

PKSOI PAPER

Rethinking Victory In Counterinsurgency

by

**Michael C. Griffin, Colonel
United States Marine Corps Reserve**

October 2014

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ISBN: 978-0-9894393-8-1

DEDICATION

Dedicated with sincere thanks and appreciation to Bill Flavin, Karen Finkenbinder, and Larry Bouchat, each one a wealth of information. Their encouragement, mentorship, and guidance were instrumental in the completion of this project.

Special acknowledgement also goes to my wife Brice and to my children, Zoe, Lily, Isabella and Jackson, for their patience and support.

FOREWORD

As U.S. participation in the counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in Iraq and Afghanistan enter a new and much more limited phase, one unanswered question remains: What defines victory in a counterinsurgency? Drawing from a multitude of works addressing COIN, the civilian and military perceptions of military victory against non-state actors, and setting conditions post-COIN operations, the author examines whether there can even be a doctrinal definition of victory in COIN or if a “better peace” is the highest achievable endstate. The author examines the perceptions of victory and failure in counterinsurgencies throughout the 20th and 21st Centuries, and compares those perceptions with the British experience in Northern Ireland and the U.S. experience in Iraq. Most importantly, the monograph addresses the definition of a COIN victory in terms of Russell Weigley’s *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, and Colin Gray’s analysis and argument that the American public, strategic, and military cultures do not agree upon the definitions within counterinsurgency.

Daniel A. Pinnell
Colonel, U.S. Army
Director, PKSOI

ABSTRACT

Americans are averse to war and easily frustrated with wars of limited objectives. As such, Americans have a cultural aversion to counterinsurgency (COIN). Moreover, Americans have grown to expect total victory in the form of unconditional surrender as the termination of any conflict. We consider anything less as a loss or stalemate. The nature of COIN is inherently political, eighty percent political and twenty percent military. It has been said that there cannot be a purely military solution to an insurgency because insurgency is not a primarily military activity. As such, the use of the term "victory" as a description of the termination of conflict when the U.S. involves itself in COIN is problematic. The political nature of COIN and the American way of viewing war and termination of conflict require that we adopt a new definition of "victory" in a COIN operation. The term "victory," as the term is classically defined and as viewed by Americans, does not fit in COIN planning or execution owing to the nature of the objective in a COIN operation. In any conflict, the definition of what constitutes "victory" and who defines "victory" can remain fluid and this is especially true in COIN. A comparison of the British experience in Northern Ireland, which many consider victory, to the U.S. experience in Iraq, which many consider a loss, demonstrates the need for a better definition for the termination of a COIN operation. Based on analysis of the outcomes of historical case studies of COIN operations and what portends to be the future of warfare, this paper argues that we create a definition of "success" for the termination of a COIN operation and replace the term "victory" in COIN in the military's vocabulary.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Griffin is a Colonel in the United States Marine Corps Reserve with 23 years of both active duty and reserve experience with the assault amphibian battalions, light armored reconnaissance battalions and civil affairs groups. He currently serves as the G-3/5 for the Force Headquarters Group, Marine Forces Reserve. Colonel Griffin has conducted four operational deployments, including two in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He served as the Coordinator for the Ministry of Interior Forces in Iraq for Second Marine Division in 2005-2006. Col Griffin holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina, a Master of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College, and a Juris Doctor from The George Washington University Law School. In his civilian profession, Mike is a civil litigation partner with the Charlotte, N.C., office of the law firm Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP.

Rethinking Victory In Counterinsurgency

As a general rule, Americans are averse to war and are easily frustrated with wars of limited objectives. As such, Americans have a cultural aversion to counterinsurgency (COIN) – which is ironic given our success using asymmetric tactics against the British in the Revolutionary War. Moreover, Americans have grown to expect total victory in the form of unconditional surrender as the termination of any conflict. We consider anything less as a loss or stalemate.

The nature of COIN is inherently political – David Galula posits that COIN is eighty percent political and twenty percent military.¹ General Sir Frank Kitson posits that “there can be no such thing as a purely military solution because insurgency is not a primarily military activity.”² As such, the use of the term “victory” as a description of the termination of conflict when the U.S. involves itself in COIN is problematic.³

The political nature of COIN and the American way of viewing war and termination of conflict require that we adopt a new definition of “victory” in a COIN operation. The term “victory,” as the term is classically defined and as viewed by Americans, does not fit in COIN planning or execution owing to the nature of the objective in a COIN operation. In any conflict, the definition of what constitutes “victory” and who defines “victory” can remain fluid and this is especially true in COIN. A comparison of the British experience in Northern Ireland, which many consider victory, to the U.S. experience in Iraq, which many consider a loss, demonstrates the need for a better definition for the termination of a COIN operation.

Based on analysis of the outcomes of historical case studies of COIN operations and what portends to be

the future of warfare, this paper argues that we create a definition of “success” for the termination of a COIN operation and replace the term “victory” in COIN in the military’s vocabulary.

Classical and Modern Definitions of Victory

Carl von Clausewitz describes his concept of victory as “the enemy’s greater loss of material strength, his loss of morale, and his open admission of the above by giving up his intentions.”⁴ Emile Simpson’s book, *War from the Ground Up* provides a superb analysis and application of Clausewitz view of war to war in the 21st Century. He concludes that the nature of war and the world has changed. Accordingly, Clausewitz’ views and analysis of war should change to fit the new way of war.⁵ His analysis provides a starting point for the definition of success in COIN.

The major shortfalls with Clausewitz’ language and definition of victory as it relates to COIN are the implication that war is a conflict between the wills of two nation-states, the limitation of polarization to two-sides, and the absence of the perception of the strategic audience. Clausewitz’ use of two men wrestling as an example of war as an act of force to compel the enemy to do our will evidences his reliance on the two-party conflict model.⁶ All of the remaining analysis and discussion of war derives from this two-party system, absolute or limited, offensive and defensive battle.

Even his incorporation of the political domain remains limited to two opposing parties or nation-states. As a result, Clausewitz treats the outcome of any war, victory or defeat and absolute or limited, as defined against the other party.⁷ Moreover, the out-

come is always a military outcome, albeit connected to the achievement of some political policy. To achieve the policy, to impose one's will on the other, requires that one must break the will of the other. Is breaking the will of an insurgency possible in the 21st Century? Can one break the will of an ideology?

Clausewitz' use of polarization in describing conflict is similarly limited to two sides, including his discussion of multiparty conflict. In polarization, again, there is a military outcome and that outcome is mutually exclusive, victory or defeat. The enemy is traditionally what a military outcome is measured against.⁸ Moreover, victory on one side necessarily excludes victory on the other. Outside of complete destruction of the other, is victory on one side to the exclusion of the other side achievable? If this result requires the complete destruction of the other, is this achievable or even desirable in the 21st Century? Is this result achievable in COIN? I think the answer to these questions is no because the end state in COIN, currently described as victory to one side and defeat to the other, is a perception, and a perception dependent on multiple views.⁹

Clausewitz' analysis and discussion also fails to address the importance of the strategic audience.¹⁰ Clausewitz' interpreters of the conflict, or the perceiving parties in the conflict, are the two sides, our side and their side, and within each side, the army, people and the government. This is not the case in COIN. There are generally multiple parties in the conflict, and within those parties, there are multiple viewpoints. Polarity as described by Clausewitz is relative when dealing with multiple parties in COIN and the multiple viewpoints within each "side" in COIN. By way of example, the U.S. political leadership's view

of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom seemed to change depending on the administration in power and party affiliation, and the views seemed to have little relation to actual success in those operations.

Clausewitz connects the desired military outcome, in terms of victory or defeat, to a political outcome. This is backwards in COIN. The military end state should not change to fit the definition of political success. Moreover, in COIN, the end state requires sustainability which in turn requires an enduring perception by the strategic audience. If victory and defeat are perceptions, then neither term is enduring. Accordingly, those terms should not be used in planning for and executing a COIN operation.

B.H. Liddell Hart defines victory as “the state of peace of one’s own people is better after the war than before . . .”¹¹ “Victory is only possible if a quick result can be gained or if a long effort can be economically proportioned to the national resources the end must be adjusted to the means.”¹² This utilitarian view of employing military forces is unsustainable and is susceptible to a default position of never engaging in any war. My father, a retired Marine, told me prior to my first deployment to Iraq that he thought the life of one U.S. Marine was more valuable than any of the millions in the region. Moreover, the “peace” of a family who lost a son, daughter, mother or father, will likely always be better before the war than after. A “better peace” is simply a too stringent measure because inaction in the near term will always be the more cost-effective solution in light of uncertain military outcomes.

Modern Definitions of Victory

In *Winning Counterinsurgency War: The Israeli Experience*, MAJGEN Yaakov Amidror provides three potential definitions of victory in COIN based on his experience in fighting Palestinian terror organizations. The first, "Total Victory," is the complete elimination of the terrorist organizations and guerrilla groups. He uses the example of the defeat of Communist guerrillas in Greece after the Second World War where the Greek army with British support completely destroyed the terror movement.¹³

The second, "Temporary Victory," is represented by the IDF victory over Palestinian terror organizations in Gaza in the early 1970s. The IDF reduced the terrorist organizations in Gaza, and then reduced the size of the IDF in Gaza so that the IDF units could move freely. The terrorist threat resurfaced approximately fifteen years later, but with a new and different form. The third, "Sufficient Victory," achieves what he labels as a "repressed quiet," requiring the continuous effort to preserve the peace. He uses the example of the British in Northern Ireland.¹⁴

Amidror acknowledges that most significant problem in defining victory is that a military victory is classically measured by the number of casualties inflicted on the enemy in manpower and equipment. He also acknowledges that in COIN, achievement of success is measured by criteria that are not clearly military, the degree of security, and indices of economic growth.¹⁵ Similarly, Moshe Yaalon notes that as chief of staff for the Israeli Defense Forces, he spoke of "the decisive victory." He defined decisive victory as that point when the terrorists, supporters, and political leadership come to the realization that terrorism's costs out-

weigh the benefits.¹⁶ His “decisive victory” is gained by winning tactical engagements, reducing the terrorist threat, and by strengthening society’s resilience in the face of terrorism. These are not exclusively military actions.

A Theory Of Victory

Professor Bartholomees essay “Theory of Victory” does not provide a definition of victory, but provides a description of the conditions of what can be considered victory and how victory is perceived. He argues that victory in war is an assessment, not a fact or condition.¹⁷ In other words, victory is someone’s opinion or a collection of opinions regarding the outcome. What matters is the perception of the outcome, not the facts of the outcome.¹⁸

In defining the conditions for victory, Professor Bartholomees posits that achieving a preferred outcome is the most basic element of conflict termination. However, he argues that achievement of a favorable outcome, preferable to accepting alternatives or continuing the war, “does not equate to victory.”¹⁹ He also notes that in certain circumstances a tie or stalemate may be based on conditions better than losing but something less than victory. Finally, he notes that achievement of a desired outcome may constitute the condition for conflict termination, but the end of fighting does not necessarily signify victory. In fact, sometimes it is desirable to terminate conflicts without allowing the conflict to produce a winner.²⁰

At the strategic level, Bartholomees notes that public opinion decides who wins and loses, and to what extent, based on an assessment of the postwar political conditions.²¹ The military situation plays a role,

but the most important criterion is political. He also argues that to be effective, the victory needs to be recognized and accepted by the opponent, and sustainable. He concludes that strategic victory is “a positive assessment of the postwar political situation in terms of achievement and decisiveness that is acknowledged, sustainable, and resolves underlying political issues.”²²

Professor Bartholomees also identifies the “assessors” of victory in the United States. He argues that the important opinions are “(1) the American people; (2) American political and military elites; (3) the opinion of friends and allies; and (4) world opinion.”²³ Emile Simpson would describe this collective group as the strategic audience.²⁴ The affect of the strategic audience on perceived victory cannot be understated.

Emile Simpson’s description of the Malayan Emergency, which according to conventional wisdom holds the blueprint for victory in COIN, demonstrates the importance of strategic audience and perception. The British viewed Malaya as a victory in 1960. However, the Communist Party in Malaya did not surrender until 1989, evidence that its will was not broken until close to 30-years following the cessation of armed conflict. However, it seems that the strategic audience was apathetic after 1960. Malaya and communism were no longer relevant to British policy.²⁵

The American Definition of Victory

It is important to note that FM 3-24 does not identify or provide a definition of “victory.” This is likely owing to the fact that the classic definitions of victory fail to apply in COIN. It is also owing to another issue unrelated to the nature of COIN which should be

considered in the use of language, the American view of war. Using Russell Weigley's *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, Colin Gray argues that the American public, strategic, and military culture does not meld with the requirements of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism.²⁶ If so, the "culture" needs to be adapted and it should begin with language.

Gray addresses close to a dozen issues, but several directly relate to the notion of victory in COIN.²⁷ First, he notes that there exists a cultural and skill bias contrast between the U.S. soldier and the civilian politician.²⁸ In COIN, the policy and military means must work in tandem, with policy taking the lead. Moreover, the policy should be chosen and be revised in light of military probabilities. In the U.S., the professional soldier and professional politician "inhabit quite distinctive subcultural universes that have different rules and are marked by distinctive skill biases," which create problems with communication, i.e., bad news during an election cycle.²⁹ A case in point is Gen. James L. Jones', the then National Security Advisor to President Obama, admonition regarding the potential request for additional forces prior to the Afghanistan "surge," or then Senator Hillary Clinton's treatment of GEN Petraeus prior to the implementation of the Iraqi surge.³⁰

Gray also highlights two issues related to how Americans treat war and peace. In the U.S., we tend to separate war and peace as two distinct conditions, i.e., we are either at war or at peace. Gray notes that this can become a lethal weakness when conducting COIN owing to the need for military action to set the conditions for a political solution.³¹ The flip side to this coin is what Gray calls America's "problem-solving faith"

and optimism. COIN is based on political, religious, or ideological grievances, leading to armed struggle. These conditions are endured, maybe mitigated, but generally tolerated. A problem set can be solved. The American problem-solving spirit and optimism creates problems in COIN because terrorist-insurgents are not problems to be solved, but a condition to be addressed by direct political action and indirect military action, e.g., by providing security to the people as a means of gaining their trust.³² American optimism often creates situations where our military is asked and expected to achieve the impossible, do it quickly, and decisively.³³

Finally, the American way of war is aggressive and works best in the offensive, which are required where decisive victory is the goal, e.g., to remove enemy forces from “ill-gotten gains, or otherwise taught the error of their ways.”³⁴ Another reason is that the domestic political environment requires American participation to be completed as rapidly as possible in order to return to peace and “normalcy.” America historically enters wars to stop evil regimes or evil actions, e.g. Hitler and Fascism. In COIN, the insurgent is the secondary objective and overly aggressive military action can be counterproductive.

In an interview of COL Gian Gentile regarding his book, COL Gentile encapsulates the “American Way of War” and its potential negative effect on COIN operations.³⁵ COL Gentile quotes Liddell Hart’s definition of the object of war is to produce a “better state of peace” at a reasonable cost in blood and treasure. He then notes that the U.S. experience in Afghanistan is a failure as against Liddell Hart’s metric as too expensive in terms of lives lost and dollars spent for what is at best a corrupt and failing state. He advocates the

use of military force when American vital interests in the world are threatened and the application of military force is deemed appropriate.³⁶ If these conditions are present, the U.S. should go in quickly with decisive military force, accomplish important objectives, and then leave.³⁷

In past conflicts, U.S. adversaries accepted our view of total victory.³⁸ In COIN, several different parties constitute the strategic audience and they must be convinced of success. In other words, several different actors must accept and buy into our proposed definition. Our goal should be to influence our strategic audience, either in protecting our internal strategic audience, the American people or allies, or influencing the external audience, the host nation and adversary, to accept our view of success or end state. These multiple actors will likely possess a different view of success from the U.S.'s "total military victory," and some will reject the U.S. notion of victory. Accordingly, if we are to engage in COIN, we should change our definition and terms. LtCol Daniel Lasica argues one step further in a monograph advocating a theory of victory for hybrid warfare, namely, that senior decision makers must understand the enemy's theory of victory and incorporate this understanding into their own theory of victory.³⁹

The U.S. view of war and victory must be taken into account in assessing victory in COIN and in preparing a definition of success in COIN. Historically, the U.S. views any theory of victory short of total defeat and unconditional surrender as a failure. The American way of war arguably seeks to destroy the enemy's military rather than serving as an extension of policy. It tends to ignore, or pay short shrift to the process of turning military victory into strategic gains. The idea of complete military victory is achievable in

conventional threats, but is not achievable in COIN. If total military victory is a prerequisite to political outcome, there is a gap between ways, means and ends when the U.S. engages in COIN.

Assuming a Political Solution, Who defines victory in COIN?

The answer to this question demonstrates the problem with the term "victory." In the British experience in Northern Ireland, victory depends on where one sits. Both Sinn Fein and the Nationalist Party claim victory. The paramilitary organizations claim that the conflict is not over. One wonders whether the British military views the Good Friday Agreement as a victory.

During the Malayan emergency Oliver Lyttleton said "you cannot win the war without the help of the population, and you cannot get the support of the population without at least beginning the win the war."⁴⁰ Perception and the strategic audience are two key pieces to the COIN puzzle. The population must adopt the perception that the government offers a better deal than the insurgents. Perception is vital and in the 21st Century, perception shaped by media is reality. Taking the best course of action is not always important, the perception of taking the best course of action is important.

Success in COIN cannot be Military Victory but political resolution.

Amidror's temporary victory and sufficient victory fail to provide a sustainable resolution, in large part because the means they fail to address root causes of

the conflict. He notes that so long as political, national, ethnic, economic, religious, ideological grievances exist, insurgent groups will use the grievance to recruit members. Additionally, so long as the active hardcore membership exists, the conflict will continue. A military effort cannot be expected to solve a political, national, ethnic, economic, religious, ideological grievance. As a result, short of complete destruction of the insurgent organization, resolution must be based in a political approach. Such an approach, in the American way of warfare, does not come from the military, but from politicians.

History also supports seeking a negotiated result to COIN. Sir Robert Thompson's five principles of COIN from the Malaya Emergency are (1) the government must have a clear political aim: to establish and maintain a free, independent and united country which is politically and economically stable and viable; (2) the government must function in accordance with law; (3) the government must have an overall plan; (4) the government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerillas; (5) in the guerilla phase of an emergency, a government must secure its base areas first.⁴¹ S.N. Bjelovac in 1966 noted that the outcome of an insurgency is not decided by decisive battles and does not end with an identifiable victory or defeat characterized by the capitulation of the enemy and surrender of its forces.⁴²

If COIN is 80% political, the end state is necessarily political. The primary instrument of power cannot be military. Therefore, victory in COIN cannot be defined by Clausewitz or Liddell Hart. Sir Robert's five principles reinforce this position with its emphasis on government action and in the political and legal realms.

The Existing Definitions are Insufficient

The Clausewitz and Liddell Hart definitions fail to address a multiparty view of “victory.” Professor Bartholomees correctly identifies the problem of perception, but admittedly does not define “victory,” and does not address victory in COIN. Amidror’s temporary victory and sufficient victory note that the resolution cannot be a military solution but political compromise. The American way of war and its unique view of “victory,” however, require that we jettison the term “victory” from our COIN language. The more applicable term, “success,” is a combination of Liddell Hart’s considerations of a “better peace,” the end state of Yaalon’s decisive victory, and the means used to attain Amidror’s “sufficient victory.” This definition of success must then be accepted by Professor Bartholomees’ strategic audience.

What does success in COIN look like?

Is it the elimination of the insurgent group? Or is it the perceived legitimacy of the host nation government? The basis of an insurgency is usually a complex set of problems and issues which likely cannot be solved, at least not by the U.S. These are problems which must be mitigated, “resolving a complex problem to an acceptable level.”⁴³ Although this sounds remarkably similar to reaching an “acceptable level of violence,” one must be careful to avoid a result that is “good enough for government work.”

A recent RAND analysis of historic COIN actions in modern history provides indicators of success in COIN.⁴⁴ The study uses several factors in labeling a particular case study as government win or mixed result,

government win. The deciding factors as to whether a case study was a “win,” were whether the government stayed in power through the end of the conflict and whether it retained sovereignty over the region of conflict. If the government remained in power and the country remained intact, the authors then considered whether the government made concessions to the insurgents or yielded to insurgent demands. In those case studies where the government stayed in power, the country remained intact, and no major concessions were granted to the insurgents, the authors concluded that the COIN force unambiguously won. If, however, major concessions were made, then the outcome was labeled as mixed.⁴⁵

A second RAND study analyzed the end of eighty-nine separate counterinsurgencies. The authors defined “insurgent win” in those cases where the insurgent group succeeded in an overthrow of the government, successful annexation of independent territory, a marked recognition of minority rights or property rights, or, dramatic political success.⁴⁶ This study separated outright government win from a mixed outcomes by identifying only those insurgencies that effected a political upheaval through an existing process. If the government survived but made some concessions to insurgents, it was labeled “mixed outcome.”⁴⁷

The authors characterized a government win where the COIN force destroyed the insurgent cadre, the insurgent political structure, or both.⁴⁸ The authors noted that in certain cases, governments crushed insurgent forces or movements only to see them reappear years or decades later. They concluded that this is “typically the case when the government fails to address the root causes of the insurgency.”⁴⁹ The au-

thors also noted that government can achieve victory through legitimate political channels, but this usually required some accommodation to insurgent demands.

The study highlights a few interesting outcomes which support the proposed definition of success in COIN. One, of seventy three insurgencies studied, more than half were settled through negotiations. Including other means of government recognition, by cease-fires, or amnesty offers, all but 12 were settled.⁵⁰ Additionally, in several of the cases, “defeated” insurgencies splintered into smaller, more-violent terrorist organizations, or went underground in order to reinitiate conflict when conditions improved.⁵¹ The authors referred to these people as “irredeemable,” who if absorbed and protected by the local population and are able to demonstrate continuing grassroots support, continue the insurgency. However, when the government addressed the root causes of the grievance and reincorporated the insurgents into society, the insurgency ended.⁵² The authors conclude that creating a sustainable end to insurgency requires social, economic, and political change, and not solely military action.⁵³ By eliminating the source of grievance, the government eliminates the grassroots support necessary to feed an insurgency, regardless of whether the insurgent cadre is wholly destroyed.

Is the British experience in N. Ireland a modern example of success in COIN?

This is not meant to be an exposition on the British experience in Northern Ireland, but a summary of the modern conflict for the purposes of analyzing the termination of the conflict, to highlight certain courses of action taken during the conflict, and to question whether the end result constitutes success.

Owing to an outgrowth of violence in response to the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland, the British government deployed the British armed forces to Northern Ireland in 1969. The view at the time was that the Royal Ulster Constabulary was unable to handle the escalating violence coupled with the perception that the Ulster Special Constabulary, known as the 'B Specials' were nothing more than a protestant army. Initially, the British troops were welcomed by Catholics. This view soon changed and the British forces became targets of violence and the source of grievance. The governments of Britain and Northern Ireland and British forces soon made several serious COIN missteps which would haunt their experience throughout the conflict.

In 1971, the British military was accused of shooting unarmed protestors in Derry. There were several allegations over the next two years of British troops killing unarmed civilians, including the infamous "Bloody Sunday" incident where the British Army is accused of killing thirteen unarmed civilians participating in a civil rights march in Derry. From the UK Doctrinal Publication 3-40 on Stabilisation Operations:

Members of the Parachute Regiment appeared to have run amok, live on TV, and the pictures of a Catholic priest running, half-crouched, through the Bogside waving a white handkerchief to try and help a fatally wounded victim will haunt the British establishment forever. Its effect was devastating. Gerry Adams later commented that on the back of Bloody Sunday 'money, guns and recruits flooded into the IRA'.

Eventually, the government in Westminster asserted control over security forces, which may have been a mixed bag given British Home Secretary Reginald

Maudling's declaration that the situation in Northern Ireland amounted to "an acceptable level of violence."

In 1971, the government in Northern Ireland re-enacted the internment law, allowing authorities the power to indefinitely detain suspected terrorists without trial. The reintroduction of the internment power led to increased violence. Eventually, the parliament in Stormont was suspended despite an attempted power-sharing agreement in 1974 between Catholic and Protestant leaders. Unionists rejected the agreement and initiated a labor strike causing the newly formed government to resign. Westminster conducted direct rule for several years.

In the opinion of a U.S. Joint Special Operations Unit study, the major contributor in eventual pacification was Britain's nonmilitary response to the paramilitary violence coupled with a reduction in British forces.⁵⁴ For example, public spending drastically increased with social security outlays increased by 102 percent to cope with the rise in unemployment and underdevelopment.⁵⁵ The government in London directed money to three major areas jobs, housing, and education. London also increased expenditures on housing creating Northern Ireland Housing Executive.⁵⁶

Britain created the Industrial Development Board to alleviate unemployment and created the Fair Employment Agency to eliminate discrimination in private hiring.⁵⁷ London transferred control of public works from local authority to new executive boards.

They also expanded education opportunities in university and vocational schools. In local elections, they scrapped sectarian gerrymandering and established new boundaries, voting systems, and enfranchisement resulting in increased Catholic represen-

tation on District Councils. This renewed feeling of political empowerment, and the election of Bobby Sands to Westminster, led IRA leader Gerry Adams to look toward political settlement.⁵⁸

Britain also sought to engage the strategic audience. Its leaders dealt with people with blood on their hands.⁵⁹ This occurred despite Prime Minister Thatcher's declaration that the British Government does not negotiate with terrorists. In 1972, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland William Whitelaw engaged in secret talks with the provisional IRA. Prime Minister Thatcher also negotiated indirectly with the IRA during the 1981 hunger strikes. Britain engaged the Republic of Ireland creating the Joint Law Enforcement Commission and discussed the extradition of terrorist suspects and other domestic legal issues, including consultative rights over British policy in Northern Ireland.⁶⁰

The Good Friday Agreement eventually signed in 1998 called for a transfer of power from London to Belfast, the removal of British military, a decommissioning of the paramilitary organizations and the creation of a power sharing arrangement between Unionist and Republican in the government. Over time, control of the police and justice functions would transfer from London to Belfast. After several starts and stops of government-rule from Belfast, in 2007, Rev. Ian Paisley Sr. and Martin McGuinness were sworn in First Prime Minister and First Deputy Prime Minister.

The Unionist view at the time was that the agreement was a victory because it contained an explicit acknowledgement that Northern Ireland would remain a part of the United Kingdom and because Unionists would effectively control the new Northern Ireland Assembly. David Trimble stated that "the struggle that has lasted 12 years for justice and equality for Union-

ists has succeeded.”⁶¹ Ian Paisley, Jr. of the UDP takes the position that the Republicans lost and the Unionists won. He notes that the Republicans pledged their loyalty to Crown forces and to enforce Crown laws.⁶²

The Republican view is that they entered negotiation knowing that a united Ireland was not an option, but that the new Assembly would give Catholics a greater voice in Northern Ireland than at any other time in its history. The release of Catholic paramilitary prisoners and the departure of the British Army was a victory. Jennifer McCann, MP for Sinn Fein, maintains that the Republicans were not defeated, Republicans don't feel defeated, and Sinn Fein has not given up its goal of a Socialist united Ireland.⁶³

However, the rank and file on both sides feel as if their politicians let them down. The sight of Martin McGuinness shaking hands with Queen Elizabeth and the Union Jack flying in front of the Stormont government are noted as evidence of betrayal.⁶⁴ There has been no real reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in the province as noted by the “peace walls” which are now twice as high and long as they were when the Good Friday agreement was signed in 1998.⁶⁵ Additionally, many Provisional IRA and UDF members fell back on criminal enterprises instead of being reintroduced into civil society. 2013 was one of the worst years of rioting in Northern Ireland for a decade and some of the highest levels of street violence and attacks by militant groups since a peace and power-sharing deal in 1998. Derry-based Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD) enforce vigilante justice against local drug dealers but also target the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) as Crown forces.⁶⁶ Moreover, groups such as 32 County Sovereignty Movement make similar public statements regarding a socialist united Ireland.

Is the success sustainable? Fifteen years following the agreement, the answer is not settled. However, the result is considered success in COIN. British civic action programs, political reform and diplomatic efforts with the Republic of Ireland and the United States, brought about the cessation of armed conflict. Addressing the roots of discontent and discrimination raised in the Civil Rights movement served to create the perception that the government in Northern Ireland was offering a better deal and that it's better to participate in the new government in Northern Ireland than to destroy it. These actions "siphoned off enough anger, enticed enough collaborators, and neutralized enough opposition that it undermined much of the minority's support for IRA violence and led to a peaceful political resolution."⁶⁷

Is the U.S. experience in Iraq an example of a failure in COIN?

The U.S. made similar missteps in OIF as the British made in Northern Ireland. However, just as the British in Northern Ireland, the U.S. assessed its strategy and tactics in Iraq, made changes to both, and those changes resulted in success by 2008.

The national objectives for OIF were to remove Saddam Hussein from power, secure Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and restore order to the country via the establishment of a representative form of government capable of maintaining its internal security without the use of WMD.⁶⁸ Following the catastrophic success in 2003, poor strategic decisions led to the insurgency. For example, Ambassador Bremer's decisions to disband the Iraqi Army and de-Ba'athification laid the groundwork for the insurgency. U.S. Central

Command and Commander, Joint Task Force-7 believed that U.S. forces constituted a virus to Iraq and moved to quickly withdraw forces from Iraq. CJTF-7 also withdrew forces remaining in Iraq to Forward Operating Bases (FOB) away from the population.⁶⁹ These moves provided operating space for the insurgents. As did the lack of engagement by President Bush in 2004-2005 owing to his desire to move away from the Bosnia/Kosovo nation-building experiment and the Vietnam-era micromanagement.⁷⁰

The reassessment in 2006 and 2007 resulted in a change in strategy and also tactics. This reframing of the problem changed the focus from the size of the U.S. military footprint and transition to Iraqi forces to securing the population. This new approach achieved success. In his interview in *Al-Anbar Awakening, American Perspectives, U.S. Marines and Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004 - 2009*, Gen. John Kelly, U.S.M.C., makes the statement that words like “‘won’ or ‘victory’ really do not apply when speaking of counterinsurgency operations,” and that when you solve the problems at the root of the insurgency, “the insurgency goes away, as opposed to being defeated.”⁷¹

Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki believes the U.S.-Iraqi partnership was a success. He wrote in 2013 that the overwhelming majority of Iraqis agree that the nation is better off than it was under the Hussein regime and that Iraqis will remain grateful for the U.S. role in ending Hussien’s regime.⁷² In fact, he stated that not only does the U.S. have a foreign policy partner in Iraq, it also has an energy supplier, trading partner, and an investment partner. He concludes that the U.S. has not “lost” Iraq, but found a partner for shared strategic concerns and common efforts on energy, economics, and promotion of peace and democracy.⁷³ GEN David

Petraeus even penned an editorial, "How We Won in Iraq," arguing that the U.S. and Iraq achieved a successful end state in ending the Iraq insurgency.⁷⁴

Did we achieve success in Iraq? Is the success in Iraq sustainable? It may be too soon to arrive at a conclusion in light of Al-Qaeda's recent gains in Al Anbar.

Conclusion

Americans grow easily frustrated with limited war and have grown to expect total victory in the form of unconditional surrender as the termination of any conflict. Anything less is viewed as a loss. Owing to the political nature of the objective in COIN and the American political and military culture, "victory" as the term is classically defined should not be used in planning for and executing COIN operations. Based on the analysis of the outcomes from historical case studies, "success" is the more appropriate term and should replace the term "victory" in any discussion of COIN in U.S. doctrinal publications.

This "success" should be conditions-based and achieved through the combination of military and political action, with the political action taking lead. The purpose of both actions will be to seeking a "better peace." The conditions for success will be set by military action, but military end state will not result in success. This point underlies the disconnect between ways, means, and ends when using military victory as an end state in COIN. The military action is directed to security of the population in order to provide freedom of movement for political and civic action as described by Amidror's "Sufficient Victory." Once achieved, the political and civic actions become the focus of effort. Not military solution, but political compromise

starves the insurgent group from local support. The end state is captured by Maalon's description of that point when the terrorists, supporters, and political leadership come to the realization that the conflict's costs outweigh the benefits. The cessation of armed conflict sets the conditions to create a sustainable political resolution, which has a greater chance of acceptance by the strategic audience.

Prior to and continuing throughout the operation, the U.S. military and political leadership must persuade the strategic audience that the military action was the best course of action to achieve sufficient victory in order to allow freedom of movement for political and civic action. This is not a small task. This audience will always be significantly larger for the U.S. than any other nation conducting COIN owing to its status as world superpower. Moreover, the leadership will be forced to confront the American view of war and military and political culture regarding war. This audience will consist not only of the American people and the minority party, but the host nation, coalition and security partner nations, the local population and the insurgent group. LtCol Lasica's advice is appropriate on this point as the military and political leadership must make an effort to understand the insurgent theory of victory because they have a vote. Insurgents and their supporters must be influenced to view participation and cooperation with the reforms as the better choice than continued armed struggle.

The final piece is sustainability. So long as political, national, ethnic, economic, religious, ideological grievances exist, insurgent groups have a powerful recruiting tool, for both internal and external support. At this stage, the military leadership must remember to provide the best objective advice as to the employ-

ment of the military in support of the political solution. Using the methods and conditions discussed to attain the defined end state “success” in COIN operations, the practitioner must align ends, ways and means through military and political action. As a result, the practitioner achieves a multiparty perception of a better state of peace.

ENDNOTES

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5. Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up, Twenty First Century Combat as Politics*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), *seriatim*.

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9. J. Boone Bartholomees, “Theory of Victory,” *Parameters*, (Summer 2008): 26.

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location of local populace, and excessive force. The British also engaged in backchannel communications with the Malayan Communist Party in an effort to reach a negotiated resolution. I raise these two points to show (1) Britain made missteps in what was later considered the blueprint for COIN; and (2) there were early efforts and reaching a political resolution.

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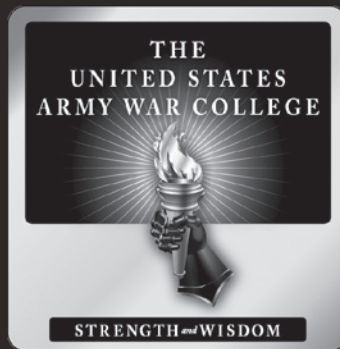
**Author
Michael C. Griffin, Colonel
United States Marine Corps Reserve**

**Publications Coordinator
Mr. R. Christopher Browne**

**Composition
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ISBN: 978-0-9894393-8-1