Understanding Irregular Warfare: The Principles of Counterinsurgency

Final Research Paper with Annotated Bibliography

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Introduction

The Chinese revolutionary, Mao Tse-tung, said of war that:

> ‘War is the continuation of politics...’ In this sense, war is politics and war itself is a political action.... When politics develops to a certain stage beyond which it cannot proceed by the usual means, war breaks out to sweep the obstacles from the way.... It can therefore be said that politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed (Mao).

Mao is the undisputed titan of insurrectionary warfare. His writings on the political and military theory of revolution still serve as the definitive distillation of the insurgent form of war. And yet, the conception of war he presents—that of war as the “continuation of politics”—is not original to Mao. He’s quoting the words of Prussian soldier-scholar Carl von Clausewitz, almost a century before.

> War is a mere continuation of politics by other means. We see, therefore, that War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce… the political view is the object, War is the means, and the means must always include the object in our conception (McMaster).

The character of war waged by Clausewitz and that waged by Mao were radically different. Clausewitz lived in an era of “gentlemen’s war,” governed largely by conventional

strategy and maneuver between legitimate opponents. Mao's war was anything but conventional, characterized by guerilla tactics and undeclared opponents fighting, not for territory, but for legitimacy.

At first glance, these two brands of conflict—known as "conventional" and "irregular" war, respectively—could not seem more different from one another. And yet, the fact that Mao, an ardent student of Clausewitz, agrees so thoroughly with the Clausewitzian paradigm, speaks volumes about the nature of Mao's revolutionary warfare.

Clausewitz asserted that war was "a true chameleon." A chameleon may change its color to match its surroundings, but no matter what color it has assumed, it is still fundamentally a chameleon. Likewise, war changes its nature and character according to the circumstances in which it has been waged, but all war is still, ultimately, the expression of some core political struggle (Dubik).

Thus, Mao's insurrectionary warfare may have many unique characteristics that set it apart in character and nature from Clausewitz's "conventional" warfare; however, it is important to remember that these differences are ultimately superficial. Irregular war, like any war, is fundamentally a political conflict. The methods and execution of the conflict may differ, but its fundamental essence remains the same.

When discussing war, it is tempting to get caught up in flashy specifics such as tactics and armaments, forgetting that the outer symptoms of armed conflict are only the outward expression of a political conflict at the core. One must not get lost in the question of *how* a war is waged, without losing sight of the fundamental truth of *why* it is being waged.

With this fundamental truth in mind, this project will endeavor to take a deeper look at the nature and character of the insurgent form of warfare, how it has been waged through history, and the theory that has been formulated to better understand it.

Characteristics of Irregular Warfare and the Roots of Counterinsurgency Theory

United States joint doctrine defines irregular warfare as "a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant populations" (United States, Department of the Army 1-18). The character of an irregular conflict is very different from that of a conventional one. Most often, irregular warfare is fought between a government actor and an insurgency, defined in NATO doctrine as an "an organized, often ideologically motivated group or movement" seeking to "effect political change of a governing authority" (DEEP). Insurgents rarely possess the firepower or capacity to engage openly with state forces, necessitating asymmetrical hit-and-run strikes and guerilla combat. Moreover, the fundamental aim of an irregular conflict is rarely to hold and control territory, as it is in a conventional war—rather, the aim is to achieve political legitimacy. This puts the civilian populace at the center of the conflict in a way that other forms of war do not (Bureau).

The fundamental concepts of insurgency have existed since ancient times, but it is in the 20th century that insurgency blossomed into a form of warfare in its own right. The political turmoil of the decolonization era sparked popular insurrections and revolutionary movements across the globe. Much of the foundational literature on insurgency came from the revolutionary leaders during this period. As insurgencies sprung up, they used a combination of innovative military tactics and socio-political mobilization to topple colonial governments—the colonial empires were the first who sought to better understand these strategies and devise ways to

counter them. Thus, the era of insurgency also saw the beginnings of the era of counterinsurgency.

The modern era of counterinsurgency (frequently shortened in military academia to "COIN") began with a French military officer, David Galula, who rose to prominence during the Algerian War for his effectiveness in countering Algerian rebels in his region. Galula's extensive study of insurgency techniques, such as those outlined by Mao, enabled him to develop an innovative framework for countering them. He became the father of modern counterinsurgency. Galula's techniques served as inspiration for many in the European military elite, and would form the backbone for counterinsurgency doctrine decades later in the United States (Vrooman).

According to Galula, counterinsurgency cannot be effective unless one understands the nature of the insurgency they are facing. He describes four prerequisites for a successful insurgency: (1) an attractive cause, (2) a weak COIN effort, (3) a favorable geographic environment, and (4) outside support in the middle and later stages of an insurgency (Vrooman). Given these advantages, Galula outlines two patterns that the majority of insurgencies follow: the "orthodox" pattern and the "shortcut" pattern. The orthodox pattern starts with the consolidation of the vanguard party, creating a robust and unified political structure to serve as the backbone of the insurgency. After creating a core party the insurgency then moves to guerilla warfare, using political subversion and armed struggle. The purpose of this guerilla struggle is largely to undermine the authority of the government while gaining the participation or complicity of the population (Vrooman).

The shortcut pattern abbreviates the seizure of power process by skipping the creation of a core vanguard, which takes time to forge, in favor of sudden terror attacks, before moving to the guerilla stage. Terror attacks are a quick and easy way to propel the movement to

prominence. They also serve an important secondary purpose, which is alienating the government from the people. Killing high-ranking government officials is ultimately pointless, but the deaths of police chiefs, schoolteachers, post officers, and mayors makes a very real change in the lives of everyday people by cutting them off from government administration. After the terror stage, the shortcut insurgency moves to the guerilla stage, same as the orthodox path (Vrooman).

After the guerilla stage, any successful insurgency will begin a movement campaign. The military power that has been built up till now is used to directly challenge the government in more conventional maneuver warfare, involving the holding and occupying of territory. While the popular conception of insurgency places most emphasis on the guerilla stage, insurgency thinkers like Mao are clear that guerilla warfare is only a means to an end. In order for an insurgency to move decisively to its end goals, it must conduct an effective movement campaign. Galula considers a fundamental goal of a government to be preventing an insurgency from becoming strong enough to transition to this conventional movement stage (Vrooman, Mao). A successful movement warfare stage is followed by a consolidation of power in the annihilation campaign stage.

(Fig. 1: Patterns of insurgent development) (Vrooman)

Many well-known, real-life insurgencies have been observed to follow these patterns of development. While the orthodox pattern was favored by insurgent groups throughout the 20th century—such as Mao's Chinese communists, Fidel Castro's Cuban revolutionaries, and the Shining Path of Peru, to list a few—the militant terror networks of the last few decades have increasingly opted for the shortcut path. The U.S. government's Counterinsurgency Guide, published 2009, writes:

> Many of the more renowned insurgencies of the 20th Century followed the Maoist 'Protracted Warfare' model; being monolithic organizations with a centralized, hierarchical command structure, clearly defined aims and a sequenced approach to achieve them [the orthodox pattern]. However, modern insurgencies are increasingly being recognized as complex matrices of irregular actors with widely differing goals. They often lack a centralized command structure but typically are linked by dynamic, flat networks (often significantly enabled by modern communications systems) [the shortcut

> pattern]. Motivations within this eclectic mix may vary from religious extremism to pure criminality and many groups may not themselves intend to become the governing authority. Often, the only common factor will be a desire to achieve local freedom from control by the government and its international supporters (Bureau).

Based on these patterns of insurgent behavior, Galula outlines several strategies and methods to counter them. The COIN agent, usually a government, starts with many advantages over an insurgency. The main instruments of organic control for the government are: (1) its political structure, (2) the administrative bureaucracy, which runs the country day-to-day, (3) the police, the first level of government interaction with the people and the most effective for maintaining order and security, and (4) the armed forces, who serve as both combatants and as ambassadors of the government among the people (Vrooman).

Galula's COIN frameworks are often summed up into 4 core "laws" of counterinsurgency, as follows.

1. The primary objective of a COIN campaign is to win the support of the population. This support is as essential for the government as it is for the insurgency.
2. Support is best gained through an active minority. As most of the population will naturally be indifferent or neutral, those who actively support COIN efforts should be supported.
3. Support from the population is conditional. Just because support has been gained doesn't mean it can't be lost again, if the government's actions are unpopular.
4. Counterinsurgency requires a massive "intensity of effort and vastness of means." Because of the large concentration of manpower, will, and resources involved in a

> COIN campaign, action cannot be effectively taken everywhere at once, but rather, in targeted areas (Vrooman),

The counterinsurgency theories of Galula and his contemporaries are heavily influential in Western military theory. Almost all of modern COIN theory is founded on the fundamental ideas of Galula. However, his ideas have been further developed over the years, leading to many different schools of thought in counterinsurgency study.

Counterinsurgency Theory

Galula's conception of insurgency is predicated on one important assumption; it takes at face value Mao Tse-Tung's maxim that "the guerrilla must move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea"—that is, the support of the population, especially the rural population, is the primary necessity for the success of an insurgency, and thus all irregular warfare is fundamentally a battle for popular support. In modern COIN literature, this is known as "Hearts and Minds" (or HAM) Theory. The HAM conception upholds the primacy of popular support as the key means for victory, and prescribes that a government should promote economic development and opportunities (especially in rural communities) and show the people that their government is dependable and cares about them (Long).

A competing school of thought is "Cost/Benefit" theory, or "Coercion" Theory. This model largely dismisses the feelings of the population. Cost/Benefit Theory's main tenet is that it is not negative *feelings* that matter, but negative *actions*. Thus, Coercion Theory treats the insurgency as a function, requiring a steady stream of inputs (resources, manpower, etc.) obtained at a reasonable cost (money, time, and difficulty) (Long). Cost/Benefit Theory assumes that the main method for insurgencies to obtain these resources is through persuasion and

coercion of local towns and communities. Cost/Benefit criticizes HAM's calls for increased rural development, and instead holds that any and all development should be a quid pro quo; that is, improvement should be doled out with the intent of exacting something in return, such as cooperation. Cost/Benefit also suggests prioritizing development in urban centers, where the government generally has more control. This theoretically denies the benefits of increased development and prosperity from going to the insurgents. Cost/Benefit emphasizes the importance of achieving short-term stability before long-term development (Long, Hazelton).

In criticizing the development policies of HAM, the Cost/Benefit theorist points to real-world examples such as the Afghan War, where extensive development efforts did not yield expected results. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction wrote after the 2021 withdrawal that:

> As it turned out, the Afghan economy did experience growth over the course of American involvement there—but that growth did not translate into substantial reductions in unemployment or poverty… The projects that aimed to spur economic growth and foster a more secure environment were undermined by the very symptoms of insecurity that they were meant to treat. The constant threat of violence inevitably affected the motivations and confidence of Afghans starting and running businesses, to say nothing of foreign companies considering investment (SIGAR).

A 2011 study from the security advisory firm Orbis Operation corroborated this conclusion, finding that the billions of dollars of investment and development funding in Afghanistan's rural areas did "little to increase popular support for the government, casting doubt on the counterinsurgency and development theories that have inspired this spending (Moyar)." The study, written from a more Cost/Benefit-sympathetic view, criticizes the prioritization of

long-term goals, such as development, over the short-term goal of stabilization. Instead, it recommends ignoring the general favor of the population and focusing on establishing ties with regional leaders, suggesting that aid be doled out on a limited basis only after securing reciprocal action from local elites. The Afghan War can be seen as testament to the ineffectiveness of blind development in winning the "hearts and minds" of the population—in fact, many Afghans themselves write of how villages that received Western development aid instead became targets of suspicion for the Taliban (Ahadi).

Fundamentally, Cost/Benefit Theory views the insurgency as a system. Thus, the dual aim of COIN activity, says Cost/Benefit, should be to raise the cost of inputs to that system (inputs such as money, resources, and recruitment of manpower), and interfere with the outputs of that system (such as the activities of combatants). Whereas HAM views the population as emotional (swayed by their "hearts and minds"), Cost/Benefit treats the population as rational actors, who behave in predictable ways to prioritize their well being—responding logically to incentives, punishments, and persuasion from the competing systems of counterinsurgency and insurgency. Thus, Cost/Benefit prioritizes pragmatic agreements with local leaders for short-term security, rather than earning the trust of the wider populace for long-term development (Long, Hazelton, Moyar).

Cost/Benefit has its critiques as well. A significant criticism of Cost/Benefit theory relates to the phenomenon of ratcheted escalation. Ratcheted escalation is the tendency of both sides in a conflict to naturally escalate their use of force over time, which makes de-escalation increasingly impossible (this resembles the movement of a ratchet, allowing for movement in one way but not the other). Thus, the heavier the use of force and suppression by the government, the stronger the provoked reaction will be from the insurgency. Taking the brutally

pragmatic Cost/Benefit to its logical extreme would suggest that the most effective way to decrease inputs to the insurgent function would be to simply reduce the economic opportunities across the board so drastically that the populace would have no value left for the insurgents to extract (Long). Cost/Benefit theorists defend this, pointing to historical examples such as the Malayan Emergency and the Algerian War as evidence for the success of "a violent process of state building in which elites contest for power, popular interests matter little, and the government benefits from uses of force against civilians (Hazelton)." These brutal methods may have been feasible for the imperialist colonial governments of the 20th century, but in today's world, the ideals of liberal democracy makes such harsh actions unforgivable . Irregular warfare is a battle for legitimacy, and such harsh actions undermine the legitimacy of the COIN actor committing them (Long, Gventer).

A similar HAM critique of Cost/Benefit is the latter's tendency to take the preferences of the population as a given. Cost/Benefit assumes the population to be fundamentally indifferent between the government and the insurgents, and assumes that both the government and insurgents can "purchase" a response from them at a marginal cost of "x." However, HAM theorists argue that the preferences of the population are not necessarily constant. The actions of the government can change the preferences of the population in a way that alters the system entirely. For example: government actions could be taken with the goal of reducing inputs to the insurgent system, such as expropriating crops to prevent their use by insurgents. However, if this provokes the ire of the population, it could shift their preferences to be more sympathetic to the insurgents. This means that in the long term, the "cost" for the insurgency to obtain those resources has actually become cheaper, and the government's actions had the adverse effect of increasing inputs to the insurgent system. This phenomenon of shifting population preferences

highlights a key axiom of irregular warfare; both COIN forces and insurgencies should only use force in a way that does not undermine their political legitimacy (Long).

An example of this effect can be seen in the change of British attitudes towards counterinsurgency between the Boer War (1899-1902) and the Malayan Emergency (1948–1960). In the Boer war, the British correctly identified the need to prevent the wider civilian populace from lending support to the insurgents, but used "socially and economically unacceptable ways" to combat this (Vrooman). These measures included scorched-earth policies against the civilian countryside and resettling Boer civilians into concentration camps—all strategies designed to combat the insurgents' ability to extract resources from the population via reducing the total amount of value available across the board (Doherty). However, between the Boer War and the Malayan Emergency, a shift occurred in British military thinking. While the tactics used in the Boer War were eventually effective, they bred severe contempt from the native population and drew harsh domestic and international criticism. The restrictive measures may have physically manipulated the population, but the "community infrastructure" was not targeted to influence "the attitudes of the public at large (Vrooman)." The British military elite ultimately came to see the Boer War as illustrating the counterproductive effects of excessive force in irregular warfare. In the early 20th century, Britain shifted to a doctrine of "minimum force," prioritizing the importance of maintaining the goodwill and favor of the collective population. The British manual on Imperial Policing, published in 1939, stated that "drastic punitive measures… may awaken sympathy with the revolutionaries (Doherty)." This change reflected itself in how the British conducted the Malayan Emergency, using the same basic principles of population control without the brutal punishments. In the Malayan emergency, disaffected civilian farmers were relocated to "New Villages," well-managed, British-established

settlements. This spatial restriction policy achieved the same goal as the Boer concentration camps in preventing the sympathetic populace from aiding the insurgents, but it was much more effective because it created sticking power by gaining the "hearts and minds" of the populace (Doherty). (This is not to say that the colonial troops in the Malayan Emergency did not utilize punishment tactics; however, it was much rarer, and not encouraged on a doctrinal level).

Perhaps the most fundamental difference between the two schools of thought is differing conceptions of the primary decision-making process for individuals. Do people make decisions based on preferences and emotions, or logical utility maximization? Cost/Benefit follows the latter by assuming the logic of consequence—i.e, individual decision-making is logical and geared toward maximizing favorable outcomes. "What will doing this get me?" Meanwhile, HAM follows the logic of appropriateness—i.e, individuals make decisions largely based on personal identity. "What would someone like me do?" Of course, both HAM and Cost/Benefit are theoretical models only. The reality is complicated, and likely a mix of both. A robust COIN campaign acknowledges that both decision-making processes are at work (Long).

This mixture of both systems is something I wanted to express in my simulation. A big priority for me in building the systems behind my project was to represent elements of both schools of thought, HAM and Cost/Benefit.

Counterinsurgency and the United States

The United States' military attitude in particular has been heavily influenced by Galula's teachings. This influence is apparent in counterinsurgency field manuals and joint doctrine published as far back as the 1980's. However, counterinsurgency theory was not prioritized in U.S. military thought until the mid-2000's, when COIN ideas surged in popularity in light of the

Iraq War. Published around that time was the famous U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual (FM 3-24), which continues to serve as the definitive distillation of modern American COIN doctrine to this day (Vrooman, United States).

As the era of conventional war waned, threats to world security and U.S. interests became increasingly irregular. With the Soviet Union gone, and no other state able to come close to matching the United States' overwhelming conventional military capacity, the U.S. found itself no longer challenged by conventional means, but mired instead in irregular conflicts in far-flung corners of the globe. Newly armed with COIN theory, the U.S. rushed headlong into such conflicts as the Iraq War and the War in Afghanistan—which, with today's hindsight, were largely ill-fated endeavors that ended in either mixed results (Iraq) or failure (Afghanistan). The logical question is: why did these U.S. COIN operations fail?

From a COIN perspective, the voguish brand of counterinsurgency theory in United States defense thinking at the time had many shortcomings.

Fundamentally, counterinsurgency is an exercise in state-building. U.S. military jargon refers to this as "IDAD" (internal defense and development) and "FID" (foreign internal defense). In diving headfirst into irregular conflicts, the U.S. neglected to consider the vast amount of time and resources needed for such an extensive overseas statebuilding operation, and also overlooked inherent contradictions that make COIN especially difficult for external actors like the United States.

Firstly: irregular conflicts tend to last a very long time. The RAND corporation finds that typical insurgencies last for somewhere between 11 and 14 years, and can even drag out for up to 20 years (Jones). External actors like the United States usually can't stay for so long. Not only do

they have to consider the mounting expense of such a commitment, but as the conflict drags on, they will also start to face domestic opposition to the war in their own country (Gventer, Jones).

Secondly: “Most assessments of counterinsurgency operations tend to ignore or downplay the role of indigenous forces and mistakenly focus on how to improve the capabilities of outside forces to directly defeat insurgents” (Gventer). The United States’ interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan fell prey to this trap. U.S. intervention did not do an adequate job of building up the capacity of the indigenous governments to manage the broader conflict, and focused too heavily on building the capacity of their external forces to defeat insurgents directly. In the end, intervention forces are strangers in a foreign country. The very presence of external actors tends to breed resentment from the population they are meant to be winning over (Baktash). A strong foreign role in combat and state-building tends to resemble more of an occupation than a support operation, failing to evoke the kind of sympathy and loyalty that a lead indigenous role does (Gventer).

Thirdly: “... Successful counterinsurgency is not just a matter of adapting the organizational structure of an external military to unconventional war. It requires an understanding of the nature of the local conflict and the ability to shape the capacity of indigenous actors to conduct an effective counterinsurgency campaign” (Jones). Fundamentally, COIN framework isn’t, and was never meant to be, a cookie-cutter template to apply to all scenarios for guaranteed victory. Too often, COIN study tends to focus too much on the government’s actions, rather than understand the true nature of the insurgency they’re meant to be countering (Gventer). Irregular war, by its nature, is a direct product of the political, cultural, and social circumstances of its environment. The conflict cannot be taken in isolation without a complex understanding of its underlying factors (Dubik). However, the United States

interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan lacked the critical understanding of the underlying contexts needed for effective nation-building. Baktash Ahadi, a former combat interpreter for the United States in the Afghan War, writes how the coalition that "poured billions of dollars into Afghanistan… built highways, emancipated Afghan women, [and] gave millions of people the right to vote" ended up alienating the Afghan people as a result of cultural illiteracy. "virtually the only contact most Afghans had with the West came via heavily armed and armored combat troops. Americans thus mistook the Afghan countryside for a mere theater of war, rather than as a place where people actually lived… Sometimes, yes, we built good things — clinics, schools, wells. But when the building was done, we would simply leave. The Taliban would not only destroy those facilities, but also look upon the local community with greater suspicion for having received "gifts" from America (Ahadi)." Moreover, the front-line American soldiers were given zero training in cultural literacy… When talking to Afghan villagers, the Marines would not remove their sunglasses — a clear indication of untrustworthiness in a country that values eye contact. In some cases, they would approach and directly address village women, violating one of rural Afghanistan's strictest cultural norms. Faux pas such as these… multiplied over millions of interactions… cost us dearly in terms of local support."

It's helpful here to revisit the Clausewitzian conception of war as a violent extension of political policy. According to Clausewitz, war "is to be regarded not as an independent thing, but as a political instrument… wars must differ in character according to the nature of the motives and circumstances from which they proceed" (McMaster). American defense thinking came to consider all irregular military operations as essentially the same, taking them in isolation from their broader socio-political contexts (Baktash). As a result, the state-building measures implemented in Iraq and Afghanistan were one-size-fits-all cures imposed from above, rather

than genuine solutions devised specifically to fit their respective local problems (Gventer, SIGAR, Dubik).

Original Product

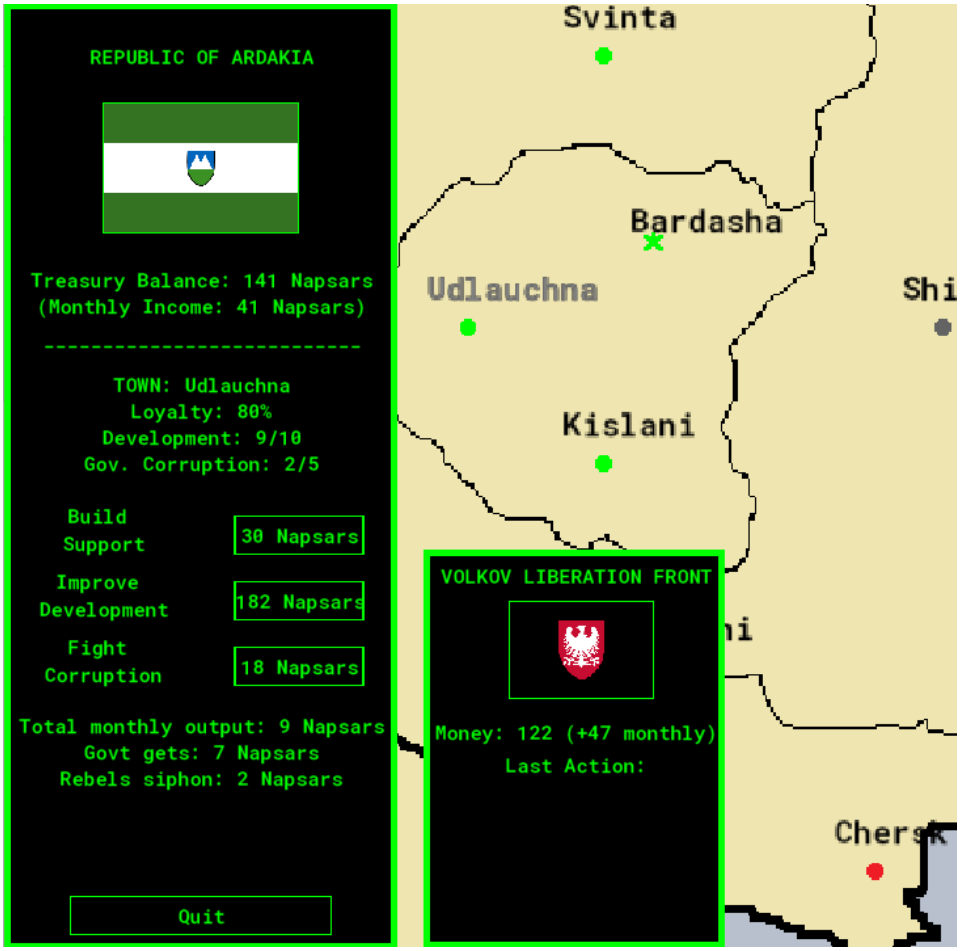
In order to reflect what I learned about the principles of COIN theory and real-world examples of its application, I decide to design and build a counterinsurgency wargame simulation. The end result was an interactive strategy game titled “Blood-Stained Flags: The Struggle For Ardakia.” The game is modelled on fundamental COIN theory concepts, simplifying and distilling the ideas I explored in my research to be easily observable and intuitive for a layperson.

(Fig. 2: Opening view of my COIN wargame simulation)

In this simulation, the player controls the counterinsurgency effort on behalf of the republican government of the fictional small nation of Ardakia. The opponent, controlled by the computer, is the Volkov Liberation Front, a nationwide insurgent movement. Ardakia is divided into six administrative districts, each containing three towns (see fig. 2). Reflecting the often local, intimate nature of irregular warfare, all actions in the game are taken on the town level, on a per-town basis. The game runs on a "real time" system, allowing players to watch how the political situation in Ardakia develops over time. The running clock in the top right that can be toggled with the pause button (fig. 2).

Upon game start, the insurgency enjoys significant influence in underdeveloped, peripheral rural communities, while the government's strong foothold is in the more highly-developed urban cities at the core. This reflects real-world patterns of irregular warfare, where the government often has strongest influence over urban areas and insurgents prey on

disaffected rural communities where the reach of government administration is limited. To visualize this, the loyalty of each town is color-coded: disloyal towns (towns where the insurgency has more influence) are marked in red; loyal towns (towns where the government has more influence) are marked in green; and contested towns (towns with split loyalties) are marked in grey (fig. 2).



(Fig. 3: Town menu)

I sought to simplify the basic principles of Cost/Benefit theory and Heart and Minds theory and represent elements of both schools of thought.

Each town has three values for the player to manage (see fig. 3). These are: loyalty (expressed as a percentage), which reflects the amount of influence the government has in a

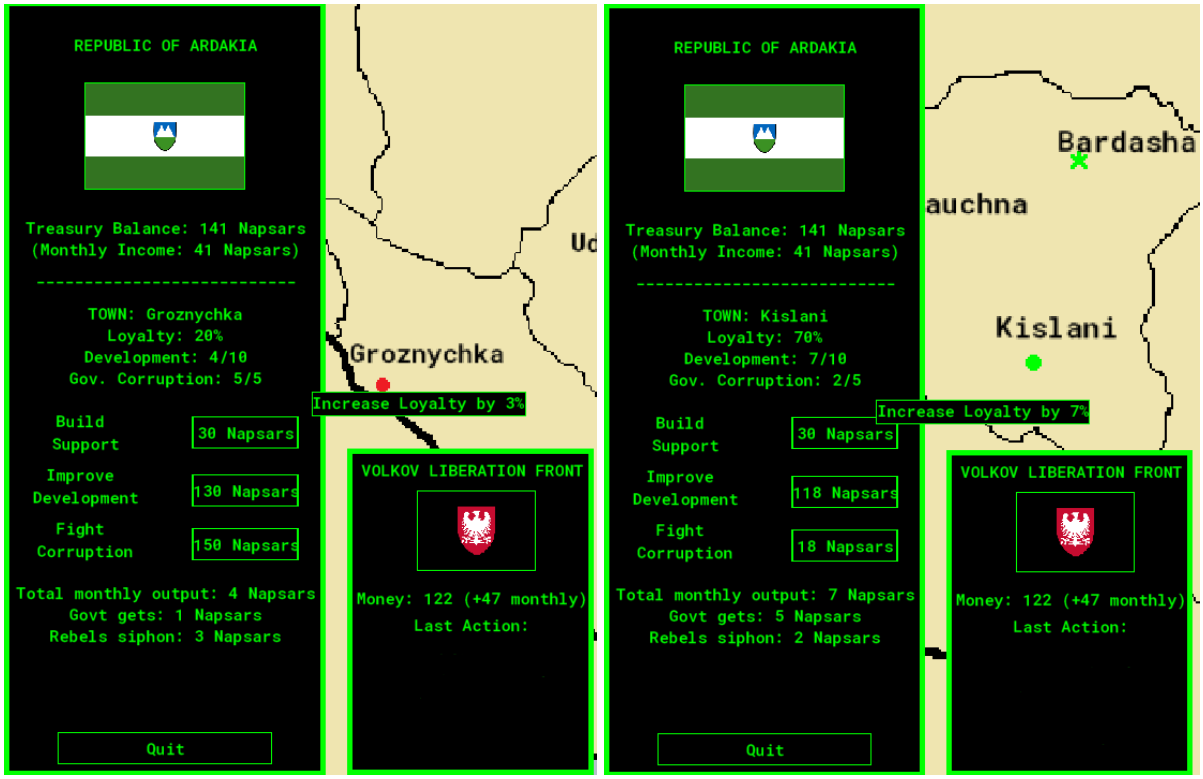
town; development (expressed as a score out of 10), which represents the value and economic capacity of a town; and corruption (expressed as a score out of five), which represents the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of local governance. For example, in fig. 3, the town of Udlauchna has been selected. The town menu shows that Udlauchna is 80% loyal to the government, contains 9 out of 10 possible points worth of economic development, and is at 2 out of 5 levels of corruption.

The player can exchange money to perform three possible actions they can take in order to manipulate these values. In order to increase loyalty in a town, the player can use the "build support" action. In order to increase development level of a town, the player can use the "improve development" action. In order to decrease the corruption value of a town, the player can use the "fight corruption" action. All these actions are accessible from the town menu (fig. 2).

The designed mechanics of the three values—loyalty, development, and corruption—is rooted in my study of counterinsurgency theory. All three values are related and influence one another.

In keeping with Hearts and Minds theory, the ultimate goal of the game is to achieve 100% loyalty across all towns, as high loyalty, which reflects strong government influence, is the foremost indicator of success. But the development system aligns more with Cost/Benefit theory. Each town produces a certain amount of tax every month, denominated in the Ardakian Napsar currency. The monthly tax output of a town is determined by its development score—in fig. 2, for example, the city of Udlauchna has a development score of 9, so it produces 9 Napsars a month. However, not all of this value goes to the government. The government only receives an amount of the monthly tax output from a town proportional to the amount of loyalty it has there.

This can be seen at the bottom of the town menu. For example, in fig. 2, although the town of Udlauchna produces 9 Napsars per month in taxes, the player is only receiving 7 Napsars a month, because the government only has 80% loyalty in Udlauchna. 80% of 9 is 7. The remaining 2 Napsars a month are being lost to the rebels. This reflects the basic premise of Cost/Benefit theory: that blindly developing rural communities is counterproductive because it simply puts more value in the hands of the insurgents.



(Fig. 4: Effects of corruption.)

Another way I chose to represent real-life counterinsurgency scenarios is through the corruption system. Each town has a corruption score, representing the efficacy of the local government in that town. As I mentioned in my research, the efficiency of governance is not decided by the quality of high-level officials removed from the people, but by the everyday local-level officials who interact with the people on a daily basis. Many COIN governments have

relatively poor administration, and struggle with maintaining a high quality of administration on a local level. To represent this in my game, a high corruption score not only makes a town more vulnerable to insurgent activity, it also makes other government actions less efficient: high corruption reduces the amount by which "build support" increases loyalty, and it makes "improve development" much more expensive. Fig. 4 compares two towns, one with high corruption (Groznychka, 5/5) and one with low corruption (Kislani, 2/5). In low-corruption Kislani, building support yields a 7% increase in town loyalty, while in the highly corrupt Groznychka, building support yields only a 3% increase in loyalty.

(Fig. 5: Insurgent actions. a: Terror attack. b: Extortion. c: Infiltration)

Meanwhile, the computer-controlled insurgency also has actions it can take in order to further its cause. In order to increase their loyalty in a town, the insurgency can commit a terror attack, which grants them a sudden and dramatic increase in loyalty, which translates to a decrease in loyalty to the government (fig. 5a). In order to exploit the economic development of a town, they can commit extortion, which grants them a sudden and dramatic one-time lump sum of money, while denying the government taxes from that town for the next month (fig. 5b). In

order to increase corruption in a town, the insurgency can infiltrate local administration, which increases the corruption level of a town by one (fig 5c).

The Volkov Liberation Front is modelled after the shortcut path of insurgent development; that is, rather than create a centralized vanguard political apparatus, they skipped straight to terrorist acts to propel the movement to notoriety among the populace (fig. 1). The insurgents "win" if they achieve at least 50% loyalty in all towns and stockpile 500 Napsars, at which point, they would be ready to begin the maneuver warfare stage against the government. Contrasted with the government's goal of achieving 100% loyalty in all towns, the insurgents' goal is much more attainable, representing some of the inherent real-life advantages that insurgents have against governments. Moreover, the focus on loyalty being the ultimate goal once again reflects HAM ideas.

Reflecting Cost/Benefit theory, the main source of the insurgents' resources is siphoning value away from communities via extortion, persuasion, and coercion. The insurgents passively siphone income away from each town proportional to their loyalty there, but they can also commit an overt act of extortion that grants them a significant lump sum of money, showing how insurgencies often expropriate resources from the civilian populace to fuel their efforts.

This is my COIN wargame simulation so far. In its final form, it serves as a perfect microcosm to observe the basic principles of counterinsurgency being played out on a small scale, allowing players to observe the complex relationships between just some of the many factors that make up an irregular warfare scenario.

Conclusion

Counterinsurgency is a significant form of warfare in its own right, not "less than" conventional warfare. Irregular warfare differs wildly in character from conventional warfare, demanding special attention and study; however, it, perhaps more so than any other form of warfare, is still fundamentally the violent expression of politics, deeply rooted in its cultural and geographical context. In the modern world, counterinsurgency is becoming ever more relevant, as many important conflicts throughout the last century have been irregular conflicts, and even current threats to global security are largely irregular in nature. By studying the basic principles of counterinsurgency, one does not only build a deeper understanding into the security issues and conflicts that continue to affect thousands of lives across the globe—one also gains deeper insight into the nature of conflict as a whole, and the complex forces that shape human history.

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Annotated Bibliography

Ahadi, Baktash. “I was a Combat Interpreter in Afghanistan, where Cultural Illiteracy led to U.S. Failure.” Opinion, Washington Post, 31 August 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/08/31/afghanistan-combat-interpreter-baktash-ahadi-us-cultural-illiteracy/.

This Washington Post op-ed is written by an Afghan and former combat interpreter in the Afghan War. It details observations by the author about fundamental flaws in the U.S. approach to counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, discussing how the intervention was plagued by cultural illiteracy and a disconnect from the practical reality of Afghan life, which resulted in breeding distrust among the Afghan population. Although the source is a personal opinion piece, the fact that its written by an ethnic Afghan so intimately involved with the day-to-day details of the war makes it a credible source of information on the effectiveness of the U.S. intervention in winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people.

Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. “U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide.” U.S. Department of State Archive, United States Department of State, Jan. 2009, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/119629.pdf.

This source is an official U.S. government guide to counterinsurgency, authored by the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs of the Department of State. This document is an

excellent reference condensing basic principles of irregular warfare, as well as ideas behind United States' practice of counterinsurgency. Its sourcing as an official government document makes it an authoritative source, and I used it to source some background knowledge on irregular warfare and real-world expressions of the patterns of insurgent development. It also informed my analysis of U.S. COIN in the last few decades.

Defense Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). "Counterinsurgency - A Generic Reference Curriculum." 18 March 2020. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_09/20170904_1709-counter insurgency-rc.pdf.

This document serves as a starting reference point for counterinsurgency curriculum. As the product of a multinational team of NATO academics, it is a reliable source to draw contextual background information from.

Doherty, Matthew R. "The Boer War and Malayan Emergency: Examples of British Counterinsurgency Pre- and Post-'Minimum Force.'" Small Wars Journal, Small Wars Foundation, 20 Dec. 2018, https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/boer-war-and-malayan-emergency-examples-british -counterinsurgency-pre-and-post-minimum.

This article was written by a scholar of counterinsurgency theory for an independent magazine dedicated to irregular warfare. It largely consists of an analysis of the British Empire's shift in counterinsurgency thinking between the Boer War, marked by brutality and repression, and the Malayan Emergency, marked by restraint and concern for the loyalties of the people. Though not as authoritative as some of my other sources, I use it

to provide a concrete real-world case study illustrating the counterintuitive effects of excessive force in counterinsurgency.

Dubik, James M. "No Guarantees When It Comes to War." Association of the United States Army, 22 August 2018. https://www.ausa.org/articles/no-guarantees-when-it-comes-war.

This piece is an article written by a retired lieutenant-general of the United States army, using the concept of Clausewitz's "chameleon" to argue that all war is essentially political in nature. As it is written by someone with firsthand experience in United States military leadership, this is a reliable and useful source. The article warns of the dangers of treating all wars the same, emphasizing that each conflict is the unique result of its immediate political, cultural, and geographic context. I use this source to discuss the Clausewitzian paradigm of war as politics, as well as to inform my analysis of U.S. failures in COIN.

Gventer, Celeste Ward, et al. "The New Counter-Insurgency Era in Critical Perspective." *Rethinking Political Violence*, Palgrave-McMillan, 2014.

This collection of studies from various scholars of military theory casts a critical light on the so-called "Counter-Insurgency Era," re-examining faulty or flawed ideas that it argues have been taken for granted as COIN came into vogue. This source must be viewed with a grain of salt, as it can be viewed as dissident scholars leveling criticism against the academic orthodoxy. However, this source does much to point out fallacies that plague conventional COIN thinking, and also discusses the inherently uphill nature of large-scale foreign counterinsurgency. I used this source to inform the analysis of failings in U.S. COIN implementation in recent history.

Hazelton, Jacqueline L. "The 'Hearts and Minds' Fallacy: Violence, Coercion, and Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare." *International Security,* 2017. https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00283.

This paper, written from a Cost/Benefit perspective, criticizes the Hearts and Minds approach for being ineffective. Using Malaya, Dhofar, and El Salvador as case studies, the paper argues that "counterinsurgency success is the result of a violent process of state building in which elites contest for power, popular interests matter little, and the government benefits from uses of force against civilians." As this source is an argumentative piece for a particular school of thought, it is intended to persuade and not inform. As such, I did not use it as a source of authoritative information, but rather to represent the main arguments of the Cost/Benefit point of view.

Jones, Seth G. "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan." *RAND Counterinsurgency Study Volume 4*, National Defense Research Institute, RAND Corporation, 2008. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG595.pdf.

This piece from the RAND Corporation, one of the foremost research authorities on irregular warfare and counterinsurgency, "examines counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan following the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001… draws lessons from the broader literature on counterinsurgency warfare and provides recommendations to help the United States develop capabilities and improve performance in future counterinsurgency operations." As the RAND Corporation is a reputable organization in the field of counterinsurgency research, I used this source to inform much of my research on the United States' involvement in Afghanistan and the nature of the Afghanistan War. The source also includes some discussion of how COIN operations can be inherently

difficult for foreign actors such as the United States, which I included in my research paper.

Long, Austin. “CHAPTER FOUR: COIN Theory: What Are Insurgencies and How Does One Fight Them?” *On "Other War": Lessons from Five Decades of RAND Counterinsurgency Research*, RAND Corporation. 2006. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg482osd.11?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents. This excellent source, again from the RAND Corporation, condenses the basics of the field of COIN theory, explaining the two basic schools of thought, Hearts and Minds and Cost/Benefit. This source was very valuable in my research, and I used this source in my paper to discuss the basics of HAM and Cost/Benefit.

McMaster. H.R. “Studying War and Warfare.” *Modern War Institute*, United States Military Academy West Point, 26 December 2014. https://mwi.usma.edu/2014111studying-war-and-warfare-by-major-general-hr-mcmaster/#:~:text=As%20von%20Clausewitz%20observed%2C%20%E2%80%9Cwar,than%20just%20one%20of%20several. This is a reprinting (by the Modern War Institute of West Point) of an essay written by former Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster, an influential Army general involved in the Gulf War, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The source links modern counterinsurgency to the political paradigm of Clausewitz, emphasizing the importance of the intellectual study of war, “understanding the context—and the continuities—of war.” This work not only gave me key understanding of the Clausewitzian conception of war and how it relates to modern counterinsurgency, it also gave me perspective as to the nature and importance of studying military theory.

Moyar, Mark. “Development in Afghanistan’s Counterinsurgency: A New Guide.” Small Wars Journal, Small Wars Foundation, Mar. 2011, https://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/development-in-afghanistan-coin-moyar.pdf. “In the areas of Afghanistan beset by insurgency, development spending has done little to increase popular support for the government.” This source, an advisory report from private security and strategy firm Orbis Operations, describes how the rural development efforts by the United States in the Afghan War did not result in the desired effect. The report instead advocates a more realistic strategy aimed at short-term stability based on negotiating pragmatic guarantees of cooperation from local elites and leaders. This source is not authoritative, but it offers a reliable point of view criticizing the prevailing development theory under the Hearts and Minds school of thought. I used this source to provide a real-world example for the shortcomings and criticisms of HAM and its development strategy.

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). “SIGAR 21-46-LL: What We Need to Learn: Lessons from Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction.” United States, August 2021. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-21-46-LL.pdf. This report, published by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, examines the two decades of reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan in retrospect after the U.S. withdrawal. It discusses how “the U.S. government struggled to develop a coherent strategy, understand how long the reconstruction mission would take,... account for the challenges posed by insecurity, [and] tailor efforts to the Afghan context…” The document, being published by an independent federal oversight agency (SIGAR), is very reputable, and can be considered an authoritative source on the U.S. development effort

in Afghanistan. I used this source to inform my use of Afghanistan as a case study to explain the flaws in HAM's policy of blind development.

Mao Tse-tung. "FMFRP 12-18: Mao Tse-tung On Guerilla Warfare." *United States Marine Corps*, Department of the Navy, 5 April 1989. https://www.marines.mil/Portals/1/Publications/FMFRP%2012-18%20%20Mao%20Tse-tung%20on%20Guerrilla%20Warfare.pdf.

Mao Tse-tung's seminal book, "On Guerilla Warfare," is perhaps history's most influential work on insurgent form of warfare. Mao's ideas in this book, derived from the Clausewitzian conception of war, were in turn emulated to some degree by insurgent movements across the globe. Moreover, it was by a careful reading of Mao's ideas that early counterinsurgency theorists such as Galula devised ways to combat the brand of warfare explained in this book. This particular printing is published by the U.S. Marine Corps as an educational document. As this is a primary source from Mao himself, I used it to source quotes from Mao about the nature of insurgency, as well as to inform my conception of irregular wafare as a whole.

United States, Department of the Army. "FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5: Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies." 15 December 2006. https://irp.fas.org/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf.

The U.S. Army's counterinsurgency field manual is the authoritative distillation of the United States' counterinsurgency doctrine and approach to fighting irregular warfare. I used this source mainly as an example of the influence of Galula in the modern strategy of the United States military.

Vrooman, Stephen. “A Counterinsurgency Campaign Plan Concept: The Galula Compass.” *School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College*. 26 May 2005. https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA436240.pdf.

This monograph by a U.S. Army major in the School of Advanced Military Studies outlines several campaign plan concepts for conducting counterinsurgency. The text uses the Boer War as a case study, using it to draw the conclusion that overly repressive physical actions that don’t target the collective conscience and loyalty of the civilian population is ineffective. As an academic work, this source is not as authoritative as a government document, but is reliable nonetheless. The text also talks extensively about Galula’s basic principles of insurgency and how they influenced contemporary U.S. strategy. I used this source extensively, citing it in my Boer War case study and my discussion of Galula’s foundational COIN theory ideas.