

JP 3-02.1, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Landing Force Operations*

JP 3-03, *Joint Interdiction*

JP 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*

JP 3-05.1, *Joint Special Operations Task Force Operations*

JP 3-07, *Stability Operations*

JP 3-07.2, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Antiterrorism*

JP 3-08, *Interagency, Intergovernmental Organization, and Nongovernmental Organization Coordination during Joint Operations*

JP 3-09, *Joint Fire Support*

JP 3-10, *Joint Security Operations in Theater*

JP 3-13, *Information Operations*

JP 3-13.1, *Electronic Warfare*

JP 3-13.3, *Operations Security*

JP 3-13.4, *Military Deception*

JP 3-15.1, *Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Operations*

JP 3-16, *Multinational Operations*

JP 3-22, *Foreign Internal Defense*

JP 3-30, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*

JP 3-31, *Command and Control for Joint Land Operations*

JP 3-32, *Command and Control for Joint Maritime Operations*

JP 3-33, *Joint Task Force Headquarters*

JP 3-34, *Joint Engineer Operations*

JP 3-50, *Personnel Recovery*

JP 3-52, *Joint Doctrine for Airspace Control in the Combat Zone*

JP 3-61, *Public Affairs*

JP 3-68, *Noncombatant Evacuation Operations*

JP 4-01, *Joint Doctrine for the Defense Transportation System*

JP 4-01.2, *Sealift Support to Joint Operations*

JP 4-01.5, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Transportation Terminal Operations*

JP 4-01.6, *Joint Logistics Over-the-Shores (JLOTS)*

JP 4-02, *Health Service Support*

JP 4-03, *Joint Bulk Petroleum and Water Doctrine*

JP 4-05, *Joint Mobilization Planning*

JP 4-06, *Mortuary Affairs in Joint Operations*

JP 4-09, *Joint Doctrine for Global Distribution*

JP 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*

JP 6-0, *Doctrine for C³ Systems Support in Joint Operations*

JP 6-01, *Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (JEMSO)*

Time for the Deconstruction of Field Manual 3-24

By GIAN P. GENTILE

The principles of population-centric counterinsurgency (COIN) have become transcendent in the U.S. Army and other parts of the greater Defense Establishment. Concepts such as population security, nationbuilding, and living among the people to win their hearts and minds were first injected into the Army with the publication of the vaunted Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, in December 2006. Unfortunately, the Army was so busy fighting two wars that the new doctrine was written and implemented and came to dominate how the Army thinks about war without a serious professional and public debate over its efficacy, practicality, and utility.

The fundamental assumption behind population-centric counterinsurgency and the Army's "new way of war" is that it has worked in history, was proven to work in Iraq during the surge, and will work in the future in places such as Afghanistan as long as its rules are followed, the experts are listened to, and better generals are put in charge.

Combat commanders currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are judged as successes or failures by COIN precepts. A recent article in the *Army Times* by veteran reporter Sean Naylor accused a battalion and brigade commander of a Stryker Brigade in Afghanistan in 2009 of not following FM 3-24's rules and implied that, because of this, it failed at its mission and had many Soldiers killed as a result. An Army report on the Wanat engagement, where nine American Soldiers were killed in Afghanistan in July 2008, also put the battalion and company commanders in the docket and judged them to be failures at population-centric counterinsurgency. That unofficial report (leaked to the press) helped lead to a more formal Army investigation.

In a recent book review in *Army Magazine*, retired Army officer and

counterinsurgency expert John Nagl "indicted" the Army for not following proper COIN rules in Iraq from 2003 to 2007. Should they be *indicted*, as Nagl charged, for failing at population-centric counterinsurgency? This has gone too far. In fact, it is all reminiscent of the preposterous claims made by Vietnam-era Army officer David Hackworth that the commanding general in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968, William C. Westmoreland, should be held "criminally" liable for U.S. failure there. Westmoreland was not the single point of failure for the United States in Vietnam—in fact, far from it. That most tragic war was lost because the Army failed at strategy and, more importantly, the other side wanted victory more.

Of course, leaders in war must be held accountable for their actions and what results from them. But to use as a measuring stick the

our Army has been steamrollered by a counterinsurgency doctrine that was developed to deal with insurgencies and national wars of independence from Algeria in the 1950s to Indochina in the 1960s

COIN principles put forth in FM 3-24 with all of their underlying and unproven theories and assumptions about insurgencies and how to counter them is wrong, and the Army needs to think hard about where its collective "head is at" in this regard.

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It is time for the Army to debate FM 3–24 *critically*, in a wide and open forum. The notion that it was debated sufficiently during the months leading up to its publication is a chimera. Unfortunately, the dialogue within defense circles about counterinsurgency and the Army’s new way of war is stale and reflects thinking that is well over 40 years old. In short, our Army has been steamrolled by a counterinsurgency doctrine that was developed by Western military officers to deal with insurgencies and national wars of independence from the mountains of northern Algeria in the 1950s to the swamps of Indochina in the 1960s. The simple truth is that we have bought into a doctrine for countering insurgencies that did not work in the past, as proven by history, and whose efficacy and utility remain highly problematic today. Yet prominent members of the Army and the defense expert community seem to be mired in this out-of-date doctrine.

For example, the widely read counterinsurgency expert Tom Ricks, in his blog *The Best Defense*, regurgitated some pithy catechisms from another COIN expert, the former Australian army officer David Kilcullen, on how to best measure effectiveness in COIN operations in Afghanistan. One of the measurements put forward by Kilcullen and then proffered by Ricks is the stock mantra that in *any* COIN operation, the greater the

number of civilians killed, the greater the number of insurgents made, and therefore the less pacified the area. Sadly, Ricks and many other COIN zealots have accepted the matter as fact and have gone on to believe other such things as matters of faith.

In fact, it is hard to know the effect of killing civilians in war. During World War II, Airmen believed that bombing industrial centers and killing civilians (although at the time Americans referred to them as industrial “workers” to be de-housed) would weaken morale. But studies after the war based on interviews of German civilians showed that bombing actually stiffened German morale to resist in some cases.

In Vietnam, some analysts argue that General Creighton Abrams’s (Westmoreland’s replacement in 1968) so-called one-war approach pacified the Vietnamese countryside from 1969 to 1972 through a hearts-and-minds counterinsurgency campaign modeled on the “classic” COIN texts of David Galula and Robert Thompson. This is simply *not* supported by current scholarship based on Vietnamese sources. To be sure, a significant level of “pacification” occurred between 1969 and 1972, but that was because many rural areas once under Viet Cong control were depopulated by the destruction of war and the forced resettlement of hundreds of thousands of civilians. In a sense, it was superior Ameri-

can and South Vietnamese firepower that “pacified” the rural countryside by “draining the sea” the Viet Cong swam in.

The point in highlighting these two historical cases is not to explore the moral issues involved in killing civilians in war (which, of course, is a worthwhile subject) but to point out that the theory that underwrites current counterinsurgency practice and thinking is unproven in history and in current practice. Yet that theory has shaped a new way of war and has seduced analysts such as Ricks and Nagl, senior Army officers, and other influential members of the defense community into believing it to be proven in practice. It is this very COIN theory that is driving current U.S. operations in Afghanistan.

It is time for FM 3–24 to be deconstructed and put back together in a similar way as the Army’s Active Defense Doctrine was between 1976 and 1982. That previous operational doctrine was thoroughly debated and discussed in open (not closed bureaucratic) forums, and the result of that debate was a better operational doctrine for the time commonly referred to as *Airland Battle*. In short, FM 3–24 today is the Active Defense Doctrine of 1976; it is incomplete, and the dysfunction of its underlying theory becomes clearer every day. The Army needs a better and more complete operational doctrine for counterinsurgency, one that is less ideological, less driven by think tanks and experts, less influenced by a few clever books and doctoral dissertations on COIN, and less shaped by an artificial history of counterinsurgency. When will the Army undertake a serious revision of this incomplete and misleading doctrine for counterinsurgency? **JFQ**