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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.**

**Pursuit, Exploitation and the Imperial Garrison**

**by**

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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature:\_\_\_\_\_**

**27 October 2010**

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## **Abstract**

### *Pursuit, Exploitation and the Imperial Garrison*

The Army has implicitly, and the Marine Corps has explicitly adopted maneuver warfare as their fundamental approach to warfare. Both Services, however, define COIN as a special case in which the normal approach to conflict does not apply. To the extent our focus on COIN for the long war leads us to disregard maneuver warfare thinking this separation between COIN and “real warfare” is detrimental to our intellectual readiness for major combat operations, giving rise to the heat of the argument between the ‘COINistas’ and more traditional thinkers. At the operational level, COIN is, in fact, best understood as a form of maneuver warfare. The paper uses the writings of noted theorist Robert Leonhard to provide the definition of “maneuver warfare.” The paper sets forth in brief the obvious objections to using maneuver warfare as a foundation for COIN campaign design, then demonstrate how Leonhard’s principles of dislocation, pre-emption and disruption do apply at the operational level to a COIN campaign using examples drawn from events in Iraq’s Anbar Province from 2003 to 2009. The paper then concludes COIN is best fought using ‘maneuver of the mind’ for which the basic tenets of maneuver warfare (preemption, dislocation, and disruption) fully apply, arguing that using the same basic approach for understanding armed conflict to COIN as to conventional operations can increase commander and staff proficiency in designing operations across the spectrum of conflict.

**Introduction:** Since the September 11, 2001 attacks the United States Army and United States Marine Corps have been focusing on counterinsurgency (COIN) as their contribution to “the long war”. This focus has generated considerable tension between those who believe our Services should be completely reoriented on COIN and stability operations and those who believe we must also retain the ability to fight and win out-numbered against future peer competitors.<sup>1</sup> One of the criticisms frequently levied against current U.S. doctrine on COIN is that it lacks focus on the enemy; some have called COIN “a set of tactics . . . raised into a doctrine.”<sup>2</sup> Underlying the harshness of this professional debate is a belief there are two distinct types of armed conflict: “real wars” typified by high-intensity major combat operations and COIN, typified by stability operations and nation building. Current doctrine and most Army and Marine officers treat COIN as a unique type of military operation with different theoretical underpinnings than major combat operations dominated by offensive and defensive actions. The Army implicitly, and the Marine Corps explicitly, have adopted maneuver warfare as their fundamental approach to warfare.<sup>3</sup> Both Services, however, define COIN as a

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1. Mehdi Hasan, “Two Sides of the COIN” *New Statesman*, 30 November 2009, <http://www.newstatesman.com/asia/2009/11/mehdi-hasan-afghanistan-coin-counter> (accessed on 20 September 2010). See also Vegetius, “The Army After This,” *Small Wars Journal*, 2009, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/293-vegetius.pdf> (accessed on 11 October 10) and Spencer Ackerman, “The Colonels and ‘The Matrix,’” *The Washington Independent*, 6 March 2008, <http://washingtonindependent.com/2067/the-colonels-and-the-matrix> (accessed on 11 October 2010).

2. See, for example, Gian P. Gentile “Eating soup with a spoon,” *Armed Forces Journal* September 2007, 30-31: “The eminent scholar and strategic thinker Elliot Cohen noted that counterinsurgency war is still war, and war in its essence is fighting. In trying to teach its readers to eat soup with a knife, [FM 3-24] discards the essence and reality of counterinsurgency warfare fighting, thereby manifesting its tragic flaw.” The quote on COIN as tactic raised into a strategy is from former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Celeste Ward, quoted in Mehdi Hassan, “Two Sides of the COIN,” *The New Statesman*, 26 November 2009, <http://www.newstatesman.com/asia/2009/11/mehdi-hasan-afghanistan-coin-counter> (accessed 11 OCT 10)

3. The Army does not use the term Maneuver Warfare in doctrine, but adopted many of its precepts in U.S. Army, *Operations*, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2008) 3-6 et seq and U.S. Army, *Command and Control of Army Forces*, Field Manual (FM) 6-0, (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2003) 1-17 et seq. The Marine Corps states “Our current naval doctrine is based on the tenets of maneuver warfare” in USMC, *Warfighting*, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1, (Washington, DC: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1997). Army and USMC COIN doctrine is set forth in the joint U.S. Army/USMC, *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual (FM) 3-24/ MCWP 33.5 Washington, DC: Headquarters,

special case in which the normal approach to conflict does not apply. To the extent our focus on COIN for the long war leads us to disregard maneuver warfare thinking this separation between COIN and “real warfare” is detrimental to our intellectual readiness for major combat operations, giving rise to the heat of the argument between the ‘COINistas’ and more traditional thinkers. Although this divide between “hearts and minds” COIN and major combat operations dominated by offensive and defensive operations has some validity at the tactical level, it is a false paradigm when applied to the operational level of war. At the operational level, COIN is best understood as a form of maneuver warfare.

The author will use the writings of noted theorist Robert Leonhard to provide the definition of “maneuver warfare.”<sup>4</sup> The author will set forth in brief the obvious objections to using maneuver warfare as a foundation for COIN campaign design, then demonstrate how Leonhard’s principles of dislocation, preemption and disruption do apply at the operational level to a COIN campaign using examples drawn from events in Iraq’s Anbar Province from 2003 to 2009.<sup>5</sup> The author will then conclude COIN is best fought using ‘maneuver of the mind’ for which the basic tenets of maneuver warfare (preemption, dislocation, and disruption) fully apply, arguing that using the same basic approach for understanding armed conflict to COIN as to high-intensity operations can increase commander and staff proficiency in designing operations across the spectrum of conflict.

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Department of the Army, 2006) and by USMC, *Tentative Manual for Countering Irregular Threats: An Updated Approach to Counterinsurgency Operations*, (Washington, DC: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 2006).

4. Specifically, Robert Leonhard, *The Art of Maneuver* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1991) and Leonhard, *Fighting by Minutes: Time and the Art of War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994)

5. Because COIN and, arguably, the contemporary operating environment telescope the three levels of war- tactical, operational and strategic- into one another maneuver warfare concepts will have applicability to headquarters not normally seen as fighting at the operational level (Division, Regiment/Brigade and Battalion). A full discussion of the impact of this effect on applying maneuver warfare to COIN is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.

**Background:** Although maneuver warfare has been adopted by both ground services, it is defined somewhat differently by each of them. The Marines define maneuver warfare as —a warfighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy’s cohesion through a variety of rapid, focused, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope.”<sup>6</sup> The Army does not use the term —maneuver warfare” in doctrine but recently adopted its tenets in doctrine concerning the use of mission command to “out-Boyd-cycle” the enemy,<sup>7</sup> defeat mechanisms including disruption, dislocation and isolation,<sup>8</sup> and emphasis on the commander’s intent in synchronizing operations.<sup>9</sup> Robert Leonhard’s concept of maneuver warfare based on dislocation, preemption and disruption<sup>10</sup> is clear, concise, and consistent with both Service’s understanding.

U.S. operations in Anbar Province provide an ideal setting for the considering the application of maneuver warfare to COIN because in Anbar, the application of those principles turned a grinding and unsuccessful attrition campaign into success. Anbar is Iraq’s largest and westernmost province, bordered by Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia and inhabited by Sunni tribes. Prior to 2007 it was the most violent area of Iraq, home to much of the notorious “Sunni

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6. MDCP 1, 73.

7. The reasons why the Army had adopted maneuver warfare without so stating are well beyond the scope of this paper. On mission command, see FM 6-0, 1-18 to 1-21; on the Boyd cycle see Boyd, John R. “Patterns of Conflict” briefing, edited by Chet Richards and Chuck Spinney 2005 *Defense and the National Interest* <http://www.d-n-i.net> (accessed on 3 FEB 2007). It is worth noting that although “bottom up” mission command is understood to be an element of maneuver warfare in U.S. doctrine, Leonhard has made cogent argument that maneuver warfare can be fought using “top down” detailed orders instead, and that detailed orders may in fact preferred under modern C2 conditions (Leonhard, *Fighting by Minutes* 119-124). In his view the choice is one between maximizing agility of the force for short-term speed (mission command) or the synchronization of the force for speed over longer distances (detailed command).

8. FM 3-0, 6-9. The fourth defeat mechanism, destruction, is an attribute of attrition warfare but the manual also states “[t]he effects of destruction are often transitory unless combined with isolation and dislocation”, *ibid*.

9. U.S. Army, *The Operations Process*, Field Manual (FM) 5-0, (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 28 March 2010) Chapter 5. FM 5-0 goes so far as to indicate that a subordinate commander can alter his course of action, specified tasks and even, under exceptional circumstances, his assigned mission so long as he remains with the higher commander’s intent. Taken together, FM 3-0, FM 5-0 and FM 6-0 accordingly provide a decent understanding of how to conduct maneuver warfare without stating that is the Army’s doctrine.

10. Leonhard, *Art of Maneuver* Chapter 3.

Triangle'. The insurgency in Anbar had three main components: an Al-Qaeda network centered on non-Iraqi 'foreign fighters' co-opting discontented Iraqis to fight the 'crusader' occupiers; ex-Ba'athist regime loyalists, many of whom were former Iraqi soldiers discharged when the CPA disbanded the old Iraqi Army, fighting to eject the foreign occupier; and the Anbari tribes, who saw the Coalition's defeat and departure as the quickest route back to safety and security for their people.<sup>11</sup> As late as August 2006, official U.S. intelligence analysis considered Anbar 'unwinnable'<sup>12</sup> yet after the 'Anbar Awakening' the province was leading the way in Iraq's recovery towards stability by mid-2007.

**Counter-arguments:** There are two principle objections to applying maneuver warfare to COIN which the paper will address. The first is the claim that using maneuver warfare with its focus on speed and violence in execution to get inside the opponent's decision cycle plays into the insurgent's hands by predisposing the COIN force to excessive, hasty force. Variations on this theme include noted 'maneuverist' William S. Lind, who has characterized maneuver warfare as a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation 'solution inapplicable to 4<sup>th</sup> generation' warfare.<sup>13</sup> Robert Leonhard himself, whose definitions of maneuver warfare are the basis of this paper, who wrote that 'low-intensity conflict' was not the war of the future and accordingly did not discuss how his theories might apply to it.<sup>14</sup> The second claim is that because insurgency has changed so much since the post-colonial 'golden age,' every COIN operation is *sui generis* and no

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11. John A. McCary, 'The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives,' *The Washington Quarterly* January 2009, 43.

12. Jonathan Karl, 'Pentagon Considers Moving Troops from al-Anbar Province to Baghdad' *ABC News* 28 November 2006, <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/IraqCoverage/story?id=2685559&page=1> (accessed on 24 October 2010): 'In a recent intelligence assessment, senior Marine Intelligence Officer in al-Anbar, Col. Peter Devlin, concluded that without a massive infusement of more troops, the battle in al-Anbar is unwinnable.'

13. William S. Lind, 'Operational IEDs,' *lewrockwell.com* 2 December 2005, <http://www.lewrockwell.com/lind/lind81.html> (accessed on 17 October 2010).

14. Leonhard, *Art of Maneuver* 232. He does write in a later book that the Army's subsequent replacement of low-intensity conflict and 'Operations Other than War' with full-spectrum operations was 'powerful doctrine' consistent with the practices of the Great Captains, Robert Leonhard, *The Principles of War for the Information Age* (New York: Ballentine, 1998) 160.



grand unified theory of COIN can exist.<sup>15</sup> However, as U.S. operations in Anbar Province demonstrate, the basic tenets of maneuver warfare do apply to COIN operations and can explain the dramatic turnaround in U.S. and Coalition fortunes there in 2007.

**Dislocation** Leonhard defines dislocation as “the art of rendering the enemy’s strength irrelevant.”<sup>16</sup> In operational terms, this means increasing the distance between the enemy’s center of gravity and the decisive points by moving the enemy, or the decisive point, or both. One basic application of dislocation in COIN is attained by separating the people from the insurgents. Prior campaigns have seen this accomplished by physical segregation or population control measures such as checkpoints, walls and identification documents.<sup>17</sup> The tribal sheiks switching sides in the Anbar Awakening is an example of a COIN force attaining decisive results by shifting the decisive point away from the insurgents. The Anbar Awakening also, however, illustrates the challenge the COIN force faces in identifying and devising operations to increase the insurgent’s distance from the decisive point in the complex human terrain of a modern conflict.

The conventional account of the Anbar Awakening holds that the murder of influential tribal sheiks finally pushed the tribes of Anbar to join Coalition forces in opposition to Al-Qaeda and the Iraqi resistance fighters.<sup>18</sup> In this account, consistent U.S. actions showing

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15. Frank G. Hoffman, “Neo-Classical Counterinsurgency” *Parameters* Summer 2007, 73 argues that FM 3-24 is not fully applicable to today’s conflicts because it relies excessively on Maoist “people’s war”, the Malay Emergency and David Galula’s thinking.

16. Leonhard, *Art of Maneuver* 66.

17. Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002) 123-124 (on U.S. use of concentration camps in the 1900-02 Philippine Insurrection); 127: “In the Philippines, by contrast [to Vietnam, the Army] concentrated on cutting off the guerillas from civilian assistance by garrisoning the countryside.” CE Caldwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996) explains at 130-134 with reference to the Boer War the necessity of removing or controlling resources the guerilla much gather from the populace but does not explicitly mention the removal of the populace themselves into concentration camps, one of the most striking aspects of that campaign.

18. Anthony Lloyd, “Murder of Sheikh Provokes Sunnis to Turn on al-Qaeda” *The London Times* 10 February 2006 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/iraq/article729206.ece> accessed on 22 October 2010).

themselves to be less of a threat to the sheikhs' power, prosperity and ability to care for their people than the insurgents gave the sheikhs an attractive alternative when Al-Qaeda's murderous efforts to cow them went too far. As is often the case, this conventional understanding is not entirely correct.

The tribes of Anbar Province are more than social clubs or extended family; they are mutual aid societies, providers of "honest graft"<sup>19</sup> patronage to their members, protection rackets, organized crime families and traditional groupings of families and clans related by blood and marriage all in one.<sup>20</sup> 75% of Iraqis have a tribal affiliation, and for many if not most it is their primary loyalty and source of identity; they would consider themselves a Dalaym or Jibur before being a Sunni or an Arab.<sup>21</sup> Sheikhs are hereditary, but their power is tied directly to how much patronage they can provide to their followers.<sup>22</sup> In Saddam's Iraq, their shared sect (Sunni Islam) gave them an in with the Sunni tribes controlling the secular Ba'athist government, which protected their influence against the Shiite majority. Although

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19. Honest graft is the evocative term coined by 19th Century NY State Senator and Tammany Hall machine politician George W. Plunkitt as explained in speeches collected in *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall* ed. by William L. Riordon (Project Gutenberg; <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2810/2810-h/2810-h.htm>) (accessed on 24 October 2010): Chapter 1: "EVERYBODY is talkin' these days about Tammany men growin' rich on graft, but nobody thinks of drawin' the distinction between honest graft and dishonest graft. There's all the difference in the world between the two. Yes, many of our men have grown rich in politics. I have myself. I've made a big fortune out of the game, and I'm gettin' richer every day, but I've not gone in for dishonest graft—blackmailin' gamblers, saloonkeepers, disorderly people, etc.—and neither has any of the men who have made big fortunes in politics. There's an honest graft, and I'm an example of how it works. I might sum up the whole thing by sayin': 'I seen my opportunities and I took 'em.'" This author believes Anbar's tribal sheikhs would recognize a kindred spirit in Senator Plunkitt.

20. Hussein D. Hassan, *Iraq: Tribal Structure, Social, and Political Activities*, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 15 March 2007), 2-3.

21. "as one tribal Iraqi put it to me, 'if you ask a Shammari what religion he is, he will say 'I am a Shammari'" — the Shammari being a confederation which, like many Iraqi tribes, has both Sunni and Shi'a branches." David Kilcullen — "Anatomy of a Tribal Revolt" *Small Wars Journal*, 29 August 2007, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/08/anatomy-of-a-tribal-revolt/> (accessed on 19 October 2010)

22. McCary, "The Anbar Awakening" 45.

their political power had been gradually absorbed by the state- first Ottoman, then the Iraqi monarchy, and finally the Republic of Iraq, the manpower and internal security requirements brought about by Saddam Hussein's wars caused his government to grant the sheikhs favors and resources in return for armed men.<sup>23</sup> In 2003, the destruction of Saddam's regime and subsequent disbanding and reformation of the Iraqi Army and police left the tribes, with their militias, as the sole effective source of order in Anbar province. One of the reasons Anbar Province was the most violent in Iraq for Coalition forces from 2003 to 2007 was that the tribal sheikhs did not see the nascent democratic Iraqi government as a benefit to them, nor as being able to mature and defeat Al-Qaeda and the Iraqi resistance fighters. Opposing that government was accordingly in their own best interest.

U.S. commanders were aware of the degree of tribal identity among the Iraqi people, but they did not initially appreciate the primacy of that identity, nor the degree to which the central Iraqi government the U.S. was supporting opposed tribal interests. A functional Iraqi central government operating on bureaucratic process within the rule of law left no power for the sheikhs and accordingly struck them as inimical to both their own and their tribesmen's interests. The U.S. and Coalition campaign was, accordingly, not conceived in accordance with the human terrain.<sup>24</sup> In fact, by making success dependent upon establishing sound local 'rule of law' governments in a region where the power brokers were tribal sheikhs, the U.S. increased the distance between the Coalition's center of gravity and the decisive point, leading to tactical success producing operational stalemate during 2004-2006. The key change in Anbar province was not Al-Qaeda's murderous actions to intimidate the tribes, nor even the

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23. Hassan, *Iraq: Tribal Structure* 3-6.

24. Designing a COIN operation to take advantage of the human terrain is directly analogous to planning movement and maneuver around the physical lay of the land: there is no other way to do it right.

efforts of Al-Qaeda to displace the tribes from their traditional businesses (legal and illegal). The key change was the decision of U.S. commanders to begin empowering the tribes – in other words, shifting the Coalition’s center of gravity closer to the decisive point while simultaneously pushing the insurgents’ center of gravity further away from it.

U.S. commanders in Anbar made the tribal sheikhs the centerpiece of their stability efforts. Reconstruction projects for electricity, roads and water, job programs and economic recovery initiatives were, in the words of the Marine commander on the scene,

–all funneled through the sheikhs, and all of it in the end empowered the sheikhs again, when al-Qaeda had done everything it could to marginalize the traditional tribal leadership. . . We empowered the sheikhs because there really wasn’t a government functioning. It was the governor in his government center. . . basically a government of one in a building protected by a Marine rifle company.”<sup>25</sup>

This was a radical departure from prior Coalition ‘good government’ practices of open bidding with Iraqi government contracts,<sup>26</sup> but the effort did not end there.

Starting as a local initiative with COL MacFarland’s 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division (U.S. Army), U.S. forces also entered a deliberate security alliance with the tribal sheikhs, essentially enlisting the tribal militias in position as Iraqi police.<sup>27</sup> Significantly, this was precisely what the sheikhs had told COL McFarland they needed to “get off the fence”<sup>28</sup> and had previously been “expressly forbidden by U.S. policy.”<sup>29</sup> With their security needs addressed and the might of the U.S. and Coalition military to back them up, the tribes were able to turn on their former

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25. LtGen John R. Allen, USMC, quoted in Timothy S. McWilliams and Kurtis P. Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 1: American Perspectives* (Quantico, VA: United States Marine Corps, 2009) 230.

26. McCary, “The Anbar Awakening” 50.

27. LtGen John R. Allen, USMC, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 1*” 235.

28. Michaels, Jim — “An Army Colonel’s Gamble Pays Off in Iraq” *USA Today* 20 April 2007, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-04-30-ramadi-colonel\\_n.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-04-30-ramadi-colonel_n.htm) (accessed on 12 October 2010)

29. McCary, “The Anbar Awakening” 49.

Al-Qaeda allies and defeated them rapidly; in COL MacFarland's words, "Once a tribal leader flips, attacks on American forces in that area stop almost overnight."<sup>30</sup> The secret to that speed was not Coalition and Iraqi security force tactical overmatch at last targeted by the tribes' local knowledge, although that certainly produced many tactical successes; the secret was that many of the same individuals had been supporting multiple causes- their own tribe's militia, Al-Qaeda in Iraq, Iraqi resistance cells- and when their tribe allied with the Americans their primary identity as a tribesman won out.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, Al-Qaeda and the Iraqi resistance were not so much destroyed or defeated as co-opted, with Al-Qaeda's foreign leadership then hunted down or chased out.

In Anbar, Coalition forces won decisively once they were able to dislocate Al-Qaeda in Iraq by increasing the distance between the insurgents and the decisive point- which was the tribal chiefs themselves. The enemy cooperated in this as well; the struggle between Al-Qaeda and the Iraqi resistance movements for primacy within Anbar highlighted the threat Al-Qaeda posed to tribal leadership,<sup>32</sup> and the Al-Qaeda practice of marrying into local clans to cement their link to the people offended the tribal mores in Anbar.<sup>33</sup> However, the primary challenge

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30. Michaels, Jim — "Army Colonel's Gamble Pays Off in Iraq" *USA Today* 20 April 2007, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-04-30-ramadi-colonel\\_n.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-04-30-ramadi-colonel_n.htm) (accessed on 12 October 2010)

31. McCary, "The Anbar Awakening" 52: "Once the unifying factor [opposition to the U.S. presence] was erased, varying allegiances became competing interests in the minds of the participating individuals. When forced to choose, these men followed their tribes." See also COL Lawrence D. Nicholson, USMC, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 1* 13: "I've met with resistance leaders, I've met with guys who said 'Hey, I was fighting you for two years. Now... we're fighting [Al-Qaeda].'"

32. Jim Michaels — "Army Colonel's Gamble Pays Off in Iraq" *USA Today* 20 April 2007, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-04-30-ramadi-colonel\\_n.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-04-30-ramadi-colonel_n.htm) (accessed on 12 October 2010): "But the sheiks were sitting on the fence. They were not sympathetic to al-Qaeda, but they tolerated its members, MacFarland says. The sheiks' outlook had been shaped by watching an earlier clash between Iraqi nationalists — primarily former members of Saddam Hussein's ruling Baath Party — and hard-core al-Qaeda operatives who were a mix of foreign fighters and Iraqis. Al-Qaeda beat the nationalists. That rattled the sheiks. 'Al-Qaeda just mopped up the floor with those guys,' "

33. David Kilcullen — "Anatomy of a Tribal Revolt" *Small Wars Journal*, 29 August 2007, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/08/anatomy-of-a-tribal-revolt/> (accessed on 19 October 2010). This is a

was in recognizing that the tribal sheikhs were the decisive point. Despite extensive investment in studying the area and its people before arriving in Anbar it required several rotations for U.S. forces to understand, as one Marine commander put it, —~~The~~ most important social feature. . . of the Anbar people, is that tribal sheikh relationship and I think we had to learn that.”<sup>34</sup> Prior to dislocating Al-Qaeda, the Iraqi resistance and the tribal militias, Coalition forces in Anbar were running a textbook COIN campaign and losing. Dislocation is what made their actions decisive.

**Preemption** Leonhard defines preemption as ~~a~~ “a move that occurs before its time.”<sup>35</sup> He describes its use as invariably audacious because its essence is speed in decision and execution replacing mass and synchronization. Relative and not absolute speed is the root of preemption; in his words, —~~the~~ truest military application of the term relates to seizing an opportunity before an enemy does.”<sup>36</sup> Preemption in COIN is accordingly getting to decisive points, which are almost always related to the populace, before the insurgents can. This is very difficult in COIN because determining the decisive points in a struggle for popular support requires a thorough understanding of the ~~human~~ terrain.” The insurgents, being members of the culture, will almost invariably have a clearer understanding of that human terrain than the COIN force-inside lines, in operational terms. Preemption in COIN is not ~~to~~ git thar furst with the most

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rare example of cultural insensitivity biting the insurgents and occurred because a tactic that worked very well in Afghanistan and Pakistan’s Northwest Frontier was culturally inappropriate in the Iraq theater.

34. I MEF commander LtGen Richard C. Zilmer, USMC, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume I*” 14.

35. Leonhard, *Art of Maneuver* 63.

36. Ibid, 62.

men”;<sup>37</sup> preemption in COIN is to seize ahead of the insurgent physical locations, propaganda points and political positions giving advantage over decisive points. Operations in Anbar Province featured both sides seizing the initiative and time advantage at different points.

One clear example of failing to seize an opportunity in COIN can be found in U.S. policy towards Iraq during 2003. After the swift defeat of Saddam Hussein’s Ba’athist regime the United States, working through the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), implemented significant changes to Iraqi institutions intended to consolidate the power of a new, democratic Iraqi central government which had the opposite effect in Anbar Province. The decisions to disband the Iraqi Army, purge Ba’athists from Iraqi institutions and close the state-owned enterprises were subsequently described by a Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) commander fighting in Anbar Province as —having created a perfect storm in Anbar” due to the Anbar tribes’ strong tradition of military service and integration into positions of civil power.<sup>38</sup> Further, by destroying the pillars of governmental power, the CPA’s actions made the tribes even more important to the populace as their sole remaining source of structure.<sup>39</sup> Sensing opportunity, Al-Qaeda fighters, organizers and financiers from outside Iraq entered Anbar and initiated operations in conjunction with their fellow Sunnis in Anbari tribes while U.S./Coalition forces in Anbar were still focusing on creating and supporting the (primarily Shi’a) Bagdad government’s control.<sup>40</sup> Al-Qaeda exploited tribal unhappiness with the CPA’s

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37. Nathan Bedford Forrest, quoted in Bruce Catton *The Civil War*. (Boston: Mariner Books, 2004) 151. Catton notes the usual quotation —ifstest with the mostest” was the creation of a 1917 NY Times article and inconsistent with Forrest’s actual speaking style.

38. LtGen John R. Allen, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 1*” 228.

39. McCary, —The Anbar Awakening” 45.

40. David Kilcullen —Anatomy of a Tribal Revolt” *Small Wars Journal*, 29 August 2007, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/08/anatomy-of-a-tribal-revolt/> (accessed on 19 October 2010): —AQI’s

decisions to establish themselves in Anbar. This preemption was entirely consistent with Mao's 'people's war' construct,<sup>41</sup> which assumes a lengthy period of organization and political mobilization before the insurgents start violent operations against the government or occupier.

Preemption in COIN can also apply to seizing physical locations. Although it is often said that terrain as such is unimportant in COIN, there is one type of key terrain in COIN: where the people live.<sup>42</sup> The insurgent must have supporters among the populace and must also conduct operations designed to convince the uncommitted majority that they, not the government's forces, will ultimately win. Both maintaining contact with their supporters and the violent actions against targets within the populace to cow the fence-sitters - assassinations of government officials and collaborators, attacks on public places and key infrastructure - demand that the insurgent operate within the towns, villages and cities where people live. At the operational level of war, combat outposts among the people are not a defensive position from which to patrol and defeat insurgent attacks. Operationally, they are an offensive preemption that gives the COIN force the same or better access to the people than the insurgent has. The combat outposts accordingly play the same role in a COIN operation that seizing a bridge or choke point has at the tactical level in a pursuit.<sup>43</sup>

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pitch to the tribes was: 'We are Sunni. You are Sunni. The Americans and Iranians are helping the Shi'a – let's fight them together.'

41. Mao Zedong, *On Guerilla Warfare* 2nd ed. Translated by Samuel B. Griffiths II (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000) 41-44.

42. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1964) 78: 'A military unit can spend the entire war in so-called strategic positions without contributing anything to the enemy's defeat. . . counterinsurgent forces should not be wasted in traditionally commanding positions, for in revolutionary warfare, these positions generally command nothing.'

43. 'Pursuit: An offensive operation designed to catch or cut off a hostile force attempting to escape, with the aim of destroying it' U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02. (Washington, DC: CJCS, as amended through 13 June 2007) 435.



In Anbar province, combat outposts began to be established in June, 2006, shortly before the first public movement by the tribes to ally with the Americans.<sup>44</sup> As established in the vicinity of Ramadi by 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division's 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team under the command of I MEF, combat outposts contained not only U.S. Soldiers or Marines but also Iraqi Army troops and, in most cases, Iraqi policemen.<sup>45</sup> The U.S. and Iraqi troops served to secure the area, with the Iraqis also providing the cultural awareness, language skills and common identity with the locals, which enabled the allies to operate as close to the people as the insurgents could. In fact, as the Anbari tribes increasingly turned against Al-Qaeda, the Coalition forces from their outposts had better access to the people than did Al-Qaeda in Iraq because most of the Al-Qaeda personnel were 'foreign fighters' from outside of Iraq.<sup>46</sup> By moving out of the heavily fortified Forward Operating Bases into the towns and villages, Coalition troops accordingly preempted the insurgents' access to their objective, the people, with telling effect.

**Preemption and Information** Information operations present a particularly fruitful field for preemption; messaging and staying on message with both words & deeds can enable the counterinsurgent to attack insurgent's critical vulnerabilities ~~throughout~~ "throughout his cognitive depth"<sup>47</sup> in a manner directly akin to operational fires. U.S. doctrine recognizes COIN as a political

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44. COL Sean B. McFarland, USA, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 1* 182

45. Ibid, 180. As a result of the deal between COL MacFarland and the sheikhs these Iraqi policemen were also tribal militiamen from the immediate area who possessed not only general cultural knowledge but also specific local knowledge on people who were their own families, friends and neighbors.

46. McCary, "The Anbar Awakening" 49.

47. S.P. Myers, "Applying Operational Maneuver Theory to Contemporary Operations" (research paper, North York, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Forces College, Advanced Military Studies Programme, 2006 <http://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/papers/amsc/amsp9/myers.pdf> (accessed on 22 August 2010) 29.

campaign with violence added in which public perception and politics, not the violence, is ultimately decisive.<sup>48</sup> Operations in Fallujah demonstrate several aspects of this phenomenon.

The first example is one of missed opportunity: the killings of Blackwater USA security personnel on 31 March 2004. These personnel were killed from ambush by Al-Qaeda fighters and Al-Qaeda skillfully and immediately exploited their deaths using video distributed online and by television.<sup>49</sup> Although the Marine commanders on the ground had been conducting a patient, Small Wars Manual-based COIN campaign in Anbar up to that point, the propaganda-generated pressure to ‘do something’ led to the Coalition HQs in Baghdad directing Operation VIGILANT RESOLVE, the first assault to retake Fallujah from the Iraqi resistance and Al-Qaeda. This attack was launched without adequate information preparation, and itself became an opportunity for Al-Qaeda’s propagandists to claim the Coalition was inflicting heavy civilian casualties. VIGILANT RESOLVE was stopped, according to the I MEF commander conducting the attack, within three days of securing Fallujah.<sup>50</sup> In both the Blackwater murders and the abortive assault, Coalition forces were defeated in large measure because they were unable to react with the speed and precision needed to counter effective Al-Qaeda propaganda.

An example of successful preemption can be seen in the approach Coalition forces under Marine leadership took in the second, October 2004, assault on Fallujah. According to I MEF

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48. FM 3-24 does so characterize COIN operations at 1-22: “political factors have primacy in COIN. . . . Military actions executed without properly assessing their political effects at best result in reduced effectiveness and at worst are counterproductive. Resolving most insurgencies requires a political solution; it is thus imperative that counterinsurgent actions do not hinder achieving that political solution.

49. Matthews, Matt M. *Operation AJ FAJR: A Study in Army and Marine Corps Joint Operations* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006) 10: “Although the Marines ordered two additional infantry battalions into Fallujah, it was to no avail. After suffering heavy losses and decisively losing the Information Operations (IO) campaign, the Marines pulled out of Fallujah the first week in May.” On the sophistication and speed of the insurgent information operation, see David Kimmage and Kathleen Ridolfo, *Iraqi Insurgent Media: The War of Ideas and Images* (Washington, DC: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2007).

50. LtGen James T. Conway, USMC, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 17*.

commander LtGen John F. Sattler, “we were phase-four oriented before we went across the line of departure.”<sup>51</sup> Phase four in U.S. parlance means stability and reconstruction operations; the Marines and Soldiers who retook Fallujah had begun building before they had finished fighting. This aggressiveness in turning to from destruction to rebuilding preempted anti-Coalition forces not once, but twice. First, by being on the ground with money and resources in hand after having defeated Al-Qaeda and Iraqi resistance, Coalition forces denied their opponents the chance to re-infiltrate and spread dissension. Insurgent propaganda claims that the Americans were there only to take Iraq’s resources were unsustainable in the face of money to rebuild damages; in the words of one official Marine history, “while the civil affairs operations helped to deny the enemy the human terrain, the seizure of the city denied the insurgents a safe haven.”<sup>52</sup> The second preemption in Operation AL FAJR was getting ahead of Al-Qaeda’s key message that they were fighting to liberate Iraq from the Western oppressors and their puppet government. AL FAJR was launched after extensive public affairs efforts to make clear why Iraq, with Coalition help, had to retake the city; these operational fires inoculated the U.S. and Iraqi populace against Al-Qaeda’s propaganda claims.<sup>53</sup> In addition, the self-evident contrast between the readiness of U.S. and Coalition forces to help Fallujah’s citizens rebuild and the stark and uncaring savagery displayed by Al-Qaeda’s foreign fighters undermined a key rationale for al-Anbar’s tribes to oppose the Coalition, and was credited after the Anbar Awakening with being among the first seeds planted.<sup>54</sup> In both establishing combat outposts

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51. LtGen John F. Sattler, USMC, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 18*.

52. McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 18*.

53. Hollis, Patrecia Slayden “The Second Battle of Fallujah: Urban Operations in a New Kind of War” *Field Artillery Journal* March-April 2006, 4-9.

54. Metz, Thomas F., et al “Massing Effects in the Information Domain” *Military Review* 86 no. 2 (May-June 2006) 5.

and the preparatory information fires which preceded and supported Operation AL FAJR, Coalition forces used preemption to gain advantage over the insurgents.

**Disruption:** Leonhard defines disruption as ~~the~~ practice of defeating the enemy by attacking his center of gravity.”<sup>55</sup> This is one of the defining features of the U.S. understanding of operational art; in fact, noted U.S. theorists Milan Vego believes this shared focus on the enemy’s center of gravity means that ~~—maneuver warfare~~” is nothing more than a partial understanding of the operational art.<sup>56</sup> Disruption in COIN is attacking the insurgents’ center of gravity through their critical vulnerabilities (i.e., the indirect approach).<sup>57</sup> Attacking the center of gravity is well-covered in U.S. doctrine, which states firmly that the insurgent’s ability to generate and sustain popular support for their cause is their center of gravity;<sup>58</sup> the hard part in designing a COIN operation is determining just what that center of gravity and its associated decisive points are. Further, in a complex ~~4<sup>th</sup>~~ Generation,” ~~hybrid~~” or ~~unrestricted warfare~~”<sup>59</sup> conflict one should expect multiple relevant centers of gravity, one for

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55. Leonhard, *Art of Maneuver* 73.

56. Milan Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2007): I-4 to I-5: ~~—Maneuver warfare~~ as a way of warfare has in fact (although its proponents are apparently unaware of it) many features of operational warfare.”

57. The author is indebted throughout this section to Lieutenant-Colonel S.P. Myers, Canadian Armed Forces, whose unpublished paper S.P. Myers ~~—Applying Operational Maneuver Theory to Contemporary Operations~~” (research paper, North York, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Forces College, Advanced Military Studies Programme, 2006 <http://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/papers/amsc/amsp9/myers.pdf> (accessed on 22 August 2010) discusses at length the application of maneuver warfare as defined by a focus on the center of gravity to COIN at the operational level. As LtCol Myers notes, an insurgency is designed from the ground up to evade the direct approach so none but an indirect approach can be expected to work in COIN.

58. FM 3-24, 3-13: ~~the~~ ability to generate and sustain popular support, or at least acquiescence and tolerance, often has the greatest impact on the insurgency’s long-term effectiveness. This ability is usually the insurgency’s center of gravity.”

59. 4th Generation warfare, see Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2006) 2: ~~4<sup>th</sup>~~ Generation Warfare uses all available networks- political, economic, social, and military- to convince the enemy’s political decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit.” Hybrid warfare, see Richard Crowell, ~~—Analyzing Hybrid Warfare~~” (working paper, Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, Joint Military Operations Department, 2010). Unrestricted warfare,

each friendly, enemy or competitor faction in the area of influence.<sup>60</sup> U.S. operations in Anbar Province demonstrate that getting the center of gravity right, and having the flexibility to nest all physical and information actions to target it through the correct critical vulnerability once discovered, were the keys to success.

One example in Anbar Province is Coalition's success in isolating Al-Qaeda from the Anbari tribes and Ba'athist resistance. Drawing on their classic Small Wars Manual, the Marines emphasized from their first days in the theater that the new democratic Iraqi government was the path forward to security and prosperity, not Al-Qaeda or the nationalist resistance.<sup>61</sup> Consistently throughout successive unit rotations, with the significant exceptions of the first, abortive attempt to clear insurgents from Fallujah in April 2004,<sup>62</sup> the Coalition approach in Anbar centered on ~~pro~~proactive engagement of sheiks and local leaders, respectful treatment of the populace, and sustained efforts to restore essential services and infrastructure."<sup>63</sup> However, the classic COIN campaign was not working; Coalition forces

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see Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, 1999). Despite these references this author believes "4th Generation" or "hybrid" or "unrestricted" warfare" to be nothing new, inasmuch as the first fully documented war involving every means of state power fair and foul was the Peloponnesian War in 431-404 B.C; see Victor Davis Hanson *A War Like No Other*, (New York: Random House, 2005) 89-90. Contemporary COIN planners can, accordingly profit from the study of imperial garrison operations throughout history. Such a study is well beyond the scope of this paper.

60. Although a campaign is usually said to have one center of gravity for each side, U.S. doctrine does permit the use of multiple centers of gravity; see FM 3-0, 6-8. This author believes that in an environment with multiple operational actors such as a contemporary GWOT campaign each actor will have their own center of gravity. This multiplicity of centers of gravity is the primary reason planning and executing successful operations gets exponentially more difficult as one adds players to the game.

61. "We went back to the *Small Wars Manual* for our initial doctrinal guidance. When we had conducted operations in the south [of Iraq] it seemed pretty valid to us, and we thought we could do a continuation of the same type of thing in al-Anbar Province." LtGen James T. Conway, USMC, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 1* 5.

62. "The Blackwater USA murders on 31 March 2004 and their aftermath waylaid the Marines' operational plan." McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 1* 7.

63. Ibid, 2.

remain trapped in an attrition-based conflict with increasing violence levels in which tactical success was not producing operational progress. By 2006, conditions had deteriorated until —we killed 1,700, almost 1,800 al-Qaeda, put another 4,500 of them in Bucca and places like that, and the violence levels doubled.”<sup>64</sup> The reasons why this doctrinally sound approach did not appear to bear fruit until 2006 clearly illustrate the value of disruption in a COIN campaign.

From 2003 through 2006, the Coalition’s approach of rebuilding Iraq through its new government simply did not appeal to any of the three groups fighting the Coalition in Anbar Province. The Sunni tribes saw Coalition-enforced sovereignty of the Shi’a-dominated central government as a threat to their security. The Saddam loyalists saw any foreign occupation, even a hypothetically benign one, as anathema and the new Iraqi government as collaborators; Al-Qaeda cared nothing for Iraq’s future and saw any authority other than its own as a threat to its freedom of maneuver. As Al-Qaeda operated it needed to fund itself and the most readily available source of income was the same illegal activities, primarily smuggling, which had traditionally been the tribes’ stock in trade. Once the tribal sheiks saw Al-Qaeda as a direct competitor and threat to their own operations, Al-Qaeda had out-stayed its welcome and the Coalition message- with the promise of Coalition and Iraqi armed forces as muscle to help oust Al-Qaeda- was now a welcome one. Similarly, Al-Qaeda’s evident disregard for Iraqi lives and vision of a theocracy eventually convinced the more secular and pragmatic Iraqi resistance elements that Al-Qaeda could not be trusted.<sup>65</sup>

Considered through the lens of maneuver warfare, the change in the U.S. approach to Anbar in 2006 to work through the tribal sheikhs enabled Coalition forces to disrupt Al-Qaeda

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64. LtGen John R. Allen, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume I* 235

65. McCary, —The Anbar Awakening” 49.

in Iraq by denying them their previous access to support from the Anbari tribes and the Iraqi resistance movement in Anbar. Each of the three insurgent opponents to Coalition forces had a separate center of gravity. For Al-Qaeda, it was their ability to wreck violent vengeance upon anyone, whether a government official, tribal sheikh or Iraqi resistance leader, who did not support their cause.<sup>66</sup> For the Iraqi resistance, it was the appeal of their nationalists cause to the populace.<sup>67</sup> For the tribes, it was ultimately the ability of the sheikhs to provide security and prosperity to their people that held the tribe together. Empowering the tribal sheikhs accordingly struck at a critical vulnerability- tribal support- of both Al-Qaeda and the Iraqi resistance, while co-opting the tribes by reinforcing the sheikh's critical capability. As the MEF commander on the ground at the time put it, "You can't win an insurgency as long as you're operating outside the human terrain. Once we were able to penetrate the tribes and be accepted and trusted by them, we were able to then isolate al-Qaeda and go after them ..."<sup>68</sup>

Prior to the U.S. policy changes that supported the Anbar Awakening, Coalition forces had been operating outside the human terrain despite their best efforts to emphasize it in training and planning for their missions in Iraq. This deliberate analysis did not turn up the central importance of the tribal sheikhs.<sup>69</sup> One MEF commander involved said U.S. forces had to learn from experience how critical tribal affiliation was to understanding Anbar's human

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66. LtGen John R. Allen, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 1* 235: "If you were a sheikh and you got seen with the Americans, the chances were very good you were going to pay for it in a very bad way."

67. COL Stephen W. Davis, USMC, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 1* 10.

68. LtGen John R. Allen, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 1* 235.

69. McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 1* 5.

terrain;<sup>70</sup> the Brigade Combat Team commander who made the crucial connection to the tribal sheikhs said –“Maybe I was a bit of a drowning man in Ramadi. I was reaching for anything that would help me float. And that was the tribes.”<sup>71</sup> One additional element of maneuver warfare seen in Anbar is, accordingly, subordinate initiative fostered by mission command.

Mission command is the style of command and control in which subordinates are given the maximum freedom to innovate so long as they stay within the commander’s intent; it is the opposite of detailed command under which subordinates are supposed to do what they’re told, and are told what to do with great specificity. The USMC ties the use of mission command directly to maneuver warfare, stating –“Mission command and control is central to maneuver warfare.”<sup>72</sup> The U.S. Army’s command and control doctrine admits that detailed command exists albeit as a disfavored option,<sup>73</sup> but the Army’s doctrine on planning and conducting operations specify that mission command is to be used.<sup>74</sup> Some authors believe that mission command is inapt for COIN because of the tight constraints political considerations must place on military operations;<sup>75</sup> however, U.S. doctrine states mission command is of particular value

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70. MajGen Richard C. Zilmer, USMC, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 1* 14.

71. COL Sean MacFarland, quoted in Michaels, Jim —“A Army Colonel’s Gamble Pays Off in Iraq” *USA Today* 20 April 2007, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-04-30-ramadi-colonel\\_n.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-04-30-ramadi-colonel_n.htm) (accessed on 12 October 2010)

72. U.S. Marine Corps, *Command and Control*, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 6, (Washington, DC: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1996) 109

73. FM 6-0, 1-16.

74. FM 3-0, *Operations* and FM 5-0 *The Operations Process* both prescribe the use of mission command and mission orders at length, and mention detailed command only as an option not to be used. See FM 3-0 Chapter 3 and FM 5-0 Chapters 1 and 2.

75. Ricky Waddell, –“Maneuver Warfare and Low-Intensity Conflict” in Richard D. Hooker, ed., *Maneuver Warfare: An Anthology* (Navato, CA: Presidio, 1993) 130.



in COIN.<sup>76</sup> Events in Anbar demonstrate that U.S. doctrine is correct in specifying the use of mission command in COIN operations. The freedom to innovate and the trust up and down the chain of command that innovation would not be punished were critical to COL MacFarland having the confidence to take a risk on the tribal sheikhs.<sup>77</sup> Because the critical step needed to secure the sheikhs support (essentially sub-contracting Iraqi security forces to the tribes)<sup>78</sup> was explicitly forbidden in U.S. policy, COL MacFarland needed a great deal of trust in his superiors. To the credit of the generals in question this trust was justified, and his local success became the new operational paradigm which subsequently contributed to success across Iraq.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, refocusing U.S. efforts across the theater of operations to support the initially local success in Anbar confirms the value FM 3-24 puts on having a ‘learning organization’ when conducting COIN.<sup>80</sup>

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76. FM 3-24, 1-26: “Mission command is ideally suited to the mosaic nature of COIN operations. Local commanders have the best grasp of their situations. . . effective COIN operations are decentralized, and higher commanders owe it to their subordinates to push as many capabilities as possible down to their level. Mission command encourages the initiative of subordinates and facilitates the learning that must occur at every level. It is a major characteristic of a COIN force that can adapt and react at least as quickly as the insurgents.”

77. LtGen John R. Allen, quoted in McWilliams and Wheeler, eds., *Al-Anbar Awakening Volume 1* 235: “[Interviewer]: was [COL MacFarland’s outreach] on his own initiative?” LtGen Allen: —~~Str.~~ Because [1 MARDIV] General Rick Zilmer created an environment where he expected his regimental and brigade commanders to take initiative, it was. It was on his own initiative.”

78. McCary, “The Anbar Awakening” 49.

79. David H. Petraeus, *Report to Congress in the Situation in Iraq* Congressional testimony (Bagdad, Iraq: Headquarters Multi-National Force-Iraq, 10-11 September 2007) 5: “The most significant development in the past six months likely has been the increasing emergence of tribes and local citizens rejecting Al-Qaeda and other extremists. This has, of course, been most visible in Anbar Province. A year ago the province was assessed as “lost” politically. Today it is a model of what happens when local leaders and citizens decide to reject Al-Qaeda and its Taliban-like ideology.

80. Although beyond the scope of the present paper which is focused on Leonhard’s basic definition of maneuver warfare, another way to consider the learning organization put forth by John Nagl (John A. Nagl, *Counter-insurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002)), and restated in FM 3-24, is Richard Simpkins’ concept of force agility as acceleration in the physics of war (Richard E. Simpkin, *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on Twenty-First Century Warfare* (London: Brassey’s, 1995) 93-115.

**Conclusions and Recommendations:** Study of the 2003-2007 counterinsurgency campaign in Anbar Province reveals several points of interest for designing future COIN campaigns. First, maneuver warfare is a valid intellectual construct for COIN operational design. Second, the U.S. should rewrite our COIN doctrine as found in JP 3-24 and FM 3-24 to highlight the use of preemption, dislocation and disruption in defeating the insurgent. Lastly, mission command is the optimal control style for COIN operations and our doctrine should retain its current emphasis on this point.

U.S. and Coalition actions in Anbar Province from the defeat of the Ba'athist regime in 2003 to the success of COIN operations in 2007 demonstrate the value of applying the concepts of maneuver warfare to counterinsurgency operations. Coalition operations in Anbar province were initially unsuccessful because although they employed sound doctrine as defined in the USMC Small Wars Manual and, eventually, FM 3-24, in the absence of a thorough understanding of the people and their culture, the operations were not focused on disrupting the insurgents' centers of gravity, dislocating the insurgent's strength, or pre-empting the insurgents' access to key advantages. Although ~~maneuver warfare~~ "is usually written about in the context of high-intensity combat operations, COIN is best fought using maneuver of the mind for which the basic tenets of maneuver warfare (preemption, dislocation, and disruption) fully apply.

The current version of FM 3-24 is a valuable tool for the commander seeking tactics, techniques and procedures for conducting successful COIN operations, but it has limited value for the commander desiring an operational design to win a COIN campaign. Its discussion of design does not address how to determine and attack the decisive points generated by the interaction between the environment and the actors in it; this is the underlying reason why

some commentators suggest it takes the enemy out of the equation.<sup>81</sup> A revision of FM 3-24 and JP 3-24 to reflect the operational value of maneuver warfare in COIN would materially assist commanders and planners designing future COIN campaigns.

Finally, the Coalition success in Anbar during 2007 was directly tied to the U.S. ability to recognize decisive success in COL MacFarland's support of the nascent —Anbar Awakening” and capitalize on it. U.S. doctrine specifies that to succeed in COIN one must have a learning organization; this concept is directly analogous to the “recon pull” which underlies tactical and operational maneuver warfare.<sup>82</sup> The mission command concept inherent to the U.S. understanding of maneuver warfare is, accordingly, directly applicable to COIN.

As this study has demonstrated, applying the intellectual tools of maneuver warfare to COIN campaign design will have several benefits. Correctly understanding the intellectual underpinnings of a form of conflict [COIN] enables the theater or JTF planner to better understand the operational environment, craft more relevant and achievable strategic objectives, and do better campaign design. The U.S. Army and USMC have explicitly (for the Marines) and implicitly (for the Army) adopted maneuver theory as their basic tool for understanding armed conflict. Applying the same tools to COIN as to high-intensity operations will increase commander and staff proficiency in designing operations for both ends of the spectrum of conflict. More importantly, the events in Anbar Province indicate that applying the tenets of maneuver warfare to COIN operations is means by which the U.S. and host nation forces can overcome the intrinsic disadvantages of countering an insurgency. Maneuver

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81. Gentile, Gian P. —Our COIN doctrine removes the enemy from the essence of war” *Armed Forces Journal* January 2008 <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2008/01/3207722> (accessed on 8 October 2010)

82. John R. Boyd, —Patterns of Conflict.” Edited by Chet Richards and Chuck Spinney Powerpoint, 2005 Defense and the National Interest <http://www.d-n-i.net> (accessed on 3 FEB 2007) 114-117.

warfare is no panacea, but it does offer the tools needed to clarify the complex modern conflict and secure victory.

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