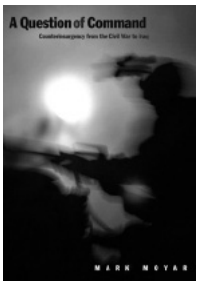

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A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq

by Mark Moyar

Reviewed by Gregory A. Daddis, Academy Professor, Department of History, US Military Academy

As the American commitment to South Vietnam grew in the early 1960s, so too did the literature on counterinsurgency. In fact, so fashionable had the topic become that military analyst Hanson W. Baldwin decried "the muddy verbosity and the pompous profundity that are beginning to mask the whole subject of counterinsurgency and guerrilla war." Baldwin likely would not be surprised by the similarly abundant musings on counterinsurgency in the last five years. He might, however, have had his interest piqued by Mark Moyar's latest contribution, which maintains that leadership is at the heart of successful counterinsurgencies. In fact, *A Question of Command* requires careful reading.

Moyar, the Adamson Chair of Insurgency and Terrorism at the US Marine Corps University, argues that the "leader-centric nature of counterinsurgency" demands identifying and developing commanders who are more flexible, creative, and intellectually agile than their conventional counterparts. Through nine historical case studies ranging from the American Civil War to the present conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, Moyar's aim is to isolate the leadership attributes of successful counterinsurgents. Indeed, he has ascertained ten such attributes. Effective counterinsurgency leaders share the qualities of initiative (a major theme in this work), flexibility, creativity, judgment, empathy, charisma, sociability, dedication, integrity, and organization. Unfortunately, Moyar offers little insight into how he identified these attributes, leaving the reader to question his methodology for historical analysis.

The historical case studies form the bulk of *A Question of Command*, and Moyar uses them not only to display the significance of leadership in unconventional warfare but also to critique "population-centric" and "enemy-centric" theories of counterinsurgency. In the process, he attacks "doctrine or strategy that dictates in detail how to defeat the insurgents." Neither social, political, and economic reforms nor using armed force to defeat insurgencies guarantee success. Rather, Moyar argues, the leader who is able to adjust his methods to local conditions is the most important factor. In the Civil War, as an example, effective Union commanders labored to separate hostile civilians from friendly and weighed the consequences before using armed force. (According to Moyar, depopulation and forced resettlement, if done correctly, have benefits.) Poor leaders allowed corruption to flourish in their commands while more capable officers fixed bureaucratic weaknesses and replaced unprincipled commanders who abused the local populace.

In a refreshing addition to counterinsurgency literature, Moyar also considers the Reconstruction era. As in the Civil War, Federal troops contended with political ambiguities of an occupation mission and local elites who still enjoyed the loyalty of Southern whites. Likewise, the Philippine Insurrection demanded that US officers combat insurgent leaders from the Filipino upper class (principalia), bolstering Moyar's contention that counterinsurgencies require subduing or destroying the enemy elite. The Philippines also reinforce a major theme: destructive force selectively applied by good commanders is often a necessary component of counterinsurgency warfare. As Moyar notes, the "US response to the Philippine Insurrection contradicts the view . . . that civic action is invariably more effective than military action in defeating insurgents."

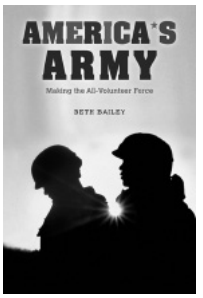
Ensuing case studies further Moyar's defense of leadership as key to counterinsurgency success. The Huk Rebellion in the post-World War II Philippines illustrates the importance of host-nation leaders, in this instance, Filipino Secretary of National Defense Ramon Magsaysay, stimulating effective local resistance against insurgents. Moyar employs the Malayan Emergency to show how civilian-military interagency committees could direct a war without depriving local commanders of their freedom of action. Moyar's balanced chapter on the Vietnam War reveals the trials of counterinsurgency leaders attempting to train local forces against an enemy able "to switch back and forth between regular and irregular warfare." Though claims of the "remarkable transformation of South Vietnamese leadership in the late 1960s and early 1970s" are unpersuasive, the Vietnam chapter demonstrates that leader development in host-nation forces is just as crucial as leader development within the US armed forces.

Moyar reserves his final two studies for Afghanistan and Iraq. While each conflict's mosaic nature required (and still requires) sound leadership at all levels, particularly the local, Moyar uses these chapters to renew his assault on doctrinal fixations. "Afghanistan's kaleidoscopic physical and human landscapes," he argues, "heightened the importance of adaptivity and further reduced the value of doctrine." In Iraq, the author rightly perceives more continuity between pre- and post-surge approaches to counterinsurgency than the popular Operation Iraqi Freedom narrative indicates. As such, Moyar believes the 2006 counterinsurgency field manual did not have as much impact as its authors intended. The new manual even "impeded innovation to a degree by advancing as universal certain principles and methods that were not actually viable in all or even most counterinsurgency settings."

Moyar's fundamental argument makes sense. Leadership in war counts. Yet as much as it offers a unique if simple approach to studying counterinsurgencies, *A Question of Command* proffers arguments that should be considered with care. Moyar's attack on doctrinal infatuation is fine; however, an army founded on good doctrine does not necessarily make it doctrinaire. Whether counterinsurgency requires a higher degree of resourcefulness than conventional operations seems equally tenuous. German and British innovations in the World War I trenches or American tactical adjustments in the World War II

Normandy hedgerows suggest that war, not just irregular war, requires all armies to adapt to their enemy and surroundings. Finally, Moyar's thinly veiled backing of an aggressively interventionist foreign policy smacks of hubris. Throughout this work, third-world leaders fighting insurgencies are portrayed as inept and diffident administrators who only need American tutelage to be successful counterinsurgents. Moyar concedes at the end, though, that such "advice rarely sank in."

A Question of Command is intended to assist counterinsurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan and, on the whole, it should be read, but with a careful eye. Moyar is surely correct that multifaceted wars require flexibility and creativity from military and civilian leaders. If readers can navigate through this work's more specious supporting arguments, there is much to consider in developing leaders comfortable with the complexities of modern war.



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America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force

by Beth L. Bailey

Reviewed by Dr. Aaron O'Connell, Assistant Professor of History, US Naval Academy.

Beth Bailey has written a marvelous book about an important topic. Her exploration of the Army's transition from selective service to an all-volunteer force is well-researched, persuasively argued, and clearly written in an easy style that is too often missing from both military and cultural history. From the draft protests of the 1960s to the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, America's Army narrates how the nation's largest armed service survived the tumultuous 1970s, rebounded in the 1980s, and fashioned a winning formula for public acceptance and support. While scholars have already given some treatment to how the Army moved to an all-volunteer force, this book situates the transition in the broader social context, using the debates over the Army's future as a lens into American race relations, gender relations, and the role of social science research and the ideology of the market in military affairs.

Bailey begins in the Vietnam-soaked political landscape of the 1968 presidential campaign when candidate Richard Nixon first proposed abolishing the draft. Nixon's promise was pure political opportunism, but the actual work of designing an all-volunteer force, which fell to a White House commission of economists, soldiers, and business leaders, involved a deeper ideological struggle. Should providing for the national defense be understood as an obligation of citizenship or a labor market issue of supply and demand? Prominent free-market economists Milton Friedman and Alan Greenspan believed the latter and argued forcefully that the key was improved pay and benefits to sustain the required enlistments. Other members of the commission, including