation Enduring Freedom*.

Deterrence can only be successful if the adversary believes that he has little or nothing to gain from aggression. If terrorists consider the prospect of fighting against an adversary using superior COIN and counterterrorism tactics so frighting that they refrain from using force at all, then the answer whether deterrence works is positive. However, few scholars and policy makers think that this is actually the case. Robert Trager and Dissislava Zagorcheva argue that the belief that terrorists cannot be deterred rests on the belief that terrorists are fanatics and irrational, are willing to die for what they consider a good cause, and lack instruments for creating counter deterrence.[37] President George W. Bush reflected this view during his 2006 graduation speech at West Point: "Unlike the Soviet Union, the terrorist enemies we face today hide in caves and shadows (…) The terrorists have no borders to protect, or capital to defend. They cannot be deterred – but they will be defeated."[38]

However, Bush's argument is seriously flawed and an underestimation of terrorist leaders. Terrorists are certainly fanatics, but terrorist leaders such as Al Qaeda's Bin Laden and, after his death, Al-Zawahiri, and ISIS-leader al-Baghdadi are not irrational. They run complex international organizations, inspire their followers ideologically and religiously, develop new strategies in response to (partial) defeats, and manage to achieve at least some of their political objectives. As terrorist "Chief Executive Officers," they exploit tribal, ethnic, and religious differences. They define goals, issue orders, and use modern management techniques. Whatever their objective, they motivate their followers to fight for their cause. In the eye of their followers and supporters, they are charismatic leaders fighting for a cause worth dying for. They have much in common with classical revolutionary leaders.

Trager and Zagorcheva argue that "even the most highly motivated terrorists … can be deterred from certain courses of action by holding at risk their political goals, rather than life of liberty." They believe that this is possible for two reasons. Firstly, the relationship between states and non-state terrorists are often not zero-sum games. Secondly, states can influence their political aims. Trager and Zagorcheva believe that holding at risk political objectives is a crucial point.[39] Robert Pape argued that even suicide terrorism can be deterred because they follow a strategic logic, i.e. "to inflict enough pain and threaten enough future pain to overwhelm the target country's interest in resisting the terrorists' demands."[40] This requires classical counter measures such as limiting access to the target area, taking into account resentment with regard to foreign occupation of the terrorist's national homeland, and preventing polarization in the West.

Ron Radlauer argued that punishing the innocent could, in theory, deter suicide bombers.[41] In Israel, destroying the homes of the suicide bombers family is meant to do this. At the same time, Radlauer concludes that this has in practice little effect. As it is unlikely that destroying homes will win the "hearts and minds" of the populace, this comes as no surprise. Gaining physical access to the general target area is the only genuinely demanding part of an operation, and a key part of the motive for suicide terrorism.

Israel is arguably most advanced in its thinking on deterring violent extremist groups. Shumuel Bar considers "intelligence dominance" an important deterrent.[42] This concepts refers to the perception of terrorists that the opposing state has superior intelligence capabilities and consequently the ability to attack them at will. Bar argues that the Israeli authorities have deliberately created the image of an "intelligence superpower."

Mark Vinson argued that "ever since achieving statehood in 1948, deterrence has stood as a pillar of Israel's national defense strategy."[43] Deterrence operations, aimed at keeping political violence on an acceptable level, now form an integral part of Israel's defense planning. Deterrence operations can take the form of "measured retaliation" or "massive retaliation." Both aim to *restore* deterrence or dissuade further escalation. Conceptually, these concepts are similar to the COIN concept of maneuver warfare and attrition or brute force. The main

difference is that the COIN concept is translated into deterrence theory. The distinction between deterring attacks and inter war deterrence is important as well. Intra war deterrence has, in the Israeli context, been defined as the ability to prevent further escalation or de-escalate the conflict and is based on the Israeli experience of periodic wars with its adversaries and the desire to prolong the interwar period as much as possible.

Measured or flexible retaliation seeks to maintain deterrence at the current level and prevent further escalation of the conflict. Massive retaliation seeks to reset deterrence through massive and overwhelming force. Targets are the violent extremist organizations or their proxys. The last massive Israeli response operation was Operation Protective Edge (2014) targeting Hamas in Gaza – an operation which saw more than 2,000 Palestinian deaths and more than 10,000 injured. This has led to accusations that Israel had violated international humanitarian law and international human rights law.[44]

Deterrence theory makes a distinction between two forms of deterrence. *Deterrence by denial* involves denying a group from achieving its political objectives, whilst *deterrence by punishment* involves the (partial) destruction thereof.[45]

Deterrence by denial can take different forms. Some examples are:

- The *hardening* of potential targets, upgrading of border controls, the reinforcement of cockpit doors in passenger aircrafts and tighter border controls are relatively simple and effective means to deter terrorists from attacking objects. Due to excessive safety measures, American embassies are no longer rewarding targets. The same holds true for most US military facilities abroad.
- Following attacks on Christmas markets and other public events in Europe, bolders, roadblocks or even walls have been introduced to deter attacks with trucks. However, some people consider roadblocks as a form of collective punishment, thus weakening its deterrent effect. This happened in Israel where Palestinians see roadblocks and walls as injustice.
- Restricting access to the commodities needed for the manufacturing of biological, chemical and radiological weapons explains the limited number of attempts to carry out attacks with CBRN-weapons. Potential perpetrators find it increasingly difficult to buy sufficient quantities of the required ingredients for bomb-making in shops and from wholesalers.
- Active counter measures, such as Israel's Iron Dome missile-defense system, are designed to counter missile attacks. During the massive attacks by Hamas in early May 2019, the Israel Defense Forces claimed that its antimissile system was 86% effective during a Hamas bombardment of 690 rockets, suggesting that Hamas' tactics had a relatively minor effect.[46]

Statistical data show that deterrence by denial is often effective. Before carrying out an attack, terrorists will make an assessment of the likelihood of success. They will attack soft targets when hard targets cannot be hit. According to the Dutch Intelligence Service (AIVD), this explains why 85 percent of 112 failed and successful attacks in Western countries were aimed at soft targets. Only 8 percent of the attacks were aimed at targets which were to some degree protected, whilst 5 percent of the attacks were aimed at highly protected or hard targets.[47]

Deterrence by punishment is more difficult and will usually involve direct attacks against targets that are of great value for terrorists:

- Attacks on the adversary's bases, command, control, communications (C3) and intelligence systems could affect a group or individual's motivation. Attacking C3 systems could introduce uncertainty.
- C3-attacks and eavesdropping could deter terrorist leaders from using cell phones, satellite communication and computers.

- Pressuring the host population is one form of indirect coercion. But this tactic is at odds with winning the "hearts and minds" of the populace. This tactic was unsuccessful during Israel's confrontations with Hamas and Hezbollah where Israel was sees as an occupying force that violated human rights.[48] In general, disproportional counterterrorism operations can increase the support of the population for a terrorist organization.
- More difficult is targeting patron support. Targeting the sponsoring patron could compel him to refrain from offering assistance to terrorists. This worked for a time well with Hezbollah and Fatah which were dependent on Iran, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority and Syria. It did not affect Hamas which was relatively independent.[49] For national counterterrorism operations this means cutting off extremists from their base by targeting their sponsors – something that can be effective.
- Targeted killing is an extreme form of deterrence by punishment. The same holds true for the destruction of terrorist's facilities as it can diminish individual motivation and influence group behavior. The American drone-attacks on Al Qaeda and Taliban facilities in the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan are examples of this tactic.

Since deterrence by punishment is likely to have a detrimental effect on the population, it carries with it the same kind of disadvantage as the COIN concept of attrition or the use of brute force. For that reason, an interesting new form is *deterrence by de-legitimation*. This form of deterrence seeks to raise "the costs of participating in terrorism by challenging the normative, religious, and socio-political rationales individuals rely upon when participating in violence."[50] It is aimed at the political, ideological and religious rationale of terrorist behavior.

This involves the creation of a credible counter narrative that questions the beliefs and guiding principles of terrorists. As most terrorists do not have deep knowledge of religious and ideological issues, one might expect that some of them are receptive to alternative visions, especially if those visions come from trusted experts. Some jihadi scholars and former practitioners of terrorism have questioned terrorism. For example, the early Al-Qaeda ideologue Sayyid Imam Sharif (better known as Dr Fadl) backtracked in 2007.[51]

Since terrorists will try to innovate their responses, complete deterrence is impossible. Moreover, in contrast to democratic governments, terrorists do not have to play according to the rules. On the contrary, they will make use of the fact that authorities in democracies will have to fight, as it were, with one hand tight on their back, following the rule of law and observing human rights. Bruno S. Frey has argued that deterrence is based on a negative approach: "terrorists are threatened with punishment if they continue their activities. Coercive action is answered by coercive action."[52] This can results in a negative sum game between the parties involved. In contrast to deterrence by denial, escalation is certainly a risk that should be taken into account when considering deterrence by punishment strategies.

COIN Tactics and Parallel Societies

As has been mentioned before, COIN is population-centric, whilst counterterrorism focuses on targeting violent extremists and terrorists. In Europe, few extremists are lone wolves. Most extremists live and radicalize in extremist milieus or hubs.

Can extremists hide in neighborhoods? In major European cities a high degree of segregation of different population groups has been observed. Contact with the indigenous population is least in neighborhoods with large numbers of immigrants and ethnic minorities. Those neighborhoods can become safe havens for jihadists. In those places, jihadist hubs can be established. One report concluded that in Europe, "the formation of hubs often happens around organized structures (militant Salafist groups, radical mosques), charismatic

personalities or, in some cases, tight-knit groups of friends."[53] The report mentions a case of radicalization in the town of Hildesheim, in the German state of Niedersachsen. Seventeen individuals from Hildesheim travelled to the Caliphate of ISIS while others were engaged in militant activities in Germany. Extremists were mobilized by a small group of Salafists organized in the Deutsch-Islamischer Kulturverein (DIK – German Islamic Cultural Association). Gradually, the DIK became a well-known center for like-minded Muslims in Germany.[54] A similar breeding ground could be found in Molenbeek, a suburb of Brussels, Belgium. A police report showed that in this suburb a number of organizations had links with terrorists.[55] Sevran, a Parisian suburb that is home to more than 70 nationalities, is another example. The French Cities Minister, Patrick Kanner, stated that there are "a hundred" French neighborhoods like Molenbeek.[56] In the Netherlands problems concentrate on a limited number of districts in the four biggest cities, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague. Across Europe, a number of neighborhoods have developed into parallel societies with de facto "no go" areas for the police. The fact that these quarters (partly) elude government control allows the strengthening of such parallel societies where terrorists can hide.

Conceptually, COIN tactics can be applied when fighting extremists in parallel societies and no-go areas. To do so, an excellent information position is paramount. Intelligence should enable the authorities to identify cells and individuals. Those individuals should be isolated from their support base. At the same time, the "hearts and minds" of the local populace should be won and counterterrorism operations should refrain from the use of excessive violence as this might only facilitate further radicalization.

Conclusions: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Western Democracies

As mentioned before, sound doctrines and correct strategies are prerequisites for success. The strategy should set the political objectives; the doctrine helps translating those objectives into military action. The same holds true for domestic counterterrorism operations by police forces. Without a clear strategy and clear doctrinal principles, counterterrorism is doomed to fail. The same holds true if counterterrorism lacks superior intelligence capabilities or when a "whole of government" approach is absent.

Military establishments have learned that insurgency and terrorism are part of a broader political struggle with the populace as center of gravity. Consequently, both COIN and counterterrorism doctrine should be population centric. Protecting the population is the key to success in any counterinsurgency campaign. A "hearts and minds" campaign is a prerequisite for gaining the support of the population. This should not be confused with softness. It is an essential activity to prevail in a political struggle. It requires responsible leaders to abstain from harsh rhetoric stigmatization of sectors of society vulnerable to terrorist appeals and refraining to contribute to polarization between maiority and minority groups in society. Political leaders ought to respect groups identities and grievances, and should take socio-economic measures to take away (some of) the grievances. At the same, they should be aware that jihadists and other militants will try to deprive the population from a sense of security.

The US military makes a clear doctrinal distinction between COIN and counterterrorism operations. A key difference between these is that insurgents rely on support of the populations whilst terrorists are individuals or isolated groups or cells without broad public support. The difference is that COIN requires a "hearts and minds" campaign, whilst counterterrorism requires search and arrest or destroy tactics without causing too much trouble for the population. In sum, the nature of the threat will define whether COIN or counterterrorism tactics should be applied.

Another lesson learned is that deterrence can be effective. Most terrorists are rational actors who make cost-benefit calculations. Thus, increasing the costs of action by the deterring side is important. The party which deters should hold something at risk that the adversary values.

Deterrence by denial is relatively simple; deterrence by punishment is more difficult; here the analytical literature can cite only few successes. The only achievement might be Israeli-style "intra war deterrence"or the ability to control escalation or deter excessive violence. Deterrence by punishment will probably have detrimental effects during domestic counterterrorism operations.

In sum, national authorities can draw important lessons from the vast experience of the military with COIN and counterterrorism operations. Unfortunatly, due to cultural differences between the military and civilian national security establishments, there is a natural tendency to ignore those Lessons Learned. An important obstacle is the perception that the military rely too much on the use of force. However, the experience with military COIN and counterterrorism operations reveals that this perception is wrong. This contribution argued that the military are very well aware of the political environment in which COIN and counterterrorism operations take place. They understand that this environment requires a completely different attitude in which the use of force plays a subordinated role. Finally, national counterterrorism efforts will greatly benefit from doctrine development. Like the military, Lessons Learned and conceptual approaches should be captured for improving future counterterrorism operations. If not, valuable knowledge might be lost.

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Appendix: A Checklist of Lessons Learned from Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism Experiences

Military COIN and counterterrorism doctrines gained from operations by major Western powers contain some Lessons Learned which should be taken into consideration for domestic counterterrorism operations as well. Some of these are:

- Major terrorist groups use constructive activities to gain the support of (parts of) the population and engaging in destructive activities to deter and fight the adversary. They tend to use asymmetry tactics to confront the adversary *not* on his own terms. It is a tactic of the weak that can be very effective. Underestimating insurgents and terrorists because friendly troops possess superior firepower and technology is extremely dangerous. Technology plays a supporting role at best.
- Military victories will therefore never be spectacular. Rather, victory will be achieved by a sequence of small successes.
- The planning of any COIN operation requires strategy, based on an analysis of the type of conflict, its implications, and the method to stop, neutralize or reverse actions of the opponent. To achieve the desired end state, clear political objectives must be defined.
- Attrition and deterrence by punishment is based on repression and destruction of the adversary. But in most cases, this will lead to accusations of barbarism and war crimes and abhorrence among the populace.
- Urban warfare can be extraordinarily destructive, especially if a strategy of attrition is applied. Therefore, small-scale urban operations should be given preference, actions involving traditional *policing operations* to prevent and contain the outbreak of violence alongside small scale (covert) counterterrorism operations.
- In unconventional warfare it is only through the physical *control* of an area or the *isolation* of the opponent that military objectives can be met. This requires the use of small units, which ultimately need to occupy terrain on the ground.
- Direct action to gain control over an area involves cutting off logistics (isolation), cordon operations, and search-and-destroy operations. In those cases, minimal use of force works best, because the insurgents seek to demonize intervening force or local authorities' use of excessive force.
- In unconventional warfare two levels are most important: the strategic level for overall direction and the technical level for the actual war fighting. The strategic level should also involve political and diplomatic actions.
- Intelligence and skills are important factors for success.

American, British and NATO manuals broadly agree on a number of principles that should be taken into account when executing COIN operations that could also improve domestic counterterrorism operations:

1. The people:
- Carry out "hearts and minds" activities.
- Provide the conditions for economic, political and social reforms.
- Provide essential services and address the core grievances of the insurgency.
- Protect the local, neutral, and sympathetic parts of the population against insurgents.
- Safeguard key infrastructure.

2. Isolate the insurgents:
- Gain the support of the populace.

- Physically and psychologically separate insurgents from the population.
- Deny the adversary active and passive support.
- Use and train local workers and materials to rebuild and provide a sustainable economic and social system.

3. Neutralize the insurgents:
- Eliminate the ideological, religious and logistical support system of the insurgents, including the prevention of external support from other organizations and countries.
- Cut off the insurgents from (food) supplies and recruits to separate them from the population.
- Eliminate the adversary's intelligence and communication network.
- Carry out direct action against terrorist cells and individuals, their ideological, religious and logistical support with small scale, covert operations and minimum use of force.
- The use of force should be selective and proportionate and should not upset larger parts of the local population.
- Restraint is key. Too much force will only increase the support for terrorists and will make it more difficult to win the "hearts and minds" of the population.
- Deterrence by denial, i.e. influencing the cost – benefit calculus of extremists should play an important role in the overall strategy. Terrorists might dream of catastrophic attacks, but can be deterred from doing so.
- Excessive force might be needed to reset deterrence, but this can only be effective if the terrorist targets experience large-scale violence by violent extremist organizations. In all other cases a flexible, measured response is needed. In case of small cells and individuals the best method is small scale, preferably covert operations.

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