

OURJ Oregon Undergraduate Research Journal

Volume 23, Issue 1, Winter 2025

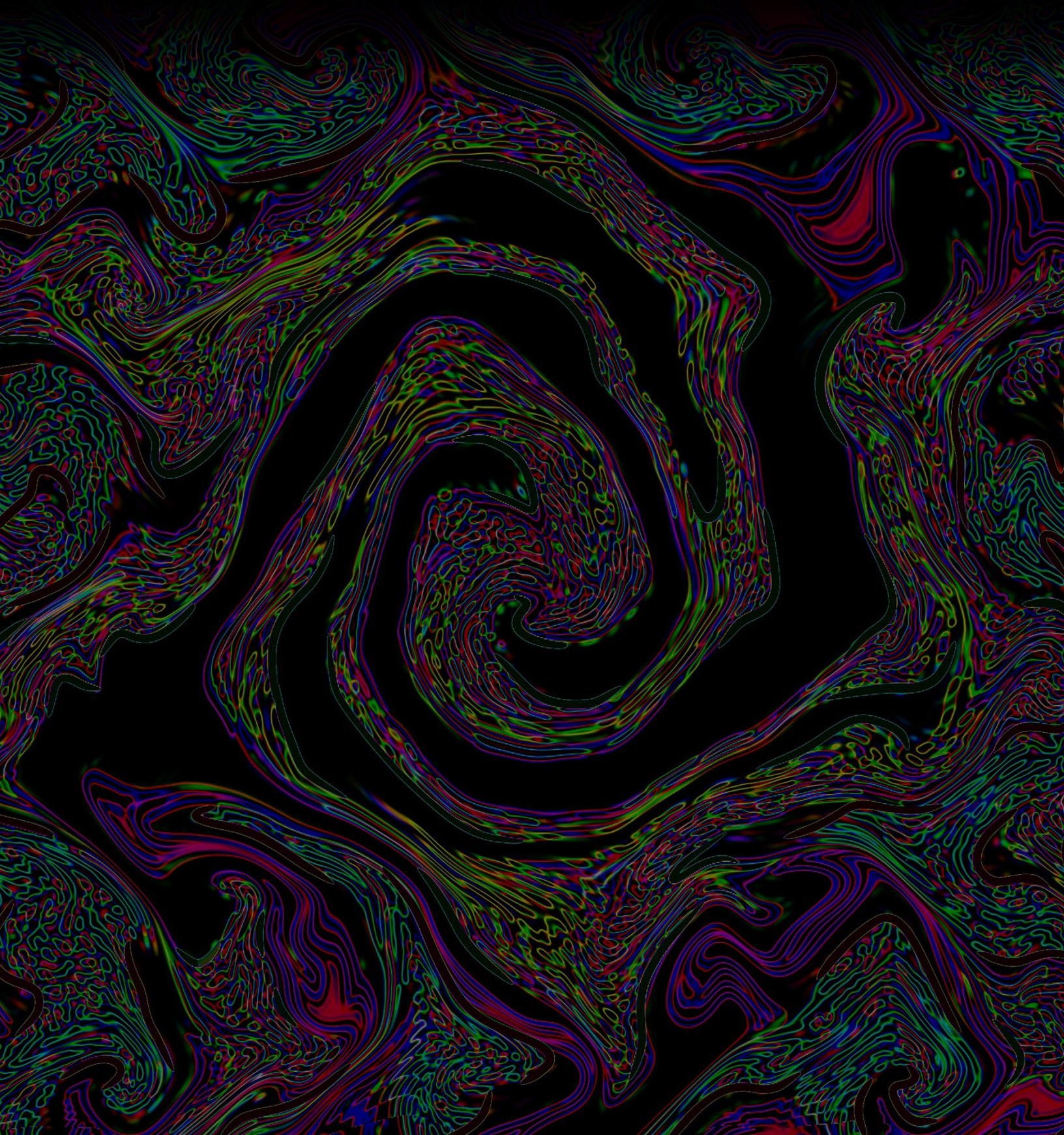


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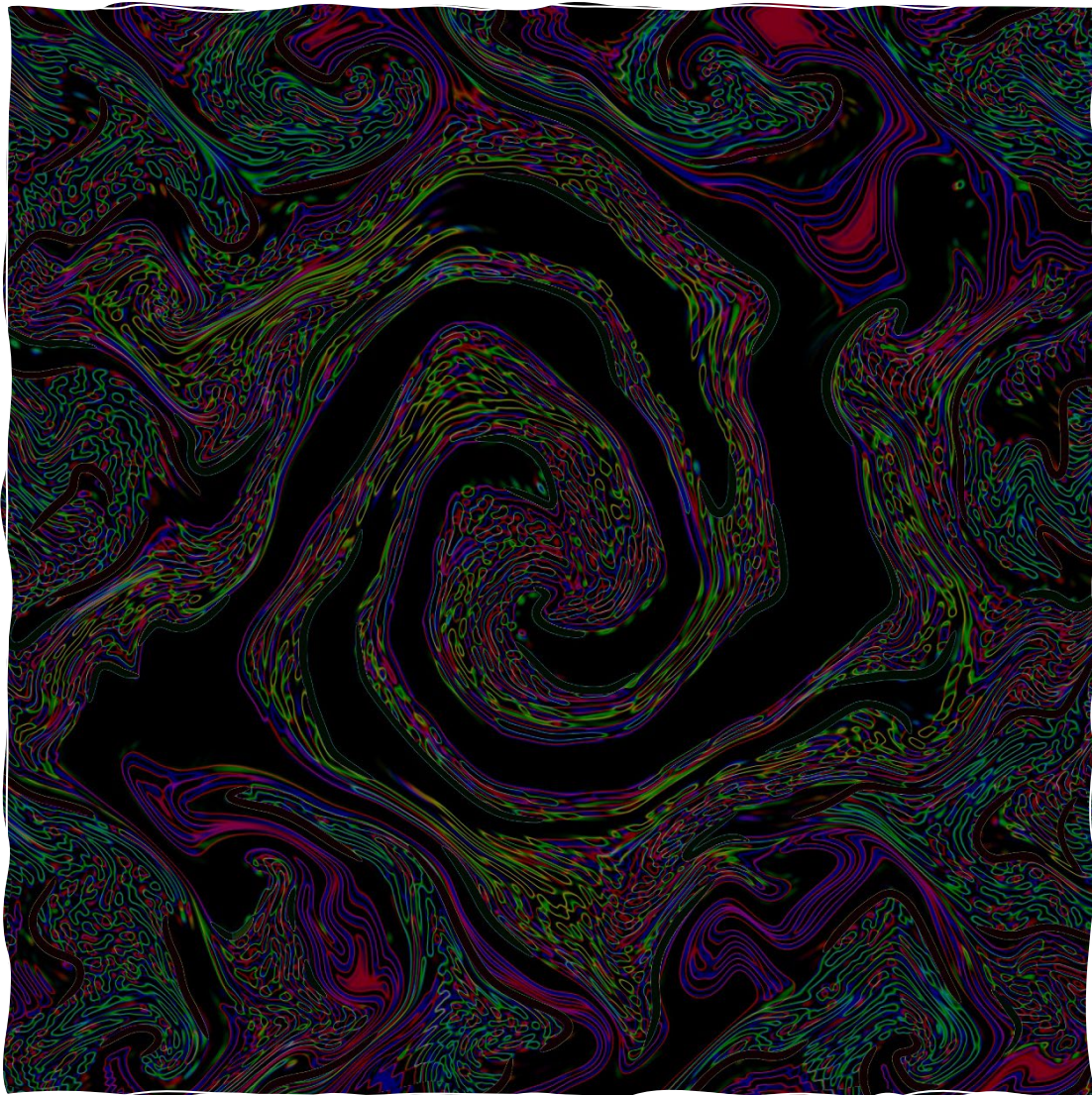
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Cover Art: “Beyond Fruition”

Gio Betancourt*

“Beyond Fruition” describes navigating the unknown. Although planning is a great habit for all events, some situations are out of your control, and an individual must problem-solve to figure out solutions to unplanned occurrences. This piece was unplanned initially and became complete through navigating new ways to find answers to issues that I was confronted within the process. Likewise, undergraduate researchers are problem-solvers. Their entire task is to navigate the unknown planned or unplanned, they may navigate unplanned obstacles along the way.

Medium: Digital imaging, Adobe Photoshop and Procreate.



*Gio Betancourt (giokbetancourt@gmail.com) is a trans Latine fourth-year undergraduate student majoring in Art & Technology with a double minor in Psychology and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Originally from Hillsboro, Oregon, they initially began creating traditional art learning techniques in painting, watercolor, and charcoal. After graduating high school, Gio wanted to take on digital art, facing many challenges yet learning many new skills on the way. In the present, Gio enjoys graphic design, digital drawing, and tattoo design with the hope to become an accomplished tattoo artist in the future.

Meet the Editorial Board

Kyla Schmitt, Editor-in-Chief

Kyla Schmitt is a senior majoring in Environmental Science and Humanities and minoring in Biology, English, and Economics through the Clark Honors College. Kyla's academic interests include wildlife ecology, contemporary history and politics, and scientific/rhetorical writing. Her latest publication sought to characterize the native signal crayfish population in Tryon Creek, Oregon, and her current thesis examines fungal diversity on Oregon white oak savannas. Beyond the classroom, Kyla coaches high-school forensics and competes in collegiate forensics, conducts research with the Diez and Roy Labs, works as a technical editor for Fall Creek Nursery, and spends plenty of time hiking and exploring the outdoors.

Ava Sechrist, Senior Editor

Ava Sechrist is a third-year Clark Honors College student majoring in Psychology and English. She has further interests in Creative Writing. She has previously been involved in child development research at UO. Her independent research has explored the impacts of social media on weight-based bias and the effect of trauma on emotional granularity. In her free time, Ava enjoys reading, listening to podcasts, and going on adventures with friends.



Charlotte Olds, Editor

Charlotte Olds is currently a third-year Clark Honors College student majoring in Neuroscience and Psychology. She conducts research in a cognitive neuroscience lab, focusing on how experiences are organized into memories and the mechanisms that underlie the tendency to forget. Outside of the UO, Charlotte volunteers with HIV Alliance to help expand access to health services. In her spare time, she enjoys hiking, running, playing the piano, and snowboarding.

Ethan Nguyen, Editor

Ethan is a junior student in the Clark Honors College majoring in Biochemistry. He is interested in performing research with a lot of potential in applied usage, especially for biomedical applications. Ethan is currently working in an organic synthesis research lab aiming to create novel molecules with potential applications in materials science and bioimaging. Outside academics, Ethan is involved in a lot of volunteering at places such as Food for Lane County and Hospice. His hobbies include jiu-jitsu and chess.

Keegan Tippetts, Editor

Keegan Tippetts is a second-year student at the University of Oregon majoring in Cinema Studies and Philosophy with a minor in Creative Writing. He has a focused interest in storytelling in any medium, writing/directing film, theatre, prose, occasionally poetry, and maybe someday video games. He is fascinated in the way that art intersects with the human experience. A major point of inquiry for him is how perception is and can be altered by the art that people experience. He likes editing writing of all kinds and is always looking forward to something new to learn or do. Outside of academics, he spends most of his time writing or working on film projects, but also enjoys video games, hiking, obsessively listening to movie OST, cooking, and getting together with friends.

Art Feature: “Heavy Under Pressure”

Gio Betancourt

Created during my study abroad trip to Greece, “Heavy Under Pressure” deals with the complexities of gravity underwater. As someone who had not swam in a body of water for a long period of time, being submerged in water felt heavier than usual, as if my body was made of stone. To illustrate this point, I rendered my hand with goggles wrapped around to signify swimming and the heaviness felt when trying to move your joints underwater. This piece captures the science of gravity underwater, and how complexly the human body adapts to different environments, even if impacted by different feelings.

Medium: *Drawing and watercolor, 9x12" mixed-media paper.*



Journal Editorial: “Research as Learning and Being”

Dr. Ahmar Zaman*

“You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.” —James Baldwin

Every developing child is learning to understand the world and their place in it. They do this through touching, experimenting, questioning, and watching the world around them; every question they have is their own research question to make sense of their world.

It starts as simple as wondering what happens when an egg is dropped on the ground. Early in my childhood, I realized that there was an unlimited number of questions to ask—an unlimited amount of knowledge to accumulate. Every experience I had triggered questions. Every question and subsequent answer brought about even further questions: historical, present, or future. Through this search for knowledge, the world has always felt expansive and infinite.

As a child, I was fortunate to have access to literary magazines that awakened my desire to learn and explore new topics—even those of no prior interest to me. “Kids” editions of National Geographic and Time provided me with knowledge, but more importantly, they kindled my sense of wonder, curiosity of the world, and desire to learn more. Beyond these magazines, I benefited from having unstructured time, open dialogue with others, and spaces that encouraged curiosity. Just as children benefit from these things, so do adults. College campuses are defined by allowing young adults to think and wonder, and spaces such as OURJ empower students to truly explore these burning questions—to contribute to our general understanding, and to make sense of the world.

Like most young children, I wanted to understand my individual world and also the larger world around me. I wanted to learn about Amelia Earhart, which led to me learning about the Bermuda Triangle, which led to me learning about 16-point compass roses. I had a toy cash register that was made in Yugoslavia; in trying to locate Yugoslavia on a map, I learned that countries could form and countries could cease to exist. And, as my day-to-day life moved forward, I realized that large sociopolitical entities are also changing and are not set structures. As I became older, the themes and topics of my questions changed, but the mechanism of inquiry and investigation remained the same. Of course, not every research question is a brain-unlocking moment. I can remember being a young child investigating where Transylvania was located in my home state of Pennsylvania. But nonetheless, learning to learn is truly an essential skill. How does one navigate the ambiguity of the unknown? How does one initiate investigation of a question? Researchers will tell you that the methodology is more important than any finding. How are constructs like self-esteem operationalized? How are the economic benefits of a policy measured? How is the value of a college degree assessed? Learning to learn is a core skill, and one that is vital to society at large. Having spaces and opportunities like OURJ allows students to learn to learn. This leads to a more informed and knowledgeable general public—a societal value of great importance.

As I gained more knowledge, I also learned more about myself in the process. I learned about who I was and about the spaces that I occupied. I learned how those spaces interacted with the rest of the world.

*Dr. Ahmar Zaman received his PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Detroit Mercy in 2020. He completed his predoctoral internship in 2020 at Harris County Juvenile Probation with the Forensic Department in Houston, Texas. He completed his postdoctoral fellowship in adolescent forensic and addiction psychology through the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University in 2021. Dr. Zaman’s clinical interests include conducting forensic psychological evaluations with adolescents involved with the juvenile justice system and working with youth in areas related to racial, cultural identity, and intersectionality. His research interests explore understanding how mental health, socioeconomic status, and racial and gender identity impact youth becoming justice-involved. In his free time, he enjoys road trips, photography, volleyball, and milkshakes.

The acquisition of knowledge served a dual purpose: understanding myself internally and understanding the world externally. Much of my worldview came to light, for instance, when I learned about the concept of code-switching. Toni Morrison once stated that “language alone protects us from the scariness of things with no names.” Research is not simply mixing red and blue test tubes—research is also learning about and describing phenomena that humans experience. It is about putting words to experiences. It is about learning about our world, ourselves, and our history. It is as much about growing as it is about connecting.

There is no better space in our society than a college campus to explore the critical questions of our world. College students are ambitious, driven, and fearless. They are eager and unafraid of tackling the most pressing questions impacting society. The campus spaces they occupy are filled with lively discourse that plants the seeds for lifelong learning and exploration. This undergraduate research journal provides the space for college students to learn about the world and about their selves. I am proud to support the future researchers, scholars, and advocates that have contributed to this journal and trust that the passion for learning will always be with them.

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Art Feature: “Body Fluidity”

Gio Betancourt

“Body Fluidity” deals with the complexities of the human body, especially in the case of genitalia. People are assigned a specific sex/gender based on the development of their genitalia before birth. Throughout puberty or even during birth, it may become apparent that someone is intersex due to external appearances or hormonal differences internally. In other cases, some individuals feel as though the sex/gender they were assigned by society does not align with their own sense of self and may transition to a different gender or deconstruct gender altogether in a way that subverts society's expected norms. In all of these instances, we see the body as fluid, not binary, not one gender or the other, but as the home of the soul, which inhabits a body unique to everyone else's. In this way, this piece is representative of undergraduate research; through research you may uncover new findings, some of which deconstruct old findings to represent a better understanding of a topic. My art piece is meant to do that—deconstructing the binary instilled into society for centuries and replacing it with a new understanding of the human body.

Medium: Charcoal, 12x16" mixed-media paper.





Letter from the Editor

Kyla Schmitt

Dear Reader,

I am so excited to wrap up this Winter Term by sharing the latest edition of the Oregon Undergraduate Research Journal (OURJ)—Volume 23, Issue 1, Winter 2025.

This issue—as is so often the case in the ‘turbulent’ world of undergraduate publishing—has been a long time coming. Three of the articles included in the pages that follow were accepted in the summer and fall of 2024, well before the previous year drew to a close. Is this publication late, or is it a carefully crafted retrospective: a year in academic research? The world may never know...

This publication, as it happens, marks the first of the six OURJ issues I have published without a co-editor-in-chief by my side. With the graduation of my dear friend and three-year co-editor, Jay Taylor—who I credit with doing most of the unglamorous, behind-the-scenes work necessary to truly keep this journal afloat—I would be hopelessly lost in all that this position entails, had OURJ not had not been fortunate enough to create and fund a new position—Outreach Coordinator—entering into this year. For making this possible, I extend my heartfelt thanks to Rayne Vieger, Kevin Hatfield, the Affiliated Students for Undergraduate Research and Engagement, UO Libraries, and all of the faculty and organizations that came together to support OURJ through this hiring.

Thus, with the help of our talented new Outreach Coordinator, Annika Segesta, as well as the continued hard work of our editorial board—Ava Secrist, Keegan Tippetts, Ethan Nguyen, and Charlotte Olds—I am excited to watch OURJ continue to facilitate research at the UO, not only through publication, but also through new workshops, resources, events, and partnerships. Notably, this expanded capacity also grants us a chance to make publication possible not only for UO students, but for student researchers at other Oregon academic institutions, too.

As such, I would be remiss not to mention that this issue is the first of its kind in a second sort of way: the article that begins on the following page—“Transitive Inference as an Intrinsic Process”—was originally authored by a local high school student under the mentorship of a graduate student in the UO’s Brain and Memory Lab. That author is now attending OSU. While it is not every day that we see a high-schooler conducting undergraduate-level research, submissions like these inspire me to emphasize that OURJ is (now too in practice) a journal for everyone, including students who hail from diverse campuses across the state, who share our core research ethics and valuation of open-access, multidisciplinary research.

Thus, as we now work to open our submissions to our fellow students at OSU, LCC, UCC, and beyond, I am inspired by and grateful for the unique chance we have here to grow in support of Oregon students in their academic journeys. This publication serves as a foray into that mission, now at a broader level than ever before. I hope you enjoy this issue.

Warm regards,

Kyla Schmitt, Editor-in-Chief

Transitive Inference as an Intrinsic Process

Austin Murray,* Ben Chaloupka**

Abstract

The present study tests participants' ability to infer implicit relationships between stimuli by building hierarchical—ranking by some value—relationships, a process known as transitive inference. For example, if you know person A is taller than person B and person B is taller than person C, you can infer that person A is taller than person C without directly comparing the two. The literature has provided contrasting results regarding whether prior knowledge of the hierarchy is needed for participants to infer the indirect relationships. This study aimed to resolve this discrepancy by investigating whether participants could learn an implicit hierarchy of six art stimuli ($A > B > C > D > E > F$) without prior knowledge using a transitive inference task ($N = 78$). After being trained on all pairs of adjacent stimuli in the hierarchy (e.g., $A > B$ or $D > E$), participants were tested on all possible pairs of stimuli (e.g., $A > C$ or $B > F$). Participants were able to infer relationships between untrained items two steps apart in the hierarchy (e.g., $B > D$) just as well as they remembered trained relationships. They were especially successful in judging untrained relationships three steps apart in the hierarchy (e.g., $B > E$). This suggests that participants were able to generalize across the trained pairs to form the hierarchy, even without prior knowledge of the underlying structure. Our results support the idea that humans possess an intrinsic ability to infer implicit relationships between stimuli.

1. Introduction

The world in which humans live and interact is filled with puzzle pieces, scattered apart and out of order, but we are able to assemble them to form a cohesive story. Evidence has long suggested that processes such as recognition memory allow humans to effortlessly identify people, sounds, places, objects, and more (Biederman, 1987). Recognition memory is the ability to recall specific pieces of information and use them to plan future events. Relational memory is a mental web of events connecting experiences and facts with one another to form a cohesive understanding of the world and objects' relationships to each other.

Humans' intrinsic ability to construct a cohesive story is the basis of transitive inference, where humans can infer relationships based on pairs not directly experienced together. For example, if you know person A is faster than person B and person B is faster than person C, you can infer that person A would likely beat person C in a race.

Transitive inference, recognition memory, and relational memory are all logical processes that rely on memory and reasoning. While recognition and relational memory rely on memory of specific stimuli and associations, respectively, they are also the foundation of memory generalization. Memory generalization occurs when we combine what we learn across

*Austin Murray (murrayau@oregonstate.edu) is a first-year student at Oregon State University majoring in BioHealth Sciences and minoring in Spanish. Austin's research focused on transitive inference and was conducted during his time as a high school intern in the University of Oregon's Brain and Memory Lab. Austin was mentored by UO professor Dr. Dasa Zeithamova and graduate student Benjamin Chaloupka. Austin plans to continue research at Oregon State University and hopes to attend medical school in the future.

**Ben Chaloupka (bchaloup@uoregon.edu) is a sixth-year PhD candidate studying cognitive neuroscience in the Brain and Memory Lab at the University of Oregon. He completed his undergraduate training at the University of Illinois at Chicago where he was a research assistant for the UIC Memory Lab. He uses behavioral tasks and fMRI to study how some aspects of overlapping experiences can be leveraged to facilitate new learning, while we mitigate the interference effects of other aspects. Outside of the lab, Ben spends most of his time rock climbing and mountaineering.

distinct experiences to form a generalized representation (Zeithamova & Bowman, 2020). Transitive inference relies on memory generalization to deduce indirect relationships between different stimuli (Zalesak & Heckers, 2009) in order to form a cohesive story.

There are currently different theories as to how participants infer indirect relationships in transitive inference. One theory suggests that participants use a recursive strategy. For example, in a transitive inference task with a hierarchy formed with six arbitrary art stimuli ($A > B > C > D > E > F$), if a participant is asked to judge the relative values of B and D, they must recall both the memory of $B > C$ and the memory of $C > D$ to deduce that $B > D$. In this case, the farther apart in the hierarchy that two stimuli are, the more difficult it is to infer their relationship because more individual memories must be recalled.

Another theory suggests that participants form a generalized representation of the hierarchy. In this case, the farther apart in the hierarchy that two stimuli are, the easier it is to infer their relationship. For example, B is almost always worth more than another stimulus and E is almost always worth less than another stimulus. Even among those who support the generalized representation theory, there is a disagreement in the literature surrounding whether participants need prior knowledge of the hierarchical structure to form the hierarchy. For example, some studies show that participants can form generalized hierarchical relationships despite only directly learning relationships between pairs of stimuli, but only when they are told about the hierarchy before the experiment commences (Smith & Squire, 2005). However, other studies have shown that participants can learn the hierarchical relationships of stimuli relative to each other, deducing their relationship, even when they were not told about the hierarchy beforehand (Moses et al., 2010).

In this study, we aimed to settle the dispute regarding whether a priori knowledge of the hierarchical structure is necessary to form a

generalized representation of a stimulus. We also aimed to provide further evidence for the generalized representation theory, reinforcing the results that previous experiments have shown. The transitive inference task used in this experiment does not inform participants of the hierarchy: they are forced to infer the relationships between stimuli based on generalizing information learned from training on a subset of pairs. Here, we divided the experiment into two phases: training and testing. In the training phase, participants were given a choice between two images, representing two pieces of art, and asked to choose the more valuable one. We were interested in whether they would be able to reconstruct the whole value hierarchy ($A > B > C > D > E > F$) from learning about pairs of art pieces of neighboring value ($A > B$, $B > C$, ...) and receiving feedback following each trial. Then, participants moved into the test phase where they saw all possible pair combinations ($A > B$, $A > C$, $B > E$...) in order to analyze if they successfully generalized the hierarchy and could apply the knowledge without any performance feedback. We anticipate that participants can form a generalized representation of the hierarchy on their own, similar to the results of Moses and colleagues (2010).

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

Participants were recruited from the University of Oregon human subjects pool and received course credit for their participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and experimental procedures were approved by Research Compliance Services at the University of Oregon. We recruited 97 participants (60 female, 36 male, and 1 non-binary), aged 18-27 years ($M = 19.60$, $SD = 1.97$). The target sample size was determined to be 63 based on a power analysis ($\alpha = .05$, power = .80, $h2p = .05$ for the critical analysis). We excluded 16 participants from the analysis for

failing to perform above chance in the final third of the training phase, as well as three participants for failing to perform above chance in the test phase. Thus, all following analyses were conducted using the remaining 78 participants.

2.2. Stimuli

We selected six stimuli from the art.pics database (Thieleking et al., 2020). We selected these stimuli because they are likely novel to participants and therefore have no intrinsic value to bias participant responses during the task. These six stimuli were arranged into a hierarchy (this hierarchy can be represented by stimuli A through F, where $A > B > C > D > E > F$; see Figure 1). Half of the participants completed a version of the task with stimulus A as the highest value end of the hierarchy while the other half completed the task with the inverse of this hierarchy (stimulus F as the most valuable). It is important to note that although the stimuli had an established hierarchy before the experiment started, the participants were not told about this hierarchy.

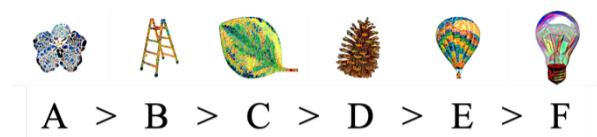


Figure 1. The six stimuli used in the task, are arranged into the hierarchy.

At the beginning of the experiment, participants were given a background story to read that was written by the first author. This story provided context for the task and the stimuli that the participants would see:

Following the break-in of a local art museum, several pieces of art were stolen. You have been specially chosen by the FBI to help with the recovery of these pieces. Your job is to identify which art pieces are worth more than the others so the FBI knows which pieces to prioritize in their recovery effort. You have the

opportunity to save these historical pieces while also getting a portion of the earnings for each piece they recover.

After reading the background story, participants started the training phase of the task.

2.3. Training Phase

Participants first underwent a training phase during which they learned only adjacent pairs in the hierarchy (e.g., C vs D). Given that there were six stimuli, there were five adjacent pairs trained in this phase ($A > B$, $B > C$, $C > D$, $D > E$, $E > F$). Participants saw two stimuli on screen at a time and had to select which was worth more using the 'F' and 'J' keys on the keyboard to indicate the left or right stimulus, respectively. They had 4 s to respond, after which they received feedback on screen for 1 s followed by a 0.5 s fixation cross. Each pair was seen six times for a total of 30 trials, and the side of the screen that each stimulus appeared on was counterbalanced. At first, participants had to guess which stimulus was worth more, but via feedback, they were able to learn these pairs by the end of the training phase.

2.4. Testing Phase

Following the training phase, participants entered a testing phase where they did not receive feedback, and all 15 possible pairs of stimuli were tested. Again, participants saw two stimuli on screen at a time and had to select which was worth more using the 'F' and 'J' keys on the keyboard to indicate the left or right stimulus, respectively. They had 4 s to respond followed by a 1.5 s fixation cross. Each pair was seen six times for a total of 90 trials, and the side of the screen that each stimulus appeared on was counterbalanced.

3. Results

We first assessed whether participants could successfully learn the pair associations and how

their performance changed in the early ($M = .59$, $SD = .17$), middle ($M = .68$, $SD = .17$), and late ($M = .79$, $SD = .12$) stages of the training phase, split into equal thirds. This analysis was performed to ensure that participants were successfully learning the task. We would expect performance at the beginning of the training phase to be around chance (50%), but performance by the end of the training phase should be significantly above chance. To test this, we performed a repeated measures ANOVA. We found a significant change in the performance during the training phase in each stage $F(2, 77) = 41.00$, $p < .001$, $h2p = .35$ (Figure 2). Tukey post-hoc comparisons revealed that participants performed significantly better during the middle stage than the early stage, $t(77) = 3.74$, $p = .001$, and that participants performed significantly better during the late stage than both the middle stage, $t(77) = 5.16$, $p < .001$, and the early stage, $t(77) = 9.46$, $p < .001$. These results demonstrate that participants successfully learn the pair associations and that their performance improves throughout the training phase.

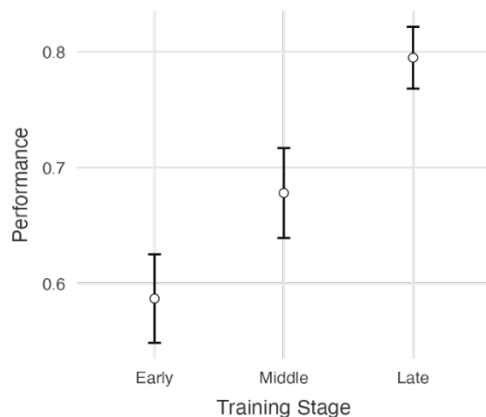


Figure 2. Performance across training. Chance performance is .5. Performance significantly increased across all stages of training, indicating that participants successfully learned the task. All error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Next, we conducted a repeated measures ANOVA to test how participants' performance during the test phase differed based on how far away the stimuli were from each other in the hierarchy. Stimuli could be separated by one ($M = .73$, $SD = .13$), two ($M = .74$, $SD = .16$), three ($M = .82$, $SD =$

.18), four ($M = .88$, $SD = .18$), or five ($M = .96$, $SD = .11$) steps. We found a significant main effect of stimulus distance, $F(4, 77) = 59.36$, $p < .001$, $h2p = .44$ (Figure 3). Tukey post-hoc comparisons revealed that performance during the test phase for stimuli that were separated by one and two steps did not significantly differ, but all other comparisons were significant. These results demonstrate that participants performed better during the test phase when stimuli were further apart in the hierarchy. While this indicates that participants may have learned the hierarchical structure, these results could be driven by pairs in which at least one stimulus in the pair was on the end of the hierarchy (stimulus A or F). Such a stimulus would serve as an anchor (either always worth more than or always worth less than the other stimulus). Thus, further analysis was needed.

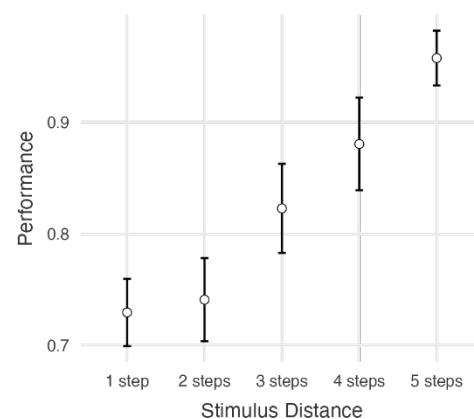


Figure 3. Performance by stimulus distance. All trained pairs were one step apart, so all other stimulus distances were novel during the testing phase while pairs one step apart were already learned. Participants performed better during the test when stimuli were further apart in the hierarchy, indicating that participants did generalize across trained pairs to form the hierarchy.

Next, we conducted a paired samples t-test to assess whether participants performed better during the test phase when at least one stimulus in the pair was an anchor (A or F). Such trials would be expected to be easier, as participants can remember to always choose A over anything else, and never choose F over anything else. In contrast, pairs that only include stimuli in the middle of the

hierarchy (B, C, D, E) would be expected to be more difficult, because each stimulus was “more valuable” than another one half of the time during training. For example, one should choose B half of the time during training, when B is presented with C but not when it is presented with A. We found that performance on pairs that contained at least one anchor ($M = .88$, $SD = .13$) was significantly higher than on pairs that did not contain an anchor ($M = .65$, $SD = .18$), $t(77) = 11.37$, $p < .001$. As predicted, these results indicate that participants were more easily able to identify the higher-value stimulus when at least one of the stimuli in the pair was an anchor. These results suggest that these anchor stimuli at least partially contributed to participants’ higher performance for greater stimulus distance.

Critically, we examined participants’ performance during the test phase when neither stimulus in the pair was an anchor (i.e., pairs that only included B, C, D, and E stimuli). If participants failed to generalize the trained pairs into the hierarchy, we would expect performance to be highest on pairs with a stimulus distance of one (trained pairs), with performance getting worse the further apart in the hierarchy the two stimuli are. If participants successfully generalized across their memories and learned the hierarchy, we would expect performance on pairs with a stimulus distance of two or more (untrained pairs) to be at least as good as performance on trained pairs. By only testing pairs that do not contain an anchor, we eliminate the possibility that any observed differences could simply be due to the cue that an anchor would provide. To test this, we ran a repeated measures ANOVA comparing performance during the test phase on non-anchor stimulus pairs with a distance of one (trained pairs B > C, C > D, D > E; $M = .63$, $SD = .18$), two (inference pairs B > D, C > E; $M = .63$, $SD = .25$), and three (inference pair B > E; $M = .74$, $SD = .32$). A stimulus distance of four or five requires that at least one of the stimuli is an anchor, and thus are excluded from this analysis. We found a significant main effect of stimulus distance, $F(2,$

$77) = 8.38$, $p < .001$, $h^2p = .10$ (Figure 4). Tukey post-hoc comparisons revealed that there was not a significant difference in the performance on pairs with a stimulus distance of one compared to two, $t(77) = -0.13$, $p = .990$. As previously noted, comparable performance between these pair types indicates that participants were successfully able to generalize the trained pairs into the hierarchy. Additionally, we found that performance on pairs with a stimulus distance of three was significantly higher than that of one, $t(77) = 3.47$, $p = .002$, and that of two, $t(77) = 3.21$, $p = .005$. As previously noted, higher performance on pairs that were further apart in the hierarchy indicates that participants were successfully able to generalize the trained pairs into the hierarchy. To summarize, participants performed just as well on untrained items two steps apart in the hierarchy (B > D, C > E) as on trained pairs, and significantly higher on untrained relationships three steps apart in the hierarchy (B > E). This would only be possible if they successfully learned the hierarchy, despite never being told about the underlying structure. Our results reinforce the idea that humans possess an intrinsic ability to generalize across distinct experiences to form representations that can be used to infer information in novel situations.

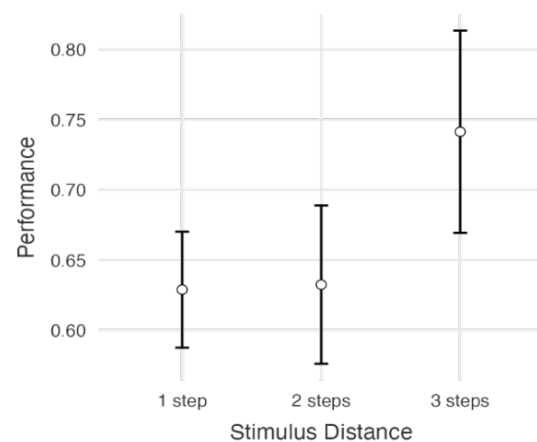


Figure 4. Performance by stimulus distance for pairs that did not include an anchor stimulus. Participants performed as well on difficult untrained pairs (2 steps) as on trained pairs (1 step), and significantly better on easy untrained pairs (3 steps), as seen in the figure. This demonstrates the successful generalization of the hierarchy.

4. Discussion

Transitive inference exists as a testament to the intricate cognitive processes that humans employ to navigate their environment. In this experiment, we assessed participants' ability to learn an established hierarchy of arbitrary art stimuli, where participants were unaware of the hierarchy before the experiment commenced. Our results showed that greater stimuli difference corresponds to higher performance, so participants performed much better when the stimuli were five steps apart versus one step apart. We also found that participants performed much better when the stimulus pair contained at least one anchor (a stimulus on one end of the hierarchy). Without anchors, participants performed as well on untrained pairs with a stimulus distance of two as on trained pairs (stimulus distance of one), and significantly better on untrained pairs with a stimulus distance of three. This demonstrates that participants were successfully able to generalize across the trained pairs and learn the hierarchy via transitive inference, despite never being informed of the underlying stimulus structure.

Our results are in line with the findings of Moses and colleagues (2010) and challenge the findings of Smith and Squire (2005), which suggested that prior knowledge of the hierarchy is necessary to learn the underlying stimulus structure. Our study supports the idea that transitive inference relies on the intrinsic cognitive process of memory generalization. The idea that memory generalization is an intrinsic process has wide-ranging implications for everyday life, allowing us to make predictions in novel situations.

5. Conclusion

In this study, we tested whether prior knowledge of a hierarchical structure is necessary to form a generalized representation. We also aimed to add

to the body of evidence supporting the generalized representation theory. We found that prior knowledge of the hierarchy is not necessary for successful generalization. Our results also support the generalized representation theory, since untrained pairs further apart in the hierarchy were easier for participants than trained pairs.

It is important to note the limitations and weaknesses of this study. This experiment only included students from the University of Oregon, whose age homogeneity only allows generalizations to only be made in the 18–27 age range. Thus, our findings do not address differences due to development and aging.

In the future, there are revisions we could make that would broaden the scope of the study, allowing for more questions to be answered. First, future research could explore the neural mechanisms behind transitive inference using neuroimaging techniques such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). By learning the neural mechanisms involved in transitive inference, researchers could gain deeper insight into the cognitive processes behind transitive inference. Longitudinal studies studying the change in transitive inference skills through different stages of development could shed light on how age impacts transitive inference.

Our study contributes to the vast research concerning memory generalization by providing empirical evidence for the human ability to deduce relationships between stimuli. The ability of participants to successfully form a hierarchy via transitive inference is a testament to the complex ability of human cognition. In this experiment, the results showed that transitive inference is an intrinsic process, and that humans can infer the relationship of a stimulus, even when they are not informed about the hierarchical relationship beforehand. Our research highlights humans' innate memory generalization ability. This ability to combine information across experiences allows us to make predictions about novel situations, helping us navigate real-world scenarios.

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COINdinistas and Contradictions: US Adoption of Counterinsurgency in 2007

Alex Li*

Abstract

Multiple theories of politics—specifically, rational actor theory and organization theory—have been used to explain decision-making processes for military actions. Rational actor theory states that military actors base decisions on value calculations and incremental changes. Organization theory suggests that military organizations push a specific doctrine to preserve power in the face of civilian challenges or criticism. While organizations generally wish to appear rational, doctrinal decisions may betray irrationality. This paper aims to identify a clear history of US counterinsurgency (COIN) and test the existing literature on organization and rational actor theory against the US military's readoption of the counterinsurgency doctrine in 2007. The US military COIN operations in Iraq that accompanied the Surge of 2007 followed a legacy of failed COIN experiments. Beginning in Vietnam with the strategic hamlet program, the continued use of COIN despite its empirical inefficacy throughout the 20th century demonstrates the military's pattern of irrational action. This paper concludes that COIN existed quietly in the background of the Cold War before its implementation in 2007. Moreover, COIN's doctrinal adoption in 2007 is better explained through organization theory as the military organization pushed COIN onto a desperate Bush administration. Finally, the history of COIN indicates that rational actor theory is insufficient to explain doctrine during low-intensity conflicts.

1. Introduction

The strategy of counterinsurgency (COIN) is a method that the US attempted throughout the 20th century and is widely regarded as a failure. Starting in Vietnam, COIN was ultimately a failed experiment, both unable to prop up a failing government and adding fuel to an ideologically driven fire. The US military continued to use COIN for clandestine operations in Latin America throughout the Cold War. Despite a history of major failures, the Bush administration adopted COIN strategies in Iraq. Theories of politics can help explain the sudden return to COIN in Iraq. Two competing explanations of military posture are organization theory and rational actor theory.¹

Conventional wisdom indicates that military posture during conflict should closely align with rational action and realist analysis of state intentions. Conversely, during peacetime, military posture should largely be structured by organizations. However, the readoption of COIN indicates a failure of the rational actor explanation because military organizations pushing for COIN became overwhelmingly dominant during wartime.

This study argues three main points. First, the use of COIN continued after Vietnam. COIN practitioners in the early 2000s presented COIN as a novel reinterpretation of bygone tactics. In the background of the Cold War, COIN became a strategy for clandestine elements of the

¹ Theories are discussed in detail below.

intelligence community. The US military readopted COIN at the forefront of American strategy in Iraq after more failed experimentation by the intelligence community in Latin America.

Second, the best theoretical explanation for the development and readoption of COIN in 2007 is organization theory. Organization theory runs contrary to the notion that military force posture is structured by rational actors during war. However, the Iraq war was clearly structured by parochial organizational interests.

Third, during low-intensity conflict, rational actor theory is insufficient in explaining the decision-making process of military force posture. This indicates that not all decision-making processes during conflict adhere to the tenets of rational actor theory.

1.1. Defining COIN

Before evaluating theories of politics, a stable definition of COIN must be developed. COIN is fundamentally defined by the existence of an insurgency. Analysts and academics broadly agree that insurgencies share a few main characteristics. During the Iraq War, US generals published Field Manual 3-24, a US joint doctrine publication analyzing the potential of COIN strategy in Iraq. FM 3-24 defined insurgency as the “organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict,”² indicating that the defining characteristic of an insurgency is the propensity to overthrow a government. COIN is then defined as “military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.”³ The definition of COIN centers on the defeat of an insurgency. Because FM 3-24 gives a definition of COIN, the

analysis will be constrained to the defeat of insurgency and will align with the common field understanding of historical counterinsurgencies. While the particular facts of COIN have shifted over a century of development, the goal of COIN remains the same. Starting with the defeat of an insurgency, COIN is a military doctrine that seeks to employ force as a primary tactic to defeat the enemy.

COIN also includes other systems of support that are not purely military assets. FM 3-24 sets out a specific doctrine for application in the direct military context but does not extend to other areas of countering an insurgency. Espionage and allied support systems are commonly applied to the wider definition of COIN, consistent with “political, economic, psychological, and civic action.”⁴ After Vietnam, COIN shifted through the Cold War. The CIA’s version of COIN in Latin America during the ’70s and ’80s through advisory committees and top-down government support is distinct from the population-centered military strategies adopted during the surge in 2007. However, given the similarities between strategies employed by the intelligence community and the military, this paper will analyze both strategies under the COIN umbrella.

There are two main ways COIN is classically conducted. Enemy-centric COIN focuses on the defeat of an insurgency through military victory. In contrast, population-centric COIN focuses on winning the hearts and minds of the population through ideological and infrastructural development before combat operations. Both versions of COIN involve countering an insurgency through significant support to the government and security forces. The historical effectiveness of each strategy has varied.⁵ Because both versions of COIN have been attempted by the

² Petraeus, David Howell, and James F. Amos. *Counterinsurgency: FM 3-24 (2006)*. Boulder, CO: Paladin, 2009.

³ This, unfortunately, gives rise to any number of actions to achieve the end goal of defining an insurgency. With definitions as broad as the ones given in FM 3-24, there are potentially hundreds of conflicts that meet the definition of COIN. Petraeus & Amos, *Counterinsurgency*, (citing JP 1-02).

⁴ Petraeus and Amos. *Counterinsurgency*.

⁵ Paul, Christopher, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, and Molly Dunigan. “Moving beyond Population-Centric vs. Enemy-Centric Counterinsurgency.” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 6 (2016): 1019–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2016.1233643>.

military and the CIA, this study will not discriminate between the two.

2. Methodology

This study will explore two competing theories—rational actor theory and organization theory—on the rise of COIN in the US. This study will include a literature review and historical analysis. This study traces the development of COIN from its earliest application in Vietnam to answer where COIN worked, where COIN failed, and why the US used it in 2007. The history will focus primarily on the US and the US's relationship with COIN as a doctrine and strategy. The history will also address vital international contexts. This study will test the explanatory power of organization and rational actor theory for the reintroduction of COIN in 2007. The bulk of this study will consist of identifying which theory best explains COIN's adoption. Finally, the conclusion will integrate the existing theories and literature into a coherent and complete theory of US COIN from 1961 to 2007.

3. Literature Review

Despite COIN being a prevalent part of military history and development, there is limited literature attempting to answer the question of why the US adopted COIN after disastrous results in Vietnam. This section will categorize the existing academic literature on the United States' adoption of COIN into rational actor theory or organization theory. This analysis will test existing theories about security against the adoption of COIN. The literature review will broadly categorize the existing literature into theories and weigh theories against each other.⁶

⁶ While some authors might not consider themselves political scientists or strictly adhere to these theories, the scope of this thesis is defined primarily as theory testing. The conclusions will evaluate the explanatory power of existing theories of international relations, not the explanatory power of individual accounts. It is useful to pare down existing literature to limit the scope of the analysis and arrive at a broader theoretical conclusion.

3.1. Rational Actor Theory

3.1.1. Rational Actor Theory in Existing Literature

Rational actor theory posits the US adoption of COIN as a fundamentally calculated action based on the constant re-evaluation of the security environment and rational adoption of COIN in response to circumstance. Constant re-evaluation means that the rational adoption of military strategies is stronger and more capable than the previous iterations as it considers the significant lessons of past successes and failures.

Political scientist Graham Allison explains rational actions as the genesis for force posture. Force posture—the configuration and deployment of military assets—is a logical deduction from objectives and doctrines.⁷ Allison also identifies four central tenets that form the backbone of rational action and terms them Model I. First, goals and objectives allow for a logical calculation of whether an action is valuable.⁸ Rational actors are bound by a decision-making framework that evaluates terminal goals. Second, alternative options to the action taken are present.⁹ The existence of alternatives gives different potential avenues for the rational actor to follow. Rational actors should be capable of taking multiple actions and understand what constitutes each individual alternative. Third, Allison identifies consequences as central to rational action.¹⁰ Alternatives are thus attached to consequences and can be valued and ordinally ranked to make decisions. This generates a cause-and-effect framework through which the impact of alternatives can be predicted and weighed. Finally, Allison isolates choice as the final aspect of rational action. Rational action derives from an action in the face of alternatives based on the calculated consequences of each

⁷ Allison, Graham Tillet. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. London: HarperCollins, 1971, 24.

⁸ To evaluate costs and benefits, the perceived benefits must be a starting point. Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 29.

⁹ Not only must alternatives occur, but the evaluation of alternatives consistent with the utility calculations of rationality must occur as well. Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 29.

¹⁰ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 30.

potential action.¹¹ This process of taking rational action applies to an individual scale of how rational actor theory should explain decisions.

Allison's decision-making unit of analysis extends beyond individuals and incorporates governmental actions.¹² Rational actor theory can accurately describe individual and state-level decision-making. Moreover, Model I explicates a process—goal setting, information gathering, alternative evaluation, and decision-making—for rational actors to prioritize the established goals.

Political scientist Kenneth Waltz interrogates the macro scale of rational action and describes a state of constantly shifting adjustment to meet a potential enemy. Waltz distinguishes between national and international systems, explaining that international decisions are based on reactions characterized by understanding shifting contexts.¹³ This process of international actors adjusting to each other and constantly adapting to the shifting environment causes incremental and piecemeal development of capabilities and decisions.¹⁴ Militaries who adhere to rational action should attempt to reconfigure themselves to be reactive, so strategy changes start with a fundamental understanding of the international system.

Waltz is speaking to an audience concerned with systemic dynamics on an international scale. His totalizing analysis of the international system is characterized by states' actions in reference to the system and to other states. Ultimately, Waltz dismisses the importance of specific strategies that arise through military decision-making, especially when applied to insurgencies. In Waltz's estimation, states are primarily interested in and responsible for their own survival, and their

behavior changes because of potential survival.¹⁵ Since international systems are not threatened by nationalist or popular movements within national borders,¹⁶ insurgencies would be counted outside of the systems-level analysis. This analysis, however, does not preclude a discussion of COIN and COIN strategy. Waltz also articulates that when feeling sufficiently threatened—akin to the supposed threat of global communism during the Cold War or global terrorism post 9-11—states may find clear definition of ends.¹⁷ The lack of an international arbiter means that, to securitize against perceived threats, nationalist causes can be rationally viewed as threats to a state's survival and thus can be rationally acted against.

3.1.2. Applications of Rational Actor Theory

Some authors writing extensively about COIN have arguments for its adoption that align with rational actor theory. The following authors reason that COIN's adoption was based on goal setting and reactions to international changes and similarly view the decision to readopt COIN as rational.

Seth Jones—current Director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies—wrote in 2008 for the RAND Corporation, pointing out the possibility of correct forms of COIN. Jones, while speaking about Afghanistan, indicates that the most effective methods of COIN should support indigenous actors native to the operating environment to conduct their own COIN operations. Jones's primary argument is that traditional understandings of COIN as exploiting interrelated issues within insurgencies fail to consider the development of governments that will continue the fight after the US eventually

¹¹ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 30.

¹² The majority of Allison's specific analysis pertains to nuclear weapons. Despite this, Allison describes the model of rational action as characterized by information gathering and action based upon rational calculations. Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 32.

¹³ This is distinct from the national systems, which are more static. Waltz, Kenneth Neal. *Theory of International Politics*. Long Grove (IL): Waveland Press, 2010, 113.

¹⁴ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 113.

¹⁵ These are central assumptions of realism. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 105.

¹⁶ While domestic and non-state actors certainly affect international systems, realism primarily focuses on states themselves as actors. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 112.

¹⁷ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 109.

leaves.¹⁸ While Jones is less clear about the overall development of COIN from the '50s onward, his prescription for success echoes the evaluation process of rational action. Jones uses previous RAND studies to argue that COIN's effectiveness significantly increases with the strength of the police force and local governance. This analysis indicates that authors like Jones apply previous lessons learned from statistical analysis to develop new methods of COIN. Jones is making prescriptions about Afghanistan and is critical of conventional approaches to COIN predating 2008. However, the justification for Jones's study is that COIN can defeat insurgencies and be modified to meet the desired goals.

Another advocate for COIN's rational adoption is Steven Metz, professor of national security and strategy at the US Army War College. As argued as recently as 2021, Metz believes that the international system will inevitably contain some level of insurgency because of civil wars and nonstate violence. COIN, therefore, has played an important role in US strategy and should play a larger role in the future.¹⁹ Metz makes the argument that there are three distinct waves of insurgency.

Starting with Chinese revolutionary Mao, Metz argues that insurgencies were explicitly politically focused—combining Marxist thought and Leninist organization in the case of Mao—and that overthrow of the government and expansion of ideology were the primary mechanisms that characterized the first wave. The second wave was characterized by the Taliban, Iraqi insurgents, and Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. These insurgents were insular and unsupported by external forces. Separate from the peasant revolutions of East Asia, second-wave insurgencies were not ideologically motivated. Instead of toppling a government,

second-wave insurgents relied on developing dispersed networks and terrorism to continue conflict. Insurgencies themselves adapt over time, creating the necessity for rational COIN adaptation.

Metz goes on to identify a third wave and a potential fourth wave, but these are largely used to frame policy recommendations for future US COIN and argue that it should play an enduring role in US strategy. While Metz does not explicitly state that US COIN developed as a response to different waves of insurgency, the implication is clear that developments in insurgency require updated tactics and strategies to combat them. Additionally, the assertion that civil conflict and nonstate violence are and will remain a part of the international system indicates the clear necessity for COIN's existence into the future.

Both Jones and Metz's commentaries are critical of the current models of COIN and believe that COIN should be updated. While they disagree with the capabilities of COIN in their respective eras—Jones in 2008 and Metz in 2021—their belief in the doctrine to produce legitimate results remains staunch. These authors illustrate attempts to revise and update COIN during the invasion of Iraq and more contemporary attitudes. Their analysis is consistent with the rational actor model because they are reactive to new developments in the threat environment. Jones is attempting to implement intelligence gathering and a decision-making process by evaluating previous attempts at COIN and new formulations. Metz is similarly attempting to drive a reconfiguration of military assets to better meet the incoming challenges of insurgencies in the modern age.

David Kilcullen, a contractor who worked for the State Department in 2005 advising the military

¹⁸ Jones, Seth G. "Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare." In *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: RAND Counterinsurgency Study--Volume 4*, 7-24. RAND Corporation, 2008. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg595osd.10>.

¹⁹ Metz, Steven. "Not Your Grandfather's Counterinsurgency: The United States Must Prepare for Radically New Forms of

Nonstate Violence." Modern War Institute, July 28, 2021. <https://mwi.usma.edu/not-your-grandfathers-counterinsurgency-the-united-states-must-prepare-for-radically-new-forms-of-nonstate-violence/>.

on asymmetric and unconventional warfare in Iraq, understood the development and response to insurgencies as inevitable. Kilcullen's accidental guerilla syndrome states that modern ideological conflict and the necessity for unconventional warfare drive the specific tactics observed in modern insurgencies.²⁰

Accidental guerilla syndrome is identified by four parts: infection (establishment of an insurgent haven), contagion (spreading violence and ideology), intervention (insurgent growth via local populations), and rejection (destruction of the insurgent haven). Kilcullen's analysis focuses on the development of post-surge Iraq, and his application is specific to the context of Al Qaeda. Kilcullen applies his argument to the Islamist militant organization Al Qaeda rather than COIN. However, his argument remains generalizable; the longer a disagreement between a government or central governing structure and a population exists, the greater the drive towards insurgencies and the necessity for population-centered approaches.

Identifying weakness in the state as creating the breeding ground for insurgency and unconventional warfare indicates that insurgencies are a product of their environment. Kilcullen's argument shows his attempt at a rational analysis of cyclical violence. Kilcullen was a central advocate for COIN and believed in COIN as a powerful and capable doctrine specifically designed to combat the violence that occurred in weak states.

While Kilcullen's analysis is more specific than Jones' and Metz's, it reaches the same conclusion. Insurgencies and their environments shift, so a new look at COIN is necessary to combat modern progress. Outside of external and retrospective writings, the most important

document about the rationality of COIN is the military's justification for FM 3-24. Informed by operations in Mosul and his own education, Petraeus, an author of FM 3-24, believed in the capability of COIN.²¹ FM 3-24 contains historical analyses of COIN, indicating that FM 3-24 aimed to understand COIN's historical development.²² The framing of FM 3-24 aligns with the existing thesis that insurgencies are an inevitable form of warfare and COIN is the only rational response.

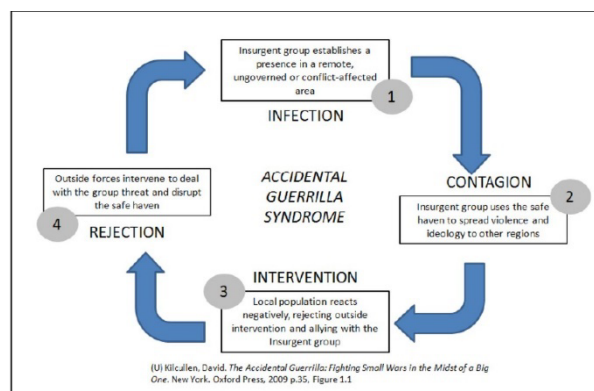


Figure 1. Kilcullen's Accidental Guerilla Syndrome.²³

3.2. Organization Theory

3.2.1. Organization Theory in Existing Literature

A competing theory for why institutions adopt strategies and doctrines is organization theory. The following authors of organization theory conclude that COIN was a failure and that the primary justification for adopting COIN was to promote the parochial interests of the military organization.

Political scientist Barry Posen concludes that organizations as discrete institutions exist to coordinate, plan, and supervise doctrine.²⁴ Organizations control doctrine by increasing their autonomy. Organizations seek to separate themselves from civilian leadership to avoid being beholden to the political whims that control

²⁰ Kilcullen, David. *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 35.

²¹ Petraeus & Amos, *Counterinsurgency*, (citing JP 1-02).

²² This history, however, is an analysis more of insurgencies themselves as opposed to the efficacy of COIN as a doctrine.

²³ Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 35.

²⁴ Posen, Barry. *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986, 41.

funding or overarching political realities.²⁵ Organizations tend to be insular and disconnected from a wider political context and take action to continue separation to stay in power.

Posen applies his doctrinal analysis to World War II, breaking down specific military trends and comparing them to doctrinal trends. In looking at the German defeat of the French in May 1940 and the subsequent loss to the British RAF in late September,²⁶ Posen argues that the most well-prepared organizations experienced the greatest success.²⁷ Furthermore, Posen argues that the doctrines and organizations were responsible for either creating a robust force capable of victory or shifting towards an ultimately doomed strategy.²⁸ While the conventional forces of WWII are distinct from COIN, war plans remain a useful heuristic to reach conclusions about militaries because doctrinal innovation is a consistent feature of military organizations.

Posen also establishes that organizations experience a strong offensive bias. In limiting the uncertainty of a military endeavor, taking the initiative is useful because it creates a standard scenario un beholden to an opposing offensive action and denies the opponent the capacity to define the operating terrain.²⁹ Organizationally, doctrine will tend towards offensive capabilities that create specific and trainable scenarios that require less individual reaction. Offensive capabilities also justify the increased size and wealth of the organization. Because organizations are primarily interested in their existence and subsequent expansion, offensive doctrine becomes preferable to defensive doctrine as it requires more investment—capital or otherwise.³⁰ Ultimately, organizations are interested in defining their operating procedure, environment,

and capacity. Doctrine and overarching strategy become useful for justifying investment into the necessary tools to allow the existence of said organization into the future.

Scott Sagan offers a similar approach to organizational pressure but focuses on organizational control of nuclear weapons instead of military doctrine specifically. In addition to Posen's argument that organizations seek autonomy, Sagan argues that organizations are beholden to civilian pressures like funding³¹ and are fundamentally limited in their scope.³² To Sagan, organizations seek to maximize their efficiency within limited domestic bounds and experience a limited set of rational calculations. Sagan concedes that organizations can act rationally³³ but argues that rationality is limited in scope. Rationality is limited because the organization has finite information and defines its own goals.³⁴ Organizations tend towards specific goals that prioritize short-term information gathering based on internal empiricism instead of external environmental observations.³⁵ Sagan argues the other central tenet of organizations is the politicized nature of organizational debates. Citing Charles Perrow, Sagan indicates that organizations are political subunits that should vie for power and the capability to expand their own influence.³⁶ Sagan also concludes that organizations operate through specific and standardized procedures to regiment action and decrease uncertainty.

Sagan's application of organization theory is in reference to nuclear proliferation and the potential ramifications of further proliferation. Sagan also articulates that organization theory offers a substantially bleaker world than rational actor theorists and hopes that rational action is

²⁵ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 46.

²⁶ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 81.

²⁷ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 82.

²⁸ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 87.

²⁹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 48.

³⁰ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 49.

³¹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 45.

³² Sagan, Scott Douglas, and Kenneth Neal Waltz. *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate: With New Chapters on Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, and on the Prospects for Global Nuclear Disarmament*. New York, New York: Norton, 2013, 46.

³³ Sagan & Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 46.

³⁴ Sagan & Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 46.

³⁵ Sagan & Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 46.

³⁶ Sagan & Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 46.

more explanatory of status quo nuclear weapons.³⁷ Ultimately, however, the organizational theory tenants between military doctrine and nuclear proliferation remain the same. While Posen is attempting to explain why organizations act, Sagan attempts to explain how organizations will act.

3.2.2. Applications of Organization Theory

Like rational actor theory, authors have written about COIN through the lens of organizational and irrational decision-making. Douglas Porch, an academic at the Naval Postgraduate School, offers one of the most comprehensive accounts of COIN's evolution. Porch traces the genesis of COIN well before Vietnam in the 19th century but places the development of modern insurgency firmly in the hands of Mao Zedong's guerilla warfare in revolutionary China.³⁸ While COIN has been a potential form of military doctrine and warfare, its modern developments occurred after World War II. Porch argues that Mao's brand of protracted people's war comes at a time when warfare becomes an ideological question placed in the hands of the people. This also narrows Porch's definition of an insurgency, as guerilla warfare is a clearly defined ideological approach to warfare that Mao sought to implement.³⁹ Porch makes it clear that COIN changed after Vietnam. Developments in Vietnam showed that warfare was about an ideological battle and the capacity to control populations instead of strongholds and capturing land. Citing *The Troubles* as one of the primary eras in which COIN developed, Porch analyzes new versions of COIN that attempted to police and suppress an insurgency. However, Porch concludes that COIN is a form of liberal

internationalism and follows a romanticized and misread history in the modern day. The discussion about the surge is brief and placed in the context of wider American development post-Vietnam. Porch specifically traces the White House's decision to adopt COIN during the surge as a desperation play and a potentially revolutionary new methodology developed in reaction to a failed public relations campaign to sell the Iraq war and stagnate political discussion.⁴⁰ This stagnation highlighted organizational insecurity and was a clear attempt to maintain public credibility. Porch argues that COIN became a method by which political elites attempted to reach a quick victory and fill existing gaps rather than being necessary to secure Iraq.

Another author, Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution, states that COIN's adoption after Vietnam was mired by failures and was only successful after repeated attempts in Iraq.⁴¹ O'Hanlon breaks from rational actor theory and asserts that the military used COIN in Latin America in the 20th century. O'Hanlon also states that while COIN persisted behind the scenes and represented a failure of doctrine, there were a few successful implementations of the strategy—namely in the Philippines in the 19th century and unspecified instances in Latin America in the 20th century. COIN proponents used these successes to justify an adherence to the tenets of COIN. O'Hanlon's essay does not fit neatly under organization theory as he does not answer why COIN was implemented in the wake of failure. However, O'Hanlon concludes that COIN's adoption was a legacy doctrine that has been repeatedly tried and failed rather than a process of rational value calculation.

³⁷ Sagan & Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 134.

³⁸ It is important to note that Porch is critical of COIN's adoption at the conclusion of his book.

³⁹ A programmatic focus portraying Maoist revolutionary guerilla class warfare as the new form of insurgency is an important aspect of existing literature. For rational actor theorists, Mao represents a primary framework from which insurgencies adapt and change. These assumptions, to rational

actor theorists, indicate a clear and concise beginning of modern insurgency.

⁴⁰ Porch, Douglas. *Counterinsurgency Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 301.

⁴¹ O'Hanlon, Michael. "America's History of Counterinsurgency." Brookings. Brookings, June 2016. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/06_counterinsurgency_ohanlon.pdf.

David Hunt of the University of Boston also takes an in-depth look at the persistence of COIN. Hunt's account focuses on COIN's failures in Vietnam. Citing the inadequate justification for COIN, flawed metrics for its success, and failure to reach its goal, Hunt concludes that COIN would have failed even with increased attention and material support.⁴² However, despite widespread failures, COIN was propped up by advocacy groups that wished to avoid using the overwhelming firepower of the Army. Advocates focused on COIN as one of the few viable alternatives to conventional war between armies. Hunt does not arrive at a satisfying conclusion, ultimately concluding that Vietnam is indicative of failures that are widespread in Iraq and the Middle East writ large. While parts of Hunt's analysis indicate that COIN was a potentially viable alternative, the failure to reach a meaningful policy conclusion indicates that Hunt is still skeptical of COIN's capabilities. The persistence of COIN is explained by the perpetual advocacy that cemented COIN in the minds of leaders looking to adhere to new restrictive modes of war rather than a proven track record of success.

Finally, Joshua Foust of the Atlantic Council and journalist Fred Kaplan claim that COIN's adoption in 2007 indicates a central cast of characters dubbed the COINdinistas. The COINdinistas were military leaders who believed they could use COIN to make their mark and revolutionize how the US military conducted warfare. General David Petraeus' sudden rise during the Bush administration indicates to authors like Foust that the prominence of the COINdinistas was produced from a legacy mired in falsehoods and an empirically tenuous track record developed during the early stages of the invasion of Iraq.

While Foust speaks more about Petraeus as a leader as opposed to COIN itself, the story of COIN

cannot be separated from Petraeus. Kaplan's book, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*, takes a less pessimistic angle on Petraeus' leadership capabilities but defends the characterization of COIN's rise as a plot arising out of the vestiges of failures seen in Vietnam. Kaplan tells the story of Petraeus emerging from a White House characterized by strict adherence to Rumsfeld's orthodoxy and fears of a new Vietnam. While Kaplan rejects the hypothesis that the persistence of COIN in Latin America was the driving factor behind its adoption, he attributes COIN's rise to the rejection of existing models and a handful of individuals taking advantage of a key opportunity. Petraeus and his accompanying cohort indicate a radical shift in doctrine. The literature surrounding Petraeus agrees that COIN was a Petraeus initiative. Petraeus and the military thus put their own organization above the wishes of the White House and convinced Bush of the viability of COIN. This indicates that COIN was a tool for the military to further entrench itself in Iraq.

4. Hypotheses

Both rational actor theory and organization theory include testable hypotheses that can establish the explanatory power of each theory. Using a top-down approach, each theory contains multiple hypotheses that, if true, would indicate the significant explanatory power of each given theory.

4.1. Rational Actor Theory Hypotheses

Rational actor theory—as a specific sub-theory of realism—indicates that individuals and institutions react to changes in the operating environment. According to rational actor theory, the capability of COIN is a constantly evolving process defined by the reaction to historical and

⁴² Hunt, David. "Dirty Wars: Counterinsurgency in Vietnam and Today." *Politics & Society* 38, no. 1 (2010): 35–66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329209357883>.

contemporary developments. Graham Allison and Jack Levy write a robust set of hypotheses to test the decision-making process and its rationality.

4.1.1. Information Gathering

The first major tenet of rational actor theory is goal prioritization. Value and utility estimation must occur for COIN to be a rational action. Well before the decision is made, goals should be identified and prioritized. This allows for a rational analysis of the tradeoffs between each potential choice.⁴³ Furthermore, the prioritization of goals will coincide with an assessment of the capability and consequences of each potential action.⁴⁴ Rational actor theory predicts that an action is made up of a steady-state choice⁴⁵ coherent with changing or shifting contexts of the environment rather than piecemeal decisions. Rational actors will aim to identify the operating environment, set robust goals within that environment, and continuously monitor the potential consequences of actions.

4.1.2. Adaptation

Another central hypothesis of rational actor theory concerns adaptation. Because rational action is predicated on the choice between multiple alternative potential actions, each alternative should carry its own set of analyzed consequences.⁴⁶ This spectrum of choices will cause rational actors to shift their decision to better account for changing environments or change their chosen method. The potential choices should come from the environment itself, as every considered alternative should suit the established contexts.⁴⁷ Rational actors will constantly make value calculations and change their strategy in response. Adaptation to utility calculations is predicated on perceived payoff,

known consequences, and fixed alternatives as evaluated by the decision-maker.⁴⁸ Thus, rational actors should adopt strategies to better meet their established goals or investigate new options.

4.1.3. Course Correction

Finally, as an internal assumption about value calculations, rational actor theory posits that value is maximized through a specific process. The value proposition of a given option is defined by a cost and the capability to achieve goals. Rational actor theory predicts that an increase in the cost of an option decreases the likelihood of an actor taking that option. On the other hand, a decrease in the cost of an alternative increases the likelihood of an actor taking that alternative. The definition of cost is nebulous and changes between actors and actions. However, an action's cost has two primary aspects: the utility value and the ability to achieve fixed goals given material constraints. Cost decreases when benefits outstrip the harms or when the capacity to reach stated goals increases. Conversely, costs increase when the harms outstrip the benefits or the capacity to reach stated goals decreases.⁴⁹ Rational actor theory predicts that actions are more or less likely to occur based on changes to an action's capability to resolve certain issues or changes in utility calculus.

4.2. Organization Theory Hypotheses

The second prominent theory in the existing literature is that organizational pressures keep COIN afloat. Organization theory posits that COIN was not developed and adopted because of reactions to the changing security environments but was pushed as a source of power within specific groups.⁵⁰ Instead of reacting to new

⁴³ Levy, Jack S., and William R. Thompson. *Causes of War*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 130.

⁴⁴ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 29.

⁴⁵ Allison characterizes "steady-state" as a collection of decisions made to elicit a specific outcome. This singular "solution" is contrasted against "partial choices." Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 33.

⁴⁶ Levy & Thompson, *Causes of War*, 131.

⁴⁷ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 33.

⁴⁸ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 31.

⁴⁹ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 34.

⁵⁰ This power can come from decision-making capabilities, increased organizational needs, or autonomous resource acquisition and utilization.

developments, organization theory indicates that COIN was used as a tool to keep specific organizations in power and ensure their survival. Barry Posen's analysis of organization theory⁵¹ sets out hypotheses that predict the interaction between organizations and their environment.

4.2.1. Power Preservation

The first hypothesis of organization theory is that power is preserved in the center of the organization. The organization is built around a specific task, attempting to maximize its power and the power of relevant sub-organizations.⁵² Organizations should also prioritize their own operating capabilities, making it favorable to keep decision-making authority within the organization. The organization will attempt to define narrow technical requirements and preferred operations elevated above policy external to the organization—in this case, presidential and congressional wishes.⁵³ Finally, within power maximization, a robust civilian-military integration should be observed.⁵⁴ This can take the form of civilians increasing their own status in conjunction with the organization's increase in power or civilians attempting to take some control and intervene in the doctrine.

4.2.2. Doctrinal Stagnation

Another hypothesis of organization theory is the contexts that drive innovation within organizations and doctrines. Organization theory generally predicts that innovation within doctrines is unlikely.⁵⁵ Innovation is unnecessary when investment into a doctrine already exists, as the organization's survival is guaranteed. However, given that an organization is not always

guaranteed power, there are two predicted causes of innovation. First, organizations innovate when defeated⁵⁶ because defeat introduces uncertainty by challenging existing authority and capabilities and threatening instability. If the organization cannot achieve its goals, then it cannot justify its survival. Secondly, because organizational survival depends on the outside help of entrenched decision-makers—like the president in this case—the second cause of innovation is intervention.⁵⁷ Civilians may intervene in doctrine or the mission. Because political-military integration is the cause of stability, organizations will innovate to accommodate political forces.

4.2.3. Uncertainty Reduction

Finally, organization theory posits that organizations want to reduce uncertainty through insularity and limited rationality. To reduce uncertainty, organizations will tend to maximize their size and wealth. Maximization gives them more resources and allows the organization to define its operations, reducing uncertainty.⁵⁸ Militaries will also tend towards offensive operations, as offensive operations allow militaries to control the task environment and justify vast resource investment.⁵⁹ Another way to reduce uncertainty is insularity and keeping political forces in the dark.⁶⁰ Insularity allows organizations to better operate alone with less oversight and stops intervention into the doctrine itself as the formation of doctrine is opaque. Furthermore, this necessitates keeping civilians in the dark, causing them to rely on the organization or external forces as sources of military knowledge.⁶¹ These aspects of uncertainty reduction and insularity give organizations incredible power to define their own environment

⁵¹ There are certainly other analyses of organization theory, but Posen's is both specific to doctrine and outlines succinctly hypotheses of the theory. This study will touch on other theorists, but the hypotheses will be drawn primarily from Posen.

⁵² Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

⁵³ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

⁵⁴ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

⁵⁵ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 54.

⁵⁶ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 57.

⁵⁷ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 57.

⁵⁸ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 49.

⁵⁹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 49.

⁶⁰ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

⁶¹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 57.

and minimize the chances that outside intervention in organizational operations occurs.

5. The History of COIN

5.1. Vietnam (1961–1963)

The US's first foray into COIN occurred in Vietnam, utilizing physical geography to combat Chinese communist revolutionary Mao Zedong's ideological power and popular warfare. The organization of Mao's people's war came from a collective ideological drive to sublimate class—an ideological position contrary to the US's defense of capitalist free markets. This ideological conflict led to the US's response and investment in COIN, starting with President John F. Kennedy. The US's attempt to integrate into the population and its implementation of strategic hamlets were a colossal failure. The strategic hamlets were a conventional tactic to conduct an unconventional war and failed to deal with the ideological question Mao had introduced.

Vietnam was a battle of competing spheres of culture and influence. The war contested revolutionary capabilities and the US's established world order.⁶² The context of the Chinese Civil War, the success of Maoist revolutionary struggles, and the prior defeat of French colonial forces gave the North Vietnamese forces examples of success and the capacity and theoretical knowledge to win. Communist forces in the North were pitted against US-backed capitalist forces in the South. Mao's seminal work published during

his struggle against the nationalists in 1937, *On Guerilla Warfare*, sets out a blueprint for combining conventional warfare and insurgencies to defeat a technologically advanced enemy, including supplementing conventional battle tactics with hit-and-run strategies against lines of communication.⁶³ Distinct from past insurgencies defined by resistance to government before ideology, Mao's centering of ideology in the Marxist tradition of class consciousness created a different political goal and method for success.⁶⁴ The US faced a unique problem from insurgencies of the past. The US had to resist North Vietnamese regulars in the National Liberation Front and insurgencies scattered across the country that, by 1961, were rapidly gaining ground and vital population centers.

Just after his inauguration in 1961, President Kennedy asked what the US was doing about guerilla warfare.⁶⁵ The war in Vietnam was heating up. It was becoming clear that the US would need to invest significant resources into unconventional and proxy wars by training advisors on new tactics to stop the spread of communism in Asia. By August 1962, a COIN doctrine was established as a government-wide attempt to restructure the capabilities in Vietnam. In a secret National Security Action Memorandum⁶⁶ titled *Counterinsurgency Doctrine*, NSAM No. 182, an insurgency is identified as a pressing national security problem for the foreseeable future.⁶⁷ The document identifies Vietnam as a successful nationalist revolution⁶⁸ in comparison

⁶² Even though Soviet expansion was also an established “world order” for many areas, the policy of containment made clear the US's position on what was the dominant ideology.

⁶³ Zedong, Mao. *On Guerilla Warfare*. Translated by Samuel Blair Griffith II. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000 first published 1937, 42.

⁶⁴ This echoes both Clausewitz's warfare as a political tool and T.E. Lawrence's revolutionary consciousness. Clausewitz identified “people's war in civilized Europe” as a revolutionary conflict and “a phenomenon of the nineteenth century.” Clausewitz enumerated the differences between a conventional conflict and that of an insurgency, explaining “that the principle of resistance exists everywhere, but is nowhere tangible.” Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. New York, New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004, 534–536.

⁶⁵ Maechling, Jr., Charles. 1988. “Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire.” Pp. 21–48 in *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties*, edited by M. T. Klare and P. Kornbluh. New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 21.

⁶⁶ Maechling, Jr., Charles. 1988. “Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire,” 28.

⁶⁷ Papers of John F. Kennedy. *National Security Action Memoranda [NSAM]: NSAM 182, Counterinsurgency Doctrine*. JFKNSF-338-010. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. Presidential Papers. National Security Files. Meetings and Memoranda (accessed March 8, 2022), 1.

⁶⁸ This further identifies the North Vietnamese struggle as an ideological and Maoist war.

with subverted internal institutions or governments, incited internal rebellion, and captured revolutions of popular anti-dictatorial character.⁶⁹ This solidifies the rationale for staying in the conflict and highlights the conflict's political nature. NSAM 182 also identifies the US strategy in Vietnam as an ideological struggle as opposed to one resisting revolutions writ large, stating the right of peoples to change their governments by revolution is recognized in international law.⁷⁰ After identifying the problem, the memorandum identifies the methodology for COIN operations in Vietnam. The methodology included land reform, civic action, community development, social projects, education, labor and youth development, leadership, police, and diplomacy.⁷¹ NSAM became the governing doctrine through which the Kennedy administration implemented COIN in Vietnam.

The implementation came broadly through interdepartmental support, combining state, defense, and independent agencies. NSAM 182 calls on the Department of Defense to train US forces and foreign fighters and support the psychological operations of the USIA in counter-insurgency.⁷² The United States Information Agency (USIA) was to work in conjunction with the CIA to covertly operate in psychological warfare and clandestine operations designed to shift ideological support towards the defending governments, collect vital information, and provide training.⁷³ NSAM 182 also established a Special Group (CI) and added roles to the Agency for International Development (AID) to oversee the development of COIN and approve missions abroad.⁷⁴ With the establishment of the Special Group, the White House quickly expanded its

COIN development in Vietnam through indigenous force multiplication and the strategic hamlet program.

By 1962, there were two main US support contingents operating in Vietnam. The first was the US Operations Mission—part of AID⁷⁵—and the US Military Assistance Command (MACV) aided by the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG).⁷⁶ After discussion, the groups decided on using supposedly adapted techniques from British operations in the Boer War and Malaya and French operations in Vietnam. Together, they implemented the strategic hamlet program. The strategic hamlet program was a resettlement program that placed Vietnamese locals into protected communities designed as a branching network of defensive strongholds and interconnected defensive routes designed to disrupt the traditional village structure and decentralize the existing power structure taken advantage of by the NLF.⁷⁷ In addition to shaping the physical geography of the counter-insurgency, MACV was responsible for assisting and training a force of 175,000 ARVN regulars, 67,000 Civil Guard, and a self-defense force of 54,000 armed civilians.⁷⁸ While this fell short by almost half of the 16-to-1 government-to-rebel troop requirement, the central goal was to fortify specific areas and create a civilian-centric defensive policy. Reliance on advanced US technology, including new small arms⁷⁹ and incredibly mobile firepower, led to a strategy of encircling and destroying Viet Cong strongholds.⁸⁰ This combined policy, while sound in theory, assumed that the NLF would operate on a

⁶⁹ Papers, *National Security Action Memoranda*, 5.

⁷⁰ Papers, *National Security Action Memoranda*, 12.

⁷¹ This overarching and expansive list of potential actions and strategies is reminiscent of the expansive list of FM 3-24. Papers, *National Security Action Memoranda*, 14-17.

⁷² Papers, *National Security Action Memoranda*, 28-29.

⁷³ Papers, *National Security Action Memoranda*, 30-31.

⁷⁴ Papers, *National Security Action Memoranda*, 22.

⁷⁵ Known as USAID now.

⁷⁶ Farmer, J. A. "Counter-Insurgency, Vietnam 1962-1963." RAND Corporation, January 1, 1978. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P2778.html>, 11.

⁷⁷ Maechling, "Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire," 39.

⁷⁸ Maechling, "Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire," "38-39.

⁷⁹ Farmer, "Counter-Insurgency, Vietnam 1962-1963," 15.

⁸⁰ Maechling, "Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire," 39.

paradigm of attacking from strongholds and was interested in defeating an enemy through offensive operations. This assumption entirely discounted the ideological struggle and failed to grapple with the failing South Vietnamese government and insurgent tenacity. One of the rationales, however, for the strategic hamlet program was to stop NLF attacks without the appearance of an attack on the people they were supposed to be helping.⁸¹ This rationale indicates

program culminated in the deployment of over 184,000 US ground troops—up from the 23,000 in 1964.⁸² The failure was primarily due to three factors. The first was the misidentification of ideological strongholds, as it became increasingly clear that the people living in strategic hamlets were at best ideologically inconsistent and more likely pro-NLF.⁸³ The spread of the ideological struggle was nearly impossible to stop with geography alone. Second was the reliance on

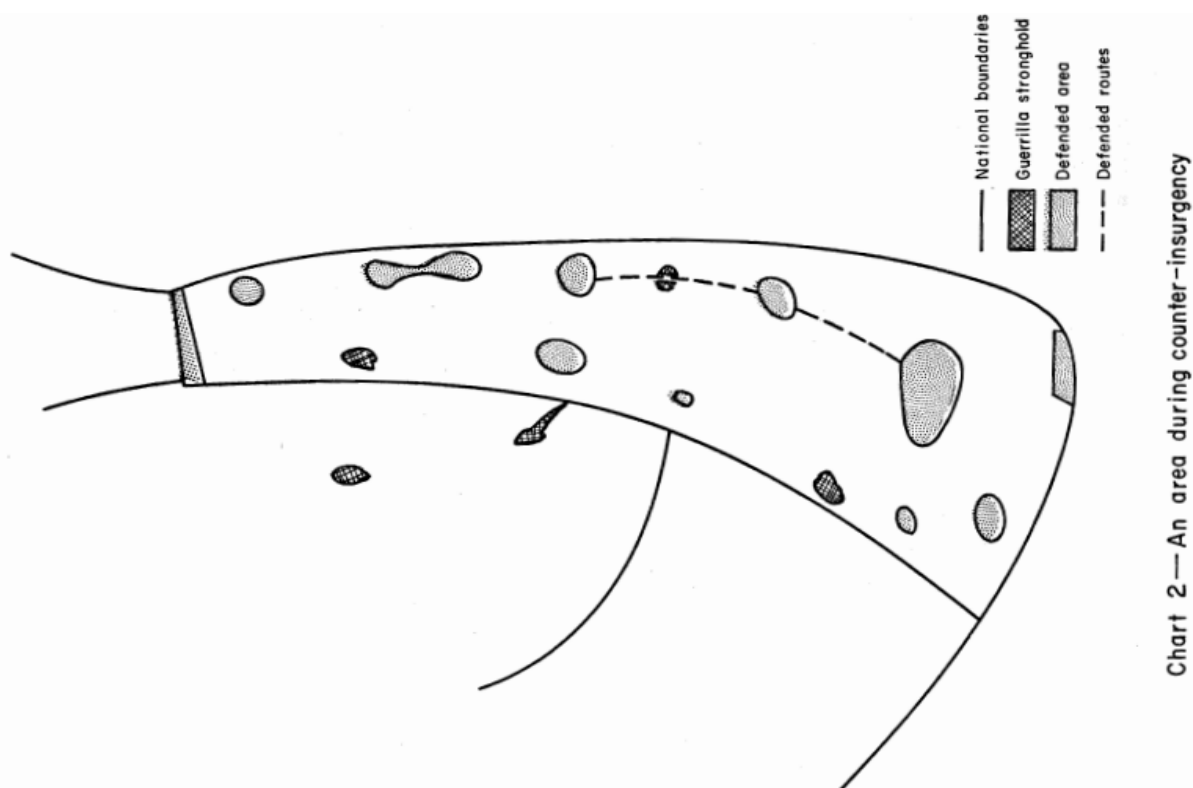


Figure 2. Strategic hamlet organization.⁸¹

that MACV assumed that geography was the key factor in political ideology and thus wrongly believed the strategic hamlets represented physical and ideological strongholds.

Ultimately, the strategic hamlets turned out to be a colossal failure. Even though it operated on knowledge gained from British and French experience, four years of the strategic hamlet

overwhelming firepower. The US absolutely had technological superiority, yet the NLF had little trouble maneuvering in and around the networked defensive structures. US helicopters offered quick deployment and maneuverable air support that could wipe out designated enemy territory through search-and-destroy-operations⁸⁴ but could not support an ideology-forward

⁸¹ Farmer, "Counter-Insurgency, Vietnam 1962-1963," 26.

⁸² "Vietnam War Allied Troop Levels 1960-73." American War Library, 2008. <https://www.americanwarlibrary.com/vietnam/vwatl.htm>.

⁸³ Maechling, "Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire," 39.

⁸⁴ Maechling, "Counterinsurgency: The First Ordeal by Fire," 42.

approach. Finally, and most importantly, was the dissolution of the South Vietnamese government. The US could not implement many strategies it had devised around land reform and public infrastructure projects. Widespread corruption and the insular and privileged government doomed any chance of winning hearts and minds.⁸⁵ The conflict soon shifted away from counterinsurgency into an open conflict and the commitment of regular US troops.

The US involvement in Vietnam was the first major doctrinal push for a COIN-centered approach, producing many failures. However, the framework for information gathering and clandestine activities through NSAM 182 and the implementation of civilian defense remained a persistent part of US military operations throughout the late 20th century. Many advisors who aided in COIN efforts would have long careers in the military advising policymakers and military officials. Thus, Vietnam set the groundwork for COIN's existence and evolution into the proxy wars and revolutionary movements of the '70s, '80s, and '90s.

5.2. Latin America (1967–1986)

After the failures in Vietnam, clandestine operators of the CIA adopted COIN. South America became a proving ground to attempt to change the methods of COIN used in Vietnam. The US deployed more advisors to work behind the scenes and tried once again to invest in COIN. Widespread corruption and parochial interests meant that the governments the US worked with were untrustworthy and ineffective. Minor victories still allowed the US to elevate COIN as a strategy above conventional war. However, the victories were largely due to external factors

rather than COIN operations. Latin America also proved the necessity for expanded resources. Without adequate oversight from US forces, COIN operations in the hands of repressive governments turned violent and brutal. US COIN in Latin America had many problems, revealing the US's willingness to stick to tenuous strategies.

While the US was still waging the Cold War, it attempted to stem the rising tide of communist revolutions, especially in Latin America. Despite the failures of COIN to win over the population and create a defensive framework against the NLF, COIN was far from abandoned. The US attempted COIN numerous times, most notably in Latin America. With revolutionary movements igniting across Latin America galvanized by Fidel Castro's success in Cuba in 1959, the US became increasingly aware that insurgencies and revolutionaries were a growing concern.⁸⁶ After the development of NSAM 182 and a renewed focus on COIN doctrine, Latin America would become a hotbed for US experimentation and activity. Wars of independence ignited in El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela, and other countries. Support for the revolutions flowed from the Soviet Union, while counterinsurgent advisors flowed from the US. Che Guevara, a Cuban revolutionary devoted to expanding the Maoist people's war into Bolivia, was met in 1967 by Bolivian Rangers backed by the CIA's Special Activities Division.⁸⁷ With US support, Che was defeated. However, the result was far from a decisive victory against insurgencies and revolutionaries.⁸⁸

By 1972, the US military was beginning to call on the CIA to aid in the planning and training of ideologically aligned groups. On July 19th, the Director of International and Civil Affairs was asked to update US Army doctrine to account for

⁸⁵ Randolph, Stephen. "Foreign Policy and the Complexities of Corruption: The Case of South Vietnam." American Foreign Service Association, June 2016. <https://afsa.org/foreign-policy-and-complexities-corruption-case-south-vietnam>.

⁸⁶ Porch, Douglas. *Counterinsurgency Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 228.

⁸⁷ Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 227.

⁸⁸ This was not an instance of COIN, but it postdated the strategic hamlet program that ended in 1963 and justified the COIN strategies used in El Salvador and Guatemala.

new developments in national doctrine.⁸⁹ The study that analyzed US doctrine accounted for 43 recent revolutionary movements and texts to understand the nature of contemporary insurgencies and the implementation of foreign internal defense (FID).⁹⁰ However, contrary to the historical effectiveness of highly specialized units embedded within populations, like T.E. Lawrence's campaign during the Arab Revolt, the study concluded that—although a manual should establish a command post exercise (CPX) training regimen for Army units—a discreet unit of specially trained individuals was unnecessary.⁹¹ In line with Vietnam-era combat operations, the study identified the problem as tactical. The tactics-focused approach shows the influence of politics on every level of FID.⁹² A bottom-up approach centering interaction with the population instead of centering on the wider ideological mission was the central focus. The US seemingly learned from the failures of supporting a failing and unpopular South Vietnamese government and moved away from waging their own war in parallel. Their solution was to support the government and armies directly through more advisors and technical assistance.

Despite the call for updated material and the increasing intensity of proxy conflicts, the Cold War turning hot preoccupied the attention of the wider military apparatus. In 1976, FM 100-5, simply titled *Operations*, focused almost entirely on a land war with the Soviet Union.⁹³ The movement towards a systemic focus on the great

power war rejected COIN and pushed the Latin American wars to the periphery of military strategy. COIN, however, was not abandoned during this period. The Army published updated guidance on COIN in 1986, titled Field Circular (FC) 100-20.⁹⁴

Updated guidance coincided with the revolution in El Salvador, which by 1986 was in full swing. Between 1979 and 1983, the US was supporting substantial paramilitary operations in El Salvador, which were responsible for the killings of 38,000 potential political dissidents and supporters of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN).⁹⁵ By 1982, the El Salvadoran government security forces were lagging in officer training, and the US Army stepped in to train over a thousand officers at Fort Benning, Georgia.⁹⁶ At the end of 1983, El Salvador, armed with thousands of advisors aided by CIA intelligence and psyops, was losing ground against the insurgents.⁹⁷

After the El Salvadorian government restructured its military leadership in 1983,⁹⁸ El Salvador instituted the Counterinsurgency Campaign: United for Reconstruction (UFR), including a four-stage strategy of cleansing operations, consolidation, reconstruction, and construction.⁹⁹ The approach sought to integrate all parts of El Salvadoran society, win hearts and minds, and isolate insurgents politically, physically, and psychologically, combatting their influence over the civilian population.¹⁰⁰

⁸⁹ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *URBAN INSURGENCY*, CIA-RDP85-00671R000300290003-7, Washington, D.C.: CIA, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85-00671R000300290003-7.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2022), 1.

⁹⁰ CIA, *URBAN INSURGENCY*, Executive Summary 1.

⁹¹ CIA, *URBAN INSURGENCY*, Executive Summary 2-5.

⁹² CIA, *URBAN INSURGENCY*, Executive Summary 121.

⁹³ Long, Austin, *Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence – The U.S. Military and Counterinsurgency Doctrine, 1960-1970 and 2003-2006: RAND Counterinsurgency Study – Paper 6*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008. https://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP200.html.

Also available in print form, 19.

⁹⁴ Long, *Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence*, 19.

⁹⁵ Siegel, Daniel and Joy Hackel. 1988. "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited." Pp. 112-35 in *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties*, edited by M. T. Klare and P. Kornbluh. New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 115.

⁹⁶ Siegel, Daniel, & Hackel, "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited," 117.

⁹⁷ Siegel, Daniel, & Hackel, "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited," 117.

⁹⁸ Siegel, Daniel, & Hackel, "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited," 118.

⁹⁹ Siegel, Daniel, & Hackel, "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited," 121.

¹⁰⁰ Siegel, Daniel, & Hackel, "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited," 121.

Ultimately, the insurgents were defeated in El Salvador, but the reasons are disputed. The government victory coincided with the collapse of other revolutionary movements, namely the Sandinistas' political defeat in Nicaragua in 1990 and the collapse of the USSR.¹⁰¹ The major turning points in the military outcomes came from foundational shifts in leadership and political victories abroad. However, this did not stop El Salvador from being hailed as the poster child for COIN's effectiveness against revolutionary movements by observers and future advocates.¹⁰²

Although many of the Latin American wars—most poignantly Nicaragua—are often attributed to Reagan's anti-communism, repressive and barbaric COIN in Latin America did not begin nor end with Reagan. From 1965 to 1976, the US Army School of the Americas (USARSA) was operating under USSOUTHCOM until it was shut down by Carter because of human rights violations.¹⁰³ Six years later, training material written in the context of lessons supposedly learned in Vietnam and Latin America, dubbed Project X, resurfaced with objectionable material cleared by Washington and implemented by USSOUTHCOM.¹⁰⁴ While it is unclear whether the material was subsequently removed, training material was already embedded within the exported COIN training regimens, specifically in Honduras. This enduring record of violence in training indicates issues that existed decades before the legacy of Reagan-era

paramilitaries were relevant and that human rights violations were encouraged by US advisors.

A CIA intelligence assessment in April 1986 included El Salvador on a list of counterinsurgencies that had achieved noteworthy progress in terms of ground gained and insurgents captured.¹⁰⁵ However, the assessment also predicted that the FMLN would remain resilient and formidable for two more years,¹⁰⁶ concluding that insurgency was the most prevalent form of warfare in the Third World,¹⁰⁷ indicating a clear stance on the necessity of COIN. The report also claims that the insurgency in Guatemala was in disarray because of personal differences among guerilla leaders.¹⁰⁸ Despite this assessment that the revolutionary movement was losing steam, the COIN campaign by the Guatemalan government, aided by the US government beginning in the 60s,¹⁰⁹ was unnecessarily violent and brutal. In addition to extremely intimate government-to-government relations,¹¹⁰ a report in 1991 retroactively looked at the tactics used in southern Guatemala and found particularly cruel torture techniques employed by the Guatemalan army between 1984 and 1986. These included mass graves and holding cells over pits filled with water that forced prisoners to hold onto bars to keep their heads above water.¹¹¹ To sanitize evidence and ensure limited evidence of torture, the captured insurgents were reportedly thrown out of aircrafts off the coast of Guatemala.¹¹² Throwing revolutionaries out of

¹⁰¹ Porch, Douglas. *Counterinsurgency* pg. 242

¹⁰² Perceived success in El Salvador would go on to justify readoption of COIN.

¹⁰³ National Security Archive, *USSOUTHCOM CI Training-Supplemental Information*, by Thomas Blanton and Peter Kornbluh. NSAEBB No. 122 Doc. 4, Washington, D.C.: The Gelman Library, 2004, [https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB122/910801%20USSOUTHCOM%20CI%20Training%20\(U\).pdf](https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB122/910801%20USSOUTHCOM%20CI%20Training%20(U).pdf) (accessed March 8, 2022).

¹⁰⁴ National Security Archive, *USSOUTHCOM CI Training-Supplemental Information*

¹⁰⁵ [U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *Insurgency: 1985 in Review*, by N/A, CIA-RDP97R00694R000600020001-2, Washington, D.C.: CIA, 2011, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP97R00694R000600020001-2.pdf)

[RDP97R00694R000600020001-2.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP97R00694R000600020001-2.pdf) (accessed March 8, 2022), pg. ix

¹⁰⁶ [CIA, *Insurgency: 1985 in Review*, 3.](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP97R00694R000600020001-2.pdf)

¹⁰⁷ [CIA, *Insurgency: 1985 in Review*, 1.](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP97R00694R000600020001-2.pdf)

¹⁰⁸ [CIA, *Insurgency: 1985 in Review*, 45.](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP97R00694R000600020001-2.pdf)

¹⁰⁹ Farah, Douglas. "Papers Show U.S. Role in Guatemalan Abuses." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, March 11, 1999. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/daily/march99/guatemala11.htm>.

¹¹⁰ Farah, "Papers Show U.S. Role in Guatemalan Abuses."

¹¹¹ National Security Archive, *Concerns Over the Military*, by Department of State. NSAEBB No. 11 Doc. 29, Washington, D.C.: The Gelman Library, 2017, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB11/docs/doc29.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2022), 67.

¹¹² National Security Archive, *Concerns Over the Military*, 67.

planes was certainly not within US doctrine nor overseen by US advisors in the region. However, these strategies showcased the brutal tactics that characterized the militaries that the US was advising and supporting.

5.3. Afghanistan (2001–2002)

As a preamble to Iraq, the war in Afghanistan saw the rise of Donald Rumsfeld and the debate about low-footprint warfare with minimal resource allocation from the US. Afghanistan pre-2007 set out the divide between the interventionists and the champions of low-footprint warfare. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld advocated for minimal resources, while Secretary of State Colin Powell believed that more troops and peacekeeping were necessary. The war in Afghanistan settled the debate. Rumsfeld's war won out, shutting down Powell almost immediately.

By most accounts, there was a hiatus of COIN operations between the end of the Cold War and the new wars in the Middle East. While the CIA kept a watchful eye on different potential insurgencies and other rebel groups, no major developments occurred within the US COIN strategy. However, the attacks on September 11th were a wake-up call, and the US quickly jumped into action. Targeting the Taliban militant group in Afghanistan for failing to turn over Al Qaeda operatives, the US rapidly mobilized. With the help of the Pakistani government,¹¹³ the US began airstrikes on October 7th.¹¹⁴ After a little over a month, Kabul fell on November 13th,¹¹⁵ starting the real test of American COIN in Afghanistan. The defeated Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters fled to Pakistan, leaving the US to clean up the mess and

secure a country wracked by political fracturing.¹¹⁶ As the largest foreign contingent in the region, it was up to Washington to decide how to secure Kabul.

There was a major debate surrounding the methodology of securing Kabul. On one side of the table was Secretary of State Colin Powell, who wished for a larger peacekeeping contingent outside of Kabul.¹¹⁷ On the other side was Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who simply wanted to bolster Afghan indigenous police and other security forces without extending beyond the capital.¹¹⁸ President Bush, on the campaign trail in 2000, had initially made promises to avoid engaging in nation-building—including political and developmental assistance—and made a preemptive endorsement of the Rumsfeld camp.¹¹⁹ In the end, while Washington was in a heated discussion, Rumsfeld took charge of the situation and steamrolled his strategy through.¹²⁰ Rumsfeld was unwilling to back down on low-footprint warfare and allowed only a contingent of military teams to work with Afghan leadership.¹²¹ The US deployed 8,000 troops in 2002, aided by a 4,000-strong international peacekeeping force that stayed in Kabul.¹²²

Since the primary goal of Rumsfeld's intervention was the training of Afghan soldiers rather than peacekeeping, Rumsfeld believed in many of the same principles as advisors and the intelligence community during the end of the Cold War. Rumsfeld thought that Afghanistan's stability depended on strengthening the government.¹²³ The US and the ISAF were to promote indigenous forces and approach the situation from the top down, focusing on government forces above population-based tactics. These principles of

¹¹³ Jones, Seth G. *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*. New York, New York: W.W. Norton, 2009, 89.

¹¹⁴ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 91.

¹¹⁵ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 92.

¹¹⁶ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 96.

¹¹⁷ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 110.

¹¹⁸ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 112.

¹¹⁹ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 113.

¹²⁰ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 115.

¹²¹ Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 115.

¹²² Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 115.

¹²³ National Security Archive, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld memo to President George W. Bush, Subject: "Afghanistan," August 20, 2002, not classified, 2 pp., ("Slow progress"), by Donald Rumsfeld. N/A, Washington, D.C.: The Gelman Library, 2002, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/24551-office-secretary-defense-donald-rumsfeld-memo-president-george-w-bush-subject> (accessed March 8, 2022), 1.

elevating government leadership echo the specific structure of advisory groups that permeated the Latin American revolutionary wars and were what contemporary military scholars indicate as leader-centric¹²⁴ COIN. Rumsfeld likely read the preceding decades as success stories for US intervention and foreign government aid systems.

Afghanistan, however, was not a COIN operation. As an explicit rejection of the population-centric model, Rumsfeld's argument for low-intensity warfare was based on reconstruction.¹²⁵ Rumsfeld articulated that the goal of ISAF and the US was to put in place the infrastructure for the Afghan government to provide itself security and for the US to leave.¹²⁶ Rumsfeld understood that establishing robust security would take significantly more resources than Washington was willing to commit. Rumsfeld thus recognized that even the 100,000 Soviet troops in years prior were insufficient because of the difficulty of risking political unpopularity, failure to control the population, and increasing instability.¹²⁷ In 2002, Rumsfeld's belief about Afghanistan was that population-centered stability was impossible without major resource allocation and small unit-based, centralized planning.

5.4. Iraq (2001–2007)

In Iraq, the debate around Afghanistan echoed. Once again, Rumsfeld's plan won out. The plan led to colossal failures in the US mission in Iraq, as the reconstruction plans post-invasion were weak and ineffective and created the conditions for a robust insurgency in Iraq. Simultaneously, US occupation and experimentation with COIN as military doctrine began. Military successes in Mosul showed the effectiveness of COIN on a city scale. At the end of 2006, COIN was again at the

forefront of the conversation. COIN became one of the only strategies that seemed to fit the bill. General David Petraeus had made a name for himself and, by 2007, was clothed in the veneer of academic legitimacy. To shore up his domestic failures and reverse the trend of Rumsfeld's low-footprint defeat, Bush chose COIN as the operating principle during the surge in early 2007.

5.4.1. Rumsfeld and Powell: An Enduring Debate (2001–2003)

After 9/11, the White House scrambled to find a culprit in Iraq. Before plans for an invasion began, Rumsfeld made his wishes known in the Pentagon. Even though Iraq was not the hotbed for Al Qaeda and the intelligence community did not believe it had a role in 9/11, Rumsfeld argued that the lack of intelligence about Iraq was enough to implicate it and justify intervention.¹²⁸ Rumsfeld's argument for the invasion was thus a symbolic show of American power. Planning for the invasion of Iraq began shortly after the invasion of Afghanistan.¹²⁹ Like Afghanistan, the proper number of troops was a contested topic. There was little doubt the US could crush the Iraqi military within a short timeframe. The central debate leading up to the war surrounded whether to invade in the first place and what should happen afterward. While war planning was underway in 2002, the plans for post-collapse Iraq stalled. Initial estimates indicated a force of 470,000 troops was necessary to stabilize the country,¹³⁰ but ultimately consensus was not achieved.¹³¹

While the future of stability operations was still in question, the US invaded Iraq on March 21st, 2003, with 145,000 troops.¹³² In less than a month,

¹²⁴ Leader-centric COIN is touted as a new development in COIN strategy but offers few innovations over numerous strategies already attempted. Moyer, Mark. "Leadership in Counterinsurgency." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 34, no. 1 (2010): 135–46. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45289496>.

¹²⁵ National Security Archive, *Donald Rumsfeld memo*, 1.

¹²⁶ National Security Archive, *Donald Rumsfeld memo*, 2.

¹²⁷ National Security Archive, *Donald Rumsfeld memo*, 1.

¹²⁸ Ricks, Thomas E. *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*. New York, New York: Penguin Press, 2007, 32.

¹²⁹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 33.

¹³⁰ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 79.

¹³¹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 80.

¹³² Ricks, *Fiasco*, 117.

Baghdad had fallen.¹³³ With the capital gone, Iraq was thrown into disarray, and various groups looking to capitalize against the US presence began making themselves known. Within days, widespread looting of cities had started. Rumsfeld quickly dismissed the instability as people free to make mistakes and commit crimes,¹³⁴ refusing to take responsibility for the repercussions of a hasty invasion. Multiple insurgencies rose in Iraq, with most of the notable inciting events the direct result of US military action. Shortly after the US took Baghdad, it implemented a form of nation-building characterized by shortsighted policies.¹³⁵

5.4.2. The CPA Creates an Insurgency (2003)

The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was the US-instituted interim government that took charge in the wake of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein's rule. In May 2003, the CPA dissolved the Iraqi Army and began expelling any former Ba'athist members—members of Saddam's party—from the government.¹³⁶ The Sunni-Shi'a sectarian divide made this transition incredibly violent. Prior to the US invasion, Sunni Muslims were a minority in Iraq but also the ruling party. The dissolution of the army pushed the Sunni leadership and already trained soldiers away from the central government directly into the hands of potential insurgent groups. A sectarian political conflict ignited from the collapsed central government in Baghdad. In accordance with the US goal of democracy promotion, the CPA sought to hold elections. Despite clear sectarian lines intensifying in 2003 and 2004, the US administration overwhelmingly believed in the

project, charging ahead with representative democracy. A series of votes led to increased Shi'a power under the CPA. As a result, Sunni insurgencies began to emerge and draw in former Ba'athists and other fighters under religious lines.¹³⁷ Because sectarian lines had given the Sunni minority control and demographically aligned elections threatened to disrupt Sunni leadership, Iraqi Sunnis boycotted a 2005 election.¹³⁸ With popular rule as a necessity for American nation-building, the CPA could do little to calm the political situation.

Despite the assessed need for almost 500,000 troops, the US believed wholeheartedly in low-footprint warfare. Some attribute this to Rumsfeld's need for control,¹³⁹ including Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz.¹⁴⁰ The focus on low resource allocation ultimately led to a decline in troop presence after the invasion as soldiers were pulled out in favor of governance over security operations. The dissolution of the Iraqi Army, de-Ba'athification, and failures to secure the economic issues with looting made Iraq ripe for multiple insurgencies to take hold.

On August 8, 2003, the CPA released a statement on the situation in Iraq, commenting that the road to freedom continued. The statement came one day after a car bomb outside the Jordanian embassy killed eleven and wounded over fifty people.¹⁴¹ Almost simultaneously, organized attacks on the embassy, the UN, the Red Cross, and the Iraqi police occurred. The timing, coordination, and sophistication of the attacks indicated a major insurgent element existing in Iraq.¹⁴² An Al Qaeda-aligned leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, claimed responsibility for the

¹³³ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 134.

¹³⁴ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 136.

¹³⁵ Rumsfeld would eventually resign after significant disagreements with uniformed military members and midterm election failures. Young, Jim. "Rumsfeld Stepping Down." NBCNews.com. NBCUniversal News Group, November 8, 2006. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wnba15622266>.

¹³⁶ Fishman, Brian H. *The Master Plan: Isis, Al-Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2017, 40.

¹³⁷ Dawisha, Adeed. *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013, 251.

¹³⁸ Dawisha, *Iraq: A Political History*, 249.

¹³⁹ Gordon, Michael R., and Bernard E. Trainor. *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*. New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 2006, 148.

¹⁴⁰ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 138.

¹⁴¹ Other sources indicate 17 deaths. Fishman, *The Master Plan*, 41. Ricks, *Fiasco*, 215.

¹⁴² Ricks, *Fiasco*, 216.

bombings.¹⁴³ Al Qaeda, gaining steam and personnel from former Saddam supporters, would become a major resistance against US occupation. While al-Zarqawi was largely alone in the early days of the insurgency, Iraq was a rich opportunity. Iraq was laden with weapons from across the country that were insufficiently guarded by American troops, allowing for the widespread arming of Zarqawi's men.¹⁴⁴ The borders were insecure, allowing funding from outside the country to flow in regularly.¹⁴⁵ Finally, the US attempt to rid the central government of sectarian Sunni elements gave Zarqawi access to already disillusioned and newly jobless Sunnis.¹⁴⁶ By 2004, the US was embroiled in a full-blown, Al Qaeda-supported¹⁴⁷ Sunni insurgency. The insurgency culminated in the second battle of Fallujah in November 2004, the single bloodiest battle of the conflict. The US was victorious and kicked Zarqawi out of the city. However, after ten months of occupation, Zarqawi was proven an effective insurgent leader in the Iraqi city centers.¹⁴⁸ Ultimately, the US methods were fundamentally ineffective against the growing insurgencies.

5.4.3. Mosul as a Proving Ground (2003–2005)

The turning point for COIN doctrine in Iraq was the city of Mosul, the largest city in northern Iraq and host to hundreds of thousands of potential enemies of the US.¹⁴⁹ Mosul was the perfect opportunity to learn from the mistakes of COIN and implement a robust and effective strategy for combatting insurgencies. Major General David Petraeus, commander of the 101st Airborne, implemented his version of COIN in Mosul in the

immediate aftermath of the invasion. Operating in conjunction with CIA and special operations units, Petraeus sought to minimize violence and, at one point, conducted a simultaneous raid on twenty-three high-value targets with only a single shot fired.¹⁵⁰ Petraeus had established a significant amount of control through the 101st as an individual leader and through the overwhelming firepower of his unit.¹⁵¹

Two aspects of Petraeus's campaign in Mosul are of note. First, establishing robust security was the central goal, and this goal was incredibly time-sensitive because of quickly spreading insurgent recruitment. The longer the US stayed in the region, the more resistance would emerge against it.¹⁵² Second, the legitimacy afforded to Petraeus with the guns of the US at his back allowed him to exert significant control over former government elements.¹⁵³ Petraeus's security focus and legitimacy meant that for Mosul to thrive after Petraeus's departure, a new form of credible legitimacy must exist in place of the US. That legitimacy had to be viewed as liberation and must avoid being viewed as occupational.

Despite these challenges, Petraeus successfully stabilized Mosul in late 2003. By January 2004, attacks on US forces and Mosul police were five times lower than other cities in Iraq.¹⁵⁴ Petraeus spent significant effort winning hearts and minds by assuring people that money was flowing to security forces¹⁵⁵ and that the US would quickly respond to Iraqi sentiment.¹⁵⁶ However, when Petraeus and the 101st Airborne left in the spring of 2004,¹⁵⁷ Mosul collapsed again. In November of 2004, most of Mosul's police force had abandoned post,¹⁵⁸ leading to instability and

¹⁴³ Fishman, *The Master Plan*, 41.

¹⁴⁴ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 191.

¹⁴⁵ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 191.

¹⁴⁶ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 191.

¹⁴⁷ Fishman, *The Master Plan*, 59.

¹⁴⁸ Fishman, *The Master Plan*, 55.

¹⁴⁹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 228.

¹⁵⁰ This follows the intelligence-military coordination in COIN operations in Latin America. This also indicates that even in Iraq, COIN was not a purely military tactic. Ricks, *Fiasco*, 229.

¹⁵¹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 229.

¹⁵² Ricks, *Fiasco*, 230.

¹⁵³ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 230.

¹⁵⁴ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 231.

¹⁵⁵ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 230.

¹⁵⁶ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 231.

¹⁵⁷ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 232.

¹⁵⁸ Wong, Edward. "Attacks by Militant Groups Rise in Mosul." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, February 22, 2005.

insurgent opportunities. The 101st Airborne had been relieved by a much smaller military force. By late February 2005, northern Iraq had turned into a haven for insurgent groups, namely Ansar al-Sunna and Ansar al-Islam.¹⁵⁹ Both groups had ties to Zarqawi and sought to forge strong ties to the central and southern-based networks.¹⁶⁰ The unit that replaced Petraeus had failed.

5.4.4. The Selection of Petraeus and the Surge Debate (2004–2006)

The failure of Mosul's endurance also mirrored a failure to secure the rest of Iraq. The US was committed to securing the country. With Mosul fresh in the memory of COIN advocates, the US Army began to work on its own strategic approach to COIN.

On October 6, 2004, COIN experts met in Quantico at the Irregular Warfare Conference.¹⁶¹ This conference emphasized the need for flexible, multidimensional forces rather than specialized units and an updated top-down strategy that improved the dialogue between the civilian leadership and the military.¹⁶² Experts in the field attended the conference, and recommendations from external sources—including David Kilcullen—were given on COIN's behalf.¹⁶³

Conferences about COIN continued, and in 2005, critics of the Iraq War joined the conversation, offering dissenting opinions from human rights activists and the Red Cross, who criticized ongoing occupation activities for human rights violations.¹⁶⁴ This integration of critics was part of Petraeus's strategy to sell a renewed push

for COIN and open the discussion space to grant legitimacy to the project.¹⁶⁵

The talks culminated in the circulation of an early version of FM 3-24 in June 2006 for open criticism and discussion among experts and military personnel.¹⁶⁶ Commentators included academics calling for more specific identification of potential enemies and emphasis on the internal politics of insurgencies.¹⁶⁷ Others, including former military officers, fully believed in the hearts and minds approach while simultaneously advocating for random searches, mandatory presentation of identity documents, and preventative detainment.¹⁶⁸ Although contested, the initial draft of the manual was published on December 15, 2006.

By 2006, Bush had overseen many failures in Iraq, Petraeus had gone home and ruminated extensively on Mosul, and a new strategy to secure Baghdad and the rest of the country was clearly necessary. The conference-driven academic review process of FM 3-24 was critical in granting legitimacy to COIN advocates, giving the appearance of a robust evaluation of capabilities and methodologies. Petraeus had cemented himself as a new, thoughtful leader who could evaluate and react to the contexts on the ground.

The Bush administration had three options to address the increasing violence.¹⁶⁹ The two scrapped options were a continuation of indigenous force training while decreasing US troop presence or pulling out US forces almost entirely. The third option was a surge modeled on Petraeus's operations in Mosul and similar

<https://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/22/world/middleeast/attack-s-by-militant-groups-rise-in-mosul.html>.

¹⁵⁹ Wong, "Attacks by Militant Groups Rise in Mosul."

¹⁶⁰ Wong, "Attacks by Militant Groups Rise in Mosul."

¹⁶¹ Ma, Jason. "Praise from Van Riper: U.S. MILITARY WRESTLES WITH IRREGULAR WARFARE, ASYMMETRIC THREATS." *Inside the Navy* 17, no. 45 (2004): 1–5. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24838718>.

¹⁶² Ma, "Praise from Van Riper"

¹⁶³ Ruettershoff, Tobias. "Counterinsurgency as Ideology - the Evolution of Expert Knowledge Production in U. S. Asymmetric Warfare (1898-2011): The Cases of the Philippines, Vietnam and Iraq." Thesis, University of Exeter, 2015, 282.

¹⁶⁴ Ruettershoff, "Counterinsurgency as Ideology," 286.

¹⁶⁵ Ruettershoff, "Counterinsurgency as Ideology," 289.

¹⁶⁶ Ruettershoff, "Counterinsurgency as Ideology," 291.

¹⁶⁷ Schultz, Richard H., and Andrea J. Dew. "Counterinsurgency, by the Book." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, August 7, 2006. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/07/opinion/07shultz.html>.

¹⁶⁸ Daly, Terence J. "Killing Won't Win This War." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, August 21, 2006. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/21/opinion/21daly.html>.

¹⁶⁹ Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. New York, New York: Crown Publishers, 2010, Chapter 12.

operations by Colonel McMaster in Tal Afar.¹⁷⁰ Bush, interested in the supposedly novel innovations of COIN, was eager to implement the new doctrine.

Ultimately, Bush chose Petraeus to lead the new era of US presence in Iraq. On February 10, 2007, Petraeus became commander of Multi-National Force, Iraq, and an additional 21,500 troops¹⁷¹ were deployed—totaling 153,000. Bush described the selection of Petraeus as akin to Lincoln discovering General Grant and General Sherman.¹⁷²

With Petraeus came a cast of other COIN advocates.¹⁷³ Notable among them was the return of John D. Negroponte as Deputy Secretary of State. Negroponte had been active during the 1980s as a US ambassador to Honduras and Regan's deputy national security advisor.¹⁷⁴ Negroponte oversaw the CIA arming and training of Contras in Nicaragua and other groups in Honduras and El Salvador.¹⁷⁵ Bush named Zalmay Khalilzad as an ambassador to the UN, giving up his former position of ambassador to Iraq to Ryan Crocker.¹⁷⁶ Khalilzad was a neoconservative who fully believed in the power of the US military.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, Admiral William Fallon¹⁷⁸ became head of CENTCOM. The COIN advocates had gained substantial authority and were set to push their own brand of military doctrine.

5.4.5. The Baghdad Plan (2007)

Bush's plans took a population-centric hearts and minds approach. Instead of securing the country through kinetic operations, the focus would be on winning the support of the population. The center of the surge was the expansion of operations in Baghdad, with an additional 7,000 troops deployed to secure the city and advise Iraqi security forces.¹⁷⁹ These troops would be split up, aiding Iraqi police and army units by patrolling and bolstering numbers. In addition to being embedded within the security forces, the US was to target specific mixed Sunni-Shi'a neighborhoods. To reduce the Sunni-Shi'a conflict, an additional Kurdish brigade was deployed to Baghdad.¹⁸⁰ These provisions came straight from Petraeus's playbook, recognizing that additional troops were necessary and the transition from external security to internal security¹⁸¹ would require spending more time on the ground.

The changes implemented during the surge heeded the lessons perceived from other COIN operations. While the plan for Iraq was not a complete departure from the model of bolstering the government observed in years prior, it was, for all intents and purposes, a newer approach to COIN. Spilling outwards from Baghdad, US forces were to operate in conjunction with indigenous

¹⁷⁰ Bush, *Decision Points*, Chapter 12.

¹⁷¹ The number of troops was under heated debate within domestic circles and between the US and the Iraqi government. Abramowitz, Michael, and Robin Wright. "Bush to Add 21,500 Troops in an Effort to Stabilize Iraq." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, January 11, 2007. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/10/AR2007011002437.html>.

¹⁷² Bush, *Decision Points*, Chapter 12.

¹⁷³ MarketWatch. "Bush to Seek Billions, 20,000 More Troops for Iraq." MarketWatch. MarketWatch, January 5, 2007. <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/bush-to-ask-for-billions-20000-more-troops-for-iraq?dist=>.

¹⁷⁴ Cannon, Lou. "Negroponte to Be No. 2 at the NSC." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, November 19, 1987. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1987/11/19/negroponte-to-be-no-2-at-the-nsc/1ba390d3-cf52-44ec-97be-f71d5d55a3b0/>.

¹⁷⁵ Cannon, "Negroponte to Be No. 2 at the NSC."

¹⁷⁶ Crocker shows up later in Afghanistan and would support Obama's continuation of COIN. Sennott, Charles M. "Interview: Ambassador Ryan Crocker." *The World from PRX*, October 19, 2009. <https://theworld.org/stories/2009-10-19/interview-ambassador-ryan-crocker>.

¹⁷⁷ Borger, Julian. "Washington's Man in Baghdad Is Pulling off a High-Risk Balancing Act." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, March 10, 2006. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/mar/10/usa.iraq>.

¹⁷⁸ Fallon resigned in 2008 and speculation of why included disagreements with Petraeus about redeploying troops to Afghanistan. Walker, Martin. "Why Admiral Fallon Resigned." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, April 8, 2008. <https://www.rferl.org/a/1079634.html>.

¹⁷⁹ Beehner, Lionel. "Bush's Baghdad Plan." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations, January 18, 2007. <https://www.cfr.org/background/bushs-baghdad-plan>.

¹⁸⁰ Beehner, "Bush's Baghdad Plan."

¹⁸¹ Transitioning from relying on US forces to relying on indigenous Iraqi forces trained by the US.

police. The plan also involved substantial expansion of provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs),¹⁸² primarily used for infrastructural development and integration of civil-military affairs.

This plan received a mixed reaction from the Iraqi government. The Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, staunchly favored the withdrawal of 50,000 US troops by the end of 2007.¹⁸³ The surge was coming at a politically contentious time. Domestically, Democrats and Republicans disagreed about the continued need for a US presence in Iraq.¹⁸⁴ Internationally, the US government and Iraqi officials struggled to find common ground.¹⁸⁵ While the US insisted that it was operating with the Iraqi government and that misunderstandings resulted from communication failures,¹⁸⁶ the rift between the two governments was far from improving.

The insurgencies starting in 2001 and the consequent COIN campaign that occurred in Iraq were mired in heated debates and failing promises. Mosul's success transformed into a campaign that lost the support of Iraq's government. The US had experimented with COIN for decades and adopted COIN to achieve wider strategic goals in Iraq. However, the lessons learned from previous decades failed to create a successful COIN strategy in Iraq. Notably, the intense training necessary to embed troops within the population was inadequate,¹⁸⁷ and the paradox of requiring swift and decisive action to avoid an occupation while necessitating persistent troop presence was never resolved. However, COIN was

not a wholesale failure. Coinciding with the adoption of COIN, violence decreased in the Anbar province from 450 incidents per month to 100 in mid-2007, and US fatalities dropped 26% between 2006 and 2007.¹⁸⁸ The insurgency that arose from the invasion of Iraq and the failures of the CPA presented an opportunity for COIN implementation, and the decision to adopt COIN represents a choice made from organizational pressure.

6. Testing Theories of COIN

6.1. COIN as Rational Action

When evaluating rational action's application to COIN, the model of gathering information and choosing a rational set of actions to achieve a goal breaks down. The US understood the environment and gathered sufficient intelligence leading up to and during the surge. The US also had clearly defined goals and metrics that it could use to measure success—albeit with some ambiguity. However, the US implemented COIN to achieve those goals because it had failed to properly judge past implementations and inadequately evaluated the alternatives. Thus, COIN's adoption was largely irrational.

6.1.1. Information Gathering

COIN's adoption was partially a result of robust information gathering and goal setting. The historical review shows that the US used environmental observation, goal setting, and rational data collection. Insurgency outcomes and

¹⁸² Beehner, "Bush's Baghdad Plan."

¹⁸³ Londoño, Ernesto. "Pelosi, Maliki Discuss Timing of Drawdown 4 Slain GIS Were Abducted, U.S. Says." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, January 27, 2007. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2007/01/27/pelosi-maliki-discuss-timing-of-drawdown-span-classbankhead4-slain-gis-were-abducted-us-saysspan/6c652b8f-a3e6-4415-ad69-990ed5fedd4d/>.

¹⁸⁴ Londoño, "Pelosi, Maliki Discuss Timing of Drawdown."

¹⁸⁵ Fadel, Leila, and McClatchy/Tribune newspapers. "Al-Maliki Hits Back at Bush, Rice Criticism." *Chicago Tribune*, August 21, 2021. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2007-01-18-0701180060-story.html>.

¹⁸⁶ Fadel & McClatchy. "Al-Maliki Hits Back at Bush, Rice Criticism."

¹⁸⁷ Eikenberry speaks on Afghanistan, but many of his criticisms stem from the wider COIN push Eikenberry, Karl W. "The Limits of Counterinsurgency Doctrine in Afghanistan." *Foreign Affairs*, August 23, 2021. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2013-09-01/limits-counterinsurgency-doctrine-afghanistan>.

¹⁸⁸ West, Bing. "Counterinsurgency Lessons from Iraq." *army.mil*, March 5, 2009. https://www.army.mil/article/20621/counterinsurgency_lessons_from_iraq.

operating environments were measured and understood. Consequences were studied to rank options by their cost. COIN was also conceived as a larger top-down approach to strategy.

A. Environment Observation—A clear lineage of operating environments exists throughout the history of COIN's adoption. The process of rationally adopting COIN was on the radar of the intelligence community throughout the Cold War. Moreover, the US military worked very closely with the CIA and was involved with interpreting the intelligence reports after Vietnam. Throughout the '70s and '80s, the CIA and the military attempted to understand the reality of modern insurgencies. The CIA kept robust surveillance of other COIN operations, most notably of the Soviet Union. The Soviets were attempting a strategy similar to the US strategy. The CIA reported that the Soviet's use of COIN was data-driven but weak. The US was aware of its own COIN operations and was evaluating the use of COIN by other countries. Ultimately, the recommendation of over 400,000 troops before the invasion of Iraq indicates that the Bush administration knew the high costs of securing Iraq after Saddam's overthrow.

B. Goal Setting—Information gathering also relies on goal setting and clearly defined metrics for success. Information gathering was present in Vietnam. However, it was in a form unsuited to low-intensity and unconventional war. The strategic hamlet program was designed to take out insurgent strongholds, and COIN's goals were fundamentally about defeating the enemy. This strategy of defeating an insurgency and amassing a kill count would extend until the end of the war, even after the strategic hamlet program was proven a failure. In Latin America, the goals were

to train an indigenous force and defeat respective insurgencies. This meant attacking specific leaders and setting goals for how many security troops to train. Updating goals thus indicates a progression in information metrics.

The goals in Iraq were explicit because the US established its overall mission and had objective measurements of success. The US's long-term goal in Iraq was to leave after creating a stable security environment.¹⁸⁹ COIN was a method to establish security, so the number of attacks on civilian and US forces was the chosen objective measurement. The US also measured success based on the number of tips received about Al Qaeda,¹⁹⁰ indicating that the hearts and minds approach strove to establish a relationship between the US and the population. The US was consistent with rational information gathering because it evaluated success with specific metrics. In Mosul and Tal Afar, the US assessed the objective differences before and after the implementation of COIN. Thus, the environmental observation before the surge was clearly established and acted upon.

While the US also had significantly more nebulous goals, like attempting to transition the security to indigenous force without an objective measure,¹⁹¹ the attacks and tips metrics were well studied. The US was in a constant process of evaluation, ensuring that it understood the environment where it was operating. Outside of the political goals that backed the initial decision to invade, the US understood the necessity of a significant troop presence. The established goals were then used to calculate the necessary size of the US force. However, nation-building required a troop presence that was politically untenable. The US understood this issue, but there was

¹⁸⁹ "Americas | Progress Report on Iraq Benchmarks." BBC News. BBC, July 12, 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6294694.stm>.

¹⁹⁰ Bush, George W. "U.S. Policy toward Iraq | c-Span.org." c-Span, April 10, 2008. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?204815-1/us-policy-iraq#>!

¹⁹¹ It was unit-dependent and relied on whether the Transition Readiness Assessment deemed mission-critical tasks able to be

performed independent of coalition support. House of Representatives. "Hearing Before the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services." U.S. Government Printing Office, May 22, 2007. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110hhrg38110/html/CHRG-110hhrg38110.htm>.

disagreement over how to engage with the environment. The plan was to use COIN to transition towards Iraqi indigenous security, and the US spent significant time evaluating this goal.

C. Irrational Information Gathering—Information gathering alone, however, does not constitute rational action. Understanding the environment is only the first step in rationally choosing actions. While the US might have had objective and rational metrics to assess its operations, many metrics made little sense in context.

The tips and attacks metrics are reasonable indicators of an insurgency's strength, but they do not establish a causal relationship between COIN and the defeat of an insurgency. This problem is highlighted by the centering of ideology in other conflicts. The US often fails to interpret ideological struggles as a primary cause of insurgencies, instead operating under the assumption that insurgencies arise from material conditions. This assumption poses two major problems. First, information gathering centers around the wrong metrics. As experienced in Vietnam after Kennedy, victory was defined by the ratio of killed enemies to killed allies. This body count approach fundamentally missed the ideological aspect of the Northern Vietnamese resistance. Second, COIN is an inadequate tool to solve the root causes of insurgencies because improving the security situation does not implicate an appreciable decrease in ideological power.

Additionally, the body count measurement generally favored the US in Vietnam. Advanced weaponry and high mobility warfare allowed the US to exact significant casualties on North Vietnamese forces. The US could easily claim victory in terms of casualties while still losing the political war. This mindset also failed to account for Ho Chi Minh's statement in 1946 that not even a ten-to-one kill ratio would diminish the ideological standings of the North Vietnamese.¹⁹² This metric issue was also present in Iraq. While

the objective measure of attacks indicates overall stability, those attacks were often unattributed, meaning the metric missed the ideological changes behind an increasingly stable security environment. Tips about Al Qaeda were a better indicator of an ideological shift, as it indicated that the population was more confident about resisting the insurgency and the capability to push out the insurgency—consistent with Kilcullen's description of an intervention. However, tips alone are insufficient and must be cross-referenced with other data. The number of tips must be corroborated against the potential insurgent numbers, as more tips alone could antithetically indicate a greater insurgent force.

6.1.2. Adaptation

Beyond goal setting and contextual understanding, rational action prescribes adaption and alternative testing. COIN's development does not follow these tenets of rational action. COIN worked in some places but failed to produce results for the US in important ways. Adaptation occurred but in ways that were incongruous with value maximization. Alternatives were also barely discussed. The conferences that led to the adoption of COIN were not conferences of genuine doctrinal debate but built around advocating for COIN. Within the military, the discussion revolved around selling COIN to Bush and creating the best version of COIN instead of engaging in outcome comparison between strategies. The spectrum of options was ultimately narrow and irrational.

Latin America is indicative of the attitudes around COIN before Iraq. COIN had become a governmental and military intelligence strategy that diverged from the geography-based COIN in Vietnam. Developments between the Cold War and Iraq indicate two rational conclusions about COIN. First, the US believed that COIN was a

¹⁹² Karnow, Stanley. "Ho Chi Minh." Time. Time Inc., April 13, 1998.

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,988162,00.html>.

successful strategy, attributing the defeat of insurgents to COIN. Second, the US attempted to rectify failures in training. After Vietnam, there were tangible changes to COIN. The US abandoned the strategic hamlet program and understood that ideology was more important than material conditions. Government assistance became the primary mechanism of support, yet still failed to win the ideological war in Iraq.

A. Perceived Victory—After the collapse of the Soviet Union and many of the Soviet-backed insurgencies, the US saw right-wing governments successfully consolidate power. The victories of respective governments in Latin America are not attributed to US COIN. Instead, victory came from US conventional support and the collapse of wider leftist movements across the globe. At best, the US could derive a correlational conclusion about COIN and the collapse of insurgencies given the global contexts of the Cold War. Despite the unclear relationship between COIN and victory, advocates used Latin America to promote COIN.

The US knew that the governments it supported in Latin America were repressive, and it was unclear whether they were using US-sanctioned tactics. The attempt to rectify the training material from Project X indicates that the US sought to modify training. Some of the failures of COIN in Latin America were acted upon. Mainly, Petraeus sought to decrease the violence of his COIN campaign in Mosul, reacting to cultural differences instead of increasing violent crackdowns on insurgents. However, embedding into the population only went so far.

The US's disagreements with the Iraqi government before the surge in Iraq indicate a failure to integrate with the security forces. The US either had learned from Latin America and wanted to maintain control over the training of security forces or, more likely, wanted to maintain control over the country writ large for political reasons. The optimistic interpretation that the US had learned to maintain control over its training to avoid abuse is undermined by the US's actions in Iraq, especially the expansive use of independent

and clandestine special operations forces and the significant expansion of detention and torture. The human rights record of the US in Iraq shows that US oversight of the Iraqi forces was loose. That is not to say that the Iraqi government did not matter, as government assistance was still a cornerstone of the strategy in Iraq. The surge specifically focused on Baghdad. The focus on supporting the indigenous government indicates consistency in the top-down view of COIN present in El Salvador, Honduras, and other conflicts. This strategy most likely comes from perceptions of success in Latin America rather than lessons from failures.

B. Considering Alternatives—The other tenet of adaptation is the analysis of potential alternatives. The extent to which the White House debated alternative approaches for Iraq is unclear. However, it is clear that there was little resistance to COIN. By the time the surge was close to being implemented in January 2007, Rumsfeld had resigned, and the Bush administration had lost its most powerful champion of low-intensity warfare. Left in power were Bush and the neoconservatives, who were committed to securing Iraq and had realized Rumsfeld's plans were a failure. By the time the surge was being formulated, the Bush administration looking for a new tactic to cement the US as a liberating force, and there was little opposition to the rise of COIN advocacy.

In his memoir, Bush indicates that he looked at the other alternatives to COIN. However, the options discussed in his memoir both involved pulling out of Iraq, either slowly with a transition towards indigenous security or abruptly. These options were closed off from the beginning, as the cabinet surrounding Bush opposed lowering its commitment. Additionally, there were larger considerations for Bush, including the legacy of his presidency. Rumsfeld's resignation indicated that the Bush administration had failed regarding Iraq. In early 2007, after the midterms and halfway through his second term, Bush believed he could make a mark, and his advisors believed in the

mission of Iraqi freedom. In his memoir, Bush takes credit for the selection of Petraeus and recalls the selection of Petraeus as him discovering his version of Grant. Additionally, Bush claims that he chose COIN because of Petraeus's academic rigor, deferring to Petraeus's extensive education and practice.¹⁹³ The Bush administration thus sought the most rationally appearing strategy and, in the process, expedited a single opinion.

C. Scaling—After Mosul, it was infeasible to carry out many of the same practices that Petraeus implemented in the wider 2007 surge. Being so close to the ground, Petraeus could respond to specific changes within the city, including paying police through the existing treasury and sharing technology with local populations as a show of good faith. While these actions boosted morale among the population and elevated the US's status, they would not operate across the entire country.¹⁹⁴ Another hypothesis for failures after Mosul is that the surge was an unsuccessful attempt to implement small-scale strategies on a wider battlefield. This hypothesis is unlikely because Petraeus updated the methodology between Mosul and the surge. There is little evidence to support that the same provisions and tactics that allowed Petraeus to succeed in Mosul would succeed in Baghdad and spill outward.

D. Academic Rationality—Many experts who criticized the original draft of FM 3-24 were overshadowed and unrepresented in the final product. While it is impossible to implement every critic's wish, the published version of FM 3-24 failed to assuage many of the larger complaints about the manual—mainly that it read like an incomplete how-to guide instead of an overarching doctrine.¹⁹⁵ The supposed method of

academic rigor involving experts and critics had two major flaws. First, it operated under the assumption of COIN's effectiveness, discussing the merits of COIN in a vacuum rather than in relation to other strategies. While the discussion of COIN involved multiple viewpoints, Petraeus's decision was uninformed by a rejection of other strategies.

Second, according to Kilcullen—one of the often-cited experts who participated in those discussions—allowing dissenting opinions was a tool to show the media that the debate over COIN was bipartisan.¹⁹⁶ The discussions were more a way to sell the strategy than to create the best version of the strategy. Selecting the surge appears like the Bush administration adopted the strategy with the loudest advocates rather than the tried-and-true strategy that was favorable over alternatives.

6.1.3. Course Correction

Value calculations are fantastic predictors of what actions are likely to be taken. For COIN to be rational, it should follow models of cost-benefit analysis. An increase in the costs of an action should be accompanied by decision-makers shying away from said action. Conversely, a decrease in the cost of an action—either by an increase in value or the probability of completing the mission—should be accompanied by decision-makers readily adopting said action.¹⁹⁷ COIN is thus irrational, as these predictors are not present. Given the increased costs of COIN in Iraq, including troop requirements, oversight, and equipment, the strategy decreased value. Definitions are also an important indicator of irrationality in Iraq, as the definitions remained

¹⁹³ This begs the question of whether Petraeus's practice was a rational action. Bush's deferment to Petraeus could still be a rational decision if Petraeus had made the rational calculations for Bush. On the surface, Petraeus's COIN methodology looks rational, as his experiments in Mosul indicate that he knew a version of COIN could work and the investigations—including opening discussion to both critics and civilian experts—allowed for dissenting viewpoints to be heard before FM 3-24 was

published. However, beyond the surface, Petraeus's adoption of COIN does not support this view.

¹⁹⁴ This also necessitates the focus on Baghdad and the top-down approach.

¹⁹⁵ Schultz, & Dew, "Counterinsurgency, by the Book."

¹⁹⁶ Ruettershoff, "Counterinsurgency as Ideology."

¹⁹⁷ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 34.

too broad for rational actions. Broad definitions offered leeway for operations. The failure to create specific definitions was an easy way to increase the scope of COIN's capabilities. Finally, training—a way to increase the probability of attaining fixed consequences—was unimproved, and actions to increase COIN's value maximization were left behind.

A. Troop Organization—The most fundamental change in COIN was the shift from government-centric advisors to a boots-on-the-ground approach, with military units training and policing local populations. While the surge was a top-down approach and adhered to the principles of COIN from Latin America, the US finally recognized the necessity for a major increase in troops and the importance of embedding significant forces in the country. These strategies were a departure from Rumsfeld's failures. Significant disagreements within the uniformed forces and Rumsfeld's leadership pointed to Rumsfeld's resignation as a necessity for the mission in Iraq.¹⁹⁸ The US's shift in strategy involved a renewed focus on transitioning towards Iraqi security with coalition support and increasing security forces outside of Baghdad. This shift strongly indicates that the US learned from the previous failures of low-intensity warfare and an overall programmatic focus on advisor groups. Advisors embedded themselves within units, intimately connected to the units they trained and supported. This was also true of transition teams, as coalition units were paired with Iraqi units, allowing for a one-to-one exchange of tactical training. This integration of units coincided with a tangible decrease in

violence after the surge.¹⁹⁹ The US learned from its previous experience in troop organization. Placing troops in population centers is a more costly strategy but is necessary because of the limitations of advisor groups.

B. Irrational Definitions—An indicator that the military failed to rectify the issues COIN experienced years prior was its definitions of insurgency and COIN. Refined definitions would have shown that it used rational calculations of past success and failure in its decision-making process. Earlier definitions are outlined in FC 100-20, published in 1986. It includes insurgency under the umbrella of low-intensity warfare—along with counterterrorism, peacekeeping, and peacetime contingencies.²⁰⁰ FC 100-20 defines an insurgency as an “organized, armed political struggle whose goal may be the seizure of power through revolutionary takeover and replacement of the existing government.”²⁰¹ COIN is defined as “all military and other actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.”²⁰² These interpretations are incredibly broad, only narrowing the definition of an insurgency by tying it to organizations and centering politics. Additionally, COIN is defined as any government action made to stop an insurgency. The broadness of this definition allows COIN proponents to attribute any government success to COIN operations.

FC 100-20 makes a critical error when characterizing the preconditions for COIN. COIN is defined as overt actions made to support a government with the understanding that appropriate change is possible without an

¹⁹⁸ Young, “Rumsfeld Stepping Down.”

¹⁹⁹ The transition itself, however, is another counterargument for excluding failed policies. FM 3-24 attempts to identify policies that worked within COIN and policies that failed. One such policy failure was training host-nation security forces in the US image. The transition towards Iraqi security, however, is very reminiscent of the US's organization. The process through which transitions were deemed a success was based on coalition unit organization and coalition mission success criteria. Despite the US using Sunnis to patrol parts of Iraq—a potential departure from US organizing principles—there is little evidence the organization, operations, or tactics

significantly differed between the US and Iraqi security forces. House of Representatives. “Hearing Before the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services.” Baghdad. “US Uses Sunnis to Patrol Streets.” The Age. The Age, August 20, 2007. <https://www.theage.com.au/world/us-uses-sunnis-to-patrol-streets-20070820-ge5mgp.html>.

²⁰⁰ FC 100-20 *Military Operations in Low-Intensity Conflict*. Arlington, Virginia: Department of the Army, 1986. 1-6

²⁰¹ FC 100-20 2-0

²⁰² FC 100-20 2-7

insurgency.²⁰³ COIN assumes that the radical overthrow of a government system is unnecessary. This definition characterizes COIN as operations that are visible and antithetical to insurgency. It also implies that the government forces can meet the demands of insurgent groups. This definition falls short of an adequate explanation of COIN for a few reasons. First, COIN operations are often covert, proven by the disappearance of suspected insurgents and the subsequent hiding of evidence prevalent in Latin America. Second, the assumption that governments can meet insurgent demands grants legitimacy to the standing government, implying that COIN is incapable of suppressing insurgent populations and must meet their demands.

The joint doctrine published for the strategy in Iraq, FM 3-24, changes the wording of the FM 100-20 definitions. FM 3-24 defines insurgency as the “organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government using subversion and armed conflict”²⁰⁴ and defines COIN as the “military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.”²⁰⁵ However, these FM 3-24 definitions only rearrange the definitions from FC 100-20 rather than refine them. The definition of insurgency is still too broad. While FM 3-24 defines COIN by specific categories of action, those actions remain just as broadly defined as in FC 100-20. FM 3-24 does identify six principles of government legitimacy,²⁰⁶ departing from FC 100-20’s flawed

assumption of absolute government legitimacy. However, the effect of the definition change is negligible, as it does not materially constrain COIN actions. Consequently, the failure to refine the definitions of COIN indicates that the US military believed every aspect of COIN outlined in the ’80s was necessary to the military process and was unaware of how to refine its operations.

C. Irrational Training—The other example of COIN’s irrational course correction is the training of US troops. Conventional wisdom from as far back as the British imperialist policing—corroborated by the Troubles and the initial troop requirement estimates—indicates that a highly trained force that could effectively integrate into the population was necessary.²⁰⁷ Training the troops on the local cultures, language, and customs was crucial for the surge to avoid the abuses of government overreach experienced in Latin America and ensure that the US troops could work with the government they were attempting to stabilize. However, the military did not expand the training programs. The US had training programs before the surge, including Operation Mojave Viper, a scenario-based training program that emphasized civilian engagement. However, specialized and optional programs like Mojave Viper highlighted the inefficiencies and training gaps for the soldiers, including language barriers and failures to identify insurgents.²⁰⁸ Despite these problems, Mojave Viper existed until it was

²⁰³ FC 100-20 2-0

²⁰⁴ Petraeus & Amos. *Counterinsurgency*, (citing JP 1-02).

²⁰⁵ The counterargument that COIN also includes operations that fail and expansive definitions account for those failed tactics makes little sense. As a military doctrine, FM 3-24 outlines the process for militaries to implement or understand COIN. However, including all government action spanning economic and civil action greatly increases the purview of the military’s operations. The primary justification for the military to be involved in economic and civic action is the protection of institutions and infrastructure. The definition of COIN stated in FM 3-24 greatly expands the military’s role. Petraeus & Amos. *Counterinsurgency*, (citing JP 1-02).

²⁰⁶ Petraeus & Amos. *Counterinsurgency*, 1-21.

²⁰⁷ The Troubles are an important development in COIN, as they are not an example of US COIN tactics but are often cited as the correct method, including by Porch. However, the application of the victories of the Troubles into US COIN in the Middle East is tenuous at best. The British had two major advantages the US did not have in Iraq: proximity and language. Since the languages are the same and many of the cultural practices similar, the British were also similarly able to integrate much better within the population. Imported British soldiers did not need specialized training to understand the language or culture.

²⁰⁸ Palmer, Brian. “Sensitivity Training and the War in Iraq.” NPR. NPR, December 13, 2006. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6618863>.

rebranded for training in Afghanistan in 2016.²⁰⁹ While some new programs were created to increase the operability within civilian populations, many programs were not mandatory, and units had to pay for training.²¹⁰ The training was not widely implemented and fell short in many relevant aspects.

At best, rational actor theory can be applied to COIN in Iraq insofar as the surge was based on falsehoods and failures to investigate past mistakes after Vietnam and during Iraq. To believe that rational actor theory explains the surge is to believe that the US government's narratives of COIN at face value. Repeated errors in government assistance and training indicate that rationality ends at goal setting and defining an overall strategic approach and does not extend into training, tactics, or historical analysis.

6.2. COIN as Organization

Unlike rational actor theory, organization theory predicts that COIN's implementation in Iraq resulted from preferences in the military organization. Organization theory holds true for COIN, explaining many aspects of COIN development. Organization theory fundamentally disagrees with rational actor theory, situating the political and military decision-making processes in organizations vying for autonomy as the driving force behind COIN's adoption. Organization theory is a more powerful theory for explaining the rise of COIN in 2007 and its selection in Iraq.

6.2.1. Organizational Power Preservation

Organizations tend towards actions that prioritize their own power. Given that decision-making authority is integral to that power, organizations will seek to prioritize their expertise and make

themselves necessary. Organizations and their sub-organizations should thus seek to preserve the power of the organization and identify the task that justifies the organization's existence.²¹¹ The organization will elevate narrow technical requirements and push specific operations against the wishes of civilian policy to maintain this power and task.²¹² However, military organizations cannot survive alone. For the organization to propagate and preserve its power, political-military integration is necessary. Political-military integration should coincide with civilian intervention in doctrinal matters.²¹³ Moreover, civilians allowed to intervene in military doctrine should be friendly to the organization.

The US military preserved its task and power by shaping its decision-making power around COIN. Proponents of COIN gained notoriety incredibly quickly. The technical operations for COIN were prioritized over civilian policy. Integration into the population through the hearts-and-minds campaign was incongruous with Iraqi politics. Further, COIN coincided with a strong political-military integration, with civilian leadership shaping around the doctrine.

A. Doctrinal Disconnect—Organizations tend to be insulated, creating a disconnect between military doctrine and overall political strategy. This disconnect between the doctrine and the political strategy was evident in Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki's dislike of the COIN doctrine. Cooperation with the existing Iraqi security forces would have been of the utmost importance if the US was centering its political relationships. The tensions that the Iraqi government had with the COIN doctrine made the strategy ill-suited for overall political goals and long-term stability. However, because the surge briefly succeeded despite political tensions, the organizations

²⁰⁹ USMC Life. "Marines Take Part in ITX, Earlier Known as Mojave Viper, CAX." USMC Life, November 27, 2016. <https://usmclife.com/marines-take-part-itx-earlier-known-mojave-viper-cax/>.

²¹⁰ Thompson, Keith. "Arabic Cultural-Awareness Training Now Available." www.army.mil, November 28, 2007.

https://www.army.mil/article/6342/arabic_cultural_awareness_training_now_available.

²¹¹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

²¹² Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

²¹³ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

pushing the COIN doctrine had more swaying power than those pushing for political reconciliation. Thus, the military convinced the Bush administration to engage in the surge.

B. Political Elevation—The surge coincided with increased military organizational power and decision-making powers among civilian COIN advocates. With John Negroponte advising Secretary of State Rice, there was an advocate of the Latin American style of COIN in Washington. The civilian leadership was influenced by those who had practiced COIN in previous decades. The elevation of neocons, including the appointment of Khalilzad to the UN, indicates the international perception of Washington emphasized military intervention at large. Low-footprint warfare advocates were pushed out of Iraq, and the newly appointed ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, signaled a major shift in strategy. Crocker would reject being labeled as a neoconservative because of his commitment to persistent forces. Crocker believed in the US's capability to promote peace and worked closely with Petraeus. From his tenure in Pakistan during years prior, Crocker's conclusion about the Middle East was that US firepower in the country was a necessity.²¹⁴ Through his tenure in Iraq, Crocker became known as America's Lawrence of Arabia because

of his commitment to and supposed understanding of the region.²¹⁵ Crocker was heavily committed to COIN. Because of the US's focus on Iraq at the time, Crocker's move from Pakistan to Iraq undoubtedly elevated his position and decision-making power.

By the time Bush decided on the surge strategy, the debate between the neoconservatives and the COIN advocates was less intense than during Rumsfeld's tenure. Rumsfeld was out, resigning on November 8th, 2006, after significant failures,²¹⁶ leaving open the direction of the war in Iraq. There was speculation that Rumsfeld was ousted to shift away from low-intensity warfare and make way for COIN, and two pieces of evidence point to the idea's truth. First, there was little opposition to COIN after Rumsfeld left. The neoconservatives²¹⁷ gained little power over the decision-making in Iraq as a result of the restructuring of leadership. Second, those less enthusiastic about COIN, including Admiral William Fallon, the new head of CENTCOM, also quickly left. A year after the surge, Fallon retired after clashing with Bush on key foreign policy decisions, having advocated for decreasing troops in Iraq.²¹⁸ The success of COIN advocates points to the strategy's power over the makeup of Washington's key decision-makers.²¹⁹

²¹⁴ Crocker, Ryan C. "Why Biden's Lack of Strategic Patience Led to Disaster." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, August 21, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/21/opinion/us-afghanistan-pakistan-taliban.html>.

²¹⁵ Lawrence explained the motivation and usefulness of galvanizing the population to meet specific tactical and strategic goals, from stopping Turkish advances to destroying bridges. Lawrence also noted the importance of small-group tactics. In large groups, the Arabs were "not formidable, since they had no corporate spirit, nor discipline nor mutual confidence," however, only "three or four Arabs in their hills would stop a dozen Turks." Office of the Press Secretary. "President Bush Commemorates Foreign Policy Achievements and Presents Medal of Freedom to Ambassador Ryan Crocker." National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration, January 15, 2009. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2009/01/20090115.html>.

Lawrence, T. E. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (Penguin Modern Classics). London: Penguin Books, 2000, 97.

²¹⁶ Young, "Rumsfeld Stepping Down."

²¹⁷ There is debate about whether Rumsfeld was a neoconservative, but there is little evidence beyond his angering neocons for failures in Iraq. Novak, Robert. "Neocons vs. Rumsfeld." CNN. Cable News Network, December 23, 2004. <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/12/23/novak.rumsfeld/>.

²¹⁸ Shanker, Thom. "Mideast Commander Retires after Irking Bosses." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, March 12, 2008. <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/12/washington/12military.html>.

²¹⁹ While Bush was not part of the military organization that pushed COIN doctrinally, Bush's potential gains bear mentioning. Analysis of Bush's domestic intentions with the surge is largely speculation, but military action is often a way to increase domestic popularity and approval. Bush had already proven that the American public was widely in favor of responding to terrorism with a hardline stance. On September 20th, 2001, Bush announced the Global War on Terror, and the next day, Bush's approval rating spiked to 90%, the highest it

The most prominent key decision-maker was General Petraeus. Almost overnight, Petraeus was established in the canon of important US commanders. Petraeus was seen as a capable commander and portrayed as an academic who gained legitimacy from the rigorous study of COIN. Petraeus's biographer and pupil Paula Broadwell rose to fame alongside him.²²⁰ Broadwell wrote a book about Petraeus, *All In: The Education of David Petraeus*, with an advance of six figures.²²¹ Broadwell captured the public imagination through a unique and incredibly close account of Petraeus's career. COIN helped elevate Petraeus as a military leader, and fascination with his personal life followed. The people who advocated COIN served to gain standing and popularity after its adoption.

C. *Civilian Elevation*—Other leaders gained power alongside Petraeus, including David Kilcullen. As part of the team of experts who emerged before the writing of FM 3-24, Kilcullen was an influential voice in favor of COIN. Book deals, news stories, interviews, and other increases in private sector popularity were also common for those surrounding Petraeus. Kilcullen shows up in many interviews and talks across different forms of media speaking on COIN. Furthermore, his book, *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* is a *Washington Post*, was a bestseller²²² and described as indispensable for every general in charge of

Afghanistan.²²³ Kilcullen's inside position was resulted from his integration with US military leadership during the conferences and talks preceding the surge.

D. *Institutional Protections*—Some argue that Petraeus gained more influence than Washington. However, Petraeus acted with support from Washington. Petraeus's credibility gained him significant backing from Washington. Bush shaped the military apparatus around the new strategy, selecting the leadership and advisors. Petraeus sold the COIN strategy to Bush, and Bush was eager to accept it. After the surge had begun, Bush's investment in Petraeus led Washington to push out dissident leaders in favor of Petraeus's plan and Congress to defend Petraeus. Petraeus was institutionally protected from public criticism. After liberal advocacy group MoveOn.org published a full-page ad smearing Petraeus in the *New York Times*, the Senate was quick to condemn MoveOn.org.²²⁴ The House followed suit, passing a resolution condemning the ad.²²⁵ Petraeus's leadership had full support from the President and Congress. Some might argue that opposing anti-war ads was not done to protect Petraeus but was important for patriotism and government cohesion. However, the unprecedented scale of the government response²²⁶ and the unique defense of a single individual show that the government supported Petraeus. COIN was a strategy backed by military

would ever be. George W. Bush Library. National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed March 8, 2022. <https://www.georgewbushlibrary.gov/research/topic-guides/global-war-terror.lup>. "Presidential Approval Ratings - George W. Bush." Gallup.com. Gallup, October 18, 2020. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116500/presidential-approval-ratings-george-bush.aspx>.

²²⁰ Lots of the fame comes from the extramarital affair between Petraeus and Broadwell, but Broadwell gained notoriety outside of the scandal.

²²¹ Shane, Scott, and Sheryl Gay Stolberg. "A Brilliant Career with a Meteoric Rise and an Abrupt Fall." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, November 10, 2012. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/11/us/david-petraeus-seen-as-an-invulnerable-cia-director-self-destructs.html>.

²²² Kilcullen, David. "The Accidental Guerrilla: Hurst Publishers." HURST, February 8, 2022. <https://www.hurstpublishers.com/book/accidental-guerrilla>.

²²³ Packer, George. "The Accidental Guerrilla." *The New Yorker*. The New Yorker, May 12, 2009. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/george-packer/the-accidental-guerrilla>.

²²⁴ Associated Press. "Senate Votes to Condemn Moveon.org's 'General Betray Us' Ad." KVIA, September 20, 2007. <https://kvia.com/news/2007/09/20/senate-votes-to-condemn-moveon-orgs-general-betray-us-ad/>.

²²⁵ Marre, Klaus. "House Overwhelmingly Condemns MoveOn AD." *The Hill*, February 4, 2016. <https://thehill.com/homenews/news/13168-house-overwhelmingly-condemns-moveon-ad>.

²²⁶ MacGregor, Hilary E. "Building a Buzz for Peace." *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles Times, February 4, 2003. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-feb-04-et-macgregor4-story.html>.

and civilian leadership. With tight civilian-military integration and COIN advocates pushing the doctrine elevated beyond political decision-makers, the organization pushing for COIN succeeded in preserving power.

6.2.2. Doctrinal Innovation

Organization theory makes predictions about the adaptation and innovation within doctrines. Organization theory, unlike rational actor theory, predicts that innovations are rare.²²⁷ When organizations are in power and have secured their existence, task, and environment, little motivates them to change. There are two predictions for when organizations will innovate their doctrines. The first prediction is when the organization suffers a defeat.²²⁸ Defeat puts the capability of the organization and its survival into question. The second cause for innovation is when civilians intervene in the mission²²⁹ due to the necessity of political-military integration. Innovation of the COIN doctrine was rare. COIN's defeat in Vietnam caused adaptation away from the use of strategic hamlets. Further, private advocacy and conferences caused COIN's adaptation between Mosul and the surge. Military figures designed these adaptations before the surge to advertise the COIN strategy to Washington, indicating political-military integration.

A. *Persistence*—COIN remained a strategy employed throughout the Cold War. The little adaptation that occurred was not solely for COIN's survival. With COIN being attempted multiple times in multiple forms, there are a few identifiable failures. The best example is Vietnam. By 1964,²³⁰ the US had turned to conventional tactics after COIN failed. The US continued its mission in Vietnam and pushed COIN to adapt. The use of COIN persisted in Latin America with

an increase in government advisors and a decrease in the reliance on stronghold tactics. The US government knew it was failing to bring the desired results, yet it adopted no new strategy to replace COIN. The process of government assistance was the prevailing theory of COIN for decades, as it was hardly challenged. Little adaptation occurred after the shift away from stronghold tactics, indicating that innovation was not a large part of the COIN doctrine during the 20th century.

B. *Alternatives*—The military organizations that pushed for adaptation in the mid-60s differed from those that advocated for COIN in Iraq. In Iraq, adaptation within the doctrine was limited. Bush believed the only alternative for Iraq was for the US to disengage. COIN was an easily pushed strategy because it allowed the administration an option to stay in Iraq. COIN was implemented with little resistance because few challenged the plan for the surge. The Bush administration wanted to justify the US presence in Iraq, and the surge was the one strategy that avoided withdrawal. COIN was implemented only after the mission in Iraq was at a standstill. Given the Bush administration's attitude at the end of 2006, Iraq was far from being abandoned for political reasons. The adoption of COIN represented a distinct shift in strategy pushed for by military organizations.

The adaptation of COIN was also less about the surge in Iraq and more important for selling the strategy. The expansion of COIN doctrine to a country-wide scale was indeed an adaptation, but this adaptation occurred specifically to allow COIN's implementation in a wider context. The expansion of the doctrine and the writing of FM 3-24 was to lend authenticity to the strategy. Petraeus and his team of experts changed COIN to sell it to the media and Bush. The adaptation of

²²⁷ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 54.

²²⁸ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 57.

²²⁹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 57.

²³⁰ Smith, Hendrick. "Vietcong Terrorism Sweeping the Mekong Delta as Saigon's Control Wanes." *The New York*

Times. *The New York Times*, January 12, 1964. <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/01/12/archives/vietcong-terrorism-sweeping-the-mekong-delta-as-saigons-control.html>.

COIN was only a way to make it the more attractive option. COIN advocates knew they needed legitimacy to convince the government and the media of their strategy. In addition to Petraeus and the debate that preceded the surge, previous perceived victories granted COIN legitimacy. Success in Mosul and Tal Afar created the perception that COIN operations worked on a city scale. The necessity to sell the strategy to civilian decision-makers for COIN's survival caused innovation between small-scale COIN and the surge.

C. *The Anbar Awakening*—COIN's adaptation was fundamentally unnecessary for victories in Iraq. Many of COIN's successes can also be attributed to the Anbar Awakening of 2006. The Awakening was a unified response to the threats of Al Qaeda from local leadership in the Anbar province. On September 14th, 2006, the Sunni leader Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha announced the formation of the Sahawa al-Anbar, including a manifesto outlining the goals of the local leaders.²³¹ The manifesto included the exchange of power to a newly elected congress²³² and provisions for a unified resistance against Al Qaeda while maintaining existing religious power structures.²³³ This uprising consolidated much of the conflicting attitudes about tribal leadership and allowed the formation of a more centralized resistance. Forty-one tribes were involved, and with the addition of existing US forces and funding, Al Qaeda left its stronghold in Ramadi in March 2007.²³⁴ The primary cause of Al Qaeda's retreat was thus not the new strategy of COIN but the independent mobilization of local Iraqi leadership.

The US surge helped support the Awakening, primarily by establishing regular salaries for the police and increasing funds for the area.²³⁵

However, the US was in a supporting role and was not the primary cause of Al Qaeda's defeat. The morale and the cohesion between leaders were significantly more important.²³⁶ Ultimately, successful US involvement was separate from COIN for two reasons. First, the movement centered on local leadership. While Sunni leadership shifted away from calling for the US's removal, the manifesto indicated that working with the US was a beneficial goal parallel to keeping religious leadership intact and consolidating against Al Qaeda. Second, COIN was not the primary strategy during the Awakening. In September 2006, Rumsfeld was still in Washington and COIN was a small part of the overall strategy in Iraq. Sahawa al-Anbar's leadership and success were not caused by a shift in US strategy. COIN was able to operate as it did was the willingness of Iraqis to accept help from the US and the recognition and threat assessment from Abu Risha and other leaders.²³⁷ COIN doctrine was less important than the local contexts in 2006, and COIN advocates could claim success by attributing the indigenous and independent Iraqi movement to the COIN doctrine regardless of COIN's actual effectiveness.

COIN advocates used the Awakening as a justification for their strategy,²³⁸ although the decrease in violence would have likely occurred absent COIN operations and the surge. While US integration increased local capabilities and regular salaries boosted the effectiveness and recruitment of Iraqi police, the Awakening was more than likely the cause of the decrease in violence. Because the Awakening led to success, COIN's adaptations were an insignificant aspect of victory. COIN advocates smartly identified the unique timing of the Awakening as the moment

²³¹ Malkasian, Carter. *Illusions of Victory: The Anbar Awakening and the Rise of the Islamic State*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, 112.

²³² Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory*, 112.

²³³ Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory*, 113.

²³⁴ Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory*, 155.

²³⁵ Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory*, 148.

²³⁶ Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory*, 159.

²³⁷ Malkasian, Carter. *Illusions of Victory* pg. 159

²³⁸ Many post hoc studies have attributed success to the US and make little mention of the Awakening. Russell, James A. "Innovation in War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces, Iraq, 2005–2007." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 4 (2010): 595–624. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2010.489715>.

COIN's adoption would experience the most success. COIN was not chosen after evaluating other tactics, indicating that it was not a rational action based on ruling out options. Rather, it was indicative of pulling the trigger on a new strategy likely to coincide with victory. The surge came at a unique time when COIN was perceived as capable in domestic spheres and when contexts were shifting in Iraq independent of the US.

D. Innovation Failures—Finally, the most significant indicator of failure to adapt was the identified challenges that Petraeus failed to correct during the surge. The vital problem the US faced after Mosul was that of US occupation. COIN never dealt with the US's contradictory position of integrating into the population while attempting to distance itself from the appearance of an occupation. This was the crux of the political battle that between Washington and al-Maliki regarding troop numbers. Every experience in COIN before Iraq indicated the necessity for expanded troops to keep a robust security partnership. The goal of transitioning security to Iraqis was liberatory, but the process of one-to-one advisement was occupational.

Without a novel and clear method for getting out of Iraq, COIN was doomed to fail. Absent an exit strategy beyond the complete eradication of all insurgent potential, the options in Iraq were either a perpetual occupation or the collapse of the security environment. Either way, violence would occur post-COIN operations. An occupation would drive more insurgencies, as proven by Ansar al-Sunna and Ansar al-Islam, and collapse would strengthen already existing movements. Regular salaries for police and independent control of units failed as a strategy for US departure. Petraeus was reactive to the population in Mosul, setting up salaries with existing money, bolstering the police force, and ensuring that operations were slowly transitioned to indigenous security.

However, when Petraeus left Mosul in 2004, Mosul collapsed into violence relatively quickly. The argument that Petraeus did not have time to fully implement his strategy fails to identify a sufficient level of security. The US had experienced the problem years before the surge and did little to rectify it. FM 3-24 sets no new standards beyond a more robust role for advisory groups and a tighter integration into the population.

COIN was never seriously challenged, and the US never adequately reacted to the known issues of COIN.²³⁹ Washington's adoption of COIN resulted from organizational pressures from the military, and the military did little to adapt COIN doctrine.

6.2.3. Uncertainty Reduction

According to organization theory, an increased organization size should be observed²⁴⁰ because of the organizational drive to minimize uncertainty within the operating environment. Another way to minimize uncertainty is to define the task environment,²⁴¹ which means attempting to control the environment and identify aspects useful to the organization. Because the expansion of militaries is often tied to civilian and political systems, organization theory makes predictions about the role of civilians. Civilian intervention is predicated on trusting specific sources of credible military knowledge.²⁴² With minimal knowledge, policymakers are kept in the dark about operations and cannot contest operational practices. From the political perspective of doctrine, political strategy changes and force posture should not occur in accordance.²⁴³

COIN experienced a major increase in size and wealth. More troops were deployed, and procurement rules changed. Civil intervention was present but occurred only after Petraeus's academic process. Petraeus was Bush's source of military knowledge. Bush was not kept in the dark

²³⁹ This also points to Washington rather than Petraeus as the organizational unit that sought to stay in power.

²⁴⁰ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 49.

²⁴¹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 47.

²⁴² Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 57.

²⁴³ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 53.

but had enough faith in Petraeus that he did little to scrutinize the strategy. Bush's unflinching faith caused little shift in political changes or top-down changes to COIN doctrine.

A. Isolation—COIN operations have been observed repeatedly operating under the same principles. While one of the earliest explicit investments in COIN was Kennedy asking about its possibility in Vietnam, in the wake of Vietnam, the mission became incredibly insular. In Latin America, COIN was largely clandestine. The military was involved but worked closely with the CIA to develop programs and training material that were often overlooked and kept secret. This is highlighted by rampant abuses, like throwing dissidents from planes, within the governments that the US was advising. The secrecy surrounding COIN indicates that its investors controlled their operating environment, and political or other repercussions were unlikely to be levied. This also coincides with the expansion of the CIA's capabilities. The CIA was given a long leash and significant resources. The connection between COIN, psyops, and other CIA activities indicates that COIN existed with little oversight from political leadership in Washington. Project X also suggests that COIN was an insular and unique case. The training material was classified and edited, and its repercussions were difficult to evaluate. The assessment of Project X indicates that it was unclear whether Honduras was still operating under the problematic training material. This clearly shows that what little oversight existed did not extend very far.

B. Training—Organizations further attempt to consolidate control by maximizing their resources. The CIA's use of COIN indicates that expanded troop requirements and resource allocation to organizations are a common feature of the COIN doctrine. Intelligence reports about

activity in Latin America were almost always favorable to the mission of COIN. The CIA's assessment of Soviet COIN in Afghanistan indicated the necessity of expanded troop numbers. The expansion of troops as a tenant of COIN is useful for organizations invested in COIN because it is a rational conclusion derived from historical policing and population integration and drives investment into the strategy. Increased troop presence can be explained by rational actor theory and organization theory. This, however, does not invalidate the conclusion that organizations tend towards increased resource requirements, and as such, the CIA's, and later the military's, assessments place troop expansion and investment into the strategy into the hands of organizations.

C. Resource Expansion—Before the surge in Iraq, evidence of insular expansion and limited rationality is clear. First, the expansion of resources and troops was a necessity. The assessment that nearly 500,000 troops were needed to secure the country meant that pursuing COIN required increasing resources. Similarly, after the surge, so many vehicles were being procured that the Department of Defense resorted to handing out more contracts and drastically increasing suppliers.²⁴⁴ Washington was aware of the troop requirements accompanying COIN and decided to invest significant resources. Rhetoric of the Vietnam quagmire had stopped Rumsfeld and others from advocating for more troops and more resources. However, Bush decided that more money and time was the answer. Significant amounts of money had already been spent in Iraq. As early as 2003, critics of the war were pointing to Iraq as more than a quagmire;²⁴⁵ Iraq was a bottomless pit for resources. Reinvestment during the surge was driven either by ambivalence towards the financial and human costs of the Iraq

²⁴⁴ Erwin, Sandra I. Surge in vehicle orders calls for unconventional buying methods, March 1, 2007. <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2007/4/1/2007april-surge-in-vehicle-orders-calls-for-unconventional-buying-methods>.

²⁴⁵ Smith, Daniel. "Quagmire? What Quagmire?" Institute for Policy Studies, May 8, 2014. https://ips-dc.org/quagmire_what_quagmire/.

war or a deliberate increase in spending for other purposes consistent with the elevation of the military organizations pushing for the strategy.

D. Limited Rationality—COIN's adoption was motivated by successful examples of the doctrine seen in Mosul and Tal Afar. Small-scale success made COIN seem rationally attractive. The academic process leading to FM 3-24 also indicates rationality.

However, this rationality stretched beyond its limits. The small-scale success and academic process were ineffective justifications for adopting the COIN strategy writ large. The military failed to adapt COIN or evaluate alternatives after Mosul. However, the Bush administration was encouraged by the supposed rigor behind COIN's endorsement. Bush's memoir and much of the literature about Petraeus portray him as bookish, intelligent, and hardworking, implying his trustworthiness. Presenting Petraeus as an academic framed him as a rational actor. The narrative that Petraeus had worked to rationally choose a strategy implies that alternatives to the strategy in Mosul and FM 3-24 were unnecessary. For Bush, Petraeus's education was enough to legitimize the strategy. Rationality was limited because only advocates of COIN were in charge of its evaluation. Bush believed that putting advocates of COIN in charge was a rational action. However, the COIN advocates were simply justifying a strategy that benefitted themselves.

E. Task Definition—Finally, COIN, as it was adopted, was obsessed with defining the task environment. Defining the task environment is a necessary step for rational actions. However, defining the task environment to suit the needs of the strategy is indicative of organizational pressure. First, the context of the Anbar Awakening made the task environment ripe for

COIN to be effective. Transitioning towards indigenous security was easier when the surge occurred than it would have been a year prior. Second, the focus on Baghdad—consistent with the focus on government-based security of prior COIN leaders—and the adherence to an American-supported government defined the task environment within limited bounds.

The COIN strategy in Iraq ignored many of the associated issues with continued occupation. For instance, Syria was reportedly comfortable establishing diplomatic relations, but the strategy adopted in 2007 was a stance against increased diplomatic talks and involvement.²⁴⁶ COIN failed to account for these international contexts. Furthermore, defining the task environment as a security issue instead of a problem of a power vacuum in state capacity characterized by inept leadership²⁴⁷ set COIN to solve a problem that was not the root cause of the violence.

F. Offensive Doctrine—Organization theory predicts that organizations will tend towards offensive operations. Offensive operations can bolster an organization's control over the environment and ensure that militaries constantly need resources.²⁴⁸ While COIN seems defensive in nature,²⁴⁹ its offensive tendencies are unmistakable.

First, the strategic hamlets were meant to be strongholds for offensive operations. The strategic hamlets were meant for use as staging areas for populations and military operations. They were also a direct response to strongholds and bases operated by insurgents, and the strategic hamlets were implemented in conjunction with offensive operations against those bases. In El Salvador, the US advised the government during a bloody campaign characterized by death squads and disappearances. After the Cold War, the US

²⁴⁶ "World | Americas | Report 'Urges Iraq Policy Shift'." BBC News. BBC, December 6, 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6212106.stm>.

²⁴⁷ Dodge, Toby. "The Causes of US Failure in Iraq." *Survival* 49, no. 1 (2007): 85–106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330701254545>.

²⁴⁸ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 49.

²⁴⁹ As revolutions are predicated on the overthrow of an existing system, they are offensive in nature.

learned defensive operations were more easily sold to the public.

After the surge, COIN was accompanied by a fivefold increase in air strikes.²⁵⁰ The air strikes were characterized as defensive because they constituted preemptive, life-saving measures.²⁵¹ However, military assets are fungible, meaning it is almost impossible to distinguish between a defensive and offensive air strike when the defense is preemptive. Furthermore, air power favors offensive maneuvers, as offensive operations correlate to more mobility and firepower. Even if COIN in Iraq was not explicitly offensive, the history of COIN points to offensive tactics as an inherent part of COIN. This offensive doctrine is consistent with what organization theory would predict as uncertainty minimizing.

Many of the tenets of organization theory, including expanded requirements and insular leadership, have been present throughout COIN's history. In Iraq, the US believed COIN was uniquely suited to deal with the instability in the security environment, only rationally evaluating COIN when it suited them and adopting a strategy that required significant investment. Organization theory can explain the decision-making process that existed to convince Bush that only COIN could meet the demands in Iraq.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Presenting A Complete Theory of COIN in 2007

COIN was adopted in the 2007 Iraq surge because of organizational pressures from the military and domestic pressures from the liberal internationalism in the Bush administration. COIN's adoption had two factors: the military's push for COIN as an overarching strategy and

Bush's willingness to accept the strategy for Washington's benefit.

Organization theory explains the military's push for COIN. Staying in Iraq would keep money flowing into the organization and secure its stability. For Washington, the need to stay was tied to the desire to remain internationally relevant. Organization theory does not account for the Bush administration's wider adoption because the organization does not exist with predetermined boundaries. The mission in Iraq and the Middle East was under fire from domestic forces by 2007, so there was a need to secure the administration's mission. Domestic factors must be considered to fully analyze the decision to adopt COIN.

The liberal internationalists ultimately won out. Bush was interested in staying in Iraq to preserve his image, and his team of advisors advocated for continued presence in Iraq and a departure from low-footprint warfare. The failures of Iraq prior to 2007 weighed heavy on his mind and the minds of those around him.

To boost his credibility, show the public that Iraq was not a lost cause, and please the people surrounding him, Bush worked with his close circles and adopted COIN. COIN was, at the time, a strategy of convenience. Petraeus and other military COIN advocates had used COIN on a small scale and supposedly had legitimacy from years of study and conversation.

Despite the intellectually tenuous goals of the conversations, Bush saw it as a perfect opportunity to adopt a new, stronger strategy. COIN was put forth by the military and quickly picked up by Bush. The domestic pressures on the Bush administration to increase approval and justify US presence in Iraq, combined with the organizational pressure from the military to present a strategy to secure the mission in Iraq, caused COIN to be adopted in 2007.

²⁵⁰ Smith, Thomas W. "Protecting Civilians...or Soldiers? Humanitarian Law and the Economy of Risk in Iraq." *International Studies Perspectives* 9, no. 2 (2008): 144-64. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44218539>.

²⁵¹ Shogol, Jeff. "Are the Recent Airstrikes in Iraq and Syria Really as 'Defensive' as the Pentagon Claims?" *Task & Purpose*. Task & Purpose, June 29, 2021. <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/syria-iraq-pentagon-airstrikes-defensive>.

7.2. Discussion

Organization theory is the best explanatory model for the military's justification for COIN and Bush's subsequent adoption of COIN doctrine in 2007. COIN was a method put forth by the military to elevate its position and extend the mission in Iraq. Because the Bush administration had few individuals willing to resist COIN, its adoption in the wider mission was a foregone conclusion. Some of the developments of COIN seem like rational actions. COIN is a potentially useful method for decreasing insurgent influence and establishing security. However, the process of US COIN development before and in Iraq indicates that the decision was an organizational effort. Organization theory has more explanatory power for the development of COIN than rational actor theory. Organization theory explains military doctrine in wartime during conflicts of choice. The military's decision to engage in COIN and the investment into the surge was an attempt to keep the US involved in Iraq. Bush's decision was primarily influenced by a need to reverse the trend of Rumsfeld's failures and shore up any doubts about the US's capabilities.

The military's investment in COIN follows the pattern predicted by organization theory. COIN had existed for decades before the surge. COIN's popularity fluctuated over time, and different administrations operated COIN through multiple departments and organizations. The US used COIN operations in Vietnam. Afterward, it was a CIA strategy for many years. Ultimately, the military would use COIN in Iraq. COIN furthered the political and economic interests of government and military leadership. It was a shift away from low-footprint warfare and demanded significantly more time and money for effective implementation. Finally, COIN was a strategy of convenience. The military had attempted other strategies and needed another approach. Rumsfeld's resignation and the Anbar Awakening came at the perfect time, and the US military was

able to capitalize on COIN to extend its hand in Iraq.

While some theories speculate that General Petraeus was the driving force behind the surge, a more robust explanation of Bush's policy goals is necessary. Until he was selected by Bush, Petraeus did not have the decision-making power to implement COIN. Petraeus had to campaign for COIN through discussions and conferences for Bush to adopt it. Petraeus was not discovering a long-lost warfighting technique. The US was aware of COIN and had been measuring its success for decades. Petraeus was in the correct spot at the correct time. He did not influence the Anbar Awakening and was not part of ousting Rumsfeld, but expertly took advantage of these situations. Petraeus was one of many catalysts for COIN's adoption.

Rational actor theory offers insufficient explanations for COIN's adoption. COIN was not built on a rational analysis of all existing potential options. A precondition for COIN strategy is a stable government that COIN operators can integrate into. Such a government did not exist in the lead-up to the surge. Baghdad was riddled with conflict, and the Anbar Awakening occurred because of the failing central government. The decision to adopt COIN without a stable governance and little thought of the ideological conflict indicates that the readoption of COIN was fundamentally irrational. Further, COIN was not evaluated against conventional methods or options to reduce US presence. The debate about COIN versus the alternatives in Washington and COIN circles was mostly for show. Without advocates for conventional tactics and low-footprint warfare in Washington post-Rumsfeld, the debates always ended in COIN advocacy because critics either did not exist or were ignored. Rational actor theory fails to explain the lack of adaptation in Iraq and the failure to deal with the problem of occupation. Even after the surge occurred, rational actor theory dictates that the best course of action is following the lessons learned by other actors and other time periods,

including advanced language training and integration into the population beyond Baghdad. This did not occur, and much of the reduction in violence across the country can be tied to the Iraqi contexts like the Anbar Awakening.

The conclusion that organization theory is more explanatory than rational actor theory regarding COIN disagrees with the literature cited earlier, namely Jones and Metz. The surge needed a particular strategy that could be sold easily and promised results. While the historic notions of COIN's success in Malay and French Algeria influenced COIN, it was primarily the work in Mosul and more recent developments that granted COIN legitimacy. Another hypothesis is that COIN was a bureaucratically forced doctrine. This hypothesis is also inaccurate. Bush was not forced to adopt COIN, nor were the bureaucratic systems in place to push COIN from within. COIN advocates came from inside and outside the organization, indicating that the primary effort was not entrenched in the military prior to 2007. A pessimistic view of COIN claims that the failures in Vietnam were experienced in Iraq, showing that COIN remained the same between Vietnam and Iraq. However, COIN strategy changed throughout its use in Latin America and into the 21st century. While many of the issues seen in Vietnam continued to exist, the contemporary approach to COIN was fundamentally different. This argument misses many important developments in US strategic and tactical approaches.

Finally, COIN's adoption indicates that the overriding view that organizations determine military force posture during peace while rational actors determine military force posture during war is insufficient. Even during conflict, organizations can direct the adoption of strategies. Heads of state and commanders in chief are not locked into a simple cost-benefit analysis, and organizations exert substantial pressures based on their parochial interests. Political pressures on civilian leaders can cause them to defer rational decision-making. In conclusion, rational actor

theory is not a sufficient model during wars of choice.

7.3. Limitations

While organization theory can explain COIN better than rational actor theory, it is not a perfect test. First and foremost, the organization of COIN is nebulous and changing. Because COIN changed drastically over time—from a military strategy to aiding counterrevolutionary operations by the CIA in Latin America and back to a military strategy in Iraq—the organizations that advocated for COIN are not static. While the theory still applies to specific individuals and ideological groups within the military and the Bush administration, the boundaries of the organization that advocated for COIN are not well defined. In this case, organization theory is best suited to analyze COIN advocates in the military who wanted to stay in Iraq. This includes the civilians and external experts who wanted to codify the US presence in Iraq and make a name for themselves by attaching to Petraeus.

Organization theory is also not a perfect test of COIN. COIN cannot be accurately tested through this hypothesis because organization theory predicts that adaptation occurs when the mission and organization are threatened. COIN was never tested on the brink of being abandoned. While the mission in Iraq was almost abandoned, it is unclear whether Iraq would have been invested in absent COIN.

Another issue with organization theory is motivation. Organization theory assumes certain political goals that are fundamentally unknowable. Actors' motivations are impossible to identify with complete accuracy because public-facing motivations differ from privately driven strategies. Because there is an incentive to sell the strategy to the public and ensure that the media sees the strategy as rational, there is a disconnect between actual organizational motivations and those presented. Bush potentially did not see the surge as a method to increase his domestic

popularity or was pressured to continue the mission in Iraq. Whether these are true are untestable absent accounts that confirm these seemingly contradictory motivations. Organization theory, while explanatory, makes potentially ahistorical assumptions.

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OpenAI's Fault Lines: Cracks in a Groundbreaking “Capped-Profit” Organization

Drew Collins-Burke*

Abstract

Influential artificial intelligence (AI) company OpenAI has a unique corporate structure featuring a non-profit/capped-profit (NP/CP) model. In the NP/CP model, a non-profit organization has control over a for-profit arm that offers financiers a fixed return based on their initial investment, as opposed to offering unlimited potential return. OpenAI's NP/CP structure is intended to reduce the negative impacts of shareholder capitalism on high-stakes artificial general intelligence (AGI) development projects. This paper evaluates OpenAI's organizational successes and failures, comparing its approach to the pitfalls many shareholder corporations fall into: excessive profit motives, lack of transparency, and negligence towards societal impacts. It also explores how OpenAI's structural features, such as investor profit caps and non-profit authority over the for-profit arm, have aided the company in avoiding some common issues with shareholder corporations. However, CEO Sam Altman's high-profile ousting and reinstatement, OpenAI's lack of open-source practices, and Microsoft's influence raise concerns about the overall efficacy of this structure. Through an analysis of OpenAI's structure, actions, and public statements, this paper investigates the hybrid NP/CP model's potential for mitigating the negative impacts of shareholder capitalism on responsible AGI development, highlighting its successes and limitations. The paper concludes that OpenAI's ability to develop AGI safely within this organization model is possible but uncertain.

Investing in OpenAI Global, LLC is a high-risk investment

Investors could lose their capital contribution and not see any return

It would be wise to view any investment in OpenAI Global, LLC in the spirit of a donation, with the understanding that it may be difficult to know what role money will play in a post-AGI world

—OpenAI's Operating Agreement

1. Introduction

OpenAI was founded as a non-profit in 2015 by current CEO Sam Altman, Elon Musk, Ilya Sutskever, Greg Brockman, and several elite research engineers. It received funding from

notable Silicon Valley personalities, like LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman, influential startup incubator YCombinator co-founder Jessica Livingston, and PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel. It also received donations from Amazon Web Services; IT consulting firm Infosys; and YCombinator's charitable arm, YC Research. Despite being backed by billionaires and massively powerful companies, OpenAI asserts that it tried from the start to avoid being controlled by financial obligations: “Our goal is to advance digital intelligence in the way that is most likely to benefit humanity as a whole, unconstrained by a need to generate financial return” (Brockman et al.).

In 2018, OpenAI established a for-profit arm

*Drew Collins-Burke (drewcb2020@gmail.com) is a recent summa cum laude Honors College graduate with previous work for a Brookings-affiliated institution and multi-year contributions as a research assistant to a Carnegie Fellow. He is interested in AI policy, political polarization, men's issues, and loves to hike, play tennis, and listen to classic albums.

of the company. The non-profit legally controls the for-profit arm, subjecting the for-profit arm to the non-profit's obligation to benefit humanity. Ninety-nine percent of the company's personnel is currently employed by the for-profit arm of the organization, with OpenAI valued at 80 billion dollars and Microsoft owning 49 percent of the for-profit's shares (Andersen, "Does Sam Altman Know What He's Creating?"; Metz and Mickle). OpenAI asserts that the for-profit arm can only offer limited financial returns for investors, called a capped profit. Reportedly, the cap on returns is 100 times an initial investment (Wiggers). The for-profit arm has day-to-day control over all commercial endeavors OpenAI has promoted, such as ChatGPT. However, the non-profit can intervene should voting members perceive a violation of the organization's ethical obligations. The non-profit/capped-profit (NP/CP) model presents a unique and novel organizational structure with distinct dynamics from the more common shareholder corporation.

Some have criticized OpenAI's 2018 structural changes and subsequent organizational behavior. Elon Musk is suing OpenAI for breaking from its original mission (Nidumolu et al.). Former OpenAI researcher Dario Amodei has criticized the company's approach to safety and left to form rival AI development organization Anthropic (Fortune Editors). Former OpenAI board member Helen Toner praised the more cautious approach of Anthropic but condemned OpenAI's release of ChatGPT, citing the follow-on effect wherein other competing firms launched products to the market without proper safety testing (Toner et al.).

OpenAI has maintained that its non-profit's mission still governs the capped-profit arm and that the company has not fallen prey to capitalistic incentives. The warning OpenAI gives investors in its Operating Agreement demonstrates an earnest desire to avoid appearing as a traditional shareholder corporation. OpenAI's organizational structure demonstrates a recognition—whether performative or genuine—of the importance of preventing financial incentives from controlling

immensely powerful AI systems. Still, some developments have been concerning, such as OpenAI's lack of transparency or open-source code. Altman's brief ouster in late 2023 served as a stress test, demonstrating issues with the NP/CP structure's ability to commercialize its products without, in the eyes of some safety-focused board members, violating the non-profit's mission. These issues put the efficacy of the NP/CP structure for creating safe AGI into doubt; nonetheless, the NP/CP structure has some advantages that should be considered for other organizations.

Through a case study of OpenAI, which includes comparison between OpenAI and typical shareholder corporations, this paper aims to critically analyze the effectiveness of the NP/CP structure in developing safe AGI.

2. Methodology

This research was largely inspired by Gerald Davis's *Managed by the Markets: How Finance Reshaped America*, which presents theories and critiques of shareholder capitalism.

The present paper conducts a case study of OpenAI's organizational structure, evaluating theories describing disadvantages to shareholder corporations and analyzing OpenAI's attempts to mitigate those negative externalities. The case study involves an in-depth examination of the company's non-profit/capped-profit structure, actions, public statements, and recent events, such as the CEO's ousting and reinstatement. Qualitative data for the case study were collected from various sources, including news articles, company blogs, and interviews with OpenAI representatives.

3. Problems with Shareholder Capitalism OpenAI Aims to Avoid

Gerald Davis's *Managed by the Markets* demonstrates how financial incentives have led

modern corporations to become almost entirely influenced by profit, often disregarding the societal harms their businesses create. According to Davis, corporations used to be more amicable to societal goals during the era of managerial capitalism in the 1920s through 1980s (63). However, during the current era of shareholder capitalism, corporations tend to act according to financial incentives alone, operating less as social institutions and more as contractual nexuses associated with emotionally cold and economically rational behavior (63). These shareholder corporations are often heavily influenced by banks. Many have strongly disliked these corporations since their inception: “faceless monopolies were bad enough, but faceless monopolies controlled by a small handful of bankers in New York were worse still” (Davis 68).

Examples of the harm these dynamics create are numerous. Consulting firm McKinsey & Company advised Purdue Pharma to aggressively sell addictive opioids, heavily contributing to America’s current opioid crisis (Forsythe and Bogdanich). Enron and Shell knowingly engaged in behavior that led to major climate harm (Franta). Amazon subjected warehouse workers to conditions that led to injuries in more than half of their laborers over a three-year period (Day and Bloomberg). Social media companies like Meta, the owner of Facebook and Instagram, knowingly promote addictive apps with harmful mental health outcomes, to the extent that the U.S. Surgeon General and American Psychological Association have issued advisories for teenagers that caution against social media use (Katella). Despite this plethora of antisocial actions, these corporations remain dominant.

Shareholder corporations have been successful despite receiving heavy criticism for causing societal harm. Their success can largely be attributed to their economically effective behaviors and strategies. Market valuation has become the sole factor driving strategic decisions for the firm (Davis 93), which often prioritize increased profits for shareholders. Stock options

also reward CEOs for increasing the company’s value in a given quarter (Davis 87). With these motivations, company decision-makers often make choices that disregard morality for the sake of profit. Overall, the exclusive focus on financial incentives for corporate actions represents one of the most prominent and harmful traits of shareholder capitalism that OpenAI has tried to avoid.

Perhaps the most culturally prominent manifestation of the principal role of financial incentives in organizational behavior can be seen on Wall Street. Anthropologist Karen Ho’s *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street* details the culture, tendencies, and influence of Wall Street bankers, arguing that Wall Street’s intense fixation on maximizing shareholder value harms society. For instance, when banks acquire public companies, they institute organizational changes—layoffs, cutting benefits, and creating programs—to increase short-term profits and raise stock value. The threat of leveraged buyouts has even affected publicly traded firms once considered too big or stable for takeovers (Ho 144); these firms must then react and adjust their actions to account for Wall Street’s desires, even if no explicit declaration of a leveraged buyout has been made (Ho 145). Thus, Wall Street’s orientation towards shareholder value above all else leads companies to try to increase the company’s stock value at the expense of workers.

CEO Sam Altman’s perspective presents a marked aversion to Wall Street financing. In an interview for the Atlantic, Altman states, “you should never hand over control of your company to cokeheads on Wall Street,’ ...but he will otherwise raise ‘whatever it takes’ for [OpenAI] to succeed at its mission” (Andersen, “Does Sam Altman Know What He’s Creating?”). Altman’s aversion to collaborating with Wall Street bankers displays an ideological divergence from the typical shareholder corporation CEO. His commitment to the cause is perhaps strengthened by the fact that he has little financial stake in OpenAI, an abnormal position compared to most other CEOs

(Massa and Galpotthawela; Davis 86). Altman's attitude displays a determination to raise capital without Wall Street involvement.

In the context of AI, prioritizing shareholder value above societal welfare and long-term research and development goals could prove very harmful. Firms could use exploitative, profit-oriented AI systems to increase shareholder value by automating the complex pattern-recognition of consumer behavior—a practice often referred to as surveillance capitalism—and creating even more effective and addictive social media algorithms (Jones). This threat raises an important question: *Has OpenAI's hybrid structure been effective at ensuring the organization avoids recklessly adhering to financial incentives?*

4. OpenAI's Alternative Form: A Non-Profit and “Capped Profit” Hybrid

OpenAI has a unique company philosophy. It maintains that its work may lead to the creation of highly powerful AI systems known as artificial general intelligence (AGI), described by OpenAI as “a highly autonomous system that outperforms humans at most economically valuable work” (Our Structure). CEO Sam Altman seems to believe that AGI is such a significant technological development that society needs to be slowly introduced to less powerful AI technologies first to avoid massive social upheaval. He also believes that AGI will fundamentally alter the nature of our world, societies, and day-to-day lives, although he expresses doubt about what that theoretical future will look like (Andersen, “Does Sam Altman Know What He's Creating?”).

As discussed earlier, OpenAI is a non-profit/capped-profit (NP/CP) organization. A capped-profit organization is a modified for-profit company that limits the maximum financial return investors can receive in order to create a balance between commercial viability and careful discretion (Our Structure). OpenAI is located in San Francisco and had 770 employees as of

November 2023 (Metz et al.). Its primary product, ChatGPT, is a widely used service, with 180.5 million unique visitors in August 2023 (Tong).

OpenAI's unique structure, extremely influential product, and stated mission of benefiting humanity make it a relevant organization to discuss when considering alternatives to the shareholder corporation. OpenAI has succeeded in creating AI safeguards and refused to monetize its technology as fully as possible, with measures against corporations owning AGI systems standing as a fundamental part of its structure. However, the company's movement away from transparent and open practices and recent tensions culminating in the ousting and subsequent reinstatement of CEO Sam Altman in late 2023 appear to show cracks within the organizational structure (Duhigg).

Nonetheless, OpenAI's NP/CP structure may qualify as an alternative to the shareholder corporation because it mediates the need for profit and capital by limiting shareholder returns. Initially, OpenAI was strictly a 501(c)(3) organization—a tax-exempt non-profit group. However, its board began to realize that a non-profit structure could not generate the capital required to fund the costs of creating powerful, novel AI systems that need enormous computational power and elite talent (Our Structure). Thus, the NP/CP structure emerged. Under this structure, investors have no reason to push OpenAI to monetize their products further once their maximum potential profits have been attained. Additionally, the non-profit's authority over the capped-profit arm—legally subjecting the capped-profit arm to the non-profit's obligation to benefit humanity—displays that OpenAI's organizational approach provides legal obligations distinct from the shareholder corporation.

OpenAI's unique organizational philosophy—that AGI could upend the world economy and potentially render many current societal structures obsolete—has also impacted its organizational structure and behavior. The

OpenAI website notes that the non-profit board will determine when the company has achieved AGI and that AGI is not included in intellectual property licenses and commercial agreements with Microsoft. Under the current NP/CP structure, OpenAI's overall goal—to create enormously powerful AI systems—cannot be controlled by any for-profit organization. Additionally, OpenAI's operating statement warns potential investors against expecting financial returns from their investments, claiming that the role of money after the completion of AGI is uncertain (Our Structure). This abnormal warning shows how OpenAI's capped-profit arm has a unique attitude towards investors that explicitly denies for-profit interests control of AGI. This behavior is far different from that of a typical shareholder corporation, which would be unlikely to discourage interested investors from expecting financial returns. OpenAI's organizational actions and attitudes towards financial backers show that the NP/CP structure can lead to organizational behavior that mitigates the harmful desire for “profit above all else” seen in shareholder corporations.

Cynical perspectives may question the genuineness of Altman and OpenAI's dedication to creating safe and beneficial AGI. After all, OpenAI has faced numerous lawsuits from parties like *The New York Times*, which claimed that the company's training of its AI on their work without permission violated copyright law. OpenAI received regulatory scrutiny from the US and EU and is under investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission (Satariano et al.). Numerous industry leaders and academics, like Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei and former OpenAI board member Helen Toner, have also raised concerns about the safety and ethics of creating AGI. Further, the company's goal of achieving AGI is likely to displace workers. OpenAI has also strayed from its initial mission of remaining open-source and is currently being sued by co-founder and former board member Elon Musk for its closed-source products and ties with Microsoft

(Satariano et al.).

In particular, the current lack of open-source AI from OpenAI presents an important example of how its organizational behavior has changed after the addition of the for-profit arm. According to Musk, the organization initially intended to provide open-source code for its products. OpenAI has countered that it never intended its products to be open-source. OpenAI asserts that the “Open” in its name refers to its transparency practices in research and distributing AI's benefits (Metz). OpenAI's alleged shift away from its original open-source ambitions sparked controversy, with critics like Musk claiming it indicates the organization's adherence to financial incentives. Some have suggested that restricting access to AI's source code puts the potential power of AGI in the hands of corporations who will abuse it.

Defenders of OpenAI have claimed that keeping the source code private is justified because it limits the misuse of AI and increases the accountability of organizations for harmful AI usage. For instance, a technology ethics advocate at the Center for Humane Technology, Aza Raskin, demonstrated that Snapchat's AI feature could be manipulated for harmful ends. He found that the AI would tell a user (whom the AI believed to be 13) how to set the scene for a romantic getaway with a 31-year-old, recommending that the 13-year-old user set the mood for their first time having sex by lighting candles (Harris and Raskin). Snapchat quickly added safeguards to vary the AI's responses more appropriately based on age (Hutchinson).

Raskin's fellow Center for Humane Technology advocate, Tristan Harris, has pointed out that these public companies are afraid of financial consequences for negative AI behaviors and will curtail harmful behaviors that impact their companies' reputations. However, with the leakage of open-source models like Meta's LLaMA, Harris pointed out that governance and accountability for AI responses become more difficult, since anyone could modify AI for harmful ends (Lloyd). If ChatGPT was open-

source, users could create highly flexible and powerful AI systems from OpenAI's advanced code without any guardrails and limited accountability from OpenAI. Child abusers could utilize AI to help them craft persuasive messages to victims, and terrorists could use AI for advice on optimal attacks. These scenarios demonstrate a plausible way in which open-source AI could be exploited. Having publicly accountable organizations attached to AI responses prevents some harmful uses, curbing anonymous individuals from using AI for any purpose they desire.

Investigative reporter Karen Hao spent three days at the OpenAI office and conducted over thirty interviews with relevant employees and experts. Hao concluded that "there is a misalignment between what the company publicly espouses and how it operates behind closed doors. Over time, it has allowed a fierce competitiveness and mounting pressure for ever more funding to erode its founding ideals of transparency, openness, and collaboration." Hao's assertion provides a worrying perspective on OpenAI's organizational structure. Hao's description sounds more like one of a shareholder corporation that follows financial incentives than holding with OpenAI's stated mission and obligation as a non-profit to benefit society (OpenAI, "About"). Hao's claims that the company has become competitive and opaque support the idea that OpenAI has strayed from its initial mission.

Still, some of OpenAI's organizational behavior has demonstrated continued concerns for AI safety. OpenAI has employed industry experts to conduct safety stress-testing on every AI model it has released, automatically registering known child abuse imagery to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and furnishing broader systems that aim to monitor harmful uses of its AI (Our Approach to AI Safety). One benefit of OpenAI's capped-profit arm is that it can distribute AI systems for people to interact, earning revenue while also enforcing guardrails to prevent harmful uses.

Significant revenue is necessary to pay for OpenAI's intensive expenses, including its team of elite talent and the large amounts of cutting-edge chips that power its AI services. These costs can be exorbitant. The most common salary range for engineering roles, as listed on OpenAI's website, is \$200,000 to \$370,000—a wage that bonuses can reportedly increase nearly threefold. Microsoft and OpenAI are reportedly planning to construct a \$100 billion data center, and ChatGPT reportedly costs \$700,000 a day to run (Constantz; Chervek; Elimian).

According to market research firm Sacra, 25 percent of OpenAI's revenue will be given to employees and early investors until they reach their profit cap, and 75 percent is expected to go to Microsoft until their principal investment of \$13 billion is recouped. Afterward, 49 percent of their revenue will go to early investors and employees. Microsoft will receive 50 percent of OpenAI profits until they receive an additional \$92 billion, and the remaining revenue will be given to the non-profit arm. Should that \$92 billion cap be reached, OpenAI will receive all further equity and 100 percent of profits under their current agreements ("OpenAI Revenue, Valuation & Growth Rate"). A non-profit alone could not legally have investors expecting returns; OpenAI's massive costs reinforce the idea that the capped-profit arm will be necessary to attain the capital and resources needed to create AGI. Still, Hao's claim that the company has strayed from its initial goal of transparency and become competitive, money-focused, and secretive creates worrying parallels to the pathologies of the shareholder corporation.

Concerns about the secrecy of OpenAI increased on November 17, 2023, when Altman was suddenly removed as CEO of OpenAI. In a vaguely worded press release, the board claimed that he "was not consistently candid in his communications" (Kerr). On November 21, 2023, Altman was reinstated as CEO after 95 percent of OpenAI employees signed a letter threatening to quit if Altman was not reinstated (Carter). As a non-profit, the board is legally obligated to hold

the organization to its mission of benefiting humanity and retains the ultimate say over hiring and firing employees (“Board Roles and Responsibilities”). Exactly what happened and why generally remains mysterious. Altman’s ouster had little to no warning—even close partner Microsoft was given only a few minutes of notice (Weise). Some details have been made public, however, and Altman’s ouster and subsequent reinstatement can be viewed as a stress test of OpenAI’s organizational structure.

Some possible malpractices can be ruled out as the reason for Altman’s ouster. OpenAI COO Brad Lightcap stated in an internal message: “We can say definitively that the board’s decision was not made in response to malfeasance or anything related to our financial, business, safety or security/privacy practices...This was a breakdown in communication between Sam [Altman] and the board” (Klein). In other words, Altman’s ouster was due to relational distress rather than the violation of law or company rules.

Altman’s removal only occurred because the non-profit was capable of ousting him for reasons beyond malpractice, incompetence, or negligence of his fiduciary obligations. In shareholder corporations, CEOs are generally only fired for cause—incompetence, insubordination, poor attendance, criminal behavior, harassment, or physical violence—if there is significant, legally admissible evidence of misconduct (“Acceptable Reasons for Termination”; Album). The board did not specify whether Altman’s removal was a for-cause termination. Their reasoning for his firing was a vague “breakdown in communication,” implying that their justification was either incompetence or insubordination. The board presented no evidence at the time of firing, and a third-party review of Altman’s behavior later cleared him of any wrongdoing (Metz and Ghaffary). Shareholder corporation CEOs are typically only fired without cause if they disappoint shareholders. The board’s statement clears Altman of disappointing shareholders by saying that his firing was not due to his financial

or business practices (Wiersema). Because of the non-profit board’s broad influence over the for-profit arm, the corporate norm of only firing CEOs for misconduct or disappointing shareholders was not sufficient to prevent the ousting of Altman. Arguably, the lack of rationale provided demonstrates a flaw in the NP/CP structure, since tense personal relations led to a high-profile event that ultimately was ineffectual at increasing OpenAI’s attention towards safety.

Two important, safety-focused former board members seem key figures in this event: Toner—an academic at the Georgetown Centre for Security and Emerging Technology—and Ilya Sutskever—OpenAI’s Chief Scientist. It appears likely that Altman’s relationship with these two deteriorated.

Toner co-authored an academic paper that praised rival AI company Anthropic—founded by former OpenAI researcher Dario Amodei—for its highly cautious approach to AI. Toner criticized OpenAI’s release of ChatGPT for creating race-to-the-bottom dynamics, where corporations strive to achieve a goal first by using progressively more harmful tactics to outcompete one another. In the case of ChatGPT, companies like Google rushed competitive AI products to market before proper safety tests could be completed (Toner et al. 30). Altman reportedly attempted to push Toner out due to this criticism (Metz et al.; Duhigg), and Toner has since been removed from the board. According to the limited information available, Toner’s publication of this critique likely led to her removal from the board, painting a worrying picture of OpenAI’s transparency and responses to criticism.

Sutskever, meanwhile, initially supported Altman’s ouster publicly, even delivering the news to Altman on a Zoom call November 17, 2023—a Friday. Sutskever’s initial support of the ouster was likely due to his concerns about AI alignment and the accelerated pace of AI products that Altman was encouraging. Ross Andersen, writing for *The Atlantic*, reported that Sutskever was concerned by Altman’s desire to ship out products at a rapid rate and fundraise with concerning

parties, such as new computer-chip production firms or even oppressive Middle Eastern governments. The same article also reported that Sutskever deeply fears AGI harming society because of the potential for corporations to misalign AGI's behavior for their own gain. Andersen based his assertion on his personal interactions with Sutskever and insider reports; due to the limited information available, his hypotheses should be taken as speculation ("The Man Who Tried to Overthrow Sam Altman").

Abruptly, Sutskever called for Altman's reinstatement the following Monday—November 20, 2023—stating, "I deeply regret my participation in the board's actions" (McMillan). Sutskever even signed the letter calling for Altman's reinstatement (Mann). Sutskever likely changed his mind due to pressure from OpenAI employees and Microsoft's initiative to briefly hire Altman and offer all OpenAI employees positions. Microsoft's move turned Sutskever's ousting of Altman against his intent to reduce the influence of large corporations on AGI.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella was reportedly furious at Altman's unexpected ouster (Knight). Microsoft flexed its power by briefly hiring Altman and offering OpenAI employees jobs, eventually leveraging a nonvoting board seat with OpenAI. Watchdog groups have raised concerns that Altman's reinstatement after Microsoft internally and externally pressured OpenAI sends a message that Microsoft holds the ultimate control over OpenAI. These groups claim that the board was merely doing its job as intended and assert that Altman's desire to monetize AI products at an increasingly aggressive pace has been enabled by his reinstatement (Duhigg). New, high-profile board members have now been installed, including Larry Summers, former Secretary of the Treasury, and Bret Taylor, Chairman of Twitter. With Toner and Sutskever's removal, the board lost two safety-focused members. These events diminished the influence of the sect of AI researchers who want to prioritize safety above monetization, raising significant concerns about

the efficacy of OpenAI's organizational structure for upholding its founding principles.

The ouster was a total failure for safety-concerned board members like Toner and Sutskever; instead, Altman, Microsoft, and AI commercialization came out stronger. This event serves as key evidence in evaluating whether OpenAI's structure has successfully maintained its goal of generating safe and beneficial AGI. The failure to oust Altman shows that the non-profit board could not overcome the incentives of commercialization and failed to increase AI safety. Although other aspects of OpenAI's behavior, such as its warning to investors and limitations to returns, remain demonstrable benefits of the structure, the idea that the board can declare the organization has achieved AGI and release it from commercial obligations seems to be a less effective safeguard after the removal of safety-focused board members. Utilizing this ouster as a case study and stress test for the NP/CP structure shows that the capped-profit arm's goals of creating value for investors may have greater influence over OpenAI than the non-profit. Thus, the NP/CP structure's efficacy is in doubt, although its advantages over the shareholder corporation should still be considered.

5. OpenAI's Organizational Structure's Successes and Failures

OpenAI's organizational structure has enabled it to be successful from an economic and innovation perspective, but whether it is currently having a positive societal effect and will succeed in making an AGI that benefits all of humanity remains questionable. OpenAI's success in avoiding the typical pitfalls of the shareholder corporation is mixed. Groups interested in using OpenAI's non-profit/capped-profit (NP/CP) model should approach it with caution. Some of OpenAI's actions, such as the warning to shareholders, capped profits for investors, board control of AGI, and Altman's statements on avoiding control from

Wall Street, demonstrate desires—likely genuine—to avoid the typical pathologies of shareholder corporations. However, the copyright lawsuits, fear of AGI's consequences, concerns of Microsoft's influence, diversion from the original mission, and ouster of Altman display that the NP/CP structure has cracks.

OpenAI's NP/CP structure should neither be seen as a perfect substitution for the shareholder corporation nor ruled out as a potential option. Its structure has enabled it to act differently from shareholder corporations; the warning to investors, the ability of the board to declare AGI, and capped profits for investors all represent legitimate, significant differences in OpenAI's organizational structure. It demonstrates that OpenAI is culturally unwilling and structurally unable to profit off its work at the expense of its morals. OpenAI could have structured its secondary arm to make as much money as possible at the expense of its mission, but instead, it purposely limited its financial incentives—an important deviation from the shareholder corporations that often act only in advancement of their goal of creating as much shareholder value as possible.

Other parties considering ways to avoid the pathologies of shareholder capitalism should consider the NP/CP structure while keeping its flaws and failures in mind, because OpenAI's behavior has some worrying parallels to the shareholder corporation. The culture of secrecy and competition that reporter Karen Hao highlights seems strikingly similar to a company trying to beat other firms to release a product. Although its step away from open-source code may be justifiable from a safety perspective, this decision still insulates the inner workings of OpenAI's products, as opposed to democratizing AI. Most concerning, Altman's reinstatement can be read as a victory for the commercialization of AI and a loss for those advocating a slower, safety-oriented approach to AI's integration into society.

The successes of OpenAI's NP/CP structure

could be incorporated into other organizational frameworks through capped profits for investors, offering an incentive to invest without creating an incentive to squeeze the company for profits. Potential options for improving this structure might include adding additional measures to prevent something like Altman's ouster and reinstatement from recurring. Specifically, it may be beneficial for the non-profit board to hold an employee vote before making decisions on hiring or firing C-level executives.

In the end, evaluating OpenAI's organizational structure presents areas of hope and gloom for the safe handling of powerful AI systems, including AGI. The NP/CP structure should be considered by other corporations to curb an exclusive focus on financial incentives but should not be qualified as a total fix of the pathologies of the shareholder corporation. Although it has some demonstrable benefits, the ability of the NP/CP structure to safely handle AGI remains in doubt.

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The Influence of Positive Maternal Involvement on the Relationship Between Maternal Emotion Dysregulation and Preschooler Internalizing and Externalizing Problems

Jin Prunuske*

Abstract

Children of mothers with elevated emotion dysregulation (ED) may be at greater risk for developing internalizing (INT) and externalizing (EXT) problems and, in turn, future psychopathology. While previous studies have investigated early risk pathways that may explain this association (e.g., unsupportive maternal responding), our understanding of factors that protect against the downstream effects of maternal ED on child outcomes is limited. To explore prospective protective factors, the current study examined the moderating role of positive maternal involvement on the relationship between maternal ED and preschoolers' INT and EXT problems. This study included 178 mother-child dyads, where maternal ED was assessed using the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale, positive maternal involvement was assessed using the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire – Preschool Revision, and preschoolers' INT and EXT problems were assessed with the Child Behavior Checklist. Maternal ED and positive maternal involvement had significant direct effects on preschoolers' INT and EXT problems; however, the moderating effect of positive maternal involvement on the relationship between maternal ED and preschooler INT and EXT problems was nonsignificant. Further examination of factors that may mitigate risk among children of mothers with elevated ED is necessary to inform effective prevention and intervention efforts.

1. Introduction

The emergence of internalizing ([INT]; e.g., withdrawn behavior) and externalizing ([EXT]; e.g., aggressive behavior) problems in preschool-aged children has been found to be associated with an increased risk for psychopathology (Basten et al., 2016; Carneiro, Dias, & Soares, 2016). This understanding has sparked curiosity for many researchers and encouraged efforts geared towards reducing the risk for later mental health challenges. Research demonstrates that preschool children of mothers who experience elevated emotion dysregulation ([ED]; i.e., difficulties effectively managing and expressing emotions)

may be at increased risk for the development of INT and EXT problems (Buckholdt, Parra, & Jobe-Shields, 2014). However, while previous studies have investigated early pathways that may help to explain this association, the vast majority have focused on factors that increase intergenerational risk (e.g., Frigoletto et al., 2022) and our understanding of factors that protect against the effects of maternal ED on child outcomes is limited. For example, positive parental involvement, such as supportive emotion socialization, may serve as a prospective protective factor that mitigates the effect of maternal ED (Lee et al., 2023; Okorn, Verhoeven, & Van Baar, 2022). The current study sought to

*Jin Prunuske (jprunusk@uoregon.edu) graduated from the University of Oregon with a Psychology major and a Sociology minor. During her time at UO, she worked as a research assistant in the Parent Mental Health Research Clinic (PMHRC) where she completed her honors thesis under the guidance and mentorship of Dr. Maureen Zalewski. Throughout her time in the PMHRC lab, Jin developed a deep interest in understanding intergenerational mental health. She plans to further her research and education in clinical psychology by pursuing graduate studies.

shift focus towards a strength-based approach by asking the following question: Does positive maternal involvement moderate the association between maternal ED and preschoolers' INT and EXT problems?

1.1. Preschoolers' Internalizing and Externalizing Problems

The preschool years represent an important period for social and emotional development, where children begin to understand and regulate their expression of emotions along with their behaviors (Cole et al., 2009; Laible & Thompson, 1998). This progression in development often coincides with the emergence of emotional and behavioral problems (Fanti & Henrich, 2010). Emotional and behavioral difficulties among preschool-aged children have most commonly been explored within two broad categories: INT problems, which refer to aspects of an individual's internal state (e.g., withdrawn behavior, symptoms of depression and anxiety), and EXT problems, which refer to the ways that an individual outwardly responds to their environment (e.g., aggressive, defiant, hyperactive, and impulsive behavior) (Achenbach, 1991; Campbell, 1995).

Importantly, studies suggest that preschoolers with INT and EXT problems may go on to have poorer mental health outcomes, including increased risk for chronic stress and various psychiatric disorders later in life (Arslan et al., 2021; Campbell, 1995; Champion, Goodall, & Rutter, 1995). Young children who display INT and EXT problems are more prone to engage in risky behaviors, have associations with deviant peers, face peer rejection, and demonstrate antisocial behaviors (Fanti & Henrich, 2010). Moreover, evidence has found that INT and EXT problems during the preschool period may serve as an indicator of poor school readiness (Blair, 2002). Further examination of factors that may protect against the development of INT and EXT problems

among preschool-aged children is necessary to inform tailored clinical efforts that intervene in and support malleable targets and early childhood development.

1.2. Maternal Emotion Dysregulation as a Risk Factor

Primary caregivers play a significant role in shaping their children's social and emotional development throughout the preschool years (Campbell, 1995; von Salisch, 2001). ED is a risk factor for mental health challenges and a process underlying many forms of psychopathology. Specifically, ED is largely understood as the inability to effectively monitor, evaluate, and modify one's emotional experience and reactions (Cole, Michel, & Teti, 1994; Fernandez, Jazaieri, & Gross, 2016; Thompson, 1994). Many parents experience elevated ED, in part due to increased parenting stress and coinciding difficulty utilizing effective emotion regulation strategies (Binion & Zalewski, 2018; Rutherford et al., 2015; Thompson, 2019). Importantly, evidence has shown that children of parents with elevated ED may be at greater risk for developing INT and EXT problems (Buckholdt, Parra, & Jobe-Shields, 2014; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022) and may impact how children learn to regulate their own emotions and behaviors (Rutherford et al., 2015). Better understanding the ways in which maternal ED impacts young children is critical and will advance our ability to prevent and intervene prior to the onset of later psychopathology.

1.3. Prospective Effects of Positive Maternal Involvement

Parents play an integral role in the upbringing and socio-emotional development of their young children (Morris et al., 2007). Research indicates that parental psychopathology may have adverse effects on parenting behaviors and may negatively affect both a parent and their children (Rutherford

et al., 2015). Specifically, elevated maternal ED has been found to be associated with greater unsupportive emotion socialization practices (Price & Kiel, 2022). Moreover, unsupportive parenting behaviors, such as harsh discipline, inconsistency in responding, dismissiveness, and punitive behavior, may help to explain known associations between elevated maternal ED and child INT and EXT problems (Campbell, 1995; Carneiro, Dias, & Soares, 2016; Frigoletto et al., 2022; Rademacher, Zumbach, & Koglin, 2023). Notably, while maternal ED is well-established as a factor that influences emotion socialization practices (Dix, 1991), these constructs are not synonymous.

To date, there is a scarcity of research examining how supportive emotion socialization practices may buffer against the downstream, intergenerational effects of elevated maternal ED. Positive parental involvement, for example, is understood as a parent's provision of love, warmth, and support when interacting with their child and responding to their emotions (Rademacher, Zumbach, & Koglin, 2023; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022). Some findings indicate that greater maternal ED may predict less positive maternal involvement and more INT problems in children (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022). However, effect sizes are small, and these associations have been explored less frequently. As parental support is robustly associated with lower levels of INT and EXT problems in children (Kotchick & Forehand, 2002; Okorn, Verhoeven, & Van, 2022), efforts seeking to understand positive maternal involvement as a protective factor that may mitigate against the intergenerational effects of maternal ED are needed.

1.4. The Current Study

Using data collected within a longitudinal, multi-site, randomized control trial, this study sought to expand on existing literature by exploring positive maternal involvement as a prospective protective

factor that mitigates the effect of maternal ED on preschoolers' INT and EXT problems. This study hypothesized that maternal ED would be significantly associated with preschoolers' INT and EXT problems, such that higher levels of maternal ED would predict greater levels of INT and EXT problems. Additionally, it was hypothesized that greater reported positive maternal involvement would be associated with fewer INT and EXT problems in preschool-aged children. Finally, it was hypothesized that positive maternal involvement would moderate this relationship, such that more positive maternal involvement would buffer against the effects of elevated maternal ED on preschoolers' INT and EXT problems.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

Participants included 178 mothers (Mage = 33.16 years, SD = 4.85; 28% ethnoracial minoritized status) and their preschool-aged children (Mage = 42.32 months, SD = 4.01; 37% ethnoracial minoritized status) who participated in a longitudinal, multi-site (i.e., University of Oregon, University of Pittsburgh), randomized control trial. Participants were recruited from community sources, including university-based, targeted multimedia and digital messaging programs, craigslist, and psychiatric treatment clinics within the same geographic regions. To achieve greater variability in maternal ED, mother-child dyads were oversampled for maternal symptoms of borderline personality disorder (i.e., a mental health disorder hallmarked by severe difficulties with emotion regulation). All participants provided informed consent and were compensated for their study contributions.

Families interested in this study were contacted for phone screening and given a brief introduction to the study. Mothers verified their age of 18 or older and the age of the target child (i.e., 3 years old). To be eligible, mothers needed

to be the biological mother of the target child and have had at least 50% physical custody of the child since birth. Mothers and their preschool-aged children then completed a clinical intake consisting of semi-structured diagnostic interviews and intelligence testing to further determine eligibility.

2.2. Procedure

Eligible dyads were enrolled to complete four assessments in a laboratory setting (i.e., baseline, 4-month, 8-month, and 12-month follow-ups). The current project focused on data obtained during the baseline assessment. Self-report questionnaires were completed by mothers to assess maternal ED, positive maternal involvement, and their preschoolers' INT and EXT symptoms. All study procedures were IRB-approved. 92.7% of mother-child dyads completed the baseline assessment.

2.3. Measures

2.3.1. Maternal Emotion Dysregulation

Mothers self-reported on ED at each of the four study time points using the 36-item Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). The DERS is a measure in which respondents rate how often the items apply to them on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = almost never, 3 = about half of the time, 5 = almost always). The DERS is comprised of six subscales representing difficulties in emotion regulation, including nonacceptance of emotional responses (6 items; e.g., "When I'm upset, I feel guilty for feeling that way"), difficulty engaging in goal-directed behavior (5 items; e.g., "When I'm upset, I have difficulty concentrating"), impulse control difficulties (6 items; e.g., "When I'm upset, I lose control over my behaviors"), lack of emotional awareness (6 items; e.g., "I am attentive to my feelings"), limited access to emotion regulation strategies (8 items; e.g., "When I'm upset, I believe

that I'll end up feeling very depressed"), and lack of emotional clarity (5 items; e.g., "I have difficulty making sense out of my feelings"). Scores on each item were summed to create a total score for maternal ED, with higher total scores indicating greater levels of ED.

2.3.2. Positive Maternal Involvement

Mothers self-reported their parenting behaviors using the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire – Preschool Revision (Clerkin et al., 2007). The APQ-PR consists of 32 items, assessing the frequency of various parenting practices commonly associated with conduct problems in preschool-aged children. Items are assessed across three domains, including positive parenting (12 items; e.g., "You compliment your child when he/she does something well"), negative/inconsistent parenting (7 items; e.g., "You threaten to punish your child and then do not actually punish him/her"), and punitive parenting (5 items; e.g., "You slap your child when he/she has done something wrong").

Using the APQ-PR, mothers indicated the likelihood of responding to their child in a given way on a 5-point Likert-type frequency scale (1 = never, 3 = sometimes, 5 = always). Scores on each of the items from the positive parenting subscales were summed to create a total score for positive maternal involvement, with higher scores indicating greater endorsement of positive parenting strategies.

2.3.3. Child Internalizing and Externalizing Problems

Mothers reported on their child's INT and EXT problems using the child behavior checklist 1½–5 (CBCL) from the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983). The CBCL 1½–5 contains 32 items assessing INT problems (e.g., "shows panic for no good reason," "too fearful or anxious") and 34 items assessing EXT problems (e.g., "gets in

many fights,” “hits others”) among children between ages 1½–5 years of age. Items are rated on a 3-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not true) to 3 (very true). Items were summed to create total scores for INT and EXT problems, with higher scores indicating greater INT and/or EXT problems. CBCL data was unavailable for 14 children.

2.4. Covariates: Demographic Variables

Preschooler sex (0 = male; 1 = female) and age, as well as maternal age, were reported on by mothers at baseline assessment and included in analyses as covariates. Additionally, a cumulative risk proportion score was included in analyses as a covariate.

The cumulative risk proportion score was comprised of three sociodemographic questions (i.e., maternal education [0 = completion of at least high school; 1 = did not complete high school], family annual income [0 = > \$22,311; 1 = < \$22,331], and single parent status [0 = two-parent home; 1 = single-parent home]) which were summed and divided by three to create a proportion score, ranging from 0 to 1, such that higher proportion scores indicated greater cumulative risk.

2.5. Data Analytic Strategy

Using Jamovi version 2.3.28 (The jamovi project, 2022), preliminary analyses were conducted to examine descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between primary study variables. To examine the effect of maternal ED and positive maternal involvement on preschoolers' INT and EXT problems, two models were tested using a linear regression. Direct effects of maternal ED and positive maternal involvement were examined prior to including the interaction term between maternal ED and positive maternal involvement, and multicollinearity was assessed.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

Table 1 provides mean and standard deviations for study variables. Table 2 provides bivariate correlations between all study variables.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for study variables.

	TOTAL (n = 178)	
	M/%	SD
<u>Demographic Variables</u>		
Maternal Age (years)	33.16	4.85
Child Age (months)	42.32	4.01
Child Sex	52%	---
Cumulative Risk Proportion	26%	---
<u>Primary Study Variables</u>		
Maternal Emotion Dysregulation	81.59	32.04
Positive Maternal Involvement	53.25	5.32
Internalizing Problems	49.33	11.42
Externalizing Problems	50.2	12.83

Maternal age and the cumulative risk proportion score were negatively associated, indicating that mothers of younger age reported higher cumulative risk proportion scores. Maternal age and maternal ED were negatively associated, suggesting that mothers of a younger age reported higher levels of ED. In addition, maternal age was negatively associated with both child INT and EXT symptoms, such that younger mothers reported more child INT and EXT symptoms. The cumulative risk proportion score was positively correlated with maternal ED, indicating that mothers with greater cumulative risk reported more elevated ED. Additionally, the cumulative risk proportion score was positively associated with both child INT and EXT problems, suggesting that mothers with greater cumulative risk reported more INT and EXT problems in their children. Maternal ED was negatively correlated with positive maternal involvement, such that mothers reporting higher levels of maternal ED reported less positive involvement. Maternal ED

and child INT and EXT problems were positively associated, indicating that mothers who reported greater levels of ED reported more INT and EXT symptoms in their children. Positive maternal involvement was negatively associated with both child INT and EXT symptoms, suggesting that more reported positive maternal involvement was associated with fewer child INT and EXT symptoms. Finally, child INT problems were positively associated with child EXT problems, such that children with elevated levels of maternal-reported INT problems also had elevated levels of maternal-reported EXT problems. Additionally, a moderate association between maternal ED and positive maternal

involvement emerged, suggesting variability in positive maternal response at various levels of maternal ED.

To assess multicollinearity and reduce the chances of Type I error (i.e., obtaining a false positive), tolerance statistics and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were examined. Tolerance statistics for models examining primary study hypotheses ranged from 0.61 to 0.67, and VIF statistics ranged from 1.64 to 1.49, indicating that multicollinearity was not likely an issue. To further reduce the potential effects of multicollinearity, independent variables were standardized prior to their inclusion in regression analyses.

Table 2. Bivariate correlations between all study variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Maternal Age							
2. Child Age	0.074						
3. Child Sex	0.084	0.101					
4. Cumulative Risk Proportion	-0.214**	0.037	-0.026				
5. Maternal Emotion Dysregulation	-0.228**	-0.127	-0.152	0.347***			
6. Positive Maternal Involvement	-0.050	-0.015	0.015	0.081	-0.281***		
7. Internalizing Symptoms	-0.260***	-0.025	-0.066	0.321***	0.547***	-0.345***	
8. Externalizing Symptoms	-0.163*	-0.107	-0.101	0.282***	0.517***	-0.325***	0.769***

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). ***Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

3.2. The Effect of Maternal ED and Positive Maternal Involvement on Preschoolers' INT and EXT Problems

To assess the effect of maternal ED and positive maternal involvement on preschoolers' INT and EXT problems, two models utilizing linear regressions were tested. First, demographic covariates were entered, followed by maternal ED and positive maternal involvement, then the interaction term between maternal ED and positive maternal involvement. Analyses revealed significant direct effects of both maternal ED ($b =$

0.39, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .001$) and positive maternal involvement ($b = -0.26$, $SE = 0.14$, $p < .001$) on preschoolers' INT problems. However, the interaction effect between maternal ED and positive maternal involvement on preschoolers' INT problems was not significant ($b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.005$, $p > .05$). Direct effects were also found for both maternal ED ($b = 0.38$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .001$) and positive maternal involvement ($b = -0.23$, $SE = 0.17$, $p < .01$) on preschoolers' EXT problems. However, the interaction between maternal ED and positive maternal involvement on preschoolers' EXT problems was not significant ($b = -0.04$, $SE = 0.005$, $p > 0.05$). These findings indicate that maternal ED

and positive maternal involvement both significantly predict preschoolers' INT and EXT problems. However, results suggest that positive maternal involvement does not influence the strength of the relationship between maternal ED and preschoolers' INT and EXT problems.

4. Discussion

Preschool children of mothers with elevated ED may be at increased risk for INT and EXT problems during this critical window of social and emotional development (Buckholdt, Parra, & Jobe-Shields, 2014). Importantly, the emergence of INT and EXT problems during early childhood has been associated with increased risk for the development of psychopathology later in life (Basten et al., 2016; Champion, Goodall, & Rutter, 1995), underscoring the importance of identifying factors that may protect against maladaptive outcomes. Positive parental involvement (i.e., warmth, support, encouragement) has been associated with fewer INT and EXT problems in young children (Okorn, Verhoeven, & Van Baar, 2022) and was examined as a prospective protective factor that may buffer against the downstream effects of elevated maternal ED. The current study sought to examine the impact of positive maternal involvement on the relationship between maternal ED and preschoolers' INT and EXT problems. Specifically, this project took a strengths-based approach to understanding how a potential protective factor (i.e., positive maternal involvement) may mitigate the intergenerational effects of maternal ED. Consistent with hypotheses, maternal ED and positive maternal involvement had significant direct effects on preschoolers' INT and EXT problems, even after accounting for demographic covariates. Specifically, elevated maternal ED was associated with greater INT and EXT problems, and more positive maternal involvement was associated with fewer INT and EXT problems in preschool-aged children. However, the moderating effect of

positive maternal involvement on the relationship between maternal ED and preschoolers' INT and EXT problems was found to be non-significant.

This study demonstrated that preschool-aged children of mothers with elevated ED may be more likely to develop INT and EXT problems. These findings are substantiated by a well-established literature base which suggests that children of parents with elevated ED are at increased risk for experiencing emotional and behavioral problems themselves (Buckholdt, Parra, & Jobe-Shields, 2014; Cole, Michel, & Teti, 1994; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022). The relationship between child behavior and parental ED may be interpreted through the seminal tripartite model proposed by Morris and colleagues (2007), which describes that the socialization of emotion regulation occurs in part through parental modeling and child observational learning. The preschool period is a time in early childhood development typically marked by an increase in one's ability to understand and express their emotional experiences (Cole, Michel, & Teti, 1994). Therefore, preschool-aged children may be particularly sensitive to learning which emotional and behavioral expressions are appropriate or accepted through their parents' modeling. For example, a preschooler who more frequently observes dysregulated emotional responding (e.g., reactive aggression) may adopt this pattern of responding themselves.

Additionally, the present study found that greater positive maternal involvement, including the provision of warmth, support, and encouragement, may predict fewer INT and EXT problems in preschool-aged children. Previous works have emphasized the significant role of parenting and emotion socialization behaviors in facilitating a child's socio-emotional development (Kotchick & Forehand, 2002; Morris et al., 2007). This project expanded on existing knowledge by highlighting this potential protective parenting factor. Our understanding of parenting factors that protect against the development of INT and

EXT problems among at-risk preschool children (e.g., preschoolers of parents with elevated ED), is currently limited (Lee et al., 2023). To our knowledge, this study was one of few extant works to explore the relationship between positive maternal involvement and preschooler INT and EXT problems among an at-risk sample of preschoolers (i.e., approximately two-thirds of children in the current sample have mothers with elevated ED).

Interestingly, contrary to the study hypothesis, the relationship between maternal ED and preschoolers' INT and EXT problems did not vary as a function of positive maternal involvement. In other words, positive maternal involvement did not emerge as a factor that protects against the downstream effects of elevated maternal ED on preschooler INT and EXT problems in the present sample. This finding may be considered in the context of several theoretical explanations. Some prior evidence suggests that elevated parental ED may increase the likelihood that parents will engage in more negative responding to their children rather than reduce positive aspects of parenting (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022). For example, previous findings have demonstrated that maternal unsupportive responding is a potential risk factor that explains the link between elevated maternal ED and preschooler INT problems and aggressive behavior (Frigoletto et al., 2022). This underscores that while maternal ED may increase the likelihood of maternal unsupportive responding (i.e., mechanistic risk factor for child INT and EXT), it may not directly impact positive maternal involvement (i.e., prospective protective factor against child INT and EXT).

Taken together, the present findings indicate that although more positive maternal involvement is related to fewer INT and EXT problems among preschool-aged children, it does not serve to protect against the downstream effects of elevated maternal ED. Recent evidence suggests that supportive maternal emotion socialization

practices may buffer against the effects of elevated maternal ED in the context of specific child emotions, such as sadness and anger (Lee et al., 2023). Given that the current study did not examine preschooler affect or emotion regulation, future works may be encouraged to further explore the protective effects of positive parenting factors on young children in the context of specific child emotions and elevated maternal ED.

4.1. Limitations

While this study provided support for the direct effects of maternal ED and positive maternal involvement on INT and EXT problems among an at-risk sample of preschoolers, it is important to note several key limitations. This study was cross-sectional, so causal conclusions cannot be drawn. Future research should consider examining the same associations longitudinally to allow for the true identification of causal mechanisms.

Additionally, future studies may examine the interplay between maternal ED, parenting factors, and child INT and EXT problems to gain a better understanding of relevant causal mechanisms. This project utilized a sample that may not be large enough to adequately estimate statistical power and detect true interaction effects (Vize et al., 2023). Future projects may expand on the present sample to be better powered to detect expected effects. Finally, the measures utilized in this study consist of solely maternal self-reporting, leaving room for reporter biases (Morsbach & Prinz, 2006). To reduce the potential for bias, future studies would benefit from including multiple informants/methods when assessing primary study constructs, such as teacher reports or direct behavioral observation.

4.2. Clinical Implications

Though not the primary aim of this study, the significant direct effects of maternal ED and positive maternal involvement on preschoolers'

INT and EXT problems highlight the importance of continued prevention and intervention efforts targeting elevated ED and positive parenting behaviors in mothers of young children. These approaches are of critical relevance as they may simultaneously reduce the risk for preschooler INT and EXT problems (Martin et al., 2017). Given that positive maternal involvement was not found to be a significant moderator, future research is needed to identify factors that may protect against the intergenerational effects of elevated maternal ED to better support mothers and their young children.

4.3. Conclusions

This study aimed to examine if positive maternal involvement moderated the association between maternal ED and preschoolers' INT and EXT problems. Contrary to expected results, positive maternal involvement did not moderate this association. However, maternal ED and positive maternal involvement both independently predicted preschooler INT and EXT problems. While positive maternal involvement may not act as protective in the context of elevated maternal ED, it may still serve to protect against the development of preschooler INT and EXT problems alone. ED and positive parenting underscore a need for further examination of protective factors that may buffer against the intergenerational effects of elevated maternal ED.

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