

Political Science 972: International Conflict
Discussion Questions for Week 13
Counter-Insurgency: Contemporary Approaches

1. Suppose you wanted to translate the approaches in Petraeus and the FM3-24 counter-insurgency manual into political science theory. To what extent is this approach supported by various theoretical approaches and empirical research programs in political science; to what extent does it provide new ideas not found in our theories; to what extent does what we know from political science theory and research contradict this approach. How similar is the Petraeus et al critique of past US failures, notably Vietnam, Lebanon and Somalia, consistent with the academic critiques?
2. Assess the current articles in *Military Review* with respect to the following critiques
 - a. What has changed in the current environment when compared to earlier US operations, notably Vietnam
 - b. What has *not* changed but the US military was ignoring things where it should have know better
 - c. Where is the existing US policy doing just fine
3. Compare and contrast the US experience in Afghanistan and Iraq: what are the various factors that have led to one going pretty much as the US expected and the other going very badly. As outside [but, presumably, informed] [mostly] civilian observers of current US actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, are there important problems or lessons that these military authors are missing?
4. Based on what has been reported in the news over the past couple of months, to what extent has Petraeus been able to implement his counter-insurgency principles now that he is in command in Iraq? To what extent do they seem to be working? To what extent is it too early to tell? Are the factors complicating the implementation ones that should have been anticipated, or do they seem to be unique (or at least unusual) to the Iraq situation as of 2007. Engaging in a crass counter-factual exercise, to what extent would the implementation of the strategy have been different in 2004?
5. Assess Aylwin-Foster's critique of US performance and, of course, Benson's rebuttal. In particular, consider the following issues:
 - a. To what extent are their agreements and contradictions between Aylwin-Foster's critique and Petraeus's (and Chiarelli's) approach? (note that Aylwin-Foster specifically states that these two folks were exceptions to the general problem)
 - b. The contention that the US military's war-making superiority—its “kinetic” capability— inherently makes it difficult to transition to peace-keeping roles; in other words, that they've made the situation worse rather than better
 - c. Lack of cultural awareness: in particular o what extent are their agreements and contradictions between Aylwin-Foster's critique and the McFate-Jackson critique?
 - d. Assess the alternative strategies of hunting down insurgents versus providing security for the population—where do these conflict? More generally, is the US military poor at counterinsurgency because they don't want to be good at it?

- e. To what extent is the US military exhibiting groupthink and other standard collective decision-making pathologies? Assess Aylwin-Foster's contention that it does this more than the British military did in similar situations. Why has organizational learning and adaptation been so bad?
 - f. How much role does the generation gap—a senior leadership from the Vietnam era and a post-Vietnam (and often post-Cold War) junior leadership—a factor in these problems?
5. Lind argues that “Fourth Generation Warfare” is new, at least for the post-1648 period, but is also acutely aware that many people think that it isn't new at all (also look at Kizley's comments on this, written three years later); we've merely been ignoring it because we know how to do Second and Third generation warfare. Look for the lost key under the streetlamp where the light is best. Assess.
 6. In the roundtable at the Hall Center on 20 April 2007, the Ft. Leavenworth folks, despite being good Clausewitzians, were remarkably coy about the issue of whether the U.S. public would support the decade-long effort that they all felt was required to successfully defeat any well-established insurgency. What is the likelihood that this political support could be maintained, *how* could it be maintained, and what sort of insights can academic political science provide on this issue. To what extent does the disjuncture between the nuanced approach of *Military Review* and the black-and-white approach found in the popular media and political speeches (where the right essentially takes a “if it moves, kill it” approach, and the left figures the conflict cannot be won) contribute to this?
 7. The Petraeus/FM3-24 approach has been labeled by critics as excessively “politically correct.” Comment. Is this document likely to survive?—keep in mind that 20 years elapsed since the previous Army version, and 25 years since the Marine Corps version. What can we take from the fact that this is a joint document? To what extent is the Petraeus/FM3-24 approach even a doctrine of “counter-insurgency” as distinct from a doctrine of political development and stability? [Cohen et al are also relevant here: it is essentially chapter 1 of FM 3-24]
 8. To what extent do these articles reinforce Thomas Barnett's contention in *The Pentagon's New Map* [which we didn't read in 2007, but did in 2006, but the question is still relevant] that the military essentially needs to divide war-making and peace-making into two very distinct tasks with very distinct skill sets. In particular, how does Petraeus's approach compare with Barnett's?
 9. Also comparing with Barnett, to what extent are these various approaches essentially arguing that the economic problems determine [largely] the military problems? What about the purely political problems such as legitimacy?
 10. Kiszely—coming out of the British experience—argues that the military needs to spend more time learning. Given the fact that insurgencies are highly adaptable, how useful is this? If one accepts Kiszely's premise that the military is particularly resistant to learning, what might account for this?