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Counterinsurgency: An American Journey

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Counterinsurgency
An American Journey

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in History

by

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Introduction

At the end of the American Civil War, the U.S. federal government found itself with new grand powers in its final victory over the Confederacy. The Union had survived the fires of war from 1861 to 1865, the bloodiest in American history.¹ In the final days of the war, General Ulysses Grant described his purpose for several triumphal marches north with his Union armies:

“The march of Sherman’s army from Atlanta to the sea and north to Goldsboro... It had an important bearing... of closing the war. As the army was seen marching on triumphantly, however, the minds of the Southern people became disabused, and they saw the true state of affairs. In turn, they became disheartened, and would have been glad to submit without compromise.”²

The conventional part of the Civil War was ending and soon bringing Reconstruction, which concentrated on reintegrating the South politically and economically into the Union. Reconstruction aimed to mend the effects of the war, which had destroyed the South’s economy, with the additional aim to help the millions of the now-freed former slaves. As the Civil War’s conventional phase ended, the North believed the war had reached a successful conclusion.

As Carl Von Clausewitz expressed, “War is the continuation of politics by other means.”³ Directly following the Civil War, the South realized that it could not maintain their political aim of white supremacy in a conventional war or immediate overt political maneuvers, and they would

¹ “*Civil War Casualties.*” American Battlefield Trust, August 24, 2021. <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/civil-war-casualties>.

² Ulysses Grant, *The Complete Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant* (Lexington: Read a Classic, 2010), 456.

³ Carl Clausewitz, “*Clausewitz: War as Politics by Other Means.*” Online Library of Liberty, Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/page/clausewitz-war-as-politics-by-other-means>.

now turn to a long war of insurgency. This insurgent phase first manifested with John Wilkes Booth, who on April 14th, 1865, assassinated President Abraham Lincoln.⁴ Booth had developed a plan to kill all the heads of the federal government with the aim to leave the federal government in political chaos. Unknown to the North, a new phase of the Civil War had begun in the form of a Southern insurgency.

The insurgency war came out of an amorphous association of returning home Confederate veterans, who reorganized themselves into networks of loosely connected militias. At times, nearly entire reconstitutions of Confederate battalions reformed.⁵ The most infamous of the insurgent groups was the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), derived from the Greek word “kyklos,” meaning circle.⁶ The KKK started an invisible empire of the South striving to intimidate, terrorize, brutalize, and kill newly freed African Americans who participated in politics as well as white people who supported these efforts. KKK members attacked schools, churches, and homes of those involved. These terror tactics successfully cemented a solely white dominance in the South, which perpetuated white superiority in economics and politics. By 1901, the last African American Congressman, Henry White, gave his farewell speech to the House of Representatives, expressing how the South had reversed the political and societal progress experienced by the African American community in the post-Civil War period through this terror campaign of crime and murder.⁷

⁴ Jeff Wallenfeldt, “Assassination of Abraham Lincoln.” Encyclopedia Britannica, inc. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/event/assassination-of-Abraham-Lincoln>.

⁵ Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles In The Rural South From Slavery To The Great Depression* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 268-269.

⁶ History.com Editors, “Ku Klux Klan.” History.com. A&E Television Networks, October 29, 2009. <https://www.history.com/topics/reconstruction/ku-klux-klan>.

⁷ “Congressman White, George Henry.” US House of Representatives: History, Art &Archives. Accessed November 12, 2021. <https://history.house.gov/People/Detail?id=23657>.

At the beginning of Reconstruction, Washington D.C. became aware of the growing terrorism in the South from the networks of the KKK, federal leadership took steps to deal with the insurgency, and President Grant would choose to increase federal troops in the South to their highest level. He authorized the use of more aggressive counterinsurgency tactics and militarized Reconstruction by turning the South into five military districts garrisoned with Army units of infantry and cavalry. At times, Grant allowed the suspension of habeas corpus, allowing federal troops to arrest anyone suspected of KKK involvement, who could be held without charge, and if necessary, held indefinitely. Though by the 1870s, a core American failure in counterinsurgency implementation emerged, the American public opinion quickly waned for the continued militarized operations, which can be gauged by the way the American public voted. The public vote swayed to the Democrat party, with many southern members in their ranks. This public turn moved the political agenda away from the militarized Reconstruction: “The number of Federal troops stationed in the South dropped from 87,000 in 1866 to 20,000 in 1867 and 6,000 in 1876.”⁸ As the American public’s will weakened for fighting a prolonged counterinsurgency, white supremacist militias were able to endure in the South.

The Congressional mid-terms of 1874 brought a Democrat majority to the House of Representatives for the first time since the Civil War. When this happened, President Grant’s militarized Reconstruction efforts stalled.⁹ Grant became politically isolated as Southern Democrats returned, and many northerners turned away from the idea of a continued federal military presence to handle the Southern insurgencies. In September of 1875, President Grant

⁸ Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History Of Guerrilla Warfare From Ancient Times To The Present* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013), 221.

⁹ “Image 2 of New National Era (Washington, D.C.), October 15, 1874.” The Library of Congress. Accessed November 12, 2021. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn84026753/1874-10-15/ed-1/?sp=2&r=0.128%2C0.759%2C0.387%2C0.189%2C0>.

received a request from Governor Ames of Mississippi, asking for federal troops to be sent to Mississippi to aid in subduing white racial violence.¹⁰ Grant refused, fearing that more troops in the South would turn Americans away from the Republican party in the upcoming 1876 elections. President Grant knew, as did the returning white Southern Democrats in D.C., that the American public had moved passed the Civil War and waging a continued counterinsurgency effort in the South was politically unpopular. By 1877, federal troops were gone, and the South had won the insurgent war and now entered into a near hundred-year long unchecked reign of terror on African Americans and allied Whites who sought equality in law, economics, and politics.

My objective is to explain the creation of the U.S. military's counterinsurgency doctrine, which I contend is made in conjunction with the American public, the federal government, and the U.S. military leadership. This American counterinsurgency doctrine creation has undergone periodic transformations that I highlight to shine a clear light on this three-way conversation of creating U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine, which is not reliant on the battlefield requirements. U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine evolved out of this tumultuous three-way conversation, with a reoccurring theme of the federal government's repeated failure to understand this societal conversation. The U.S. federal government repeatedly desired short conventional wars, failing to understand post-war counterinsurgency operation requirements and the American public's powerful role in guaranteeing the success or failure of such operations. I will show this reoccurring American phenomenon in Reconstructions failure, the Philippines, Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Iraq war following the 2003 invasion.

¹⁰ Melissa Jones. "*The Clinton Riot of 1875: From Riot to Massacre.*" Mississippi Department of History & Archives, September 2015. <https://www.mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/issue/the-clinton-riot-of-1875-from-riot-to-massacre>.

Returning to Reconstruction, the Union had won the conventional war only to lose the post-war peace. After the Civil War, the federal government had grown drastically in power, size, and ability to wage a grand conventional war, yet the South won the long war of peace through the use of an exhausting insurgency. Networks of terror cells in the South dramatically outnumbered the limited capabilities of the continually dwindling U.S. Army in the South. The South's insurgent networks worked hand-in-hand with the Democratic political leadership to produce the political win they desired and create a legal system of racial segregation in the South, cementing white supremacist rule in the legal code of Jim Crow laws in the South, which delayed the goals of Reconstruction until the mid-twentieth century with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement.

Counterinsurgency is an ancient tool used by various militaries in governing internal sectors and external territorial claims. As early city-states began to expand their political influence over wider realms outside their original territory, insurgency movements developed in these newly dominated foreign political spheres. Pulling my Webster's thesaurus off the bookshelf, it defines "insurgency" as "open fighting against authority (as one's own government)."¹¹ The thesaurus uses the same definition for insurgents, who are "rebellious" against the political sovereign over an area. A study of counter-rebellion does not have the same ring to it as the name of counterinsurgency, nor does it have the stinging rebuke for the so-called rebels. Because Americans love to root for an underdog, the language must be worded carefully to mark enemies. By labeling enemies as insurgents, Americans often align them with terrorists or terrorism. Even the American Revolution was labeled a rebellion (insurgency), although they rebranded themselves as patriots. Defining

¹¹ Laird Charlton, *Webster's New Thesaurus* (Cleveland: Wiley Publishing, 2005), 338.

terms is particularly important because many of these words are carelessly used today in the public and media and are poorly understood.

The aim here is to explain the creation of the U.S. military's counterinsurgency doctrine and the unique three-way conversation of the American public with the political and military leadership, who together formed existing U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine throughout American history. I analyze this conversation creating doctrine by using declassified government documents, official military analyses, U.S. military field manuals, and politician statements and memoirs in conjunction with military leaders' statements and news articles at that time.

I do not always agree with the U.S. actions or condone them. My research began with two monumental counterinsurgency manuals: the United States Marine Corps (USMC) *Small Wars Manual* (1921) and the U.S. Army's *3-24 Field Manual Counterinsurgency* (2006) published for the Iraq Surge; however, I found these manuals to be incomplete regarding the elements bringing about their creation. My search took me far beyond both military manuals, forcing me to grapple with the American public's influence, lack of government leadership, and accountability and to research the United States' foundation. This process required an analytical approach into understanding the relationship of the American public's attitude during each conflict examined, its leadership, election results, and the current politics of that day.

Outline

Chapter One

The first chapter traces the foundational works that set the U.S. on a course to dramatically expand to the West. This blueprint of a nation was a British-lite empire mirrored after the Roman and Venetian Republics. The U.S. experienced forms of counterinsurgency campaigns with the

Native American tribes, who found themselves in the growing political sphere of U.S. dominance. U.S. counterinsurgency doctrines were not written into a formal military field manual but were instead passed down through military experience. Local commanders were left to learn and produce their own fighting styles and doctrines. Developing U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine was not a cohesive approach.

Chapter Two

As the US became a multi-continent empire after the Spanish-American War, the Philippines required the U.S. to manage counterinsurgency operations on a global scope. Two different campaigns occurred in the Philippines, a northern and southern campaign, requiring the U.S. military to deal with new insurgency types. Unlike in the American West, a white settler class was not near to aid the U.S. military operations. The U.S. military learned how to build indigenous assistance to dismantle the insurgent movements. Crucially, the American public supported overt American imperialism at this time, which was witnessed in the election and reelection of Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt. Despite scrutiny against these U.S. military campaigns; the anti-imperialist criticism was not strong enough to change the political setting. After World War One and in the depths of the Great Depression, the U.S. reexamined its imperial role in the world.

Chapter Three

This chapter investigates the Vietnam War, which included an Americanization of the war, which means that the U.S. prosecuted the war on its own effort with increased war material and troop strength. This approach is termed a heavy “boot print” for U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine due to the country’s focus on conventional force strategy and tactics using large conventional troop

deployments. As U.S. military operations grew in Vietnam, the U.S. news media and American public became growingly critical of prolonged U.S. military operations due to mounting U.S. casualties and seemingly endless conflict. The American public sentiment was tied to the receding desire of being a global empire, which was heavily critiqued by the political Left, the Soviet Union, and the American anti-war movement. Although the U.S. government held the media's approval for a time, this changed with the 1968 North Vietnamese Tet offensive, which altered the media's perception, including counterinsurgency styles used against the Viet Cong. In addition, it was believed that the South Vietnamese government was not willing to fight for themselves due to corruption and low morale. With news outlets reporting on the war and discontent for the draft daily, the American public moved politically to end the conflict post Tet offensive. By 1968, the U.S. federal government understood the American public's disdain for the Vietnamese counterinsurgency efforts; and sustaining the war was politically impossible.

Chapter Four

This chapter highlights U.S. military operations in El Salvador from 1977 to 1992. During these operations, the U.S. military made a counterinsurgency doctrinal change from Vietnam, by using an exceptionally "light boot print" focused on small deployments of Army Green Beret units that were used to train, equip, and supplement the El Salvadorans capabilities. At this point, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were the only global empires, and the media paid close attention to their military actions. The Soviet operations in Afghanistan were strongly criticized by media outlets, forcing the U.S. to carefully walk a fine line of fighting a war as humanely as possible in El Salvador. This strategy would fail. In the Salvadoran conflict, a U.S. troop "light boot print" was created and centered on arming and training the host nation's forces. This approach went go awry, and the war led to a slaughtering of civilians by forces under direct U.S. military support and

guidance. A light footprint was found to be lacking in El Salvador as well. Driven by a new fear of a communist invasion, the American public desired to be tough on communist groups but did not want the American military linked to genocidal operations. At the same time, they did not want large troop deployments to the El Salvadoran conflict. This U.S. military failure compelled a new evolutionary change in U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine, seeking to align more with the American public will.

Chapter Five

This chapter is focused on the American troop surge to Iraq in 2006 to 2007, which occurred at the last moments of the height of American military and global imperial preeminence. The surge was a new form of counterinsurgency in a population-centric doctrine. The new doctrine had American troops live in neighborhoods that they patrolled in an effort to win the local populace through a sense of protection, respect, and community reconciliation. The U.S. military encouraged Iraqis to provide intelligence on the insurgent networks through local security gains and payment incentives. The surge brought an appropriate presence of a U.S. military boot print that was not too heavy or too light, but just right. This approach produced an effective counterinsurgency doctrine centered on effective local governance, proper policing, and separating the Iraqi population from the insurgent networks, which was based on building an American troop core backing the Iraqi troop presence. The surge allowed for Iraqi troops to gain experience, morale, and to feel responsible for their nation's success while being properly paid, observed, and supported by American military troop partnerships. Crucially, the American public supported the Iraq war effort post 9/11 through a desire to be tough on international terror networks; however, political pressures in D.C. forced changing the Iraq war's counterinsurgency efforts in 2006 due to the war's post-invasion chaos. These events brought the counterinsurgency doctrinal movement

to the U.S. troop surge and population-centric strategy. Driven by this time period witnessing the apex of news media scrutiny on U.S. counterinsurgency operations, generating a quick turn around on altering tactics and strategies for the better.

Final Thoughts

The closing chapter describes the new phase of counterinsurgency challenges the U.S. is in post-2007. After the Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008, Russia quickly expanded its political and military operations globally.¹² Russia then entered the global war of counterinsurgency operations in competition to the U.S., witnessed in Syria, Libya, and the Central African Republic. France returned to the global scene with its military operations across much of its former colonies in North and Central Africa in the Sahel. China has made a resurgence as well, having built military bases in Djibouti, Pakistan, and across the South China Sea in an effort to expand its military umbrella. China has grown in international preeminence from its “One Belt, One Road Initiative.” China has not openly engaged its forces in military counterinsurgency conflicts globally; instead, it has turned its efforts internally. It has aided other allies in crushing internal insurgencies, such as Myanmar.

As France, Russia, and China have entered military counterinsurgency operations globally, the U.S. is now finding its own counterinsurgency doctrine is one of many again. This will now require the U.S. to market its counterinsurgency doctrines internationally to both its allies and competitors and I contend, to the American public. The alternative is to continue to watch the world turn to far harsher counterinsurgency tactics and strategies of the gruesome past.

¹² Tony Harris. “*Russian Invasion: Aid Shipments Arrive in Georgia; Pentagon Press Conference; Refugee Camp Being Set Up Outside of Tbilisi.*” CNN. August 14, 2008. <https://transcripts.cnn.com/show/cnr/date/2008-08-14/segment/03>.

With the global dilemmas of emerging competitors, developing nations, and stabilizing failed states, the importance of effective counterinsurgency doctrine is crucial to prevent vast sums of bloodshed in these unstable environments. This is not only essential for the U.S. and her partners but for global stability. Developing and marketing successful counterinsurgency doctrines at home and abroad, even to non-allies, may help those powers less inclined to human rights concerns to lessen their use of brutal forms of counterinsurgency tactics and the use of annihilation type doctrines. As seen in Aleppo, by the actions of Syrian and Russian forces, and by Chinese actions in the mass relocation to concentration camps of the Uighur Muslim populations.

New counterinsurgency studies will help the U.S. understand the political, sociological, cultural, and economic importance of insurgent conflicts. Even if these conflicts appear not to affect the U.S. outright, they do effect America's long-term interests and its allies from conflicts changes in mass-migration patterns and global market instability. Proper counterinsurgency doctrine is necessary to create global initiatives that can successfully intervene in failing states to prevent killing zones, as the world saw in Yugoslavia's breakup or Syria's recent civil war and the insurgent conflicts that induced famines in Somalia. The goal of creating long-term success through proper counterinsurgency doctrines within nations with complex ethnic and religious backgrounds is imperative. This can be compared to the results of military frustration in such operations, which can lead to population annihilation as seen in the current conflict of Yemen. Global conflicts are continuing and are increasingly connected through globalization, which has allowed the proliferation of globally coordinated and connected insurgent networks to destabilize on a wider global scale. The world needs further evolution in developing U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine, which I consider to be hinged on winning over the American public.

Chapter 1

A National Foundation and Mission

“The United States has in fact adhered to a well-defined grand strategy... to preserve and, where feasible and conducive to U.S. interests, expand an American Imperium. Central to this strategy is a commitment to global openness - removing barriers that inhibit the movement of goods, capital, ideas, and people. Its ultimate objective is the creation of an open and integrated international order based on the principles of democratic capitalism, with the United States as the ultimate guarantor of order and enforcer of norms.”¹³

Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire*

The United States of America was conceived by its founders with ideas coming out of the Enlightenment Era. They believed that white men who were independent, freely associated, well-educated, and financially secure could govern themselves in a republic. After the American Revolutionary War, the founders saw that the originally agreed on Articles of Confederation were failing the new nation. The Articles of Confederation’s Congress could pass laws but lacked the federal power to enforce these laws, and this federal weakness sowed conflict between the thirteen states, which acted as competing nations. The American founders aimed to develop a singular national unity with economic interdependence and a powerful functioning federal government. The founders wanted to present a new, unifying goal for the American states, which on both sides

¹³ Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3.

of the political aisle accepted; the goal of building a new type of American empire would now unify the new nation going forward.

The U.S. was modeled after the eighteenth-century world and ancient republics. The founders attempted to navigate the imperial theme of the day, which implied that countries could become an empire or be devoured by one. *The Federalist Papers*, written by John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison, shares a series of arguments for their version of the future of the United States federal government. In *The Federalist Papers* No. fourteen written by James Madison, he openly spoke of the U.S. becoming a global empire, expressed as a lofty goal. Madison states:

“Hearken not to the unnatural voice which tells you that the people of America, knit together as they are by so many cords of affection, can no longer live together as members of the same family; can no longer continue the mutual guardians of their mutual happiness; can no longer be fellow citizens of one great, respectable and flourishing empire! Hearken not to the voice which petulantly tells you that.”¹⁴

For this empire to be built, a strong federal government would be necessary. Alexander Hamilton, in *The Federalist Papers* No. seventeen expounds:

“Allowing the utmost latitude to the love of power which any reasonable man can require... Commerce, finance, negotiation, and war seem to comprehend all the objects which have

¹⁴ Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers: The Ideas That Forged The American Constitution*, Ed. by Richard Bernstein (London: Sirius, 2019), 43.

charms for minds governed by that passion; and all the powers necessary to those objects ought, in the first instance, to be lodged in the national depository.”¹⁵

The question of empire building directed by a federal government was not debated by Hamilton or Madison, just what route to take.

The Federalists Papers argue for developing a commercial-based imperium with less focus on the goal of acquiring territory. The papers expound on building large industries to generate wealth, with small outposts of holdings spread internationally, which involves ideas reflecting the Venetian Republic. The Federalist reasoned that avoiding land accumulation would prevent America from being plunged continually into a European-styled history of perpetual land wars. The Federalists envisioned a trade empire reflecting the British empire, where controlling the sea lanes with a large navy was crucial to success. Hamilton continually referenced Athens, Venice, and Rome, showing his inspirational sources. Hamilton expressed how: “Athens, Rome, Carthage were all republics; two of them, Athens and Carthage, of the commercial kind”¹⁶ were built largely on naval dominance. Drawing upon the examples of past democracies and republics, the Federalists shared their ambition to improve and perfect this form of governance in order to achieve longevity in the new American empire.

Today, many believe that the founders’ idea of building a democratic republic resulted from such governance styles being largely peaceful and targeting coexistence more than war, which deviates from the described aim of the American Republic. The American federal government's expansion is envisioned and is understood to require war. The use of political and

¹⁵ Alexander Hamilton. “*Federalist Papers: Primary Documents in American History: Federalist Nos. 11-20.*” Research Guides: Library of Congress. Accessed October 11, 2021. <https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/text-11-20>.

¹⁶ Hamilton, *The Federalist Papers*, 25.

economic force and distinct types of military troop deployments were all meant to claim a place in the world for the newly envisioned American commercial empire. The expansion of territory would at times require conventional wars. One of the leading Federalists, President George Washington, created an iconic quote in his first annual address to the American congress. Washington stated that, “To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.”¹⁷ He understood personally from battlefield experience that militias were a fickle force and what was needed by the nation was a stable and professional military. This professional military was primarily for the purposes of preventing rival empires from invading the new American empire, clearly seen in the War of 1812. A professional military was needed to secure the vision of the Federalists in their expanding port empire along with international commercial growth and recognition. Hamilton argued intensely for this approach, viewing small wars and military growth as required to establishing the U.S. international prestige among the global empires of the 18th-century world.

This imperial mindset was not in the Federalists alone. Thomas Jefferson, a Democrat-Republican who was starkly against a federal government, advocated a separate way to an American Empire. He called on the U.S. to become an “Empire of Liberty,”¹⁸ one that would be formed by the American masses spreading West, spearheaded by the “yeoman farmers,” which would spread the ideals of republicanism and liberty.¹⁹ In turn, the vast population boom of these farmers would generate and regenerate new republics throughout North America. As these republics grew, they would come to be united into the nation as states. This idea of growth and

¹⁷ George Washington, “*First Annual Address to Congress.*” The American Presidency Project, January 8, 1790. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/first-annual-address-congress-0>.

¹⁸ Peter Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 2.

¹⁹ Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, 54.

regeneration of republics was explained as a peaceful form of generating an empire for the U.S., believing the Native Americans would come into awe at the principles and wisdom of American culture and Republicanism and then join freely into the nation. This idea would then lead to the peaceful absorption of Native American tribes into the U.S. and expand the nation's political, regional, and global reach. Jefferson envisioned the U.S. expanding from coast to coast. This empire of liberty was an American imperium but more idealistic or fantastical, than the Federalists' visions.

The Federalists saw national expansion as requiring war, military development, commerce, and national banking. Democratic-Republicans saw a more idealistic development of American imperialism through the spreading of American population growth, which would introduce the superior or unrefusable American culture, democracy, and individualism. Both visions saw empire as the American dream and both espoused expanding America's power regionally and globally as the unifying national aim; however, a glaring oversight in both these visions of American expansion persists into the American political, public, and often military psyche today. What if in the expansion of the American empire it is resisted by local populations? What if conventional war, culture, and the principles of democracy fail to win over or pacify new U.S. territories and internationally politically controlled areas? From the outset of the nation, the founders dreamed of an empire but ignored the necessary role of counterinsurgency in it.

During each generation of the American public, political and military leaders have had to grapple with unwanted long-term insurgent wars, after they have won a conventional war. For the U.S. was designed to want quick conventional fights but faltered in understanding that these conventional wars required long post-war pacification operations, which are required to make the new territories truly cemented into U.S. political hands. These small wars were lengthy, and at

times multiple decades long, which became confusing to the American populace, and overtime, these small wars have eaten away at the American people's will for the responsibilities of holding a global empire.

The resentment of military deaths, treasury costs, and growing scrutiny of the brutality of empire, would mount, which we will see more in the twentieth century. Empire shifted from being a positive event and national pride, to now, a time of global political and national distancing from empire. This shift brought about a new narrative for the U.S., which had to explain its role in the world to their citizens. In essence, it was hiding an empire and reshaping how it executed its role in dealing with global counterinsurgency operations.

Returning to the post-Civil War American expansion westward, a series of Indian Wars caused the U.S. Army to develop strategies and tactics of counterinsurgency, which would develop forward into the 20th century. Historian and U.S. Army Captain John G. Bourke wrote about his firsthand experiences in these first insurgent wars for the U.S. with the Apache and Cheyenne. In 1876, he accompanied General Ranald Mackenzie in a winter campaign in Wyoming against the Cheyenne. The U.S. Army by this point had learned several keys to turn an invisible guerrilla army visible by using capable local Native American scouts. The intelligence gathered helped give "sight" to U.S. forces to see the invisible fighters. Sioux warriors played a leading role in this campaign, with "hundreds of young warriors enlisted as scouts," with large numbers of motivated Shoshone.²⁰ Many Shoshone had a deep hatred of the Cheyenne, as some were former slaves to the Cheyenne and had experienced a litany of abuses. Due to their speed, capabilities, and

²⁰ John Bourke, *Mackenzie's Last Fight With The Cheyennes* (Nashville: Big Byte Books, 2015), 6.

environmental knowledge, the Indian scouts were crucial to successfully finding the Cheyenne.²¹ Once the U.S. Army was able to reliably recruit various Indian Scouts, its counterinsurgent campaigns became an overwhelming success.

Indian Scouts acted as an external ring around the U.S. Army forces, forming both an early warning system for Cheyenne attacks and scouting ahead. Once the Indian Scouts had found an enemy force, “the calvary, under Mackenzie, could be pushed forward to strike a sharp, decisive blow upon anything not beyond its ability to handle, or... could fall back behind the infantry following more slowly behind.”²² Bourke gave his highest praise to the logistical lines of the mule trains that supplied the Army and wrote that “there was a train of one hundred and sixty wagons and seven ambulances, with two hundred and nineteen drivers and attendants, and a pack train of four hundred mules cared by sixty-five expert packers,” that kept the Army supplied and enabled the continued fighting and pursuit of the insurgent forces.²³ During the winter, the Cheyenne insurgents chronically lacked supplies because they were accustomed to living off the land. The weather in Wyoming dramatically restricted their movements to pre-established villages holding their limited supplies. The U.S. Army knew that finding these nodes of supply were fundamental to ending the resistance.

Bourke describes how once General Mackenzie’s forces were alerted to the presence of a large Cheyenne village, the Army and their Native American scouts waited and attacked at night. They caught the insurgent force by surprise and watched as confusion reigned. Bourke’s account describes brutal fighting, with Shoshone scouts scalping Cheyenne warriors during hand-to-hand

²¹ Peter Cozzens, *The Earth Is Weeping: The Epic Story Of The Indian Wars For The American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016), 112.

²² Bourke, *Mackenzie's Last Fight With The Cheyennes*, 6.

²³ *Ibid*, 18.

fighting.²⁴ General Mackenzie ordered the village to be burned after the Cheyenne had been beaten. The Army destroyed the vital food stores and seized a substantial number of horses, which had been part of a limited transportation network for the Cheyenne. These efforts denied movement for the insurgency and eliminated the ability to resupply, evade, move, and fight; thus, the insurgents were not able to retreat in sizeable numbers on horseback. The Army learned that, to reduce the enemy's movement, Indian Scouts were needed to discover the mobile village network used for trading, recruiting local aid, food resupply, and the acquisition of horses. As Cheyenne insurgent groups were killed or captured, Cheyenne civilians were moved to reservations, which prevented the reorganization and recruitment by insurgent bands.

In another account by Bourke, he wrote about his experiences in the 1883 spring counterinsurgency campaign against the Chiracahua Apache in the Sierra Madre. During this campaign, the U.S. Army used similar tactics to the Wyoming winter campaign by employing local Apache scouts with U.S. Army cavalry and infantry coordination and a continual supply line. This campaign became uniquely complex because the Chiracahua Apache retreated into Mexico and crossed international borders to raid American towns and Mexican villages. Their main operations were in Mexico, where they captured, enslaved, and sold Mexicans.²⁵ The Chiracahua Apache insurgent network established a base of operations on a tall plateau for a fortress of sorts, which was used to raid from and retreat to. During this campaign the U.S. Army learned about the need for coordination with international allies, which opened international partnerships with Mexican militias and military units and allowed for troop multiplication and conservation of U.S. troop strength and resources. This international partnership in counterinsurgency operations

²⁴ Bourke, *Mackenzie's Last Fight With The Cheyennes*, 30.

²⁵ John Bourke, *An Apache Campaign: In The Sierra Madre 1883* (Nashville: Big Byte Books, 2015), 5.

further allowed for the sharing of vital information, easier resupply, and more nodes of observation to track the Chiracahua Apache. The coordination of allied forces helped to confine the Chiracahua Apache on their plateau fortress, where thirst and hunger forced their surrender. These lessons of what I term, “annihilation tactics,” were effective in ending the Indian Wars, developing experience for the U.S. Army in counterinsurgency operations. These lessons were later carried into the Philippines counterinsurgency efforts by U.S. officers who served in both Cheyenne and Apache campaigns. The counterinsurgency lessons of the Indian Wars would be carried on into the Asian theater.

Near the end of the nineteenth century, America soon picked a war with the aging Spanish empire, because Spain held key naval ports in her colonial territories. War with Spain was presented to the American public as a bid to stop the brutal Spanish counterinsurgency in Cuba. For Spain was fighting a brutal counterinsurgency against a three-year Cuban uprising, which caused the American public to call for a military intervention into Cuba to aid the Cuban resistance.²⁶ The USS *Maine* was sent to observe Spanish operations and experienced a mysterious sinking on Feb 15, 1898 in Havana, Cuba.²⁷ American newspapers blamed Spain and reported news stories of a mine sinking the ship. The Spanish-American war became a unifying American international adventure, which furthered the goal of the U.S. founders for the country to become an official global empire. A quick conventional victory for the U.S. led to the American acquisition

²⁶ “*The Spanish-American War, 1898.*” Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute. U.S. Department of State. Accessed September 25, 2021. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/spanish-american-war>.

²⁷ “*Sinking of USS Maine.*” Naval History and Heritage Command. U.S. Navy. Accessed September 25, 2021. <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/wars-and-events/spanish-american-war/sinking-of-uss-maine.html>.

of Spain's overseas colonies. In the 1898 Treaty of Paris, the U.S. bought the Philippines for twenty million dollars and seized Puerto Rico and Guam, and Cuba became an American protectorate.²⁸

A new chapter began in U.S. military history, as the U.S. military was tasked with managing small wars of pacification in far-away territories. These pacification campaigns aimed to defeat local indigenous insurgencies and were initially the responsibility of the U.S. Army, who in turn produced joint operations with the U.S. Navy and the USMC. These global counterinsurgency operations grew, first in a bid to control the Philippines and later various Latin American nations as well. A need arose to generate a U.S. collection of learned and proven doctrines in counterinsurgency, as custom and officers' memories of past Native American campaigns became insufficient. The bureaucratizing of strategies and tactics regarding U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine was at hand and would grow.

²⁸ Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Picador, 2020), 90.

Chapter 2

Fifteen Years of War in the Philippines: Annihilation

“Work of this kind has its disagreeable side, which is the unavoidable killing of women and children; but it must be done, and disagreeable as it is, there is no way of avoiding it.”²⁹

Major General Leonard Wood, 1906, Moroland Campaign

With the dawning of the twentieth century, the U.S. public was not waning from its intensely expansionist goals for its own economic gain. The nation had claimed and pacified the West, acquired Alaska and Hawaii, and began a serious expansion of its navy. Industry in the American West had produced many growing economic ties to Asia, especially Chinese markets.³⁰ The need for islands and ports to resupply American ships and naval vessels on their routes to Asia became a crucial concern for American political leadership. Holding many of these key islands and ports was an aging Spanish imperial power, which was growing weaker due to internal economic chaos, political disputes, and revolts across its territories.³¹

U.S. imperialists of the day observed this weakening in the Spanish empire and hoped to use it to America’s advantage. The U.S. wanted tighter control over its Latin American neighbors;

²⁹ James Arnold, *The Moro War: How America Battled A Muslim Insurgency In The Philippine Jungle, 1902-1913* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011), 139.

³⁰ Thomas Cox, *Mills and Markets: A History of the Pacific Coast Lumber Industry to 1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 83-85.

³¹ David Silbey, *A War Of Frontier And Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899-1902* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 32.

to this end, it became involved in what became later categorized as the Banana Wars. In 1896, the U.S. was led by President William McKinley, who had an assistant Secretary of the Navy named Theodore Roosevelt, who would eventually become President. Two American goals now arose: The first was to attain strong naval ports for access and control of sea lanes, and the second was to maintain tight control of South American nations using a rigid interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. Theodore Roosevelt was deeply influenced by the renowned naval book *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* by Alfred Thayer Mahan. Mahan argued that the oceans of the world were large highways and whoever dominated these sea lanes of trade would control the world markets or in essence the world.³² Making America the naval guarantor of these sea lanes became paramount to Roosevelt, who desired the U.S. to replace the aging British empire on the sea.

For Roosevelt, all that was needed was a reason to obtain these key Spanish islands with their naval ports. A rallying cry for war with Spain arose due to the intensely brutal counterinsurgency operations that the Spanish army was conducting in Cuba. Under the Spanish Governor Valeriano Weyler, the *reconcentrado*, or reconcentration, was occurring before American shores.³³ The Spanish strategy was to force the Cuban population into concentration camps, creating a break of civilian support for the Cuban insurgents.³⁴ This concentration campaign was heavily reported in the American press, with news stories circulated about Americans living in Cuba being assaulted by the Spanish reconcentration actions. These concentration camps were under supplied in all facets for Cuban civilians and the conditions led to mass deaths from disease, starvation, and the brutality of mandatory relocation. American imperialists such as William Hearst, owner of the *New York Journal*, printed news articles

³² Silbey, *A War Of Frontier And Empire*, 23.

³³ *Ibid*, 32-33.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 32.

advocating the need for American military intervention and garnered wide American public support.³⁵ Hearst was able to rile up American fervor for support for war with Spain using emotional “yellow journalism.”³⁶ Even though the American congress was not yet willing to give a declaration of war, the U.S. Navy sent the USS Maine to monitor Spanish actions in Cuba.

The USS Maine, however, unexpectedly exploded in the Havana Harbor in Cuba on February 15, 1898.³⁷ American newspapers ran stories describing a Spanish mine destroying the Maine, with slogans of “Remember the Maine! To Hell with Spain!”³⁸ American public opinion would swing aggressively for war. Alongside these events in 1898, *National Geographic* explained that the U.S. had to “take its rightful position among the nations of the earth... The welfare of our nation lies largely in the development of our trade with the nations south of us and the countries of the Far East... our policy in the future must be an aggressive one.”³⁹ Congress granted the nation the war it desired, although it would write into the declaration of war with Spain a ban on the annexation of Cuba. Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, saw no ban on the American military taking other territories from Spain for the United States. He sent orders to Admiral George Dewey:

³⁵ “‘Shameful Treachery’: Hearst’s Journal Blames Spain.” George Mason University. Accessed September 27, 2021. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5471/>.

³⁶ “U.S. Diplomacy and Yellow Journalism, 1895–1898.” Office of the Historian. U.S. Department of State. Accessed September 27, 2021. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/yellow-journalism>.

³⁷ “Sinking of USS Maine.” Naval History and Heritage Command. U.S. Navy. Accessed September 25, 2021. <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/wars-and-events/spanish-american-war/sinking-of-uss-maine.html>.

³⁸ Witzenburg Frankie, Thomas Cutler, Walter Scott Meriwether, Robert Cray. “‘Remember the Maine, to Hell With SPAIN!’” U.S. Naval Institute. U.S. Navy, December 10, 2020. <https://www.usni.org/remember-maine-hell-spain>.

³⁹ Julie Tuason, “The Ideology of Empire in *National Geographic Magazine’s* Coverage of the Philippines, 1898-1908.” *Geographical Review* 89, no. 1 (1999): 34–53. <https://doi.org/10.2307/216139>.

“Secret and confidential Order: The Squadron except *Monocacy* to Hong Kong. Keep full of coal. In the event of declaration of war with Spain, it will be your duty to see that the Spanish squadron does not leave Asiatic coast and then offensive operations in Philippine Islands. Keep the *Olympia* until further orders. Signed Roosevelt.”⁴⁰

Along with this dispatch to attack the Philippines, orders to take Guam and Puerto Rico followed. The war with Spain was a quick conventional one that started on April 21st, 1898 and ended with American victory on August 13th, 1898.⁴¹ With the signing of the treaty of Paris between the U.S. and Spain, the U.S. retained Guam, Puerto Rico, and gained a protectorate in Cuba while purchasing the sovereignty rights to the Philippines.

With the war over, the U.S. found itself in a precarious position since it had armed and built-up rebel forces in the Philippines to help aid American forces in overthrowing Spanish rule. Today, there is a debate over whether the U.S. promised national independence to the Philippines once America won the war, in an effort to gain the support of the rebel leader Emilio Aguinaldo.⁴² None would not find it surprising if independence was promised, though it is debated. There was nonetheless a strong belief in the Filipino’s that American forces arrived to facilitate an independent Philippines; however, independence was not to be realized at the end of the Spanish American War. As the American flag rose over Manila and across the Philippines at the end of the war, a cold chill fell across former allies. At the end of the war, American forces numbered roughly

⁴⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, “Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt to Commodore George Dewey, Commander, ASIATIC Station, 2/26/1898.” Naval History and Heritage Command. U.S. Navy. Accessed September 27, 2021.

<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/publications/documentary-histories/united-states-navy-s/the-battle-of-manila/assistant-secretary-0.html>.

⁴¹ “Spanish American War.” Library of Congress, June 22, 2011.

<https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/intro.html>.

⁴² Silbey, *A War of Frontier And Empire*, 40-41.

14,000 Marines and soldiers in Manila, aided with a small capable U.S. fleet.⁴³ Confronting these U.S. forces were 30,000 Filipino rebel soldiers, which were a patch work of loosely connected militias.⁴⁴ A tense standoff occurred in Manila as the political realities came to light. Some American imperialists desired to only claim Manila with its surrounding areas. Indiana Senator Albert Beveridge argued the U.S. needed the entire archipelago, seeing it as a “self-supporting, dividend paying fleet, permanently anchored,” which could amplify American sea access to Asian ports. The Philippines could also be used to produce an un-tariffed sugar supply. Altogether, these elements would strengthen the American economy through an increasing market presence in China.⁴⁵

As the realization of American direct rule became apparent, the Filipino political and military leadership prepared for war, creating an umbrella network of militias called the Army of Liberation. On February 4th, 1899, a confrontation occurred between American soldiers on patrol and now Filipino insurgents.⁴⁶ After nearly a six-month standoff, an American soldier shot a Filipino insurgent who did not obey his order to stop, which was due in most likelihood to a misunderstanding in language. This event officially began the insurgent war in the northern islands of the Philippines, which raged from 1899 to 1902.⁴⁷

At first, American troops fought in their element as Aguinaldo waged a conventional war with the Filipino Army of Liberation. After substantial casualties were sustained on the Filipino

⁴³ Arnold James, *Jungle Of Snakes: A Century Of Counterinsurgency Warfare From The Philippines To Iraq* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010), 17.

⁴⁴ James, *Jungle Of Snakes*, 16-18.

⁴⁵ Jack McCallum, *Leonard Wood: Rough Rider, Surgeon, Architect of American Imperialism* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 201.

⁴⁶ James, *Jungle of Snakes*, 17.

⁴⁷ McCallum, *Leonard Wood*, 206.

side without costing the American forces any significant losses, he abandoned the use of conventional tactics. Aguinaldo dispersed his forces, command staff, and military resources across the northern islands of Luzon and Mindoro. He established an elusive shadow government that survived on the use of intimidation, terrorism, and forced indigenous taxation. This dispersion caused great difficulty for the U.S. military in their attempt to defeat the insurgents because of the geography. The Philippines is an archipelago with thousands of islands, some which are swimming distance apart and other islands miles apart.⁴⁸ Geography was craftily used to aid in the strategy of evasion for the Army of Liberation to continue fighting. Emilio communicated broad strategies to these independent cells, and even he did not know where they were. This approach permitted each cell to be separate and operate safely even if one cell was found and dismantled; however, this strategy was counterproductive for Aguinaldo because it made controlling the insurgents nearly impossible and restricted the pooling of forces for large engagements, even when it could have been advantageous.

During 1899 and 1900, Aguinaldo did not attempt a decisive victory against the U.S. forces, which he understood this to be impossible; instead, he hoped to influence the American public before the 1900 presidential election. President McKinley, a Republican, was up for reelection with his Vice President Theodore Roosevelt. The Democrat party put up William Jennings Bryan, who wanted to quickly let the Philippines become an independent country. The Democrat party platform that year framed the insurgent war as an American war of “criminal aggression, born of greedy commercialism.”⁴⁹ They argued that “no nation can long endure half republic and half empire. Imperialism abroad will lead quickly and inevitably to despotism at

⁴⁸ Silbey, *A War Of Frontier And Empire*, 5.

⁴⁹ Immerwahr, *How to Hide An Empire*, 95.

home.”⁵⁰ The Filipino insurgent forces envisioned that by increasing their attacks on Americans would drain resources and American lives, and the American voter would turn against those supporting the war effort. This result did not occur, because in 1900, President McKinley was reelected with a 52.5% voter support and 292 electoral votes, a slight increase over his first election in 1896.⁵¹ Crucially he was given even more Republican seats in congress, which indicated a public nod of support for the imperialists. The U.S. military could now escalate their fight to break the Filipino insurgency.

To defeat such a foe, the U.S. turned to the same tactics as the Spanish Empire and the Indian Wars. The Americans used the Spanish torture method known as the “water cure,” a form of water boarding where the victim is forced to consume massive quantities of water before intense pressure is put on the stomach, forcing the victim to vomit.⁵² This process was repeated as needed until the intelligence was gained. The tactic of using concentration camps began with the American military relocating many towns to “safe zones,” then proceeding to kill anyone found outside of these safe zones.⁵³ U.S. forces created in essence “free fire zones,” done in the aim of cutting off the insurgents from the civilian population’s support networks of food, money, and recruits. Captured insurgents were killed, and if a town was found to aid them, then it was burnt in its entirety. This scorched-earth policy would cut a deep scar through the northern and eventually the southern Philippines.

⁵⁰ Immerwahr, *How to Hide An Empire*, 95.

⁵¹ “*Presidential Election of 1900: A Resource Guide.*” Presidential Election of 1900. Library of Congress. Accessed September 27, 2021.

<https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/elections/election1900.html>.

⁵² Immerwahr, *How To Hide An Empire*, 99.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 57.

With civilian relocation to concentration camps, the U.S. military burned all the vacated villages or towns. The destruction of crops and poisoning of water wells were used to create a devastating famine outside of the concentration camps, thereby compelling civilians to evacuate the affected area and place themselves inside the camps. These camps were drastically under supplied, which showed the abysmal ability of the American military to feed, house, keep clean, and prevent disease. Death totals are debated, but some “estimated that 200,000 Filipinos died in the Philippine-American War. With an estimated 4,000 Americans losing their lives in fighting, which involved atrocities on both sides.” Ultimately, the total deaths from 1899 to 1902 are impossible to calculate.⁵⁴

Formerly persecuted religious minorities in the Philippines would prove the insurgency’s death nail. These Filipino communities became crucial informers regarding the inner workings of the village dynamics and opened a view into the workings of the Filipino shadow government created by the Liberation Army in many towns and cities. These areas had not been affected by the scorched earth policy. These Filipinos acted in like the Native American scouts; they provided critical insight into the invisible inner workings of the insurgency. Once a spy ring was established of Filipinos willing to work for the U.S. forces, American agents found local shadow governments and arrested anyone associated with them. Those arrested were tortured and further divulged other insurgents and hide outs. All insurgents were to be killed, and the hide outs destroyed. After these events, the shadow government and military of the Liberation Army crumbled. Emilio Aguinaldo surrendered in 1902 and joined the American government, where he worked to establish a Filipino

⁵⁴ Michael McGuire. “‘*Splendid Little War*’ Echoes Still.” Chicago Tribune. August 29, 2018. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1998-07-19-9807190112-story.html>.

government inside the American-led administration of the Philippines, and he lived on to witness the Philippines become an independent nation after World War II.

As the war in the north of the country ended, the southern island chains began a longer and more brutal insurgency. The Philippine Islands were not a united nation or even affected by the call for northern Filipino nationalism. Filipino was viewed as a northern island chain term, while many of the southern islands and tribes of the Philippines saw themselves as their own entities, loosely knit by family or religious relations. The terms “Philippines” and “Filipino” were impressed upon the island chain by Westerners. The northern islands, controlled and influenced by Manila, were largely Catholic, had an educated class, and were growing in commercial connections to Asian markets. Emilio Aguinaldo and his Liberation Army based their republican struggle on the original American founding fathers’ republican structure. The Liberation Army wanted an elitist group as the voting bloc, which held all political power and mostly adhered to the class dynamics established by the Spanish. They envisioned a structure of higher class, educated landowners, and merchants ruling the government, with a lower class of laborers uninvolved in political decisions. Aguinaldo rejected the idea of universal Filipino suffrage, which was ultimately detrimental to his cause because it alienated many Filipinos.

The American military and political leadership brought an entirely new political, cultural, and legal system to the Philippines, which began an economic restructuring aimed at producing a micro-United States. Developing the Philippines in the U.S.’s image was overwhelmingly unpopular with the Filipino educated elites but won over many in the labor class, and most importantly, formerly oppressed minorities. These events came coincided with an American public supporting U.S. economic expansion into Asia, generating a stable voting block for a D.C. political coalition to hold. This desire of the American public for expansionism and D.C. political stability

in the Republican party broke the feasibility and strategy of The Liberation Army long-term. This was tied to the ability of the U.S. Navy to increasingly patrol the water ways between the islands to further isolate the insurgency. The U.S. Navy prevented insurgent forces from uniting for attacks and coordinating resources and fighters, which drained insurgent morale.

After the surrender of the Liberation Army in 1902, President Roosevelt announced the end of the war in the Philippines.⁵⁵ Unknown to Roosevelt, the end of the northern conflict began a second and a longer insurgency in the southern island chains. These southern islands were of near complete Islamic following living under a mixture of indigenous culture and Islamic Sharia law. After the U.S. centralized power in Manila and pacified the north, they turned to enforcing American law across the entire archipelago and endeavored to embed American values of democratic-republicanism, individualism, culture, legal structuring, and commercialism in all areas of the Philippines. This approach proved difficult for the northern Catholic islands, which were integrated into the global economy. The question arose regarding how to implement American values in an extremely isolated island chain that was home to a war-prone population of Islamic fundamentalists and linguistically diverse peoples, who derived a substantial portion of their economy based on piracy and the slave trade. For the U.S. military this would prove an extremely challenging counterinsurgency task for the next eleven years.

From 1902 to 1913, the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps fought an especially bloody counterinsurgency and employed all the tactics of annihilation to disrupt the insurgent networks. The U.S. created a large constable unit of Catholic Filipinos from the northern islands that dramatically increased the American fighting strength in the southern islands. An all-American

⁵⁵ Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex* (New York: Random House, 2010), 184.

force formed the backbone and was supplemented with a sizable portion of Filipinos, which together endeavored to establish American law in the southern islands. The southern islanders rejected American sovereignty over the south, where the most significant issue regarded the ending of slavery. Slavery was deeply engrained into the diverse islander communities' economy and culture. Of the diverse southern communities, the longest resistance was from the Moros.

American political leaders in the Philippines had tolerated the practice of slavery under the 1899 Kiram-Bates treaty while they had been occupied in the north; however, the Americanization of the southern regions did not allow for such practices to continue.⁵⁶ The American goal was to make the Philippines an industrialized colony, which included building roadways and rail lines into the southern regions. This connection of the southern islands to the north rapidly altered the cultural, economic, and ecological makeup of the south, which produced the rapid movement of people and goods with the goal to build a growing Filipino market that desired American products. The campaign used Filipino settlements as a weapon, and constable Filipinos were given substantial portions of land, including any northern Catholic Filipino willing to relocate to the south.⁵⁷ These settlement actions angered local Moros and other Islamic tribes; as a result, many southerners joined insurgent movements to repulse this invasion of their homeland.

This situation produced a new American counterinsurgency operation in the south, which lasted long past 1902; however, American casualties were relatively light. This fact allowed American public opinion to largely forget about the conflict post 1902, which worked in D.C.'s favor. From 1903 to 1913, only 107 American service members, and 111 Filipino constables

⁵⁶ Arnold, *The Moro War*, 12.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 258.

died.⁵⁸ Americans forces injured in the campaigns were 1,706 and an unrecorded number of Filipinos.⁵⁹ The American goal was to hand over the governing of the southern region to the Filipino populace, which was possible only through a scorched-earth removal of hostile forces and insurgent supporting populations. Army General Leonard Wood was tasked with the southern operations, who stated openly his view of the U.S. campaign in the Moroland:

“The people of this valley have been so hostile and intractable for generations that I have decided to go thoroughly over the whole valley, destroying all warlike supplies, and dispersing and destroying every hostile force, and to destroy every “Cota” [a fortified village] where there is the slightest resistance. While these measures may appear harsh, it is the kindest thing to do.”⁶⁰

Filipino settlers were a constant aid in fighting and observing insurgent network activities, and they relayed key information to the Filipino constables and American military units. By 1913, the southern insurgent conflicts had ended, which brought relative peace across the American territory of the Philippines. Americanization, industrialization, and Filipino migration into the southern islands increased, promoting a growing unified call of nationalism which could not be denied. On July 4th, 1946, the Philippines gained its independence.⁶¹

The American military was engaged in combat operations in the Philippines from 1898 to 1913, finally ending the Spanish-American War’s consequences.⁶² For fifteen years, American political and military leaders managed an ever-shifting conflict zone in the island archipelago.

⁵⁸ Arnold, *The Moro War*, 248

⁵⁹ Ibid, 248.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 110.

⁶¹ Ibid, 259.

⁶² Ibid, 254.

American public support had held firm for the Republican party for the conflict's duration. U.S. military actions broke resistant southern cultures, organized economic integration of the Philippines, and brought the colony further into the American and global economy, which strengthened American political and military leaders in Manila. The northern Filipinos were allowed a role in assuming government positions and aligned themselves with the American mission to transform the southern islands. The U.S. carefully channeled a Filipino nationalist ideal after 1902, which helped to stifle insurgent claims in the north and aided in crushing the southern insurgency. Ultimately, the U.S. military was thus able to achieve victory in a fifteen-year insurgent war in an Asian nation.

The United States Marine Corps shortly after these experiences produced a classified *Small Wars Manual*, which was first published in 1921 and represented an analysis of the USMC's conflicts in Latin America and its operations in the Philippines. *Small Wars* outlined the pitfalls in future conflicts in the later 20th-century world. With the global proliferation of firearms, increases in the speed of transportation, and communication advancement, the U.S. victory in the Philippines and to a mixed degree in Latin America could not be assumed going forward. The manual states:

“with all the practical advantages we enjoyed in those wars, that experience must not lead to an underestimate of modern irregulars, supplied with modern arms and equipment. If Marines have become accustomed to easy victories over irregulars in the past, they must now prepare themselves for the increased effort which will be necessary to insure victory in the future. The future opponent may be well armed as they are; he will be able to concentrate a numerical superiority against isolated detachments at the time and place he

chooses; as in the past he will have a thorough knowledge of the trails, the country, and the inhabitants.”⁶³

These concerns became glaringly real with the production of the AK-47, which turned any insurgent into a light machine gunner. This development meant future campaigns of counterinsurgency required more time to complete, included higher casualties, and increased the difficulty to end successfully. Accomplishing such prolonged and deadly counterinsurgency operations into the future, however, would require the careful winning over of the American public’s will even more and generating an ever-stable political consensus in Washington.

The U.S. military learned key lessons from the Philippines, including a need to construct local allied forces to act as intermediaries; to direct the host nation’s public consensus on politics through strong political leadership in conjunction with U.S. leadership; and ample time. The U.S. military also learned it was possible to hide an insurgent conflict with light American casualties from the American public, which was made feasible by using the local/host nation forces to supplement a light American troop presence. A complicating factor was that technological advantages going forward would be mixed, as the proliferation of technology made insurgencies worldwide evermore coordinated, deadly, and capable. These lessons and realizations would be difficult for Washington D.C. and the U.S. military to digest, and past successes in U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine and tactics of annihilation would be difficult to maintain into future conflicts with the American public.

⁶³ *Small Wars Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 1940), 24.

Chapter 3

American Quagmire: Heavy Boot Print

“To defeat an insurgency, you have to know who the insurgents are - and to find that out, you have to win and keep the support of the people.”⁶⁴

Lieutenant Colonel John A. Nagl, *Learning To Eat Soup With A Knife*

With the end of World War II, the U.S. government and especially its military felt growing international responsibilities. The National Security Council Paper 68 began formulating a process of America upholding global stability, which generated the Truman Doctrine.⁶⁵ The Truman Doctrine aimed to support and defend U.S. allied nations against perceived communist subversion and expansion into these allies, specifically to prevent regime changes. The American public viewed themselves as champions of liberty, which enabled the enactment of long overdue civil rights reform to some degree. No longer would the American generations post-World War II want to see the U.S. as an empire, because in their eyes, imperial ambition among nations was to blame for both catastrophic world wars. Direct imperial rule thus became taboo by the 1960s, which prompted the U.S. to rebrand its external activity. The reinvention of terms and redevelopment of doctrines redefined the U.S. was and its global responsibilities. A new generation of young

⁶⁴ John Nagl, *Learning To Eat Soup With A Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons From Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), xiii.

⁶⁵ “*Objectives and Programs for National Security.*” America in Class. NSC 68: America’s Cold War Blueprint, 2015.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116191.pdf?v=2699956db534c1821edefa61b8c13ffe>.

Americans would soon grapple with how to deal with the nation's international image, responsibilities, and the U.S. military's behavior in America's counterinsurgency. A stark collision of ideas, doctrines, and different American generations would soon cause debate regarding the new direction of the U.S., which culminated around a nation called Vietnam.

The conflict in Vietnam was centered on late-French colonial rule in Indochina. After France's humiliating defeat in World War II, France sought to reassert itself in the world and hoped to hold its crumbling imperium in Indochina. Asian peoples were not blind to the events of an Asian imperial power, Japan, defeating the Western empires in World War II. Vietnam experienced the short-term self-government rule of the Viet Minh, with their political leader Nguyen Sinh Cung, commonly known Ho Chi Minh.⁶⁶ As the French consolidated power in Indochina post World War II, which forced the Viet Minh back into the mountains of Vietnam to again play a role as a shadow government and an insurgency.

The U.S., once a nominal ally of the Viet Minh during WW II, had helped train and equip the Viet Minh through the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).⁶⁷ The OSS gave crucial medical treatment to Ho Chi Minh, saving his life and boosting the Viet Minh insurgency against Japanese rule in Vietnam. Post-WWII and enthralled in the Cold War, the U.S. gave support to their demoralized French ally, who was chaffing in their newfound role as a lesser power in the world. Bruised French pride led them to commit tremendous resources, military equipment, and over 175,000 troops deployed to hold Indochina.⁶⁸ President Harry Truman assumed the responsibility

⁶⁶ William Duiker, *Sacred War: Nationalism and Revolution in a Divided Vietnam* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 45-52.

⁶⁷ Duiker, *Sacred War*, 44.

⁶⁸ Kelley Wayne, "France's Indochina Expeditionary Force." *History and Hardware of Warfare*, May 12, 2020. <https://weaponsandwarfare.com/2020/06/03/frances-indochina-expeditionary-force/>.

of being the financial backer of Western-allied regimes that resisted communist insurgencies. Beginning with the support for Greece's monarchy against communist insurgents, the U.S. began a dire trend of aiding allies, dictators, and non-democratic government coups against any deemed communists.⁶⁹ The French successfully sold the idea to President Truman that France was fighting an international communist conspiracy in Indochina. The Viet Minh were not viewed as an independence movement fighting against French imperialism. The Truman administration began to fund the French war effort in Indochina with increasing capital. America watched over six presidencies, a growing commitment in funds, military equipment, and American lives to the evolving Vietnam conflict.

In the 1950s, the American public was in the grip of McCarthyism and the Red Scare and felt powerless against communism in many ways. Public demand grew for a new, aggressive way to resist the growing power of the Soviet Union and its international communist conspiracies.⁷⁰ Americans believed that an international communist monolith was directed from Russia, and thus resisting and fighting communism grew in its political popularity. This public belief gave political incentive to begin dangerously escalating militarized interventions. Starting with President Dwight Eisenhower, the U.S. began to establish a growing military presence of CIA-backed "military advisors," based around the newly established Green Berets, deployed to the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam).⁷¹ The American goal was to help the newly established country of South Vietnam resist communist infiltration and aggression; meanwhile, the Democratic Republic of

⁶⁹ Robert McMahon, *The Cold War In The Third World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 27-46.

⁷⁰ David Hackworth, Julie Sherman, *About Face: The Odyssey Of An American Warrior* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 291.

⁷¹ Ken Burns, "*The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*." Amazon Prime, 2017. https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B0753XH4H2/ref=atv_yv_hom_c_unkc_1_2.

Vietnam's (North Vietnam) political leadership was worked to reorganize and mobilize their nation for the mission of fully reuniting Vietnam.

In 1954, a flagrantly rigged election in South Vietnam brought Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem to permanent power, and later, as President Diem, would fill his political cabinet with corrupt allies and friends.⁷² Due to the derailed vote for national reunification, South Vietnam faced internal emergencies ranging from ethnic and religious strife to the friction of urban and rural Vietnamese animosity, which fueled Viet Cong insurgent efforts in South Vietnam. In his book *The First Domino*, James Arnold described that the South Vietnamese government experienced the increasing strength and effectiveness of the National Liberation Front. Arnold “distinguished it from the Viet Minh: a contraction of Viet Nam Cong-San, or Vietnamese communist, the Viet Cong... to refer without distinction to both Southern and Northern Communists, in the belief that the latter controlled their southern brethren.”⁷³ The Viet Cong engaged in developing an insurgency in the South, which was aided by an increasingly organized North Vietnamese regular army and military aid received from the communist bloc, specifically from China.

From the middle of the 1950s, the U.S. increased its counterinsurgency presence in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in a growing secret war. America aimed to stymie the Viet Cong and the international communist agenda in Indochina due to the belief in a linkage to the Soviet Union. Holding the line here in these countries prevented other nations from falling under Soviet influence. Relying on the domino theory, President Eisenhower stated openly, “you have broader considerations, that might follow, what you call the falling domino principle, you have a row of

⁷² Herbert McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2017), 24-41.

⁷³ James Arnold, *The First Domino: Eisenhower, The Military, and America's Intervention in Vietnam* (New York: William Morrow and Company Inc., 1991), 330.

dominoes set up and you knock over the first one and what will happen to the last one is certainly that it will go over very quickly.”⁷⁴ Losing Vietnam represented one such domino. President Eisenhower reasoned that stopping communism in Asia became fundamental to prevent the U.S. from becoming a garrison state. This belief was strengthened by the perceived notion that North Vietnam was a controlled communist ally of Communist China and the Soviet Union. The American public and political belief was that stopping each domino from falling prevented the next nation from falling to communist control and ultimately impeded growing Soviet international dominance and a looming invasion of America.

Because the domino theory was engrained into the American public, American politicians paid close attention to it, stated openly by Senate minority leader Lyndon B. Johnson, “We have been caught bluffing by our enemies... Today it is Indochina, tomorrow Asia may be in flames. And the day after, the Western alliance will lie in ruins.” This quote shows the broad political support demanding aggressive U.S. action in response to perceived international communist aggression, which was focused on Vietnam at the time.⁷⁵ The Green Berets and the CIA became united in organizing plans to prevent a collapse of the South Vietnamese government due to the Viet Cong insurgency.

Through the Green Berets, the U.S. armed, trained, and led militias of indigenous tribes in Laos and Vietnam’s jungles and highlands. These forces would be backed up with tremendous amounts of air support in battling against Viet Cong supply routes, staging zones, and training camps. The Green Berets aimed to create a “force multiplier” effect in Indochina by seeking to use

⁷⁴ “*Eisenhower Explains the Domino Theory (1954)*.” The Cold War. Elite Cafemedia Publisher, March 24, 2018. <https://alphahistory.com/coldwar/eisenhower-explains-domino-theory-1954/>.

⁷⁵ Burns, “*The Vietnam War*.”

local forces to hamper Viet Cong actions instead of a conventional American force intervention. Developing fighters from the ostracized tribes were also a key intelligence source, acting as an early warning system for learning about Viet Cong troop movements into the South.

Building on these Eisenhower administration efforts, President John F. Kennedy established a Special Forces Command in 1961, leading to a new military organization called the Special Operation Group (SOG), which was the precursor to today's Special Operations Command.⁷⁶ This group was used for the extreme missions of deep infiltration into communist-controlled territory in Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam. The SOG operated counterinsurgency campaigns built around force multiplication from the locals and targeted the Viet Cong's means of organization and movement through sabotage. These campaigns were combined with an early attempt by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to "win the hearts and minds" of rural South Vietnamese areas.⁷⁷ The goal of USAID was to establish friendly relations with locals to help build an integrated Southern economy and to prevent or hinder the economic draw of the Viet Cong. There was a strong belief in Modernization Theory that through technology, economic growth, and integration into the global economy, South Vietnam would remain a Western-liberalizing ally. Each American program was a strategy to gain local sight to see the insurgents. These campaigns of defense, organization, and winning the hearts and minds were spearheaded by the CIA. By the end of the Eisenhower administration, there was an estimated seven hundred military advisors in South Vietnam.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ John Plaster, *SOG: The Secret Wars Of America's Commandos In Vietnam* (Boston: Dutton Caliber, 2010), 17-74.

⁷⁷ Plaster, *SOG*, 272.

⁷⁸ "Military Advisors in Vietnam." Military Advisors in Vietnam: 1963, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, 2021.

The U.S. enjoyed a moderate level of success by the end of the 1950s against the Viet Cong, but this was undermined by the tyrannical, unpopular, and urban-centered government of Diem. In Diem's "denounce the communists" campaign, a series of mass incarcerations, show trials, and summary executions took place, which largely effected rural zones.⁷⁹ Southern police organizations from the city polls alienated the rural populous through corruption in these proceedings. Rural hatred continued to grow from the 1962 Strategic Hamlet Program, which sought to concentrate rural Vietnamese into fortified zones to be policed, defended, centralized, and controlled in these small hamlets.⁸⁰ These efforts failed as local chiefs inside the hamlets reported to American media reporters that more troops were needed to make the people secure.⁸¹ The Viet Cong entered the hamlets at night to tax, recruit, intimidate, plan operations, and kill Viet Cong dissenters. The hamlets became the opposite of their intended design. Green Beret units lived in some rural villages, creating small outposts to help curtail the problem of the Viet Cong night operations. However, the attempted cooperation with the South Vietnamese militias never came to a point of stopping the Viet Cong rural operations and intimidation tactics.

The American counterinsurgency failure resulted from not understanding that the war was largely a civil war. Many families in these rural zones had relatives in the Viet Cong. The rural areas of Vietnam were a fluid zone of family relations with the "enemy," which the Viet Cong exploited, and they frustrated the actions of the Green Berets. The rural Vietnamese viewed the urban South Vietnamese government as foreign, corrupt, and lacked respect or relationship with the rural populations. Family divides as well as rural and urban divides, created a compounding

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/education/teachers/curricular-resources/high-school-curricular-resources/military-advisors-in-vietnam>.

⁷⁹ Arnold, *The First Domino*, 362-366.

⁸⁰ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 37-38.

⁸¹ Burns, "Vietnam War."

complexity to an already dubious insurgent war. Green Berets complained about South Vietnamese rural forces giving off “accidental” shots, or loud coughs and strange sounds while on patrol, in most likelihood, to warn the nearby Viet Cong.⁸² Agreements were arranged between some rural zones and the Viet Cong. The Viet Cong understood the need for friendly relations with the rural populace or at least for keeping their relationship intact through intimidation, bribery, and other means.

In 1961, President Kennedy found himself through the media to be embarrassed and bullied by the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev.⁸³ Kennedy had the failure of the Bay of Pigs on his hands and dealt with the chaos of the Cuban Missile Crisis. He wanted a “win” against the communist world; thus, Vietnam became his possible source of redemption. He expanded the Green Beret and military advisor presence to over 16,000 by the time of his death in 1963.⁸⁴ This advisor increase was tied closely with sending helicopters and Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs). These vehicles were central to the new, aggressive counterinsurgency tactics against the Viet Cong. Kennedy expressed in a speech the new communist form of insurgency: “This is another type of warfare, new in its intensity, ancient in its origin. War by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration instead of aggression.”⁸⁵ He broke from the past WWII mindset of large conventional warfare to a small, aggressive, mechanized force led by the Green Berets and using air power and host nation forces.

⁸² Burns, “*Vietnam War.*”

⁸³ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 10-21.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 37-41.

⁸⁵ John Kennedy, “*Remarks at West Point to the Graduating Class of the U.S. Military Academy, June 6, 1962*” YouTube: Oak Ridge Jet, 2009. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WSHVh-ZtMs>.

This secret war of the Green Berets was not supposed to be American led, or so the American public was told. This had been a lie from the beginning since American forces had been deeply embedded into indigenous militias, village defense, raiding the Viet Cong, and leading the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) troops in battle.⁸⁶ By 1962, the American military's mission began the failed process of Americanization of the Vietnam war, led by the expanding control of the newly established Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV).⁸⁷ MACV centralized pentagon control and pulled the direction of the war away from the CIA. The CIA had previously focused on the rural areas of South Vietnam, where the enemy was actively recruiting and organizing forces. Up to 1962, success was occurring for the American's and South Vietnamese, and this worried the North Vietnamese and Chinese. China supplied the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese government efforts, and this aid from the wider Communist world shifted the American political and military leadership away from the successful CIA/Green Beret-led counterinsurgency efforts. After the death of President Kennedy, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) assumed the presidency and role of leading the Vietnam War effort. Retaining the former members of Kennedy's cabinet, new pressure arose from these men and MACV officers to place conventional forces in Vietnam. The war-weary LBJ listened, and more conventional troops swiftly became the answer to the growing conventional campaign failures, leaving the CIA/Green Beret-led counterinsurgency campaign behind in favor of an American conventional war in Vietnam.

There are multiple ways to win counterinsurgency campaigns, although each route requires various levels of lives lost, materials, and political commitment to win. The change to conventional

⁸⁶ Nagl, *Learning To Eat Soup with a Knife*, 118-124.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

war, however, arose due to the past successes of conventional forces in WWII and Korea along with the D.C. political desire to look anticommunist to the American public, which desired strong anticommunist actions. These changes overlooked the required American blood that these new conventional strategies would require. The administration ignored the successes in the Green Beret and CIA's secretly run counterinsurgency, which occurred in the rural communities. This LBJ change to a visible, conventional war with large troop formation battles became an anti-communist show for the American public. Conventional war doctrines harkened back to the tactics of the Philippines and Western campaigns of the late nineteenth century. This counterinsurgency doctrinal shift would prove to be intolerable to an ever-growing section of America.

The changes that occurred in the 1960s American public mindset contrasted with the American generations that sanctioned the Philippine and American Indian War campaigns. Racism and dehumanization had played a vital role in direct rule imperialism, viewing colonialized people as savages or, at best, as children. The American Civil Rights Movement played a leading role in dramatically changing the young American public opinion, especially post WWII. The American public experienced a growing inability to separate emotions for American war efforts and for Vietnamese victimized by the war effort. Past wars of American imperialism included American antiwar and anti-imperialist organizations that were vocal but fell on deaf public ears, but this was changing as a resurgence of anti-imperialist writings grew. One source of antiwar rhetoric that became popular at the time was from retired Major General Smedley Butler, a two-time Medal of Honor recipient. He gave a renowned speech, *War is a Racket*, outlining war's profiteering of American imperialism:

“Until 1898 we didn't own a bit of territory outside the mainland of North America... Then we became internationally minded. We forgot, or shunned aside, the advice of the Father

of our country...We went to war. We acquired outside territory...It would have been far cheaper (not to say safer) for the average American...to stay out of foreign entanglements. For a few, this racket, like bootlegging and other underworld rackets, brings fancy profits, but the cost of operations is always transferred to the people - who do not profit.”⁸⁸

American antiwar and anti-imperialist groups initially received limited political or public backing; however, by the 1960s and the arrival of the draft, these past works and ideas became more publicly mainstream, which became American political power.

Prior to WWII, the American public had been embedded with White Nationalism, which included racism and dehumanization needed for conducting imperial counterinsurgency efforts of annihilation, which gave the American public the ability to tolerate the brutal tactics used against dehumanized indigenous peoples. In campaigns of brutality, the use of concentration camps, torture, starvation and thirst as weapons, and mass killing on non-white groups were tolerated by the American public. By the 1960s, this tolerance changed, and the required racism and dehumanization needed for direct rule imperialism were viewed as similar to Nazi Fascism and became untenable in the post-WWII period. The doctrines that D.C. and MACV chose to win the Vietnam War failed, in part because leaders did not appreciate the nature of the change that the American public had undergone to reject anything similar to direct rule imperialism counterinsurgency doctrine operations.

After the confusing or nefarious 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident involving North Vietnamese's naval vessels attacking American naval vessels and a false radar reading of a second attack soon after. President Johnson decided on a massive conventional troop increase and received

⁸⁸ Smedley Butler, *War Is A Racket* (Seattle: Loki Publishing, 2021), 9.

congressional authorization for a dramatic uptick in military operations in the Vietnam conflict.⁸⁹ Congress gave the President the authorization to prevent a communist takeover of South Vietnam and permitted bombing of North Vietnam. A bombing campaign of gradual pressure began called Operation Rolling Thunder.⁹⁰ This air operation was an increasing number of bombing attacks on industrial zones, military bases, troop formations, and any materials deemed useful for the Viet Cong's war effort in the South.⁹¹ These large-scale bombing operations in the North also produced massive civilian deaths.

The conventional American infantry units moving into the Vietnam conflict were largely young inexperienced men, who were often drafted for the war and used tactics of food starvation and village destruction.⁹² U.S. Army and Marine units were sent to burn the food supplies of rural villages that were deemed to be aiding the communist insurgency, which included orders to burn so-called hooches in villages that were deemed aiding the Viet Cong. News reporters followed the progress of U.S. conventional forces' actions, and Americans at home watched the war's news and developments every day on television. Along with mounting scenes of brutality, they saw Americans burning rural Vietnamese villages, U.S. air power causing mass destruction, and the conventional war contributing to civilian deaths in the North.

Alongside these events, some of the war's most heinous accounts came from the American unit code named Tiger Force of the 101st airborne.⁹³ Tiger Force was a reconnaissance unit that was sent into the deep jungles of Vietnam to beat the Viet Cong at their own insurgent game. Some

⁸⁹ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 107-108.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 226-227.

⁹¹ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 226-227.

⁹² Nagl, *Learning To Eat Soup With A Knife*, 151-187.

⁹³ "Winter Soldier" YouTube. United Kingdom: BBC, 1972.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZt5IRkjY-E>.

former soldiers of Tiger Force gave accounts of rape, mass murder, mutilation, and dismemberment of Vietnamese villagers, and the use of torture.⁹⁴ The American public and media drew a direct connection to Nazi Storm trooper actions. Was not America better than this? These actions were deemed actions of an empire, though America was not an empire. Or was it? Empire was now unacceptable, and the war tactics of direct imperial action were being rejected by the American public.

American troops continued to increase in number in Vietnam and led the war, being termed as an Americanization of the Vietnam war.⁹⁵ Which now saw U.S. servicemembers lead, direct, and die for the Vietnamese war effort. This demand for troops would require a growing number of Americans to be drafted into the war, which was a key friction point in the relations with the Vietnamese people. Young drafted American troops did not have the same training in the language, patience, or goals of the Green Berets, who worked to build relationships with locals, gaining insight into local communities and intelligence for American forces to see the insurgents. American conventional forces were quickly trained to fight and kill an enemy, and the troops arriving in Vietnam could not recognize the difference between the enemy and the local people, which shaped the common feeling that all Vietnamese were the enemy. In addition, using the draft interrupted many young Americans' lives, thereby distressing families with the possibility of their sons dying in a far-off war zone. The draft meant removing men from college using a rank structure at universities, and it increased racial tensions as more minorities were being drafted compared to the white population.⁹⁶ President Johnson knew these failures were coming to a head, and he was conflicted, speaking the quiet part out loud, he said: "We don't have a prayer of staying in Vietnam.

⁹⁴ Burns, "Vietnam War."

⁹⁵ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 100.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 254-285.

These people hate us, but I can't give up a piece of territory like that to the Communists and then get the people to reelect me."⁹⁷ The President understood that American actions were alienating the Vietnamese populace, but that still enough American public and political party winds called for war. These events fueled the anti-war movement and alienated a growing portion of the American public against the Vietnam War; however, until 1968, did the American public's will turn generally anti-war, in the aftermath of the North Vietnamese Tet Offensive.

The released classified documents of the Pentagon Papers exposed the internal controversy about the failing conventional strategy. In a 1965 memo created by Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton to then Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, McNaughton noted that: "The situation in general is bad and deteriorating. The VC [Viet Cong] have the initiative. Defeatism is gaining among the rural population, somewhat in the cities, and even among the soldiers - especially those with relatives in rural areas."⁹⁸ Seeing the current strategies as failing, McNaughton explained that: "U.S. aims were the following: 70% to avoid a humiliating US defeat, 20% to keep SVN [South Vietnam] territory from Chinese hands, and 10% to permit the people of SVN to enjoy a better, freer way of life."⁹⁹ The aim was to keep U.S. prestige intact rather than finding a successful conclusion to the war, which highlights the public's and political incentive creating U.S. military doctrine for the war. The top leaders of the Pentagon were not drawing from the Vietnam battlefield to fix the failing counterinsurgency doctrine but public perception.

⁹⁷ Kent Germany, "Lyndon B. Johnson: Foreign Affairs." Miller Center. University of Virginia, June 16, 2020, <https://millercenter.org/president/lbjohnson/foreign-affairs>.

⁹⁸ Mike Gravel, *The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United States Decision making on Vietnam* (Boston: Beacon Pr., 1971), 694-702.

⁹⁹ Gravel, *The Pentagon Papers*, 694-702.

The Americanization of the Vietnam War was akin to a strategy of swinging a sledgehammer in the dark hoping to hit an elusive target, and it caused a mounting level of destruction on civilians. This development was entwined with a continued effort to defeat the insurgency by using brutal tactics seen in rural Vietnamese village annihilation, including starvation, torture on suspected Viet Cong members, and mass population movement into hamlets, which was further complicated by America's ties to a corrupt and fractured political system as an ally in the South. These failings would not be tolerated for long by the American public, and the conflict's variables again depreciated the timeline for such conventional strategies and tactics to succeed. Americans had tolerated a volunteer force which used a shield of deniability around its use of brutal tactics, unlike the drafted army and nightly news showing the war's continuance to the American public, which was unsustainable. For the eventual success of conventional tactics of annihilation to work in Vietnam required increasing amounts of American blood, and crucially, more time. However, more time was politically unsustainable, for an observable war runs on a tight timeline for the American public. The author Phillip Davidson explains in his book *Vietnam At War*, this American time restraint in war. Quoting a senior intelligence officer on his view for America's will for war using a ratio to time, America has an "incapacity to sustain a long, unfocused, inconclusive, and bloody war far from home, for an unidentified or ill-defined national objectives."¹⁰⁰ The political structure grew ever aware of the American public's internal clock.

Army General William Westmoreland, who was in charge of MACV, did not appreciate this point of time and American patience. Describing to the American Congress in a joint address in April 1967, he sought "the crossover point", where American forces were killing more enemies

¹⁰⁰ Phillip Davidson, *Vietnam At War: The History: 1946-1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 798.

than the Viet Cong could replace, in the drive for “body count”.¹⁰¹ The importance of body count was highlighted in his exchange with visiting Senator Frits Hollings in Saigon. Westmoreland explained: “We are killing these people at a rate of ten to one.” Hollings replied: “Westy, the American people don’t care about the ten, they care about the one.”¹⁰² The drive for a body count created a false aim for Westmoreland and MACV, which developed an incentive for American units to kill as many Vietnamese as could be found and inflate figures of killed enemy combatants, breeding false statistics for decisional basis. Westmoreland’s strategy sought to produce quantifiable diagrams of “data” that could prove to the American people that the U.S. military was winning the war. It was often mentioned that “the light can be seen at the end of the tunnel,” but this narrative soon backfired on President Johnson and MACV in 1968.¹⁰³

The Viet Cong were not deterred by the lopsided kill ratios, their own civilian death counts, their nation in rubble from the bombing, or their brutal tactics of pacifying the rural Southern areas in their control.¹⁰⁴ A final campaign was fashioned by the North called the Tet Offensive, which involved large numbers of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese regulars, who were stationed in the south and were secretly stockpiling weapons and ammunition.¹⁰⁵ A farce truce was declared for the lunar holiday of Tet, which the North Vietnamese leadership believed was the moment for

¹⁰¹ “General William Westmoreland: Report to the Congress - April 28, 1967.” YouTube. Joseph Hewes, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNbOti9kGNQ>.

¹⁰² Craig Miller, “The Vietnam War: The River Styx.” The United Methodist Church, September 20, 2017. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/blog/the-vietnam-war-3-the-river-styx>.

¹⁰³ David Coleman, “Lyndon B. Johnson and The Vietnam War.” Presidential Recordings Digital Edition. University of Virginia, 2014. <https://prde.upress.virginia.edu/content/Vietnam>.

¹⁰⁴ Duiker, *Sacred War*, 69-88.

¹⁰⁵ Qiang Zhai, *China & The Vietnam Wars: 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: Chapel Hill, 2000), 168-179.

striking a fatal blow against the South Vietnamese and American forces, which would inspire a mass civilian uprising of the “oppressed” South Vietnamese.

Beginning on January 31, 1968, a tidal wave of Viet Cong attacked nearly every major city in South Vietnam.¹⁰⁶ This military operation was a strategic abysmal failure for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese, who incurred around 40,000 casualties including 30,000 killed.¹⁰⁷ This North Vietnamese military failure, however, provided the political change needed in the U.S. by convincing the American public that the war in Vietnam was unwinnable. 1968 would be the turning point for the American public, which led to the American political structure to seek an end to its involvement in Vietnam. Which I pin on the turning away from a secret military counterinsurgency effort to a conventional war, which failed from its unacceptable counterinsurgency tactics of annihilation and human cost, which repulsed the American public; further complicated by a wavering and corrupt South Vietnamese ally. All these events reinforced the source of the American counterinsurgency doctrine creation employed in Vietnam as being from a three-way American conversation, where the American public held the final say.

The difficult lesson of defeat in Vietnam revealed doctrinal misunderstandings that the U.S. military needed to analyze deeply. They learned that there were limits to the American public’s will, which could be affected by recent developments in media technology, rules regarding press access, high U.S. servicemember casualties, changes in the American public’s racial consciousness, and the political controversy of the draft. The military realized the existence of an American public internal clock for visible wars and comprehended the change from the earlier

¹⁰⁶ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 333.

¹⁰⁷ Duiker, *Sacred War*, 213.

successes in the counterinsurgency war. These pressures forced an evolution in U.S. counterinsurgency doctrines thereafter into the twentieth century.

The strategy of turning attention away from the rural countryside was a devastating mistake. Marine Lt. General Victor Krulak explained that the village was central and missed by MACV: “the real war is amongst the people, not the highlands.”¹⁰⁸ Westmoreland’s tactic of finding and destroying the enemy’s large troop formations in “search and destroy” missions had not paid off.¹⁰⁹ This failure related to the political failure of being unable to clean up the corruption of the South Vietnamese government, which crucially alienated rural populations, who were the key support network for the Viet Cong. This village network of support, transportation, recruitment, and concealment enabled the Tet Offensive possible, and ultimately broke the American public’s will.

The inability to uncover the insurgent networks in rural Vietnam was the primary cause for losing the war. This American blindness to the insurgent network contributed to the hatred and lashing out of American troops at the Vietnamese, who were not all the enemy, and produced elements that led to the American public’s repulsion to the war. The political structures in D.C. thus recognized the untenability of staying in Vietnam after 1968.

The U.S. military and D.C. leadership began a soul-searching mission for understanding the successes and failures in Vietnam, which began the next evolution in U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine. The successes of the CIA and Green Berets working inside the rural indigenous village framework with urban host nation’s forces, before the conventional forces of Americanization failure, became better understood. If American troop formations could not be deployed to the

¹⁰⁸ “*July–December 1967 - The Vietnam War.*” Vietnam: A Military History, Erenow, 2018, <https://erenow.net/ww/vietnam-war-an-intimate-history/5.php>.

¹⁰⁹ McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 115-135.

conflict, developing the same standard of unit capabilities by the host nation's forces became the goal in professionalization. This strategy would keep the American public largely uninterested in conflicts due to low American casualties and would generate more time for the U.S. military to operate. Time was realized to be a key ingredient or military resource in American counterinsurgency campaigns.

Chapter 4

Loss of Control: Light Boot Print

“Once again, for the first time since the mid-1950's, a small group of American military advisers has been placed at the outer edges of American foreign policy, charged with the task of helping the government of a strategic country defeat a communist-led insurgency, described by the Administration as a threat to the security of the United States.”¹¹⁰

Lydia Chavez, *The New York Times*, July 24, 1983

The U.S. military and D.C. learned a litany of stark lessons from its military experiences in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. The American public expressed that they did not want their sons drafted to fight poorly articulated, long, foreign wars; nevertheless, the public accepted secret wars executed by professional warriors of special forces who offered a wall of deniability, which had been successful in the early Vietnam campaigns of the 1950s. These tactics allowed for a longer American presence in a foreign war and occurred without significant public discussion or active resentment. The time span of a war became understood to be a crucial element by the American leadership. Once U.S. wars turned conventional and within public view, the length of time that the conflict was acceptable to the American public became noticeably short.

¹¹⁰ Lydia Chavez. “*Footnotes To An Embassy 'Grim Gram'.*” (*The New York Times*. July 23, 1983).

There were strategies to gain more time for prosecuting a counterinsurgency war, including building walls of deniability, and using top-secret classifications that were undisclosed due to “national security” interests. These obstacles required time to be penetrated by the American public, who faced uncertainty in determining what was reality and what was hearsay, which allowed for a longer timetable for military actions to take place. The late 1970s brought a new phase in the Cold War, where deniability, secrecy, training, and arming foreign forces with embedded U.S. Special Forces became the doctrine of choice in counterinsurgency in Latin America. Latin America had been the site of long past American interventions, such as by President Theodore Roosevelt’s “gunboat diplomacy” in Latin American nations. The USMC’s *Small Wars Manual* was a product of the experiences of the Marine Corps occupations and interventions in handling “banana republics” (aiming to protect American citizens’ property) or actual national occupations such as in Nicaragua, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and elsewhere in Latin America. By the 1970s, a new phase of American interventionism arrived.

By the 1970s and 1980s, Latin America became a vital role in American counterinsurgency campaigns focused against Cuban trained and sponsored rebel groups. These small wars of influence with Havana led the U.S. to form The School of the Americas in Panama in the American-controlled corridor.¹¹¹ This school was the training hub for most Latin American officers selected for top commands in their home nations. The CIA used the school to generate close ties or “ins” with these future military leaders, which allowed close lines of communication and coordination for the overthrow of governments in Latin American who became too strongly associated with communism, including for example, a Chilean officer coup which was an

¹¹¹ Russell Crandall, *The Salvador Option: The United States in El Salvador 1977-1992* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 39-40.

American-sponsored overthrow of a leftist government in Chile.¹¹² In addition, American support aided Brazilian officers in a successful coup against their country's government.¹¹³ Similar U.S. support flowed into El Salvador, resulting in a trinity of U.S. support in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. Focusing on El Salvador, the U.S. doubled down on its portrayal of preventing Latin America from falling to communism through the domino theory.

In this U.S. bid to stop the national dominoes from falling, alongside the officer training programs created in Panama, the U.S. developed local-enlisted units for Latin American nations, which were American trained, equipped, and funded.¹¹⁴ The successful use of U.S.-trained indigenous troops was observed in Columbia against communist insurgents.¹¹⁵ Additional training took place for other Latin American units at Fort Benning, Georgia, which was and is, the "Home to the Infantry" and where the U.S. Army trains its infantry, airborne, and Ranger units.¹¹⁶ A chronic problem Latin American nations faced was a military force with extremely poor or non-existent training. On the insurgent side, many pro-communist rebel groups traveled to Cuba to train, organize, and become equipped. A large portion of this military hardware supplied to them by Cuba was the American weaponry that was left behind in Vietnam after the U.S. withdrawal. The Eastern European Communist bloc also sent funds and resources to Havana, which were left to Cuba to funnel, distribute, and train insurgent forces as it saw fit in Latin America.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 116-120.

¹¹³ Brands, *Latin America's Cold War*, 60.

¹¹⁴ Mark Danner, *The Massacre At El Mozote* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 41-60.

¹¹⁵ Crandall, *The Salvador Option*, 340.

¹¹⁶ "Fort Benning." Fort Benning: U.S. Army Infantry School. U.S. Army, August 23, 2021, <https://www.benning.army.mil/Infantry/>.

¹¹⁷ Crandall, *The Salvador Option*, 173.

El Salvador is a tiny nation in Central America which was formally established in 1524 as an Imperial Spanish colony and for a time part of Mexico, but declared its independence in 1841.¹¹⁸ For over 300 years, the Spanish empire molded a rigid agrarian society run by a small elite caste of landowners. These authoritarian oligarchs ran their plantations as tiny fiefdoms and created local militias to police, control, and regulate their peasant-class field hands. Indigo and coffee were the crops of choice from the 19th century onward, which spawned a boom-and-bust economy for El Salvador with frequent, sporadic peasant revolts occurring during economic down turns. A change occurred in the beginning of the 20th century with these sporadic revolts through the proliferation of technology that could connect opposition groups. Due to the growing coordination of these peasant revolts and the potential for political change, the El Salvadoran government's level of lethality grew against these internal insurgency conflicts.

In the 1920s, Marxist ideology began to spread within El Salvadoran academic circles. A man named Augustin Farabundo Marti Rodriguez embraced such Marxist ideas and zealously preached as a revolutionary leader in the western El Salvadoran provinces.¹¹⁹ With the decline of the El Salvadoran economy during the Great Depression, many small coffee farmers and peasant field hands were won over to this Marxist revolutionary, which began the first communist revolution in Latin America in 1932.¹²⁰ This communist insurgency erupted for a few days, who seized towns and villages, killing local politicians, plantation owners, and landlords. This communist revolution did not get far because the revolutionaries were poorly equipped with few

¹¹⁸ Crandall, *The Salvador Option*, 15.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 16-19.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 18.

firearms, and their militia forces were not organized to a point to fight a straight-out war with the El Salvadoran military.

General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez was a fascist-styled strong man who had recently seized political power in El Salvador. Martinez mobilized the military to crush the communist insurgency and he commenced *La Matanza*, known in English as “The Massacre.” It is unknown how many were killed, but it is estimated that 20,000 to 30,000 El Salvadorans were killed in La Matanza.¹²¹ Those killed were not all communist insurgents, as some were sympathizers of connected civilians and many just happened to live in certain zones that were in revolt, but all were slaughtered. This historical precedence of violently purging the communist revolution in 1932 set the stage for a near repeat of the conflict half a century later, which was complicated, however, due to the El Salvadoran government working with the U.S. military.

El Salvador’s economy changed little by the late 1960s, because a strong oligarchy of wealthy property owners, industrialists, and plantation owners known as *La Catorce*, (the fourteen families) ran the nation, who had no desire to reform or diversify the economy.¹²² They endeavored to keep a concentrated hold on political power, fearing any political change which might affect land ownership and the political status quo. The oligarchs reinforced their coalition with paramilitary squads of military veterans and willing thugs, nicknamed *El Orden*, or “The Order,” who would intimidate, harass, beat, and kill as directed.¹²³ This situation continued to drastically divide the economic standing between El Salvadorans.

¹²¹ Crandall, *The Salvador Option*, 19.

¹²² *Ibid*, 47.

¹²³ Brands, *Latin America’s Cold War*, 182.

In Russell Crandall's book *The Salvador Option*, named after the Pentagon's code name for the American operation in El Salvador, he described that "the Salvadoran oligarchy considered itself the architects of El Salvador, whose industriousness allowed them to create something out of nothing in this tiny, overpopulated...country."¹²⁴ He quotes a wealthy Salvadoran oligarch to explain this engrained belief, "our entrepreneurial spirit is the country's only natural resource... without us the country will sink into the grave."¹²⁵ With this staunch outlook and belief in their position, the elites of the country would stop at nothing to "save" El Salvador from the idea of an international communist agitation. The communist insurgents were coordinating and training in Havana and obtaining American military hardware from the communist world. The oligarchs swept under the rug the obvious need for reforms in the economy, the legal system, political diversification, and pervasive corruption. This economic and political environment encouraged many to view the insurgency as the only path to national reform.

A new form of Catholicism in Latin America further complicated these events. In El Salvador's history, the Catholic Church had been a strong ally of the oligarchy, but times were changing by the 1960s. In this nation's battle of ideologies entered a militant style of Catholicism from the Jesuits, in the form of Liberation Theology.¹²⁶ Who saw poverty, ignorance, and oppression from governments, as the Church's responsibility to dismantle. This belief was an outgrowth of the Vatican II (1962-1965) decisions, which reformed a litany of Catholicism's older doctrines. Adherents to Liberation Theology were to liberate the people from these societal "sins" in the belief that the people would then turn in mass to Christianity and salvation in Jesus Christ

¹²⁴ Crandall, *The Salvador Option*, 48.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 48.

¹²⁶ Matt Eisenbrandt, *Assassination Of A Saint: The Plot To Murder Oscar Romero and The Quest To Bring His Killers To Justice* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 43.

once freed from these local oppressions. Once the civil war began, Liberation Theology blurred the lines between religion and politics, which plagued El Salvador with an epidemic of paramilitary assassinations against religious leaders and followers.

Countering the insurgencies of communism in Latin America had been a long-term American effort. The Eisenhower administration had begun funding allied military and police forces.¹²⁷ The reason was to build core institutions in nations that brought stability from professional police and military forces, without needing direct American intervention. U.S. policy during President Franklin Roosevelt's leadership broke from the Banana Wars strategy of direct American intervention in the 19th and early 20th century to instead follow the Good Neighbor Policy of less American interventionism.¹²⁸ During the Kennedy administration, the before mentioned Latin American U.S. military institutions and partnerships received increased funding, a roughly fifty percent increase.¹²⁹ By 1961, the U.S. established the Special Forces Group in Latin America with the aim of aiding nations with communist rebel groups.¹³⁰ Many U.S. Special Forces veterans returning from Vietnam rotated through and trained Latin American troops how to resist communist influences externally and how to neutralize insurgent movements internally.

During the administration of President Jimmy Carter, the uptick in violence in El Salvador in assassinations, increased steadily between right-wing fascist militias and leftist-socialist militias. By 1977, the violence made clear a civil war was near in El Salvador, which precipitated increased American aid to the government.¹³¹ By 1979, a tidal wave of events occurred globally

¹²⁷ Brands, *Latin America's Cold War*, 15-17.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 13-14.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 59-64.

¹³⁰ "Memorandum From Thomas A. Parrott to President Kennedy." Office of the Historian. U.S. Department of State, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v08/d74>.

¹³¹ Crandall, *The Salvador Option*, 180-181.

which were not in America's favor, which affected America's foreign policy in Latin America. Americans watched as an ally in Iran fell to the Iranian Islamic revolution, Americans in the Iranian embassy were held hostage, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and the Nicaraguan government was overthrown by the communist Sandinistas with Cuban support. The Carter administration, back peddling from global events and did not want to allow another American ally to fall. These global events fanned a new wave of American public belief of being under siege while seeing the domino theory coming closer to the American home front. The American public believed that Cuba, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and now El Salvador, were examples of these communist revolutions getting closer to America. The U.S. response was to increase funding, military equipment, and military advisors:

“Most of the advisers in El Salvador, whose number was close to fifty-five, a number that was set by the Defense Department in 1980...was a highly qualified group (half of them officers, many with advanced degrees, most of them Green Berets, with an expertise in counterinsurgency and augmented by subsequent experience in Latin America); the men were acutely conscious of the Vietnam parallel.”¹³²

These secret U.S. military operations established communication and surveillance abilities, alongside Green Beret military training and mission participations, supported by American airpower. These resources arrived in force in El Salvador by the early 1980s.

This U.S. intervention into El Salvador grew with funding and was obscured as much as possible over three presidencies that would handle the El Salvadoran civil war. This U.S.-executed counterinsurgency campaign learned from Vietnam's failures, understanding that there had to be

¹³² Lydia Chavez, “*The Odds In El Salvador.*” The New York Times, July 24, 1983.

near zero American casualties and an extremely small gray area of troop levels. The aim to avoid triggering the “Vietnam syndrome” in the American public, which was still weary of foreign intervention.¹³³ The Vietnam syndrome derived from the fear of committing large numbers of young American service members to die in a foreign jungle for an unknown reason while aiding a corrupt allied government. Such a controversy in enabling another failed U.S. military intervention was political suicide for the party in power; however, it was also a political death note to “allies” to communist insurgencies. The American public still had a substantial number that believed in the domino theory and wanted U.S. action to stop communist subversive activities internationally, conceiving that these activities were protecting the American homeland. This conflicting public pressure for the homeland’s protection from communism with near zero American forces being killed created a new type of U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine in El Salvador.

An exceptionally brave documentary film *The Front Line*, explores El Salvador in 1983 and interviews random people in El Salvador about events occurring around them. The film was shot in both urban and rural areas and shares interviews with both Salvadoran soldiers and communist rebels in addition to both sides’ political leaders in the effort to understand each side’s viewpoint. The filmmakers portrayed an urban zone that experienced assassinations on a nightly basis. Bodies were dropped randomly in the streets, which was purposely ignored by the urban population because they feared a death squad’s retribution. The right-wing military leader Roberto D’Aubuisson explained that his forces were fighting an international communist conspiracy and he contended that some “patriots” were creating anti-communist groups to kill communists outside

¹³³ George Bush, and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 354.

of the law and government control. He wanted to build a wall of deniability between the American-funded government, the Salvadoran military, and the nightly killings by death squads.

The film crew interviewed a Mr. Bill Murphy, an American businessman and farmer from Texas, who shared that he had lived and worked in El Salvador for 26 years and had witnessed the situation develop. He reported that:

“according to history we are very abusive in this country... we need a strong man, he does not have to be a military man, but he does have to be a strong man and have the military force behind him...Only thing Roberto D’Aubuisson is doing is fighting communism and if we don’t wake up and help these countries fight communism, we’ve got it in our backdoor. If you think Mexico can last, your wrong! They can’t last! Communism will take over Mexico because Mexico by itself will fall. And then when we get them on the other side of the Rio Grande crossing into Baron County, San Antonio, I wonder then what people will say?”¹³⁴

Mr. Murphy reiterated a widely held American public belief of an impending communist invasion or terror threat to the American homeland. Fear of a communist subversion still ran deep in the American voter base, which President Ronald Regan encouraged, stating that: “What we are doing is going to the aid of an El Salvadoran government...to halt the infiltration into the Americas by terrorists...who aren’t just aiming at El Salvador but...who are aiming at the whole of Central and possibly later South America, and I’m sure, eventually, North America.”¹³⁵

¹³⁴ “*The Front Line.*” Prime Video, United Kingdom: Journeyman Pictures, 1983, https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B01M6B9MY0/ref=atv_yv_hom_c_unkc_1_6.

¹³⁵ “*The President’s News Conference.*” American Presidency Project, March 6, 1983, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43505>.

President Reagan stoked these American fears by insinuating the monolith of communism cohesion and Soviet influence may have sway in the insurgency, as maybe a possible wider plan for global domination, coming out of the “evil empire.”¹³⁶ This sentiment was expressed on April, 27,th 1983 in President Reagan’s speech to a joint session of Congress about El Salvador’s conflict:

“Suddenly the so-called freedom fighters in the hills were exposed for what they really are, a small minority who want power for themselves and their backers, not democracy for the people. I do not believe that most of the Congress of the country, is prepared to stand by passively, while the people of Central America are delivered to totalitarianism. And we ourselves are left vulnerable to new dangers... when the Soviets today could recognize the Caribbean and Central America as vital to our self-interest, shouldn’t we also?”¹³⁷

He alluded to possible Soviet opportunism in the close to home Central American conflicts. This fear mongering would motivate many Americans to support the Reagan administration, which effectively increased U.S. war efforts in El Salvador, thereby increasing military equipment, training, and advisor numbers. These efforts had the goal to defeat the communist insurgency, although American casualties were not to be allowed since a bloodless American counterinsurgency operation was the goal.

This decentralized American counterinsurgency against communist insurgents was to be played out by the El Salvadorans, who received American Huey helicopters, M16 rifles, bombs, and communication equipment. Soldiers were to be paid by American tax dollars, trained at

¹³⁶ Samuels Brandon, “Ronald Reagan Calls the Soviet Union an ‘Evil Empire.’” World History Project, 2021, <https://worldhistoryproject.org/1983/3/8/ronald-reagan-calls-the-soviet-union-an-evil-empire>.

¹³⁷ “President Reagan’s Address on Central America before a Joint Session of the Congress, April 27, 1983”, YouTube. White House Television Office, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nvqoqQWLt0>.

American bases, and aided by Green Beret advisors. This seemed like a top-down, American-controlled El Salvadoran government and military. But was it? The El Salvadoran military, which was funded and molded in the American fashion, was supposed to execute the war by American standards. In theory, training, equipping, and funding the El Salvadoran military would engrain the Salvadorans with the American way of fighting and an internal ethos for operations; in practice, this proved to be a grave misconception. The Salvadorans' history, class structure, and political makeup was more engrained in their own soldiers' decision-making than the U.S. military had anticipated.

An investigative book called *The Massacre at El Mozote*, by Mark Danner investigates the nightmarish massacre in El Salvador in early December, 1981. The massacre occurred in several towns in the northeast jungles and was perpetrated by a well-equipped and American trained unit called the Atlacatl Battalion, which was led by Colonel Domingo Monterrosa, a top student from the U.S. military's School of the Americas. The Atlacatl Battalion committed mass killing, raping, and pillaging of several towns, where men, women, and children were brutally slaughtered, with no quarter given, with estimates near a 1,000 killed.¹³⁸ The military headquarters of the El Salvadorans reasoned that brutalizing the populations in the jungle regions would send fear throughout the jungle, causing a mass exodus of the networks of support that the insurgents used for recruiting fighters, supply acquisitions and insurgent information networks. The tactic of annihilation of the civilian population harkened back to the tactics used by the American military in the Philippines in the early 20th century; however, the American public and military doctrines of the 1980s were radically different and rejected such activity as not acceptable.

¹³⁸ Danner, *The Massacre At El Mozote*, 189.

News outlets quickly spread the news internationally. The insurgents worked to use the event as a recruiting tool and assisted news media crews to descend on the massacre sites. A general international outcry grew regarding American military support and actions in the El Salvadoran civil war. Many Americans criticized the war effort, which moved the Reagan administration to significantly increase its political pressure on the El Salvadoran government and military leadership. The administration worked to discredit the story and used the walls of deniability to shield American involvement and hinder those trying to get to the massacre sites. An understanding of the lack of American control over the war became clear as American resources, training, and funding were being abused, which embarrassed the U.S. military and the Reagan administration.

Despite political pressure on the El Salvadoran government and military leadership to clean up their act and stop large-scale massacres, many smaller sized killings occurred until the end of the civil war. From 1981 onward, the El Salvadoran army kept its extrajudicial killings to under fifty when engaging in a village.¹³⁹ Yet, El Salvador's government did not cease its use of death squads. Even before the massacres at El Mozote, there had been an international uproar in 1980 when Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated by a government directed death squad.¹⁴⁰ International outcry came again with the killing of Jesuit priests and children, portrayed as insurgent sympathizers or possible supporters, in the aftermath of the 1989 Battle of San Salvador.¹⁴¹ This battle included a close city-wide seizure of the nation's capital by the Farabundo

¹³⁹ Danner, *The Massacre At El Mozote*, 140-161.

¹⁴⁰ Eisenbrandt, *Assassination of A Saint*, 6.

¹⁴¹ "Blood of the Martyrs," Prime Video, United States: Loyola Productions, 2017, https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B076XVHPXX/ref=atv_yv_hom_c_unkc_1_5.

Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) insurgents but was narrowly repelled by the El Salvadoran military.

Although these atrocities were perpetrated by a U.S. ally that received American backing in political and military aspects, the U.S. public did not turn against the war effort in large part. No large-scale American public antiwar movement changed the political scenery. Even with American forces dying in the El Salvadoran combat zone, it did not change the overall American public's mood. In 1987, an article by the *Chicago Tribune* shines some light on the conflict, after an American Green Beret died:

“Sgt. Fronius was the first American to die in a combat situation in El Salvador. He was not the first American casualty of the communist insurgency there. Another U.S. adviser was gunned down in downtown San Salvador in 1983, and four off-duty marines were killed at a cafe. Those too were tragedies, but they did not constitute a basis for policy change. What the troops do, as President Reagan noted of Sgt. Fronius` death, is "bring home to everyone what we face" in the way of the communist threat in Central America.”¹⁴²

American casualties were of volunteers and occurred at low levels. This was not only accepted by the American public, who in 1980 voted for Ronald Reagan with a slight 50% majority. In his reelection in 1984, he had won over 58% of the vote, a startling American public approval jump.¹⁴³

This overwhelming popularity allowed for U.S. support in El Salvador to continue regardless of the atrocities in the civil war, which had little political effect on President Reagan. Reagan renewed the U.S. cultural Red Scare against the “Evil Empire” of the Soviet Union. This

¹⁴² Michael Tackett, “A Soldier's Death In El Salvador.” (Chicago Tribune. April 3, 1987).

¹⁴³ “1984 Electoral College Results.” National Archives and Records Administration, 2019, <https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/1984>.

belief was displayed perfectly in the blockbuster 1984 movie *Red Dawn*, which shows a literal Russian invasion of the U.S., supported by invading communist allies from Central America and Cuba.¹⁴⁴ The movie, which remains a right-wing cult favorite today, plays on the fear in the American public in the 1980s of being attacked by the Soviet Union and her controlled allies in Latin America. This Hollywood concept is what Mr. Murphy in El Salvador shared and was amplified by President Reagan.

American public support, along with its perceived fears and beliefs, allowed El Salvador to be a continual U.S. military counterinsurgency operation. The U.S. was able to stay in El Salvador long enough to see the collapse of the communist bloc in Eastern Europe in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in late 1991.¹⁴⁵ These events ended most of the funding and weapons supply and crushed morale for communism, which had once flowed into Cuba before being exported into El Salvador's civil war. A United Nations peace agreement was created soon after these events. The Chapultepec Peace Accords in Mexico were signed by the El Salvadoran government and FMLN insurgents in January 1992.¹⁴⁶ The war had killed roughly 75,000 El Salvadorans, displacing nearly half a million, and destroyed significant portions of the country physically, and deeply scarred El Salvador psychologically.¹⁴⁷ The FLMN reorganized into a political party, and the military obtained an amnesty clause to prevent trials into the war's atrocities to provide immunity and turn the national page on the conflict. Though little would be done,

¹⁴⁴ Charles Cassady, "*Red Dawn (1984) - Movie Review.*" Common Sense Media, December 14, 2009, <https://www.common sense media.org/movie-reviews/red-dawn-1984>.

¹⁴⁵ "*The Collapse of the Soviet Union.*" Office of the Historian. U.S. Department of State, 2017, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/collapse-soviet-union>.

¹⁴⁶ David Holiday and William Stanley, "*Building the Peace: Preliminary Lessons from El Salvador.*" *Journal of International Affairs* 46, no. 2 (1993): 415–438. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24357142>.

¹⁴⁷ Crandall, *The Salvador Option*, 1.

however, to restructure the economic inequality which had brought about the conflict, due to the economy's agricultural centralization and lack of diversification to prevent a boom and bust.

El Salvador is a small Latin American nation that was home to five million at the time and represented the site of the largest U.S. strategic counterinsurgency "success" in the Cold War.¹⁴⁸ The civil war illustrated that when the American people saw few U.S. military personnel casualties, they shielded themselves from a sense of connection tied with plausible deniability to the war effort. The American public did not see American military actions at play and had a cultural majority against the insurgents' international backers. A U.S. counterinsurgency could therefore continue long enough to bring it to a conclusion. Time was again a valuable resource for winning the counterinsurgency, giving needed time to be able to outlast the insurgents will and resources, and restructure the host nations politics or economy that gave rise to the insurgency. El Salvador had direct American military involvement from 1977 to 1992, representing a 15-year U.S. counterinsurgency campaign which was waged in a foreign jungle successfully.¹⁴⁹ American counterinsurgency strategy had again evolved with the needed secrecy, low U.S. casualties, and developed host nation forces to engage in counterinsurgency post-Vietnam, holding the course with the 1980s American public will, which desired to be tough on international communism.

Though a core problem was experienced for the U.S., a loss of control by American advisors arose throughout the 15-year "Salvador Option" counterinsurgency operation, which would have to be remedied in the future. The lack of a sizeable, credible American troop presence, which was strong enough to correct and control local military forces, had been missing in El Salvador. The El Salvadoran government and military leaders knew that they had a near unending

¹⁴⁸ Crandall, *The Salvador Option*, 1.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 1-12.

American commitment with no tangible way to be held liable for their actions by the Americans. This permitted them to prosecute the war in whatever way they saw fit, perpetually using death squads and massacres, even if toned down after the El Mozote massacre.

In future counterinsurgency campaigns, the U.S. military would have to find an acceptable troop level for the American populous to tolerate and to fix a loss of credibility in a host nation. Americans increased their tolerance of troop deployments as time went on, with the “Vietnam syndrome” disappearing after the victory in the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War victory, as explained by President George Bush Sr. in his book, *A World Transformed*:

“The United States had recognized and shouldered its peculiar responsibility for leadership in tackling international challenges, and won wide acceptance for this role around the globe. American political credibility and influence had skyrocketed... Our military credibility grew as well. US military forces and equipment operated in superb fashion... The result was that we emerged from the Gulf conflict into a very different world from that prior to the attack on Kuwait.”¹⁵⁰

This change was witnessed in the regular large deployments of troops into the Middle East.

Going forward, the U.S. sought to find the right balance of local allied forces backed with American military forces and training, funding, and weapon systems. This balance included finding the right levels of American regular troops, special forces, and air power to guarantee American accountability without falling into the trap of Americanization, as in Vietnam. The 2007 Iraq Surge would find a military temperature, as it were, that the American public would accept and would dismantle the enemy’s insurgent network.

¹⁵⁰Bush, *A World Transformed*, 491-492.

The U.S. military commanded a leading global role after the Gulf War, as “A New World Order” occurred with the collapse of the Soviet Union, which made the U.S. the sole global empire from 1992 through 2007, with Washington D.C. relying on the military as its key to fixing complicated global problems. Military interventions would become common in humanitarian roles, which was exemplified in Somali, Haiti, and the Bosnian-Serbian conflict. The success stories in El Salvador, Panama, and the Persian Gulf conflict fed a superiority complex in the U.S. military and a belief reinforced by the American public, and from D.C., that the U.S. military was now the simple, unstoppable solution to turbulent problems in foreign nations. This sentiment produced a false mindset for continued conventional U.S. military dominance and success, regardless of the circumstances it was introduced into. Counterinsurgency doctrines were neglected, although situations in Iraq’s post-invasion bewildered the conventionally trained military and forced a new evolutionary change in U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine.

Chapter 5

Enemy Centric Versus Population Centric

“Terrorism is inseparable from its historical, political, and societal context, a context that has both a local and a global dimension.”¹⁵¹

Audrey Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*

September 11th, 2001 challenged the U.S.’s superiority complex after winning the Cold War, as its invincibility became shattered. The twenty-first century now showed the glaring, destructive capabilities of unconventional warfare through the use of low-grade weapons (a few box cutters) combined with motivated individuals (19 hijackers) using civilian commercial airliners for a coordinated attack with a devastating blow to the U.S. in a greater way than any foreign conventional military force had done since WWII.¹⁵² President George W. Bush rallied the American public in ways not seen since Pearl Harbor, and a common bond was forged between Americans for a time. President Bush’s American public approval ratings swelled to near 90%, and the U.S. Congress aligned behind his call for military interventions into Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003.¹⁵³ President Bush’s policies reflected the American public’s fervent desire to

¹⁵¹ Audrey Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 217.

¹⁵² David Rose. “*Attackers Did Not Know They Were To Die.*” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, October 14, 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/oct/14/terrorism.september111>.

¹⁵³ Frank Newport, “*Despite Sharp Increase In Bush Approval Since 9/11, Race Gap Persists.*” Gallup.com. Gallup, January 8, 2002, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/5158/Despite-Sharp-Increase-Bush-Approval-Since-911-Race-Gap-Persists.aspx>.

exact revenge on those who had attacked the nation. The world rallied around the American people's "quiet unyielding anger,"¹⁵⁴ which sparked a series of American military interventions of various aggressive proportions into Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Libya, Somalia, and the greater Sahel region. In addition to funding allies' wars, including Saudi Arabia's military intervention into Yemen and the Philippine's counterinsurgency operations in its southern island chains, there was a nearly global effort to dismantle Al Qaida and their allies in regional and international arenas.

A time of global campaigns focused on unconventional warfare arrived. These actions opposed transnational terror networks, their financiers, and fighters, forcing the U.S. military to adapt from a conventional focus of the 1990s to the "Global War on Terror" and its numerous campaigns of counterinsurgency.¹⁵⁵ Conventional means seemed to show signs of early success in Afghanistan, where the U.S. military dismantled the operations of Al Qaida and their allies in the Taliban, forcing them both to flee into Pakistan. In Iraq in 2003, in a little over a month, the Saddam Regime was ended by a "shock and awe" campaign of conventional air and ground forces by American and British forces.¹⁵⁶ Although in quick succession in Iraq wide ranging insurgencies developed, and conventional means were realized as not the means to success. The situation was similar to the failure of the American Civil War with Reconstruction, as large conquering armies of the U.S. joined with allied forces from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) quickly found themselves harassed by invisible enemies after sweeping out the Saddam regime in Iraq.

¹⁵⁴ "9/11: George W. Bush Addresses The Nation Following The 9/11 Attacks." YouTube. Washington Press Office, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUXiByDQ3bA>.

¹⁵⁵ "President George W. Bush Addresses A Joint Congress About The War on Terror." YouTube. U.S.A.: Associated Press, 2001, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vzRMaHCysU&t=31s>.

¹⁵⁶ Joel Rayburn et al., *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War* (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2019), 81-110.

These forces were often hit with improvised explosive devices (IEDs), suicide bombers, snipers, and quick ambushes while interacting with a local population that was alien to them in religion, custom, and language,¹⁵⁷ the American public watched a spiraling and chaotic Iraq war effort grow more deadly by the year; however, in Iraq in 2007, the U.S. military stopped this violent cycle.

This point of counterinsurgency success is my focus. Against the rising chaos reaching its crescendo in 2006, it ended (for a time) with the 2007 surge, which was an American population centric counterinsurgency campaign that ended the Sunni-Shia Civil War.¹⁵⁸ In the “Global War on Terror” campaign, the U.S. momentarily found the right ratio of American conventional and special forces, along with NATO support, local Iraqi security forces, all backed with air power.¹⁵⁹ This military concoction would be joined with a large aid programs for communities, focused around community outreaches of Sunni-Shia reconciliation initiatives. With the careful hiring of key Sunni and Shia militias focused to break up the militarized coalition that “Al Qaida in Iraq” (AQI) had created against the American, NATO, and post-Saddam Iraqi government.¹⁶⁰ The surge forced the AQI insurgency, which had caused a tremendous amount of bloodshed and destruction in Iraq, to go underground and relative peace to develop; however, AQI would reemerge, rebranding itself as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

To provide some background on the conflict in Iraq and on the AQI insurgency’s origins, we will look back before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, starting with the American Congress passing the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, which “Declares that it should be the policy of the United States

¹⁵⁷ Rayburn, *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War*, 121-127.

¹⁵⁸ “General David Petraeus - Statement to Congress on Iraq War Progress.” YouTube, U.S.A: AP, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6PTWsdY7jg>.

¹⁵⁹ Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of The Task: A Memoir* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2014), 254-272.

¹⁶⁰ McChrystal, *My Share of The Task*, 260-261.

to seek to remove the Saddam Hussein regime from power in Iraq and to replace it with a democratic government.”¹⁶¹ After September 11th, the American political and military leadership rashly searched for connections between Iraq and Al Qaida. A weak plausible connection surfaced in the northeast of Iraq, which housed a small Sunni terror cell, which was loosely in communication with Al Qaida, led by an Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, who was actively working to produce cyanide and training fighters for terror attacks against Western targets.

On February 3, 2003, Secretary of State Collin Powell described Zarqawi’s terror cell operations to the U.N. Security Council, explaining that it had ties to Saddam:

“what I want to bring to your attention today is the potentially much more sinister nexus between Iraq and the Al Qaida terrorist network, a nexus that combines classic terrorist organizations and modern methods of murder. Iraq today harbors a deadly terrorist network headed by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, an associated collaborator of Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaida lieutenants.”¹⁶²

He explained further the belief in direct contacts between the two:

“Baghdad has an agent in the most senior levels of the radical organization, Ansar al-Islam, which controls this corner of Iraq. In 2000 this agent offered Al Qaida safe haven in the region. After we swept Al Qaida from Afghanistan, some of its members accepted this safe haven. They remain there today.”¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ “*H.R.4655 - 105th Congress (1997-1998): Iraq Liberation Act.*” Library of Congress, 1998, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/105th-congress/house-bill/4655>.

¹⁶² “*Colin Powell United Nations Security Council Briefing on WMD in Iraq.*” YouTube, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAxDW15R6rY>.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

He explained Saddam's Iraqi government as a direct partner, "We are not surprised that Iraq is harboring Zarqawi and his subordinates. This understanding builds on decades long experience with respect to ties between Iraq and Al Qaida."¹⁶⁴ Invading the nation in a conventional war seemed an easy fix that fit America's strengths and toppled an erroneously believed key ally of Al Qaida, which was argued to hinder a future September 11th attack. President Bush made clear in his speech shortly after the September 11th attack that: "The search is under way for those responsible for these evil acts... we will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them."¹⁶⁵

Political speeches from the White House cabinet members and the President were reminiscent of the Red Scare, which used alarmist rhetoric about Iraq generating nuclear weapons before and after the invasion. This rhetoric enflamed American public fears of a nuclear or biological attack stemming from Iraq if not dealt with immediately. In a speech in Cincinnati on October 7, 2002, not long before the conventional war, President Bush declared:

"Knowing these realities, America must not ignore the threat gathering against us. Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof -- the smoking gun -- that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud. As President Kennedy said in October of 1962, "Neither the United States of America, nor the world community of nations can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small."

¹⁶⁴ "Colin Powell United Nations Security Council Briefing on WMD in Iraq." YouTube, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAxDW15R6rY>.

¹⁶⁵ "9/11: George W. Bush Addresses The Nation Following The 9/11 Attacks" YouTube, Washington Press Office, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUXiByDQ3bA>.

Continuing he said, "We no longer live in a world where only the actual firing of weapons represents a sufficient challenge to a nation's security to constitute maximum peril."¹⁶⁶

Repeated reference to possible nuclear attacks continued and encouraged the American public to support the military intervention which was striking similar to the Reagan rhetoric around El Salvador of communist threats of invasion and attacks on the U.S. homeland. The tactic succeeded in large part and a substantial number in the American public were shaken in their sense of security following the September 11th attack, who placed their long-term political support behind President Bush's administration.

During the first days of the American invasion into Iraq, an initial failure occurred within the U.S. military strategy. The U.S. military did not immediately seek to destroy Zarqawi, with his known terror network's locations, even though it had been a stated "reason" for invading Iraq.¹⁶⁷ American military assets were concentrated on conventional Iraqi forces, which gave Zarqawi time to disappear into Iraq's cities. Soon after the conventional war toppled the Iraqi regime, more American errors aided Zarqawi. The U.S. concentrated its energy to form a new government for the Iraqi nation in the image of the U.S. with Iraqi personnel that had been residing in the West. These transplanted Iraqis from the Iraqi National Congress (INC), a U.S. funded organization, worked to globally network Iraqi exiles and dissidents for the removal of Saddam. The INC's openly stated aim was to establish a democracy in Iraq after the regime's fall and purge Iraq of Baathists. With these Iraqis now in power, they worked in step with American officials and were disconnected from the realities on the ground in Iraq. The nation had a failing economy, limited

¹⁶⁶ "George W. Bush - Cincinnati Speech on Iraq Threat." YouTube. C-SPAN 2, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iusLiSEsT0k>.

¹⁶⁷ Rayburn, *The U.S. Army In The Iraq War*, 86-105.

infrastructure, internal pent-up ethnic and religious rage in the populace, and a chaotic political scene, which the new Iraqi government struggled to grasp. Neither the INC nor American officials in charge understood the ethnic and religious powder keg that was about to erupt around them in Iraq.

On May 15th, 2003, the American official put in charge of Iraq, L. Paul Brimmer, acquiesced to a radical INC political position by disbanding the Iraqi Army (with over 250,000 Iraqis) and disqualifying the entire Baathist political party membership from political activity.¹⁶⁸ This action prevented Baathists from playing any future role in the new Iraqi government, thereby accomplishing the total removal and de-Baathification of Iraq's governmental body. This instantly threw out all top and lower-level politicians, teachers, and soldiers from their lifelong careers, and this pool of military and governmental experience, containing many highly educated and internationally networked people, were now all unemployed. This situation was added to a nation that was experiencing a reported near 40% unemployment rate.¹⁶⁹ Thrown out of careers onto the streets, many would join AQI to rapidly form a well-staffed shadow government, with Zarqawi rising as a leading figure. The former American Army General David Petraeus, who was tasked with the 2007 Surge, described these early decisions: "that's where the seeds of what became the Sunni insurgency were largely planted."¹⁷⁰ This complicated web of political decisions in Iraq fed the insurgency networks in Iraq to deadly effect going forward from 2003.

¹⁶⁸ "The Secret History of ISIS: FRONTLINE." YouTube. Frontline PBS, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wY_URYzvw8.

¹⁶⁹ "Iraq's Tishreen Uprising: From Barricades to Ballot Box." Reconstructing Iraq. International Crisis Group, September 2, 2004, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iraq/223-iraqs-tishreen-uprising-barricades-ballot-box>.

¹⁷⁰ "The Secret History of ISIS: FRONTLINE" YouTube. Frontline PBS, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wY_URYzvw8.

Iraq spiraled out of control in 2004 on television for the world to see, which showed that the Global War of Terror to be just beginning, and Americans would soon go to the polls for a presidential election. In 2000, Bush had received 47.9% of the American vote representing over fifty million votes, which was not a resounding victory in any form.¹⁷¹ In 2004, however, with wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the Global War on Terror raging, President Bush received 50.7% of the vote with over sixty-two million votes.¹⁷² A sufficient wave of American public confidence had been given to President Bush, which he poured into expanding the U.S. military's efforts in this international conflict. With the increased vote, the Bush administration felt confident to continue its use of far more aggressive tactics and strategies to fight the Global War on Terror.

The Bush administration thus increased American troop deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq. Designated as "Boots on the ground," these troops experienced tens of thousands of casualties. The height of these troop levels reached "187,900 in FY2008 primarily because of increases in Iraq" for the 2007 Surge.¹⁷³ The American public watched and sustained a continued belief in the wars, even as an anti-war movement arose; however, the anti-war movement was never strong enough to break a core establishment of general American public support for the Iraq war. Sufficient Republican and Democrat support persisted for the U.S. military's troop/strategy reconfiguring in the later 2007 Surge. In war correspondent Thomas Rick's book called *The Gamble: General David Petraeus And The American Military Adventure In Iraq*, he explains three

¹⁷¹ Liz Dee, "The 2000 Presidential Election – The Florida Recount." Association for Diplomatic Studies & Training. ADST, October 17, 2016, <https://adst.org/2016/10/2000-presidential-election-florida-recount/>.

¹⁷² "2004 Electoral College Results." National Archives. National Archives and Records Administration, 2019, <https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/2004>.

¹⁷³ Amy Belasco, "Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2001-FY2012: Cost and Other Potential Issues" Congressional Research Service. U.S. Congress, July 2, 2009, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R40682.pdf>.

key signs of continued American public support for the Iraq War which enabled the surge:¹⁷⁴ first, through the abysmal box office failures of Hollywood's antiwar movies stocked with high level actors, such as *Valley of Elah*, *Grace is Gone*, or *Lions for Lambs* which starred Tom Cruise and Meryl Streep. Second, the antiwar movement that arose by 2008 at its height could barely garner a few thousand marchers for a march on Washington D.C., and garnered far less for anti-war protests elsewhere. Third, Democrats actions in Congress mirrored this recognition of a limited American public antiwar sentiment. Democrat actions in the Senate would label the war, "Bush's War," but would take no action to defund or stop the war. The Democrats understood that rhetoric was all that the American public found acceptable.

President Bush rested his political strength on this continued American public support, which permitted him to conduct special operations raids into Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia, which were joined with the creation of a fleet of arial drones, used to strike targets across the Middle East.¹⁷⁵ This was undergirded with the return of enhanced-interrogation techniques, which many argued allowed the CIA to use torture as a means for extracting intelligence.¹⁷⁶ This was linked to the transferring detainees to allied nations that performed outright torture, and these methods of attaining information would then be used for drone strikes or "kill and capture" raids by U.S. special forces. The U.S. military sought to eliminate the shadow government in Iraq, and the Al Qaeda trans-national partner organizations worldwide by an enemy-centric counterinsurgency.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas Hicks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus And The American Military Adventure In Iraq, 2006-2008* (New York: Penguin Press HC, 2009), 254-255.

¹⁷⁵ Steve Coll, *Directorate S: The C.I.A. and America's Secret Wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (New York: Penguin Books, 2019), 266-349.

¹⁷⁶ Ali Soufan, and Daniel Freedman, *The Black Banners: The Inside Story of 9/11 and The War Against Al-Qaeda* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 432-484.

Though by 2006, a full-scale Iraqi civil war had erupted from the ethnic hatreds that had laid suppressed during the brutal regime of Saddam.¹⁷⁷ AQI had sought to openly slaughter the Shia population using shootings and coordinated bombings of civilians to drive a national rift that promoted a backlash of revenge killings against the Sunni communities with the aim to drive all Sunnis to rally behind AQI for protection from the Shia communities, which largely succeeded. The objective was to make AQI the perpetrator of cyclic violence and a savior for Sunni communities in the civil war. These tactics by AQI became so deadly against civilians that even Osama Bin Laden and his second in command, Ayman Mohammed Rabie al-Zawahiri contacted Zarqawi, pressing him to stop targeting Muslims.¹⁷⁸ The situation gave Al Qaida at large a mark of brutality that was driving away other Islamic terror networks support, who sought to focus attacks on Westerners, but to avoid open bloodbaths amongst the Muslim communities. This overreach in brutality on the part of Zarqawi and his AQI affiliates began to isolate them both in Iraq and internationally.

A profound debate started within the top military leadership in the White House about ending the Iraqi cyclic violence, which was perceived to be ruining Iraq and isolating America in Iraq. Due to the rise of the AQI insurgency and the civil war it had sparked, many NATO allies and international aid organizations had left Iraq. AQI sought to isolate American forces, aiming to put the entire weight of reconstruction, aid, and security onto American shoulders, which would require them to abandon Iraq to the AQI, similar to what occurred in Vietnam. Preventing a Vietnam-like fiasco became a top priority for the Bush administration, which soon the promoted a “New Way Forward [in Iraq].” In a *Foreign Policy* article by Brett McGurk, a National Security

¹⁷⁷ Coll, *Directorate S*, 187-213.

¹⁷⁸ “*The Secret History of ISIS: FRONTLINE*” YouTube. Frontline PBS, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wY_URYzvw8.

Council member at the time, he highlighted the internal debate by noting that a top CIA counterinsurgency expert had conducted an assessment showing that the presence of U.S. forces was key to stability.¹⁷⁹ McGurk states: "when we have a presence, we are able to help resolve local disputes before they get out of control, stop illegal police conduct by Iraqi forces, and ultimately help the Iraqis develop their own patterns of interaction," this was a tough political sell.¹⁸⁰ Some argued to leave Iraq and saw placing more American forces into Iraq for the surge, roughly 28,000, like a deadly doubling down, as President Johnson had done in Vietnam. An in-depth study of the conflict and the Iraqi dilemma then occurred. With the continued support of the U.S.'s battered allies from the U.K., Australian, and Canadian forces along with other allies staying in Iraq, American forces were not isolated, as had occurred in Vietnam.

Army General Petraeus oversaw the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center and with Marine Lt. General James Mattis led the creation of a joint research team of military and civilian researchers in a bid to develop a new military field manual for conducting counterinsurgency. In a similar event to the early twentieth century's USMC *Small Wars Manual*, a new military manual for the 21st century arose. The *Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency* outlined for the U.S. and NATO military field commanders a path forward in understanding the complexities of local insurgencies. A "surge of new ideas" to stabilize Iraq began in policies, plans, and the orientation of U.S. and British troops.¹⁸¹ Not only would there be a surge of additional American forces into Iraq, but a complete overhaul of "on the ground" tactics and a reshuffling of Iraq's national security

¹⁷⁹ Michael Gordon, "The Secret Surge Debate." *Foreign Policy*, March 18, 2013, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/18/the-secret-surge-debate/>.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ David Petraeus, "The Surge of Ideas and Change in the U.S. Army in 2006." American Enterprise Institute, 2006, <https://www.aei.org/research-products/speech/the-surge-of-ideas-2/>.

strategy.¹⁸² The changes sought to reorganize coalition forces largely through commander and warrior reeducation of how to fight and orient oneself in Iraq. The aim was for American forces to develop positive interactions with Iraqis, where winning the Iraqi population's "hearts and minds" was the key step to gaining trust to help the coalition forces uncover the insurgent networks.¹⁸³ The local Iraqis were viewed as the solution to receiving key tips in information to find the insurgents, a new form of the doctrine of population-centric counterinsurgency arose as the "Petraeus doctrine". No longer would the U.S. military see the Iraqi population as the field to be played on against the insurgents in enemy-centric counterinsurgency, which had led to large Iraqi civilian deaths and U.S. isolation from the Iraqi public. Iraqi civilians were now the goal to be won over in order to isolate the insurgent networks.¹⁸⁴

American forces worked in close coordination with Iraqi forces by living and sleeping together in the streets that they were assigned to patrol. No longer were coalition forces to be housed in distant bases, searching the area during the day, only to leave a few hours later. This routine gave the insurgents the night to coordinate, smuggle weapons and fighters, and specifically allowing for the terrorizing of the locals and gave time for insurgents to plant IED's for returning American patrols in the morning. With the additional American forces buffered with Iraqi police and soldiers, all forces would sleep where they worked. Coalition forces reclaimed the night and made some local Iraqis feel more secure. Enough of the local population now saw that their fate was better off with the coalition forces. Without the fear of insurgent reprisal, more locals shared crucial tips on the AQI insurgency and helped direct the coalition forces to arrest insurgents and

¹⁸² Joel Rayburn, and Frank Sobchak, *The U.S. Army In The Iraq War: Surge and Withdrawal: 2007-2011*, Ed. Jeanne Godfroy, Matthew Morton, James Powell, and Matthew Zais (Carlisle: United States Army War College Press, 2019), 95-133.

¹⁸³ Rayburn, *The U.S. Army In The Iraq War*, 251-195.

¹⁸⁴ Ricks, *The Gamble*, 300.

discover the insurgency's routes for smuggling fighters and weapons. Equally importantly, American forces were there to monitor and police the actions of the Iraqi forces. These tactics aided in preventing reoccurring discrimination by the Iraqi government forces, which had alienated the Iraqi people. The U.S. troop presence was the key to the Petraeus doctrine to gain local trust across Iraq's diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious communities by supporting good Iraqi governance, because corruption and abuse had been fueling the conflict in many ways.

A fundamental flaw after 2003, however, was the Shia dominated political sphere, pinnacled in the abusive Nouri al-Maliki Iraqi government, as corrupt Shia officials oversaw the governing and policing of Sunni dominated zones. A top-down Shia government placed Shia in positions of political power over many Sunni communities. Some of these Shia politicians, police, and military commanders viewed it as their time to extract revenge on the Sunnis, even if they were not former Baathists. This situation produced Shia night raiders of police and military death squads, who haphazardly attacked and killed any suspected AQI members, arresting large numbers of Sunnis and systematically torturing them.¹⁸⁵ A loss of control like El Salvador was occurring. Some Shia leaders and their forces were so isolated from the Sunni communities that they were put in charge of that they adopted a siege mentality in isolated bases, becoming useless in the policing of an area giving free reign to AQI activities.

This Iraqi divide along religious lines was understood and openly exploited by AQI, who constantly enflamed tensions between the religious and ethnic communities, helping generate the Shia governmental overreach in abuse, fear, and revenge killings, which perpetuated sectarian violence. This situation prevented the nation from uniting in its fight against AQI. In 2006, the

¹⁸⁵ Herbert McMaster, *Battlegrounds: The Fight To Defend The Free World* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2021), 227-228.

pinnacle of the Iraq civil war occurred when AQI bombed and destroyed the Al-Askari Mosque.¹⁸⁶ The Al-Askari mosque was a key sacred Shia religious site. By the end of 2006, the conflict in Iraq had a death toll of over 2,000 a month, with a devastating uptick in bombings and assassinations.¹⁸⁷ Dismantling the AQI militia coalitions perpetuating this violence became critical. Many Sunnis were joining militias aligned with AQI for protection from the Shias due to ethnic cleansing occurring in Iraqi neighborhoods. Coalition forces in the surge sought to separate religious and ethnic communities, creating corridors of concrete walls to give room for community leaders to talk. The goal was to reconcile the community leaders once the bloodshed had slowed. Part of these talks involved the controversial release of popular militia leaders, many having killed American troops but were now seen as being able to play a role in ending the violence through careful negotiations, in order to break up the AQI support networks.¹⁸⁸ An important Iraqi reconciliation program was created called The Sons of Iraq, with the Sunni awakening, and a delicate coalition of tribal Sheikhs, militia leaders, and community leaders of all religious and ethnic communities was built.¹⁸⁹ They were paid and aided by the coalition forces in an effort to help properly police communities and stop the arbitrary killings between Iraq's diverse communities. With a stabilizing security situation under American troop supervision, it enabled a calming of tensions and fear, which had driven Sunnis to aid AQI against Shia communities.

For population-centric counterinsurgency to work, it is as much about military raids and police work, as it is about establishing proper governance. Equal treatment under the law must be

¹⁸⁶ Michael Crowley, "Iraq: ISIS Attack Against Al-Askari Mosque in Samarra Could Spark Fight." Time USA, June 26, 2014, <https://time.com/2920692/iraq-isis-samarra-al-askari-mosque/>.

¹⁸⁷ "General David Petraeus: Statement to Congress on Iraq War Progress." YouTube, U.S.A: AP, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6PTWsdY7jg>.

¹⁸⁸ McChrystal, *My Share Of The Task*, 259-270.

¹⁸⁹ McMaster, *Battlegrounds*, 251-253.

felt and understood by the populace, and economic futures must be brighter under government leadership. Tied to the AQI insurgents being kept separate from the Iraqi public, to prevent intimidation of the people. All these elements came together in the U.S.'s favor to win enough of the Iraqi population to receive the needed intelligence and identify the insurgent networks. Once the U.S. had the vision to see the insurgent threads that were creating the insurgent networks, surgically dismantling the insurgency piece by piece occurred.

This population-centric counterinsurgency was also acceptable to the American public, which enabled a dramatic increase of American forces into direct conflict with the insurgents. The reason for creating a strategy that required more coalition forces, more American casualties, and was more expensive, was due to the American public's consistency in a political reelection of President Bush. Surprisingly for the new counterinsurgency agenda to arise it was inseparably linked to the 2006 mid-term swing to a Democrat political victory. By allowing President Bush to remain in office, the public gave President Bush breathing room in not needing to seek reelection, he saw after the 2006 mid-term election that drastic change in the Iraq counterinsurgency strategy was needed due to the public's rejection of the Republican party. President Bush acted on that demand, changing the commanders in Iraq, and picking General Petraeus and his staff to lead a dramatic change in the Iraq counterinsurgency effort. General Petraeus redirected the American counterinsurgency doctrine away from the conventionally minded and military preferred kill focused enemy-centric counterinsurgency to a course of Iraqi governance stabilization in a population-centric approach. At the same time, Democrat political actions following 2006, showed that they understood this American public desire for policy changes in the direction of the Iraq war but not an outright rejection of the war. These events allowed room to see if the Petraeus doctrine's strategic and tactical changes would bear fruit. This understanding was shown in Democrat

political inaction displaying a wider American public understanding for supporting for the Iraq war effort. These developments point to the American public picking the new strategic and tactic changes to the Petraeus doctrine going forward in Iraq, as much as the situational requirements on the battlefield required them.

On September 10, 2007, General Petraeus and the American ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, addressed the U.S. Congress on the successes and dilemmas in Iraq due the surge. The number of attacks and overall deaths had steeply declined in most regions and success seemed the overall message, although a warning was put forth at the end of Petraeus's speech:

“A Defense Intelligence Agency report on the implications of a rapid withdrawal of US forces from Iraq. Summarizing it in an unclassified fashion, it concludes that a rapid withdrawal would result in the further release of the strong centrifugal forces in Iraq and produce a number of dangerous results, including a high risk of disintegration of the Iraqi Security Forces; rapid deterioration of local security initiatives; Al Qaeda-Iraq [ISIS] regaining lost ground and freedom of maneuver; a marked increase in violence and further ethno-sectarian displacement and refugee flows; alliances of convenience by Iraqi groups with internal and external forces to gain advantages over their rivals; and exacerbation of already challenging regional dynamics, especially with respect to Iran.”¹⁹⁰

Success could only be sustained with a long-term American troop presence in Iraq. America had to commit troops and keep the ethnically charged Iraqi government accountable, or the gains would be lost.

¹⁹⁰ “*David Petraeus - Statement to Congress on Iraq War Progress.*” YouTube, U.S.A: AP, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6PTWsdY7jg>.

The success strategy and tactics of the surge, with its population-centric aim, would bear much fruit for a time but failed with the 2011 American troop withdrawal.¹⁹¹ Iraq's government under the Shia strongman Maliki, returned to its old ways, defunding the Sons of Iraq, ending community reconciliation efforts, refocusing government funds solely to Shia communities, and stopping the scrutiny of Shia government officials abuses against Sunnis.¹⁹² This abuse and corruption allowed for a reemergence of AQI, this time as ISIS, which rallied large portions of the Sunni populations after 2011. ISIS thundered across Iraq and Syria in 2014 and led to over two million people fleeing into Europe and over a half million being killed in ethnic cleansing and violence by ISIS.¹⁹³

American troops had to return, remaining there as of May 2021, with 2,500 U.S. service members in Iraq.¹⁹⁴ The gains and successes of America's population-centric counterinsurgency doctrine, required a long-term American troop overwatch of the local government actors until a stable government body could become permanent. The weakness of population-centric doctrine was that it required fair and effective local governance and failed without it. American officials had trusted too quickly that the deep seated ethnic or religious conflicts in Iraqis would end. American forces and international observers were necessary for decades in Iraq for a resolution to take permanent root. America was learning that to keep the Iraqi peace America had to have a near permanent troop presence in Iraq. Future presidents would not respect or understand that America's new commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan (or Libya) required a long-term troop

¹⁹¹ David Kilcullen, *Blood Year: The Unraveling Of Western Counterterrorism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 47-78.

¹⁹² McMaster, *Battlegrounds*, 261-284.

¹⁹³ Kilcullen, *Blood Year*, 167-171.

¹⁹⁴ Daniel DePetris, "It's Time For The U.S. To Leave Iraq." *National Review*, July 26, 2021, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2021/05/its-time-for-the-u-s-to-leave-iraq/>.

commitment, just as in Japan, South Korea, or Kosovo. Today, America continues to provide security in these regions, acting as a regional security foundation; however, removing the U.S.-built security apparatus changed that regional foundation, which disrupted the region's gains in peace and effective governance.

2007 was a pivotal year internationally regarding the American military's success in population-centric counterinsurgency. With the end of 2007, a global shift in another region transformed the global equation. Under President Vladimir Putin the Russian Federation reemerged onto the world scene by invading Georgia in 2008.¹⁹⁵ President Putin began the Russian course of becoming a military alternative to the U.S. counterinsurgency narrative. The U.S. would no longer be the only global empire with a counterinsurgent doctrine to share and emulate. Russia was reemerging from its Cold War loss and wanted to give an alternative counterinsurgency solution for nations to follow.

¹⁹⁵ Condoleezza Rice, "*Opinion / Russia Invaded Georgia 10 Years Ago. Don't Say America Didn't Respond.*" The Washington Post. WP Company, August 9, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/russia-invaded-georgia-10-years-ago-dont-say-america-didnt-respond/2018/08/08/ba4279d4-9b3e-11e8-8d5e-c6c594024954_story.html.

Conclusion

“The power of the mighty hath no foundation but in the opinion and belief of the people.”¹⁹⁶

Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth*

I chose 2007 as the endpoint of this work because it fulfills my search of the U.S. military's counterinsurgency doctrinal evolution between two American field manuals as well as it also shows the relationship of the American public's will as a crucial source of the U.S. military's counterinsurgency doctrine creation. This American public will represents a key part of the convoluted three-way conversation that together creates the U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine I had sought to understand, in my bid for the search for the catalyst of the writing of the USMC's 1921 *Small Wars* manual and how the U.S. Army was led to create the *Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency*. Starting at why did the U.S. have such counterinsurgency doctrinal needs? And what drove their creation? I had carelessly believed in the past that the battlefield was the main source of U.S. counterinsurgency doctrinal creation. Not understanding how complex the U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine creation was. This research took me to a far grander exploration of U.S. history than I had originally planned. Exploring the foundational documents, predecessors' ideas, and the human elements that flowed through them, it showed a grand American narrative, which had worked to transform the United States of America into a global empire, which required the U.S. to begin developing its counterinsurgency doctrine and develop it further over the U.S's

¹⁹⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth: Religion and Democracy*, ed. by Tomaz Mastnak (Charlottesville: Imprint Academic, 2009), 41.

historical global interactions. For a moment, America fulfilled its foundational goal of becoming the sole global empire. The U.S. won the global imperial race that it entered in 1788 when, on December 26, 1991, the Soviet Union broke apart.

Developments past 2007 made this victory short-lived, by 2008, many of the U.S.'s grandiose hopes and beliefs of the 1990s were crushed. The global imperial race was not over, and America was not the sole world hegemon from here on out. It was not “the end of history,” and democratic rule was not perpetually assured.¹⁹⁷ 2007, saw the successful implementation of a U.S. military counterinsurgency doctrine, but it quickly showed that the U.S. was not to remain the sole counterinsurgency doctrinal leader. Competitors were on the rise, recovering from their twentieth century losses, and international rivals were emerging who had their own aims and ethos on human rights, and visions on how to achieve their global influence.

Many nations viewed the fickleness of the American public as a liability, and Russia reemerged as a global alternative to America's counterinsurgency support. Many have pointed to Russia's small economy, being nearly the size of Spain's, as an argument to disregard their international competitiveness to the U.S. influence.¹⁹⁸ A nation's gross domestic product does not guarantee one's impact on the world, however, and Russia is actively involved in counterinsurgent campaigns in Syria, Libya, and the Center African Republic (CAR). The government of Mali is in talks to bring Russian military advisors to aid in their counterinsurgent operations against ISIS

¹⁹⁷ Yascha Mounk, “*The End of History Revisited.*” *Journal of Democracy*, January 2020, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/the-end-of-history-revisited/>.

¹⁹⁸ Jim Edwards. “*Russia's Economy Has Shrunk So Much It's Now Almost The Same Size As Spain.*” *Business Insider*, December 2, 2014, <https://www.businessinsider.com/russia-economy-gdp-v-spain-2014-12#:~:text=Spain%3A%20Russia%20has%20lost%20its%20ranking%20as%20the,feeble%20economies%2C%20with%201%20in%204%20Spaniards%20unemployed.>

aligned organizations.¹⁹⁹ The world watched during the Syrian civil war as Russian planes carpet bombed whole cities, forcing millions to flee to Europe.²⁰⁰ Using brutality as a weapon and not only against Syrian civilians, but these tactics also sought to use mass migrations into Europe to sow chaos and internal political upheaval within its European competitors. Russia allowed its Syrian ally to use chemical weapons, which recalled back to many older strategies of Soviet operations in Afghanistan in the 1980s, which killed millions.²⁰¹ This Russian counterinsurgency doctrine of annihilation was allowed, because the U.S. was not willing to intervene in Syria in 2013. Even after President Barack Obama said that the U.S. had a “Red Line” for American intervention if chemical weapons were used, Russia and Syria watched as this line was drawn and broken, followed by American military actions being canceled by President Obama.²⁰² Nations took notice as America stepped back from its global military leadership role, disastrously allowing another international competitor to outcompete the American military.

President Obama approved a U.S. led and NATO supported air campaign to help remove the Libyan dictator, Mu’ammur Al-Qadhafi, not wanting to see another “Red Line” failure with perceived U.S. inaction.²⁰³ President Obama preformed a half measure by not sending any sizeable ground troops to help stabilize a new Libyan government. In quick fashion Libya was wrecked with rival militia infighting from economic insolvency which paralyzed the new Libyan government’s actions. President Obama’s decision allowed for the unmitigated growth of ISIS in

¹⁹⁹ Moses Rono, “*Mali’s Plan for Russia Mercenaries to Replace French Troops Unsettles Sahel.*” BBC News, October 1, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58751423>.

²⁰⁰ Jonathan Marcus, “*Russian Cluster Munitions: Now You See Them, Now You Don’t?*” BBC News, June 20, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36578281>.

²⁰¹ Neil Robbins, “*Soviet Forces Carpet-Bomb Afghan City and Villages.*” United Press International, May 10, 1983, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1983/05/10/Soviet-forces-carpet-bomb-Afghan-city-and-villages/6609421387200/>.

²⁰² Kilcullen, *Blood Year*, 79.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 61-72.

the eastern portion of Libya. A U.S. catastrophe in Benghazi soon occurred, which again highlighted American inaction, even when U.S. citizens and their ambassador were in danger. American power was lacking in the will to act, continuing to recede post-2011. Today, Russian forces through the pseudo-mercenary company the Wagner Corporation, aid the eastern Libyan portion of the nation under General Khalifa Haftar.²⁰⁴ Haftar is supported with Russian mercenary forces in air, artillery, and infantry troops. At the same time in the CAR, Russia has sent military advisors and Wagner Corporation forces to aid the nation in its western zones with Islamic insurgents.²⁰⁵ These activities have led to mounting allegations of crimes against humanity by way of summary executions, rape, and the destruction of entire villages. These Russian led counterinsurgency operations have again fomented the mass migration of traumatized peoples, strikingly like the strategies and tactics used in Syria. These Russian types of annihilation strategies and tactics in counterinsurgency are spreading in international popularity.

France has reengaged in parts of the African Sahel, seen in Chad, the CAR, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso, after the devastating ISIS terror attacks in Paris in November of 2015.²⁰⁶ The French have sought to employ an American styled population-centric counterinsurgency campaign, which has shown progress and success against ISIS aligned militants, although France has limited forces and resources that it can employ. Nations such as Mali and the CAR are turning to Russian influences and styles of harsh brutal doctrines for faster results, sensing the French as

²⁰⁴ Ilya Barabanov, and Nader Ibrahim. “*Wagner: Scale of Russian Mercenary Mission in Libya Exposed.*” BBC News Russian & BBC News Arabic, August 11, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58009514>.

²⁰⁵ “*Wagner, Shadowy Russian Military Group, 'Fighting in Libya'.*” BBC News, May 7, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52571777>.

²⁰⁶ “*Paris Attacks: What Happened On The Night.*” BBC News, December 9, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994>.

a faltering Western ally. This turning away from America and Western engagements is due in large part to the U.S. receding in its use of military forces.

I lay this retreat on the American public's will, which have become tired of their global responsibilities. America had obtained the title of the sole surviving global empire from the twentieth century but now, like a seasoned champion, has lost that hunger for global engagement. This shift by the U.S. is creating a world where the more time consuming and expensive doctrine of population-centric counterinsurgency is being discarded for the cheaper, harsher, and devastating doctrines of annihilation currently advocated by the Russians.

The Russians are not the sole example of another type of brutal counterinsurgency doctrine. China has also entered this global counterinsurgency competition by reasserting itself as a global power to be emulated for domestic rule. It has developed a brutal internal (domestic) counterinsurgency, whereas the Russians are showing their military power externally. China has articulated that to stop Islamic terrorism in its western regions, it must crack down internally.²⁰⁷ Today, millions of Chinese Muslims, the ethnic Uighurs, find themselves in concentration camps experiencing forced reeducation, forced renunciation of their religion, mass sterilization, and systematic rape of women.²⁰⁸ The Chinese have in their Western region, employed DNA tests to find ethnic communities, and their sole crime is not being Han Chinese enough.²⁰⁹ China has pioneered the use of AI technology in their nationwide surveillance networks. If the AI determines

²⁰⁷ Roland Hughes, “*China Uighurs: All You Need to Know on Muslim 'Crackdown'.*” BBC News, November 8, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-45474279>.

²⁰⁸ Joel Gunter, David Campanale, and Matthew Hill. “*Their Goal Is to Destroy Everyone': Uighur Camp Detainees Allege Systematic Rape.*” BBC News, February 2, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-55794071>.

²⁰⁹ Sui-lee Wee, “*China Uses DNA to Track Its People, with the Help of American Expertise.*” The New York Times, February 21, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/business/china-xinjiang-uighur-dna-thermo-fisher.html>.

you do not appear to be properly Han Chinese, they are seized and sent to a concentration camp.²¹⁰ This forced population movement and sterilization campaign are an amplified style of the annihilation counterinsurgency strategies and tactics of the 19th century.

Nations are seeing the success of the brutal crushing of ethnic or religious minorities in China, which has garnered many nations in the world to condemn China but who are slow to truly act against China, due to China's growing economic influence. This influence is pinnacled in China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative, which is moving other nations ever deeper into the Chinese orbit of political influence and economic control.²¹¹ China is seeking to economically tie itself through roads, seaports, airports, rail, and massive loans to Asia, Africa and into Europe. This Chinese economic success is leading to China's internal counterinsurgency methods spreading abroad. Exemplified by China's support for their ally Myanmar, China did not bat an eye as Myanmar's democratic government was overthrown by a military junta. Today, Myanmar executes a policy of extermination against internal dissenters and ethnic minorities.²¹² These aggressive events are strikingly like China's internal actions; and I believe Myanmar will not be the last to emulate Chinese counterinsurgency doctrines.

²¹⁰ Ryan Grenoble, "Welcome to the Surveillance State: China's AI Cameras See All." The Huffington Post, December 12, 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/china-surveillance-camera-big-brother_n_5a2ff4dfe4b01598ac484acc.

²¹¹ Geoff Wade, "China's 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative." Parliament of Australia. Commonwealth Parliament, May 11, 2017, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BriefingBook45p/ChinasRoad#:~:text=The%20E2%80%98One%20Belt%2C%20One%20Road%2%80%99%20%28OBOR%29%20initiative%20is,economic%20aid%20to%20be%20rovided%20to%20needy%20economies.

²¹² Michael Sullivan, "China's Relationship with Myanmar's Military: It's Complicated." National Public Radio, March 29, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/03/29/982417602/protestors-in-myanmar-have-torched-several-chinese-owned-or-operated-factories>.

The world is becoming again a multi-narrative counterinsurgency competition, and the days of the 1990s of sole Western or American influence, are over. The U.S. military must become competitive to these alternative doctrines and assertive in military force with allies that seek military cooperation. America must effectively market U.S. military doctrines of counterinsurgency. American troops must be allowed to fight in a rapid response, provide development aid, and train allied armies. To apply the U.S. military in this fashion is the only way I see to properly compete to stop the current global turn to the doctrines of annihilation. America must realize that the aid and training from Russia and China is in direct opposition to our ethics in human rights and doctrines of counterinsurgency. This does not account for other competitors that are regional powers, such as Iran. Russia has shown a will to train, provide aid, and send forces to any ally in the world be it Belarus, Venezuela, Cuba, the CAR, Syria, Libya, and others. This gives great credibility to Russia's word and deed, which contrasts with American military withdrawals. New theaters are arising that will test American resolve or its continued retreat of security agreements, which I see exemplified in the self-described, independent island nation of Taiwan. China seeks to actively reclaim Taiwan, describing it as a "break away territory."²¹³ Nations will flock to China's influence as they see China's aggression unchecked. America's words of protection must be backed up by deeds for nations to emulate our values. World opinion is only part of the equation.

I contend after writing this thesis that it is the American public's will that must be crucially won over for the U.S. to renew its place as the global counterinsurgency provider. The American public must understand that America plays an enormous role in international stability. The post-

²¹³ Meera Suresh. "China Sends a Record 39 Warplanes into Taiwan's Airspace; US Calls It 'Provocative'." International Business Times, October 4, 2021, <https://www.ibtimes.com/china-sends-record-39-warplanes-taiwans-airspace-us-calls-it-provocative-3308926>.

2011 steps of American withdrawal, which was further exasperated by the 1930s like isolation actions of former President Donald Trump must be rejected, showing the dangerous world it allows and the increased influence it gives to our competitors. Americans today have such a poor interpretation of their international responsibilities. This mindset brings about the failure of the U.S. to market its counterinsurgency doctrine effectively internally. America has the technology, the experience, and the global network to aid and develop population-centric counterinsurgency in allied nations. What is needed is a marketing of the successful, and more humane campaigns of population-centric counterinsurgency at home to Americans, for it be able to operate abroad. What we lack is the will of the American public today. I lay the failure on the state schools and federal government for not articulating in any effective fashion America's role in the world to win the American public's heart for action. America has an exceptionally influential role to play in this competition of doctrines that no other Western nation can fill or supply at this moment.

It has taken world wars and international conflicts to create a global American military machine which can act in this vital role, having required the blood of many American warriors, who have shown the errors and truths in the U.S. counterinsurgency doctrines. America has the economy to aid failing states in providing effective governance, training humane military practices, and holding nations accountable through sizeable American political and an appropriate military troop presence, until their populations can hold their leadership accountable from the ballot box. Americans, deep down, want to play a significant role in the world. They can sense that their nation is unique. They know it is powerful and influential. They internally know it has an ethical basis and foundation. We need to teach Americans and provide a vision for each citizen to contribute to this role for sustaining and building this world order we desire. It is required of the American people to uphold that ethos if we desire to see it continue in the world. This takes me

back to a common phrase, with great power, comes great responsibility. America today is dropping the ball in its global responsibility in being a counterinsurgency enabler and leader. America is allowing inhumane competitors in Russia and China to now take the global counterinsurgency lead from itself.

Author's Note

I began this journey in 2015, when I served in an active role in the Global War on Terror. I wanted to understand the role that I and my three brothers had played in our USMC deployments, at times to combat zones in Iraq and Syria. On my deployment in 2015, with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit to the Middle East, I was a cannoneer for a M777 Howitzer section. This experience stirred my desire and internal mission to learn about what America was and what role it played in the world. It has taken nine years of real-world experience, international traveling, and long hours of research, to find a general understanding, which I share in this thesis. I still lack a full handle on this international behemoth of the American empire's responsibility. I am today still proud to wear a uniform for the United States of America, as I recognize America's ability to learn, change, and develop increasingly ethical doctrines for U.S. military operations. There are improvements and reforms to be done, but our history shows we can change. I desire to play a growing role in that positive trajectory and influence in future U.S. military doctrinal developments. As an ambassador for my nation and U.S. ethos internationally, I aim to help to dismantle and oppose destructive and ghastly doctrines of annihilation that are propagated and used today by our competitors, with the hope that others will do the same.

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