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From Counter-Terrorism to Counter-Insurgency

> Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones.
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> **US SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DONALD RUMSFELD,** February 2002[1]

When the US invaded Afghanistan and Iraq it did so with equipment that had been conceptualised during the Vietnam era but with a great-power war still most in mind. The disinclination to get involved in more thankless overseas quagmires was combined with a determination to stick with the regular wars for which the armed forces were best suited. From the start of the 1970s full attention was given once again to the inner-German border and plans to hold back a Warsaw Pact invasion. Academic strategic studies could also turn with relief away from the perplexities of counter-insurgency to the more familiar terrain of preparations for conventional war in the centre of Europe.[2] The army began to rebuild its strength, now with an all-volunteer force instead of conscripts, and with new weapons that were far more capable than anything known in the past. The reconstruction effort originated in the determination to reduce dependence upon nuclear threats, but this effort was then propelled

forward by the potential of these new technologies that could take information and turn it into a form that could be processed, stored, and transmitted through digital circuits, equipment, and networks. A new version of future war was opening up.

How this might develop was apparent by 1968:

> The pinpoint of targets by land-based, airborne or satellite radar, the use of infra-red to reduce the concealment obtained from darkness and overcast weather, and miniaturized battlefield computers will together allow for a centralized control of conventional fire-power; its efficiency will be further increased by the use of advanced proximity fuzes that detect their targets.[3]

A number of different strands of technological development came together. Satellites were in use for reconnaissance purposes by 1961 and for communications in 1965. Work on the development of integrated circuits, allowing complex processes to be managed in ever-smaller packages, had begun in the 1950s. In 1965 Gordon Moore promulgated his famous and remarkably prescient law that the number of transistors in a dense integrated circuit would double every two years. The first ‘smart’ bombs, relying on these technologies, were employed by the USAF during the closing stages of Vietnam.[4] Whereas once it might have taken numerous sorties for an important bridge to be destroyed, now this could be achieved with a single weapon. The success of air defence and anti-tank weapons during the opening stages of the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War suggested that the trend could include moving as well as fixed targets.[5] It was now becoming possible to work out where enemy forces were and what they were up to, and then they could be hit with a high probability of success.

In 1980 the futurologists Alvin and Heidi Toffler offered a schema for basic changes in society. After the familiar move from an agricultural to an industrial age had come an information age—the ‘third wave’. During the second wave, of industrialisation, the focus had been on mass, standardisation, and bureaucratic organisation.[6] With the third wave, knowledge was at the centre of all decisions, and organisations would be more flexible. In the military sphere this went beyond improved weapon

design but to a new way of thinking about warfare, along with all other human activities, in more systematic, holistic terms. The ability to identify enemy vulnerabilities within a complex setting and target them swiftly raised possibilities for disruption and disorientation as well as pure destruction. Later, the Tofflers took their investigations into the way the US army was adjusting to the information age as confirmation that 'the way we make war reflects the way we make wealth'. Unusually for books on future war they also explored the future of peace, or 'anti-war', showing the influence of the Balkans conflicts in urging the need to think about war as a means of preventing even greater violence.[7]

THE EXTENT OF THE CHANGE COULD BE MARKED BY A COMPARISON with Liddell Hart's *The Revolution in Warfare*, completed in 1945 just as the Pacific War concluded. He had then regretted the transformation of war 'from a fight to a process of destruction.' He judged that the rot had set in to modern warfare when it was realised that air raids could not be used to hit specific military targets but instead large civilian areas. 'Inaccuracy of bomb-aim resulted in inhumanity of war-aim'. The corollary of this was that if now bomb aim was more accurate so too could be war aim. War could become once again more of a fight.[8]

At first improved accuracy and lethality appeared to reinforce defence. Anything visible and in range, whether aircraft, tanks, or warships, would be vulnerable to accurate missiles. That put a premium on manoeuvrability as the best way to get round strong defensive positions. From their study of Warsaw Pact exercises and military literature, NATO planners concluded that their adversaries had put a lot of effort into developing armoured divisions and plans for their use geared to moving fast to outflank NATO defences.[9] This led to pressure for NATO to start preparing along the same lines, improving mobility to match that of the Warsaw Pact. Much more fluid and complex battles were envisaged, increasingly facilitated not only by precise weaponry but also improved infrastructure, so that surveillance and communications became much easier.

Even prior to 1991 there had been indications of the possibilities of the new technological generation. They were then employed in the Gulf War

for the first time to fight an essentially classical conventional campaign to a swift and decisive conclusion and with limited casualties (especially on the coalition side). Helpfully Iraqi forces fought along Warsaw Pact lines (reflecting past training), only not as well. This demonstrated the advantages American commanders enjoyed as a result of improvements in sensors, data management, and communications as well as accuracy. Iraqi units were left stranded, picked off with ease, while cruise missiles arrived at individual targets in the middle of built-up areas and destroyed them with minimal damage to any other buildings in the vicinity. Desert Storm was proclaimed as the world's first 'information war'.[10] The Iraqi military were rendered blind, deaf, and dumb. Though the weapons were not quite as effective as some of the initial propaganda suggested, it did not take much imagination or leaps of technological fancy to see how this form of warfare could be taken further. A rosy future for the American armed forces was at hand, in which they might expect to be completely dominant. There was talk of a 'revolution in military affairs' (RMA).[11]

As described, the revolution would result from the interaction of systems that collected, processed, fused, and communicated information with those that applied military force.[12] As a result, military force in the future would be directed against a discombobulated enemy still working out what to do as they were rocked by incoming fire. A swift and unequivocal victory could be achieved with scant risk to troops, let alone the home population and territory. What was once the 'battlefield' was now to be known as the multi-dimensional 'battlespace'. With 'Dominant Battlespace Knowledge', information could be processed to describe the overall operational environment close to real time, making possible 'Near-Perfect Mission Assignment' and thus 'Precision Violence'. This sort of capability was well on its way to being developed by the US Navy, because at sea, as in the air, it was possible to contemplate a battlespace empty of all but combatants. The challenge of the RMA was to demonstrate that this approach could work with ground forces, where warfare had always been subject to a greater range of influences.

Historically, the infantry made up around 80 per cent of US combat deaths, even though they accounted for just 4 per cent of the total force.[13] There was therefore great interest in finding ways of prevailing on land

without putting troops at excessive risk. This naturally led to greater reliance on directed firepower, especially from the air, to influence the course of battle so that ground forces need not be committed too early in an operation. The idea was that by striking with precision over great distances, time and space could become less serious constraints. Enemy units within the battlespace would be engaged from outside. The command systems could cope with attacking many targets simultaneously.[14] It would be less important for ground forces to close with the enemy, but if they needed to do so they could stay agile and manoeuvrable, carrying only the firepower required for self-defence, with anything else called in from outside. No longer would there be a need for large, cumbersome, self-contained divisions and their associated potential for high casualties. The infrastructure of war, which required the mobilisation of whole societies, could be reduced. The accuracy of weapons meant that fewer would be required, putting less strain on industry and the transport infrastructure. The 'heavy dependence upon ports, munitions depots and a large transport network' would decline.[15]

The technological optimism underlying the RMA was overdone. While information technology might still be following Moore's Law, other trends were less dramatic, for example propulsion systems and ordnance. In many respects this was not a major problem for the United States as in most contingencies it would enjoy an overwhelming advantage in firepower. This more brutal feature of American strength, however, tended to be missed in the focus on qualitative developments. The smarter the technology, the sharper the choices. As accuracy improved over time, it became possible to move the focus beyond large military formations and facilities and on to specific units, and then particular buildings, even in the middle of civilian areas, eventually reaching designated individuals, isolated from whatever protection they might have hoped for from their surroundings. Range became irrelevant as a constraint. The same accuracy that was first available with short-range and air-launched missiles was soon offered by long-range cruise missiles. Then unmanned drones, controlled from a distance, could hover over an area, identify targets, and attack them on command.

This whole trend of development pushed towards an idealised version

of classical warfare, pitting regular forces against each other while barely touching the civilian population. Hackett and Clancy had envisaged wars that must involve large armies and navies on the move, fought across the world, with setbacks and close calls before combinations of raw strength, political determination, and strategic acuity would save the day. Now a vision of war was developing which would get the whole affair over quickly with few casualties. Extracting the pain from war was essential to the project. If warfare could become both high-impact and low-casualty, then it could be socially contained and retained as a political instrument.

When wars were fought on an industrial scale, suffering was both widely shared and largely anonymous. With the new systems, levels of casualties, military as well as civilian, which in the past might have been deemed to be tolerable, now appeared as excessive or disproportionate.[16] Poignant images and harrowing personal stories created a democracy of casualty. Those killed, and not only one's own personnel, acquired equality as victims because—by and large—they were not personally responsible for the violence which consumed them. With campaigns fought by smaller specialist, volunteer forces, individual deaths and injuries stood out more. Dwelling on larger strategic considerations could appear heartless.

Western sensitivity to the casualty issue created its own strategic logic. It led to a strong military presumption that popular support would drain away if significant numbers of casualties began to be taken.[17] If massive loss of life need no longer be tolerated as an unavoidable consequence of war, the focus could be on disabling an enemy's military establishment with the minimum necessary force. In 1993 the US Joint Chiefs of Staff insisted that: 'In all cases, US military forces must be able to undertake operations rapidly, with a high probability of success, and with minimal risk of US casualties.'[18] No more resources should be expended, assets ruined, or blood shed than absolutely necessary to achieve specified political goals. As a result a high premium was put on the protection of one's own force rather than the actual mission objective. This affected the US approach to the way that forces were deployed, as if they must be kept out of harm's way.[19] Even when the operations were less discretionary, as with Afghanistan and Iraq, with government insisting that military success was vital, casualty aversion encouraged a relatively small footprint on the

ground and greater reliance on air power.

THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES THAT INFORMED THE REVOLUTION in Military Affairs were celebrated as promising a return to wars decided by battles between regular forces. In such wars not only would civilians be spared but also casualties on all sides would be reduced to a minimum. With accurate weapons targets could be chosen solely for their military relevance. Because they could be launched from a distance, and from places relatively invulnerable to enemy attack, the risks to those doing the launching were minimal. This was true whether the weapons were cruise missiles launched from submarines or missiles from aircraft. This supported the view that armed force could be used as a precise and not a blunt instrument, and could be directed exactly against the armed forces of the opponent, with the minimum of associated damage to civilian life and property. There would be no need to put innocents at risk either inadvertently or deliberately.

As an idealised form of warfare this fitted in entirely with American preferences. But for that reason it was unlikely to be followed by others. The technologies and concepts behind the RMA came to be applied in settings far removed from those for which it had originally been envisaged. Michael O'Hanlon observed in 2000, not long before the point became painfully apparent, that instead of situations which might show off these benefits, US forces might instead be facing foes whose forces were 'interspersed among civilian populations and in combat settings where even relatively unsophisticated enemy units will have opportunities to ambush American troops or booby-trap and mine their likely paths of advance.'[20] Instead of taking on other regular forces in some grand battle, they had to prove their worth coping with terrorism and guerrilla warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Moreover, the abstract analyses about future combat surrounding the RMA had not really addressed the problem of fighting in urban areas. Until modern times, cities, with their walls and elaborate defences, had always posed a severe strategic challenge to the point where armies had to break off from their advance through a country to lay siege. As a result of urban sprawl and with armies shrinking, cities had become too large to be

encircled and sealed off. The alternative prospect of fighting through streets and alleys was deeply unattractive. Buildings allowed enemy fighters opportunities for concealment, ambushes, and snipers. Attempts to dislodge them by artillery, bombs, and mortars might simply create rubble that would complicate movement and provide new opportunities for defenders.

Cities therefore challenged the aspirations of the RMA. Their structures obstructed sensors and reduced the scope for manoeuvre operations. Forces would need to fragment as they moved through streets, becoming harder to coordinate as they did so. Because urban combat tended to be greedy on ammunition, it posed extra logistical challenges. Faced with multiple players and sudden movements the environment was stressful and frustrating. Yet in modern conflict cities were hard to avoid. 'We long for gallant struggles in green fields', observed Ralph Peters, yet 'the likeliest "battlefields" are cityscapes where human waste goes undisposed, the air is appalling, and mankind is rotting'. Before it might have been jungles and mountains but now cities were the 'citadels of the dispossessed and irreconcilable'. Here warfare would be as much vertical as horizontal, 'reaching up into towers of steel and cement, and downward into sewers, subway lines, road tunnels, communications tunnels, and the like'.[21]

This was not a prospect greeted with enthusiasm. Historically big battles for cities had been painful. Stalingrad was just one example of how hard it was to defeat stubborn defenders. In Vietnam marines took heavy casualties in the struggle for control of Hue, comparable to some of the worst fighting of the Pacific War. More recently Beirut and Mogadishu had seen American forces caught out. All commentators mentioned the painful Russian experience in the Chechen capital of Grozny during the mid-1990s where they took fearful casualties while failing to defeat rebel militias. A 2001 study reported both historical cases and training exercises as suggesting that it would require a rifle company (100-200 individuals) to take a defended city block in about 12 hours. This would lead to an unsustainable level of 30-45 percent casualties. The survivors would be both physically and emotionally exhausted and modern Western armies, reliant on volunteers rather than conscripts, lacked reserves. Posen noted

that the active US Army then had ‘only perhaps 180 rifle companies’ and the Marines another 60-70. An army or marine infantry division had 27 rifle companies; an army mechanized division, a dozen.[22] In 2016 the same point was made by observing that ‘America’s treasure house of close-combat soldiers is only marginally larger than the New York City Police Department.[23]

If the Americans allowed themselves to get enticed into cities, warned General Robert Scales in 1996, all its military advantages would be neutralised. He dismissed the possibility that Western forces could render a city uninhabitable by pounding it with firepower. Instead he argued for doing everything possible to avoid direct urban combat, if possible by preventing an enemy force retreating into a city but, if that were not possible, by establishing ‘a loose cordon around the city and control of the surrounding countryside’. The aim would be to isolate the city from the outside world. ‘All avenues, including air, sea, and land arteries, would be blocked’, while the ‘coalition would seek to control sources of food, power, water, and sanitation services’. Information entering the city would also be controlled. Accurate standoff missiles could attack targets inside the city. In short, he envisaged a modern version of a siege,[24] though this would be a tall order with a large metropolis and the enemy enjoying the propaganda advantage of being demonstrably in charge.

The test of the RMA came not in a conventional campaign but in the ‘war on terror’. The US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld explained that Afghanistan was going to be a new type of war, ‘like none other our nation has faced’.[25] He saw opportunities to demonstrate that future war could be won with only a modest force so long as it was backed by the most advanced ‘transformational’ capabilities. Instead the US found itself fighting with its allies in Afghan and then in Iraq wars that were drawn out, with their own similarities to Vietnam. The enemy adopted the traditional tactics of guerrilla warfare. The resultant wars were described as ‘asymmetric’.[26] A symmetrical war would involve two belligerents of similar capabilities. The outcome would be determined by small differences growing in importance, whether superior training, tactical prowess, strategic imagination, technical innovation, or the capacity to mobilise national resources. In such cases the victor was likely only to

emerge through attrition, when the hurt reached a point where small margins of staying power could make the difference. By contrast, in an asymmetrical war, belligerents with quite different capabilities and priorities would clash, with the outcome determined by one side's superior ability to find counters to the capabilities of the other.

AT FIRST ALL WORKED AS PLANNED. A RELATIVELY SMALL SIZED invasion force, backed by advanced air power, could overwhelm weak and outgunned adversaries. In both Afghanistan and Iraq the initial stages of the war were asymmetrical only in the sense of being completely one-sided as the Taliban and the Iraqis tried to fight like regular armies against the world's only superpower. In both cases the enemy lacked the organisation, morale, and numbers even to offer a staunch urban defence. The fighting was less fearsome than anticipated. Later as the insurgencies developed cities came to present different sorts of dangers. The environment suited forms of guerrilla war, with scope for riots, ambushes, and improvised bombs, harassing and stressing troops, at times leading to disproportionate and counter-productive responses.

Eventually the US military realised that their scripts were for the wrong sort of war. [27] The US Government had been warned before the invasion that a force of 500,000 would be needed to maintain order once the old Iraqi regime had been toppled.[28] The warnings were dismissed. As a result the US and its allies struggled with a fraction of the necessary forces, until a 'surge' in 2007 when they were able to take advantage of a more favourable political situation. The lesson was that in this sort of war numbers mattered, despite all the advanced equipment now available to American forces.

Their opponents often enjoyed substantial local support, were linked to broadly based political movements, and benefitted from considerable freedom of movement. Instead of relatively civilised combat, professionally conducted by high-quality regular forces, the struggle was against murky, subversive forms of insurgency and terrorism. The enemy did not oblige by providing targets that could be attacked by accurate fire. Instead militias drawn from the aggrieved sections of society moved in and out of civil society, with strategies geared to maximising pain. They

relied on the assassination of senior political figures or indiscriminate assaults against civilians, with or without warning, or else the sabotage of critical infrastructure and ambushes of army or police patrols. They preferred to remain hidden and, in some cases were even prepared to accept a martyr's death as human bombs. Unlike traditional armies, insurgents did not expect to hold territory, as their priority was to play for time rather than hold space, allowing them to gain in support while the enemy was drained of patience and credibility. All the clichés of guerrilla warfare, dimly remembered from the 1960s, of an enemy hiding in the shadows and the tactics of darting flea bites, returned. The Americans and their allies were caught in a prolonged, doleful, and disappointing form of warfare—the opposite of that idealised in the Revolution of Military Affairs and exactly the sort they hoped to avoid.

Because the US had taken the initiative to topple the regime its commitment was much greater than if it had intervened to try to calm an already fraught situation. It was, with the UK, an occupying power and then, even after Iraqi governments took over, accepted a responsibility to support them until they could cope on their own. The Iraqi governments were to meet political standards that made them worthy of support. Though this was a divided country that had suffered years of brutal rule and calamity, it too was to have a representative government that would respect human rights. Success in this regard would turn Iraq into a beacon for the rest of the region. President George W. Bush, and Prime Minister Tony Blair in Britain, picked up this theme. In 2004, as he was promoting democracy as a solution to the numerous problems of the Middle East, including in Iraq, Bush insisted that 'the reason why I'm so strong on democracy is democracies don't go to war with each other.… And that's why I'm such a strong believer that the way forward in the Middle East, the broader Middle East, is to promote democracy'.[29]

BY 2005 IT WAS EVIDENT THAT, FAR FROM IRAQ MOVING forward, it was beset by multiple problems, with a range of conflicts going on at once, within and between communities, with coalition forces taking regular casualties. Somewhat sobered by this experience, the US Army and Marines decided to revise their Field Manual on counter-insurgency (FM-3-24). Conrad

Crane, a professor at the US Army's Strategic Studies Institute, coordinated the exercise.[30] Prior to the US engagement in Iraq he had warned that the US Army had failed to learn lessons from Vietnam. It had instead treated Vietnam as an aberration that must never be repeated rather than try to prepare for anything at all similar.[31] The lack of preparedness was evident in the run-up to the Iraq War, with little thought given to the impact of the 'deep religious, ethnic, and tribal differences which dominate Iraqi society'. Crane warned how 'US forces may have to manage and adjudicate conflicts among Iraqis that they can barely comprehend'. An exit strategy would require a degree of political stability that would be difficult to achieve given Iraq's 'fragmented population, weak political institutions, and propensity for rule by violence'.[32]

Crane was in charge of the drafting the new manual for which he established a substantial team of like-minded colleagues.[33] It was a group that had gathered around General David Petraeus, who was the main sponsor, having been frustrated by the poor management of the situation in Iraq post-invasion. The manual eschewed a rigid script and allowed flexibility in interpretation of the guidance offered. The core to their message was that this was an essentially political undertaking. The military role was to gain popular support for the government. This required learning and adaptation.

Unusually for such an exercise it involved academics and was even eventually published by an academic press.[34] Harvard's Sarah Sewell, a specialist in human rights, argued the benefits of developing international human rights law, restraint in the use of military force and more reliance on conventional policing. More controversially the anthropologist Montgomery McFate encouraged improved cultural awareness as a means of avoiding foolish errors. Working so closely with the military did not go down well with other anthropologists, reviving the old debate as to whether mitigating the harmful effects of war simply made it more acceptable and easier to undertake.[35] Yet one group of academics was absent. Stathis Kalyvas noted that 'the manual betrays zero impact by political science research'. This, he noted, was because the political scientists had largely attended to the causes, duration, termination, and aftermath of civil wars, rather than their content. In addition, 'political

scientists, including large-n practitioners, have failed so far to produce startling results.' He doubted 'that the most robust finding of the econometric literature, namely, that poor countries face a higher risk of civil war, would have impressed (or been of much use to) the manual's writers'. Nor had it picked up on the supposedly central role of natural resources, sticking firmly with the presumption of 'grievance' and playing down 'greed'.[36]

Instead the Counter Insurgency Field Manual was firmly placed within a tradition of thinking about revolutions, insurgencies, and guerrilla warfare, going back to T. E. Lawrence and Mao Zedong, with a nod in the direction of the French officer David Galula who had developed theories of counter-insurgency during the French war to hold on to Algeria in the 1950s.[37] From this tradition came a focus on separating the enemy militants from the population. The government would be rendered more attractive through reforms as the insurgent cause would be shown to be hopeless. To achieve this, violence must be controlled, away from killing as many militants as possible, which was the instinctive military approach, to concentrating on the political effects. The use of deadly firepower was now described as 'kinetic', to be distinguished from softer forms of power.[38] The 'kinetic' had its place, but if employed excessively risked driving even more people into the enemy ranks.

The authors were careful not to refer to 'hearts and minds', a phrase which now carried a lot of baggage left over from Vietnam as a failed attempt at social engineering. The aim was to change behaviour, but phrases such as 'carrots and sticks', which might be more accurate, were also eschewed as too simplistic. To capture the emphasis, the non-kinetic approach was described as 'population-centric' as opposed to 'enemy-centric'. There were to be no hard and fast rules. Action had to be sensitive to context. Officers needed to think about how they might protect their forces without making people less secure and when it was best to do nothing, even in the face of severe provocation. The document also recognised the inherent problem faced by outsiders, whose position, at least in the first instance, depended on superior military strength. 'Eventually all foreign armies are seen as interlopers or occupiers; the sooner the main effort can transition to HN [Host Nation] institutions,

without unacceptable degradation, the better'. The key objective was to isolate the enemy by winning over the population, in part by rendering the government more attractive through reforms while also demonstrating the hopelessness of the insurgent cause.

THE CREDIBILITY OF THE DOCUMENT BENEFITTED FROM BEING followed by a turn for the better in Iraq in 2007, a result of disaffection with al-Qaeda among Sunnis and the additional resources deployed as a result of the 'surge', combined with Petraeus's leadership. This episode illustrated that Iraqi civil society was much more complicated than the simple elite-mass distinction on which revolutionary theorists based their analyses or the broad ethnic distinctions which Western policymakers tried to make sense of local politics. In addition to the broad groupings of Sunni, Shia, and Kurds, there were also tribal and village allegiances, and local leaders with their own connections to more senior figures. Loyalties could be fluid and flexible, groupings were prone to factionalism, and political authority was multi-layered. It was thus not necessarily a shift in attitudes by the people as a whole that led to increased Sunni support for the battle against al-Qaeda, but a decision by some local Sunni leaders to work with the US military despite the risks and distaste for the occupation.

The document was subject to a number of criticisms. The most fundamental was that while there were techniques of counter-insurgency, which, if properly applied, could address the timeless dynamics of insurgency, in practice there were formidable contingent factors at work in all these conflicts.[39] Another, to which we will return, was that it set impossible targets for political action. Critics of the approach later argued that Petraeus and his strategy were flattered by political circumstances over which they had little control and the development of misleading narratives with regard to what had gone right for the British in Malaya and wrong for the Americans in Vietnam.[40] For those who saw the enemy as implacable and fanatical the approach was simply too soft.[41] They argued that the only plausible strategy was to kill militants until their numbers were depleted and they were demoralised. But as events in Iraq later demonstrated, military successes depended on isolating the enemy politically. The apparent victory achieved over insurgents in 2007 did not

produce lasting benefits because the politics was subsequently mishandled.[42]

The practical challenges revolved around the nature of the government's relationship with the people. The script pointed to putting more effort into studying and appreciating local culture and attending to grievances, so that the people could be persuaded to support a hitherto unpopular government. This was given support by an underlying optimism that this was part of an effort to 'advance those societies mired in backward customs and the slough of authoritarianism along the road of socioeconomic improvement and democratic development.'[43] The difficulty with this was that reforms could only be implemented by local elites who were often the beneficiaries of the structures that needed reforming.

There was another view. This accepted that a section of the population, if not the whole, would always be hostile to the government, but that if life was made sufficiently miserable then they could be persuaded not to support a rebellion. On this basis the most effective strategy for dealing with insurgents was not to win the people over but by 'out-terrorising them'.[44] Those making this observation were not advocating this for the US and its allies. Their point was that because the Americans could not adopt such a strategy their efforts were doomed to failure, not least because their alternative, of achieving popular consent, could not succeed.