



# A WESTERN INSURGENCY IN Afghanistan

By ROBERT EGNELL

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**Dr. Robert Egnell is a Visiting Professor and Director of Teaching in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University. His most recent book is *Counterinsurgency in Crisis: Britain and the Challenges of Modern War* (Columbia University Press, forthcoming), coauthored with David H. Ucko.**

**T**he wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya have each had many names, reflecting the political and strategic ambitions of coalition forces, the antagonism of those unopposed to these wars, and the latest conceptual trends within the military profession as well as in academia. For a number of years, counterinsurgency was the dominant conceptual trend, and operational plans were adjusted to reflect the contested lessons gleaned from America's experience in the Vietnam War as well as Britain's and France's imperial experiences in Malaya, Algeria, Kenya, and elsewhere. While there were clear benefits of the counterinsurgency narrative as a tool for reform of armed forces too narrowly focused on conventional warfare, the theories of colonial policing have also evinced clear limits in their applicability to the contemporary context.

This article engages the heated counterinsurgency debate by arguing that not only were previous counterinsurgency lessons misunderstood, misapplied, and under-resourced in Afghanistan, but also that, more fundamentally, the counterinsurgency narrative failed to provide an accurate analysis of the nature of the problem in Afghanistan, or a link between the tactical level of operations and the coalition's frequently changing political aims. In short, the Western application of counterinsurgency approaches in Afghanistan never "got it right," and an alternative interpretation of and approach to the conflict would therefore have been necessary to achieve success.

With the withdrawal date from Afghanistan drawing closer, one can reasonably question the merits of reconsidering the coalition's strategy for the country. Afghanistan increasingly looks like a lost cause, and the main lesson from it is seemingly set in stone: avoid large-scale social engineering projects on the other side of the globe unless one has almost infinite will, resources, and time. However, limiting ourselves to that conclusion would be a serious mistake. The lessons emerging from the insurgency/counterinsurgency nexus in Afghanistan and Iraq will likely prove important in an environment of continued global urbanization, with operations that will most likely be conducted "amongst the people."<sup>1</sup> This environment will also be characterized by the continued attractiveness of asymmetric tactics to militarily inferior adversaries, continued Western political ambitions to democratize and liberalize the Global South, the securitization of "state failure," and operations with the objective of building government capacity. Nonetheless, in exploring *alternative ways*—defined as being less costly in lives, money, and political capital—of dealing with state failure, regional instability, and international terrorism, the conceptual toolbox from the British and French colonial histories should be replaced or at least amended by reference to the writings of revolutionaries and guerrilla leaders such as Mao Zedong and Che Guevara.

This article turns the international coalition's approach in Afghanistan on its head by advocating an insurgency approach to operations; that is, a strategy for fostering revolutionary political change by a steadily growing local movement, supported by Western political and military advisors and materiel. Surely the reader will also recognize weaknesses in the insurgency approach, but the purpose of this article, beyond illustrating the flaws in the counterinsurgency approach to operations in Afghanistan and the need to draw the appropriate lessons for future campaigns, is to demonstrate the strategically and intellectually formative nature of concepts, and the utility of using or at least contemplating completely different perspectives. To achieve that, this article challenges the application of counterinsurgency approaches in the contemporary context of Afghanistan and demonstrates how the idea of a Western insurgency in Afghanistan and elsewhere can improve the way we interpret conflicts and conduct operations.

## The Campaign in Afghanistan as Counterinsurgency

Part of the problem with the coalition's campaign in Afghanistan was the lack of certainty and consensus regarding the aims of the international community as a whole, which has over time led to three separate yet increasingly related operations with different missions occurring simultaneously:

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the American-led counterterrorist effort to hunt down al Qaeda and its fellow travelers, then the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led International Security Assistance Force operation with a mandate to provide security and enable the third mission, and finally the third mission itself, which is the United Nations-led effort to pursue political and economic development. In addition to never quite being defined in a coordinated way, the international community's aims changed over time. What was initially a spontaneous reaction aimed at the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks morphed, in the relatively calm years following the fall of the Taliban regime, into a state-building effort both to prevent al Qaeda's return and to create a democratic Afghanistan.

NATO Allies disagreed over whether counterterrorism or state-building ought to be the driving motivation for the overall mission, and these tensions only grew as the security situation deteriorated from 2004 onward and the Taliban regained its strength. As the frequency of attacks on government and international targets increased, the language of development and state-building shifted in favor of counterinsurgency, culminating in a formal change in strategy announced by President Barack Obama in 2009. At that time, with 8 years on the war clock, the counterinsurgency campaign only had so much time to succeed, so by 2011 the focus again shifted to "transition" and withdrawal as NATO troop contributors sought a way out. To enable some degree of success in this more than 11-year endeavor, the ambitious language of state-building and even of counterinsurgency gave way to the more limited aspirations of counterterrorism—completing a full circle regarding international intervention in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup>

In Iraq, the switch to population-centric approaches, together with the troop surge and the Anbar Awakening, was instrumental in turning an ever-worsening civil war into a more manageable situation.<sup>3</sup> In Afghanistan, however, the switch to counterinsurgency has not proven as useful. Whatever the metric, assessments of post-2014 Afghanistan conducted in 2013 are generally bleak.<sup>4</sup> Not only

have the democratic ideals that once justified the operation been more or less abandoned, but there are also signs that the Western military withdrawal will lead to an escalated civil war in the country, compromising NATO's achievements, however defined.<sup>5</sup> As a consequence, the idea of counterinsurgency in the contemporary context is increasingly criticized within the U.S. context and may already be a nonstarter.

Regardless, the branding of the campaign in Afghanistan as counterinsurgency meant that a number of assumptions were made regarding the nature of the enemy, Afghan society, "the problems at hand," and the appropriate resources and strategies required to deal with those issues. Since the concepts we use to define a conflict also create the intellectual framework within which we approach the problem, the following section highlights and problematizes a number of key assumptions that follow from the interpretation of the conflict in Afghanistan as counterinsurgency.

## Relevance of Counterinsurgency Lessons Over Time and Space

Most seriously, major counterinsurgency operations have historically achieved few successes. While it is indeed possible to learn from these few successes and numerous failures, counterinsurgency principles of the past are accepted outright a bit too easily in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Applying often-failed historical approaches in today's context should at least require a substantive reinterpretation and reorientation of past approaches and principles. A challenge recently stressed by numerous scholars is that past theorists, and especially contemporary interpreters of those theorists, have generally exaggerated the "hearts and minds" aspects while

downplaying the often equally and perhaps more important coercive tactical approaches of historical counterinsurgency operations.<sup>6</sup> Massive use of force, executions, and forced population movement are but a few examples of past tactics that were employed even in the most revered counterinsurgency campaign of all, the British response to the Malayan Emergency from 1948 to 1960.

Beyond the selective interpretations of past campaigns, the context within which counterinsurgency operations take place has changed significantly. Invading or intervening in a foreign country to assist an insurgency-threatened ally or to impose a new regime, as in Iraq or Afghanistan, represents a different endeavor than achieving an organized and politically acceptable withdrawal from a colony (such as Malaya) and from suppressing uprisings for national liberation against the established governments (as in Kenya and Algeria). Contemporary intervention by fighting one's way in and asserting control brings a broader set of challenges including domestic commitment, theater familiarity, and the necessarily limited timelines of operations. Winning the hearts and minds of the local population in order to remove support for an insurgent group preaching change is also different from intervening to impose such change and fomenting local support for it.

A second difference in the nature of counterinsurgency today is the fact that past counterinsurgency operations took place as "internal" challenges within the realms of the empire; today, operations are typically conducted by coalitions and in support of a legally sovereign state.<sup>7</sup> In the place of the leverage that comes with colonial control, we are left with weak yet entirely independent host nation governments that are either unable or unwilling to lead such campaigns or even to follow our lead.<sup>8</sup> Despite these obstacles, contemporary counterinsurgency doctrine still presumes a sufficient harmony of interest between intervening and host nation governments, and the ability of intervening states to deploy a civilian presence large and capable enough to compensate for whatever weaknesses are found in-state. Actual practice provides a more sobering perspective. In Iraq, the institutions either collapsed through war or were dismantled through coalition decree, leading to the infiltration of various sectarian elements into positions of central political power and

a government whose interests at times ran counter to those of the intervening coalition. In Afghanistan, the counterinsurgency campaign confronts a deeply dysfunctional state bureaucracy and a NATO headquarters that lacks the competence and resources to run anything but the security aspects of operations. In both campaigns, difficulties with the host nation government were compounded by differences among coalition partners regarding approach, commitment, and contributions.

Although it is easy to overstate differences between the past and now, the nature of insurgency has also changed. It is easier today for movements of different persuasions and types to communicate and cooperate across borders. John Mackinlay introduces the idea of the "insurgent archipelago" to highlight horizontally ordered, informal patterns of insurgents disbursed transnationally, with no formal command structures or territorial basis, making them difficult to reach through a nationally based military campaign.<sup>9</sup> The information technology revolution has also provided insurgents with entirely new and vastly more efficient means of resistance in the struggle for hearts and minds. Whereas the British authorities in Malaya managed to clamp down on newspapers and other media, today's insurgents are difficult to silence or isolate from their target audience. Indeed, the

problem must be an *insurgency*—commonly defined as "an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict."<sup>12</sup> Consequently, *counterinsurgency* is defined as "the military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency."<sup>13</sup> If we take a closer look at the identity of the "enemy" and ourselves in Afghanistan, is this really an accurate description of the nature of the problem and the actors involved? I would argue that the counterinsurgency conceptualization of the conflict in Afghanistan is so off the mark that it risks creating significant confusion regarding the situation on the ground. There is not room in this article for what would necessarily be a long and complex discussion about the actual nature of the problem in Afghanistan, but a useful test would be to ask ourselves if the defeat of the insurgency would lead to the achievement of our strategic aims there. If we cannot answer affirmatively, it is definitely time to rethink both the concept and strategy.

**Counterinsurgency Is Inherently Conservative.** We—the United States, the international coalition, NATO, or however we is defined—overthrew the Taliban government, we are imposing revolutionary societal changes in the image of Western

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### *contemporary intervention by fighting one's way in and asserting control brings a broader set of challenges*

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expansion in the ways and means of communication has increased the returns on what the anarchists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century called "propaganda of the deed."<sup>10</sup> Social media and the ability to find an audience have allowed some groups to complement whatever they are lacking in capability with a powerful narrative.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Problematic Assumptions of Counterinsurgency**

Beyond historical and contextual challenges, there are also a number of problematic assumptions involved in choosing to frame operations as counterinsurgency.

**Is the Nature of the Problem Really an Insurgency?** Defining the campaign in Afghanistan with the terminology of counterinsurgency means the core of the

liberal ideals of governance, and we are fighting the Taliban despite the constant reminder that we are only supporting the Afghan government in its counterinsurgency campaign and in its struggle for democracy, equality, and a liberal market economy preferably not based largely upon opium revenues. In fact, part of the problem is that counterinsurgency, by definition, is a conservative endeavor that seeks to preserve the existing political order. Although the quest for control may often involve a number of minor adjustments to address the popular grievances that fuel the insurgency, counterinsurgency is not about change.

In Afghanistan, the international campaign can be described as conservative only through a tremendous stretch of imagination. Such a view treats the history of the



U.S. Army (Thomas Duval)

**Female Engagement Team Soldier talks with Afghan children on their way to school in Kandahar Province**

conflict as starting after the overthrow of the Taliban government in 2001 and is therefore completely ahistorical. Moreover, such an interpretation fails to help us understand the current challenges of the campaign. First, it fails to acknowledge the overthrow of the Taliban regime and the far-reaching international aims of state-building. While the initial aims of the campaign were limited to countering threats of terrorism emanating from Afghanistan, the aim of overthrowing the Taliban regime arose within a broader international context that was flirting with grand social engineering projects, which meant that the intervening coalition naturally inherited the state-building campaign. Colin Powell's "Pottery Barn rule," that is, "you break it, you buy it"—albeit in relation to Iraq—highlights the dominant sentiment of the time. The subsequent state-building rhetoric of democratization, reconstruction, economic liberalization, and equality can be described as nothing short of revolutionary in the context of Afghanistan. The Western intervention cannot accurately be described

as being in any way conservative. Instead, the coalition has been an actor in support of revolutionary societal change.

***The Assumption of Legitimate Counterinsurgency.*** The ahistorical counterinsurgency narrative in Afghanistan also fails to acknowledge the limited legitimacy of the current Afghan government. This legitimacy deficit, on the one hand, is a traditional problem due to the limited experience of central governance. At the risk of oversimplifying Afghan politics, I would simply note that there is a built-in suspicion toward centralized rule in Afghan society, which has been characterized by decentralized tribal-based rule and informal patrimonial structures for centuries. Popular suspicion of the central government in Kabul also stems from the widely held perception that it is thoroughly corrupt and incapable of delivering the bare necessities—even though these demands in Afghanistan seldom go beyond security, justice, or simply being left alone.

However, acknowledging that the Western coalition is more accurately

described as an agent of revolutionary change also forces the coalition and the Afghan government to acknowledge that there is nothing natural or inherently legitimate in their activities, aims, or existence. They have to convince the population of the benefits of the change they purport to offer, and thereby establish legitimate authority. In the liberal international state-building context, democratic and liberal ideals, as well as the superiority of a view of legitimacy based on legal and rational factors, are too often accepted outright as inherently useful. What is forgotten is Max Weber's important lesson that legitimacy and authority are based only on the subjective perception of the population and not on quasi-objective factors such as liberal democracy or rule of law. If a citizen of Marjah perceives the brutal but effective Taliban justice system as more legitimate than the corrupt and dysfunctional official justice system of the Karzai government, it *is* more legitimate, regardless of ideological grievances. The "inherently" desirable and beneficial nature

of democracy and liberalism is obviously not convincing enough, and the Western revolutionary coalition must work much harder to change the perceptions and political behavior of the population in order to achieve success. I will return to the most appropriate means of doing so.

The final point in the litany of assumptions involved in defining the contemporary campaign in Afghanistan as counterinsurgency is that it involves clearly taking sides. In the context of Afghanistan, the international coalition—including its civilian and military elements—is supposed to be a resource for the Afghan government in its struggle against the insurgency. It is nevertheless increasingly acknowledged that Hamid Karzai and his entourage are part of the problem rather than the solution. Moreover, in terms of Afghan popular perceptions, are we really sure that Karzai's government is categorically seen as good and that the Taliban and other fighters are viewed as bad? Of course not, and we should therefore not have been so willing to place all our bets on Karzai and his version of Afghan democracy.

In sum, defining the campaign in Afghanistan as a counterinsurgency has proven unfortunate as the concept has failed to help us understand the true nature of the problem there. Consequently, it has failed to help us determine the most appropriate methods and resources needed to deal with that problem. Therefore, let us turn the approach to the conflict upside-down and consider the idea of a Western insurgency or other narratives of conflict that have the aim of revolutionary societal transformation in Afghanistan.

### A Western Insurgency in Afghanistan

The counterinsurgency narrative in Afghanistan is clearly problematic. However, all concepts that seek to capture the complex conflict in Afghanistan are likely to be imperfect, so a constructive critique requires presenting a more useful alternative. A key argument of this article is that any definitions or terms used to brand conflicts must help us understand their true nature and the best approaches to achieving some form of success. Turning the tables by considering an insurgency strategy is helpful in a number of respects.

First, an insurgency strategy provides a more accurate description of the nature of the problem in Afghanistan, as well as the



**Afghan soldiers rehearse security procedures during simulated road halt as part of training with U.S. forces at Forward Operating Base Shank, Logar Province**

U.S. Army (Tia Sokimson)

means needed to address it. Given that the international coalition's aim is not merely counterterrorism but also broader societal transformation, the main hurdle is not the existence of Taliban fighters, the Haqqani Network, or other groups currently categorized as insurgents; they are simply actors that cause tactical friction in the struggle to transform Afghan society. The challenge is to transform not only the political system that, in part, is an unfortunate post-invasion creation of the West, but also societal ideals at large. Rather than assuming that the West is the protector of the existing Afghan political order, as the counterinsurgency approach does, an insurgency approach would acknowledge that Afghan society is in fact far from permeated by Western notions of governance, justice, and economic management, and that the international coalition is instead the agent of change. The aims of operations in Afghanistan thereby take a much more ambitious turn, and the tactics that must be used to achieve the more ambitious aims change from defense to offense—not least along the civilian lines of operations, including governance and development.

Second, a more ambitious transformational aim coupled with offensive civilian tactics places the local population at the forefront of operations. A societal transformation on the scale that was envisaged during the state-building phase of the campaign in Afghanistan is inherently difficult to achieve

by external actors. Instead, local actors must take charge of these processes. The question then is whether the Afghans would be willing to fight for Western ideals and aims. As Mao and other revolutionary guerrilla theorists have reminded us, the most important quality in officers and soldiers is a strong belief in the cause.

In fact, Mao, George Washington, and Vladimir Lenin were all absolutely certain about the moral righteousness of their revolutionary struggles and aims, and so are we today as liberal interventionists in Afghanistan. While there are still some disgruntled socialists and moral relativists out there, general support for market-based liberal democracy is almost unchallenged within the broader Western populace. However, the key to success is to nurture this conviction among not only the local troops but also the entire population. Just as the populations in China and Imperial Russia were far from communist at the time of their revolutions, the Afghan population is far from liberal, and a key aspect of operations would be to create the support of the local population. The challenge then is to make substantial positive changes in the lives of ordinary Afghans in regions that could function as bases of support and recruitment against the existing political order—that is, both the corrupt central government and patrimonial clan system. This would involve raising not only military units (either through recruitment or indoctrination) with a strong

belief in the cause, but also a substantive civilian effort to establish new systems of governance, justice, and economic management within the havens of support, which would include the training and recruitment of local civil servants for these systems. Indeed, counterinsurgency also highlights the importance of local support and population-centric operations. The difference is that in an insurgency approach, the international community would use the people as a proxy for change rather than the government. The local population would be involved as the key actor in the process of change rather than as a third party or a prize to be won through hearts and minds activities.

Third, the insurgency perspective stresses the importance of bottom-up approaches to achieving order and security. A common problem of current attempts at state-building and societal transformation is the focus on the state and its central institutions with top-down approaches that fail to engage the broader population.<sup>14</sup> As already noted, societal transformations of this magnitude should ideally emanate from the people, and a better approach is to engage, educate, and mobilize the masses to initiate the deep rumblings of the early stages of a popular outpouring that can lead to societal transformation.

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*the insurgency approach fits well with current activities of economic development assistance in many parts of the world*

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A fourth strength of the insurgency approach is that it has the potential to provide a better congruence of the strategic concepts of ends, ways, interests, and means. The current strategy has failed in this regard and requires more resources than the international community has been either willing or able to commit and sustain. An insurgency approach would retain the strategy's ambitious aim of societal transformation but would produce a much more limited footprint and type of intervention. It could be argued that this is exactly what took place during the early years of the campaign. However, the problem in Afghanistan during those years was that the light footprint was defensive rather than offensive. To spread the idea of change, the coalition should have sought to completely transform Kabul and thereby create not only a functioning beacon

of hope, but also a base for recruitment and military training for the struggle to transform the entire social fabric of Afghan society in the rural areas.

The insurgency approach to regime change abroad is not in any way new. Western special operations forces have long operated in support of guerrilla movements around the world. The U.S. Special Operations Command-approved definition of *unconventional warfare* is "activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary and guerrilla force in a denied area."<sup>15</sup> It is further described as the core mission and organizing principle for Army Special Forces. The novelty of an insurgency approach to international interventions would be the directive to act more comprehensively—that is, to provide essential civilian and ideological support for these efforts. The insurgency approach actually fits well with current activities of economic development assistance in many parts of the world. The aim of development aid, beyond the more acute goal of poverty alleviation, is to transform societies in our self-image through positive and negative sanctions—the old carrot and stick—and provide some

degree of leverage or influence over foreign governments. Although obviously controversial, development aid can thereby be described as a semi-overt insurgency strategy employing both sticks and carrots. An insurgency approach to military activities would provide the civilian insurgency effort with a matching military operation.

The above is clearly only the first broad strokes in an outline of an insurgency approach to operations, and much work on this subject remains to be done. There are also a number of obvious caveats to the insurgency strategy. Most importantly, it is not the quick-fix solution that political leaders are looking for; it will require time and patience to achieve substantial political change. This does not really clash with current approaches, but the difference is that politicians would have to acknowledge

this from the onset when adopting the insurgency approach. In the end, however, given the fact that the insurgency approach to operations manages to tickle our intellects by asking new questions and pointing out new possibilities, it is certainly worth further inquiry and consideration.

### **Toward a Multiconceptual Identification of Conflicts**

Proposing an insurgency approach to operations in Afghanistan serves two purposes. First, it provides an attempt at a broad outline of a more useful approach to the interventions and societal transformation projects of today. Afghanistan may already be a lost cause, and it may be too late to implement the insurgency approach there. However, in a strategic context where the problems of failed states, rogue regimes, and crimes against humanity will persist, coupled with an "Iraq syndrome" characterized by a reluctance to become engaged in large-scale military interventions and state-building projects, the insurgency approach provides a thought-provoking policy alternative not unlike the idea of "limited intervention," but with the ambitious aims of societal transformations remaining.

Second, the insurgency approach highlights how changing the way we conceptualize a conflict can also completely change the way we view the problem at hand and the methods we choose to deal with it. Not only does the choice of concept mean working within certain legal frameworks or dusting off a particular doctrine or field manual. The concepts we use to define conflicts also change the way we approach the conflict, the way we interpret it, and the resources and means we employ to deal with it. The problem is that concepts defining wars are seldom the product of strategic analysis or an objective process of matching the analysis of a conflict with the most accurate concepts that characterize it. Instead, they are often the product of political and bureaucratic processes and interests that have more to do with "selling" than conceptual effectiveness for operational effectiveness.

Challenges arise when our constructed "reality" or definition of the conflict fails to match the conflict's true nature—that is, when the political narratives and concepts depart from the reality in the field. As an example, the conceptualization of the interventions in Somalia and Bosnia



**General John Allen, USMC, commander of ISAF and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, and Afghan Minister of Defense sign memorandum of understanding to begin process of transferring detention facilities to Afghan government**

as “peacekeeping” created complete mismatches between the way the conflicts were interpreted, resourced, and conducted and the grim reality of the ethnic wars there. The same thing happened in Afghanistan, where the counterinsurgency narrative neither provided an accurate diagnosis nor a remedy.

While advocacy of the insurgency approach has been useful in making these two points, a final cautionary note should be raised against strictly adhering to any single narrative approach. Conflicts of today and tomorrow are to a large extent moving targets of great complexity that cannot be pinned down with a single concept—unless it is so all-encompassing as to be analytically useless. Instead, in our attempt to understand and deal with future conflicts and security threats, we should draw on a wide range of concepts and literatures. As an example, the conflict in Afghanistan can usefully be understood through the lenses of insurgency or guerrilla war, but even more by the politically incorrect strategies of occupation and colonial conquest. In the end, a deep understanding of the conflict, combined with a large and flexible intellectual and practical toolbox, is necessary for effective planning and conduct of operations.

Most interventions take place because of the recognition that the problems at hand stem from the current state of governance and leadership, of societal structures, and

sometimes of the values and traditions that permeate the target state. There is neither sufficient political interest nor the military and civilian resources to intervene massively in many places around the world simultaneously. This limitation, however, has not stopped international coalitions from at least trying to influence these governments and societies through development aid, coercive diplomacy, and other means. Why not try an insurgency approach to societal change? Just like a politically motivated guerrilla, we are facing a strong and societally entrenched opponent, and we have limited means available to defeat him. Just like guerrilla fighters in the past, we are nevertheless convinced about the moral righteousness of spreading freedom and democracy, as well as of the potential for its popular dissemination. The American Revolution obviously reminds us that we have rebelled for this cause before. **JFQ**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The citation is a homage to General Sir Rupert Smith’s important work in *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> David H. Ucko and Robert Egnell, *Counterinsurgency in Crisis: Britain and the Challenges of Modern War* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob N. Shapiro, “Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?” *International Security* 37, no. 1 (Summer 2012), 7–40.

<sup>4</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, “Afghanistan: Outlook Remains Bleak Despite Progress in Some Areas,” operational update, January 16, 2012; Dexter Filkins, “After America: Will Civil War Hit Afghanistan When the U.S. Leaves?” *The New Yorker*, July 9, 2012; Scott Bates and Ryan Evans, *NATO Strategy in Afghanistan: A New Way Forward* (Washington, DC: Center for National Policy, May 2012).

<sup>5</sup> This civil war is arguably already decades old, but the fear is that it will enter a new and more violent phase following the Alliance’s withdrawal. See Ryan Evans, “The Once and Future Civil War in Afghanistan,” *AfPak Channel*, July 26, 2012, available at <[http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/07/26/the\\_once\\_and\\_future\\_civil\\_war\\_in\\_afghanistan](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/07/26/the_once_and_future_civil_war_in_afghanistan)>.

<sup>6</sup> See Paul Dixon, “Hearts and Minds?” British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 3 (June 2009); Jonathan E. Gumz, “Reframing the Historical Problematic of Insurgency: How the Professional Military Literature Created a New History and Missed the Past,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 4 (August 2009).

<sup>7</sup> The following two paragraphs are based on a forthcoming book by Ucko and Egnell.

<sup>8</sup> John Mackinlay made this point in 1997, some time before the war in either Afghanistan or Iraq. See Mackinlay, “War Lords,” *RUSI Journal* 143, no. 2 (1998), 25. It does not render historical counterinsurgency campaigns entirely irrelevant to the wars of today and tomorrow, however. As David French perceptively argues, the discontinuity, although extant, can also be exaggerated. See French, *The British Way in Counter-insurgency 1945–1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 252–253.

<sup>9</sup> John Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago* (London: Hurst, 2009), 6.

<sup>10</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, “Neo-classical Counter-insurgency?” *Parameters* 37, no. 2 (2007), 79.

<sup>11</sup> See Thomas Rid and Marc Hecker, *Irregular Warfare in the Information Age* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Army/Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> See as an example Séverine Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Dave Maxwell, “Why Does Special Forces Train and Educate for Unconventional Warfare?” *Small Wars Journal*, April 25, 2010.