

From Warfighting to Counterinsurgency

**Low-intensity Elements in Marine Corps
Doctrine after the Cold War**



Amund Lundesgaard

Master Thesis in History
Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History
University of Oslo
Spring 2009

From Warfighting to Counterinsurgency

Low-intensity Elements in Marine Corps Doctrine after the Cold War

Amund Lundesgaard

Master Thesis in History
Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History
University of Oslo
Spring 2009

Contents

Chapter 1: On Doctrine and Theory	1
About the Project.....	1
The Research Problem	3
Delimitations	4
Marine Corps Doctrine after 1940	4
Low and High-Intensity Conflicts.....	7
Role and Importance of Doctrine	9
Doctrinal Theory	10
Research Status and Literature	12
Sources	13
Structure of the Thesis.....	14
Chapter 2: Warfighting	16
Introduction	16
Low-Intensity Doctrines.....	17
Warfighting	18
Political Approaches to Conflicts	18
Other Low-intensity Approaches to Conflict.....	22
The Means in War	24
The Spectrum of Conflict	27
Potential Consequences of the High-Intensity Focus.....	29
Conclusion.....	30
Chapter 3: Explaining the Warfighting Doctrines.....	30
Introduction	30
Doctrinal Theory	30
The Cultural Factor	34
The Rationalist Factor: Lessons Learned From Operations in the 1990s	36
Other Factors	38
Technology.....	38
Bureaucratic politics.....	39
Organizational Inertia.....	40
Assumptions Connected to Low-intensity.....	40
Lack of Conceptual Clarity.....	41
Conclusion.....	41

Chapter 4: Counterinsurgency	43
Introduction	43
Pre COIN-06 Low-Intensity documents	44
The Status of the COIN Doctrine	46
COIN-06.....	47
A Focus on the Population: Legitimacy	48
Political Approaches.....	55
Constructive, Reconstructive and Economic Approaches	60
Informational Approaches	61
Consequences of COIN-06.....	62
Conclusion.....	64
Chapter 5: Explaining the Counterinsurgency Doctrine.....	65
Introduction	65
The Status of the COIN Doctrine	65
The Rationalist Factor: Afghanistan and Iraq	66
Other Factors	67
Conclusion.....	68
Chapter 6: Conclusion	70
From Warfighting to Counterinsurgency	70
Explaining the Development.....	72
The Way Ahead.....	74
Future Research.....	75
Bibliography	76
Primary Sources	76
Litterature	78

Chapter 1: On Doctrine and Theory

About the Project

After the Cold War, the United States was the only remaining superpower, and its conventional forces were unsurpassed. The fall of the Soviet empire created expectations of a new world order marked by peace and prosperity. However, it did not live up to the expectations. There were a number of conflicts surfacing, and most of the ones that the U.S. participated in were not high-intensity conflict. Many of them were vicious civil wars, where centuries-old ethnic conflicts that surfaced and erupted in violent conflicts. Others were tribal and clan-based conflicts, and yet others included trans-national insurgencies with religious motivations. What they had in common was that the U.S. military faced an enemy that did not fight on American terms. Rather, they made use of guerilla tactics, suicide bombings and other means that did not fit into the traditional battle-centered, high-intensity paradigm, leaving the American military unprepared for the challenges that were awaiting them.

Facing these challenges meant that the ability to conduct low-intensity operations became more important than during the Cold War. In this thesis I will address the doctrinal development of the United States Marine Corps in the period between 1989 and 2006. The focus of the thesis will be on the attention devoted to low-intensity conflicts in general, and counterinsurgency more specifically. The primary question is whether the Marine Corps took the new reality of the situation on the ground into account by significantly changing their doctrines.

Why are doctrines important? They are the theoretical foundation for operations. Whether it is organizational matters, training, humanitarian support in a disaster struck Indonesia, handling insurgents in Afghanistan or fighting Saddam Hussein's armies in the deserts in Iraq, doctrines are to guide all actions. Given the importance of both doctrine and low-intensity conflicts throughout the post Cold War period, a thorough analysis of the doctrinal material and the changes that happened in this period can contribute to understanding operations as well as organizational structure and strategic decisions.

I chose the Marine Corps as the subject of study as there is no study on low-intensity elements in Marine Corps doctrine, while there have been conducted comprehensive,

historical studies on the U.S. Army.¹ This thesis is designed to partially fill this gap in research.

More specifically, Marine Corps counterinsurgency doctrine was chosen for two reasons:

- Generally, of all low-intensity conflicts, the Marine Corps seems to have given priority to counterinsurgency.²
- The Marine Corps released its new counterinsurgency doctrine in 2006.

The time frame 1989 to 2006 was chosen for three reasons. 1989 marked the end of the Cold War. It was a strategic watershed for not only the U.S. armed forces, but the Marine Corps too. It was the start of a period where the Marine Corps would participate in a number of low-intensity conflicts, most notably the later stages of Afghanistan and Iraq, but also Somalia and Haiti. 1989 was also important because it marked the publication of a new doctrinal series - the *Fleet Marine Force Manual 1 Warfighting (Warfighting-89)*. 2006 is a natural end point for this thesis, because of the publication of the counterinsurgency manual - the *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5 Counterinsurgency (COIN-06)* in 2006.

This chapter will address several issues. First I will explain the research problem and the delimitations of the thesis. Following this I will touch upon the delimitations of this thesis and then give a brief account of the history of doctrines in the Marine Corps from 1940 until 2006. Next I will discuss the dichotomy of low and high-intensity conflict, what is characterized as low intensity conflicts and the criteria that form the basis for the analysis of the doctrines. Then I will address the role and importance of doctrine, doctrinal theory and the current research status and literature. Finally I will discuss the sources that have been researched and outline the structure of this thesis.

¹ There are no studies on this for the Air Force or the Navy, however, neither service is very relevant in low-intensity conflicts. Although they can assist with air support or controlling littoral areas, the Army and the Marine Corps are more relevant in conflicts that take place mainly on land.

² The history of Marine Corps doctrine will be addressed later.

The Research Problem

“[The modern battlefield] requires a concept that is consistently effective across the full spectrum of conflict, because we cannot attempt to change our basic doctrine from situation to situation and expect to be proficient.”³

Throughout the period after 1989, the Marine Corps maintained that being able to handle all sorts of conflicts, from peacekeeping to full scale warfare, was vital to their success in military operations.⁴ To achieve this aim, it would be necessary to include low-intensity conflicts in the doctrines.

The argument emerging from this thesis is that, despite traces of low-intensity elements in Marine Corps doctrine in the 1990s, there was no comprehensive and up to date treatment of low-intensity conflicts or counterinsurgency until the publication of the counterinsurgency doctrine in 2006.

Based on this assertion, I have formulated two research questions:

- 1. Which were the elements of low-intensity conflict in Marine Corps doctrine between 1989 and 2006, and how central were these elements in the doctrines?*
- 2. How can we explain the lack of developments towards low-intensity before 2006, and likewise explain the significant changes that happened then?*

Generally, the thesis concludes that the most likely explanation for the relative absence of low-intensity elements before 2006 was the high-intensity culture that was dominant in the Marine Corps. The rather sudden change that occurred in 2006 was most likely due to the need for a doctrine that was relevant to the circumstances that the Marine Corps faced in Afghanistan and Iraq.

³ United States Marine Corps, "Fleet Marine Force Manual 1 Warfighting," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1989), From now on, this doctrine will be termed FMFM 1 in the references; Department of the Navy, "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1 Warfighting," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1997), 71. From now on, this doctrine will be termed MCDP 1 in the references.

⁴ FMFM 1, 22 and MCDP 1, 27.

Delimitations

I have concentrated on two main issues. First, I have analyzed the low-intensity *contents* of Marine Corps doctrines. Second, I have discussed *possible reasons* for both the small changes before 2006 and the major changes that were made with *COIN-06*. Expanding the thesis to include research based on primary sources on the explanations for this development would put it beyond the scope of a master thesis. Based on this I have a number of delimitations.

Firstly, the study concentrates on the strategic doctrines, using subordinate doctrines as examples where appropriate. The strategic doctrines are the most relevant doctrines, as these describe, at an overarching level, the Marine Corps' general perception of different types of conflicts and approaches to these. Consequently, they are more interesting if the intention is to get an impression of Marine Corps doctrine in its totality. Doctrines addressing the operational or tactical levels are usually more relevant in a narrow military setting.

Secondly, I have not examined the relationship between doctrines on the one hand, and operations on the other, because of the problems connected to the collection of empirical evidence. Records of military operations, especially more recent operations, might not be publicly available, which could severely limit the scientific value of such a project. Also, a project on this scale would have put it beyond the scope of a master thesis.

Thirdly, I have not included the issue of organizational change. Organizational changes are closely related to doctrinal change, however, the organizational change issue was addressed by David Ucko in his thesis on the transformation of the U.S. military for stability operations.⁵

Finally, political processes have not been discussed to a large extent in this the thesis as it is a different issue altogether. I am concerned with the doctrinal development within the Marine Corps, not the political process.

Marine Corps Doctrine after 1940

The U.S. Marine Corps has a tradition of formal doctrine and doctrinal development dating back to the late 1970s, even though doctrine was a part of the Marine Corps before this. In 1940, the Marine Corps published the *Small Wars Manual*, a doctrine that was strongly related to counterinsurgency. However, “[t]he scale and scope of Marine Corps operations in World War II overcame the small war specialist attempts to further their agenda. [...] Despite the numerous MOOTW-type [low-intensity] operations that also occurred during the high-

⁵ David Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations, an Assessment of Organisational Change" (University of London, 2007).

intensity conventional warfare of World War II, the *SWM's* legacy faded.”⁶ Consequently, after the Second World War Marine Corps doctrine was almost exclusively based on conventional warfare,⁷ and remained so throughout the Cold War. However, signs of a small war approach started manifesting itself in Marine Corps doctrine in 1962, when the U.S. Marine Corps published a low-intensity doctrine, “Operations against Guerrilla Forces”, a doctrine that was related to counterinsurgency operations.⁸ According to Allen S. Ford, this was also reflected in operations in Vietnam, for example the *Combined Action Program* in Vietnam.⁹

However, the introduction of counterinsurgency to the Marine Corps failed, and David Ucko stated three main reasons for this.¹⁰ First of all, there was a lack of conceptual clarity, as the Marine Corps did not fully engage with an “evaluation of the specific and in many ways unique characteristics and logic of counterinsurgency operations” Secondly, the “[e]ngagement with counterinsurgency [was] frontloaded with assumptions [...] and prerequisites that would, in theory, reduce the need to deploy U.S. ground troops and, with it, the risks of engagement.”¹¹ Thirdly the culture of the Marine Corps favored conventional, high-intensity conflicts. Also, the Vietnam War provided the Marine Corps with the “wrong” lessons, resulting in what is known as the Vietnam syndrome and prompted the services to emphasize high-intensity conflicts.¹²

After the Vietnam War the Marine Corps, like the Army, went through a time of change. The challenges that faced the post-Vietnam War Marine Corps were, according to Alan R. Millett, mainly the end of conscription, disciplinary problems, modernization, lower budgets and U.S. withdrawal from the strategically less important areas in the world.¹³ U.S. withdrawal could potentially undermine the relevance of the Marine Corps, seeing as it was the most expeditionary of the services and thus more suited for power projection. The renewed focus on Europe provided the solution to this problem, as the Marine Corps was

⁶ Allen S. Ford, "The Small Wars Manual and Marine Corps Military Operations Other Than War Doctrine" (Master of Military Art and Science, Auburn University, 2003), 25. Author's italics.

⁷ Scott A. Edwards, "Forcible Entry in the 21st Century" (US Naval War College, 2001), 3.

⁸ Ucko, *Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations*, 49.

⁹ Ford, "The Small Wars Manual and Marine Corps Military Operations Other Than War Doctrine", 31-32.

¹⁰ These three reasons will be more thoroughly addressed under the “Doctrinal Theory” headline.

¹¹ The assumptions connected to low-intensity operations will be addressed under the *Doctrinal Theory* headline. For an in depth analysis of this development see Ucko, *Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations*, 47-66.

¹² Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 52.

¹³ Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 611-616.

charged with protecting NATO's northern flank against a conventional Soviet attack.¹⁴ Soviet conventional forces outnumbered NATO forces in Europe, and to counter this asymmetry the AirLand Battle doctrine of 1982 institutionalized the concept of maneuver warfare in the U.S. Army.¹⁵ Maneuver warfare heavily influenced Marine Corps doctrine, and in 1989, the Marine Corps published its first maneuver warfare doctrine, the *Fleet Marine Force Manual 1 Warfighting (Warfighting-89)* which was the primary doctrine in the 1989 doctrinal series. *Warfighting-89* was replaced by the *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1 Warfighting (Warfighting-97)* in 1997. *Warfighting-97* and its subordinate doctrines replaced the 1989 series of doctrines.

Nevertheless, there were attempts at introducing low-intensity conflicts to Marine Corps doctrine in the 1980s. In 1980, the Marine Corps published a counterinsurgency doctrine (*COIN-80*),¹⁶ the last low-intensity doctrine before *COIN-06*. However, the introduction failed for much the same reasons as the attempts in the 1960s.¹⁷

Another development in the post-Cold War period was the increasing influence of small wars on Marine Corps doctrine, and the importance of low-intensity conflicts increased. During the 1990s and especially after the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, low-intensity conflicts became more prominent than earlier, and in December 2006 the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps published a joint counterinsurgency doctrine, the *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5 Counterinsurgency (COIN-06)*.¹⁸ At the time of writing, this is the latest addition to the doctrinal hierarchy in the Marine Corps, and the changes were of such a fundamental nature as to warrant a chapter entirely dedicated to *COIN-06*.

¹⁴ Millet, *Semper Fidelis*, 608-609.

¹⁵ The introduction of maneuver warfare added new aspects to conventional doctrine. While attrition warfare mostly relied on firepower and numbers to grind down the enemy (attrition warfare), maneuver warfare relies more on speed and flexibility, striking at the enemy's critical vulnerability to win the battle at hand. The aim was not necessarily to annihilate the enemy, but to eliminate his ability to wage war effectively.

¹⁶ United States Marine Corps, "Fleet Marine Force Manual 8-2 Counterinsurgency Operations," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1980). From now on, this doctrine will be termed FMFM 8-2 in the references.

¹⁷ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 47-66.

¹⁸ United States Marine Corps, "Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5 Counterinsurgency," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2006). From now on, this doctrine will be termed MCWP 3-33.5 in the references.

Low and High-Intensity Conflicts

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify certain terms that will be used in this thesis. First of all, the low-intensity/high-intensity terms are important. The intensity of a conflict is based upon the magnitude of violence. When the magnitude of violence is high, like in regular combat operations like operation Overlord during World War 2, it is considered a high-intensity conflict. Likewise, when the magnitude of violence is low, like the mission to Kosovo in the Balkans, it is considered a low-intensity conflict. However, defining the intensity of the conflict is not as easy as it might seem. All conflicts vary in intensity, and in many cases a single conflict can fluctuate between a complete halt in combat operations and full scale, conventional battles. The intensity of a conflict is therefore determined by its general level of violence, even though this leaves room for a multitude of interpretations.

Generally, high-intensity conflicts are predominantly conventional in nature and the violence is characterized by traditional high-intensity battles with regular forces, conducted by nation-states. Conversely, low-intensity conflicts are characterized by violence that takes forms that differ from traditional battle, like guerrilla warfare and suicide bombings.

The dichotomy of low/high-intensity fails to encapsulate the nature of a conflict, as they only refer to one specific aspect of it, namely the violence involved, and does not take into account the full array of means by which the Marine Corps conducts these operations. Nevertheless, I have chosen to primarily use the high and low-intensity terms. The main reason for this is simplicity, as there are other terms describing roughly the same phenomena. Examples are conventional and unconventional conflicts, old and new wars, and war and military operations other than war.¹⁹ All of these dichotomies refer to roughly the same phenomena, although with some differences. High and low-intensity were the terms used in the 1989 series of doctrines. This was changed to war/military operations other than war (*MOOTW*) in 1995,²⁰ a term which was formally discontinued in 2006.²¹

Next question: What do we look for when we try to identify low-intensity elements in the doctrine? The doctrines themselves actually gave part the answer when referring to war as an act of policy:

When the policy motive of war is extreme, such as the destruction of an enemy government, then war's natural military tendency toward destruction will coincide with the political aim, and there will tend to

¹⁹ For more on new wars, see: John Andreas (ed.) Olsen, "On New Wars," *Oslo files on Defence and Security* 04 (2007).

²⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Joint Publication 3-07 Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War," (1995). From now on, this doctrine will be termed JP 3-07 in the references.

²¹ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 155.

be few political restrictions on the military conduct of war. On the other hand, the more limited the policy motive, the more the military tendency toward destruction may be at variance with that motive, and the more likely political considerations will restrict the application of military force.²²

The key word here is political. Low-intensity conflicts are in general more political in nature than high-intensity conflicts, as the military effort usually plays a supporting role to the diplomatic and economic efforts.²³ In very general terms, I will look for political, rather than military solutions to conflict in the doctrine. More specifically, I have scrutinized the doctrines for these five criteria:

- A focus on the **local population**. Conventional high-intensity conflicts have been focused on enemy combat formations. Low-intensity conflicts, on the other hand, concentrate on the local population, as Rupert Smith ascertained that “the objective is the will of the people.”²⁴
- **Diplomatic** approaches. Although diplomacy always has been a part of war, it has been the domain of civilian diplomats in the western military traditions. What is new in low-intensity conflicts, compared to conventional high-intensity warfare, is that diplomacy can be necessary all the way down to the tactical level of conflict. The nature of low-intensity conflicts facilitates a much more diverse and numerous array of actors, a consequence of what Herfried Münkler defines as the “three general characteristics of new wars”: the privatization, asymmetricalization and demilitarization of war.²⁵ Consequently, low-level commanders can be required to engage in diplomatic negotiations.
- **Reconstructive or constructive** approaches to conflicts. Many countries that experience some sort of low-intensity conflict have an infrastructure and a government that does not function properly. To alleviate grievances in the local population it may be necessary to assist in building or rebuilding vital infrastructure.²⁶
- **Economic** approaches to conflicts. In low-intensity conflicts where the Marine Corps will be involved, it is likely that the economic system and infrastructure is underdeveloped and

²² MCDP 1, 24.

²³ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 10.

²⁴ Rupert Smith, "Thinking About the Utility of Force in War Amongst the People," *Oslo Files On Defence and Security* 04/2007 (2007), 35.

²⁵ “The gradual *privatisation of war* meaning that states are no longer the monopolists of war. [...] The development of insurmountable military asymmetry and, in reaction to it, the asymmetricalisation or [sic] war by military inferior actors otherwise hardly fit for battle. [...] The demilitarisation of war: regular armed forces have lost both the control and monopoly of warfare.” Quote taken from: Herfried Münkler, "What Is Really New About New Wars? -a Reply to the Critics," *Oslo Files On Defence and Security* 04 (2007), 69.

²⁶ Peter W. Chiarelli and Patrick R. Michaelis, "Winning the Peace the Requirement for Full-Spectrum Operations," *Military Review* 2005, 10.

can be one of the causes for the conflict. Approaches to improve the situation for the local population can improve their lives and help to reduce the grievances of the local population.

- **Informational** approaches to conflicts. Although information and propaganda is not a special characteristic of low-intensity conflicts, it has a different nature than in high-intensity conflicts, a consequence of and an expansion of the focus on the local population: “The theater commander needs to produce a more compelling narrative than his opponent in the minds of the people”.²⁷ The focus on the population is expanded in the sense that the information also targets people anywhere watching TV, using the internet or reading the news papers.

Role and Importance of Doctrine

Military doctrine provides guidelines for how to conduct military operations. It “refers to a set of rules, principles or prescriptions”²⁸ for military personnel. One might ask why the study of doctrine is important. “Doctrine is salient because it is central to how militaries execute their missions- it is how [they] operate. Doctrine, therefore, is an authoritative expression of a military's fundamental approach to fighting wars and influencing events in operations other than war.”²⁹ In short, doctrine is fundamental to the understanding of how armed forces operate, and is important in understanding how wars are conducted. Thus, to understand the actions of the United States’ “force in readiness”, one needs to understand its doctrines.

Marine Corps doctrine is divided into three levels:

1. Level one doctrines are higher order doctrines and they contain “the fundamental and enduring beliefs of warfighting [...] and the guiding doctrine for the conduct of major warfighting activities”. As Olof Kronvall stated, this is considered to be doctrine on the strategic level.³⁰

²⁷ Smith, "Thinking About the Utility of Force in War Amongst the People," 36.

²⁸ Olof Kronvall, *Doctrinal Transformation, U.S. Strategic Doctrine, 2001-2004* (Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College, 2005), 7.

²⁹ Cassidy, *Peacekeeping in the Abyss*, 3. Quoted in: Olof Kronvall, "Finally Eating Soup with a Knife?," *Oslo Files On Defence and Security* 05 (2007), 6.

³⁰ Kronvall, *Doctrinal Transformation*, 6-7.

2. Level two doctrines have a narrower focus detailing TTP [tactics, techniques and procedures] used in the prosecution of war or other assigned tasks.
3. Level three doctrines contain general reference and historical material.³¹

Although the source for this is from the 1997 series of doctrines, the division is also valid for the 1989 series of doctrines. Mainly, the doctrines discussed in this thesis are level one doctrines, with one major exception; *COIN-06*. Officially, *COIN-06* was a level two doctrine, however, its contents suggests a combination of level one and two, as will be discussed in chapter 4.

This thesis will occasionally refer to doctrines that are not published by the Marine Corps. These doctrines will mostly be Joint Publications, i.e. of an inter service nature. The reason why these are brought into the discussion is because they are valid for, and outrank, the doctrines of the individual armed services in the U.S. Military. Consequently, they can explain terms or concepts that were not explained in Marine Corps doctrine.

Doctrinal Theory

There are several factors that influence the doctrinal development, which will be briefly addressed in this chapter. In the available literature, they have been used to explain organizational development; however, the close relationship between the doctrines and the organization makes these applicable to doctrinal change. First, in his Ph.D. thesis, David Ucko stated that the factors that prevented the learning of counterinsurgency in the Marine Corps organization in the 1960s and 1980s, doctrine included, were:

- **The conventional warfare culture of the U.S. Marine Corps.** Traditions and culture are an important part of any organization's self-conception, and may be especially in military organizations, making the Marine Corps culture a highly conservative force.
- **The lack of conceptual clarity concerning low intensity conflicts.** Low-intensity conflicts were bundled together in one large concept (like low-intensity conflicts) that obscured the individual characteristics of counterinsurgency and most likely other low-intensity conflicts too.

³¹ Warfighting Center United State Marine Corps, "Marine Corps Doctrine," (Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 1997) ² From now on, this doctrine will be termed Marine Corps Doctrine Overview in the references.

- **Low intensity conflicts (or Military Operations Other Than War) are “frontloaded with assumptions”.** In short, the Marine Corps did not expect to participate in low-intensity operations, and if they did, they assumed that they would perform combat like functions while leaving low-intensity functions to others. In short, they assumed they could avoid engagement in low-intensity conflicts.³²

Although Ucko’s thesis did not address the 1990s, the factors were likely to have had an impact on the developments.

In her thesis on why the U.S. had decided not to create a constabulary, Tammy Schultz operates with somewhat different explanations, all of which are applicable to the doctrinal development addressed in this thesis:

- **Neorealism.** In this thesis rationalism, not neorealism, will be applied, meaning the rational analysis of goals in a means-ends analysis.³³
- **Service Culture.** Schultz and Ucko seem to agree on the influence of culture on organizational change, and consequently on doctrinal change too.
- **Bureaucratic Politics.** An organization, in this case the Marine Corps, wants to capitalize on new markets, low-intensity conflicts, to increase their funding and power.
- **Organizational Inertia.** As organizations by nature prefer slow change to sudden change, the organizational development will happen slowly.³⁴

Additionally, technological change has traditionally been considered to be a factor in doctrinal development.³⁵

Based on this, I will use mainly seven different factors when explaining the development:

- **Service culture**
- **Lack of conceptual clarity concerning low-intensity conflicts**
- **The assumptions connected to low-intensity conflicts**

³² Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 67.

³³ Although Tammy Schultz uses the term neorealism, this thesis will apply *rationalism*, an issue that will be addressed in chapter 3.

³⁴ Tammy Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week: The Warrior’s Transformation to Win the Peace" (Georgetown University, 2005), 47.

³⁵ Kronvall, *Doctrinal Transformation*, 9.

- **Rationalist explanation**
- **Bureaucratic politics**
- **Organizational inertia**
- **Technology**

This thesis will argue that, out of all of the above factors, service culture was the most likely to have resisted the development of low-intensity elements in Marine Corps doctrine, while rationalism is the main factor that drove the development, mainly after 2003/2004. Before 2003, the rationalist factor had more of a mixed influence, depending on how the Marine Corps interpreted specific conflicts.

Research Status and Literature

To my knowledge, there is no comprehensive analysis of Marine Corps doctrine for the relevant period, let alone the occurrence of low-intensity elements. Most doctrine literature concerns the Army, and the only historical study of *COIN-06* from an Army perspective that I am aware of was done by Olof Kronvall.³⁶ Although the core issue of these papers, *COIN-06* and the Army, does not apply to this thesis, the analysis of the doctrine has still been helpful. However, this thesis goes more into depth than Kronvall's paper and makes a more thorough analysis of *COIN-06*. Also, Kronvall's paper analyses five different aspects of the doctrine: The character of insurgency, the basis of counterinsurgency strategy, the degree of army involvement, the use of force and the time frame of operations.³⁷

Literature on Marine Corps history, like Allan R. Millet's *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*³⁸, and Robert J. Moskin's *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*³⁹ are mostly concerned with organizational development, changes in leadership, technological change and military operations. They do not address doctrinal development in any comprehensive way.

There are several student papers from military schools on Marine Corps doctrine in the period; however, these are more specifically aimed at individual doctrines or types of doctrines. Many were aimed at *COIN-06*; however, none analyzed the low-intensity contents of the post Cold War doctrines to any extent. Even though these articles and papers have

³⁶ Kronvall, "Finally Eating Soup with a Knife?,".

³⁷ Kronvall, "Finally Eating Soup with a Knife?," 12-13.

³⁸ Millet, *Semper Fidelis*.

³⁹ Robert J. Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story* (New York: Little Brown & Co., 1992).

addressed some of the same issues as are addressed in this thesis, none address this in a comprehensive way. For instance, in his research project on U.S. irregular warfare doctrine, James M. Kimbrough examines theories behind insurgency and counterinsurgency, critiques of *COIN-06* and compares *COIN-06* with an Air Force counterpart.⁴⁰ Another example is Allen S. Ford's thesis *The Small War Manual and Marine Corps Military Operations Other Than War Doctrine* [*MOOTW*].⁴¹ The thesis was mostly concerned with the *Small Wars Manual*'s status in the doctrinal hierarchy, rather than the actual *MOOTW* doctrine at the time. In his paper on doctrinal transformation in the U.S. Military between 2001 and 2004, Olof Kronvall must have encountered some similar tendencies when he stated that:

A substantial portion of the relevant literature is focused on suggesting improvements of current doctrine or policy, and some of it is rather polemical in nature. But this does not automatically invalidate the description and/or analysis given in a specific text. As long as a politicized or otherwise polemical text fulfills [scientific standards], I have not *a priori* excluded it.⁴²

When explaining the development between 1989 and 2006, the most relevant literature is Tammy Schultz' PhD thesis on the decision not to develop a U.S. constabulary⁴³ and David Ucko's PhD thesis on the transformation of the U.S. Military for stability operations.⁴⁴ Both discuss doctrine; however, they are concerned with the overall organizational change, in which doctrine is only a part.

Sources

The main sources for the doctrinal analysis of this thesis are the doctrines themselves, consisting mainly of two individual series of doctrines, the 1989 series and 1997 series. As was mentioned earlier, Marine Corps doctrine consists of three levels, and the majority of the doctrines on which this thesis is based are from the top level, with a few exceptions; the 2006 counterinsurgency doctrine, the 1980 counterinsurgency doctrine (the only Marine Corps doctrine that does not belong to either the 1989 or 1997 series), the 1987 *Small Wars Manual* reprint and a few joint doctrines.

⁴⁰ James Kimbrough, "Examining U.S. Irregular Warfare Doctrine" (Department of the Air Force, 2008).

⁴¹ Allen S. Ford, "The Small Wars Manual and Marine Corps Military Operations Other Than War Doctrine" (Master of Military Art and Science, Auburn University, 2003)

⁴² Kronvall, *Doctrinal Transformation*, 8.

⁴³ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week".

⁴⁴ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations,".

The most senior Marine Corps doctrines from the 1997 series are available from the internet, and are easily available on U.S. military web pages.⁴⁵ Some of the doctrines that are unavailable on military web sites can be found at a web-site that publishes various documents on the internet. This is, however, an unreliable source, as one can not know whether the documents are truly original. In this thesis, all doctrines have been either scanned from printed versions found in the Marine Corps library Marine Corps Library at Quantico, Virginia, or they have been downloaded from the Joint Electronic Library.⁴⁶

The 1989 series is not as easily available as the 1997 series. The only doctrine available from the net is the *Warfighting-89* doctrine. However, this is not from an official U.S. Military web site, and it must be treated as a potentially non-original source if it is used.⁴⁷ The doctrines that have been used in this thesis, however, were scanned from printed versions of the doctrine found in the Marine Corps Library in Quantico, Virginia. Some of the 1989 doctrines are available from Library of Congress in Washington D.C., however, the complete collection is, as far as I know, only available at the Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia. Alternately, there are companies that specialize on outdated military manuals which can procure these doctrines at a cost. Nevertheless, in order to get 100% reliable material, it is most likely necessary to travel to the Marine Corps Library or other official government institutions.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapters two and three address the Warfighting doctrines from 1989 and 1997. Chapter two discusses the contents of the doctrines, while chapter three discusses the reasons for the lack of development towards low-intensity and counterinsurgency. Chapters four and five address

⁴⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Joint Electronic Library" <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/index.html>. Accessed 09.05.2009

⁴⁶ The doctrines that were found on CDs and are available online from the Joint Electronic Library are:

- MCDP 1.
- United States Marine Corps, "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-1 Strategy," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1997). From now on, this doctrine will be termed MCDP 1-1 in the references.
- United States Marine Corps, "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-2, Campaigning," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1997). From now on, this doctrine will be termed MCDP 1-2 in the references.
- United States Marine Corps, "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-3 Tactics," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1997). From now on, this doctrine will be termed MCDP 1-3 in the references.
- "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-0 Operations," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2001). From now on, this doctrine will be termed MCDP 1-0 in the references.
- MCWP 3-33.5.

⁴⁷ This website has not been used as a source for this thesis, however, *Warfighting-89* can be accessed at: <http://www.marines.cc/downloads/FMFM1/FMFM1-1.pdf>

the counterinsurgency doctrine from 2006 (*COIN-06*) in a similar fashion, with chapter four discussing the contents of the doctrine and the changes that were made from the 1997 series of doctrines and chapter five addressing the question of why the changes happened. Chapter six outlines the development from the accentuation of warfighting to the stressing of counterinsurgency, why this was such a slow process and which factors were decisive when the changes happened.

Chapter 2: Warfighting

“The Marine Corps, as the nation’s force-in-readiness, must have the versatility and flexibility to deal with a situation at any intensity across the entire spectrum of conflict.”¹

Introduction

This quote is taken from both *Fleet Marine Force Manual I Warfighting (Warfighting-89)*, published in 1989, and *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication I Warfighting (Warfighting-97)*, published in 1997. Being proficient across the spectrum of conflict implies having doctrines that are applicable to low-intensity as well as high-intensity conflicts. In fact, it suggests that this was an integral part of being the nation’s force-in-readiness, a readiness which is fundamental in justifying the Marine Corps as a separate service. This chapter will analyze *Warfighting-89*, and its successor *Warfighting-97*. The analysis has two aims: Firstly to analyze the doctrines in order to identify elements of low-intensity conflicts, and secondly to trace any development between the two doctrines. Subordinate doctrines will be used to exemplify where that is appropriate. I will also suggest possible operational consequences of the doctrines, although this will not constitute a major part of this chapter.

At the time of writing, *Warfighting-97* is still the formally, authoritative doctrine. Recent developments on both the doctrinal and operational fronts, however, have made this doctrine obsolete and in need of an updated version. The developments on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, the publication of the *counterinsurgency* manual in 2006 and a more prominent counterinsurgency community are the main reasons for this. These developments will be addressed in chapters 4 and 5.

The Warfighting doctrines contained the Marine Corps’ most fundamental thoughts on war and conflict, and they establish the theoretical framework for all subordinate doctrines in their respective series. The analysis of these doctrines will therefore lay out the basic premises for how I will approach later chapters.

This analysis will first address the doctrines that were specifically aimed at low-intensity conflicts in this period. Following this it will make some considerations about the title of the Warfighting doctrines. The last part of this chapter is the main part, where I will analyze the doctrines and address the five criteria that were listed in the introduction: 1)A

¹ FMFM 1, 22, and MCDP 1, 27.

focus on the population. 2) Political/diplomatic approach to conflicts. 3) Constructive or reconstructive approaches to conflicts. 4) Economic approach to conflicts. 5) Informational approaches to conflicts. Finally I will conclude the chapter.

This chapter will argue that, even though there were some developments from 1989 to 1997, the general impression is that there were few references to any of the criteria that were listed in either of the doctrines.

Low-Intensity Doctrines

Before analyzing the Warfighting doctrines, it is important to note that there were two publications specifically aimed at low-intensity conflicts in this period: the Counterinsurgency doctrine published in 1980 (*COIN-80*) and the reprinted *Small Wars Manual*. These, however, were of such modest importance, that they will not figure in the discussion below. There are several reasons for that. Even though *COIN-80* was the official counterinsurgency doctrine until 2006, it was published in 1980 and was a part of an effort to introduce counterinsurgency to the Marine Corps, an effort that failed for several reasons.² Secondly, it is not mentioned as a contributor to low-intensity operations in the 1990s in any literature on the subject. Thirdly, the *Small Wars Manual*, actually a reprint of the *Small Wars Manual* first printed in 1940, was published in 1987 as a reference for low-intensity operations. The reprint of a 50 years old doctrine indicated that the previously mentioned *COIN-80* was either considered to be unsuitable to handle the low-intensity conflicts, or it was just ignored or forgotten.

The problems with the *Small Wars Manual* had to do with its status. Its official title was *Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication 12-15 Small Wars Manual*. It was a reference publication, and the foreword of the 1987 reprint stated its purpose:

Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication (FMFRP) 12-15, *Small Wars Manual*, is published to ensure the retention and dissemination of useful information which is not intended to become doctrine or to be published in Fleet Marine Force manuals. FMFRP's in the 12 series are a special category of publications: reprints of historical works which and [sic] are no longer in print.³

²The three reasons being 1)The conventional warfare culture of the US Marine Corps. 2) The lack of conceptual clarity concerning low intensity conflicts. 3) Low intensity conflicts (or Military Operations Other Than War) are "frontloaded with assumptions". For more on this process, see Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations."

³ United States Marine Corps, "Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication 12-15," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1990), foreword. From now on, this doctrine will be termed FMFRP 12-15 in the references.

Consequently, it was not a doctrinal publication and lacked the status to actually have a serious impact on the Marine Corps.⁴

Warfighting

“As the nation’s expeditionary force-in-readiness, the Marine Corps must maintain itself for immediate employment in “any clime and place” and in any type of conflict. All peacetime activities should focus on achieving combat readiness.”⁵

The doctrines themselves stated that most conflicts involving the Marine Corps would be low-intensity conflicts. They have also stated that a military that is highly proficient at full scale warfare might be ill prepared for low-intensity environments. The implication of the above quote was that combat was the solution to all conflicts the Marine Corps was likely to get involved in; however, low intensity conflicts are not necessarily all about combat, quite the contrary. This was a priority of conventional or conventional-like missions, and, as we shall see, was indicative of the Marine Corps’ perception of conflicts.

Political Approaches to Conflicts

The doctrines were adamant about the primacy of policy. Military force was *not* to be used just for the sake of using force; it was to be applied as a means of attaining political ends. “[W]ar *must serve policy*.”⁶ Nevertheless, some conflicts were considered to be more political than others, that is, political solutions were considered to be more important than military. If the objective of a war was unlimited (as in a high intensity conflict), that is the destruction of the enemy government; war was more military and less political. The more limited the objective was (as in low-intensity conflicts), war would appear more political and less military.

Both doctrines agreed on this matter. However, *Warfighting-97* explicitly stated that “many political problems cannot be solved by military means.”⁷ This could be of significant importance to this thesis. The significance of this statement depended on who would handle the civilian elements (infrastructure, justice system, economy and such) and who would handle the military (combat) elements in a low-intensity conflict. The doctrines were not clear on this, as this specific issue did not receive attention. However, if the Marine Corps expected

⁴ For more on this subject, see Ford, “The Small Wars Manual and Marine Corps Military Operations Other Than War Doctrine.”

⁵ FMFM 1, 41 and MCDP 1, 53.

⁶ FMFM 1, 19 and MCDP 1, 23. Author’s italics.

⁷ FMFM 1, 19 and MCDP 1, 24.

civilian agencies, allies or host nations government to take care of the civilian tasks, one would not have expected much attention to low-intensity conflicts. If the Marine Corps expected to take care of both civilian and military tasks, one would expect the doctrine to reflect this by including civilian tasks.

How does *Warfighting-89* and *Warfighting-97* deal with the full spectrum aspirations? The first indication as to their focus are their titles; *Warfighting*. *Warfighting-89* defines war as “a state of hostilities that exists between or among nations, characterized by the use of military force. The essence of war is a violent clash between two hostile, independent, and irreconcilable wills, each trying to impose itself on the other.”⁸

Warfighting-97 defines war as

a violent clash of interests between or among organized groups characterized by the use of military force. These groups have traditionally been established nation-states, but they may also include any non-state group—such as an international coalition or a faction within or outside of an existing state—with its own political interests and the ability to generate organized violence on a scale sufficient to have significant political consequences.

The essence of war is a violent struggle between two hostile, independent, and irreconcilable wills, each trying to impose itself on the other.⁹

It is necessary to linger somewhat by these definitions of war. The Marine Corps considered the two wills in war as irreconcilable. Strictly interpreted, this effectively eliminated any diplomatic or political solution and made war a zero-sum game where there was only victory and defeat, nothing in between.

The 1997 series of doctrines defined war more precisely in a subordinate doctrine, the *Strategy-97* doctrine.¹⁰ The doctrine concluded that war is:

- Organized violence.
- Waged by two or more distinguishable groups against each other.
- In pursuit of some political end.
- Sufficiently large in scale and in social impact to attract the attention of political leaders.
- Continued long enough for the interplay between the opponents to have some impact on political events.¹¹

⁸ FMFM 1, 3.

⁹ MCDP 1, 3.

¹⁰ MCDP 1-1, 14-16.

¹¹ MCDP 1-1, 15-16.

The issue of organization was elaborated on:

A single assassination, while certainly a violent political act, does not constitute a war. On the other hand, large-scale, long-term violence alone does not necessarily mean war either. For example, over a 25-year period—1969 through 1994—some 3,000 people were killed in Northern Ireland for an average of 120 deaths per year in a population of 1.5 million. For that same period, there were approximately 291 murders per year committed in Washington, D.C. in an average population of 642,000. The former situation is widely recognized as war, while the latter is not. The difference is a matter of organization.¹²

What can be deduced from these two definitions? Both of them, even the more precise definition that was offered in *Warfighting-97*, were quite vague. Both can include most conflicts, even organized riots and conflicts within organized crime, depending on the subjective interpretation of the reader.

Aside from the 1997 elaborated definition of war, there was one notable change from *Warfighting-89* to *Warfighting-97*. In *Warfighting-89*, the definition still used the nation as the basic unit in war. The severity of a conflict does not entirely depend on whether the actors are states, criminal organizations, tribes, terror organizations and so on. *Warfighting-97* was thus more adjusted to low-intensity conflicts, as these are generally considered to be more likely to have non-state actors as major parties.

Titling the authoritative doctrines “Warfighting” inevitably gives some associations, mostly to high-intensity warfare, and describing the wills in war as irreconcilable indicated a focus on high-intensity combat as the only solution to war and conflict.

The Marine Corps’ concept of the conduct of war supports my interpretation of the definition of war. As it was expressed in *Warfighting-89* “[t]he challenge is to identify and adopt a concept of Warfighting consistent with our understanding of the nature and theory of war and the realities of the modern battlefield.”¹³ For all practical purposes of this thesis, *Warfighting-97* presented the same challenge.¹⁴ War and battle were the central premises.

Nevertheless, both doctrines included the spectrum of conflict, and stated that the challenge “requires a concept that is consistently effective across the full spectrum of conflict because we cannot attempt to change our basic doctrine from situation to situation and expect to be proficient.”¹⁵ This statement was somewhat at odds with the challenge mentioned above in the sense that the challenge was concerned with high-intensity conflicts, while the spectrum

¹² MCDP 1-1, 15.

¹³ FMFM 1, 57.

¹⁴ “The challenge is to develop a concept of Warfighting consistent with our understanding of the nature and theory of war and the realities of the modern battlefield.” in MCDP 1, 71.

¹⁵ FMFM 1, 57 and MCDP 1, 71.

included both high and low-intensity conflicts. How was this reflected in the doctrine? First, maneuver warfare was considered to be the solution to the challenge.¹⁶ As *Warfighting-97* stated, maneuver warfare did not exclude low intensity missions; however, both doctrines were focused on high-intensity conflicts when they described it.¹⁷

In general, both doctrines acknowledged the political nature of low-intensity conflicts, *Warfighting-97* especially so. But their definition of war and description of the actual conduct of war suggests a priority of high-intensity conflicts. To be more specific, the Marine Corps considered political solutions to be outside its area of responsibility, something which is supported when analyzing the three levels of war in the doctrine.

In low-intensity conflicts, actions at the tactical level can often have larger strategic and political implications than in high-intensity conflicts. For instance, tactical actions that kill civilians, like indiscriminate firing into crowds, will consequently have more of a strategic (and consequently political) effect in a low-intensity conflict than in a high intensity one. It was therefore important that Marines at all levels of command have a clear understanding of the strategic level of conflict and their impact on it. The status of the strategic level of war can indicate the status of political approaches to conflicts in the Marine Corps.¹⁸

The 1989 series of doctrines, the Fleet Marine Force Manuals, consisted of four doctrines, all of them written from a military strategic point of view:

1. "Warfighting"
2. "Campaigning"
3. "The Role of the Marine Corps in the National Defense"
4. "Tactics"¹⁹

¹⁶ FMFM 1, 58 and MCDP 1, 72.

¹⁷ FMFM 1, 58-61 and MCDP 1, 72-76.

¹⁸ The Marine Corps asserted that War has three levels, the strategic, operational and the tactical level.

¹⁹ Strategic doctrines in the 1989 series:

- FMFM 1 (Warfighting).
- Department of the Navy; "Fleet Marine Force Manual 1-1 Campaigning," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1990). From now on, this doctrine will be termed FMFM 1-1 in the references.
- Department of the Navy; "Fleet Marine Force Manual 1-2 the Role of the Marine Corps in the National Defense," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1991). From now on, this doctrine will be termed FMFM 1-2 in the references.
- Department of the Navy; "Fleet Marine Force Manual 1-3 Tactics," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1991). From now on, this doctrine will be termed FMFM 1-3 in the references.

The 1997 series of doctrines, the Marine Corps Doctrinal Publications, also had four doctrines with a strategic point of view:

1. “Warfighting”
2. “Strategy”
3. “Campaigning”
4. “Tactics”,²⁰

The significance here lies in the fact that there was no doctrine explicitly focused on the strategic level in the 1989 series of doctrines.²¹ The lack of a strategic doctrine can indicate that the political approaches were considered to be more important in the 1997 series than in the 1989 series of doctrines.

However, the introduction of a doctrine on the strategic level does not necessarily mean that the intention was to improve the low intensity qualities of the doctrines. It certainly was not new that there was a strategic level to war, and a doctrine devoted to the strategic level would be useful for the Marine Corps in a high-intensity conflict as well. Nevertheless, the introduction of a doctrine explicitly referring to the strategic level of war *could* indicate a greater appreciation of the political dimensions of low-intensity conflicts.

Other Low-intensity Approaches to Conflict

Even though the 1989 series did not have a strategic doctrine, both *Warfighting-89* and *Warfighting-97* discussed the strategic level of war, and analyzing this is important in appreciating the Marine Corps’ thoughts on low-intensity approaches.

The Marine Corps divided strategy into different levels, with the national strategy at the highest level and the military strategy subjected to it.²² *Warfighting-89* defined military strategy as “the art of winning wars”.²³ Implicitly, this formulation gave preference to high-intensity conflicts when using the term war, as war is usually associated with high-intensity conflicts. The general interpretation of the doctrine so far supports this. On this point, there

²⁰ Strategic doctrines of the 1997 series:

- MCDP 1.
- MCDP 1-1.
- MCDP 1-2.
- MCDP 1-3.

²¹ This situation was a bit of a paradox, as in 1989, the Marine Corps had four doctrines that that were written from a strategic point of view without actually addressing the strategic level in a separate doctrine.

²² FMFM 1, 22 and MCDP 1, 28.

²³ FMFM 1, 22.

was a substantial change in the eight years that passed between the two publications, because *Warfighting-97* defined military strategy as “the art of winning wars and *securing peace*.”²⁴ This change was reflected in the doctrine’s treatment of the tactical level.

Tactics refers to the concepts and methods used to accomplish a particular mission in either combat or other military operations. In war, tactics focuses on the application of combat power to defeat an enemy force in combat at a particular time and place. In noncombat situations, tactics may include the schemes and methods by which we perform other missions, such as enforcing order and maintaining security during peacekeeping operations.²⁵

Combat and noncombat situations were in this case treated on equal terms, which was a significant change from *Warfighting-89* and was in accordance with the full spectrum intent. Low-intensity conflicts were taken into the account, and it suggests an awareness that alternatives to violent methods existed, however, it did not refer to specific solutions. To really increase the importance of political solutions to low-intensity conflicts, both *Warfighting-97* and subordinate doctrines would have had to elaborate on these intentions and statements. And to a certain degree, this also happened. For instance, in the *Campaigning-97* the Marine Corps admits that a campaign contains both military and non-military elements. Also, the *Campaigning-97* doctrine devoted three pages to the British 1948-1960 Malaysia campaign.²⁶ The campaign was of a low-intensity nature against a Communist insurgency, and the aim was to leave an independent Malaysia with a stable, non Communist government. According to *Campaigning-97* the British succeeded in this, in close collaboration with Malaysian military and civilian agencies. The example used military, political and economic approaches, and also gave the local population a fair bit of attention.²⁷

Another example of low-intensity conflicts was found in *Warfighting-97*. The *Combined Action Program* (CAP) from the Vietnam War (a prime example of a low intensity approach) was among the examples of maneuver warfare.²⁸ The *Combined Actions Program* was a part of winning the hearts and minds of the rural Vietnamese population, where US Marines and South Vietnamese units worked on securing individual South Vietnamese villages from the Vietcong.²⁹ Characterizing CAP as an example of maneuver warfare was a bit of a stretch, as there were few maneuver elements in this program. The use of CAP as an

²⁴ MCDP 1, 28. My italics.

²⁵ MCDP 1, 28-29.

²⁶ MCDP 1-2, 56-58.

²⁷ MCDP 1-2, 56-58.

²⁸ Maneuver warfare is basically a high-intensity approach to warfare, focusing on outmaneuvering enemy forces, focusing on their weak points, instead of meeting them head on in a battle of attrition.

²⁹ For more reading on CAP, see Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, 1st pbk. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 304-307.

example of maneuver warfare was an indication that low-intensity conflicts had increased in importance in the period between the publishing of *Warfighting-89* and *Warfighting-97*. However, classifying CAP as a maneuver operation was to put a low-intensity approach into a high-intensity setting, which was to neglect the nature of the mission.

Consequently, the Marine Corps' attention to low-intensity solutions increased in 1997, however, *Warfighting-97* and its subordinate doctrines only referred to them in general terms. The Marine Corps thus seemed to perceive that low-intensity conflicts required different approaches, but did not elaborate much on it. An analysis of what the Marine Corps' considered to be the means in war and its view on the spectrum of conflict confirms this.

The Means in War

According to *Warfighting-89*, there were two ways of imposing ones will on the enemy.³⁰ “[E]ither eliminate his physical ability to resist or, short of this, we must destroy his will to resist. In military terms, this means the *defeat of the enemy’s fighting forces*, but always in a manner and to a degree consistent with the national policy objective.”³¹ Furthermore, *Warfighting-89* described the means in war. “[W]hile we [the Marine Corps] will focus on the use of *military force*, we must not consider it in isolation from the other elements of national power [diplomacy, economics, ideology, technology and culture].”³² The former quote suggested a clear preference for high intensity conflicts. The latter quote suggested that the Marine Corps is concerned with the use of force while the remaining efforts in a conflict situation were left for others to take deal with.

Military force is the key term in this case, and both *Warfighting-89* and *Warfighting-97* admitted that it can take several forms, ranging from high intensity warfare to demonstrations of force.³³ This is a very general statement and could be of significance for low-intensity conflicts. However, *Warfighting-89* asserted that “[t]he principal means for the application of military force is combat violence in the form of armed conflict between military or paramilitary forces.”³⁴ This was an explicit preference of high intensity conflict and low-intensity operations that are similar to conventional war. In practice, this statement barred most low-intensity conflicts from the doctrine, as it implicitly excluded approaches like

³⁰ Referring to the belief that war is struggle between two irreconcilable wills, each trying to impose itself on the other, which is intimately connected to the means in war. See footnote 7 and 8.

³¹ FMFM 1, 20. My italics.

³² Although phrased differently, practically the same was stated in *Warfighting-97*. See: FMFM 1, 20 and MCDP 1, 25-26.

³³ FMFM 1, 20 and MCDP 1, 26.

³⁴ FMFM 1, 20.

reconstruction and economy. Even though it did not exclude other means than military force, it certainly did not include them either.

Campaigning-89 illustrated the general aversion towards more civilian tasks in the 1989 series of doctrines. The doctrine hardly mentioned low-intensity conflicts at all. The few references to low-intensity operations put them either within a maneuver warfare context, or were practically thrown in without any further explanation or justification.³⁵ In practice, low-intensity conflicts were nonexistent in this doctrine. In *Campaigning-97*, examples are somewhat more developed, as it was stated that “the tactics employed to win in actual combat may prevent success at a higher level”, using the example that heavy handed tactics in a growing insurgency can alienate the population if it causes widespread collateral damage.³⁶ This was, however, the only low-intensity example directly related specifically to the means in war in this doctrine.

Both doctrines explicitly stated that low-intensity conflicts were the most probable, but if that was the case, did it have an impact on the means in conflict? Both doctrines stated that “[a] modern military force capable of waging a war of high intensity may find itself ill-prepared for a ‘small’ war against a poorly equipped guerrilla force.”³⁷ This is at the core of this thesis and it seems clear that *Warfighting-89* was somewhat inconsistent. First, when it claimed that combat violence was the principal means for the application of military force, the doctrine was at odds with the next section, which stated that low-intensity conflicts were more probable than high-intensity conflicts and that a military force that was well prepared for high-intensity conflicts can find themselves struggling to cope in a low-intensity environment.³⁸ This was practically admitting that combat violence was only suited to solving a minority of the conflicts that the Marine Corps was expected to get involved in. The doctrine did not suggest any alternatives to violence.

The remaining doctrines in the 1989 series support this conclusion, as low-intensity conflicts were hardly referred to at all. *Campaigning-89* has already been mentioned, and the two remaining doctrines continued this trend. The *Role-89* did contain several sections dedicated to what was termed *Political Reinforcement Operations*, essentially low-intensity operations. This doctrine, however, only stated that this sort of mission was a Marine Corps responsibility, leaving it at that.³⁹ There were no suggestions as to the nature of, challenges

³⁵ FMFM 1-1, 39 and 47.

³⁶ MCDP 1-2, 14.

³⁷ FMFM 1, 22 and MCDP 1, 27-28.

³⁸ FMFM 1, 21-22.

³⁹ FMFM 1-2, 3-12 to 3-14.

inherent in, or solutions to a low-intensity conflict. The *Tactics-89* doctrine was completely bereft of any low-intensity contents.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the fact that there was a section dedicated to the spectrum of conflict in *Warfighting-89* suggests at least awareness that not all conflicts can be solved by traditional combat.

Like *Warfighting-89*, *Warfighting-97* identified two ways of imposing one's will on the enemy, with one important change that is relevant to this study. The second strategy, destroying the enemy's will to resist, was no longer focused on the destruction of the enemy's military forces. The new focus was on utilizing military forces to raise the cost of resistance to a level where the enemy leadership was no longer willing to pay the price, whatever that price was.⁴¹ That was an important change from *Warfighting-89*. The significance lies in the fact that the doctrine did not specify the destruction of the enemy's fighting forces as the primary means of solving conflicts with limited political goals, which diverged somewhat from the high-intensity paradigm. This does not, however, mean that low-intensity conflicts were included, as the focus was still on the enemy, not on the local population.

There was a problem with parties that cannot be destroyed or persuaded to give up, and this problem was accentuated in the *Strategy-97* doctrine when it discussed how to destroy the enemy's will (a strategy of erosion):

The first category of targets in an erosion strategy is the same as in an annihilation strategy: the enemy's armed forces. [...] On the other hand, certain assets that have limited military importance but are of critical economic or psychological value—a capital city or key seaport—may be seized. [...] A third possible target in an erosion strategy is the enemy leadership's domestic political position. Money, arms, and information can be provided to internal opponents of the leadership. The purpose is to make enemy leaders feel so endangered that they will make peace in order to focus on their domestic enemies.⁴²

Out of these three categories, it was the third which was the closest to a low-intensity approach. However, it was only considered from a conventional, high-intensity, point of view.

There were certain differences between *Warfighting-89* and *Warfighting-97* on the issue of military force. First of all, while *Warfighting-89* specified combat violence as the primary means of military force, *Warfighting-97* had removed this sentence in its entirety. Consequently, *Warfighting-97* opened up for other options, like reconstruction and financial approaches. Also, *Warfighting-97* used enforcing a negotiated truce, a typical low intensity

⁴⁰ FMFM 1-3.

⁴¹ MCDP 1, 25.

⁴² MCDP 1-1, 85-86.

conflict, when it exemplified different uses of military force.⁴³ This was in concert with a full spectrum objective and provided an opportunity to develop low-intensity doctrines on a more equal basis with high-intensity doctrines. Nevertheless, the Marine Corps did not abandon its focus on conventional war, as it stated that “[o]ur primary concern is with the use of *military force*.”⁴⁴ In other words, when describing the means in war, the Marine Corps prioritized conventional, high-intensity warfare and missions that are similar to it, while other, civilian tasks were left for other parties to take care of.

Not only were low-intensity conflicts practically absent from this part of both Warfighting doctrines, the section was also inconsistent with the full spectrum aim. If the Marine Corps wanted to function across the spectrum of conflict, it would have to develop the capability to handle the challenges that are inherent in these conflicts. In theory it is possible for a military to deal exclusively with combat, even in a low intensity conflict like a peace enforcing mission. This presupposes that partners like other government agencies, coalition partners or host nation forces and agencies address issues like policing, distribution of food, infrastructure and so on. However, on a real mission, these partners are not always capable of performing such missions. Sometimes, the only ones capable of performing in an uncertain and often violent environment will be the military (in this case the Marine Corps).

The Spectrum of Conflict

Defining the spectrum of conflict, both doctrines stated that “conflict can take a wide range of forms, constituting a spectrum which reflects the magnitude of violence involved.”⁴⁵

Nevertheless, they both assert that high-intensity conflicts can have periods of relatively low-intensity, and vice versa, as the level of intensity can fluctuate within one specific conflict.⁴⁶

Consequently, the spectrum is defined from the level of violence, not the means applied in war, which suggests a preference for a military solution to conflicts.⁴⁷

It is interesting that, in *Warfighting-89*, nuclear war was used as an extreme example of high intensity conflict, while there were no examples of low intensity conflict.⁴⁸ The understanding of the lower part of the spectrum was thus not as well developed in this doctrine as it was in *Warfighting-97*, where military operations other than war (*MOOTW*)

⁴³ MCDP 1, 26.

⁴⁴ MCDP 1, 26.

⁴⁵ FMFM 1, 21 and MCDP 1 26.

⁴⁶ FMFM 1, 21 and MCDP 1 26-27.

⁴⁷ James M. Dubik, "The Two Senses of 'Full Spectrum'," *Army Magazine* November 2008.

⁴⁸ FMFM 1, 21.

were used as an example of low-intensity conflicts. *MOOTW* was a new term in *Warfighting-97* and did not exist in *Warfighting-89*.

In *Warfighting-97*, it was not clear exactly what *MOOTW* was meant to encompass, as it included a very wide range of operations. The term was introduced by and defined in *Joint Publication 3-07*. This doctrine was consequently valid for all of the services, not just the Marine Corps, and stated that “MOOTW focus on deterring war, resolving conflict, promoting peace, and supporting civil authorities in response to domestic crises.”⁴⁹ The lack of precise definition limited *Warfighting-97*’s usefulness as a basis for subordinate doctrines. Tammy Schultz points out in her 2005 dissertation; there also are three basic problems with the *MOOTW* term:

First, definition by negation implicitly assumes that one agrees on the definition of war, a risky assumption at best. Second, the writers drafting the new FM 100-5 [US Army field manual] struggled with the term “MOOTW” because it did not describe what the troops were doing on the ground. Instead, the missions proved to be “combinations” of different kinds of operations. Third, separating these missions (war from MOOTW) allowed for the creation of a hierarchy of missions, with MOOTW clearly taking second place.⁵⁰

Schultz’ first point is, as we have already seen, quite interesting. The definition of war, which was addressed at the start of this chapter, and *MOOTW* were so vague that they can be interpreted almost any way one wants. The vagueness could have been a source for confusion about the Marine Corps’ perception of the most basic terms in the military in general; what is war, and what is not war.

Schultz’ second point is of critical importance to this thesis. A conflict consists of several types of operations, and this was recognized in Marine Corps doctrine as shown above. The separation between war and *MOOTW* created a problem, because every conflict can vary in intensity. Schultz’ third point is important as well, as it touches upon the essence of this thesis, namely that high intensity conflict (or war) was considered the most important mission of the Marine Corps. At first, this appears to be a paradox, seeing as *Warfighting-97* stated explicitly that low intensity conflicts (or *MOOTW*) were considered to be the most likely missions of the Marine Corps.

Notwithstanding that the *MOOTW* term was problematic, the Marine Corps seems to have made an attempt at including low-intensity conflicts when *MOOTW* was introduced in

⁴⁹ JP 3-07, I-1.

⁵⁰ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week", 165.

Warfighting-97. However it is obvious that the Marine Corps was mostly preoccupied with the high end of the conflict spectrum, in large part ignoring low-intensity conflicts.

It seems clear then, that the Marine Corps' means in war were concentrated on high intensity warfare in all conflicts, even if they were of a low-intensity nature. The civilian tasks that are the hallmarks of low-intensity conflicts were outsourced to other agencies, allies or host nation governments. The likely consequences of this were that, when the civilian tasks could not be outsourced, the Marine Corps could be unprepared for these missions, as was outlined by the Marine Corps itself.

The Marine Corps' approach to the means in war and the spectrum of conflict acknowledged that low-intensity conflicts required alternatives to a purely military solution; however, this did not result in a discussion of the means in a comprehensive way. The most detailed treatment was in the discussion of the British counterinsurgency campaign in Malaysia in *Campaigning-97*.

Potential Consequences of the High-Intensity Focus

As we have seen from the discussion, both Warfighting doctrines were geared towards conventional, high-intensity warfare. This priority could, potentially, have had severe consequences for the level of competence and preparedness for low-intensity missions. The lack of a theoretical and conceptual base for low-intensity conflicts could have contributed to training and operations concentrating on conventional warfare. What would have happened when the challenge was reconstruction for example, not battle? Both the troops on the ground and their officers would be learning from scratch when entering a low intensity conflict. The troops on the ground and their commanders would have expected combat since this was what doctrine and training had prepared them for, and it is not unlikely that they would have engaged in combat, even when violence was not called for. As was explained earlier, tactical actions are much more likely to have strategic implications in a low-intensity conflict. Consequently, the strategic implications of tactical mistakes could be disastrous if the battle was for the hearts and minds of the local populace, and not the enemy army. I do not have the data to support this as a scientific conclusion; however it was likely that a doctrine that was not adjusted to low-intensity conflicts could have contributed to this sort of situation. In other words, the US Marine Corps could have been completely unprepared for low-intensity missions, which is in large part supported by the performance of US forces in the War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Conclusion

In general, both *Warfighting-89* and *Warfighting-97* were written with high intensity, conventional war as the focal point. Both doctrines were saturated by a preference for high-intensity conflict, clearly stated in all the chapters and their sections. With that said, there was a development from 1989 to 1997. *Warfighting-97* was more accepting of low-intensity conflicts and its consequences than was *Warfighting-89*. *Warfighting-89* accepted that a full spectrum force was necessary, but it did not accept the consequences of this, as it focused almost exclusively on high-intensity conflicts. In most ways *Warfighting-97* did not accept the changes needed to create a full spectrum doctrine either. However, it did include low-intensity in some of its concepts and philosophies. Nevertheless, this was only done on a superficial level, and substantial changes did not occur. Consequently, the spectrum of conflict was more of an intent, not containing much substance. The headline of this chapter and the title of the doctrines are thus indicative of the contents of them, as they concentrated on high-intensity warfare, giving little attention to low-intensity conflicts.

The consequences for the performance in low-intensity conflicts could have been serious, as the troops and their commanders would have been unprepared for the special requirements of a low-intensity environment. The results of being unprepared are still visible in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Chapter 3:

Explaining the Warfighting Doctrines

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss why the changes in the Warfighting doctrines were so limited, despite the increasing occurrence of low-intensity conflicts. As explained in the introduction to this thesis, my ambitions are limited for two reasons. Doing independent research on this issue is too comprehensive for this master thesis, and existing research into this exact issue is rather limited. The conclusions are in large part taken from studies that are concerned with general *organizational* change in both the Marine Corps and the Army, in roughly the same period as is relevant for this thesis.¹ Consequently, this chapter should be seen as a starting point for further research.

The argument emerging from this chapter is that out of all of the seven factors mentioned in the introduction, the service culture was most likely to have been the largest impediment to a development of low-intensity doctrines, and technology could have contributed to this. The influence of the rationalist perspective is uncertain; however, it would have been mixed, as the 1990s had an array of different mission.

This chapter will begin with a description of theories on doctrinal development, followed by a short overview of the operational experiences in the 1990s. Next, I will discuss the impact of culture on the doctrinal development, after which I will address the influence of the rationalist factor. Then I will address the remaining factors that explain the development and their impact on the doctrine development and finally I will conclude.

Doctrinal Theory

According to Olof Kronvall, there are four traditional ways of approaching the subject of doctrinal change and development; the cultural, rationalist, technological change and bureaucratic politics perspective.² In addition, this thesis applies three other factors, organizational inertia, the assumptions connected to low-intensity conflicts and the lack of conceptual clarity that surrounded low-intensity conflicts.

¹ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week;" Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," and Terry Terriff, "Warriors and Innovators: Military Change and Organizational Culture in the Us Marine Corps " *Defence Studies* Vol. 6, no. 2 (2006).

² Kronvall, Olof, *Underlag til FHS forskningsseminarium i krigsvetenskap*, (FHS/KVI/FoU 2005), 11-13.

- First, there is the “cultural perspective”. In her dissertation, Tammy Schultz quoted James Q. Wilson when she defined culture as “a persistent, patterned way of thinking about the central tasks of and human relationships within an organization. Culture is to an organization what personality is to an individual.”³

The US military in general has been geared towards big-war scenarios and has developed a culture that favors conventional warfare. However, conventional practices are not always appropriate for low-intensity conflicts. Schultz stressed the predominance of the *Warrior Ethos* in the Marine Corps. She did not define the warrior ethos explicitly; however, she mentioned a few key words that are essential to it: camaraderie, honor, and respect for innocents, machismo, maximum firepower and force protection.⁴ Out of these, the first three are easily combined with counterinsurgency and low-intensity conflicts; however, the last three are not very compatible. The Warrior Ethos has been a central part of the Marine Corps’ culture for most of its history, and was thus deeply rooted in the period between 1989 and 2006. Whether it changed or not during this period is hard to say. There was a significant move towards a full spectrum *doctrine* from 1997 to 2006, however this alone can not be used as evidence of a cultural change.

- With the rationalist perspective, the development of doctrine is thought to be a product of the rational analysis of goals. It is basically a means-ends analysis. Olof Kronvall describes it as a rational response to political, military and other changes in the state’s environment.⁵ If the realist perspective was the most influential, it follows that external forces had a major impact on doctrine. The threat environment, as perceived by the Marine Corps, would be central to this perspective.

In her thesis, Tammy Schultz uses neorealism as a perspective, and she asserts that “[d]octrine is determined by [...] perceived external threat environment.”⁶ In the neo-realist case, the focus of the doctrines will be the survival of the state. “Neorealism would predict no change in a state’s [...] doctrine unless a perceived external threat to survival necessitated adaptation.”⁷ Schultz used these five tenets in defining neorealism: 1) The international system is anarchic. 2) States are the main actors in this system. 3) At a

³ Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*, 91. Quoted in: Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week;", 39.

⁴ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week;" 40.

⁵ Olof Kronvall, *Underlag Til Fhs Forskningsseminarium I Krigsvetenskap* (Stockholm: FHS/KVI/FoU, 2005), 9.

⁶ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week," 47.

⁷ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week," 38.

minimum, states seek survival. 4) States pursue their ends in a rational way. 5) The international system is a self-help system.⁸ This perspective overlaps with the rationalist perspective in many respects. Nevertheless, the rationalist perspective seems to be the most fruitful approach. The neorealism perspective was developed for Schultz' thesis on why the U.S. did not develop a constabulary. Developing a constabulary is a more of a fundamental change to the military compared to changing a doctrine, and it is fitted to measure changes at an even more fundamental level than doctrine.

- The third perspective is that of technological change and its impact on doctrinal development. The development in technology can potentially influence doctrine at a fundamental level, depending on the nature of the technology. For instance, information technology heavily influenced the development within the U.S. Military in the 1980s. For the Marine Corps, the end result of this development was the publication of the *Warfighting-89* and the institutionalization of the Maneuver Warfare concept.⁹
- Fourth there is the “bureaucratic politics” perspective, where structures and rivalries are the main driving force behind doctrines. Inter-service competition to “corner the market” on comparably resourced new missions would have been indicators of this perspective. “Organizations, driven by a desire for power and resources, seek to expand turf and the money that comes with that responsibility.”¹⁰ In this case, when a new market for operations appears, doctrine would be adapted to this operational environment in order to receive the resources that come with it.
- One can also use organizational inertia as an explanation, and Tammy Schultz states that “[b]ureaucracies by design favor incremental, versus radical, change as means to limit risk and reduce uncertainty.”¹¹ Doctrinal change would occur slowly, without rapid changes, and actual change would be the result of major developments in the external environment. “Inertia, therefore, assumes that making changes as significant as [...] doctrinal alterations takes time, patience, and tremendous political will to see change implemented.”¹²

⁸ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week," 37.

⁹ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 63.

¹⁰ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week," 44.

¹¹ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week," 45.

¹² Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week," 46.

- Another factor is that low intensity conflicts (or Military Operations Other Than War) were “frontloaded with assumptions”.¹³ “[T]he approach formulated by the US military to respond to insurgencies relied precariously on a number of assumptions and prerequisites that would, in theory, reduce the need to deploy US ground troops and, with it, the risks of engagement.”¹⁴ As David Ucko stated in his thesis, the Marine Corps, and the U.S. Military in general, assumed that they would not get actively involved in counterinsurgency campaigns, and that low-intensity operations would be conducted in permissive (friendly) environments. The involvement in non-permissive (hostile) or counterinsurgency environments would have been through advisors to the local government.¹⁵ As a consequence of its conventional culture, if it was engaged in a low-intensity campaign, the Marine Corps would have prioritized the missions that resembled high-intensity warfare.¹⁶ The assumptions connected to low-intensity conflicts were very closely linked to both the service culture and the rationalist explanation. Nevertheless, I have chosen to consider it as a separate factor. As long as high-intensity means were considered to be appropriate for low-intensity operations it would have been possible to have a high-intensity culture while at the same time assume that one would have to participate in low-intensity conflicts. As for the rationalist factor, chapter two showed that one can assume that low-intensity conflicts are the most likely conflicts, while at the same time expecting that one will not have to take an active part in it.
- Lastly the lack of conceptual clarity concerning low intensity conflicts. As David Ucko stated in his thesis; “the effort to understand and focus on irregular or unconventional warfare did not include a separate evaluation of the specific and in many ways unique characteristics and logic of counterinsurgency operations”.¹⁷ Another point he made was that the U.S. military in general has had a problem with the conceptual clarity of counterinsurgency operations.¹⁸ In the 1960s and 1980s, the “efforts were predicated on similar conceptualisations of counterinsurgency as bundled together with a host of other less-than-conventional military engagements. This conflation of different types of operations resulted in the relative marginalisation and misunderstanding of

¹³ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 67.

¹⁴ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 67.

¹⁵ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 72.

¹⁶ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week," 40.

¹⁷ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 67.

¹⁸ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 67.

counterinsurgency.”¹⁹ As this was the case for counterinsurgency, it is reasonable to assume that this was the case for other low-intensity missions, like peacekeeping, as well.

All of the factors mentioned by Ucko and Schultz were used in the context of organizational change, not doctrinal change. Nevertheless, they are relevant to this thesis. However, factors propagating change may have been neglected, as Ucko’s thesis measures the extent of organizational learning of counterinsurgency. He refrains from offering a comprehensive explanation for *change* in the 1960s and 1980s, as he is mostly preoccupied with the lack of such. His discussion on counterinsurgency after 2004 addressed specific signs of actual learning of counterinsurgency in the Army and Marine Corps. Schultz, on the other hand, employed a range of explanatory factors; however they were aimed at explaining why the U.S. did not establish a constabulary, not why doctrine developed the way it did. Also, the thesis was published before the counterinsurgency doctrine in 2006. The explanatory factors provided by these theses are therefore not entirely adapted to the problem that was formulated for this thesis. Consequently, the explanatory ambitions of this thesis are limited to discussing the potential factors, determining the factors that had the greatest influence and provide a basis for future research.

The Cultural Factor

“The warrior ethos embodied the predominant service culture at the Cold War’s end. An S&R [stability and reconstruction] ethos began to contest this predominant culture during the 1990s.”²⁰

Although it was being challenged, the conventional, high-intensity culture was dominant throughout the period of time that is relevant for this thesis, and can contribute to explaining the apparent divergence between the low-intensity nature of the missions and the modest changes in doctrine.

In 1989, forty years of Cold War had embedded the service culture of the Marine Corps firmly in the big war paradigm. The planning and training had been focused on stopping a Soviet invasion of Europe since the late 1940s, and efforts to introduce low-intensity in the 1960s and 1980s had failed. The contents of the doctrine were a result of this, and giving low-intensity conflicts a high priority would have been inconsistent with this culture.

¹⁹ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 67.

²⁰ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week," 43-44.

The cultural situation was mostly the same in 1997, with a reluctance to break with the reigning paradigm. For example, a change in the Marine Corps focus on warfighting would have implied a significant break with the conventional war paradigm. This paradigm is one of *the* defining aspects of Marine Corps culture, and changing a long standing “truth” takes time. As the authoritative doctrine of the Marine Corps, it is hard to imagine a change of focus unless the mind set of the Marine Corps changed from a conventional to a full spectrum one. However, as the previous chapter showed, *Warfighting-97* included non-state organizations when discussing the actors in a conflict, something which the predecessor did not.

It is interesting to observe that this change seemed to have happened so easily. The reason for that was probably that it was not the actors in war that mattered, but the conduct of war. Although including some low-intensity conflicts, the focus was on missions of a similar nature to conventional operations. Missions that included more civilian tasks, like reconstruction and humanitarian relief, were ignored. This was a shift towards low-intensity conflict without having to sacrifice the conventional warfare focus of the Marine Corps. Consequently, it did not represent a *major* break with the Marine Corps’ conventional culture. Any “major change which a military organization seeks to implement that is not consistent with its self-identity, that indeed challenges an important aspect of self-identity, is very likely to run into considerable resistance.”²¹

This was addressed by Terry Terriff in his article on military change and organizational culture in the Marine Corps.²² In the period from 1995 to 1999, the then Marine Corps Commandant²³ attempted to introduce organizational changes that were designed to change the high-intensity approach to low-intensity conflicts. The cultural resistance to change was of a substantial nature. This attitude was exemplified by the General Officers Futures Group’s thoughts on adapting the Marine Corps for the future in the 2001 *Marine Corps Strategy*: “[they] concluded that the Corps requires only marginal adjustments to successfully adapt”.²⁴

This conservative attitude was apparent in *Warfighting-97*, as the changes from *Warfighting-89* were small. For example, the specific cases that were used to exemplify the different concepts were mostly aimed at high-intensity conflicts, the exceptions being the British Malaysia campaign and the CAP (*Combined Actions Program*) in Vietnam.

²¹ Terriff, "Warriors and Innovators," 238.

²² Although he does not refer to doctrines in his discussion, the explanations for the organizational changes that failed were closely related to the doctrinal development. Terriff, "Warriors and Innovators."

²³ The commander of the Marine Corps.

²⁴ Terriff, "Warriors and Innovators," 233.

What can potentially limit service culture as an explaining factor was the low status of doctrine (compared to the Army) in the Marine Corps. It could have made changes more likely, as they would not have been considered to be of a serious nature. However, it is unlikely that the Marine Corps would break with its own culture. Doctrine is, after all, the theoretical framework for all operations, and one can not separate doctrine from training or combat. Consequently, if Marine Corps culture had been more in accordance with the full spectrum concept, the examples would probably have been more balanced between high and low-intensity conflicts. However, one could also argue the opposite, as the low status could have made changes less likely, as doctrine could have been ignored and considered as not important enough to change.

The attitude of the Marine Corps was summed up by the former Commandant of the Marine Corps, Charles C. Krulak, when he stated that “[t]he Marine Corps is tremendously attached to tradition, and its hand, as I term it, is always on touchstones of the Corps.”²⁵

The Rationalist Factor: Lessons Learned From Operations in the 1990s

“Repeated S&R [stability and reconstruction] engagements during the 1990s [...] began to challenge [the] established warrior identity with an S&R ethos that included principles such as minimal use of force and the primacy of political objectives.”²⁶

Although experiences from missions are not a subject of this thesis, it is appropriate with a brief outline because of the doctrines apparent divergence from the reality on the ground.

Throughout the 1990s, the Marine Corps was regularly engaged in military operations. From low-intensity operations like Operation Restore Hope in Somalia to the conventional operations of the first Gulf Wars, these operations ranged across most of the spectrum of conflict. As with previous conflicts, their nature shaped the development of the Marine Corps doctrine. The first Gulf War, Operation Desert Storm, was a classical high-intensity conflict. The Somalia mission on the other hand, started out as a peacekeeping mission that resulted in a firefight in Mogadishu and ended with the withdrawal of US forces in 1994. The Marine Corps also took part in Operation Restore Democracy in Haiti in 1994-95. The Air Force and the Army participated in the aerial bombing of and peacekeeping missions on the Balkans in the 1990s, which are relevant in this context because of its influence on Marine Corps doctrinal development. Although they were potentially less influential than missions actually

²⁵ Charles C. Krulak quoted in Terriff, "Warriors and Innovators," 234

²⁶ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week," 20.

undertaken by the Marine Corps, the experiences from the Balkans could have informed this development. What is interesting about these missions is that they were mostly low-intensity conflicts, the major exception being Desert Storm and the aerial bombing campaign in the Balkans. Nevertheless, with the exception of Somalia, the peacekeeping missions of the 1990s were relatively risk free. The U.S. reaction to the Somalia experience was to try “to avoid any peace operation that might connote a risk to US combat troops.”²⁷ Consequently, these experiences confirmed the assumptions and misconceptions about low-intensity conflicts, an issue that will be addressed later.²⁸ As we will see, the experiences from the 1990s were reflected in *Warfighting-97*.

When *Warfighting-89* was written, the strategic thinking at the time was mostly concerned with conventional scenarios in Europe. *Warfighting 89* was written before the end of the Cold War, while the vast majority of remaining doctrines in the 1989 series were published between 1990 and 1992. Consequently, they were heavily influenced by the potential war between the two superpowers, which must have dominated the threat assessment at the time.

In 1997, the threat of a major interstate war had subsided, and the operational experiences of the Marine Corps were from predominantly low-intensity environments. Consequently, there was an apparent divergence between the operational experience and the doctrines. However, as we will see, the operational environment was perceived as ambiguous.

Even though there were no great doctrinal changes between 1989 and 1997, the low-intensity conflicts of the 1990s still seemed to have influenced the doctrinal development. It is the most likely factor when explaining the changes that were actually made. For example, the inclusion of non-state actors, the examples of Malaysia and CAP in Vietnam, the introduction of the *MOOTW* (*military operations other than war*) term and the introduction of *Strategy-97* were all likely to have been influenced by the operations in the 1990s. Pointing clearly in the high-intensity direction was one single experience, Operation Desert Storm in Iraq. It is possible, though; that the overwhelming success the American military had in Iraq could have counterbalanced the low-intensity operations to a high degree, and thus prevented a change in doctrines.

Another operation that had some significance was the Somalia operation. It did not point directly towards high-intensity conflicts; however, it certainly pointed away from low-intensity operations. The disaster that struck in Mogadishu in October 1994, and the

²⁷ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 72

²⁸ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 75.

subsequent withdrawal of U.S. forces, led the Marine Corps to seek “to avoid any peace operation that might connote a risk to US combat troops. [...] Rather than reassess the grounding assumptions of peace operations or develop capabilities to deal with non-permissive environments,”²⁹ this originally low-intensity experience provided the much same lesson that the Vietnam War did. The experiences of the 1990s were mainly in permissive environments where the actual use of force was not necessary. This combined with the Somalia mission could have led the Marine Corps to draw the conclusion that participation in low-intensity conflicts in an environment that was non-permissive, or risked becoming non-permissive, was undesirable.

This leads to the issue of threat assessments, as these kinds of operations were obviously not perceived as vital enough to warrant a proper evaluation. In both doctrines, the Marine Corps stated that low-intensity conflicts were more probable than high-intensity conflicts;³⁰ however, it is unlikely that they were considered to be the greatest threat to the national security. Judging from the contents of the doctrines it is natural to assume that, although low-intensity conflicts were important, the major security threat was a high-intensity conflict. The consequences of losing high-intensity conflicts would most likely have been greater than losing a low-intensity conflict. The stakes would probably have been much higher in a conventional war, as they usually involved an enemy that was more powerful. Resorting to unconventional strategies has been regarded as a means for the weak to challenge the strong.³¹

Other Factors

Technology

Technology as an influential factor in the doctrinal development was confirmed by Ucko, who touched upon the subject, stating that the U.S. military dismissed

the entire ‘lower end’ of the of the conflict spectrum as an irrelevant distraction. This trend was reinforced by the US military’s experiences with conventional campaigns during the 1990s, in which the emerging technologies associated with the ‘Revolution of Military Affairs’ (RMA) – satellites, precision bombing, and information technology – had appeared to provide a means of avoiding the pitfalls of more complex, on-the-ground operations. The coercive engagements over Bosnia and Kosovo

²⁹ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 72.

³⁰ FMFM 1, 21 and MCDP 1, 27.

³¹ Smith, "Thinking About the Utility of Force in War Amongst the People," 33.

were dominated by precision bombing from a risk-free altitude and the notable absence of US ground forces, whose role was instead played by local allies.³²

Although the Marine Corps did not participate in the Balkan missions, it is still relevant as the technological focus could have influenced Marine Corps doctrine. However, the degree of influence is very uncertain. The Marine Corps is proud of its independence of technology, and explicitly stated that

No degree of technological development or scientific calculation will diminish the human dimension in war. Any doctrine which attempts to reduce warfare to ratios of forces, weapons, and equipment neglects the impact of the human will on the conduct of war and is therefore inherently flawed.³³

This interpretation of Marine Corps doctrine is supported by Olof Kronvall in his paper on U.S. Strategic doctrine, where he stated that “[t]he Air Force and the Navy has a much stronger belief than the Marine Corps in the idea that new technology, information superiority, and precision weapons could radically reduce the uncertainty and unpredictability of war.”³⁴ The influence of technology is therefore uncertain.

Bureaucratic politics

To my knowledge, there were few signs of a bureaucratic politics factor that favored a change towards low-intensity conflicts. If this was a major factor for change, it was likely that the entire Marine Corps organization would have made significant moves to improve its low-intensity capacities in the period, in order to capitalize on the resources that were being attributed to this new development. This did not happen, and there were two main reasons for this. First of all, it presupposed that there was political will to invest in low-intensity capabilities. This was not the case. The attitude towards low-intensity conflicts in both political and military circles in 2000 was that of “disinterest and aversion”,³⁵ and consequently, there were few resources that were allocated to this field. Second, even if there was political interest in the field, the U.S. Military and politicians have had a preference for advanced weapons systems. This was a very expensive preference, and unless there was a serious shift in priorities, the “major cash” would not be found in low-intensity operations.

³² Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 75-76.

³³ MCDP 1, 14. In essence, FMFM 1 stated the exact same thing, except that the last word of the quote was “false”, not “flawed”. FMFM 1, 11.

³⁴ Kronvall, *Doctrinal Transformation*, 40.

³⁵ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 70.

Tammy Schultz' thesis supports this conclusion, as she did not observe any attempts to "corner the market" of low-intensity conflicts.³⁶

Organizational Inertia

At first sight, the slow development certainly fits with the organizational inertia explanation. However, the Marine Corps perceived itself as an innovative organization that was open to change. Significant changes over a relatively short period of time had successfully been implemented previously, like the implementation of maneuver warfare.³⁷ At the same time, Tammy Schultz did not observe any organizational inertia in the doctrine process for this period; however, this pertained mainly to the Army and Joint doctrine, as the Marine Corps was not mentioned explicitly. Nevertheless, her thesis concerned both services, so it is natural to assume that her conclusion also included the Marine Corps.³⁸ The influence of organizational inertia was thus uncertain; however, the literature suggests that it was of a modest impact.

Assumptions Connected to Low-intensity

The assumptions that were connected to low-intensity operations were important in the failed attempts to introduce counterinsurgency into Marine Corps doctrine in the 1960s and 1980s, and most likely played a conserving role in the doctrinal development between 1989 and 1997 too. First, if the Marine Corps expected not to actively partake in low-intensity conflicts, but delegate those missions to host nation governments, allies or civilian agencies to handle the non-combat part of a mission, the need to change the focus of the doctrine from warfighting to a full spectrum one would not be present. Producing a full spectrum doctrine would just have been a waste of time and resources that could have been used for better purposes elsewhere. These assumptions could also have been strengthened by the lessons learned in Somalia, but also the Air Force and Army's experiences with technology in the Balkans.

Nevertheless, there were signs that these assumptions were being challenged. The previously mentioned Commandant Charles C. Krulak launched several concepts and programs aimed at introducing low-intensity operations; however, most of these initiatives came after 1997 and ended up failing.³⁹

³⁶ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week," 252.

³⁷ For more on this, see: Terriff, "Warriors and Innovators."

³⁸ Schultz, "Ten Years Each Week," 190 and 194.

³⁹ Terriff, "Warriors and Innovators," 232.

Lack of Conceptual Clarity

The lack of conceptual clarity could have been a serious obstacle to developing low-intensity doctrines. For example, changing a doctrine's contents requires a proper comprehension of the problem one is trying to solve and a reasonably clear notion of the end state one is trying to achieve, and lacking in these two issues would have caused difficulties when trying to conceptualize the challenges and identify the proper changes. The only alternative would have been superficial changes.

However, conceptual problems are not static issues and can, like the other factors, change over time. This seems to have been the case in the doctrines. The *MOOTW* concept and the inclusion of "securing the peace" in the definition of military strategy were good examples of this. *MOOTW* was an attempt at conceptualizing the low-intensity conflicts. It is thus likely that the lack of conceptual clarity was diminishing slightly in importance towards the end of the period.

Conclusion

There are several reasons for the modest development of low-intensity elements in Marine Corps doctrine between 1989 and 1997. Service culture seems to have been an important factor, which is supported by both Tammy Schultz and David Ucko. The long standing, conventional, tradition of the Marine Corps takes time to change, and it seems that eight years of almost continuous exposure to low-intensity conflicts was not enough to bring about a substantial shift in focus. A part of the reason for this is that some of the lessons learned from the conflicts themselves partially confirmed the culture and assumptions that was predominant in the Marine Corps at the time. Both the first Gulf War and some of the combat missions in the Balkans were of a conventional nature, and the Somalia mission reinforced the U.S. military skepticism to low-intensity mission in a hostile environment.

The assumptions that were connected to low-intensity conflicts contributed to the priority of high-intensity conflicts. The Marine Corps, and the US military in general, did not expect to take part in low-intensity operations, at least not ones that differed from high-intensity warfare in a significant manner. These were expected to be handled by civilian agencies, host nation governments, by allies or avoided altogether.

The lack of conceptual clarity concerning what low-intensity conflicts actually contains was also a factor in explaining the modest development of low-intensity elements, as it is difficult to change a doctrine when you do not know what you are actually trying to

change it into. The clarity was somewhat improved, however, not sufficiently to call it a substantial change. This suggests a diminishing role though.

Other factors that may have played a part in this were technological change, organizational inertia and bureaucratic politics. The influence of technological development was ambiguous, and it is hard to draw any conclusions without further research. Organizational inertia does not seem to have influenced the development in any substantial way, and the same can be said for bureaucratic politics.

Consequently, it seems that culture and rationalism seems to be the most fruitful avenues for further research.

Chapter 4:

Counterinsurgency

Introduction

In 2006, the Marine Corps was five years into its operation in Afghanistan and three years into its operation in Iraq, both of them clear cases of insurgencies. A doctrine that addressed the challenges encountered in these theaters was highly anticipated,¹ and Counterinsurgency-06 (*COIN-06*) sat a high standard already in its preface:

Counterinsurgency operations generally have been neglected in broader American military doctrine and national security policies since the end of the Vietnam War over 30 years ago. This manual is designed to reverse that trend. It is also designed to merge traditional approaches to COIN with the realities of a new international arena shaped by technological advances, globalization, and the spread of extremist ideologies—some of them claiming the authority of a religious faith.²

First of all, the authors intended to reverse the neglect of counterinsurgency. Previous attempts to do so had failed.³ Secondly, the authors aspired to supply the Marine Corps and the Army with a COIN doctrine that was up to date and applicable to the situation at the time. The “monopoly” of high-intensity conflicts portrayed in Chapter 1 was brought to an end, and with it the interpretation of war as a concept seems to have changed.

COIN-06 was officially a part of the 1997 series of doctrines. It was, however, not the first counterinsurgency doctrine to be published by the Marine Corps. In 1940, the Marine Corps published the *Small Wars Manual*, which was reprinted in 1990, and in 1962 “Operations against Guerrilla Forces” was published. A counterinsurgency doctrine was also released in 1980,⁴ but as was pointed out in the introduction, both the 1962 and 1980 doctrines were considered to have failed in introducing counterinsurgency and low-intensity conflicts to the Marine Corps.

Firstly, this chapter will analyze *COIN-06* and identify its low-intensity elements. As was mentioned in the introduction, *COIN-06* has been analyzed previously; however, this analysis goes deeper and has a different perspective than the previous papers and theses. Secondly, I will compare the 1997 doctrines with *COIN-06* and identify the changes. I will not try to answer if *COIN-06* really did reverse the trend of doctrinal neglect of

¹ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 9.

² MCWP 3-33.5, vii.

³ For more on this issue, see: Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 39-69.

⁴ FMFM 8-2.

counterinsurgency, as this is beyond the scope of this thesis. Lastly, the chapter will identify potential operational consequences of the changes between 1997 and 2006.

In this chapter I will argue that *COIN-06* was in its entirety a low-intensity doctrine, as the main focus was shifted from conventional battles to alternative approaches. The developments from the first 1997 series were quite radical and the nature of low-intensity conflicts seem to have been appreciated at an entirely different level with the new doctrine. Nevertheless, *COIN-06* had its limits and weaknesses. First of all, it was placed at a very low level in the doctrinal hierarchy, and its influence could be limited by higher ranking doctrines that contradicted the contents of *COIN-06*. Secondly, it was only concerned with counterinsurgency, seemingly leaving other sorts of low-intensity conflicts within the realm of the original 1997 series. Lastly, the doctrine contained both very general theoretical and philosophical elements on the one hand and very detailed tactical elements on the other hand. The doctrine was consequently a mix of strategic and a tactical doctrine. Despite these problems, *COIN-06* was a thoroughbred low-intensity doctrine.

COIN-06 was a joint Marine Corps/Army publication,⁵ and consequently, the analysis in this chapter will in large part be valid for the US Army. Nevertheless, I will concentrate on the Marine Corps, as that is the focus in this thesis.

Pre COIN-06 Low-Intensity documents

Before I address *COIN-06*, it is important to give a brief account of the low-intensity contents of doctrines and manuals that were published between *Warfighting-97* and *COIN-06*. What is interesting is that three out of five low-intensity documents in this period were published in 2006. The remaining two, the MCWP 3-33.8 *Peace Operations* and the MCWP 3-33.1 *Marine Air-Ground Task Force civil-military operations*, were published in 2003.

Unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity to study these doctrines in detail. However, the aim of *Peace Operations* was to provide “a single-source tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) manual that focuses on conducting peace operations (PO) at the brigade level of warfighting.”⁶ Consequently, it was aimed at the tactical level, without providing concepts or theories regarding low-intensity operations. The civil-military doctrine pertains to cooperation between civilian and military organizations on a tactical level too, as it did not belong to the

⁵ MCWP 3-33.5, Foreword.

⁶ United States Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Airforce, "Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.8 Peace Ops Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Conducting Peace Operations," (Washington, D.C.: United States Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Airforce, 2003), i. From now on, this doctrine will be termed MCWP 3-33.8 in the references.

top level doctrines. Also, neither of these two publications has been mentioned in the literature addressing low-intensity conflicts, indicating that their significance was quite low. This literature also ascertained that the Marine Corps was firmly committed to high-intensity operations until 2004,⁷ although events in Afghanistan “were beginning to signal the importance of consolidating conventional victories through effective stabilization.”⁸ Lastly, the Marine Corps devoted one chapter to *military operations other than war (MOOTW)* in its 2001 *Operations* doctrine (Operations-01).⁹ Despite the inclusion of several aspects that are considered to be of a low-intensity nature,¹⁰ the modest attention suggests that the Marine Corps did not prioritize low-intensity conflicts.

The three low-intensity documents from 2006 were, firstly the *Small-Unit Leaders' Guide to Counterinsurgency*, published in 2006.¹¹ This manual was not a doctrine, and it stated that “[t]hese TTP [tactics, techniques and procedures] represent the current “best practices” derived from American, Australian and British sources.”¹² It did, however, contain a number of concepts and approaches that were also found in *COIN-06*. The manual will not feature in the thesis, though, as it was not a doctrine. Secondly the *Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a Changing Security Environment*, published in March, which covered the entire range of Marine Corps operations.¹³ The document covered all operations and did not go into any depth, and the approach to counterinsurgency was “derived from British, Australian and US doctrine and the prominent theorists in the field. As a result, the document mostly emphasized classic principles and established wisdom.”¹⁴ Also, at a mere 119 pages, the manual was quite superficial in its treatment of most operations. Third, the Marine Corps published the *Tentative Manual for Countering Irregular Threats: An Updated Approach to Counterinsurgency* in June 2006. This manual was an extended version of the counterinsurgency chapter in the *Operating Concepts* publication. At about 150 pages, the *Tentative Manual* was quite substantial, with a focus “on tasks such as governance and reconstruction and to integrate these with the security component.”¹⁵ David Ucko concludes that both these publications “represented a refinement of the conceptual understanding of

⁷ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 84-86.

⁸ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 86.

⁹ United States Marine Corps, "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-0 Operations," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2001)

¹⁰ Examples are the importance of legitimacy and restraint in the use of force. See: MCDP 1-0, 10-5 to 10-6.

¹¹ United States Marine Corps, "Small-Unit Leaders' Guide to Counterinsurgency," ed. Department of the Navy (Washington D.C.: Marine Corps Combat Development Command 2006).

¹² United States Marine Corps, "Small-Unit Leaders' Guide to Counterinsurgency," Foreword.

¹³ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 151.

¹⁴ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 152.

¹⁵ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 153.

counterinsurgency”.¹⁶ These publications signaled an increasing focus on low-intensity conflicts in the Marine Corps; however, they were not doctrines as such. The doctrine step was taken when *COIN-06* was published in December 2006, and this doctrine will be the subject for the remainder of this chapter.

The Status of the COIN Doctrine

Before analyzing the specifics of *COIN-06*, it is important to make some general considerations about the status and background for the doctrine. This section will show that there was a tension between the doctrine’s aim and its status in the doctrinal hierarchy.

First of all *COIN-06* was officially a part of the 1997 series of doctrines. *COIN-06* was consequently subordinate to these doctrines. This could have resulted in problems if the two doctrines were in conflict with each other. Secondly, it was the Marine Corps’ first counterinsurgency doctrine in over 25 years; and in 2006 the updated version was “much anticipated”.¹⁷ The new doctrine received the official title of “*Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-33.5 Counterinsurgency*”. This technical title may seem rather unimportant, however, it is very telling as to its status and relation to other doctrines in the hierarchy. First of all, it was a *Warfighting Publication*, not a *Doctrinal Publication*. The difference is one of doctrinal levels, and as was stated in the introduction, the Marine Corps has three levels of doctrine:

1. Level one doctrines are higher order doctrines and they contain “the fundamental and enduring beliefs of warfighting [...] and the guiding doctrine for the conduct of major warfighting activities”.
2. Level two doctrines have a narrower focus detailing TTP [tactics, techniques and procedures] used in the prosecution of war or other assigned tasks.
3. Level three doctrines contain general reference and historical material.¹⁸

The 1997 doctrines were in the first category, while *COIN-06* was classified as a tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) doctrine.¹⁹ Consequently, *COIN-06* was subordinate to the

¹⁶ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 154.

¹⁷ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 9.

¹⁸ Marine Corps Doctrine Overview, 2.

1997 doctrines discussed in chapter 2. However, the doctrine was supposed to provide “principles and guidelines for counterinsurgency operations”.²⁰ As was mentioned above, it was a hybrid doctrine, and a clear break with the traditional organization of Marine Corps doctrine. The tactical, operational and strategic levels of military operations overlap to a certain extent in all sorts of operations; however, the overlap is much stronger in low-intensity operations than in conventional, high-intensity missions. Former Marine Commandant, Charles C. Krulak referred to the “Strategic Corporal”²¹ when explaining the strategic implications of actions on the tactical level. The “Strategic Corporal” will, to a higher degree than in conventional operations, need strategic guidance in low-intensity operations. The combination of the tactical and strategic level of doctrine may have been intentional. Most low-intensity conflicts are fundamentally different from high-intensity ones, and consequently demands fundamentally different doctrines.

Also, *COIN-06*’s scope could have limited its use,²² as the doctrine was exclusively aimed at counterinsurgency. Counterinsurgency is one type of operation, while the spectrum of conflict consists of several types of operations, from humanitarian relief and peacekeeping operations at the low end of the spectrum, to large scale, conventional operations at the high end. Consequently, the doctrine only covers one out of a multitude of low-intensity conflicts. The remaining low-intensity doctrines that were published in 2003 was not mentioned in literature concerning low-intensity conflicts at all.²³ This could suggest that they did not really contain much of relevance for, or innovation concerning low-intensity conflicts. This is supported by the relevant literature which asserted that the real inventions in doctrine, both in the Pentagon, the Marine Corps and the Army, started in 2004.²⁴

COIN-06

This analysis will address the major elements of *COIN-06* and address the changes that were made from the 1997 doctrines. The argument emerging from this chapter is that the Marine Corps considered insurgency as a political struggle for the approval from the local population, and that legitimacy for the host-nation government and the Marine Corps was the overarching

¹⁹ For simplicity, this will be referred to as a tactical doctrine.

²⁰ MCWP 3-33.5, foreword.

²¹ Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War," *Marines Magazine* 1999.

²² MCWP 3-33.5, Foreword

²³ These doctrines are: MCWP 3-33.8; United States Marine Corps, “MCWP 3-33.1 *Marine Air-Ground Task Force civil-military operations*,” ed. Department of the Navy (Washington, D.C. Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2003). From now on, this doctrine will be termed MCWP 3-33.1 in the references.

²⁴ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 90.

objective of a counterinsurgency campaign. The doctrine was, almost in its entirety, a change from the high-intensity focus of the doctrines that have been mentioned previously.

A Focus on the Population: Legitimacy

As Rupert Smith stated, new wars are wars amongst the people.²⁵ In *COIN-06*, the Marine Corps took this seriously when they stated that the objective in an insurgency is “acceptance of the *legitimacy* of one side’s claim to political power by the people of the state or region.”²⁶ In his paper on *COIN-06*, Olof Kronvall came to the same conclusion when he stated that “popular legitimacy is of crucial importance in COIN.”²⁷ Although it might seem trivial, this is a major change from the 1997 doctrines. The objective is no longer the enemy’s military units and the will of its leadership, but the local population. The focus has shifted completely, and this aligned the doctrine with the low-intensity conflicts. To emphasize this point, *COIN-06* stressed that “[v]ictory is achieved when the populace consents to the government’s legitimacy and stops actively and passively supporting the insurgency.”²⁸ Terrorist and guerrilla tactics are the most common tactics of an insurgency, and “many of the ‘rules’ favor insurgents.”²⁹ Maintaining an insurgency is relatively cheap, however, maintaining security is considered to be expensive and requires “a high ratio of security forces to the protected *population*.”³⁰ This was an explicit acceptance of the special requirements and aspects of an insurgency. Previous doctrines had concentrated on the enemy’s combat formations, while in *COIN-06*, the military aspect of the counterinsurgency prioritized protecting the population. The 1997 doctrines did acknowledge that there were different requirements for low-intensity conflicts, counterinsurgencies included; however, this realization was never followed up with anything but high-intensity solutions. *COIN-06*, on the other hand, showed that it was

²⁵ Smith, "Thinking About the Utility of Force in War Amongst the People," 32.

²⁶ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-2 My italics.

²⁷ Kronvall, "Finally Eating Soup with a Knife?," 31.

²⁸ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-3.

²⁹ “That is why insurgency has been a common approach used by the weak against the strong. At the beginning of a conflict, insurgents typically hold the strategic initiative. Though they may resort to violence because of regime changes or government actions, insurgents generally initiate the conflict. Clever insurgents strive to disguise their intentions. When these insurgents are successful at such deception, potential counterinsurgents are at a disadvantage. A coordinated reaction requires political and military leaders to recognize that an insurgency exists and to determine its makeup and characteristics. While the government prepares to respond, the insurgents gain strength and foster increasing disruption throughout the state or region. The government normally has an initial advantage in resources; however, that edge is counterbalanced by the requirement to maintain order and protect the population and critical resources. Insurgents succeed by sowing chaos and disorder anywhere; the government fails unless it maintains a degree of order everywhere.” In: MCWP 3-33.5, 1-2.

³⁰ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-2. My italics.

thinking outside the conventional “box” from the outset. As we will see, “[t]he importance of creating popular legitimacy is stressed throughout the document.”³¹

When *COIN-06* addressed potential insurgent vulnerabilities there were few references to high-intensity operations. Instead, the doctrine focuses on these points:

- Insurgents’ need for secrecy
- Inconsistencies in the mobilization message.
- Need to establish a base of operations.
- Reliance on external support.
- Need to obtain financial resources.
- Internal divisions.
- Need to maintain momentum.
- Informants within the insurgency.³²

Some of these points can include regular combat operations, like attacking a base of operations or eliminating the flow of support from external sources. The majority, however, concentrated on a mix of intelligence (informants within the insurgency), financial measures and psychological and informational operations. For example, the inconsistency in the mobilization message was not a suitable objective for a Marine squad; it was a target for an information campaign. The doctrine’s treatment of insurgent vulnerabilities was another step away from a high-intensity approach to the nature of insurgency. It analyzed the essence of insurgencies section and came up with concrete areas where they had weaknesses. The identification of these weaknesses corresponded with the political nature of low-intensity conflicts as they emphasized mostly non-military points that were important in attaining legitimacy.

One of the most important subjects to receive attention was historical principles for counterinsurgency. The common trait among these principles was that they all concentrated on the local population, and the first principle established legitimacy in the population as the main objective, and the stated reason for this was that “[l]egitimate governance is inherently stable; the societal support it engenders allows it to adequately manage the internal problems, change, and conflict that affect individual and collective well-being.”³³ Attaining legitimacy

³¹ Kronvall, "Finally Eating Soup with a Knife?," 34.

³² MCWP 3-33.5, 1-17.

³³ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-21.

was done by balancing the “application of both military and nonmilitary means.”³⁴ Also, the legitimacy issue did not only concern the US military, but also the host nation government.³⁵

Legitimacy received a substantial amount of attention, where its importance was stressed, and indicators of legitimacy were presented. The attention dedicated to legitimacy, and the fact that it was the first of the historical principles to receive attention, accentuated the local population as the main “battlefield” between insurgents and counterinsurgents, at the expense of combat operations.

The focus on the population was evident throughout the entire doctrine. For example, the chapter concerning intelligence in counterinsurgency operations was adamant about what it calls civil considerations, which is:

How the manmade infrastructure, civilian institutions, and attitudes and activities of the civilian leaders, populations, and organizations within an area of operations influence the conduct of military operations. [...] While all characteristics of civil considerations are important, understanding the people is particularly important in COIN.³⁶

Understanding the people was necessary to achieve legitimacy, as the lack of such would most likely have lead to wrong decisions based on false or flawed premises. This was elaborated on, when the Marine Corps stated that counterinsurgents must understand the environment in which they operate.³⁷ In other words, the society and culture had a central position in a counterinsurgency operation. The importance of cultural and societal awareness was reflected throughout the doctrine. For example, when explaining how to establish or restore essential services, the importance of “[a]n accurate needs assessment [that] reflects cultural sensitivity; otherwise, great time and expense can be wasted on something the populace considers of little value.”³⁸ This was an important point; for the Marine Corps to gain legitimacy for itself and the host nation government, it was necessary to satisfy local demands, not Marine Corps demands. The importance of culture and society was especially evident when intelligence in counterinsurgency was elaborated on, as it was stated that “[i]ntelligence in COIN is about people. U.S. forces must understand the people of the host nation, the insurgents, and the host-nation (HN) government.”³⁹ It was also stressed that

³⁴ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-21.

³⁵ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-21 to 1-22.

³⁶ MCWP 3-33.5, 3-3 to 3-4.

³⁷ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-22.

³⁸ MCWP 3-33.5, 5-14.

³⁹ MCWP 3-33.5, 3-1.

“staffs should identify and analyze the culture of the society as a whole and of each major group within the society.”⁴⁰

The Marine Corps was adamant that intelligence drives operations:⁴¹ “With good intelligence, counterinsurgents are like surgeons cutting out cancerous tissue while keeping other vital organs intact.”⁴² Correct and detailed intelligence facilitates appropriate execution of combat operations, as the deaths of innocents can have a detrimental effect on legitimacy. There could be a problem with this analogy, however, as it implicitly focuses on combat operations specifically, and not the counterinsurgency as a whole. As we have seen, *COIN-06* itself was adamant that cutting away the cancerous tissue, or killing terrorists, is only a small part of the operation, and intelligence must have a wider focus than just this. Nevertheless, the Marine Corps maintained that combat operations were necessary in counterinsurgencies, as an insurgency was violent.⁴³ This makes accurate intelligence vital to the Marine Corps’ combat actions. Also, the chapter on intelligence was mostly focused on the cultural aspect, so the focus was still on a low-intensity approach.

A logical consequence of this focus on the population was restrictions on the use of force. The excessive use of force can create resentment in the population, as civilian lives are likely to be lost.⁴⁴ Kronvall ascertained that *COIN-06* “adopts the principle of *measured force* as a guideline for the conduct of both US and indigenous forces [...] The principle of measured force is to be all-pervasive.”⁴⁵ However, according to the doctrine, who wields that force was also important, as the application of force by host nation security forces is more likely to be considered legitimate, providing that they have the reputation for being both competent and impartial.⁴⁶ This was very important, as it regulates the use of violence, the primary tool of the Marine Corps in the Warfighting doctrines. It was stressed that the use of violence could both support and thwart the objective of legitimacy.⁴⁷ The easiest way to render insurgents irrelevant would thus be to isolate them “from their cause and support.”⁴⁸

⁴⁰ MCWP 3-33.5, 3-6.

⁴¹ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-23.

⁴² MCWP 3-33.5, 1-23.

⁴³ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-2.

⁴⁴ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-25.

⁴⁵ Kronvall, "Finally Eating Soup with a Knife?" 40. Authors italics.

⁴⁶ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-25.

⁴⁷ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-25.

⁴⁸ “Some sources can be reduced by redressing the social, political, and economic grievances that fuel the insurgency. Physical support can be cut off by population control or border security. International or local legal action might be required to limit financial support. Urban insurgents, however, are especially difficult to isolate from their cause and sources of support. They may operate in small, compartmentalized cells that are usually independent or semi-independent. These cells often have their own support mechanisms and few, if any, ties to the population that counterinsurgents can track.

The focus on the population in *COIN-06* culminated in eight “paradoxes” of counterinsurgency. Most of these paradoxes were actually quite obvious; nevertheless, they represented the essence of the change from *Warfighting-97*:

The first “paradox” was that “*Sometimes, the More You Protect Your Force, the Less Secure You May Be*”.⁴⁹ If a force gets stuck in a base, they lose touch with the population, “appear to be running scared and cede the initiative to the insurgents”,⁵⁰ which is the opposite of what a counterinsurgency campaign is trying to achieve, and would thus have been counterproductive. This “paradox” was not really new to the Marine Corps. In both *Warfighting-89* and *Warfighting-97*, risk is considered to be inherent in combat operations, and increased gains are often related to an increased risk. Nevertheless, “risk is equally common to both action and inaction.”⁵¹ Consequently, by fortifying oneself in bases (inaction), there was risk without any potential gain because one did not perform any counterinsurgency functions. By sending troops out of base (action), that is taking a larger short term risk, they could address the issues of the insurgency and thus improve the situation in a longer perspective. As a consequence of this, the short term risk could have reduced the overall, long term risk. The basics of this principle were found in both the *Warfighting* doctrines and it is natural to assume that it was adapted to a counterinsurgency environment in *COIN-06*. Whether it was a paradox or not is debatable. When the Marine Corps was stuck in base, there was no way they could perform the time consuming tasks of a counterinsurgency. It should be obvious that not performing essential tasks would be counterproductive.

The second “paradox” was that “*Sometimes, the More Force Is used, the Less Effective It Is*”,⁵² which is strongly connected to the principle of applying the appropriate level of force. Force must be used only where and when it is necessary, and in the minimum amount that is consistent with attaining the end state. Excessive force could have benefited the insurgents’ cause, making it less effective, or even counterproductive. This should have been rather obvious when legitimacy is the objective. The third “paradox”, which was a logical consequence of the second, was that “*The More Successful the Counterinsurgency Is, the Less*

As the HN government increases its legitimacy, the populace begins to assist it more actively. Eventually, the people marginalize and stigmatize insurgents to the point that the insurgency’s claim to legitimacy is destroyed. However, victory is gained not when this isolation is achieved, but when the victory is permanently maintained by and with the people’s active support and when insurgent forces have been defeated.” In: MCWP 3-33.5, 1-23.

⁴⁹ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-27. My italics.

⁵⁰ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-27.

⁵¹ MCDP 1, 8 and FMFM 1, 7.

⁵² MCWP 3-33.5, 1-27. My italics.

*Force Can Be Used and the More Risk Must Be Accepted.*⁵³ This was also quite obvious, since the level of success should have been inversely proportional to the level of violence.

The fourth “paradox” was that “*Sometimes Doing Nothing is the Best Reaction*”,⁵⁴ as the insurgents could have tried to provoke an overreaction from the counterinsurgents, which, as we saw in the two previous paradoxes, can be counterproductive and jeopardize the legitimacy of the Marine Corps and the host nation government.

The fifth “paradox” was that “*Some of the Best Weapons for Counterinsurgents Do Not Shoot*”,⁵⁵ also a “paradox” that is related to the imperative of using the appropriate level of force. When legitimacy was the objective, shooting, as we have seen, could have been counterproductive. It is quite obvious that when the objective is nation building, as it usually is in counterinsurgency, the best means at ones disposal were not bombs and guns, but an improvement of the population’s lives. To brand this as a paradox was not really appropriate. In fact, defining it as a paradox suggests that it is something unnatural about not using guns, and considering the objective of legitimacy, it should have been one of the first things that came to mind.

The sixth “paradox” was that “*The Host Nation Doing Something Tolerably Is Normally Better than Us Doing It Well*”,⁵⁶ which was related supporting the host nation. For the Marine Corps to withdraw from the host nation, they would have needed to develop host nation capabilities, something which would not have happened if the Marine Corps did all the work for them. This should also be quite obvious. Letting the student try to do whatever you are trying to teach is a pedagogic principle.

The seventh “paradox” was that “*If a Tactic Works this Week, It Might Not Work Next Week; If It Works in this Province, It Might Not Work in the Next*”,⁵⁷ something which has been addressed earlier. Whether this was a paradox can also be debated. This was a general principle of warfare, as was explained in both *Warfighting-89* and *Warfighting-97*: “The essence of war is a violent struggle between two hostile, independent, and irreconcilable wills, each trying to impose itself on the other.”⁵⁸ It comes from this that “the enemy is not an inanimate object to be acted upon but an independent and animate force with its own objectives and plans.”⁵⁹ Although the range of measures probably varied more in a

⁵³ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-27. My italics.

⁵⁴ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-27. My italics.

⁵⁵ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-27. My italics.

⁵⁶ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-27 to 1-28. My italics.

⁵⁷ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-28. My italics.

⁵⁸ FMFM 1, 3 and MCDP 1, 3.

⁵⁹ MCDP 1, 4.

counterinsurgency campaign that in a conventional, high-intensity, campaign, the principle was the same.

The eighth “paradox”, “*Tactical Success Guarantees Nothing*”,⁶⁰ had been pointed out in both the 1989 and the 1997 doctrines: “*Tactical success does not of itself guarantee success in war.*”⁶¹ Whether it was a paradox is hard to ascertain, however it should have been obvious, as military history has shown that tactical success can be squandered by operational and strategic incompetence or disadvantages.⁶² The ninth and final “paradox”, was that “*Many Important Decisions Are Not Made by Generals*”,⁶³ and this should not have come as a surprise either, considering the decentralized and mosaic nature of insurgency and counterinsurgency, and also the importance of the individual units in gaining legitimacy. A decentralized command structure was also important in the 1989 and 1997 doctrines.⁶⁴

As we have seen, the term “paradox” was not necessarily accurate to describe the contents of the nine points mentioned above. Some of these points are actually quite self evident. Also, not all of the nine “paradoxes” were new, and have obviously been developed or derived from concepts in the 1989 and 1997 series of doctrines. This does not, however, mean that they are incompatible with a low-intensity approach. Quite the contrary, as they emphasize the complexity of counterinsurgency operations, they were more like “rules of thumb” that were designed to support the legitimacy of counterinsurgents. Most of them were also valid in peacekeeping and other low-intensity operations. Take the fifth “paradox” for instance. Using guns alone to solve a peacekeeping operation or a humanitarian crisis would not achieve the desired end state.

Finally, the Marine Corps ascertained that the “counterinsurgents should prepare for a long term commitment, [as] insurgencies are protracted by nature.”⁶⁵ To attain legitimacy, it would have been necessary for the local population to “have confidence in the staying power of both the counterinsurgents and the HN [host nation] government.”⁶⁶ This principle was very different from the 1989 and 1997 doctrines. Although they did not state so explicitly, the impression was that the Marine Corps was intent on disengaging from a conflict as soon as possible. Speed, both in time and space (having a high tempo and moving fast) was essential,

⁶⁰ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-28. My italics.

⁶¹ FMFM 1-1, 5 and MCDP 1-2, 7. Author’s italics

⁶² The prime example here is the Vietnam War, where the United States won most of the engagements and battles, but lost the war.

⁶³ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-28. My italics.

⁶⁴ FMFM 1, 61-62 and MCDP 1, 77-78.

⁶⁵ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-24.

⁶⁶ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-24.

⁶⁷ and combined with the Weinberger-Powell doctrine,⁶⁸ it showed a keenness to withdraw US forces as soon as possible. Consequently, *COIN-06* represented a major change as it was officially stated that a prolonged operation was necessary, or even preferable, in order to attain the objectives set for a particular mission.

There was a strong focus on the local population in *COIN-06*, and legitimacy was the objective in counterinsurgency. Legitimacy was highly relevant in many low-intensity conflicts, as any state that was ruled by an illegitimate government and/or foreign force would have been inherently unstable. Obviously, it was also a concept that significantly differed from the previous doctrines' focus on a military solution to any conflict,⁶⁹ as legitimacy opened up for alternative solutions.

Political Approaches

“[*COIN-06*] emphasizes the primacy of political as opposed to a military solution to the conflict and stresses unity of effort in combating the insurgents.”⁷⁰

The focus on the population implied that the Marine Corps would have prioritized the political, not the military sides of a conflict, which is in line with the nature of low-intensity conflicts as it was described in the introduction. *COIN-06* explained the Marine Corps' understanding of the aspects of insurgencies, emphasizing the structure and aim of insurgencies and stressing their complex nature.

The Marine Corps was adamant that political factors were primary in a counterinsurgency campaign, which is at the core of this thesis.⁷¹ The primacy of political factors directly supported the legitimacy of the counterinsurgency campaign and vice versa. Without political solutions, it is hard to imagine the Marine Corps gaining any legitimacy by military operations alone. This was not really new in Marine Corps doctrine, as the 1989 and 1997 doctrines stressed the primacy of policy and consequently of political factors too. Nevertheless, there was a change to the nature of the political factors. In conventional

⁶⁷ FMFM 1, 32 and MCDP 1, 40-41.

⁶⁸ For more on the Weinberger-Powell doctrine see: Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 47-48; H.W. Brands, Darren Pierson, and Reynolds S. Kiefer, *The Use of Force after the Cold War*, 1st ed., Foreign Relations and the Presidency No. 3 (College Station, [Texas]: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 62-64; Jeffrey Record, *Making War, Thinking History: Munich, Vietnam and Presidential Uses of Force from Korea to Kosovo*, (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2002), 26-30.

⁶⁹ MCDP 1, 71-76.

⁷⁰ Thomas R. Mockaitis, *The Iraq War: Learning from the Past, Adapting to the Present, and Planning for the Future*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2007). Quoted in Kronvall, "Finally Eating Soup with a Knife?," 34.

⁷¹ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-22.

warfare, policy and politics were left to politicians, while the militaries took care of the fighting.⁷² In counterinsurgency, “[t]he political and military aspects of insurgencies are so bound together as to be inseparable.”⁷³ Implicit in this was the possibility of the Marine Corps having to participate in politics and shape policy in their area of operations.

According to *COIN-06*, insurgency is “typically a form of internal war” (primarily within a state),⁷⁴ and is defined as “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict (JP 1-02).”⁷⁵ Consequently, the Marine Corps considered insurgency as a political struggle by nature.

The most notable consequence of the political nature of counterinsurgencies was that “the new doctrine [*COIN-06*] sanctions, and to some extent advocates, a much more comprehensive type of involvement for Army forces in COIN operations. This pertains to combat as well as non-combat operations.”⁷⁶ Even though this pertained to the Army, the conclusion is the same for the Marine Corps. This will be evident after this thesis has addressed the remaining criteria for low-intensity conflicts.

The Marine Corps’ perception of insurgency as a political struggle was evident when *COIN-06* addressed the insurgents and their motives and approaches: “Each insurgency is unique, although there are often similarities among them”⁷⁷, and that each insurgency had to be examined to identify:

- Root cause or causes of the insurgency.
- Extent to which the insurgency enjoys internal and external support.
- Basis (including the ideology and narrative) on which insurgents appeal to the target population.
- Insurgents’ motivation and depth of commitment.
- Likely insurgent weapons and tactics.
- Operational environment in which insurgents seek to initiate and develop their campaign and strategy.⁷⁸

⁷² FMFM 1, 19-20 and MCDP 1, 23-25.

⁷³ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-22.

⁷⁴ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-2.

⁷⁵ *COIN-06* used the definition from: Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Joint Publication 3-02 Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations,” (2001), 268. From now on, this doctrine will be termed JP 3-02 in the references.

⁷⁶ Kronvall, “Finally Eating Soup with a Knife?,” 40.

⁷⁷ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-5.

⁷⁸ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-5.

What are interesting about the list are both the contents and the organization of them. Although the list was not written in order of priorities, it is still telling that the top three points were essentially of a political nature, while the military challenges of an insurgency were the bottom two. Compared to the 1997 doctrines, there was a substantial difference. The top three points were important in achieving a political solution, and even though policy and politics was important in the 1997 doctrines, it was not a part of the theater of operation itself. In the 1997 doctrines, the Marine Corps' mission was to fight wars and leave the politics up to others. This list transformed this relationship. In *COIN-06* the top three points were prioritized ahead of the military ones, and consequently a political solution was considered to be primary.⁷⁹ This was not just a major break with previous practice, but a complete turnaround. This turnaround is consistent with the nature of low-intensity conflicts and the increasing importance of the political dimension that came with them. The political dimension not only figured prominently, it took the center stage, and it is natural to assume that the emphasis was intentional. The new priorities were reflected in the rest of the doctrine.

This was obvious when insurgent approaches, six in total, were identified:

- **Conspiratorial**, where a few leaders and activists seize “control of government structures or [exploit] a revolutionary situation.”
- **Military-focused**, where the aim is “to create revolutionary possibilities or seize power primarily by applying military force”.
- **Urban**, where the insurgents “use terrorist tactics in urban areas to sow disorder, incite sectarian violence, weaken the government, intimidate the population, kill government and opposition leaders, fix and intimidate police and military forces, limiting their ability to respond to attacks and create government repression.
- **Protracted popular war**, consisting of three phases; the defensive, stalemate and counteroffensive.⁸⁰ This kind of insurgency is complex, and is identified as a “mosaic war”, where different tactics are applied at different places and is constantly shifting.

⁷⁹ Implicit in this is the realization that the Marine Corps would have to participate in the political processes in their area of operations.

⁸⁰ Phase I, strategic defensive, is a period of latent insurgency that allows time to wear down superior enemy strength while the insurgency gains support and establishes bases. During this phase, insurgent leaders develop the movement into an effective clandestine organization. [...] Phase II, strategic stalemate, begins with overt guerrilla warfare as the correlation of forces approaches equilibrium. [...] Phase III, strategic counteroffensive, occurs as the insurgent organization becomes stronger than the established authority. Insurgent forces transition from guerrilla warfare to conventional warfare. MCWP 3-33.5, 1-6 to 1-7.

- **Identity-focused**, which is “based on the common identity of religious affiliation, clan, tribe, or ethnic group”
- **Composite and coalition**, which is when insurgents combine some or all of the approaches above and also form coalitions with other insurgents when it serves their cause. This was, according to the Marine Corps, the most likely approach of contemporary insurgencies.⁸¹

These approaches were based on both current and historical examples, and they represented a major change from the 1997 doctrines. The 1997 doctrines did not identify different enemy approaches to a conflict. They focused on the application of high-intensity warfare to any situation, making the enemy approach more or less irrelevant to the counterinsurgents. *COIN-06* offered an increasingly nuanced view of insurgency, focusing mainly on the political sides of the different insurgent approaches as opposed to the 1997 doctrines.

In addition to identifying insurgent approaches, *COIN-06* addressed the means of mobilization for insurgencies and the insurgent causes. Much was more or less obvious statements;⁸² however in a doctrinal context they were still very important. The fact that the Marine Corps addressed these subjects indicates that the reasons behind the insurgency were in focus. If the insurgent’s cause lost its appeal in the local population and the flow of new recruits stopped, the insurgency was likely to die out. By concentrating on the basic causes, the Marine Corps also accepted a political solution. This accentuated the political dimensions of the doctrine and downplays the focus on actual combat. By stressing the fundamental reasons for an insurgency, *COIN-06* corresponded with the assumption that low-intensity conflicts are more political in nature than high-intensity conflicts.

The political dimension was also present when the elements of insurgency were addressed:

- The **Movement leaders**.
- The **Combatants** that “do the actual fighting and provide security.”
- The **Political** cadre that “forms the political core of the insurgency.”

⁸¹ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-5 to 1-8.

⁸² The means of mobilization were: persuasion, coercion, reaction to abuses, foreign support and apolitical motivations (money). The causes for mobilization were not mentioned specifically, however, their diversity was stressed: “[Insurgent] causes often stem from the unresolved contradictions existing within any society or culture. Frequently, contradictions are based on real problems. [...] Skillful counterinsurgents can deal a significant blow to an insurgency by appropriating its cause.” MCWP 3-33.5, 1-8 to 1-10.

- The **Auxiliaries** provide important support functions, but does not actively engage in combat.
- The **Mass base** of followers.⁸³

This exemplified the broader view of actors in *COIN-06*, compared to the 1997 doctrines. While the 1997 doctrines concentrated mainly on the leadership and attacking the combatants as a means to break their will, *COIN-06* considers the whole movement from the mass base up to the movement leaders. This opens up for a wider range of means in the *COIN-06* doctrine than in earlier doctrines. The means were not restricted to fighting leaders and combatants, but were expanded to include others that are not necessarily as “hard core” and can possibly be persuaded to abandon the insurgency, not killed or captured. Persuading people to abandon the insurgency is part of a political solution. Consequently, the inclusion of the entire range of actors in an insurgency accentuated the understanding of insurgencies as mainly political struggles as opposed to military struggles, and was most certainly in concert with the spectrum of conflict.

Finally, the Marine Corps was to “support the host nation”,⁸⁴ as foreign armies would eventually be seen “as interlopers or occupiers”,⁸⁵ and in *COIN-06*, the Marine Corps asserted the importance of transferring the responsibilities to host nation governments as soon as possible “without unacceptable degradation”.⁸⁶ This point was emphasized when it was stated that

Achieving these goals [a legitimate government and addressing the fundamental causes of the insurgency] requires the host nation to defeat insurgents or render them irrelevant, uphold the rule of law, and provide a basic level of essential services and security for the populace. Key to all these tasks is developing an effective host-nation (HN) security force.⁸⁷

This illustrates the importance of developing the host nation’s ability to provide its population with all the basic needs. This would have required a political solution to the insurgency, as a stable country would have required a political solution that a sufficient majority consented to.

⁸³ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-12.

⁸⁴ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-26.

⁸⁵ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-26.

⁸⁶ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-26.

⁸⁷ MCWP 3-33.5, 6-1.

Constructive, Reconstructive and Economic Approaches

COIN [counterinsurgency] requires Soldiers and Marines to be ready both to fight and to build—depending on the security situation and a variety of other factors. [...] All full spectrum operations executed overseas—including COIN operations—include offensive, defensive, and stability operations that commanders combine to achieve the desired end state. The exact mix varies depending on the situation and the mission.⁸⁸

Further accentuating this was the realization that “killing insurgents—while necessary, especially with respect to extremists—by itself cannot defeat an insurgency. Gaining and retaining the initiative requires counterinsurgents to address the insurgency’s causes through stability operations as well.”⁸⁹ This is the natural consequence of having the approval of the local populace as the objective: Legitimacy depends upon the counterinsurgency’s ability to alleviate the grievances that fuel the insurgency. This was further elaborated on when the Marine Corps stated that

Essential services address the life support needs of the HN population. The U.S. military’s primary task is normally to provide a safe and secure environment. HN or interagency organizations can then develop the services or infrastructure needed. In an unstable environment, the military may initially have the leading role. Other agencies may not be present or might not have enough capability or capacity to meet HN needs. Therefore, COIN military planning includes preparing to perform these tasks for an extended period.⁹⁰

This was a major change from the previous focus on combat missions and the assumptions connected with war, as the Marine Corps accepted reconstruction as a part of its repertoire of tasks.⁹¹ However, it was not enough to assess the needs of the population from the Marine Corps’ point of view, as one would need “[a]n accurate needs assessment [that] reflects cultural sensitivity; otherwise, great time and expense can be wasted on something the populace considers of little value.”⁹²

However, the fact that the Marine Corps still considered other actors as more proficient at reconstruction was expressed when the doctrine addressed the unity of effort. The importance of the joint civil/military effort in the counterinsurgency environment

⁸⁸ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-19.

⁸⁹ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-3.

⁹⁰ MCWP 3-33.5, 5-14.

⁹¹ Kronvall, "Finally Eating Soup with a Knife?," 39.

⁹² MCWP 3-33.5, 5-14.

increased noticeable.⁹³ The Marine Corps' reason for this was that “[m]ilitary forces can perform civilian tasks but often not as well as the civilian agencies with people trained in those skills.”⁹⁴ In earlier doctrines, unity of effort primarily applied to military units, however, in *COIN-06* the effort included other organizations, like state department and NGOs (non-governmental organizations). Neither of the 1989 and 1997 doctrines included NGOs. In *COIN-06*, achieving a synergy with these was considered essential to succeed in a counterinsurgency operation. This was aptly illustrated when the integration of civilian and military activities was addressed: “The integration of civilian and military efforts is crucial to successful COIN [counterinsurgency] operations”⁹⁵

It was previously mentioned that the Marine Corps stated that some of the best weapons for counterinsurgents do not shoot. The improvement of people's lives, constructing necessary facilities and improving the economy, would certainly have been important. Construction has already been mentioned several times, but the Marine Corps was also aware of the economic challenges in a counterinsurgency environment, as it stated that

Military operations or insurgent actions can adversely affect the economy. Such disruption can generate resentment against the HN government. Conversely, restoring production and distribution systems can energize the economy, create jobs and growth, and positively influence local perceptions.⁹⁶

Informational Approaches

In *COIN-06*, ideology and narrative received quite extensive treatment, which was a clear expression of the priority of the fundamental background and driving forces of an insurgency, and also accentuated insurgency as an information war. As the ideology and narrative was important in shaping and the development of an insurgency, it follows that communicating them would have been central to an insurgent strategy. Consequently, the counterinsurgents would have had to have a competing ideology and narrative resulting in an information war, adding another element to a counterinsurgency campaign and enforcing the impression of *COIN-06* as a predominantly low-intensity doctrine.

Conducting information operations was considered to be of decisive importance,⁹⁷ a logical consequence of the focus on legitimacy, and it was stated that “[b]y publicizing government policies, the actual situation, and counterinsurgent accomplishments, IO

⁹³ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-22.

⁹⁴ MCWP 3-33.5, 2-9.

⁹⁵ MCWP 3-33.5, 2.1.

⁹⁶ MCWP 3-33.5, 3-12.

⁹⁷ MCWP 3-33.5, 5-8.

[information operations], synchronized with public affairs, can neutralize insurgent propaganda and false claims.”⁹⁸ Information operations were generally given a prominent position in counterinsurgency, and it was addressed specifically with several points on how to perform them.⁹⁹

The doctrine was thus a major change from its superior doctrines. *COIN-06* changed the focus from enemy combat formations to the local population. The analysis of this doctrine has shown that the interpretation of war seems to have changed since the 1997 doctrines were published. In chapter 1, I concluded that, even though the definition of war could include many low-intensity conflicts, the interpretation was mostly high-intensity centered. Counterinsurgency belonged in the Military Operations Other Than War (*MOOTW*) category, however, in *COIN-06*, it was considered a war.¹⁰⁰ *COIN-06* did not offer its own definition of war, and it is natural to assume that the 1997 doctrines’ definition of war was used in *COIN-06*. There was not much resembling a conventional war in *COIN-06*. The contents of the doctrine can therefore indicate that the interpretation had expanded to encompass at least some low-intensity conflicts.

Consequences of COIN-06

First of all, the doctrine was aimed at counterinsurgency specifically. In principle, that excluded other low-intensity operations, risking that they were subjected to doctrines dominated by a high-intensity approach to conflict. However, the relevant parts of *COIN-06* could be applied if they were relevant.

Secondly, the status of *COIN-06* in the doctrinal hierarchy could have been a problem. As was explained above, it belonged to the second level of doctrines, and was subordinate to doctrines that were of a high-intensity nature. This means that the conventional doctrines were still prioritized when in doubt as to which doctrine to apply. Also, the fact that it was placed so far down the hierarchy, made it easier to ignore it. The comparatively low status of doctrines in general in the Marine Corps would not have contributed to this situation. Related to this issue were the consequences of the low status of *COIN-06* compared to its hybrid contents. Officially the doctrine was on a tactical level; however, the combination of the tactical, operational and strategic level in *COIN-06* could have created confusion as to the

⁹⁸ MCWP 3-33.5, 5-8.

⁹⁹ MCWP 3-33.5, 5-8 to 5-11.

¹⁰⁰ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-2.

target group of the doctrine. However, previously in this chapter we saw that the fusing of these three levels could be necessary in low-intensity warfare.

Thirdly, the operational environment portrayed in this doctrine was more complicated than what was the case in previous doctrines, which will lead to more complicated operations, and would also be reflected in training. This would add more tasks that a Marine would have had to learn. Conventional, high-intensity war is complex as it is, and whether the addition of counterinsurgency degrades the Marine Corps ability to fight conventionally or not is a valid question. This is an ongoing debate at the time of writing; however, contributing to this debate is not within the bounds of this thesis.

Supposing that counterinsurgency was introduced to the Marine Corps as it was portrayed in *COIN-06*, there would have been significant changes to the way the Marine Corps conducted its counterinsurgency operations.

First of all, it would have reduced the number and intensity of offensive combat operations that were so preeminent in the previous doctrines. The restrictions on force placed on the counterinsurgents by the contemporary imperatives and “paradoxes” of insurgency would most likely cause a significant difference from the 1997 doctrines. In general, the entire doctrine was restrictive on the use of force, and would thus have contributed to this.

Secondly, the previous priority of high-intensity would have been abandoned, and instead, the focus would have turned towards the relationship between the population and the Marine Corps. Consequently, the Marine Corps would have been performing a relatively high number of unconventional missions. Quoting the French counterinsurgency expert David Galula, *COIN-06* described the new situation

To confine soldiers to purely military functions while urgent and vital tasks have to be done, and nobody else is available to undertake them, would be senseless. The soldier must then be prepared to become...a social worker, a civil engineer, a schoolteacher, a nurse, a boy scout. But only for as long as he cannot be replaced, for it is better to entrust civilian tasks to civilians.¹⁰¹

In practical terms, it meant that the Marine Corps in some instances could have performed the functions that were usually entrusted to a civilian government until such a capacity was attained. A good example of this sort of function was the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Afghanistan. A result of this would have been that the Marine Corps increased its

¹⁰¹ MCWP 3-33.5, 2-9.

number of Military Police, engineers, economists, medical personnel, civil affairs personnel, sociologists and others who had expertise that is essential in creating a stable society.

Conclusion

The introduction of *COIN-06* to the doctrinal hierarchy of the US Marine Corps constituted a major change to the long standing conventional focus. While the previous doctrines had concentrated on high-intensity warfare with quick and violent victories over major enemy combat formations, the publication of the Counterinsurgency doctrine in 2006 shifted the focus towards the population as the new “battleground”. Counterinsurgency was a conflict where legitimacy and trust was to be earned by concentrating on political solutions and providing the population with the basic needs, consequently removing the basis for the insurgency.

In *COIN-06*, the political factors were primary in attaining legitimacy. This was evident in the doctrine’s extensive discussion of the motivations, approaches and elements of insurgency, and finally the development of the host nation government. The importance of constructing and reconstructing civilian infrastructure and developing the economic system of the host nation was also stressed, and the importance of informing the local population of progress was considered vital to the success of a counterinsurgency operation.

There were, however, some problems with the new doctrine. The status of the doctrine could have limited the impact on counterinsurgency operations. Also, *COIN-06* was aimed at counterinsurgency campaigns, which left a doctrinal gap for other sorts of low-intensity operations. Nevertheless, the principles in the doctrine were applicable to low-intensity operations, and with some initiative from the readers, it could be used in other unconventional operations. The doctrine was, without doubt, predominantly low-intensity focused, and if *COIN-06* fulfilled its purpose “to merge traditional approaches to COIN with the realities of a new international arena shaped by technological advances, globalization, and the spread of extremist ideologies”,¹⁰² the Marine Corps would have faced significant changes to its operations, with the new focus and approaches outlined above.

¹⁰² MCWP 3-33.5, vii.

Chapter 5:

Explaining the Counterinsurgency Doctrine

Introduction

As we saw in the previous chapter, the changes from the 1997 doctrines were quite substantial; however, one must keep in mind *COIN-06*'s status as a level two doctrine. Nevertheless, the hybrid nature of and fundamental changes in *COIN-06* had made it partially incompatible with *Warfighting-97*.

This chapter has two aims. Firstly it will discuss potential reasons for the status of *COIN-06*. Secondly, it will discuss possible reasons for the decision to develop the counterinsurgency manual and potential explanations for the change this manual represented. This chapter will argue that the decision to write a counterinsurgency manual and the explanation for the changes that it entailed had the rationalist factor as the main explanation: The ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq were perceived to be a greater challenge than what was previously thought. The nature and extent of these challenges warranted a doctrine that took a radically different approach from the previous doctrines.¹

The Status of the COIN Doctrine

Counterinsurgency operations are only one out of several types of operations and in the doctrinal hierarchy, doctrines concerning specific operations were written for the tactical level. For *COIN-06* to fit into this hierarchy, it would have had to be placed at the tactical level, even though it contained elements of both strategic and tactical doctrine.² I would assume that changing the hierarchy itself in order to accommodate a single doctrine would have been unlikely, as this would upset the entire system and warrant a complete reworking of the hierarchy and the doctrines' relationship to each other. Also, establishing low-intensity doctrines in a separate, unconventional, hierarchy would have been in direct violation of the intent stated in *Warfighting-97*. Referring to the challenge of developing a concept of warfighting, the Marine Corps stated that: "It [the challenge] requires a concept that is consistently effective across the full spectrum of conflict because we cannot attempt to change our basic doctrine from situation to situation and expect to be proficient."³ In this context,

¹ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 70.

² Marine Corps Doctrine Overview, 2.

³ MCDP 1, 71.

basic doctrine referred to what this thesis has termed strategic doctrine.⁴ The intent, then, was to have one doctrine series that covered all potential conflicts. If that was possible, it would have been the most logical way to organize the doctrines. As the quote suggests, changing strategic doctrine, from situation to situation would be undesirable. Having one doctrinal hierarchy for all operations seemed to have been the ideal.

Whether these factors were taken into consideration when *COIN-06* was written is hard to ascertain. It is also possible that the Marine Corps considered the doctrine to be essential for the development in Afghanistan and Iraq, and this urgency could have forced it into the hierarchy without much thought to its actual place and status.

The Rationalist Factor: Afghanistan and Iraq

As was previously stated in the introduction, the decision to write and publish *COIN-06* was a result of the ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and in the words of Steven Metz in his book on Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy: “The military’s counterinsurgency doctrine was decades old and designed for a Col War-style rural ‘people’s war’.”⁵

The initial operations in Afghanistan and Iraq were predominantly conventional, high-intensity conflicts. However by 2003 the security situation in Afghanistan was deteriorating. Additionally, events in Iraq after the successful campaign in March and April 2003 quickly began to take a turn for the worse.⁶

The decision to publish a new counterinsurgency manual was strongly influenced by the ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The previous manual, *COIN-80*, was obviously not applicable to the situation, as was the case for the reprint of the *Small Wars Manual*.⁷ Considering the forces that prevented a change, first and foremost the culture of the Marine Corps, the influence of these operations must have been quite substantial. As David Ucko stated, “[T]he US military’s attitude toward stability operations in 2000 can be understood as a combination of disinterest and aversion,”⁸ something that did not start to change in a significant way until 2004 and 2005.⁹ This was supported by Terry Terriff’s paper on military change and organizational culture in the Marine Corps. As was previously

⁴ Examples of which are: *Warfighting-97*, *Strategy-97*, *Campaigning-97* and *Tactics-97*.

⁵ Steven Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy* (Potomac Books, 2008), 152.

⁶ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 87.

⁷ Although it was not considered applicable to the situation, the *Small Wars Manual* contained elements of political solutions that informed the authors of *COIN-06*. See: Kronvall, "Finally Eating Soup with a Knife?," 10-12.

⁸ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 70.

⁹ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 106, 119.

mentioned, the paper referred to a survey from 2003, where a majority of the officers thought the Marine Corps had no need to innovate.¹⁰

The first example of change in *COIN-06* was the shift of focus from enemy combat formations to the civilian population and the new emphasis on political solutions. The Marine Corps probably realized that their focus on enemy combat formations did not bring about enough positive results, as the security situation in Iraq, especially, was deteriorating. The shift in focus and the new emphasis must have been considered to be critical in achieving U.S. objectives, as the change was an obvious break with the previous, combat centered doctrines.

In order to achieve the political goals in Afghanistan and Iraq, it would have been necessary to improve the population's daily lives, which was reflected in the doctrine's emphasis of constructive, reconstructive and economic measures. Also, the nature of these two conflicts probably required a new approach to information operations, as the successes of the counterinsurgents depended on relaying the relevant information to the local population.

This led to the decision to take on all tasks related to a counterinsurgency, not just strictly security tasks, and also, the "embrace of the full complexity of counterinsurgency."¹¹ The situation in Afghanistan and Iraq must have been considered grave enough for the Marine Corps to set its long standing culture and perceptions aside and produce a doctrine that it considered as suitable to the situation. This confirms the rationalist factor as the primary, if not *the*, agent for change. The factors that were preserving the status quo seem to have been overrun by events.

Paradoxically, rationalism could also help explaining why the change came in 2006 and not earlier. Ucko gave two reasons for this. First, the initial combat operations in Afghanistan seemed to confirm the high-intensity paradigm, as the campaign was marked mostly by regular combat operations supported by combat aircraft.¹² Second, the invasion of Iraq also confirmed the high-intensity paradigm. This shows that rationalism had a major impact on the doctrinal development, and in more than one way.

Other Factors

Together with the rationalist factor, the service culture of the Marine Corps was probably a major factor in explaining why the change did not come after the initial invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001. Terriff's study strengthens this explanation. However culture is

¹⁰ Terriff, "Warriors and Innovators," 233.

¹¹ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 159.

¹² Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 82.

not necessarily reflected in the pace of doctrinal publications, as changes in doctrines would probably have materialized after they had been consolidated in the organization. For example, Commandant Charles C. Krulak's attempt at introducing low-intensity conflicts into the Marine Corps could have reduced the cultural resistance, and consequently reduced culture as an explanatory factor. The same logic can be used for the impact of organizational inertia. The point here is that even though *COIN-06* was a doctrinal revolution, the process of change could have been underway in the Marine Corps for a while. However, the factors identified in Terry Terriff's paper limited this change to happening after 2003, as the culture seemed to be focused on high-intensity missions, at least in the officer corps.¹³

Lastly, according to David Ucko, technology would have contributed to slowing down the process of change.¹⁴ "Instead of conducting state-building, Bush wanted the US military to take advantage of the so-called 'strategic pause' in international relations to make the RMA¹⁵ happen."¹⁶

Conclusion

To my knowledge, there is no existing literature directly addressing this subject, and a systematic analysis of primary sources – to the extent that they are available in the first place – is outside the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, I have tried to portray some reasons why the Marine Corps decided to develop *COIN-06*, reasons for the change in the doctrine, and why it occurred at that time. It seems obvious that the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq had a decisive influence on both the decision to develop a new doctrine and the contents of the doctrine. Other factors seem to have a limited influence on the contents, but may have influenced the decision to write, and the timing of, the doctrine. The status of *COIN-06* seems to have been decided by the previous counterinsurgency doctrine. Whether the decision was deliberate, due to tradition or a sense of urgency is hard to determine.

¹³ "A survey of US military officers conducted in 2003 indicated that while a majority of Marine officers viewed their service as being very open to innovation, they also thought that the Marine Corps had no present need to innovate. These findings are consistent with the observation in the 2001 *Marine Corps Strategy 21* that, 'the [General Officers Futures Group] concluded that the Corps requires only marginal adjustments to successfully adapt [for the future]. We do, in fact, have it right.' These opinions reflect a view that the Marine Corps had no need to embrace relentless change and to strive for persistent innovation, had no need to experiment so that it was prepared to operate and fight in an unknown future environment." Quote taken from: Terriff, "Warriors and Innovators," 233.

¹⁴ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 76-79.

¹⁵ RMA is the belief that the inventions in technology, like precision guided ammunition, communication and satellites, among other things, would revolutionize the way war was waged.

¹⁶ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 76.

All of these factors influenced the development of *COIN-06* in some way. The question is to what degree, something which could be the subject for future research.

Chapter 6:

Conclusion

The low-intensity elements in Marine Corps doctrine were practically nonexistent at the end of the Cold War. 17 years later, in 2006, the Marine Corps published *COIN-06*, a comprehensive manual “designed to fill a doctrinal gap”, and specifically aimed at the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹ This chapter will, first, summarize the analysis of the doctrines’ contents, and second, try to explain why the lack of development until 2006 and the reasons behind the new counterinsurgency doctrine. Following this, I will make some short remarks on the way ahead for low-intensity elements, and finally reflect on future research.

From Warfighting to Counterinsurgency

Published in the final stages of the Cold War, the Fleet Marine Force Manual 1 Warfighting (*Warfighting-89*) was a product of its time, reflecting the predominantly high-intensity focus of the east-west struggle. The Marine Corps intended to be proficient in both low and high-intensity conflicts, an intention that was explicitly stated in *Warfighting-89*. However, the low-intensity intention was not elaborated on in a comprehensive way. The first indication on this was the lack of doctrines dedicated to low-intensity conflicts.² Compared to the number of doctrines on high-intensity conflicts, it is clear that low-intensity conflicts were given a low priority on a general level.

The doctrine itself confirmed this impression. Firstly, it is observable in *Warfighting-89*’s definition of war as “a state of hostilities that exists between or among nations, characterized by the use of military force. The essence of war is a violent clash between two hostile, independent, and irreconcilable wills, each trying to impose itself on the other.”³ The focus was on traditional nation-state warfare on a conventional, high-intensity level, however.

Although parts of the doctrine contained concepts that were equally applicable to both low and high-intensity conflicts, low-intensity conflicts were not mentioned when the concepts were exemplified. Few, if any, of the criteria for low-intensity elements were mentioned explicitly. One of the only examples of low-intensity approaches was the acknowledgement that “war *must serve* policy”; however, this was put in a high-intensity

¹ MCWP 3-33.5, Foreword.

² In practice, there were no low-intensity doctrines, as was argued in chapter 2.

³ FMFM 1, 3.

setting.⁴ Also, *Warfighting-89* did note that low-intensity conflicts were more probable than high-intensity conflicts, and that militaries that were trained and equipped for high-intensity mission could struggle to handle a low-intensity environment. However, the solutions that were outlined were of a conventional nature. In essence, the Marine Corps' theory of war was practically without low-intensity elements, a phenomenon which was perfectly summed up in its definition of military strategy as "the art of winning wars".⁵ Thus the doctrine, almost in its entirety, concentrated on high-intensity conflicts. Consequently, the analysis makes it clear that the Marine Corps' definition of war, and thus warfighting, in *Warfighting-89* was preoccupied with conventional, high-intensity warfare.

Moving eight years forward in time, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1 *Warfighting (Warfighting-97)* was published. In large parts there were no major changes from 1989. Nevertheless, there were a few developments within low-intensity elements. First of all, the Marine Corps expanded its definition of war to include non-state actors and generally adapted it somewhat to low-intensity conflicts. Moreover, the strategic level of war was addressed in a separate doctrine, which was in tune with the political nature of low-intensity conflicts. A potentially major change in *Warfighting-97* was the realization that "many political problems cannot be solved by military means."⁶ However, a closer analysis of the doctrine revealed that in low-intensity conflicts, the responsibility for non-military tasks lay with other agencies, allies or the host nation government, exempting the Marine Corps from low-intensity solutions. One of the few changes was the introduction of military operations other than war (*MOOTW*). The inherent problems of this term made it impractical, and the real change lay with the *attempt* to address low-intensity conflicts more specifically. Another change was that the definition of military strategy included not just winning wars, but also securing the peace.⁷ This was reflected when the doctrine addressed the tactical level of war, where noncombat situations received some treatment. However, the noncombat situations mentioned were very similar to high-intensity warfare, indicating a priority of conventional-like missions.

This picture changed in 2006, when the counterinsurgency doctrine (*COIN-06*) was published. And although the doctrine was not formally on the military strategic level, its contents were a mix of all the levels of war, the strategic, operational and tactical level.

⁴ FMFM 1, 19.

⁵ FMFM 1, 22.

⁶ FMFM 1, 19 and MCDP 1, 24.

⁷ MCDP 1, 28.

COIN-06 contained significant developments on all five low-intensity criteria. First and foremost, the focus on defeating enemy combat formations had been replaced by a focus on the local population in the area of operations. The prime example of this was the stressing of legitimacy. Throughout the doctrine legitimacy was, either explicitly or implicitly, the main priority, which was neatly summarized when it was stated that “[v]ictory is achieved when the populace consents to the government’s legitimacy and stops actively and passively supporting the insurgency.”⁸

The other main issue of *COIN-06* was the primacy of political solutions to conflicts. As with the focus on the population, the political dimension of conflicts was present throughout the doctrine, and this was illustrated when it was claimed that “Military efforts are necessary and important to counterinsurgency (COIN) efforts, but they are only effective when integrated into a comprehensive strategy employing all instruments of national power.”⁹

Furthermore, the doctrine dealt extensively with constructive, economic and informational approaches to counterinsurgency, satisfying my criteria for low-intensity doctrines.

From the above, a picture of a slow and painstaking process of doctrinal change emerges from the 1990s and well into the first decade of the 21st century. With the publication of *COIN-06*, this process made a leap.

Explaining the Development

The developments outlined above had a rather slow start in the 1990s, but took a relatively large step with the *COIN-06*. Now, the question is why did we see so few developments in the 1990s, and why did this change in 2006?

In the introduction, there were mentioned seven possible explanations:

- Service culture
- Lack of conceptual clarity concerning low-intensity conflicts
- The assumptions connected to low-intensity conflicts
- Rationalist explanation
- Bureaucratic politics
- Organizational inertia

⁸ MCWP 3-33.5, 1-3.

⁹ MCWP 3-33.5, 2-1.

- Technology

The lack of development from *Warfighting-89* to *Warfighting-97* seems to be caused by the predominance of high-intensity conflicts in Marine Corps culture, something which the literature on organizational development supports. As most military services, the Marine Corps held its culture in high regard, and changing a part of the culture will inevitably take time but most likely also require outside events that contradict the predominant views. The high-intensity paradigm was in many ways reinforced by the Marine Corps' interpretation of some of the operations that were conducted by the Marine Corps, but also by the Army. The most prominent example of high-intensity operations where the Marine Corps participated was of course the first Gulf War, where the use of large numbers of ground units with sophisticated technology and with precision strikes delivered by air and naval units backing them up, strengthened the faith in high-intensity approaches. Other events, like the Somalia mission, was interpreted so as to confirm the perception that U.S. forces should not get embroiled in low-intensity conflicts, as they were thought of as quagmires that would require prolonged operations with significant losses of American lives. The rationalist factor thus had a dual impact, as some conflicts were interpreted in such a way as to promote high-intensity conflicts, while others were interpreted as promoting low-intensity conflicts.

Another explanation that was likely to have hindered the development of low-intensity elements was the lack of conceptual clarity concerning low-intensity conflicts. The Marine Corps did not grasp the inherent complexities of low-intensity conflicts, making it difficult to author doctrines that addressed them. Also, the assumptions connected to low-intensity conflicts probably played a role in preventing the development of low-intensity elements. The Marine Corps expected not to take part in these conflicts, and when they did, they assumed that others, be it civilian agencies, allies or host nation government would take care of the non-military components of a mission.

The available literature does not attribute bureaucratic politics and organizational inertia much influence on the doctrinal development. Although Ucko and Schultz addressed organizational change in both the Army and Marine Corps in general, this still suggests that these two factors had a modest impact.

How can we explain the marked change that was introduced with the counterinsurgency doctrine that was published in 2006? I conclude quite unambiguously on the primacy of the rationalist explanation. The decision to write and publish *COIN-06* was based on the deteriorating situation in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The initial strategy in both

countries failed, and the violence that ensued had the hallmarks of insurgencies. The existing doctrine on counterinsurgency was outdated, and it became apparent that the situation required a new approach. Despite the doctrine's low status in the hierarchy, the gravity of the situation, the extensive low-intensity contents and the cooperation with the army suggests a genuine attempt at introducing this low-intensity doctrine. The most obvious example of the seriousness was the shift in focus, from enemy military forces to the local population. Although winning hearts and minds had been suggested before, this priority must be considered as a new and serious attempt at getting to terms with the complexities of counterinsurgency. The general impression was that the events in Afghanistan and Iraq had a decisive impact on the decision to develop and contents of *COIN-06*. The problems the Marine Corps faced in Afghanistan and Iraq were obviously so grave that the culture and other conserving factors were no longer able to resist a change. It is also likely that the conserving forces were in a process of change towards low-intensity conflicts at this point, making the resistance against change smaller than what it had previously been.

The Way Ahead

As David Ucko stated in his thesis, "the future of counterinsurgency as a topic within the US military depends to a large degree on the outcome of the Iraq campaign."¹⁰ In the light of the recent shift in emphasis by the Obama administration from Iraq to Afghanistan, the outcome of both these conflicts are likely to have major implications for the future of low-intensity elements in the Marine Corps and the U.S. military in general, but also for the United States security policy.

Looking beyond a purely doctrinal perspective, the implications of a positive outcome for the U.S. in Afghanistan and Iraq can be many. First and foremost, this will suggest that the military is on the right track in developing counterinsurgency and low-intensity capabilities, which would be new to the U.S. military. One could potentially be looking at an increasing focus on low-intensity conflicts in general; however, it is unlikely that it will replace high-intensity conflicts as the predominant paradigm. With a potential peer competitor in China and a resurgent Russia, the consequences of failing in a high-intensity conflict would probably be too great for it to take second place.

What, then, would happen in the case of outright failure? Most likely counterinsurgency and low-intensity in general with it, would be under severe pressure. This,

¹⁰ Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 220.

however, does depend on who “gets the blame” for the failure. If the counterinsurgency proponents are blamed, it will most likely be a lost cause, while if the politicians are blamed; counterinsurgency is more likely to survive.¹¹

Future Research

This perspective on and analysis of COIN-06 in this thesis can serve as a starting point for further research. As was mentioned in the introduction, the literature on Marine Corps doctrine is quite limited, so potential future research projects can be many. First, the actual changes made in Marine Corps organization after the introduction of *COIN-06* could be an interesting path, as this would give an indication as to the degree of implementation of the doctrine. Second, a study could also be made on the operational consequences of the doctrine and the implementation of *COIN-06*'s tenets in actual operations. The results here would be highly relevant to the degree of implementation of counterinsurgency principles. The feasibility of such a project depends on the degree of openness in the Marine Corps, as it is likely that such information would be classified. Third, and the most interesting in the context of this thesis, would be to do research on the actual reasons behind the doctrinal development described in this thesis. Although they have been indirectly and partly addressed by Tammy Schultz and David Ucko, there is no study that I have knowledge about that addresses the issue of this thesis specifically.

¹¹ For more on this: Ucko, "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations," 221-224

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Joint Doctrines

Joint Chiefs of Staff. "Joint Electronic Library." Joint Chiefs of Staff,

<http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/index.html>.

———. "Joint Publication 3-02: Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations 3-02." 2001.

———. "Joint Publication 3-07 Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War." 1995.

Marine Corps Doctrines

United State Marine Corps. "Marine Corps Doctrine." edited by Department of the Navy.

Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1997.

———. "Fleet Marine Force Manual 1-1 Campaigning." edited by Department of the Navy.

Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1990.

———. "Fleet Marine Force Manual 1-2 the Role of the Marine Corps in the National Defense." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1991.

———. "Fleet Marine Force Manual 1-3 Tactics." edited by Department of the Navy.

Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1991.

———. "Fleet Marine Force Manual 1 Warfighting." edited by Department of the Navy.

Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1989.

———. "Fleet Marine Force Manual 8-2 Counterinsurgency Operations." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1980.

———. "Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication 12-15." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1990.

———. "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-0 Operations." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2001.

———. "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-1 Strategy." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1997.

- . "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-2, Campaigning." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1997.
- . "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-3 Tactics." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1997.
- . "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1 Warfighting." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1997.
- . "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 2 Intelligence." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1997.
- . "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 3 Expeditionary Operations." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1998.
- . "Marine Corps Reference Publication 3-02e, the Individual's Guide for Understanding and Surviving Terrorism." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2001.
- . "Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.1 Marine Air-Ground Task Force Civil-Military Operations." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2003.
- . "Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5 Counterinsurgency." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2006.
- . "Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-34.1 Military Police in Support of the Magtf." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2000.
- . "Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-35.3 Military Operations on Urbanized terrain (Mout)." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1998.
- . "Small-Unit Leaders' Guide to Counterinsurgency." edited by Department of the Navy. Washington D.C.: Marine Corps Combat Development Command 2006.

Literature

- Alderson, Alexander. "Us Coin Doctrine and Practice; an Ally's Perspective." *Parameters* Winter, (2007).
- Bacevich, A. J. *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Batiste, John R.S., and Paul R. Daniels. "The Fight for Samarra: Full-Spectrum Operations in Modern Warfare." *Military Review*, 2005.
- Boot, Max. *The Savage Wars of Peace : Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*. 1st pbk. ed. New York: Basic Books, 2003.
- Brands, H. W., Darren Pierson, and Reynolds S. Kiefer. *The Use of Force after the Cold War*. 1st ed, Foreign Relations and the Presidency No. 3. College Station, [Texas]: Texas A&M University Press, 2000.
- Chiarelli, Peter W., and Patrick R. Michaelis. "Winning the Peace: The Requirement for Full-Spectrum Operations." *Military Review*, 2005.
- Dubik, James M. "The Two Senses of 'Full Spectrum'." *Army Magazine*, November 2008.
- Dunlap, Charles J. *Shortchanging the Joint Fight? An Airman's Assessment of Fm 3-24 and the Case for Developing Truly Joint Coin Doctrine*. Maxwell Air Force Base: Airpower Research Institute, 2008.
- Edwards, Scott A. "Forcible Entry in the 21st Century." US Naval War College, 2001.
- Flournoy, Michèle A. "Did the Pentagon Get the Quadrennial Defense Review Right?" In *Implementing the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review*. Institute for National Strategic Studies: The Washington Quarterly, 2006.
- Ford, Allen S. "The Small Wars Manual and Marine Corps Military Operations Other Than War Doctrine." Master of Military Art and Science, Auburn University, 2003.
- Gilman, Brian L. "Distributed Operations: Translating Tactical Capabilities into Operational Effects." Naval War College, 2006.
- Hoffman, Bruce. *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2004.
- Holsti, K. J. *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1995.
- Isaksen, Bjørn Gunnar. "Doctrines- Do They Reflect the Challenges of Asymmetrical Warfare?", Expeditionary Warfare School, 2003.

- Kimborough, James. "Examining U.S. Irregular Warfare Doctrine." Department of the Air Force, 2008.
- Kronvall, Olof. *Doctrinal Transformation, U.S. Strategic Doctrine, 2001-2004*. Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College, 2005.
- . "Finally Eating Soup with a Knife?" *Oslo Files On Defence and Security* 05, (2007): 53.
- . *Underlag Til Fhs Forskningsseminarium I Krigsvetenskap*. Stockholm: FHS/KVI/FoU, 2005.
- Krulak, Charles C. "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War." *Marines Magazine*, 1999.
- Long, Austin. *Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence-the U.S. Military and Counterinsurgency Doctrine*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2008.
- Metz, Steven. *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*: Potomac Books, 2008.
- Millet, Allan R. *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*. New York: Free Press, 1991.
- Moskin, Robert J. *The U.S. Marine Corps Story*. New York: Little Brown & Co., 1992.
- Münkler, Herfried. "What Is Really New About New Wars? -a Reply to the Critics." *Oslo Files On Defence and Security* 04, (2007).
- Olsen, John Andreas (ed.). "On New Wars." *Oslo files on Defence and Security* 04, (2007).
- Record, Jeffrey. *Making War, Thinking History: Munich, Vietnam, and Presidential Uses of Force from Korea to Kosovo*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2002.
- Resman, Johnny. "Amerikanska Marinkåren under Irakkrigen 1991 Och 2003: Manöverkrigföring I Teorin Och Praktiken?", Försvarshögskolan, 2005.
- Roberts, Adam. "Doctrine and Reality in Afghanistan." *Survival* 51, no. 1 (2009): 29-60.
- Schultz, Tammy. "Ten Years Each Week: The Warrior's Transformation to Win the Peace." Georgetown University, 2005.
- Smith, Rupert. "Thinking About the Utility of Force in War Amongst the People." *Oslo Files On Defence and security* 04/2007, (2007).
- Snell, D.M. "Training for Today's Security Challenges." Expeditionary Warfare School, 2005.
- Terriff, Terry. "Warriors and Innovators: Military Change and Organizational Culture in the Us Marine Corps " *Defence Studies* Vol. 6, no. 2 (2006): 215-47.
- Ucko, David. "Transforming the United States Military for Stability Operations, an Assessment of Organisational Change." University of London, 2007.

———. "Will Iraq Transform Us Doctrine; Us Counterinsurgency in the Information Age."

Jane's Intelligence Review, 2005.

Worley, D. Robert. *Shaping U.S. Military Forces : Revolution or Relevance in a Post-Cold War World*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2006.