

Innovation Under Fire:
Politics, Learning, and US Army Doctrine

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Dedication

To my uncle,
Daniel Roger Selph
Echo Company “Tiger Force Recon,” 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment,
101st Airborne Division
Vietnam
January 1968 - January 1969

To my friend,
Thomas Wade January
362d PSYOP Company, 10th PSYOP Battalion, 7th PSYOP Group
Iraq
March 2004 - December 2004, July 2009 - June 2010

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Abstract of Dissertation

Innovation Under Fire: Politics, Learning, and US Army Doctrine

In the face of defeat, national militaries occasionally exhibit the ability to engage in doctrinal innovation in an attempt to alter the course of a war. In Vietnam, the US Army was unable to achieve the objectives for which the war was being fought and suffered strategic defeat. In Iraq, it nearly met the same fate. In each case, the Army initially fought with a doctrine ill-suited for the achievement of the goals identified by the president. In each case, there existed within the organization individuals who sought to innovate doctrine in an attempt to salvage the war. In Vietnam, proponents of existent Army doctrine effectively resisted innovation. In Iraq, such resistance was overcome.

This dissertation examines the processes through which doctrinal innovation occurs during wartime by examining attempts at innovation during the US' wars in Vietnam and Iraq. In both cases, bureaucratic politics and organizational dynamics affected the Army's ability to successfully innovate doctrine.

It is argued here that doctrinal innovations are the product of a learning process that updates core assumptions about how an armed service should fight. Such processes are more likely to be successful when innovators are able to leverage their bureaucratic position to: initiate a debate within the organization about the appropriateness of existent doctrinal assumptions, develop a backchannel network outside the organization that allows them to gain the political and material support of civilian authorities, and emplace a new consensus within the organization's combatant command in favor of innovation.

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Glossary of Terms

COIN: Counterinsurgency doctrine, here it is short for the formal Army Field Manual produced under David Petraeus and the set of doctrinal innovations it represented.

Doctrine: A core set of assumptions regarding how an armed service should fight. It exists as consensus opinion within the organization and as a formal set of instructions regarding the use of force, specific tasks, and organizational relationships.

Double-loop learning: A learning process that goes beyond the correction of errors or performance and alters the core assumptions or values upon which behavior is based.

Joint Chiefs of Staff: Statutory body of military leaders representing each of the armed services. The group is tasked with providing military advice to US' civilian authorities.

MACV: Military Assistance Command - Vietnam, the US military headquarters for the war effort.

MNFI: Multi-National Forces Iraq, the US led military headquarters for the war effort.

PROVN: A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam. A set of doctrinal innovations based on the principles of counterinsurgency.

Chapter 1: Doctrinal Innovation and the United States Military

“God is not on the side of the big battalions, but on the side of those who shoot best.”
— Voltaire¹

When losing, a military force has three choices. Surrender and accept defeat. Try harder. Try something else. In the last fifty years, the US Army has twice found itself in this position — first in Vietnam, then in Iraq. In each instance, the organization initially tried harder. The Army tried harder by increasing or expanding its effort and by seeking to maximize its efficiency. Paradoxically, the harder the Army fought, the worse it performed. In each instance, there were individuals who observed the performance gap between effort and outcome and believed that the better choice was to try something else. In both Vietnam and Iraq, there existed within the Army individuals who argued that what was needed was a change in the way the war was being fought. It is this third choice that is of interest here. It raises the question — how do members of a professional military bring about doctrinal innovation in the face of wartime defeat?

Changing how an armed service fights, requires changing the doctrinal assumptions that inform organizational behavior. During wartime, the likelihood that such will occur is a product of the bureaucratic position of those seeking innovation. A potential innovators must have the bureaucratic autonomy and access to launch an internal debate about ongoing performance failures and the need to innovate. They must bring into question the validity of existent assumptions and forge a new consensus in

¹ Quote taken from Volume 2 of Voltaire’s *Piccini Notebooks* (c.1735-c.1750). This particular translation from the 1968 edition edited by Theodore Besterman, published in Toronto by University Press.

favor of an updated set of beliefs. Innovators, and the community of likeminded individuals they establish, must have the bureaucratic access necessary to develop a backchannel network to civilian authorities. These networks provide a conduit through which innovators can present their proposals to civilian leaders, without such proposals being blocked or altered by adherents of existent doctrine. Because of the failing war and the domestic political costs it entails, civilian leaders will be receptive to innovators' ideas. This provides innovators with a potential opportunity. With civilian support, innovators may gain the ability to counter proponents of existent doctrine and secure the opportunity and resources necessary to attempt implementation. An innovator's bureaucratic access and authority shape the likelihood of successful implementation. Innovators must have the authority to ensure that supporters are emplaced throughout the hierarchy of the combatant command. Innovators also must have the access necessary to monitor performance at each level of combatant command.

Unlike past arguments concerning doctrinal innovation (Posen 1984; Rosen 1991), this dissertation contends that wartime attempts at doctrinal innovation occur fairly frequently. In the face of strategic defeat, the attempt to innovate begins with members of an armed service. Within the organization, these individuals must convince their colleagues to revisit long held assumptions. They must then 'exit' the organization and present the need for doctrinal change to civilian authorities and convince them to intervene in support of their proposed innovations. With civilian intervention, innovators 're-enter' the organization with the additional resources and authority necessary to attempt a change in operational behavior. Thus the innovation process cannot be

explained through solely external (Posen 1984) or internal (Rosen 1991) sequences of events. Doctrinal innovation is the product of a process made up of critical events that occur within, outside, and then within a military organization.

As noted earlier, looming failure is the catalyst for doctrinal innovation. In wartime, militaries constantly adapt to their enemies, their battlefields, and to new technologies. However, armed services only change their theory of how they ought to fight and achieve victory, when faced with strategic defeat. This dissertation seeks to explain the processes that bring about such doctrinal innovation. Successful innovation is defined as a change in organizational beliefs and behaviors that change how the organization actually fights. Yet, successful innovation should not be confused with victory.² In the face of strategic failure, successful innovation offers an opportunity — not a panacea.

Doctrine

Military doctrine provides professional armed services with a conceptual understanding of how to win wars and achieve the political objectives that motivate them. The contents, the beliefs and assumptions, of such understandings vary among militaries. Over time, a given military's understanding of how best to fight may change. Yet the purpose of doctrine remains static. A given doctrine represents an explicit articulation of

² Grissom (2006) notes that most studies of military innovation have focused on cases meeting three criteria. First, innovation must lead to an actual change in how military forces operate in the field. Second, innovation must represent a change that is significant in both scope and impact. Third, innovation must bring about greater military effectiveness. Grissom's assessment of prior works is generally correct. However, the conceptualization traditionally offered is flawed. It biases the study of innovation by only looking at attempts that were both successful organizationally (in that the military actually changed its behavior) and martially (in that the organization was victorious in war). As a result of this bias, past examinations present an inaccurate understanding of how innovation occurs.

the means by which armed forces are to secure national security objectives (Posen 1984; Rosen 1988; Avant 1993; *US Army Field Manual 3-0* 2001). Doctrine provides military organizations with goals, tasks, cognitive tools and guidance to prepare for and execute military operations (Farrell 1997). It provides an expression and awareness of the current state of warfare (Galloway 1986). Ultimately, doctrine represents the means and ability by which military forces attempt to achieve strategic success within a given context (Osgood 1957; Bidwell and Graham 1982; Millett, Williamson, and Watman 1986). Because of this, military doctrine is intimately connected to national security.

Historical examples illustrate the relationship that exists between doctrine and an armed service's understanding of how it should fight. In the 18th and 19th centuries, US Navy doctrine held that victory depended upon the protection of commercial trade and seaborne resources. The assumed relationship between trade and victory, led the Navy to blockade Confederate States in an effort to deny the South vital war supplies (Buker 1993). At the turn of the 20th century, French Army doctrine held that victory was the product of massed firepower and maneuver delivered against an enemy force. It was assumed such would shock an adversary into submission and capitulation. This doctrine served as the basis for Plan XVII, which hurled five French armies into an operation to retake Alsace-Lorraine at the outbreak of the World War I (Foch 1920: 22-47; Williamson 1979; Terraine 1982). In the first half of the 20th century, the Imperial Japanese Naval maintained a 'decisive battle' doctrine. It held that victory would be achieved through a single all important battle in which enemy forces were decimated. The attack on Pearl Harbor was the result (Evans and Peattie 1997). During the Chinese civil war, the

insurgent doctrine of communist forces viewed control over the population as the foundation for victory. For most of the conflict, communist forces avoided battle with nationalist forces and instead worked to increase their geographic and popular base (Boorman and Boorman 1966).

These examples represent a small sample of the history of military doctrine. Nonetheless, they demonstrate the relationship between assumption and action. They also demonstrate the variance that exists among national armed services. Variance in doctrinal assumptions, however, can also be observed over time within a single service.

Historically, the core assumptions of US Army doctrine have varied. The same is true for the manner in which Army doctrine has been developed and promulgated. During the 19th century, US Army doctrine was written by individual military officers or military theorists. In that period, doctrine often took the form of textbooks or tactical handbooks that were read and studied by other officers.³ At the turn of the 20th century, the Army moved away from individual publications and began to publish official doctrine as an organization. The first of which appeared as *Field Service Regulations* in 1905.

The Army's first *Field Service Regulations* were based on the doctrinal assumption that victory would be brought about by making an enemy's position "untenable." This could be achieved by cutting off supply lines, envelopment by maneuver, or through siege (*US Army Field Service Regulations* 1905: 104-105). By 1944, Army doctrine had evolved. Victory, it was assumed, was best brought about via "the destruction of the enemy's armed forces." This was to be accomplished through the

³ Two of the most influential were Henry W. Halleck's 1846 *Elements of Military Art and Science* and Dennis Hart Mahan's 1847 *An Elementary Treatise etc.* Both works emphasized the use of terrain and maneuver to envelop enemy forces and force surrender.

concentration of superior might directed against enemy units (*FM 100-5 Field Service Regulations: Operations* 1944: 32-33). After the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the Army developed a new doctrine known as Active Defense.⁴ It held that control over operational tempo and the outcome of the first battle were decisive. In the 1980's, the Army developed AirLand Battle doctrine. It held that the ability to strike throughout the depth of the battlefield, the ability to act quickly, and synchronization in the use of force were fundamental to the achievement of victory. At the end of the 20th century, Army doctrine began to factor in technological advancements in computers and communication in an attempt to increase operational speed and precision. Each of the post-World War II doctrines altered the way the Army fought. Yet, one doctrinal assumption remained unchanged — that which held that national security objectives would be achieved through the destruction of enemy forces (*FM 100-5 Operations* 1976; *FM 100-5 Operations* 1982; Long 1991; King 2008: 31-35).

It is the ability to achieve national security objectives which determines the validity and value of any military's doctrine. If doctrine is well fitted to the strategic goals and operational context of a given situation, military forces can be expected to perform well.⁵ When it is not, the achievement of national security objectives via the use

⁴ The development of Active Defense doctrine is interesting for another reason. It illustrates that the Army, as an organization, was determined not to innovate and change doctrine on the basis of counterinsurgency or its experiences in Vietnam. Essentially, the Army worked to expunge its experiences in Southeast Asia from its organizational consciousness. Forty years later, the lessons learned during Vietnam would not be readily available to members of the organization serving in Iraq.

⁵ Performing well does not equate to victory. Military forces may exercise great skill, yet be out performed by their opponent (General Erwin Rommel's Afrikakorps in 1942) or suffer defeat as the result of changes in the political (General Alexsei Brusilov's 2nd Offensive in 1917) or even climatological environments (the Duke of Medina Sindonia led Spanish Armada in 1588).

of force becomes difficult — if not impossible. Strategic failure, with all its implicit ramifications, becomes likely.⁶

This raises an important question, one at the heart of this dissertation: are national military forces that find themselves facing strategic failure as the result of doctrinal mismatch doomed? History would suggest they are not. It is possible, in the face of defeat to ‘try something else’ and perhaps achieve victory. Examples, including British experiences during the Malayan Emergency, demonstrate that even in the face of failure it is possible to innovate and win. Yet, snatching victory from defeat is not easy — especially when one is in the midst of a self-inflicted crisis.

Innovation is difficult to bring about, it is important to remember that innovative military organization may still suffer defeat. Nonetheless, the ability to innovate is important — it offers an opportunity to salvage a war and the political objectives that motivated it. The following table illustrates the points above. It provides a short list of 20th century wartime innovation. Some of the attempts listed changed the course of a faltering war effort, others did not.

⁶ Strategic failure, as opposed to tactical failure, is defined as being unsuccessful in the achievement of those national security goals delineated by civilian authorities. Thus it is possible that a military force might ‘win’ on the battlefield and defeat the enemy — yet still suffer strategic failure.

Table I: Examples of 20th Century Wartime Innovation

<i>Military</i>	<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Nature of Innovation</i>
US Army	Philippine Insurrection	1899-1902	Counterinsurgency
Imperial German Army	World War I	1916-1917	Elastic Defense-in-Depth
British Army	World War I	1916-1918	Tank Warfare
Imperial German Army	World War I	1917-1918	Offense-in-Depth
US Army	World War I	1917-1918	Firepower Intensive Warfare
Paraguayan Army	Chaco War	1932-1935	Dispersion/Swarm Defense
US Navy	World War II	1939-1943	Antisubmarine Warfare
British Air Force	World War II	1942-1945	Population Centric Strategic Bombing
Philippine Army	Hukbalahap Insurrection	1950-1951	Counterinsurgency
British Army	Malayan Emergency	1948-1951	Counterinsurgency
French Army	Algerian War	1955-1956	Guerrilla Warfare
French Army	Algerian War	1957-1960	Counterinsurgency
Israeli Defense Forces	1973 October War	1973	Relational Maneuver
Soviet Army	Afghanistan	1983-1987	Counterinsurgency

Table I shows that the need to innovate in the face of strategic failure is a challenge that frequently, if not routinely, presents itself. Whether or not innovation occurs can have implications for the conflict at hand, the fortunes of the nation-states involved, and the international system as a whole. The processes by which innovation occurs, therefore, represents an important area of inquiry.

This dissertation seeks to explain the causal mechanisms behind doctrinal innovation in the face of strategic failure. To evaluate the variables and mechanisms involved, it examines two instances of attempted innovation — the attempt led by General Creighton Abrams during the Vietnam War and the attempt made by General David Petraeus during the Iraq War. Addressing two instances of innovation within a single military force, under similar circumstances, and with a relatively short period of time separating the two, allows for greater focus on the innovation process. What this dissertation finds is that in each of these attempts, the outcome was shaped by bureaucratic politics.

Innovations in Military Doctrine

Major innovations in military doctrine, those that affect an armed service's core assumptions about how to fight and win, are difficult under any circumstance. Proponents of change must use their bureaucratic positions to accomplish three tasks. They must overcome resistance within the organization. They must capture the material support of civilian authorities. And, they must disseminate and implement their innovations (Millett, Williamson, and Watman 1986; Evangelista 1988; Avant 1993; Utterback 1994; Argyris 1999 and 2004; Johnson and Tierney 2006; Lieber 2007).⁷ In the face of impending failure, each of these tasks must be accomplished in short order.

⁷ Argyris (1999 and 2004) argues that organizational resistance to innovation is borne out of self-referential logics that prevent learning. Within such logics, basic assumptions are presumed without investigating their validity. These assumptions take the form of a dominant design. As Utterback (1994) writes, such dominant designs make implicit certain requirements — they become unspoken expectations to which others must adhere. Within the military, doctrine plays the role of a dominant design. It becomes the conceptual lens through which problems are assessed and the logic by which solutions are evaluated.

An innovator's ability to do so is shaped by the autonomy, access, and authority granted by their bureaucratic position within the service.

Because doctrinal innovation engages elements of organizational learning, it is best thought of as a process. For learning to occur: problems must be identified, resources collected, and actionable knowledge disseminated (Haas 1980; Kolb 1984; Nye 1987; Downie 1998; Tsoukas and Vladimirou 2001; Argyris 2004: 7; Huysman 2004: 73-75; Takahashi, Kijima, and Sato 2004). Each of these endeavors corresponds to one of three phases in the innovation process.

The *preparation phase* encompasses those events through which the need for change is identified. During the preparation phase, the military organization must be made ripe for innovation (Bogenrieder and Nooteboom 2004; Lewin and Massini 2004; Soo, Devinney, and Midgley 2004). Preparation is shaped by events within the organization. The key variables lie within the armed service itself. It is critically important that the innovator's position give them access to battlefield information. It is also critical that it give them access to an audience within the organization to whom they can disseminate their insights regarding doctrinal mismatch and potential solutions. Finally, the innovator must have the autonomy to engage in diagnoses of ongoing failures and search for potential solutions (Murray 1996: 307).

The *espousal phase* encompasses those events through which support for a given response is secured. The key variables exist outside the formal structures of the armed service. During the espousal phase, the innovator must find a way to present their proposed changes to civilian authorities and secure their political and material support

(Millett 1996: 359). Civilian intervention is critical. It provides the resources and opportunity necessary for innovation. It also provides a means for offsetting and overcoming the organizational authority held by proponents of existing doctrine. Without civilian intervention, attempts at doctrinal innovation will be stillborn. The sequence of events that lead to such occur outside the organization. Yet, civilian intervention in favor of doctrinal change is shaped by the bureaucratic attributes of those supporting innovation. The access granted by the innovator's bureaucratic position is key. It provides opportunities to capture civilian support. It conditions civilian intervention by shaping the range of options authorities see.

The *implementation phase* encompasses those events through which changes in behavior are attempted. The implementation phase occurs within the organization. In this phase, once again, the key variables lie within the armed service. During this phase, innovators must disseminate and operationalize doctrinal innovations. Of critical importance is the authority bestowed by the innovator's bureaucratic position. They must have the authority to remove subordinates unable or unwilling to innovate and replace them with those willing to change the manner in which the war is being fought. Innovators must also have the authority to modify incentive systems in support of new behaviors (Clark and Wilson 1961; Lewin and Massini 2004). To achieve this, it is important that innovators have autonomy from the organizational structures and proponents of the previous doctrine.

Figure 1: Model of Military Innovation

1 = Critically Important / Determinative Effect
 2 = Very Important / Significant Effect
 3 = Important / Some Effect

VARIABLES		PHASES		
		<i>Preparation</i>	<i>Espousal</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
ATTRIBUTES OF BUREAUCRATIC POSITION	Autonomy	2	2	2
	Access	1	1	3
	Authority	3	3	1

For professional militaries, the innovation process is shaped by the variables and events of these three phases. Given the nature of organizational learning, the order in which these phases occur affects the likelihood of innovation. Events in each phase affect events in the others. Success or failure in the preparation phase conditions the outcome of the espousal phase — and so on. Although it is theoretically possible that the phases could be attempted simultaneously, innovation is most likely if the phases are engaged sequentially; from preparation, to espousal, to implementation. This increases the likelihood that the organization will prepare for, receive, and accept the innovations. This does not, however, guarantee success. If opponents of proposed innovations leverage their bureaucratic positions to block or frustrate attempts during the preparation phase, their ability to resist innovations during the espousal and implementation phases increases. Even if innovators manage to move the process forward — innovation remains an uphill task.

Innovation is Difficult, Major Innovation During Wartime is Nearly Impossible

Innovations in military doctrine can be classified as technological (based on changes to machinery or equipment), minor (based on changes to accepted tasks) or major (based on changes in the core assumptions about how military organizations are to fight) (Rosen 1991: 7). Minor, and even technological, innovations can be differentiated from major innovations by their generally tactical nature (Posen 1991: 7; Murray 1996: 304-306). Such tactical innovations affect operational understandings concerning how to achieve certain tasks — for example, how best to move troops into battle or how best to deliver direct or indirect fire (Posen 1991: 8; Meese 1993; Millett 1996: 331).⁸

To bring about minor and technological innovations in doctrine, individuals must learn to accomplish an accepted task in a new manner.⁹ Such learning requires new techniques or new procedures, often in an attempt increase efficiency or effectiveness, or in response to battlefield conditions. Known as single-loop learning, this process requires changes in behavior — but not changes in beliefs. The validity or appropriateness of a task is not challenged or updated, simply the means for accomplishing it. Minor or technological innovations leave unaltered the organization's essential workings and assumptions (Argyris 2004: 10). The US Army's adoption of digital maps and global positioning satellites for land navigation provide one example.

⁸ Millett (1996) provides examples of such tied to problems of “distance, time, weather, terrain, firepower, strategic and operational mobility, force structure, and the character of the enemy's armed forces.”

⁹ Dombrowski and Gholz (2006: 18-19, 26-29) note in regard to technological innovations that it is easier to bring about changes that “sustain” (improve performance as measured in traditional ways) than those that “disrupt” (which introduce new metrics or tasks).

Major innovations in military doctrine are more difficult to bring about than minor or technological innovations.¹⁰ Major innovations challenge core assumptions and prior beliefs. They challenge not only the processes for accomplishing accepted tasks — but the very appropriateness of those tasks. Thus, major innovations involve a type of Bayesian updating at the organizational level, innovations must overcome prior beliefs about the utility of existent doctrine (King 1998: 18-19, 28). Whereas minor or technological innovations involve the refinement of existing tasks to meet new conditions or technologies without challenging core beliefs, major innovations represent a fundamental challenge to the military organization's core beliefs. Major innovations require the development, dissemination, acceptance, and implementation of novel assumptions, knowledge, and tasks that then also change behavior at the tactical level (Dewey 1938; Osgood 1979; Rosen 1988 and 1991; Sauquet 2004; Tsoukas and Mylonopoulos 2004).

In addition to their inherent difficulty, there is another reason major innovations in military doctrine are difficult. Existent doctrine, by its very nature, enjoys high levels of salience within the organization. This condition results from the role doctrine plays as a dominant design within armed services (Utterback 1994). Because the actual occurrence of war is rare, doctrinal assumptions (rather than battlefield outcomes) act as the reference upon which military education, operations, and career advancements are normally based (Romjue 1984: 1; Galloway 1986; Utterback 1994; Murray 1996; Farrell 1997; Hennessy 1997; Downie 1998; Lock-Pullan 2006). Over time, the assumptions of

¹⁰ It is important to note that in referring to the difficulty of technical innovation, I mean not the discovery of technical advancement, but the operationalization of such by armed forces.

existing doctrine will be privileged by members of the military because their expertise, rank, and position within the organization will be seen as depending, in part, upon their validity (Posen 1984: 224). In this manner, doctrine becomes an established set of beliefs about the use of force, prior to its actual exercise in the pursuit of national security objectives. As a prior belief, existent doctrine will skew the interpretation of incoming battlefield information. By leading military personnel to discount or discard disconfirming information, existent doctrine will prevent or retard organizational evaluations of how well it fits the strategic goals and operational context of a given situation (Axelrod 1973; Larson 1994; King 1998: 18-19).

To innovate, the organization must engage in double-loop learning processes that weaken the salience of prior beliefs and assumptions (Argyris 1999 and 2004). Double-loop learning processes question not only the mechanisms for accomplishing organizational tasks, but also the assumptions that provide the legitimacy of those tasks. Double-loop learning allows for the altering of core assumptions and the essential workings of an organization. Double-loop learning involves internal discussions concerning the expected or desired results and compares those with organizational decisions and behaviors. It provides a mechanism for comparing prior beliefs and assumptions with observed performance gaps or outcomes (Argyris 2004: 10; Takahashi, Kijima, and Sato 2004: 89).¹¹ Yet, because these prior beliefs and assumptions are associated with individuals' careers and professional identities, as well as the positions and organizational relationships that exist between the service's sub-branches — the

¹¹ Double-loop learning also alters tasks associated with the core assumptions and essential workings of an organization.

learning process activates defensive reasoning on the part of those who feel threatened by innovation (Bergerson 1980: 12; Argyris 2004: 1-2, 212). As a result, the learning process takes the form of a political contest within the organization (Bergerson 1980: 79; Rosen 1988: 141 and 1991: 19-21).

Individuals learn during moments of reflection brought on by an observed mismatch between outcome and past experiences or expectations (Kolb 1984). Chris Argyris summarizes learning this way: it “requires the creation of new knowledge, new insights, and new understandings . . . [l]earning occurs when these three features are all in the service of effective action” (Argyris 2004: 7). Organizational learning is motivated by a similar impetus — the desire to minimize performance gaps and maximize future success (Haas 1980; Nye 1987; Downie 1998).

Organizational learning, unlike individual learning, involves the transmission, sharing, and acceptance of new information among a collective in order to successfully create new knowledge (Argyris 2004: 86-90; Huysman 2004: 73-75). This is necessary for the organization to: first, recognize the mismatch between expectation and outcome; and then, to engage in a search for potential solutions. Information from various parties is pulled into the search. The most important aspect of this process is the detachment of previous measures of success, those based on existent assumptions, and the creation of new measures based on efforts to close the observed performance gap (Argyris 1999; Takahashi, Kijima, and Sato 2004).

Organizational learning is initiated when an individual, using the knowledge of the organization, recognizes a performance failure (Nye 1987; Tsoukas and Vladimirou

2001; Takahashi, Kijima, and Sato 2004). It begins in earnest, however, when an individual within the organization possesses the access, autonomy and resources necessary to overcome defensive behaviors (Cyert and March 1963: 278-279; Sauquet 2004: 377-378). For this reason, innovation must be driven by senior level individuals — for only they have the ability to “wander through the organization” seeking input and facilitating dialogues among subgroups (Murray 1996: 306; Argyris 1999: 135-136 and 2004: 86-87 — quote is from Argyris). In doing this, a senior leader takes on the role of a domain expert and attempts to harness his/her bureaucratic position to shepherd the learning process by acting as an entrepreneur for change (Huysman 2004).

The widespread recognition of the problem and the search for a solution are not enough to bring about innovation. For innovation to occur new knowledge must be implemented (Rosen 1991: 4). This requires the development of a new organizational consensus in support of a specific set of remedies. As James March and Herbert Simon note, collective acceptance is a product of the establishment of dominant coalitions within the organization (March and Simon 1958). The need to establish a consensus opinion to bring about organizational learning introduces elements of bureaucratic politics and organizational dynamics.¹²

Once a new consensus is established, entrepreneurs must gain the authority to disseminate and implement new knowledge throughout the organization. This too

¹² As Argyris (2004; 1-2, 8-9) notes, that attempts to establish a consensus typically result in a learning environment with four governing values: be in unilateral control over others; strive to win and minimize losing; suppress negative feelings; and, use defensive reasoning to protect your group’s assumptions and organizational position. In practice, this results in behaviors in which individuals seek to advocate their own position, evaluate the actions of others, and make attributions about their own and other’s intentions. Yet, this is done without addressing the primary performance issues indicated by the mismatch between expectations and outcome, *see* Argyris 2004; 8-9; Takahashi, Kijima, and Sato 2004; 85. As a result, such defensive behaviors often block learning by inhibiting the development of new knowledge.

involves a political contest. Joseph Nye writes that an “organization’s social structures and shifts in political power among members within an organization determine whose individual learning matters” (Nye 1987: 381). For learning to occur, entrepreneurs must have the ability to disseminate clear tasks based on their new knowledge and the ability to alter incentive systems so that they support the implementation of said tasks (Huber 1991: 90; Lebovic 1995; Halperin, Clapp, and Kanter 2006: 247-257; Clark and Wilson 1961).

The organizational learning needed to bring about major innovations in doctrine are difficult under the most favorable circumstances. The material and organizational constraints of war add exponentially to the challenge. During wartime, time itself represents a significant challenge. Because innovations during war occur in response to realized performance failures rather than expected future needs, attempts at innovation occur within compressed time horizons. During war, proponents of change have limited time within which to convince their peers and civilian authorities of the merits of innovation (Rosen 1988; 167 and 1991; 22-23, 253).

Past Examinations of Doctrinal Innovation

The general argument above, and the specific model of US innovation to follow, owe a debt to past examinations of military innovation. Past studies of military innovation have focused primarily on three issues: the degree to which innovation results from forces internal or external to the organization; the necessity of civilian intervention; and, the timeline or conditions under which innovation occurs. They have informed this

work. Many of the mechanisms and variables examined here were drawn out of past efforts. Thus, a short review is in order. For convenience, and because much of what political science has to say about military innovation can be summarized via their work, the arguments of Barry Posen and Stephen Rosen provide a framework for this review.

Barry Posen contends that innovations in military doctrine are best explained by balance of power changes in the international system (Posen 1984: 239-240). Such changes foster the need for civilian intervention in order to bring about the doctrinal transformations necessary to successfully meet international developments (Posen 1984: 228-236). Thus both the necessity and catalyst driving innovation are external to the military organization. Because of this, Posen argues that although organization theory explains the operational preferences of military organizations, it does not explain the actual nature of doctrine (Posen 1984: 222). Logically, his argument suggests that military doctrine is the product of civilian perceptions of existing or near-term opportunities and constraints in the international system. Furthermore, Posen writes that militaries will rarely innovate on their own — in part because senior leaders have a vested interest in maintaining existent doctrine (Posen 1984: 224). For Posen, military innovation has more to do with responses to political pressure than organizational learning.

Regarding the conditions under which one should expect innovation, Posen argues that innovation will be rare. Furthermore, because of the risks involved, Posen contends that attempts at innovation will be even less likely during wartime — for such would disorient military forces with potentially disastrous effects (Posen 1984: 30-31).

For Stephen Rosen, the doctrine of military organizations is the product of internal forces. Doctrine is based on the perceptions of senior officers regarding expected changes in the strategic environment (Rosen 1991: 57-75). Although doctrinal innovation is based on the future conditions of the international system, the necessity and catalyst for innovation rest within armed services. It is the perception of members of the organization that serves as the basis for innovation and the processes that drive it. Rosen contends that major innovations in military doctrine occur as the product of the organization's internal power struggles. Innovations are brought about when senior officers, motivated by expected future needs, engage in an intellectual redefinition of doctrine and then successfully establish career paths for junior officers that support such innovations (Rosen 1988: 136 and 1991: 57-105).

Rosen's position is based on a view of military organizations as complex political communities with distinctive subunits, each of which actively pursue their own interests (Rosen 1991: 19-21). Lasting innovations, Rosen contends, are created through the establishment of incentive structures that support them (Rosen 1988: 160). Thus, Rosen views the innovative process as a long term (generational) enterprise largely beyond the control of civilians (Rosen 1988 and 1991). For Rosen, military innovation is explained by bureaucratic contests within the service, rather than organizational learning.

Like Posen, Rosen is dismissive of wartime innovation. Rosen argues that wartime innovations involve relatively minor changes with little long term effect (Rosen 1991: 110, 253-257). His position is informed by a belief that during war, reduced information flows and shorter time lines make innovation more difficult (Rosen 1988:

167). However, Rosen's position on wartime innovation is also based on his general view of the processes surrounding military innovation. Rosen contends that during wartime, civilian authorities have an increased ability to intervene in military affairs (Rosen 1988 and 1991). This runs contrary to his argument that innovation in military doctrine must be driven from within to achieve lasting effects.

The works of Barry Posen and Stephen Rosen serve as useful summaries; together they illuminate the major themes and key disagreements that exist in past examinations. However, a few additional points, ones in which there exists general agreement, must be highlighted. First, the role civilian authorities play in the innovation process — everything from the likelihood of intervention, to the conditioning of the organization toward innovation, and the provision of resources — is predicated on the domestic institutions and political environment of a nation-state (Millett, Williamson, and Watman 1986; Evangelista 1988; Avant 1993; Johnson and Tierney 2006; Lieber 2007). Second, the innovative process varies depending on the type of innovation. Major changes in the concept of warfare, minor changes in operational behavior, and technological changes in military capabilities are shaped by different processes with different likelihoods for success and varying effects (Posen 1984; Rosen 1988 and 1991; Murry 1996). Third, military doctrine represents a dynamic norm. It represents a consensus agreement about the means by which armed forces are to secure objectives (Rosen 1988: 141). As a result of this last point, and in addition to its primary purpose, doctrine provides a shared professional culture within the military. Doctrine is the basis for professional education and development, the evaluation of individual and organizational performance, and a

facilitator of communication through the provision of common focal points of understanding (Downie 1988). Finally, doctrine serves as an institutional memory for its organization — it is the product of what has been learned (Nagl 2005).¹³ Given these last two points, questions arise about how new memories are made and new consensus understandings achieved. It brings us full circle and leads one to ask: how do militaries learn and innovate doctrine?

Past works have contributed to our understanding of military innovation. They have uncovered novel facts with their research, their case studies, and their questions. Yet, after more than a half century of work, questions remain regarding from where the push for innovation originates, the role civilian authorities play in the innovative process, and the conditions under which innovation occurs. Stephen Rosen gives voice to the maddeningly equivocal nature of past research: “as one study found a factor that seemed to be associated with innovation, another would find evidence of innovation when that factor was absent, or even when the opposite of that factor was present” (Rosen 1991: 3). The external-internal divide represented by Barry Posen and Stephen Rosen suggests that when it comes to the study of military innovation, political science has yet to establish a research program in the ‘Lakatosian’ sense — with linked theories united by constitutive and guiding core assumptions (Lakatos 1978).

Thus, in addition to their substantive contributions regarding doctrine, past examinations make clear an epistemological lesson; the complexity and ambiguity associated with innovative processes create equifinality issues that make the search for a

¹³ It is doctrine’s role in the provision of professional culture, education, and institutional memory that establishes and reinforces its position as a dominant design within each organization, *see* Argyris 1999 and 2004; Utterback 1994.

grand theory of innovation little more than folly (Murray and Millett 1996: 4-5). As with all social science, context is vital to determining the utility of a theory or model. When it comes to military innovation, political scientists must be even more mindful of the conditions, scope and range of their arguments (Keohane 1986: 2-3).

How learning and innovation occur within any armed service, and specifically within American military organizations, is a product of the characteristics of the organization as well as the institutional arrangements of the nation-state it serves (Avant 1993; Lebovic 1995: 859). Regarding innovations in US military doctrine, John Nagl writes: “[t]he key to organizational learning is getting the decision-making authority to allow such innovation, monitor its effectiveness, and then transmit new doctrine with strict requirements that it be followed throughout the organization” (Nagl 2005: 195). Given the political communities that exist within US military organizations and the nature of American civil-military relations, innovators must engage in political campaigns within their organization and outside it. If successful, these political contests will allow them to shepherd the process through the preparation, espousal, and implementation phases. Success depends upon the autonomy, access, and authority granted by the innovator’s bureaucratic position within America’s armed services.

Major Innovations in US Military Doctrine During War: A Model

Three elements of context are vital to the range and utility of any argument about military innovation: whether innovations are being attempted during peacetime or war; the political-institutional arrangements of the nation-state; and, whether the innovations

in question are of a major or minor nature. This dissertation examines major innovations in US military doctrine during wartime. The model presented argues that attempts at innovation originate from individuals within the organization. To be successful, these individuals must present their ideas to civilian authorities and garner their political and material support. With such support, individuals may then attempt to implement changes in military doctrine.

War and Politics — Doctrinal Innovation in the US

Major innovations in military doctrine affect assumptions about the nature of war. Through double-loop learning, they update conceptual understandings regarding what, how, or where military force is to be applied (Starry 1979; Posen 1984: 13; Clausewitz 1984: 595-596; Murray 1996: 306). Major innovations in doctrine change ideas governing the way forces are to be used to secure national security objectives. Major innovations alter the very concept of how military organizations are to fight (Rosen 1991: 7). Major innovations in military doctrine are more difficult to bring about than minor or technological innovations because they challenge the assumptions upon which military education, operations, and career advancements are based (Romjue 1984: 1; Galloway 1986; Utterback 1994; Murray 1996; Farrell 1997; Hennessy 1997; Downie 1998 Lock-Pullan 2006). This condition affects all professional military organizations, including those of the United States.

Civil-military relations are the product of a nation-state's political and institutional environment. These recursive relationships affect where, how, and how

easily civilian authorities may intervene in military affairs. They also affect how the military is viewed and resourced by general society and government officials (Millett, Williamson, Watman 1986; Evangelista 1988; Avant 1993; Johnson and Tierney 2006; Lieber 2007).

Within the US system, civilian authorities provide oversight and resources — yet it is incredibly difficult for civilians to intervene in military affairs. Changes in American military doctrine must originate from within, and ultimately must be ratified by, the armed services themselves (Lind 1984: 327-333; Rosen 1982, 1988 and 1991). This condition stems from a constitutional architecture in which the executive branch controls the use of military forces while the legislative branch maintains responsibility for their organization and funding.

Over the course of US history, and particularly after World War II, American military services learned quite effectively how to exploit cleavages in the positions and policy preferences that routinely exist between members of Congress and the president. The US military has learned how to ‘play politics’ in order to block civilian intrusions into doctrine or other aspects deemed part of the organization’s essence.¹⁴ The arrangement of US political institutions provide a type of constitutional insulation against civilian interference. Only through unified action is civilian intervention into American military doctrine likely to be successful (Bergerson 1980: 7; Avant 1993).

The US military also enjoys three types of political insulation. First, because civilian authorities are more interested in protecting their own position, especially in

¹⁴ Each of the services maintain congressional liaison offices. The Army’s is tasked in part to: “Advise on the status of congressional affairs affecting the Army” and “Coordinate, monitor, and report legislative and investigative actions of interest to the Army.” See, *Army Regulation 1–20* 2004.

regard to reelection, the US military enjoys a large degree of what may be labeled ‘benign neglect.’¹⁵ During wartime, civilian officials are more interested in leveraging the war at hand to achieve pre-existing goals than investigating and correcting the performance of the uniformed military (Mayhew 2005: 474-475; Stout 2007).¹⁶ Second, in the US, civil-military relations are in fact comprised of many actors and multi-dimensional relationships. These relations exist as spheres within a political ecosystem made up of relevant domestic audiences (Huntington 1957; Lyons 1961; Albright 1980; Beaver 2004). Depending on the issue at stake, these audiences may be composed of different actors or interest groups. How these groups align on a specific policy serves to increase or decrease the costs of civilian intervention (Halperin 1970; Dandeker 1994; McCaffrey 2002). Military leaders may activate allies within these groups to affect interactions and achieve their desired outcomes (Evangelista 1988; Loeb 2002; Feaver 2003). Third, the US military enjoys high levels of general support among the American populace. The US military is routinely listed among the most, if not as *the* most, trusted American institutions (Harris Poll 2008). This ‘support the troops’ attitude supplies US military leaders with an appellate audience to which they may turn to resist interference by congressional or presidential authorities. As a result, civilian intervention without support from within the uniformed services risks being seen as illegitimate (Rosen 1991: 21; Waldman 1993). Such informal political insulation gives US military leaders the

¹⁵ Mayhew (1974) famously made the argument that legislators are “single-minded seekers of reelection.” The assumption is made here that the logic holds for members of the executive branch — that they are equally consumed with the desire to maintain the position of the incumbent president.

¹⁶ Even during the Vietnam war, Congress did not vote to cut off funding until after US troops had withdrawn, *see* Jespersen 2002. During the Iraq war, congressional hearings — such as those during September 2007 — normally targeted the policies of the president as an election issue rather than critique the actual conduct of military forces themselves.

ability to out-flank civilian authorities by carrying the fight to a larger political audience (Schattschneider 1975: 2-4).

Within the US system, periods of war bring a loosening of material, political, and organizational constraints. This provides opportunities for those who wish to bring about doctrinal innovation. Furthermore, the US' open political structures and press freedoms generate public information about expected and realized outcomes from war (Rosen 1991: 22-23; Murray 1996: 303-304).¹⁷ Already reluctant to deny the resource requests of American military forces engaged in combat, in the face of a strategic failure US officials become even more willing to meet the perceived needs of the military (Deering 1988: 146; Durso and Donahue 1995: 110; Donnelly 2007).¹⁸

In the face of a strategic failure, the desire for success weakens political and organizational constraints. Senior officials become willing to consider previously closed choices, to provide additional or withhold routinely provided resources, or seek information and advice from outside the formal structures for providing such. Political and organizational constraints become particularly weak if performance gaps on the part of existent doctrine generate a specific critical juncture crisis that leads civilian

¹⁷ Posen (1984: 30-31) for his part sees this as a danger and a reason not to pursue innovations during wartime. He argues that introducing attempts at major innovation threaten to introduce confusion and present the possibility of potentially disastrous outcomes. Beyerchen (1992-1993) makes a compelling argument that this phenomenon is central to Clausewitz's arguments about war. Beyerchen (1992-1993; 89) argues that Clausewitz's *On War* suggests that conflict is inherently a non-linear event (similar to the ideas presented by chaos theory) and that war alters political constraints during the conflict — not just as an outcome.

¹⁸ Deering (1988), Durso and Donahue (1995) note that even during peacetime, the size and resources available to the US military have tended to expand over time. Donnelly (2007), however, argues that this is not always the case. He cites the Korean War as an instance in which civilian authorities did not provide all of the resources requested by US military forces in the field. However, in his discussion he notes that such decisions were made in case the war in Korea was a diversion for pending Soviet action in Europe. Donnelly references NSC-68's belief that 1954 would be the year of maximum danger — the decision to hold back resources does not equate to decisions to deny them to the military.

authorities to question the conduct of military operations (Collier and Collier 1991: 30-35; Cappoccia and Keleman 2007: 348-351). The president's position as commander-in-chief of the US military makes the executive politically vulnerable to strategic failure (Burke and Greenstein 1991; Johnson and Tierney 2006). This provides opportunities for those seeking innovation.

A Model

In the US, variables and events within the armed services are primarily responsible for the presence or absence of major innovations in doctrine during periods of war. The nature of major innovation, the specifics of US civil-military relations, and the effects of war combine with organizational characteristics and learning processes to create a specific pattern. First, the perceived necessity and the catalyst behind attempts at innovation result from the bureaucratic access and autonomy of innovators within the organization. Second, fights for the opportunity and resources needed to attempt innovation are determined outside the organization in the larger political ecosystem of civil-military relations. Outcomes are affected by an innovator's access to civilian authorities, elite opinion, and the public. Third, the dissemination and implementation of innovations ultimately occurs, or fails to occur, as the result of an innovator's authority and autonomy within the organization's combatant command.

This model represents a break from the two dominant views of doctrinal innovation. Posen (1984) argues that military innovation is the product of external processes driven by civilians. Rosen (1991) argues that it is the product of internal

process driven by senior officers who control organizational resources. This model posits a view of innovation in which the process begins with individuals inside the military who must first establish a community in support of innovation. The innovator and his/her community of like minded individuals must ‘exit’ the organization to gain access to civilian authorities and gain their support. With the opportunity and resources won from civilians, the innovator and the community of innovators ‘re-enter’ the organization and attempt to implement doctrinal innovations.

Major innovations require innovators within the US military accomplish the following tasks. First, innovators must demonstrate the need for change. Second, they must establish opportunities to garner the support of civilian authorities. Third, they must gain the bureaucratic authority needed to implement new ideas. To achieve success, innovators must leverage their bureaucratic access, autonomy, and authority to shepherd the process through the *preparation*, *espousal*, and *implementation* phases.

Preparation Phase

The preparation phase begins when an individual within the service comes to the conclusions that existent doctrine is ill-suited to the current conflict and unlikely to achieve strategic success.¹⁹ It is the perceived presence of such a performance gap that necessitates the need for innovation (Downie 1998: 2). During the preparation phase, the organization must be made ripe for learning and innovation. This is done by bringing into question the core assumptions and essential workings of the service.

¹⁹ Strategic success, as opposed to battlefield success, is defined as the achievement of those national security goals delineated by civilian authorities.

The likelihood that an individual will be able to make the organization ripe is predicated on three attributes of his/her bureaucratic position within the service.

- His/her **access to battlefield information**, this determines the clarity with which they will be able to describe operational failures and potential responses. It is measured by the number, breadth, and depth of the sources from which they receive information.
- His/her **access to an audience within the service**, this determines who and how many individuals hear the innovator's arguments. The size of his/her audience is indicated by the number of individuals engaged in detailing the performance gap, searching for responses, and on the distribution lists of proposed innovations.
- His/her **bureaucratic autonomy**, this determines his/her freedom to engage preparatory tasks and manage the innovation process. The innovator's autonomy is indicated by his/her ability to set his/her own agenda within the organization.

These three variables shape an individual's ability to act as an innovator. Their relative value affects an innovator's ability to do two key things.

First, access and autonomy allow the innovator to increase the organization's absorptive capacity — which is defined as its ability to absorb new actionable knowledge, as opposed to simply new information.²⁰ In this case, absorptive capacity is indicated by the degree to which members of the organization attribute operational

²⁰ Tsoukas, et al (2004) write that "Information is knowing about something — knowing about events, happenings, and transactions. Knowledge is knowing of something — appreciating the significance of patterns of events, happenings, and transactions."

failures to the relative validity of existent doctrine's core assumptions. High levels of absorptive capacity are brought about via double-loop learning processes that disseminate information about the inadequacy of current doctrine and generate a search for a corrective response (Bogenrieder and Nooteboom 2004; Lewin and Massini 2004; Soo, Devinney, and Midgley 2004).

Second, access and autonomy allow the innovator to establish himself/herself as the focal point for those seeking change. Access and autonomy also allow the innovator to take on the role of a doctrinal entrepreneur. This is achieved by establishing himself/herself as the domain expert — the *primus inter pares* — of a community of innovators based on new doctrinal assumptions.²¹ The entrepreneur's leadership and the community's sense of purpose binds it together and provides a sense of legitimacy and authority. This sense of legitimacy and authority plays a vital role in challenging existent doctrine's position as a dominant design.²² Establishing himself/herself as the doctrinal entrepreneur also gives the individual the ability to coordinate the efforts of the

²¹ Krogh, Ichijo, and Nonaka (2002), Nonaka, Toyama, and Nonaka (2001), and Argyris (2004) present a similar idea in regard to how managers may promote learning within firms. Argyris breaks the process down into five steps: (1) "Managers discover new strategies and market opportunities by wandering inside the firm;" (2) "Managers facilitate creative and essential dialogue, 'abductive' thinking, and the use of metaphors to foster concept creation;" (3) "Managers assemble data used to plan strategies and operations;" (4) "Managers interact with cross-functional groups, they search for and share new values and thoughts, they share and try to understand management's vision and values by communicating with fellow managers;" (5) "Managers foster a spirit of challenge within the organization." It also fits with the arguments of Boer, van Baalen, and Kumar (2004) regarding the establishment of "communal sharing relationships" for the search for and dissemination of new knowledge; and those of Bogenrieder and Nooteboom. (2004) regarding "communities of practice." It is similar to Haas' (1992) notion of epistemic communities.

²² Bergerson (1980; 15) notes that the desire to achieve mission success binds those who are aware of the need for innovation together and provides a sense of authority from which to challenge the status quo.

community of innovators and leverage its potential political power within the organization.²³

Once an innovator establishes himself/herself as a doctrinal entrepreneur and begins to expand the absorptive capacity of the organization, his/her access and autonomy allow him/her to further increase the size of the community of innovators. This makes it possible to further disseminate knowledge of the impending strategic failure. If the entrepreneur can expand the community of innovators throughout the organization, existent doctrine's dominant position will weaken. Individuals and groups within the service will become prepared to consider other sources in their evaluations of the performance gap and potential solutions. The preparation phase is complete when the entrepreneur is able to supplant the mandate provided by existent doctrine with that provided by the need to achieve strategic objectives.²⁴

Espousal Phase

The espousal phase begins with a critical juncture crisis — a crisis significant enough to be recognized by contemporaries as a turning point.²⁵ Such a crisis opens up the range of policy choices. It leads to a reevaluation of the context, goals, or benefits of

²³ Murray (1996; 307) suggests that autonomy provides opportunities to “seek help from a wide number of sources, including civilians and scientists” and allows one to keep focused on larger issues. Also see, Wenger 1999; Huysman 2004.

²⁴ Bergerson (1980; 12-15) suggests that there are several different sources of authority and identity within the US military. Doctrine and mission are a chief source for both, a point supported by Lock-Pullan (2006; 4). This suggests doctrinal skeptics may use the authority and identity supplied by mission to undermine the authority and identity supplied by doctrine.

²⁵ Collier and Collier (1991) and Capoccia and Keleman (2007). Capoccia and Keleman note that during critical junctures, influences are significantly relaxed and the range of plausible choices expands. Such crisis do not necessarily produce changes in behavior or policy; yet they increase the likelihood of such happening. During such periods, decision-making is more uncertain. Bergerson (1980; 39) notes that there are critical points in the environment that affect both tasks and their underlying legitimacy.

current policies. In doing so, it weakens the constraints of past decisions. In regard to doctrinal innovation, such a crisis may take the form of a real or perceived battlefield loss, or an experienced or expected political setback. Regardless of its exact manifestation, the phase begins with an external shock that forces administration officials to reevaluate the operational nature of the conflict. To avoid the domestic political costs associated with backing down, it is assumed that executive branch authorities will forgo reevaluations of stated national security objectives and focus instead on the performance of the military (Fearon 1994; Lieber 2007; Tomz 2007). This creates opportunities for the doctrinal entrepreneur and community of innovators to present their ideas to senior officials and the president. During the espousal phase, the political and material support necessary to implement innovation must be secured.

The likelihood that the doctrinal entrepreneur will gain the support necessary to implement innovation is predicated on two attributes of his/her bureaucratic position within the service.

- **His/her access to publicly visible elite opinion in support of the community of innovators**, this determines the salience of the crisis and innovations in the minds of members of the administration, Congress, and the general public. It is indicated by the professional diversity of military, retired military, and non-military supporters of innovation and the ratio of their congressional, public, and mass media appearances relative to appearances by supporters of existent doctrine (Feaver and Gelpi 2004: 65-66).

- His/her **access to backchannel conduits reaching senior members of the executive branch**, this determines the nature of any presidential intervention. It is indicated by closed/private meetings with administration officials, by meetings outside the normal routines of the organization, and by follow-on requests for information or briefings from the White House.

These two variables affect the doctrinal entrepreneur's ability to harness the critical juncture crisis to his/her advantage and accomplish the following.

Access to elite opinion allows the entrepreneur to seed the domestic political environment with support for innovation. This is accomplished by getting elites to publicly highlight the failure of existing doctrine and promote the merits of proposed innovations.²⁶ By seeding the political environment, the community of innovators raises the audience costs civilian authorities face from their continued support of the operational status quo. Access to elite opinion also establishes political rewards for policies supporting innovation (Mayhew 1974 and 2005; Fearon 1994: 581-582; Tomz 2007: 832).²⁷ This alters the calculations faced by civilians regarding the risks and rewards of innovation. This in turn, makes the president more willing to intervene in favor of doctrinal innovation.

²⁶ For more on the political effects of framing within the domestic environment, see Schattschneider (1975) and Johnson and Tierney (2006).

²⁷ This notion stretches the traditional treatment of audience costs by international relations scholars. But the logic remains the same. Once committed, civilian authorities will be reluctant to simply disengage from the conflict or the announced national security objectives for which it is promulgated. Similarly, various politically relevant audiences exist in regard to both the conflict and civil-military relations in general. This makes it possible for either proponents or opponents of innovation to alter the payoffs faced by civilian authorities for either supporting innovations or the status quo.

Access to backchannel conduits allows for exclusive communication; such access allows innovators to by-pass organizational proponents of the existent doctrine. Backchannel conduits may be established via networks of retired military personnel, national security experts, and academics. Backchannel access shapes presidential intervention by providing alternative sources of information directly to the chief executive and presenting him/her with an alternative way to fight the war and perhaps secure his/her strategic objectives. Access to senior officials and the president allow the doctrinal entrepreneur to present civilian authorities with another, previously unavailable, option.

To offset the organizational position of adherents of existent doctrine, the general public, members of Congress, and senior officials within the executive branch must lend public support for the proposed innovations (Millett 1996: 359). When this occurs, it becomes more likely the president will make statements in support of the stated military objective, the proposed innovation, and the doctrinal entrepreneur. The greater the political pressure in support of both the national security objectives and the innovation, the greater the likelihood the president will be moved to provide (or secure from Congress) the resources necessary to operationalize innovations. The espousal phase ends when the entrepreneur captures the political and material support of the president.

Implementation Phase

The implementation phase begins with the entrepreneur being placed at the head of the combatant command and the service's adoption of the entrepreneur's doctrinal

innovations. Adoption, however, does not equate to implementation. During the implementation phase, innovations must be disseminated throughout the organization. During implementation, the core assumptions and essential workings of the service change and become the basis for altered military operations.

The likelihood that the entrepreneur will be able to disseminate innovations and actually change the way the service fights is predicated on three attributes of his/her bureaucratic position.

- His/her **authority to assign tasks based on changes in doctrinal assumptions**, this determines the degree to which innovations actually change operations. It is indicated by the orders issued, the monitoring of how instructions are carried out, and his/her ability to designate and prioritize areas of military operations.
- His/her **authority to relieve subordinate commanders, alter incentive systems, and allocate resources**, this determines an entrepreneur's ability to direct implementation. It also determines the salience of the innovations in the minds of many career service personnel. It is indicated by whether or not the entrepreneur has the ability to fire commanders who fail to comply with proscribed changes, bring about promotions for those who adopt the innovations, and assign individuals to key positions.
- His/her **autonomy to make decisions free from the organizational structures and proponents of the previous doctrine**, this determines

the level of resistance faced within the combatant command. It shapes the degree to which adherents to the previous doctrine will appeal implementation to the services headquarters (i.e. the Pentagon). This is indicated by internal communications within the combatant command (normally via commander's briefings and updates) and communications between the combatant command and the organization's hierarchy in Washington.

These three variables affect the doctrinal entrepreneur's ability to operationalize their innovations. The relative value of these two variables affects the entrepreneur's ability to do the following.

Authority and autonomy affect the entrepreneur's ability to ensure members of the community of innovators occupy positions of leadership at each level of the combatant command.²⁸ This is important if the entrepreneur is to disseminate and receive information without such being filtered by proponents of the previous doctrine.²⁹ It also provides the high levels of acceptance needed to establish an operational consensus regarding new assumptions (Bergerson 1980: 39; Rosen 1988: 141). This allows the entrepreneur to communicate throughout the hierarchy of the organization actionable knowledge about what it is supposed to do — about how it is supposed to fight.

Authority and autonomy also affect the entrepreneur's ability to ensure that doctrinal innovations become the new metric for evaluating individual and unit

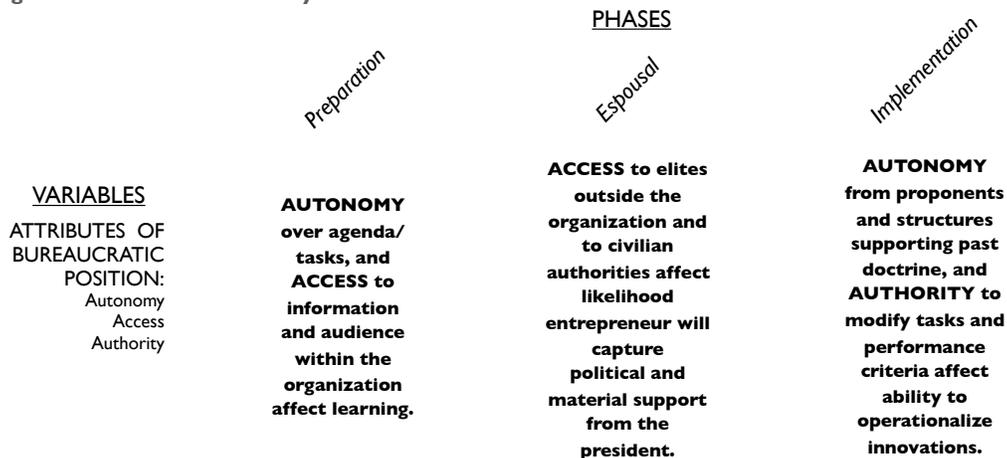
²⁸ Argyris (1999 and 2004) discusses the general importance of leadership/authority on organizational learning. Nye (1987) discusses the effects of political power. March and Simon (1958) explore the role dominant coalitions play. Halperin, Clapp, and Kanter (2006) discuss information flow implementation.

²⁹ At this point, the presence of the community of innovators with the organization provides transmission belts to help bring about implementation of the doctrinal innovations.

performance (Clark and Wilson 1961; Lewin and Massini 2004). With this, the innovations assume the position of a dominant design; they become the criteria against which individuals and units hone their abilities (Murray 1996: 311-314). This provides mechanisms for managing the organization's ability to carry out novel tasks. It allows the entrepreneur to ensure compliance with doctrinal innovations.

Implementation requires that the armed service itself accept and operationalize doctrinal innovations. This requires that subordinate units and individuals receive and understand novel tasks based on innovations in doctrine. Implementation continues with the recognition that units and individuals have a stake in complying with the proposed changes. Implementation is complete when subordinate units and individuals have internalized doctrinal innovations and accept them as important in their own right.

Figure 2: Model of US Military Innovation



Implications of this Model

This model argues innovation in US military doctrine unfolds via the following scenario: actors within the armed forces craft innovations that under crisis conditions are sold to civilian authorities and ultimately ratified or vetoed by the organization itself. This suggests two things about major wartime innovation in the US military. First; that the likelihood of major innovations in US military doctrine are predicated on an entrepreneur's ability to successfully engage in bureaucratic politics. Second; that an entrepreneur's capacity for constructing the necessary political efficacy is greatest during the preparation phase. If this model is accurate, US armed forces are the source and arbiter of innovations in American military doctrine. It also means that during times of crisis, bureaucratic politics within the US military have a significant affect in determining how and to what degree national security objectives are realized.

Vietnam and Iraq - Sketches of the Two Cases Under Consideration

Twice in living memory the United States Army has put itself in a position of needing to innovate doctrine in order to achieve the national security objectives with which it was tasked. A structured, focused comparison of these two cases should identify the scope conditions and variables that affect the likelihood of successful innovation. In both conflicts, bureaucratic politics and organizational dynamics shaped the Army's ability to recognize a growing performance failure and implement timely innovations in order to achieve success. That such would be the case raises interesting questions about the processes through which innovations in US military doctrine occur. More puzzling,

however, is this — under similar circumstances, the wars in Vietnam and Iraq, we observe different outcomes. In Vietnam, adherents of existent doctrine effectively resisted innovation. In Iraq, such resistance was overcome. The key difference between the two cases was the bureaucratic positions from which doctrinal entrepreneurs launched their attempts. The innovators' bureaucratic autonomy, access, and authority affected how, what, and whether the Army engaged in the organizational learning necessary to achieve its strategic objectives.

Attempts at doctrinal innovation during the Vietnam War began in 1965 when General Harold Johnson, the Army Chief of Staff, tasked (then) Lieutenant General Creighton Abrams to review the growing conflict in Vietnam and propose an effective strategy for success. Abrams, already among a group of doctrinal skeptics, emerged from the process a doctrinal entrepreneur leading a small community of innovators. From his position as Vice Chief of Staff, Abrams attempted to prepare the Army for the changes called for in his study: *A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam* (PROVN). His doctrinal innovations were distributed to a controlled group of senior officials, including Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and General William Westmoreland — then commander of US forces in Vietnam. Abrams refined and strengthened the arguments of the community of innovators by articulating specific changes in doctrine. Yet despite the presence of potential supporters within the political ecosystem, including George Ball, Roger Hilsman, and Walt Rostow, the size and diversity of this community never greatly expanded outside the Army itself. Although Westmoreland and others would come to pay lip-service to many of the goals and

innovations recommended by PROVN, they essentially and effectively used their bureaucratic positions to dismiss or stonewall doctrinal innovation.

The Tet Offensive of 1968 brought about a critical juncture crisis. Westmoreland was replaced with Abrams. Abrams, now in command of US forces in Vietnam, moved to implement his innovations. However, he found himself without the necessary resources or authority to disseminate and operationalize his innovations. Although President Johnson had replaced his combatant commander, he had not provided clear support for doctrinal innovation. Civilian leaders, wary of the war's growing costs and unpopularity, failed to supply the political and material support needed. This condition persisted under President Richard Nixon. Despite changes in command and changes in policy (including the scope of the war), civilian authorities failed to back new concepts for how to fight the war. Subordinate commanders clung to the tasks and incentives of existent doctrine. Despite limited success with counterinsurgency efforts, Abrams would be unable to position enough supporters throughout the Army to establish his innovations as the basis for operations, and the measure of success, in Vietnam.

Attempts at doctrinal innovation during the Iraq War began in 2005. The push for innovation began when (then) Lieutenant General David Petraeus assumed command of the Army's Combined Arms Center. Petraeus, already among a group of doctrinal skeptics, launched a broad search for an innovative approach to the war in Iraq. From his position he had access to battlefield information from every level of command and oversaw the Army's educational programs and professional journals. Petraeus developed a community of innovators with diverse backgrounds — including career military,

academics, policy experts, and human rights specialists — that transcended the Army. From this community, a new counterinsurgency field manual (*FM 3-24*) was developed. As the war in Iraq bogged down, members of the community made increasing use of backchannel approaches to civilian authorities within the administration of President George W. Bush. Retired General Jack Keane, and others, actively lobbied civilian authorities to support doctrinal innovation.

Like Vietnam, a critical juncture crisis — this time in the form of disastrous mid-term elections and a worsening situation on the battlefield — led to a change of command. In 2007, Petraeus took command of US forces in Iraq. Unlike Abrams, Petraeus assumed command with the political and material support needed to implement his innovations — the so-called ‘surge.’ In Iraq, Petraeus had the authority necessary to establish his doctrine as the basis for operations and evaluations of success.

Methods

With this dissertation, I seek to explain innovation in US military doctrine during wartime. The similarities that exist between these two cases provide the puzzle as well as opportunities for its study. The same military organization, facing a similar counterinsurgency challenge, within comparable domestic political contexts, in one case failed to innovate — but in the other did. Even the major events of each case — the identification of the performance gap, the development of an innovative response, changes in command — occurred at approximately the same intervals. Although the innovative process is inherently complex, such similarities make it relatively easy to

evaluate the effects of the independent variables. Such similarities also provide a means for addressing the core concepts and causal mechanisms of this model.³⁰

To present a causal argument, examinations of these cases will be conducted via process tracing methods. As George and Bennett note, such methods provide the best means for addressing causal complexity, interaction effects, feedback loops, path dependencies, tipping points — and perhaps most importantly for this project, the sequential interactions between agents and structures (George and Bennett 2005: 12-13). Carrying out such process tracing, however, requires constructing a narrative chain of events for each instance. For the Vietnam war, historical accounts, media reports, and official records will be used to accomplish this; for the Iraq war, these same materials will be used along with interviews of key personnel.

This model's dependent variable is whether or not innovations in doctrine occurred. It does not include whether such innovations actually brought about strategic success. To illustrate causation in each case study, the dependent variable will be broken down into three distinct and observable events: the organizational recognition of a performance gap based on doctrine (the preparation phase); the securing of support from the president (the espousal phase); and the dissemination and operationalization of new knowledge (the implementation phase). This will allow the model's predictions to be tested against the historical record. Taken as a whole, the value of this model's dependent variable will be indicated by the degree to which assumptions within the organization regarding the proper focus of military effort (the operational center of gravity) changed.

³⁰ Friedrichs and Kratochwil (2009) make an argument for the use of abduction in case studies. The authors contend that by examining the most important or typical cases, research can address richness and complexity, address core concepts, and still make causal arguments.

Ultimately however, it boils down to this — whether or not the US Army changed the way it fought in Vietnam and Iraq.

The independent variables to be studied are the bureaucratic characteristics of the positions from which each entrepreneur sought to innovate doctrine. As noted by the model, this project posits the claim that an innovator's bureaucratic autonomy, access, and authority affect their ability to overcome resistance, capture civilian support, and implement innovation.

Like the dependent variable, the independent variable of bureaucratic position will be treated slightly differently during each phase. As noted above, such is necessary in order to provide a causal argument. In the preparation phase, it will be evaluated according to the individual's access to battlefield information, access to an audience within the organization, and autonomy to engage in innovation. In the espousal phase, the independent variable will be evaluated on the basis of the innovator's access to elite opinion makers and access to senior officials and the president. In the implementation phase, the independent variable will be evaluated on the basis of the innovator's authority to task the combatant command, authority to remove subordinates and control incentives, and his/her autonomy to act freely of the structures and routines based on prior doctrinal assumptions.

To evaluate the effects of the independent variables and the validity of the model presented, the following hypotheses will be tested against evidence from the case studies.

H.1 (Preparation Phase): As an individual's bureaucratic autonomy increases, his/her ability to develop innovative responses to performance failure increases.

H.2 (Preparation Phase): As an individual's access to an audience within the organization increases, his/her ability to bring into question existent doctrine's core assumptions increases.

H.3 (Espousal Phase): As the public visibility of the community of innovators increases, political pressure on the president to support innovation increases.

H.4 (Espousal Phase): As the doctrinal entrepreneur's backchannel access to executive branch officials increases, the likelihood of presidential support for innovation increases.

H.5 (Implementation Phase): As the presence of a community of innovators at each level of command increases, the likelihood that innovations will be operationalized increases.

H.6 (Implementation Phase): As innovative tasks become the basis for evaluation, the likelihood of resistance to innovation decreases.

The hypotheses are specific to the three phases of the model. The sequence of events in each case will be compared with one another, as well as with the expected sequence of events predicted by the model and its hypotheses. By illuminating causal processes, process tracing will show whether or not expected causal relationships led to the

observed outcomes. The validity of the model's claims concerning key variables will be evaluated based on the results of hypotheses testing.

Although this project examines only two cases of attempted doctrinal innovation, employing process tracing methods will allow for numerous testable observations within each phase of the model. Furthermore, by examining the sequential effects of these observations — the study will be able to provide insights into how success at one phase of innovation influences the likelihood of success in subsequent phases.

Process tracing will also allow for the consideration of alternative explanations based on traditional arguments. Traditional explanations have been based on either external (strategic concerns arising from the international balance of power) or internal (organizational or institutional) mechanisms — not both. The consideration of alternative explanations are vital to the evaluation of this model. They provide a test of the relative merit of its explanations (Collier and Collier 1991: 18, 39; Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 354-359; Elster 2007: 15-17).

Before moving into the cases, and with an eye to the above, it is important to list the specific events that should be observed during each of the three phases — if this model is accurate. During the preparation phase, we should witness the rise of a community of innovators within the Army and attempts on the part of Generals Abrams and Petraeus to expand said community. Efforts to highlight the perceived performance gap and to promote specific innovations should be observed. During the espousal phase, we should observe attempts on the part of innovators (as well as proponents of existing doctrine) to capture or maintain the political and material support of civilian authorities

through backchannel conduits outside the formal structures of the organization. More specifically, we should observe attempts on the part of innovators to increase the political costs faced by civilian authorities who support the status quo and attempts to increase the rewards for those who support innovation. We should also observe attempts by innovators to bypass formal channels in order to make direct appeals to civilian officials. During the implementation phase, we should observe attempts to disseminate, operationalize, and evaluate the innovations throughout the Army's combatant command. Those supporting innovation ought to be witnessed briefing new tasks and evaluating their implementation. Those supporting existent doctrine ought to be observed actively resisting such.

If traditional arguments of balance of power and civilian intervention are correct we should expect to observe the following during each of the phases. If balance of power arguments are correct, one should observe discussions, statements, and testimony concerning the Army's strategic priorities – in short, we should witness debates about whether or not the wars in Vietnam and Iraq are of primary importance. If past arguments about the role of civilians in military innovations are correct, we should observe members of the organization reacting to questions and concerns on the part of civilian authorities – from members of Congress, from the White House, or from the Office of the Secretary of Defense.³¹

³¹ Interestingly we observe civilian pressure for doctrinal innovation prior to the Army's undertaking of a combat mission in Vietnam. In the early 1960s, the Kennedy administration pressured military leaders to develop counterinsurgency doctrine and training. Yet, military leaders paid little more than lip service to the president's push for innovation. This is in direct contrast to what Posen's (1984) argument would predict. In the end, civilian pressure had no substantive effect on the Army's concept of how it should fight. See Krepinevich (1986).

The model of innovation provided here leads to certain expectations regarding what should be observed in the case studies. Ultimately the explanatory value of this model will be judged on whether or not tests of the hypotheses support the presumed relationships between independent and dependent variables, and the degree to which expected outcomes, based on such, are realized.

Military Doctrine and National Security — Why Innovation Matters

This dissertation examines what happens when doctrine is ill fitted and unlikely to bring about the political objectives that motivated the use of military force. It examines the causal mechanisms by which military organizations innovate doctrine in the face of potential failure. Why should we care? The US Army failed in Vietnam. Twenty years later, the Soviet Union no longer existed — the US had won the Cold War. Had the Army failed to innovate in Iraq, would it really have mattered?

Policy makers and academics hold that as a result of the anarchical nature of the international system, national security is ultimately predicated on a nation-state's ability (or perceived ability) to successfully exercise military force (Jervis 1976; Waltz 1979: 58-113, 195-210; Schweller 1994). The ability to exercise such force is both product and guarantor of a host of national characteristics — including economic, political, social and even geographic attributes (Gilpin 1983; Morgenthau and Thompson 1985: 115-183). However, the successful exercise of military force requires more than the employment of material capabilities such as troops, tanks, ships, or aircraft (Luttwak 2001; Reiter and Stam 2002; Biddle and Long 2004). It requires a clear understanding of what, how, and

where military means ought to be employed.³² Although military force is rarely the first mechanism by which nation-states seek to achieve their security objectives, at critical moments, it is the pivotal one. Military prowess, therefore, is often a decisive determinate in a nation's ability to realize its security objectives (Posen 1984; Rosen 1988; Avant 1993; Van Evera 1998). This fact has implications for the general nature and stability of the international system, and the fates of domestic political actors (Posen 1984: 14-15; Snyder 1984 and 1991; Van Evera 1985; Millett, Williamson, and Watman 1986; Lieber 2007).

The relationship between military doctrine and military prowess creates links between doctrine, national security objectives, and international outcomes. Barry Posen suggests such when he writes that “[m]ilitary doctrines are critical components of national security policy or grand strategy” (Posen 1984: 13). But Posen goes on to make a second critical point. He notes that “doctrine is a component part of a state's theory about how it can best ‘cause’ security for itself” (Posen 1984: 13). Thus, military doctrine provides a powerful tool for understanding why states may or may not achieve their national security objectives as well as the motives that animate state behavior.

This point is echoed by Richard Betts when he discusses the interdependence that exists between the causes, execution, and consequences of war. Betts argues that “conduct becomes cause, as mechanisms of violence shape decisions about its political application” (Betts 1997: 10). For Betts, “[i]t is impossible to understand impulses and choices in the political dimension of war or peace without understanding constraints and

³² Starry 1979; Posen (1984; 13) explicitly addresses the *what* and *how* elements. The *where* element, known as the ‘center of gravity’ can be traced back to Clausewitz (1984; 595-596).

opportunities in the military dimension.” Betts illustrates with reference to Nazi Germany; “it is not possible to understand how Germany managed to rule Europe for half of the 1940s without understanding how it overcame the opposing might of France and Britain” (Betts 1997: 10). Betts contends that one must look at how and why “the Wehrmacht adapted the technology and doctrine of armored warfare” to fully appreciate the observed outcome and its importance (Betts 1997: 10).³³ The German case may be more dramatic than most, but its importance is not unique — and it suggests why the study of military doctrine has proven fertile ground for scholars seeking to explain international outcomes.

The challenges of the next century are likely to be every bit as dynamic as those of the last. The ability of national military forces to learn and innovate will most likely play a decisive role in shaping not only the outcomes we observe in the international system, but the nature of the system as well. The Army’s failure in Vietnam may not have affected the outcome of the Cold War because it was followed by the Soviet Union’s own inability to innovate in the face of strategic defeat in Afghanistan. In the 21st century the ability to innovate and snatch victory from defeat may become more important, countries may get fewer second chances, and the costs of American failure may increase as its relative strength declines. Innovation matters.

³³ Watts and Murray (1996; 372-373) make a similar argument. They note that prior to the outbreak of World War II, the Allied countries enjoyed numerical and or technological advantages over Nazi Germany in all aspects except total aircraft and anti-aircraft artillery. Watts and Murray contend that, “[w]hat matters most was that the Germans had evolved sound concepts for mobile, combined-arms warfare and had trained their army to execute those concepts.”

Chapter 2: Vietnam

“I’ll be damned if I permit the United States Army, its institutions, its doctrine, and its traditions to be destroyed just to win this lousy war.”

— unnamed senior Army officer, Saigon 1968³⁴

In 1965, General Creighton Abrams was Army Vice Chief of Staff (Davidson 1988: 577). In this position, Abrams had responsibility for overseeing the day to day operations of the Army — including development of the organization’s capabilities, policies, and plans (see *US Code; Title 10 — Armed Forces; Subtitle B — Army; Part I — Organization; Chapter 305 — The Army Staff*; Davidson 1988: 577). Beginning that July, and lasting until its publication in March 1966, this included overseeing the development of *A Program for the Pacification and Long-term Development of South Vietnam* (PROVN) (*PROVN*, Volume 2 1966: 492; Lewy 1978: 133-134). In April 1967, in response to a growing performance gap between the way the Army was fighting the war and what was occurring on the ground and at the prompting of President Johnson, Abrams was sent to Vietnam as Deputy Commander-US Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) (Sorley 1992: 193-194). A year later, in the aftermath of the Tet Offensive, President Johnson put Abrams in command of MACV — a position he held until 1972.

From these bureaucratic positions, Abrams attempted major innovations in US Army doctrine. He perceived a doctrinally based performance gap likely to bring about strategic defeat. In response, Abrams attempted to disseminate information about a

³⁴ This quote has appeared many times. It appears to have originated with Jenkins (1970; 3).

growing crisis and implement needed innovations. Ultimately, however, Abrams lacked the access, autonomy, and authority necessary to bring about change. During the Vietnam War, attempts at major innovations in US military doctrine would fail.

Creighton Abrams and the Failure to Innovate

A good number of scholars attribute US defeat in Vietnam to the Army's failure to employ counterinsurgency doctrine (Krepinevich 1986; Crane 2002; Nagl 2005). Regardless of whether or not such a doctrine would have altered the outcome of the war, what is clear is this — within the Army there existed a group of individuals that perceived a performance gap on the part of existent doctrine and sought to implement major innovations.³⁵ These individuals felt such was necessary to achieve the national security objectives of the US (*PROVN*, Volume I 1966: 1). What is also clear is this: there existed within the political ecosystem retired military and civilian leaders, who having come to the same conclusion, would have supported innovation.

³⁵ Lewis Sorley (1992, 1998 and 1999) contends that the Army did innovate under General Abrams. Sorley argues that the US was winning the war at the time US political support for the war waned in the early 1970s. He posits the idea that it was the collapse of political support that brought the war to an unsuccessful end. In essence, Sorley argues that Abrams and the Army simply ran out of time. As others, including Krepinevich (1986) and Nagl (2005), have observed — the Army, as an organization did not substantially alter its operational behavior in Vietnam. In fact, Sorley's (2004) own work in transcribing the audio records from Abrams' staff meetings indicate that Abrams was not successful in changing how the Army was fighting. Abrams was unable to alter long held assumptions. Sorley's argument is based in large part on the fact that under Abrams, US and South Vietnamese forces increased the amount of territory under their control. This fact, however, has more to do with increased efforts to interdict North Vietnamese supply routes, the weakness of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces after Tet '68, and a strategic decision on the part of communist forces to conserve resources in anticipation of the US withdrawal. Although Abrams managed the war differently and sought to implement doctrinal innovations, he was unable to bring about an updating of military doctrine or move the Army closer to the achievement of its national security objectives in Vietnam.

The Preparation Phase — PROVN and the US Army Vice Chief of Staff

The attempt to innovate doctrine in Vietnam was born from a tasking by Army Chief of Staff General Harold Johnson in June 1965. After returning in March from his fourth trip to Vietnam, Johnson had questions about the nature of the conflict and the appropriateness of the growing US military mission (Karnow 1983: 437; Gibbons 1995: 201-202; Sorley 1998; Birtle 2008; Long 2008). Concerned that the Army did not fully understand the challenges it faced, Johnson commissioned a study to examine the situation (Davidson 1988: 409; Sorley 1998; Nagl 2005; Record 2006). General Johnson carefully selected ten officers to work under Abrams' leadership (Lewy 1978: 133-134; Gibbons 1995: 202; Sorley 1998). The Chief of Staff instructed them to “stand away from the problem and examine it from the broadest possible perspective” (Sorley 1998). If necessary, they were to develop a “new course of action to be taken in South Vietnam by the United States and its allies to successfully accomplish US aims and objectives” (*PROVN*, Volume I 1966: v; *The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 2, Chapter VI 1971: 559-560; Gibbons 1995: 201-202; Nagl 2005: 159; Record 2006: 11). The result of their inquiry, *A Program for the Pacification and Long-term Development of South Vietnam* (*PROVN*), was published in March 1966 (*PROVN*, Volume 2 1966: 492; Krepinevich 1986: 180-181).

As Vice Chief of Staff, and with responsibility for overseeing *PROVN*, Abrams had access to battlefield information and the autonomy necessary to evaluate how well existent doctrine matched the national security objectives of the US in South Vietnam (Lewy 1978: 133-134; Hunt 2010: 39). Members of the group also gathered insights by

traveling to southeast Asia, by meeting with academics (including Henry Kissinger and Bernard Fall), by examining histories of past insurgent wars and guerrilla operations, and by surveying hundreds of officers who had served in South Vietnam (*PROVN*, Volume 2 1966; Gibbons 1995: 202-204; Sorley 1998). Based on *PROVN*'s findings, Abrams became convinced that existent doctrine was unlikely to achieve strategic success — a free and independent South Vietnam (Davidson 1988: 613; Sorley 1999: 7; Long 2008; 17).

To achieve victory, *PROVN* recommended two major innovations in Army doctrine. The first was a shift in the operational center of gravity away from the destruction of enemy forces toward the protection of civilian populations. The second was an emphasis on small unit operations and restraint in the use of firepower. Each of these innovations represented a stark departure from existent doctrine.³⁶ Both were viewed as vital to achieving strategic success (Sorley 1992: 192). These two innovations were to be realized via one-hundred and forty recommended changes in strategy and operations.

With these major innovations, *PROVN* essentially sought to shift the American effort from a doctrine based upon attrition warfare to one based on counterinsurgency (Gibbons 1995: 359; Sorley 1998; Nagl 2005: 158-160; Record 2006: 11).³⁷ At the

³⁶ Among *PROVN*'s called for innovations: discontinuance of unobserved artillery fire, unity of command and effort at provincial level, increased responsiveness to rural construction needs, stressing of security and police protection, enhanced use of amnesty programs, encouraged development of social organizations, and increased refugee support operations. *PROVN* also called for restraint; it argued against the use of scorched-earth tactics. *PROVN*, Volume I 1966: 19-27

³⁷ The *PROVN* group had spent a great deal of time studying insurgency and counterinsurgency and was convinced Vietnam represented insurgent warfare. To that end, it is worth noting that *PROVN*'s selected bibliography cites General Vo Nguyen Giap's 1961 book *People's War, People's Army*. *PROVN*, Volume II 1966: xiii

beginning of the nine-hundred page report, PROVN laid out the importance of protection and pacification:

"Victory" can only be achieved through bringing the individual Vietnamese, typically a rural peasant, to support willingly the Government of South Vietnam (GVN). The critical actions are those that occur at the village, district and provincial levels. This is where the war must be fought; this is where that war and the object which lies beyond it must be won.³⁸

Despite Abrams' endorsement, PROVN's dissemination was effectively blocked. Lieutenant General Vernon Mock, the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, refused to sign off on the study (Gibbons 1995: 210-211; Sorley 1998; Long 2008: 11).³⁹ Although Abrams was nominally Mock's superior, it was Mock's decision that controlled whether or not PROVN would be distributed throughout the Army. Mock's refusal concerned General Johnson. He worried about the study's effect on the Army as an organization. Alarmed by how controversial and divisive PROVN might be, General Johnson restricted discussions of the study to the Army Staff in the Pentagon (*The*

³⁸ *PROVN*, Volume I 1966: 1

³⁹ Mock was so disdainful of the study he reportedly responded to the PROVN group's request for his signature and distribution with "Why don't you come in early some morning and have one of the cleaning ladies sign it?" Quoted in Gibbons (1995: 210-211).

Pentagon Papers, Volume 2, Chapter VI 1971: 560; Davidson 1988: 410; Nagl 2005: 160; Record 2006: 11; Birtle 2008: 1244).⁴⁰

Despite Johnson's reservations, within a few weeks of its March 1966 publication the study was briefed to the rest of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Like Mock, they were dismissive of its findings. General Earle Wheeler, an Army officer and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, rejected PROVN (Gallucci 1975: 37-39; Sorley 1998; Nagl 2005: 160).⁴¹ Wheeler insisted the study's authors had misdiagnosed the situation and refused to forward it to the White House (Gallucci 1975: 38-39; Tierney 2006: 242-243). The others concurred (Sorley 1998; Long 2008: 11). The JCS continued to argue that the war should be prosecuted via traditional doctrine directed against communist forces (Gallucci 1975: 37-38; Karnow 1983: 435; Burke and Greenstein 1991: 122). Furthermore, the Chiefs elevated PROVN's security classification from secret to top secret to further restrict its distribution (Krepinevich 1986: 182; Gibbons 1995: 208).

In May 1966, PROVN was briefed to General William Westmoreland, (then) Commander-Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). In deference to military custom and tradition, the JCS felt that the commander in the field should be given the opportunity to review the study and respond (Lewy 1978: 114; Sorley 1998; Nagl 2005: 160). Given PROVN's critical appraisal of Westmoreland's search-and-destroy strategy, his response was predictable. Like Wheeler, Westmoreland felt the study misdiagnosed

⁴⁰ Although General Johnson initiated the PROVN study, and by some accounts was supportive of counterinsurgency, by December 1965 he appears to have decided that such a doctrine was untenable. While meeting with junior officers of the 1st Infantry Division in Vietnam, Johnson reportedly argued that it was politically impossible for the US to move away from large unit search and destroy missions. See Gibbons (1995: 202).

⁴¹ Wheeler argued that "Unless you match or overmatch the action taken by the enemy . . . you're going to lose . . . the side with the initiative comes out on top . . . You must carry the fight to the enemy . . . No one ever won a battle sitting on his ass." Quoted in Gallucci (1975: 125-126).

the situation in Vietnam (Westmoreland 1976: 296; Blaufarb 1977: 250-251; Lewy 1978: 114; Karnow 1983: 435; Sorley 1992: 192-193; Gaddis 1999: 225-226; Sorley 1999: 2-5; Record 2006: 11; Long 2008: 11).⁴² Westmoreland viewed the war as a being driven and sustained by foreign (North Vietnamese) aggression. Thus, he held that containing the enemy's military forces (some 225,000 communist soldiers and guerrillas in the field) should be the primary focus of the US Army's efforts. Pacification and counterinsurgency, Westmoreland argued, should be the responsibility of the South Vietnamese (Birtle 2008:1221-1223).

Rather than directly oppose the PROVN, a tactic that might have promoted its dissemination and additional discussions about the need for innovation, Westmoreland recommended the study be downgraded to a conceptual document. Westmoreland called for further study of PROVN's innovations, a tactic designed to limit dissemination and shift the discussion from one of practical immediate need to theoretical possibility. He also suggested that the goals outlined in PROVN be sent to the National Security Council for consideration — a move that would effectively shield existent doctrine (and his strategy) from change by pushing many of the study's programs off onto civilian agencies (Lewy 1978: 114; Krepinevich 1986: 182; Davidson 1988: 410; Sorley 1998; Nagl 2005: 160).

Despite Westmoreland's recommendation, PROVN was never formally presented to the National Security Council. Nor was it forwarded to the White House. There exists no known evidence that President Lyndon Johnson was made directly aware of the study

⁴² At the same time, Westmoreland was pressuring the Marines to abandon the counterinsurgency strategy they were pursuing in Vietnam. Westmoreland wanted the Corps to move toward large unit search-and-destroy operations aimed at enemy forces. See Crane (2002: 3-4).

(Gibbons 1995: 209). Proponents of existent doctrine limited knowledge of the study's recommended innovations by controlling its distribution and discussion.

Abrams, however, was not done. From his position as Vice Chief of Staff, he continued to push for PROVN's dissemination. Later that spring, Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara were briefed on the report — though to little avail. McNamara, for his part, was unwilling to get into a political fight with the Joint Chiefs over PROVN (Lewy 1978: 89; Davidson 1988: 393-403). In August, the US diplomatic mission in Saigon was briefed. Here Abrams met with greater success. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge expressed his support for PROVN's emphasis on pacification and on increasing the capabilities of South Vietnamese forces. Lodge accepted the notion that success would ultimately be predicated on the protection of the South Vietnamese population (Gibbons 1995: 209-210). Lodge's support, however, did little to promote PROVN's recommended innovations within the Army itself.

In August 1966, Abrams again pressured the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations to disseminate PROVN. In response to a newspaper article questioning whether or not the US had a succinct strategy for how to win the war, Abrams pressed the case for PROVN. Mock's reaction was to further diminish the study's significance. Mock answered Abrams with a memorandum noting that PROVN was but one of several conceptual documents regarding Vietnam — and that it was not in fact wholly inconsistent with existent doctrine (Gibbons 1995: 210-211).

At the end of 1966, it appears that fewer than one hundred general officers within the Army had been briefed on PROVN.⁴³ Furthermore, when asked at a December 1966 Policy Planning Council meeting at the State Department as to whether or not the military was studying alternatives to the current conduct of the war — the Joint Chiefs respond no, that no such study was being conducted. No mention of PROVN was made (Gibbons 1995: 494). As an organization, the Army was unaware of the need for innovation or the specific recommendations regarding counterinsurgency made by the study. The JCS, the commander in the field, and other proponents of existent doctrine were working to keep it that way.

PROVN's formal dissemination within the military may have been blocked, but its tenets were being increasingly discussed outside the Army. As civilian leaders became increasingly frustrated by the growing performance gap observed by PROVN's authors, they began to search for potential solutions. Thanks to the efforts of Ambassador Lodge, Secretary McNamara, and others within the White House, by November 1966, President Johnson grew to support the pacification efforts recommended by PROVN (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 4, Chapter II 1971: 367-370; Gibbons 1995: 485-491; Sorley 1998; Nagl 2005: 163).⁴⁴ The president's support for pacification would initially come about via a civilian organization — the Office of Civil Operations (OCO), later reworked into Civil Operations and Revolutionary/Rural Development Support (CORDS) (*The*

⁴³ Each of the copies were numbered, no more than one hundred copies were produced. *PROVN* 1966.

⁴⁴ Andrew Birtle contends that General Johnson himself violated restrictions regarding PROVN and gave a copy to Robert Komer, who at the time was serving on the National Security Council staff. See Birtle (2008: 1244).

Pentagon Papers, Volume 2, Chapter VI 1971: 459; Nagl 2005: 164-166; Long 2008: 15).

Efforts to disseminate PROVN continued in 1967. Although still rejected by the uniformed military, Secretary McNamara allowed PROVN to be distributed outside the Defense Department (Krepinevich 1986: 182; Sorley 1998; Nagl 2005: 160; Birtle 2008: 1244). Unable to circulate the document within the Army, Abrams moved to disperse those who had worked on it. Lieutenant Colonel Volney Warner, who served as a member of the PROVN group, volunteered for assignment in the Executive Office of the President. Once there, Warner “spent a lot of time trying to get the White House to ask the JCS for solutions that we [PROVN] had.” Warner hoped that by doing so, the small community of innovators could “jam [PROVN] through the JCS . . . whether they liked it or not” (Gibbons 1995: 201, 211). Although the Army continued to resist innovation, it became increasingly difficult for the service to ignore PROVN.

Political pressure from the White House forced Westmoreland to pay lip-service to the innovations recommended by PROVN (Krepinevich 1986: 183-186; Davidson 1988: 411; Nagl 2005: 164). Westmoreland increasingly spoke in terms of pacification and population security. Yet during the last half of 1966, large unit firepower intensive search and destroy missions, the exact kind PROVN warned against, increased. Westmoreland continued to request additional troops and firepower in order to pursue attrition of the enemy at a faster rate. Westmoreland’s plans for 1967 continued to emphasize traditional doctrine and his need for additional forces remained acute. In March 1967, Westmoreland requested four more divisions. Continued emphasis on

current doctrine, Westmoreland promised, would bring the war to a successful conclusion by the summer of 1967 (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 4, Chapter II 1971: 370; Krepinevich 1986: 184-190, 196-197; Gibbons 1995: 607-618; Hennessy 1997: 107-108; Sorley 1999: 5; Tierney 2006: 245). Westmoreland insisted that existent doctrine and strategy were winning the war (Kissinger 1969: 211-212; Rogers 1974: 156; Lewy 1978: 89; Krepinevich 1986: 168-172; Hennessy 1997: 129-130; Lock-Pullan 2006: 32). Secretary McNamara disagreed. McNamara and his staff had come to the conclusion that attrition warfare would not produce victory (Krepinevich 1986: 183-186; Sheehan 1988: 684; Sorley 1992: 200 and 1999: 5-9). Based on Westmoreland's current strategy and requests, they projected that by mid-1968 US forces in Vietnam would total 676,000 personnel (Krepinevich 1986: 187; Davidson 1988: 428).

President Johnson balked at Westmoreland's request for more troops. The president noted that the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong had matched or exceeded every US increase in forces (Krepinevich 1986: 187; Davidson 1988: 395, 425-426, 431). Worse yet, Defense Department statistics indicated that the enemy held the initiative. Battlefield reports stated that eighty-eight percent of all engagements were initiated by communist forces. Despite pouring in hundreds of thousands of US personnel, communist control over South Vietnam was increasing (Lederer 1968: 158-159, 186; Krepinevich 1986: 188-189; Nagl 2005: 157). Westmoreland's request for more forces, and his forecast that unless the US added enough troops to break the enemy the war would go on indefinitely, rattled the president and his civilian advisors. They increasingly sought alternatives (Davidson 1988: 431).

The Secretary of Defense, the Director of the CIA, and CORDS director Robert Komer argued that success could not be brought about via the destruction of enemy forces (Krepinevich 1986: 187; Sorley 1999: 7-10). McNamara argued that the president should level off the ground effort and work for a negotiated settlement based on more limited objectives that would end the US commitment. At the same time, the Joint Chiefs continued to argue for increased use of military force against Communist forces and warned against walking away (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 4, Chapter II 1971: 400-406; Davidson 1988: 393, 461-463; Gibbons 1995: 493; Nagl 2005: 163). The president, however, was determined to emphasize pacification (Davidson 1988: 454). It was the one area making slow but steady progress. Thanks to the American advisory effort, South Vietnamese forces were enjoying success on the pacification front (Davidson 1988: 431-432).

In response to increasing political pressure in support of pacification, the Joint Chiefs became willing to allow changes in the military doctrine of South Vietnamese forces. The JCS offered to devote a “substantial fraction” of the South Vietnamese Army to pacification. In exchange, the Chiefs hoped to retain control over such efforts and asked that pacification be placed under the control of MACV (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 4, Chapter II 1971: 371, 394; Krepinevich 1986: 185). President Johnson agreed. CORDS was placed within the MACV chain-of-command as a hybrid organization (*National Security Action Memorandum 362* 1967; *The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 2, Chapter VI 1971: 459-460; Hennessy 1997: 117-118).

In 1967, US Army doctrine and strategy continued to espouse the belief that the destruction of enemy forces represented the best method for achieving US national security objectives in Vietnam (Krepinevich 1986: 185). Nonetheless, the organization's inability to point to clear measures of success were raising serious concerns in Washington. So much so, that President Johnson pressed Army Chief of Staff General Johnson, "Who is the best soldier, who is your number one soldier in the Army?" When the Chief answered "Abrams," the president ordered Abrams sent to Vietnam as Deputy Commander MACV.⁴⁵ The president was prepared to try something new, even if the Army was not.

The Espousal Phase — TET and a Change of Command

"WAR HITS SAIGON!" was the afternoon headline in Washington, DC on January 31, 1968 (Karnow 1983: 525-527). Americans sat stunned at the sight of coordinated attacks throughout South Vietnam. That evening, fifty million Americans watched the Tet Offensive explode across their television screens (Karnow 1983: 523-527). Particularly disturbing, the sight of some four thousand communist attacking the capital of Saigon and surrounding the US embassy (Karnow 1983: 525-527). Having been assured by President Johnson and General Westmoreland that the US was achieving its objectives — many echoed the mood of Walter Cronkite when he asked, "What the

⁴⁵ Supposedly the Chief responded with "Fine, when?" To which LBJ answered, "Now." Upon arriving in Vietnam, Abrams would immediately set to work building up South Vietnamese forces and improving their ability to engage in the kinds of counterinsurgency operations called for by PROVN. Such changes also required innovation on the part of the South Vietnamese military — which had been modeled as a mirror image of American forces. See Davidson (1988: 432) and Sorley (1992: 193-196).

hell is going on? I thought we were winning the war” (Oberdorfer 1971: 158; LaFeber 1993: 257; Davidson 1988: 483; Goodspeed 2002: 35).

In South Vietnam, the US Army also was stunned by the attacks. Although intelligence reports indicated that a major enemy attack was imminent, its timing, size, and intensity surprised MACV. Westmoreland anticipated an attack, but expected it would focus on the northern border area of South Vietnam, and possibly the area around Saigon. He and his command staff did not foresee the possibility of nationwide coordinated attacks — such was “intellectually unacceptable to General Westmoreland” (Krepinevich 1986: 237-239; Davidson 1988: 478-479). For three days, Westmoreland was pinned down in his headquarters (Sorley 1992: 211-212).

Among civilian authorities in Washington, an “air of gloom” hung over discussions about the implications of Tet (Herring 2002: 233). In the first weeks of the crisis, Daniel Ellsberg at the Defense Department argued “the war is over; [our] aims are lost” (Rosen 1982: 101-102). President Johnson’s initial reaction was one of determination. To stave off defeat, the president offered Westmoreland whatever reinforcements and resources he might need (Herring 2002: 233-234). But the more typical reaction was one of reflection and reassessment. Clark Clifford, the designated incoming Secretary of Defense, began to assemble a senior council of ‘wise men’ to review US objectives and policy in Vietnam (Krepinevich 1986: 242; Davidson 1988: 510-525).

The Tet Offensive and its aftermath sparked a critical juncture crisis for US policy in Vietnam. Lasting from January to May, 1968, the crisis led to “the most soul-

searching debate within the administration about what course to take next in the whole history of the war” (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 4, Chapter I 1971: 260). There existed a brief opportunity to evaluate and perhaps change course. Yet, in the administration, in the military, among members of Congress, and among the general public — opinion was divided. Some supported cutting US losses and getting out. Others argued for a reaffirmed commitment to the stated national security objectives and the adoption of new strategies. Still others argued that success could best be secured through increased effort based on current operations.

At first, shocked as they were by Tet, most Americans rallied around the flag. A majority expressed support for the US war in Vietnam. In February 1968, only 24% of those polled supported withdrawing from Vietnam (Karnow 1983: 545-546). Westmoreland’s own optimistic reports, however, began to undercut public support (Small 1987: 191; Goodspeed 2002: 35; Herring 2002: 232-233). The apparent disconnect between Westmoreland’s arguments that Tet represented a victory for US forces and the images being presented in the media served to erode confidence in the war effort. Americans increasingly questioned the Army’s doctrine and strategy (Goodspeed 2002: 35).⁴⁶ As the fighting to push back the communist offensive continued, President Johnson’s popularity collapsed. Americans were abandoning the president. Yet most continued to support the stated US national security objectives in Vietnam (Guttman 1969: 57; Karnow 1983: 546). By April, however, Americans were increasingly

⁴⁶ American concerns about the how the war was being fought were only heightened by off hand comments such as this from an Army officer discussing the ‘liberation’ of the village of Ben Tre: “We had to destroy the town to save it.” See, Herring (2002: 233).

convinced the US was bogged down — only 34% of those polled approved of the way the war was being fought (Hennessy 1997: 134; Herring 2002: 243).

For Westmoreland and most of his subordinate generals at MACV, Tet was an opportunity — not a moment of doubt. Westmoreland saw the offensive as a chance to destroy large numbers of enemy forces. To that end, he submitted a request for reinforcements to blunt the attack and then regain the initiative through increased use of search and destroy operations (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 4, Chapter II 1971: 656; Krepinevich 1986: 239-245). Westmoreland hoped that the troop ceiling, currently set at 525,000, would be raised and that he would be able to carry the war into Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam as necessary. Westmoreland was so confident that the current crisis would expand the scope of his current operations, that in February he ordered his staff to draw up plans for increased offensive operations. For Westmoreland, the critical juncture brought by Tet was an opportunity to expand the use of existent doctrine (Davidson 1988: 499-500).

Like Westmoreland, the Joint Chiefs saw the crisis brought on by the communist offensive as an opportunity to redouble their efforts and expand the prosecution of the war via traditional doctrine. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Wheeler, presented the JCS' analysis of the situation. The Chiefs held that the existent doctrine was sound. What was needed, in their opinion, were more troops — specifically another 206,500 troops — in order to wrestle “control of the countryside from the enemy” (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 4, Chapter II 1971: 641-642; Krepinevich 1986: 241, 244-245; Davidson 1988: 501-509, 514-515; Nagl 2005: 168).

The JCS' assessment, however, had a secondary motivation. General Wheeler sought to exploit the crisis as a mechanism for forcing the president to call up the reserves (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 4, Chapter II 1971: 406; Nagl 2005: 167). Wheeler had pressed for such an activation. But thus far the president had refused (Davidson 1988: 504). Now, Wheeler hoped to trap Johnson. To force the president's hand, the Chairman portrayed the situation in Vietnam as dire. Wheeler informed President Johnson that Westmoreland's position might collapse. The only way, argued Wheeler, to avoid battlefield defeat was to mobilize the reserves (Karnow 1983: 551-552; Davidson 1988: 519-520).

Civilians in the Defense Department responded to Tet with a complete review of the Army's strategy. The initial assessment held that existent doctrine had led to an ill-conceived focus on large unit, firepower intensive warfare aimed at the destruction of enemy forces. Their assessment argued that even with the provision of additional troops, such an approach was unlikely to bring about success. The assessment went on to explicitly call for a change in strategy — one fashioned on counterinsurgency doctrine (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 4, Chapter II 1971: 445-449; Krepinevich 1986: 240-243; Davidson 1988: 509-514, 516-520; Herring 2002; 236-237).

Clark Clifford, the incoming Secretary of Defense was shocked by the assessment of his civilian staff. Clifford also was shocked by Wheeler and the JCS' insistence that existent doctrine and additional resources would produce victory. In an attempt to bridge the difference, he ordered a second, less controversial assessment of the situation (Krepinevich 1986: 245-246). In addition, Clifford put together a collection of 'wise

men' — senior statesmen, military officers, and other experts — to audit the military's performance and vet possible solutions to the current crisis. The group included Dean Acheson, George Ball, Cyrus Vance, General of the Army Omar Bradley, General Maxwell Taylor, General Matthew Ridgeway, McGeorge Bundy, Henry Cabot Lodge and others. The group failed to develop a consensus opinion. Some supported the initial assessment of the civilians in the Defense Department, others supported the position of the Chiefs and Westmoreland. The Secretary of Defense failed to offer the president clear guidance one way or another (Schandler 1977: 241; Krepinevich 1986: 247-248; Davidson 1988: 522-525; Herring 2002: 238, 249-250).

Congress reacted to the crisis with shock and anger. Republicans and Democrats demanded to know what had gone wrong and insisted that Congress be part of any decisions concerning escalation of the war. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held hearings, using such as an opportunity to voice discontent with the administration's policies in South Vietnam. Members of the House of Representatives sponsored a resolution calling for a full review of US policy (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 4, Chapter II 1971: 294; Herring 2002: 242; Hall 2004: 15). But there was no clear consensus about whether or if US policy and military doctrine ought to change.

President Johnson's reaction to the Tet Offensive was to dig in. The president offered Westmoreland additional troops. He informed the Joint Chiefs that any requests for additional men and materials would be met. First and foremost, defeat was to be avoided at all costs (Karnow 1983: 549). The president also reaffirmed US commitment to the national security objectives for which the war was being fought — a free and

independent South Vietnam (Herring 2002: 251). But as the crisis wore on, and as public and congressional support began to evaporate, LBJ became increasingly frustrated and unable to discern a clear path forward (Morris 1977: 44; Herring 2002: 241-250). Deluged by the stark choices put before him by the JCS and by Clifford's 'wise men,' President Johnson attempted to forge a consensus that did not exist. When that failed, the president attempted to hedge against all outcomes. He relieved Westmoreland (by making him Army Chief of Staff). He placed Abrams in command of MACV. He pressed for a diplomatic solution. All of this he did while announcing his own intention to forgo reelection. Yet, the president took these actions without espousing support for a new strategy in Vietnam or reaffirming the existing one (LaFeber 1993: 257-258; Herring 2002: 251-252).

Creighton Abrams responded to the Tet Offensive by taking on the management of the US and South Vietnamese counter attack. Westmoreland ordered Abrams to establish a forward command post to insure Abrams' ability to direct the military response to the offensive (Sorley 1992: 212). Abrams had spent his time since arriving in Vietnam building up the capability of South Vietnamese forces. Abrams also had worked to discretely shift the military operations of South Vietnamese and US commands toward the principle of population security — as called for in PROVN (Sorley 1992: 201-202, 211-212, 218 and 1999: 11-12; Nagl 2005: 168-169). Given that the Tet Offensive was aimed at cities throughout South Vietnam, Abrams went about making sure US and South Vietnamese forces put into practice those techniques necessary for repelling the communists and protecting civilians (Blaufarb 1977: 264-265; Herring 2002: 257).

By June 1968, the critical juncture crisis brought on by the Tet Offensive had passed. MACV had a new commander, General Creighton Abrams. With the selection of Abrams, the Army ostensibly had a new doctrine and strategy for how to win the war. The crisis had presented an opportunity to change course. From the president there had been no clearly espoused argument or support for how, or even to what degree, the US ought to pursue its national security objectives in Vietnam.

The Implementation Phase — Abrams versus the Generals

When he took command of MACV on 01 July 1968, Creighton Abrams had more combat experience than any general in the Army (Sorley 1992: 193-194). Most contemporary observers, therefore, expected little change from the traditional doctrine and strategy of his predecessor ("The War: Changing of the Guard" 1968; Sorley 1992: 232). Yet as a result of PROVN, Abrams believed existent doctrine unsuited for the achievement of US national security objectives in Vietnam. Abrams held that large unit, firepower intensive tactics aimed at the destruction of enemy forces could neither secure military success — nor the “object which lies beyond this war” (*PROVN* 1966: v, 100, 103; Sorley 1999: 9-12). According to historian Lewis Sorley, once Abrams took command, he sought to change “what he could — everything that he could” (Sorley 1999: 30). General Abrams immediately tried to implement the innovations called for in PROVN (Lewy 1978: 137; Krepinevich 1986: 252-253; Sorley 1992: 233; Sorley 1999: 17-18).

It quickly became clear that Abrams intended to implement major innovations. Shortly after taking command, during a briefing in which the MACV staff was reviewing the campaign plan for the upcoming year, a briefer put up a mission statement that read “seek out and destroy the enemy.” Such a statement represented the objective of traditional doctrine, it was that objective that had been emphasized by Westmoreland. Abrams immediately interrupted. MACV’s new commander rose from his chair and walked forward to an easel. There Abrams slowly wrote out, and said aloud: “The mission is NOT to seek out and destroy the enemy. The mission is to provide protection for the people of Vietnam” (Sorley 1992: 233, 237 — emphasis added).

Although Abrams’ innovations came as a shock to MACV, he had been discretely attempting to implement PROVN’s recommendations long before he officially assumed command. Since his May 1967 arrival as Deputy Commander, Abrams had moved to apply the innovations called for in PROVN. In an attempt to protect the civilian population, Abrams reduced the use of artillery in populated areas by reducing the allocation of munitions. This forced subordinate commanders to curtail their use of harassment and interdiction fire — a primary source of US inflicted civilian casualties (Komer 1970: 106; Sorley 1992: 11). At times, Abrams’ actions to reduce the indiscriminate use of firepower created confusion within the Army. Early in the Tet Offensive, Abrams and Westmoreland gave contradictory orders regarding the use of artillery during a battle occurring around the Y-Bridge near Saigon (Herring 1993: 106; Sorley 1999: 28). Such incidents confused subordinate commanders. It raised questions regarding the proper strategy and priorities of their mission. As a result, many

commanders fell back to the conventional wisdom supplied by traditional doctrine and continued to employ massive amounts of firepower (Sorley 1999: 124; Nagl 2005: 175-176).

As Deputy Commander of MACV, Abrams pushed to increase the counterinsurgency efficacy of South Vietnamese forces (Lewy 1978: 133-134). Because South Vietnam's armed forces lacked the ability to engage in large unit search-and-destroy missions, they had been shunted aside by Westmorland and the JCS (Blaufarb 1977: 252-253). Based on PROVN's conceptualization of the war as an insurgency, Abrams considered the role of South Vietnam's military of vital importance. Upon his arrival in May 1967, Abrams set out to increase the "foxhole strength" of the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN). He worked to secure better weapons and equipment for ARVN. Abrams also made it a point to refocus ARVN's training in favor of the small unit tactics called for by counterinsurgency doctrine. South Vietnamese forces had been created as a mirror image of US forces, but Abrams altered their training — emphasizing counterinsurgency over traditional doctrine (*PROVN*, Volume I 1966; Abrams 1967; "The War: Changing of the Guard" 1968: 22; Krepinevich 1986: 23-25; Davidson 1988: 605-607; Colby and McCargar 1989: 212-213; Sorley 1992: 200-201; Sorley 1999: 11-12, 19, 72-73, 165; Nagl 2005: 168-169).

During his tenure as Deputy Commander, Abrams worked to shift the thinking of American forces in the field. He attempted to highlight the performance gaps resulting from existent doctrine. Abrams also encouraged subordinates to take a more holistic approach to the war by emphasizing mission over doctrine (Sorley 1999: 33, 55). At a

conference of MACV commanders in 1967, Abrams informed the assembled officers that they must adjust their conceptualization of the war. General Westmoreland viewed the war as being comprised of two components — one military, one political. General Abrams, however, argued that the Army was fighting but ‘one war’ in which the military and political aspects were intertwined (Palmer 1984: 63-64, 185; Sorley 1999: 59, 94-95; Nagl 2005: 169).

At the commanders conference, Abrams again presented the PROVN argument that Vietnam represented an insurgent struggle. He told his audience that they could not win via the use of military force alone. Abrams stressed the need to be cognizant of how combat actions affect the political situation — and thus the Army’s ability to achieve US objectives. Abrams made such messages a theme of his, one he stressed repeatedly within MACV. To help spread his innovation gospel, Abrams had some of those familiar with PROVN assigned to Vietnam — among them, Lieutenant Colonel Donald Marshall who would manage MACV’s longterm planning processes (*PROVN*, Volume I 1966; Sorley 1992: 201-202, 234; Sorley 1999: 4-5, 19).

Once he ascended to the position of Commander MACV, Abrams pushed hard to right the war effort by putting into effect PROVN’s innovations. As Commander MACV, Abrams attempted to shift Army doctrine away from its traditional emphasis on the destruction of enemy forces via large unit firepower intensive tactics ("One War — MACV Command Overview, 1968-1971" 1971; Lewy 1978: 137; Sorley 1999: 22; Nagl 2005: 169; Lock-Pullan 2006: 38). In its place, he sought to implement a counterinsurgency doctrine based upon the protection of the civilian population and

operationalized through the use of small unit tactics and restrained firepower.⁴⁷ Abrams continued to use the 'one war' concept as a means for presenting MACV with the need for innovation as well as instructions regarding how to implement such ("One War — MACV Command Overview, 1968-1972 — Status Report" 1972; Lipsman and Doyle 1983: 76; Davidson 1988: 609-610; Sorley 1999: 23; Sorley 2004: 152; Nagl 2005: 169-172).⁴⁸

Creighton Abrams' attempts to implement major innovations occurred primarily via top-down management of the US Army in Vietnam. Through the use of meetings with subordinate commanders, weekly briefings, travels into the field, and by moving forces and reallocating supplies, Abrams sought to implement innovation by redirecting the Army's efforts.

The Weekly Intelligence Estimate Updates (WIEU) and other command briefings provided regular opportunities for Abrams to try to convince subordinate commanders of the need to shift the operational center of gravity away from the destruction of enemy forces to the protection of the civilian population (Sorley 1999: 36-38, 60-61; Sorley

⁴⁷ As part of implementation of counterinsurgency doctrine, Abrams continued to press for increases in the capabilities of South Vietnam's military. Unlike Westmoreland, Abrams stressed, and over time, increased the number of joint US-South Vietnamese operations. See, "One War — MACV Command Overview, 1968-1971" 1971: Nagl 2005; 170. Military historians have debated the degree to which Abrams truly attempted to innovate doctrine. Those contend that he in fact maintained Westmoreland's emphasis on large unit firepower intensive tactics often point to the use of B-52 strikes or ground operations such as those launched against Sihanoukville. What such arguments miss is this: such operations were designed to target communist supply points or bases. They were strikes against enemy resources, not forces. In addition, they occurred in locations far removed from the South Vietnamese forces. Furthermore, many of the large unit operations or attacks that occurred during Abrams tenure were directed by the White House by Alexander Haig and others — often bypassing Abrams and the Army. See, Davidson (1988: 595-601) and Sorley (1999; 21).

⁴⁸ Abrams argued that the 'one war' concept had three components, a point he still found necessary to stress more than a year after taking command. At a Weekly Intelligence Estimate Briefing in August 1969, he once again had the argument laid out for subordinate commanders. "This is our concept. We call it the 'one war' concept. It has three principal objectives: the achievement of pacification, the improvement of the RVNAF [Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces] (not only in modernization of their equipment, but effectively employing it), and combat operations itself." See, Sorley (2004; 242).

2004). The meetings followed a familiar pattern. Abrams would highlight the need to innovate by citing the objectives and mission of the United States as well as the ongoing performance gap. He would then make a clear statement regarding what was needed. He would then acknowledge the difficulty of innovation. Finally, Abrams would acknowledge those units that were successfully innovating and single out those that continued to employ traditional doctrine (Sorley 1999: 104, 134-136; Sorley 2004).

Abrams also attempted to reorientate the Army and bring about innovation by issuing new orders and operational guidance (Sorley 1999: 88-89). Abrams restricted the use of firepower under all but the most explicit conditions.⁴⁹ When subordinate commands started reinterpreting his orders to continue using massive amounts of firepower, the general issued follow-on orders forbidding the reinterpretation of his instructions and requiring his personal approval before deviating from the new rules of engagement (Lewy 1978: 235; Sorley 1999: 28-29, 219-221).

Abrams sought to implement doctrinal innovation by reallocating resources and refocusing operations. To emphasize the protection of the South Vietnamese population, Abrams made the area around Saigon, as well as the other population areas long the coast, the focus of US Army operations. This shifted the bulk of the US war effort to the ten percent of South Vietnamese territory that contained eighty percent of the population (Kissinger 1969: 212; Krepinevich 1986: 166; Sorley 1999: 25-27, 56). In addition, Abrams increased military operations targeting the communist infrastructure in South Vietnam. In both population security and the targeting of the communists' insurgent

⁴⁹ General Abrams informed MACV subordinate commands, "Counterfires must be directed only in self-defense and against targets which are attacking friendly forces . . . exercise extreme caution in order to avoid exceeding this authority." See, Abrams (1968) and Sorley (1999: 56-57).

infrastructure, Abrams emphasized small unit military operations at the district level (Sorley 1999: 54; Sorley 2004: 168-169). Finally, Abrams reserved large scale operations for use against North Vietnamese logistics — against supply points within South Vietnam and across the border in North Vietnam and Laos (Sorley 1999: 42, 88; Nagl 2005: 170).⁵⁰

Abrams also sought to implement doctrinal innovation through the use of the planning process. Through the development of the “1969 MACV Objectives Plan” and the “One War: MACV Command Overview, 1968-1972,” Abrams hoped the MACV staff and subordinate commands would internalize and implement his innovations. Each plan was built upon the PROVN innovations. During planning processes, Abrams encouraged commanders to intertwine military and civilian approaches and to develop their own pacification strategies. So long as they modeled the concepts, Abrams informed his subordinates that there was “no restriction against overfulfilling [sic]” (“One War — MACV Command Overview, 1968-1971” 1971; “One War — MACV Command Overview, 1968-1972 — Status Report” 1972; Davidson 1988: 609-610, 613-614; Krepinevich 1986: 253-254; Sorley 1999: 66, 113, 123-124).⁵¹

Abrams attempts at innovation were met with pockets of success. Some occurred quite quickly. In April 1968, subunits of the 101st Airborne Division successfully used intelligence provided by South Vietnamese provincial forces to target the communist infrastructure in the villages around Hué. Instead of relying on traditional airpower and

⁵⁰ To make his point about the importance of targeting the communists logistics systems, and to contrast it with attacks against enemy forces, Abrams often made a point to stress rice interdiction. He also stressed the interdiction and measurement of other supplies as a means of communicating his ‘one war’ innovations. See, Sorley (2004: 150-154).

⁵¹ Abrams relied on Lieutenant Colonel Donald Marshall, who had been a member of the group that developed PROVN and who Abrams had assigned to MACV, to guide these processes.

artillery, units of the 101st partnered with South Vietnamese forces to patrol the area — eventually convincing many of the communists to surrender (Lewy 1978: 135-136; Nagl 2005: 169). By August 1968, the 1st Cavalry Division was also operating in company size units and engaging in counterinsurgency (Sorley 1999: 20-21, 30). However, such successes had limited effect.

Most of MACV's subordinate commands failed to implement Abrams' doctrinal innovations ("Mechanized and Armor Combat Operations in Vietnam." 1967; Blaufarb 1977: 288; Lewy 1978: 138-139; Doughty 1979; Sorley 1999: 134-136; Nagl 2005: 175-176). Subordinate commanders often did not see the merits of such, failed to understand what was being asked of them, or simply refused (Lewy 1978: 138-144).

Lieutenant General Julian Ewell provides the best example of such recalcitrance. First as 9th Division Commander and then as II Field Force Commander, Ewell ignored Abrams' attempts to innovate doctrine. At command conferences and briefings, Ewell openly challenged the logic of the PROVN innovations.⁵² In the field, he continued to rely on massive amounts of firepower followed by search-and-destroy operations (Lewy 1978: 143; Krepinevich 1986: 254-255; Sorley 1999: 60-61; Nagl 2005: 172). Even those that

⁵² One of the clearest examples of the difficulty Abrams had in convincing Ewell to change his approach to the war can be seen in an exchange the two had during a weekly briefing for subordinate commanders in June 1969. Abrams had been lecturing Ewell (and the others) on the need to protect civilians and avoid the indiscriminate use of lethal force. The discussion has centered itself on how to treat suspected communist sympathizers. Ewell: "Anybody stealing gas is a VC [Viet Cong] sympathizer. You knock off about five and the rate of stealing in that general area will go down precipitously." Lieutenant General Frank Mildren, then Abrams' Deputy Commander, responded: "Yeah, but you can't shoot people for petty larceny." Ewell: "Bullshit." This prompted Abrams: "Now wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute." Ewell: "If you have a pipeline, you put out rules that people aren't supposed to steal gas . . . and that we're going to get these VC that are doing it and just shoot them." Abrams: "You've got to think about these people here. Christ these people have been shot at for the last twenty years! I don't — going out there and killing a few of them is not, in my opinion, going to have the effect." Ewell: "Well, I don't agree with you, General." Abrams went on to stress that to win the US needed to inflict less terror on the civilian population than that which was being inflicted upon them by the communists. Abrams also stressed how such behavior would be perceived by the American press and public. Neither argument seemed to have any effect on Ewell. See, Sorley (2004: 212-213).

did attempt to implement innovation often slid back to the tenets of traditional doctrine in the heat of battle or in the face of political pressure to reduce US casualties. This was the case with the 101st Airborne Division. In May 1969, a little over a year after successfully innovating doctrine, the unit slid back into the traditional use of large unit firepower intensive doctrine in its assault on Hill 937 — the infamous “Hamburger Hill.”⁵³

The Army’s incentive system and hierarchy retarded efforts to innovate. The Army’s promotion and evaluation system continued to favor traditional doctrine (Komer 1986: 70-74; Krepinevich 1986: 260; Baritz 1991; Nagl 2005: 171).⁵⁴ Soldiers and units continued to be evaluated based on how well they performed the tasks of traditional doctrine, not on the basis of how well they accomplished a specific mission (Gallucci 1975: 126-127; Fisher 1994: 324-342). As a result, the destruction of enemy forces and body counts continued to be privileged over the protection of civilians and the restrained use of firepower (Thompson 1990: 25; Sorley 1999: 22; Lock-Pullan 2006: 34).

The Army’s own structural hierarchy trapped Abrams. His subordinates acted as gatekeepers. If he failed to convince his corps and division commanders to innovate, he effectively lost the opportunity to innovate at the company, brigade, and battalion levels below.⁵⁵ At the same time, his superiors undermined MACV’s institutional learning.

⁵³ In response to the political outcry from Hamburger Hill, President Nixon pressured the Army to avoid US casualties. This further reinforced traditional doctrine as commanders sought to use firepower to protect their own troops at the expense of South Vietnamese civilians, pacification, and the stated objectives of the United States. See, Blaufarb (1977: 252-253; Lewy 1978: 144-145; Krepinevich 1986: 256-257; Davidson 1988: 614-615; Nagl 2005: 172-173). Abrams also was livid over the incident — as he also was on the continued overuse of search-and-destroy tactics. See, Sorley (1999: 135).

⁵⁴ Furthermore, as Baritz (1991: 330) notes, starting in 1962, promotion decisions came to rest with the JCS. This effectively allowed Westmoreland to undermine innovation and support traditional doctrine by controlling career advancement.

⁵⁵ Often junior officers at the brigade level (far below Abrams’ immediate subordinates) recognized the performance gap and the Army’s inability to innovate. But they were cut off from Abrams and perhaps unaware of his attempts to change doctrine. See, Jenkins (1970), Lewy (1979: 138-144), and Nagl (2005: 172).

When Abrams requested that tour-of-duty rotations be based on units rather than individuals, General Westmoreland (then Army Chief of Staff) refused. As a result, personnel were constantly joining and then exiting units in the field. This prevented the build up and transfer of the actionable knowledge necessary for innovation. As the Army turned over individual by individual each year, Abrams had to reteach the same lessons about counterinsurgency doctrine (Sorley 1999: 129-130, 191-192, 288; Lock-Pullan 2006: 35).

The rotation system and interference on the part of his superiors made Abrams reluctant to fire subordinate commanders who failed to innovate. Unlikely to receive support from Westmoreland, Abrams hesitated to relieve corps and division commanders who refused to abide by his orders. Abrams also hesitated because he feared replacement commanders would be equally unwilling to innovate, thus forcing him to restart his attempts to implement doctrinal change within a given unit (Lewy 1978: 138-139; Sorley 1999: 192).

The White House also complicated Abrams' attempts to innovate Army doctrine. Individuals like Alexander Haig and Henry Kissinger attempted to direct MACV operations to serve their political agendas. At times, this forced Abrams to engage in operations based on traditional doctrine. The starkest example of this was the White House's push for MACV to engage "the headquarters for the entire Communist military operations in South Vietnam" believed by Haig and Kissinger to be in Cambodia (Karnow 1983: 589; Davidson 1988: 595-601; Sorley 1999: 107, 125-126, 203-205, 230,

262-263; Sorley 2004: 437).⁵⁶ Such occurrences undermined Abrams' attempts at innovation by sending mixed messages to subordinate commanders about the need for innovation and expectations regarding their implementation. Additionally, the Nixon administration increasingly moved to reduce the resources being supplied to the US Army in Vietnam — despite promises to the contrary and public statements in support of US national security objectives and Abrams' conduct of the war. Troop withdrawal rates were increasingly driven by domestic politics rather than national security objectives or military operations (Kissinger 1979: 267-277; Karnow 1983: 598; Davidson 1988: 601; Hennessy 1997: 144; Sorley 1999: 112-130, 235, 237).

Attempts to implement major innovations in US Army doctrine during the war in Vietnam effectively ended in 1972. Creighton Abrams was reassigned from Saigon to Washington so that he could assume the post of Army Chief of Staff. Although his replacement, Frederick Weyand, supported innovation — by then it was too late. The US' national security objective had changed. The US simply wanted out — the need for innovation had evaporated (Palmer 1984: 118; Sorley 1999: 6, 214-216; Nagl 2005: 174).

Shortcomings of Traditional Explanations

That the Army failed to innovate doctrine during the Vietnam War seems surprising for several reasons. First, senior members of the organization were aware of a performance failure likely to result in defeat. Second, within the organization there existed concrete recommendations regarding how to address this gap. Third, there

⁵⁶ Regarding the targeting of communist headquarters in South Vietnam, MACV tried unsuccessfully to convince the White House that the communist leadership was not located in a specific location, but in fact was spread out over some one hundred square kilometers of jungle.

existed in Creighton Abrams a respected general who sought to innovate doctrine in pursuit of the US' stated national security objectives. Given this, and the blood, time, and resources the US spent in Vietnam, the Army's failure to innovate in an attempt to stave off defeat is puzzling.⁵⁷

Traditional arguments about military innovation suggest four potential explanations for the failure to innovate during Vietnam. Two of the arguments rest upon perceptions of the international balance of power, one based on the perceptions of civilian authorities (an external argument, resting on events and variables outside to the organization), and one based on the perceptions of those within the Army itself (an internal argument).⁵⁸ A third traditional explanation rests upon the degree to which civilian authorities pushed for doctrinal innovation (a second external argument).⁵⁹ The final potential explanation offered by traditional arguments relies on the degree to which incentives within the Army supported innovation (a second internal argument).⁶⁰ None of these traditional arguments offer a satisfactory explanations for this case.

Arguments about the effects of the perceived balance of power turn on the relative importance of South Vietnam as a US national security objective. At issue is this: was innovation viewed by either civilian authorities or the uniformed military as unnecessary, even unwise, given that the US' overriding national security objective was the

⁵⁷ Both Posen (1984) and Rosen (1991) argue that major doctrinal innovation will rarely occur during wartime. Posen contends that such is the case because of the potentially disastrous effects of such an attempt. Rosen concludes that the time frame is too short to allow for major innovation. Both arguments lack face validity in Vietnam. The Army was on the ground in South Vietnam for close to a quarter century. Furthermore, the *failure* to innovate was recognized as likely to result in strategic defeat.

⁵⁸ The externally derived version of this argument follows the logic of Posen (1984), the internally derived version that of Rosen (1991).

⁵⁹ Based on the logic of Posen (1984).

⁶⁰ Based on the logic of Rosen (1991).

containment of Russia, not North Vietnam? The essential question in evaluating such explanations, whether taken from the external or internal perspective, is this: can the failure to innovate be explained by Cold War concerns regarding the power of the Soviet Union? The answer is no.

Starting with the administration of Harry Truman, every president linked the fate of South Vietnam with America's Cold War struggle. In June 1950, President Harry Truman informed the American public that he was accelerating the provision of military assistance to French forces fighting in Indochina. Furthermore, he was dispatching a military mission to "provide close working relations with those forces." The president argued that such actions were vital to the containment of the Soviet threat (Truman 1950). An argument that would be repeated by Truman's successors (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 1, Chapter II 1971: 53-75; LaFeber 1993: 161-163; Crane 2002: 10-11).

By the early 1960s, US interest in an independent South Vietnam had an established pedigree among civilian authorities. It was part of the general containment policy borne out of NSC-68 (Dulles 1958; Eisenhower 1959; *The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 1, Chapter I 1971: 29-42; Rotter 1987: 29-31, 204-205; LaFeber 1993: 96-97, 191, 248-249; Herring 2002: 137). Civilian authorities in each presidential administration, and within the Defense and State departments, held that an independent South Vietnam was key to maintaining Western access to raw materials in Southeast Asia and demonstrating US resolve (Kennedy 1956; Schlesinger 1965: 548; Geyelin 1966: 34-40; *The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 3, Appendices - "United States Policy in Vietnam" Statement by Robert McNamara in Department of State Bulletin of 13 April

1964” 1971: 712-715; Schaller 1982; Rotter 1987: 35-48, 127-140; LaFeber 1993: 234-235; Herring 2002: 18-20). The issue of resolve, and the US’ ability to respond to “wars of national liberation,” became acute after Nikita Khrushchev’s January 1961 speech declaring the Soviet Union’s support for such conflicts. From the early 1950s through the late 1960s, civilian perceptions that South Vietnam represented a vital US interest increased (Blaufarb 1977: 52-55; Hennessy 1997: 14-15; Gaddis 1999: 223).

Like their civilian counterparts, members of the uniformed military believed South Vietnam to be vital to American Cold War efforts. By August 1950, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had concluded that Indochina was the key to Southeast Asia, and Vietnam the key to Indochina (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 1, Chapter II 1971: 53-75; Bowman 1981: 13). That same month, a Military Assistance Advisory Group for Vietnam (MAAGV) was established. The US military was on the ground in Vietnam (Krepinevich 1986: 18; Rotter 1987: 210; Nagl 2005: 118). Furthermore, the JCS held that maintaining a free and independent South Vietnam was vital to checking the spread of communism throughout Asia and into the Pacific (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 1, Chapter I 1971: 204; *The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 2, Chapter I 1971: 54-55, 81. Thus the defense of South Vietnam was seen as pivotal in the protection of Japan, and Japan’s post-World War II reintegration with the nations that had traditionally supplied it with rice, raw materials, and markets (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 1, Appendices - “Memorandum from General Omar Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense on the Strategic Assessment of Southeast Asia, 10 April 1950” 1971: 363-366; Porter (Volume 2) 1979: 235-246; Davidson 1988: 316; Herring 2002: 18-20). For the

US military, South Vietnam also represented a pivotal commitment on the part of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) — the Asian version of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). For the military, South Vietnam was vital to stopping the Soviets' expanding arc of influence in Asia (Demma 1989).

By the time John Kennedy was sworn into office, the importance of South Vietnam to the outcome of the Cold War was accepted wisdom by both civilian authorities and the uniformed military. US objectives in Vietnam had become clear and were often referenced in national security documents (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 1, Chapter II 1971: 53-75; LaFeber 1993: 161-163).

It remains the central object of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported Communist conspiracy. The test of all decisions and US actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contributions to this purpose.⁶¹

From this special commitment came the tasking and orders that sent US soldiers into South Vietnam — first as advisors, then as combatants. The Army's mission would be based on plans developed through interagency work between the executive branch and the JCS. Starting in the 1960s, the Army would be tasked with actively bringing about the security, economic, and social programs needed to keep South Vietnam free and independent of communist rule ("NSC 6012: US Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia."

⁶¹ *National Security Action Memorandum 263 1963; National Security Action Memorandum 273 1963*

1960; *The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 1, Chapter V 1971: 242-269; *The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 2, Chapter I 1971: 40-98; *The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 3, Appendices - “‘South Vietnam’ Memorandum for the President by Robert McNamara dated 16 March 1964” 1971: 496-499; Ball (October 1964 Memo) 1972; Gaddis 1999: 220). In short, the Army was charged with, and gladly accepted, the mission of keeping “South Vietnamese territory from Red hands” (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 3, Appendices — “Working Group Draft, ‘Action for South Vietnam,’ 2nd Draft, McNaughton, 6 November 1964” 1971: 598-601).

The Cold War balance of power is what made South Vietnam a vital national security objective. Contemporaries viewed the maintenance of a free and independent South Vietnam as vital to the Cold War balance of power and global struggle against communism. Civilian and military perceptions of the international balance of power and the Cold War were catalysts for innovation — not resistors to it.

The third potential explanation provided by traditional arguments concerns the degree to which civilian authorities pushed for doctrinal innovation. It too fails to provide a satisfactory explanation regarding innovation during Vietnam.

Beginning in the 1950s, civilian authorities pressured the military to innovate doctrine in South Vietnam. As early as 1954, (then) Secretary of State John Foster Dulles clashed with the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding the need to train South Vietnamese forces for tasks specific to the provision of internal security (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 1, Chapter IV 1971: 215-241). By the early 1960s civilian concerns about the fungibility of military forces had grown. Roger Hilsman, director of the State Department’s Bureau of

Intelligence and Research, challenged the JCS' assumptions regarding the validity of traditional doctrine, "In my judgment, it is nonsense to think that regular forces trained for conventional war can handle jungle guerillas adequately" (Hilsman 1962: 25-29).⁶² No one, however, was a greater advocate for the development of counterinsurgency capabilities than John Kennedy himself.

Such civilian pressure increased significantly from the moment President Kennedy was sworn into office. Through the use of National Security Action Memorandums, speeches, and the establishment of a Special Group on Counterinsurgency, President Kennedy pressed for increases in the Army's counterinsurgency capabilities (*National Security Action Memorandum 2* 1961; *National Security Action Memorandum 52* 1961; Blaufar 1977: 52-74; Krepinevich 1986: 30-31; Nagl 2005: 124-125; Tierney 2006: 236-237). The Army quickly responded by adding chapters on counterinsurgency to its field manuals, by drafting new manuals on guerilla tactics, and by adding such to its training regimen (Krepinevich 1986: 39; Nagl 2005: 125-126; Tierney 2006: 238-239). Yet such changes were superficial at best — a point illustrated by General Earle Wheeler, (then) Army Chief of Staff. Even after being forced to pay lip service to counterinsurgency, Wheeler continued to argue: "despite the fact that the conflict is conducted as guerrilla warfare... [the war in Vietnam] is nonetheless a military action" (Nagl 2005: 127; Tierney 2006: 242-243). The Army continued to privilege the assumptions of its existent doctrine (Blaufar 1977: 75-82; Doughty 1979: 25-26; Krepinevich 1986: 35-55; Summers 1989; Nagl 2005: 116). The traditional

⁶² Hilsman had served in the Office of Strategic Services during World War II and had participated in guerrilla operations in Burma. See, Posen (1982: 89), Krepinevich (1986: 36), Hennessy (1997: 19), and Nagl (2005: 125).

argument that civilian intervention brings about innovations in military doctrine fails to explain the outcome in Vietnam.

The final potential explanation offered by traditional arguments relies on the degree to which incentives within the Army supported, or in this case failed to support, innovation. During the Vietnam War, the Army's professional incentive system worked against innovation.

From an individual perspective, incentives based on traditional doctrine worked against innovation. In the early 1960s, Army doctrine was dominated by two concepts. The first was a belief that success was achieved via the destruction of enemy forces. This was the lesson the service chose to learn from its own history, especially its recent experiences in two World Wars and Korea. The second concept was a belief that through the use of high volumes of American firepower, US casualties could be minimized (Krepinevich 1986: 5; Nagl 2005: 44-49). Within the Army, this second point was often expressed with the colloquial: "better to send a bullet than a man" (Krepinevich 1986: 6). By the early 1960s, these core assumptions underpinned a doctrine that privileged large unit, firepower intensive tactics aimed at the destruction of enemy forces (Krepinevich 1986: 6-7; Nagl 2005: 15-19, 44-49).⁶³ Individuals were advanced through the ranks and given assignments based on their ability to carryout tasks derived from traditional

⁶³ This notion is illustrated by the Army's 1923 Field Service Regulations which include the following passage: "The ultimate objective of all military operations is the destruction of the enemy's armed forces by battle. Decisive defeat in battle breaks the enemy's will to war and forces him to sue for peace" — "Field Service Regulations United States Army 1923" 1924. This concept routinely appeared in Army field manuals through the 21st century. For example, the 2002 version of FM 3-21 The Role of the Mechanized Infantry Rifle Platoon states that "the only way to gain the decision in battle is by close combat between ground forces." The 1996 edition of FM 17-15 Tank Platoon puts it this way: "The fundamental mission of the tank platoon is to close with and destroy the enemy." Even FM 10-115 Quartermaster Water Units (from 1989) communicates the notion that enemy forces are the doctrinal center of gravity. FM 10-115 notes that even water supply units "must be able to engage and delay enemy forces until supporting forces arrive."

doctrine. In Vietnam, the Army's incentive structure continued to reward officers for carrying out these tasks — even if they failed to produce victory (Fisher 1994: 324-342; Sorley 1999: 22).

From an organizational perspective, faith in traditional doctrine's ability to produce victory under any circumstance established a self reinforcing logic (Weigley 1977: 443, 449). Previous successes were viewed as providing an incentive for evaluating new conflicts in accordance with traditional assumptions. The Army entered South Vietnam in the 1950s with the intent of assisting in the development of conventional forces capable of deterring foreign aggression (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 1, Chapter IV 1971: 215-241; *The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 2, Chapter VI 1971: 408-514; Nagl 2005: 120-124). By 1960, however, it was clear that the conflict in Vietnam was in fact a different kind of war — that it was in fact an insurgent struggle (“National Intelligence Estimate Number 63-59: Prospects for North and South Vietnam.” 1959).

In response, the Joint Chiefs of Staff developed a counterinsurgency plan for Vietnam. The plan, finalized in 1961, called for increases in South Vietnam's armed forces. Most of the South Vietnamese troop increase, however, would come about via the activation of three infantry regiments — not from counterinsurgent forces. Although the plan called for counterinsurgency training, none was provided. Instead, US forces trained their South Vietnamese counterparts in unconventional warfare — the use of special operations directed against enemy forces, not the pacification of civilian populations (*The*

Pentagon Papers, Volume 1, Chapter V 1971: 242-269, 314-346; Krepinevich 1986: 24-26; Collins 1991: 12-13, 17-20; Nagl 2005: 119-120).

Despite the recognized insurgent nature of the war, Army doctrine went unquestioned (Komer 1986). There was no perceived need. As General George Decker noted, “any good soldier can handle guerrillas” (Blaufar 1977: 80; Krepinevich 1986: 37; Nagl 2005: 120). Counterinsurgency was approached in regard to how it supported large unit, firepower intensive tactics aimed at the destruction of enemy forces (Blaufar 1977: 75-82; Doughty 1979: 25-26; Krepinevich 1986: 35-55; Summers 1989; Nagl 2005: 116). During the Vietnam War, a self referential logic based on past victories incentivized adherence to traditional doctrine.

Although traditional arguments about the role of incentives appear to explain the lack of innovation in Vietnam, such arguments are not entirely satisfactory. They fail to provide an explicit causal argument about how incentives support or inhibit innovation. It remains unclear as to how incentives alone shape the processing of information or decision making. Furthermore, such arguments fail to take into account the existence of various incentives and the manner in which rewards are determined and distributed (Clark and Wilson 1961; Cohen 1984: 436-440). Multiple incentives existed for both individuals and the organization in Vietnam. They included avoiding defeat and accomplishing the mission as well as the performance of assigned tasks. Which incentives got rewarded and how such occurred was a product of bureaucratic politics within the Army.

Vietnam and the Feasibility of Innovation

The first chapter noted that military doctrine provides professional armed services with an explicit articulation of how to fight wars to secure national security objectives (Posen 1984; Rosen 1988; Avant 1993; *US Army Field Manual 3-0* 2001). Before evaluating how and why Creighton Abrams' bureaucratic assignments affected his ability to innovate during Vietnam, it is important to establish whether or not such was even possible. Did the antecedent conditions that would have allowed for major innovations in Army doctrine during the Vietnam War exist? The answer is yes.

Innovation is a product of an individual's bureaucratic autonomy, access, and authority. Its feasibility is determined by the observation of a performance gap, the presence of proponents of innovation, and a well of potential support among civilians.

The observation of a performance gap has two elements. First, individuals within the organization must become aware of the fact that existent doctrine is not achieving the nation's objectives. Second, the ramifications of the performance gap must present a grave threat to national security. Both elements existed during Vietnam. In the wake of massive operations like MASHER in March 1966 and THAYER II in February 1967, many in MACV grew concerned about the Army's performance. During these operations, and others like them, US forces conducted large search-and-destroy operations designed to kill or drive out communist forces. Yet, within a few weeks to months, communist control over such territory would return — if not increase (Krepinevich 1986: 166-172, 178; Nagl 2005: 155-156). By late 1967, even

Westmoreland recognized this growing performance gap.⁶⁴ The seriousness of the gap was clear. It was the position of the JCS, as it had been since the 1950s, that the loss of South Vietnam would pose a grave threat to the security of the United States. Members of the Army recognized the fact that something had to be done, MACV needed to turn the war around (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 1, Chapter V 1971: 242-269, 314-346; *The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 1 Appendices - “Memorandum from General Omar Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense on the Strategic Assessment of Southeast Asia, 10 April 1950” 1971: 363-366).

By 1967, the Army was aware of the fact that it was failing to achieve in Vietnam the national security objectives with which it had been tasked. Although few would have phrased it this way, the organization was cognizant of the fact it was losing the war. Given the prevailing Cold War dynamic that dominate American foreign policy and the domestic political costs of ‘losing Vietnam’ — it was not possible for the Army to surrender and accept defeat. That left two choices, try harder or try something else.

For many, including General Westmoreland, the choice between trying harder and trying something else presented a dilemma. For adherents to traditional doctrine, the Army was caught in a double-bind. As it was, communist forces were employing both conventional and insurgent tactics. Adherents to traditional doctrine believed that while the Army focused its attention on the conventional forces of the North Vietnamese, insurgent forces expanded their activity in the South. Yet, if the Army shifted its efforts in favor of pacification, Westmoreland and others felt the North Vietnamese would

⁶⁴ Westmoreland’s solution however was more firepower (including potentially the use of tactical nuclear weapons) and increased operations based on existent doctrine. See, Karnow (1983: 539-540).

increase their conventional push toward victory. Proponents of existent doctrine thought the Army had no choice but to focus on traditional warfighting and leave counterinsurgency to the South Vietnamese military (Birtle 2008).

This perceived double-bind, however, exists as evidence of traditional doctrine's position as a dominant design — not as an indicator of the feasibility of doctrinal innovation. The double-bind was itself the product of the concept of war provided by the Army's existent doctrine.⁶⁵ There were in fact members of the Army that did not see the double-bind envisioned by Westmoreland and others. These individuals, many with much greater experience with insurgent warfare, held a different concept of the war in Vietnam and would become proponents of doctrinal innovation.

The presence of proponents of innovation provides opportunities to challenge the consensus opinion represented by existent doctrine. By questioning the utility of existent doctrine, proponents increase the absorptive capacity of the organization. They reduce the salience of existent doctrine within the organization. Proponents form the potential nucleus of a new consensus opinion. From the outset of US involvement in Vietnam, there existed proponents for doctrinal innovation. Individuals such as generals William Yarborough and William Rossen began calling for change in the late 1950s and early 1960s. By the mid-1960s, individuals like Bruce Palmer, Jim Galvin, and Frederick Weyand, all lieutenant generals in MACV, had joined the ranks of those calling for

⁶⁵ Birtle (2008) argues that as a result of the threat posed by North Vietnam's regular forces, Westmoreland could not undertake the types of actions called for in PROVN. But as Krepinevich (1986), Gaddis (1999), and others contend, Westmoreland never really considered the innovations called for by Abrams' team. Westmoreland was never in the stark either-or position that Birtle suggests. In reality, the Army could have asked for the resources necessary to conduct both conventional operations along the North Vietnamese - South Vietnamese border while focusing on counterinsurgency with the territory of South Vietnam. At a point in time when the Johnson administration was willing to supply any additional resource requests, Westmoreland fails to ask for the materials necessary to implement counterinsurgency operations.

changes in doctrine (Krepinevich 1986: 30-36; Davidson 1988: 351; Sorley 1999: 6, 11; Nagl 2005: 152-153; Tierney 2006: 238-239). In addition, there existed mid-level officers (colonels and majors), many of whom had served as advisors or combatants in Vietnam, who were giving voice to the need for innovation (Karnow 1983: 407-408; Sorley 1999: 7).

Potential civilian support for innovation comes in two forms. One is the specific support of members of the executive branch, White House allies that can convey information about innovation to the president. The second is a more general form of support, that which springs from domestic politics. Together they form a permissive environment in which it is possible to capture the political and material support of the president.

During the Vietnam War there existed around the president individuals who would have supported innovation. Many of these individuals were among the first to recognize the need for counterinsurgency doctrine in South Vietnam. They included Walt Rostow and Roger Hilsman in the Kennedy White House (Hilsman 1962; Rostow 1962; Hennessy 1997: 17-18, 20-21; Gaddis 1999: 220). Later in the Johnson administration potential support existed in the personage of George Ball, Bill Moyers, and Maxwell Taylor (Ball 1972; Karnow 1983: 404-405; Herring 2002: 155-158, 214; Lock-Pullan 2006: 29).⁶⁶ In 1969, *Foreign Affairs* published an article by Henry Kissinger highlighting the need for counterinsurgency doctrine in South Vietnam (Kissinger 1969). There was also support for counterinsurgency doctrine from within the Marine Corps,

⁶⁶ The PROVN report itself contained memos written by current and former members of the executive branch, including Walt Rostow and others. See *PROVN* 1966.

specifically from the Commandant of the Marine Corps General Wallace Green and from Major General Victor Krulak (Krepinevich 1986: 31; Hennessy 1997: 70, 75). As noted above, the executive branch had since 1961 been placing political pressure on the military to develop counterinsurgency doctrine and forces (*National Security Action Memorandum 2* 1961; *National Security Action Memorandum 119* 1961).

Potential support for innovation was further buttressed by domestic politics. No president wanted to be faulted as having failed to meet the communist challenge and ‘lost’ Vietnam. For reasons of both foreign and domestic politics, helping Saigon maintain its political independence had become a national security objective. The US had “developed a special commitment in South Vietnam” (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 2, Chapter I 1971: 1-39; Moyers 1975; Goodwin 1976: 252; LaFeber 1993: 236; Hennessy 1997: 17; Gaddis 1999: 229; Rotter 1999: xxv-xxvi; Herring 2002: 132). Congress supported this, members of both the House and Senate praised US military involvement. Starting in the 1950s, Congress repeatedly approved resolutions backing US actions to secure a free and independent South Vietnam. Members of Congress acknowledged the fact that US support tied the outcome in Vietnam with American fortunes in the Cold War (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 2, Chapter 2 1971: 79; Karnow 1983: 421; Burke and Greenstein 1991: 192).

For their part, the American press and people remained supportive of US objectives in Vietnam. In the mid-1960s, at the moment in which Abrams was first attempting to distribute PROVN, major newspapers (including *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*) and columnists (such as David Lawrence and Joseph Alsop) praised the

US mission and objectives. Gallup and Harris polls at that time indicated that a majority of Americans were behind the administration (Burke and Greenstein 1991: 192-194, 252-253).⁶⁷ Even after Tet, a majority of Americans supported US objectives in Vietnam. Not until 1970, with the incursion into Cambodia, did domestic support for US objectives (and thus potential support for innovation) completely dissolve (Karnow 1983: 545-546, 594-600, 625-627; Hennessy 1997: 134; Herring 2002: 243, 293-294).⁶⁸

Major innovations in Army doctrine were feasible during the Vietnam War. The performance gap was recognized by individuals throughout the organization. A free and independent South Vietnam was held to be of grave importance to the United States. Furthermore, the political system supported — even encouraged — the adoption of counterinsurgency innovations.

Access, Autonomy, Authority and the Failure to Innovate in Vietnam

Convinced that traditional doctrine would lead to strategic defeat in Vietnam, Creighton Abrams sought to change the way the Army fought. Abrams attempted two major innovations in doctrine. The first was a shift in the operational center of gravity. Existing Army doctrine assumed that the destruction of enemy forces provided the best means for securing victory. Within the context of the Vietnam War, Abrams sought to replace this assumption with one based upon the protection of civilian populations. The

⁶⁷ As *The New York Times* summed it up, “few Americans will quarrel with President Johnson’s determined conclusion to hold on in Vietnam, this is quite different from saying we will bring the other side to its knees.” See Burke and Greenstein (1991: 231).

⁶⁸ Americans remained supportive of US objectives after the Tet Offensive of 1968, but they began to question the conduct of the war. During the first years of the Nixon administration, support for US objectives in Vietnam spiked again. Opinion polls in October 1969, registered seventy-one percent of Americans as supportive of the war. After the Cambodian incursion, however, support for US objectives gave way.

second innovation was an emphasis on small unit operations and the restrained use of firepower. This challenged the traditional assumption that large unit firepower intensive operations represented the most effective use of force (*PROVN*, Volume I 1966; Gibbons 1995: 359; Sorley 1998; Nagl 2005: 158-160; Record 2006: 11). By changing these core doctrinal assumptions, Abrams hoped to shift the Army away from tactics based on search-and-destroy in favor of those based on counterinsurgency. Abrams believed these innovations were necessary to achieve the US' objective of a free and independent South Vietnam. Despite his attempts, General Abrams was unable to bring about major doctrinal innovations during the Vietnam War. The Army's concept of how to fight did not change.

To successfully innovate doctrine during Vietnam, the following would have been necessary. First, someone needed to convincingly demonstrate within the Army the requirement for innovation. Second, someone needed to leverage opportunities in the larger political ecosystem to garner the support of civilian authorities — including the president. Third, someone needed to gain the required authority within the Army to implement new ideas. Abrams was unable to accomplish these three tasks. He was unable to leverage his bureaucratic access, autonomy, and authority to shepherd the organization through the learning process that occurs via the preparation, espousal, and implementation phases. Without the requisite organizational learning and the establishment of a new consensus opinion, innovation became impossible.

The following sections examine what this case tells us about how bureaucratic access, autonomy, and authority affect the organizational learning process and doctrinal

innovation. This will be done by comparing the hypotheses introduced in the first chapter to the events that occurred during the Vietnam War. The final section of this chapter analyzes General Abrams' attempt at doctrinal innovation.

The Preparation Phase

During the preparation phase, the organization must be made ripe for learning and innovation. To achieve this, the organization must become aware of the doctrinally based performance gap observed by the innovator. Such organizational awareness represents the dependent variable of this phase. An individual's ability to bring this about is held to be a function of his/her access to battlefield information, access to an audience within the organization, and autonomy to engage in innovation. These are the independent variables of the preparation phase. In Chapter 1, the following two hypotheses were offered for evaluating the effects of these variables.

H.1: As an individual's bureaucratic autonomy increases, his/her ability to develop innovative responses to performance failure increases.

This hypothesis is consistent with the events that took place during Vietnam. As Vice Chief of Staff, General Abrams enjoyed relatively high levels of autonomy. The PROVN group had the autonomy to study the Army's growing performance gap in Vietnam. As part of their efforts, they had access to battlefield information from both the US war effort and the previous experiences of the French in Indochina — in the latter

case, from the perspectives of both French and communist forces. Furthermore, the PROVN group had access to a range of historical and theoretical works about counterinsurgency as well as the origins of the conflict in Vietnam (*PROVN*, Volume 2 1966; Lewy 1978: 133-134; Davidson 1988: 613; Gibbons 1995: 202-204; Sorley 1998; Sorley 1999: 7; Long 2008: 17; Hunt 2010: 39).⁶⁹ As a result, the innovations Abrams sought to bring about were clearly expressed. Furthermore, the innovations were accompanied by a detailed set of supporting tasks.

H.2: As an individual's access to an audience within the organization increases, his/her ability to bring into question existent doctrine's core assumptions increases.

This hypothesis also is consistent with the events of this case. Abrams' bureaucratic position as Vice Chief of Staff left him isolated from the bulk of the organization. He had little direct access to anyone other than his immediate superiors or subordinates. From above and below, the JCS, General Westmoreland, and General Mock were able to block effectively his attempts to disseminate PROVN (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 2, Chapter VI 1971: 560; Krepinevich 1986: 182; Davidson 1988: 410; Gibbons 1995: 208-211; Sorley 1998; Nagl 2005: 160; Record 2006: 11; Birtle 2008: 1244; Long 2008: 11). Abrams' severely constrained access left most of the organization ignorant of PROVN's analysis of the performance gap or its recommended innovations.

⁶⁹ Among the works reviewed by the PROVN group, Vo Nguyen Giap's *Inside the Vietminh*. See *PROVN* Volume 2 (1966).

The Espousal Phase

The espousal phase begins with a critical juncture crisis that forces administration officials to reevaluate the operational nature of the conflict. During the espousal phase, the material and political support of the president must be captured. Presidential support for innovation represents the dependent variable of this phase. An individual's ability to bring this about is held to be a function of their access to elite opinion makers and access to senior civilian officials — including the president. These are the independent variables of the espousal phase. Two hypotheses were offered for evaluating the effects of these independent variables.

H.3: As the public visibility of the community of innovators increases, political pressure on the president to support innovation increases.

This hypothesis is inconclusive given the events of this case. During the Vietnam War, even prior to Abrams' attempts at innovation, there existed a relatively large and diverse group of individuals willing to support innovation (Krepinevich 1986: 27-36; Tierney 2006: 238-239). Yet this group failed to have a significant effect — despite pressure on the Army to adopt counterinsurgency doctrine during the Kennedy administration (Krepinevich 1986: 38-55). This lack of efficacy resulted from a lack of public visibility. This group was unable to increase the political rewards available to President Johnson for supporting innovation.

H.4: As the doctrinal entrepreneur's backchannel access to executive branch officials increases, the likelihood of presidential support for innovation increases.

This hypothesis is inconsistent with the record of events in Vietnam. During the period of events coinciding with the espousal phase, President Johnson reached out to General Abrams for consultations about the war effort — often without the knowledge of General Westmoreland. LBJ went so far as to summon Abrams to Washington so that he could get his opinion regarding Westmoreland (and Wheeler's) requested troop increase. Although such nontraditional exchanges were few in number and often included General Wheeler, Abrams did have the ability to directly lobby the president for his support (Sorley 1992; 222-223). Yet there is little indication this affected the outcome. There is no substantial evidence that Abrams or those supporting PROVN expressly presented President Johnson with doctrinal innovation as a means for achieving success in Vietnam.

The Implementation Phase

During the implementation phase, innovations must be disseminated throughout the organization and become the basis for military operations. This represents the dependent variable of the implementation phase. An individual's ability to bring this about is held to be a function of their authority to task the combatant command, authority to remove subordinates and control incentives, and their autonomy to act free of the structures and routines based on prior doctrinal assumptions. These are the independent

variables of the implementation phase. In Chapter 1, two hypotheses were offered for evaluating the effects of these independent variables.

H.5: As the presence of a community of innovators at each level of command increases, the likelihood that innovations will be operationalized increases.

This hypothesis is consistent with the events of this case. Although Abrams successfully had key members of the PROVN team assigned to MACV, their numbers were relatively small compared to the size of the organization (*PROVN*, Volume I 1966; Sorley 1992: 201-202, 234; Sorley 1999: 4-5, 19).⁷⁰ The social structures in MACV remained unchanged — very few innovators were introduced into the Army’s hierarchy. As a result, there was little first hand information regarding PROVN’s analysis of the performance gap or knowledge about the innovations designed to correct it. As a result, operationalization was sporadic and fleeting.

H.6: As innovative tasks become the basis for evaluation, the likelihood of resistance to innovation decreases.

This hypothesis is consistent with the events that took place in Vietnam. The PROVN innovations never became the basis for organizational or personal incentives in Vietnam. Westmoreland and the Joint Chiefs buttressed traditional doctrine through their

⁷⁰ In reality, Abrams was only able to get between three and four of the PROVN team into Vietnam at a given time. This out of a force that numbered between 500,000 and 50,000 troops during Abrams tenure as Commander MACV.

control of the promotion system. Career soldiers continued to be rewarded on the basis of how well they performed traditional search-and-destroy tactics (Gallucci 1975: 126-127; Krepinevich 1986: 260; Thompson 1990: 25; Baritz 1991: 330; Fisher 1994: 324-342; Sorley 1999: 22; Nagl 2005: 171; Lock-Pullan 2006: 34). As a result of this, the Army's incentive structures worked against implementation of doctrinal innovations. Organizational and personal incentives provided little logic for innovation.

Table 2: Hypotheses Results, Vietnam Case

	Consistent with Events in Vietnam	Inconsistent with Events in Vietnam	Inconclusive in regard to Events in Vietnam
H.1 (Preparation Phase):As an individual's bureaucratic autonomy increases, his/her ability to develop innovative responses to performance failure increases.	✓		
H.2 (Preparation Phase):As an individual's access to an audience within the organization increases, his/her ability to bring into question existent doctrine's core assumptions increases.	✓		
H.3 (Espousal Phase):As the public visibility of the community of innovators increases, political pressure on the president to support innovation increases.			✓
H.4 (Espousal Phase):As the doctrinal entrepreneur's backchannel access to executive branch officials increases, the likelihood of presidential support for innovation increases.		✓	
H.5 (Implementation Phase):As the presence of a community of innovators at each level of command increases, the likelihood that innovations will be operationalized increases.	✓		
H.6 (Implementation Phase):As innovative tasks become the basis for evaluation, the likelihood of resistance to innovation decreases.	✓		

Analysis of Abrams' Attempts at Innovation

General Creighton Abrams' attempt to introduce two major innovations in Army doctrine during the Vietnam war failed. It failed because the attributes of his bureaucratic positions within the organization left him unable to overcome resistance within the Army,

unable to capture the political and material support of the president, and unable to disseminate and implement innovation.

Innovation requires organizational learning. Such learning takes place via a preparation, espousal, and implementation phase. What is learned, however, is the result of political contests within the organization (March and Simon 1958; Nye 1987; Tsoukas and Vladimirov 2001). An actor's bureaucratic autonomy, access, and authority determine how successfully they will engage the political contests that shape the learning process. Without the bureaucratic resources necessary to win these political struggles, Abrams was unable to shepherd the learning process and bring about innovation.

During the preparation phase, Abrams was blocked from disseminating PROVN and establishing himself as a doctrinal entrepreneur leading a community of innovators (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 2, Chapter VI 1971: 560; Krepinevich 1986: 182; Davidson 1988: 410; Gibbons 1995: 208-211; Sorley 1998; Nagl 2005: 160; Record 2006: 11; Birtle 2008: 1244; Long 2008: 11). His bureaucratic autonomy gave him the ability to observe and reflect on the performance gap and his access to information gave him the ability to search for solutions and develop specific innovations (Kolb 1984). His inability to access a larger audience within the Army, however, left him unable to facilitate dialogues among subgroups. As a result, Abrams was unable to forge a community of innovators. Without this community, he was unable to increase the absorptive capacity of the Army. The organization failed to question the core assumptions of its doctrine. Double-loop learning processes were not engaged. The

Army remained unaware of a doctrinally based performance gap and unprepared to innovate.

During the espousal phase, Abrams failed to present PROVN to President Johnson and then capture his support for doctrinal innovation. The critical juncture crisis brought about by the Tet Offensive of 1968 loosened political, material, and organizational constraints. President Johnson, Congress, and the American people questioned the conduct of the war — but not its objectives (Guttman 1969: 57; Karnow 1983: 546, 549). There were political incentives for change, yet there was no clear incentive for supporting innovation. The advice Clark Clifford's 'wise men' gave LBJ was contradictory and divided (Schandler 1977: 241; Krepinevich 1986: 247-248; Davidson 1988: 522-525; Herring 2002: 238, 249-250). This was also the case with the information President Johnson received from the uniformed military — including that which he received from Westmoreland, Wheeler, and Abrams (Krepinevich 1986: 237-257; Sorley 1992: 222-223; Nagl 2005: 167-168). As Deputy Commander of MACV, Abrams had access to the president — but he lacked access to a visible community of innovators. Abrams' position left him incapable of seeding the public sphere with political support for innovation. Abrams was unable to capture the political and material support of the president. Without it, Abrams had no mandate to implement innovation.

During the implementation phase, Abrams' position left him unable to overcome the defensive reasoning of his subordinate commanders and implement the PROVN innovations. Without the presence of a community of innovators at MACV, Abrams was

unable to establish a consensus opinion in support of doctrinal change. As Commander MACV, Abrams attempted to instill lessons about the need to change through staff meetings and visits with his subordinates in the field. His corps and division commanders, however, were unprepared to accept his innovations (Blaufarb 1977: 288; Lewy 1978: 138-144, 235; Doughty 1979; Sorley 1999: 28-29, 134-136, 219-221; Nagl 2005: 175-176). This condition effectively blocked Abrams' ability to disseminate innovation throughout MACV. Furthermore, Abrams lacked the authority to change professional incentive structures. These incentive structures continued to be controlled by proponents of traditional doctrine (Gallucci 1975: 126-127; Komer 1986: 73-74; Krepinevich 1986: 260; Baritz 1991; Fisher 1994: 324-342; Nagl 2005: 17). The hierarchical nature of the Army, combined with the lack of a consensus opinion in favor of innovation and an inability to alter the performance criteria effectively stripped Abrams of the autonomy and authority necessary for innovation. In essence Abrams was left to attempt innovation through the management of the war effort — by controlling where the Army fought, rather than how the Army fought.

By 1966, Creighton Abrams was convinced the Army needed to change the way it fought in order to achieve US' stated national security objectives in Vietnam. From his positions as Army Vice Chief of Staff, Deputy Commander MACV, and then Commander MACV, Abrams attempted to make major changes in Army doctrine. The levels of bureaucratic autonomy, access, and authority granted by the positions, however, would prove to be insufficient for bringing about the organizational learning necessary for

innovation. During the Vietnam War, the Army would continue to fight using traditional doctrine — while the US' objective slipped further and further away.

Chapter 3: Iraq

“We must secure the population. This is our primary focus.”

— Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, Baghdad 2007⁷¹

In 2005, (then) Lieutenant General David Petraeus was the commander of the US Army’s Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. In this position, Petraeus was responsible for the organization’s educational and training establishment — including the Army’s refereed journal *Military Review* (Robinson 2008: 76; Ricks 2009: 15, 18). From November 2005 through December 2006, this included overseeing the development of *Army Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency (COIN) (FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency 2006; Robinson 2008: 77; Crane 2010)*. In January 2007, in response to a faltering war effort, midterm elections that cost the Republican Party control of the Congress, and historically low approval ratings, President Bush had Petraeus promoted and ordered him to assume command of the US-led Multinational Forces in Iraq (MNFI) (Gordon and Shanker 2007; Ucko 2009: 112-114; Mansoor 2010: 81; Gallup 2010).⁷²

From these two bureaucratic positions, General Petraeus attempted major innovations in US Army doctrine. He perceived a doctrinally based performance gap likely to bring about strategic defeat. In response, Petraeus disseminated information about a growing crisis and later implemented needed innovations. The access, autonomy,

⁷¹ This quote, provided by Nutt (2008) is particularly striking when one considers the fact that early in the war, as the Commander of the 4th Infantry Division, Odierno fought the war in an aggressive manner consistent with traditional doctrine.

⁷² According to Gallup (2010), President Bush’s approval ratings hovered between 37% and 33% from October through December 2006. At the time, these were the lowest numbers of his presidency — more than 60% of respondents disapproved of his handling of the office of the president.

and authority bestowed by Petraeus' bureaucratic positions allowed him to shepherd organizational learning and implement major innovations in Army doctrine. Petraeus used his positions to successfully engage in the bureaucratic politics necessary to establish a new consensus about how the Army should fight.

David Petraeus and Doctrinal Innovation in Iraq

In late 2010, it remains unclear as to whether or not the US will achieve its national security objective of a stable and democratic Iraq (Bush 2005; *National Strategy for Victory In Iraq* 2005; Ricks 2007: 116; Woodward 2008: 108, 171, 210).⁷³ Regardless of the eventual outcome of the war, in 2007, the Army staved off defeat through the innovative adoption of population centric counterinsurgency doctrine (Robinson 2008; Alarkon 2009; Ricks 2009; Ucko 2009; Rid and Keaney 2010).⁷⁴

From the outset of the 2003 invasion, there existed within the Army a group of individuals that perceived a potential performance gap on the part of traditional doctrine. The Army's existent doctrine privileged the use of large unit, maneuver, and firepower

⁷³ The US' stated national security objectives in Iraq underwent revision in the years between the 2003 invasion and the eruption of the insurgency and sectarian civil war. By 2005, President Bush had moved away from the objective of regional transformation and settled on the establishment of a relative stable, generally democratic, and independent Iraq. To Bob Woodward, Bush summed US national security objectives as "[an Iraqi] government that can govern, sustain and defend itself."

⁷⁴ Given the Army's history in Vietnam, the fact that it once again found itself in this position is somewhat surprising. As others, including Cloud and Jaffe (2009:48) have noted, after Vietnam the Army chose to avoid lessons about occupation and insurgency. As an organization it purged itself of the what had been learned in Southeast Asia and returned to a focus on overwhelming firepower and the destruction of enemy forces as the basis for victory.

intensive tactics aimed at the destruction of enemy forces.⁷⁵ By 2005, a small number of field grade officers (lieutenant colonels and colonels) began to search for ways to correct the Army's failure to address the growing violence and insecurity in Iraq. These individuals felt that to achieve US national security objectives, the Army needed to change the way it was fighting the war. At the same time, there existed within the political ecosystem retired military and civilian leaders, who having come to the same conclusion, were willing to support doctrinal innovation (Ricks 2007: 72, 134-137, 147).

The existence of such individuals is necessary, but insufficient for innovation to occur. Separate pockets of innovation are easily ignored or effectively resisted by the proponents of existent doctrine. Organizational learning and innovation require the presence of an entrepreneur who can forge a new consensus within the organization and implement change. In this instance, David Petraeus fulfilled this role.⁷⁶

The Preparation Phase — the US Army Combined Arms Center and COIN

The attempt to innovate Army doctrine in Iraq began in November 2005. (Then) Lieutenant General David Petraeus was in Washington, DC to address a conference hosted by the Carr Center for Human Rights. During his remarks, Petraeus announced

⁷⁵ General Tommy Franks, the commander of the US Central Command and the senior US commander for the invasion, encapsulated the ideas of traditional doctrine with the expression 'speed kills.' The Army's war plan called for the use of massive firepower and maneuver to quickly destroy and defeat enemy forces. Although supported by a majority of the organization, the plan elicited immediate questions from some about post-conflict operations. Some were concerned about the size of the force, some about how well doctrine fit the national security objectives being sought. See Ricks (2007: 69-72, 127-130, 157), Robinson (2008: 12), Nagl (2010b: 118). For examples of how this doctrine was expressed in the Army's field manuals, see *FM 1 The Army* (2001: 3-1) and *FM 3 Operations* (2001: 1-18).

⁷⁶ At the outset it is important to note that although the 'surge' is often viewed as the critical element that changed the course of the war in Iraq, such interpretations conflate the increased allocation of resources with the decision to innovate doctrine — and as a result change strategy and operations. The 'surge' supported and was vital to the implementation of COIN; but the allocation of additional forces did not represent innovation. See Ucko (2009: 120-121) and Gentile (2010).

that the Army would completely rewrite its manual on counterinsurgency. Petraeus' statement came as a shock — even to Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl — the person Petraeus announced would manage the process (Nutt 2008; Robinson 2008: 77; Crane 2010: 60). The Army had issued its existing counterinsurgency manual, *FMI 3-07.22 Counterinsurgency Operations*, in October 2004 — just thirteen months earlier (*FMI 3-07.22 Counterinsurgency Operations* 2004; Crane 2010: 59).

In 2003, the Army successfully toppled Saddam Hussein's regime. Yet it was no closer to securing the objective of a stable and democratic Iraq when *FMI 3-07.22* was issued eighteen months later. In fact, Iraq had become more violent and less stable. Insurgents had bombed the Iraqi headquarters of the United Nations, forcing the organization to abandon its mission. Sectarian tensions that had been brewing exploded into a civil war with the bombing of the al-Askari Mosque. The Army realized it was stuck in what was likely to be a protracted counterinsurgency. *FMI 3-07.22 Counterinsurgency Operations* was drafted in response to Iraq's growing instability and to help the Army secure the national security objectives with which it had been tasked (Schmitt and Shanker 2004; Shanker 2006; Ricks 2007: 214-302; Robinson 2008: 14; Ucko 2008: 293 and 2009: 104).

FMI 3-07.22 was based on two previous field manuals: *FM 90-8 Counterinsurgency Operations*, issued in 1986, and *FM 100-20 Low Intensity Conflict*, issued in 1990. Added to the principles derived from these two manuals were operational lessons from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. *FMI 3-07.22* adapted past experiences with guerrilla warfare and stability operations to the current conflicts and provided specific tactical

lessons, techniques, and procedures to address the growing insurgency and sectarian violence in Iraq (*FMI 3-07.22 Counterinsurgency Operations* 2004; Ucko 2009: 66-71; Crane 2010: 59).⁷⁷

According to *FMI 3-07.22*, the Army's primary task in counterinsurgency was to use force against enemy units in order to bring about stability. The manual called upon the Army to fulfill a secondary task, training the supported host nation's armed services — so that indigenous forces could eventually assume responsibility for the country's security (*FMI 3-07.22 Counterinsurgency Operations* 2004).

In 2005, the Army's counterinsurgency manual conceptualized operations in accordance with the tenets of traditional doctrine. Success was to be achieved by bringing about the destruction of enemy forces through the use of firepower and maneuver.⁷⁸ According to *FMI 3-07.22*, the Army would engage in counterinsurgency through “offensive operations to disrupt and destroy insurgent combat formations” (*FMI 3-07.22 Counterinsurgency Operations* 2004: 2-3).⁷⁹ To secure victory — the Army would fight much as it always had.

The development of *FMI 3-07.22* demonstrated growing awareness of the Army's performance gap in Iraq. In 2004, General George Casey who had assumed command of the US led Multinational Forces in Iraq (MNF-I) in July, asked a British officer (whom he

⁷⁷ Based on lessons learned from Afghanistan and Iraq, the manual supplied guidance for gathering information, hardening vehicles, and conducting convoy operations. It maintained, however, traditional doctrine's emphasis on the destruction of the enemy. It provided guidance for assessing insurgent strength, distribution, and combat effectiveness.

⁷⁸ *FM 1 The Army* 2001 states that the Army's primary function is to “to defeat enemy land forces.” Traditional doctrine held that to accomplish this; “Army forces close with and destroy enemy forces through maneuver and precision direct and indirect fires.” See *FM 1 The Army* (2001: 3-1) and *FM 3 Operations* (2001: 1-18).

⁷⁹ The manual describes three roles for the Army: kill enemy forces, train host nation armed services, and advise the US State Department.

assumed would be more objective) to review operations in Iraq. The assessment that came back was brutal, the mission was failing — although US forces were increasing operations to quell the unrest and put down the growing insurgency, violence was skyrocketing (Cloud and Jaffe 2009: 184). The expanding violence and instability led to a recognized need to alter Army operations. In 2005, General Casey attempted to meet this need (Woodward 2008: 4-6, 9-10; Ucko 2009: 65-74).

Casey believed US forces were acting as an irritant enflaming the insurgency. In response, Casey established a “counterinsurgency academy” and sought to reduce the visible presence of American forces by moving them to a few large bases and by having Iraq forces take lead as often as possible (Cloud and Jaffe 2009: 221-222; Ricks 2009: 390-429). Casey’s in-country academy provided Army officers with a one week course on how to conduct counterinsurgency operations. The course, like *FMI 3-07.22*, maintained traditional doctrine’s operational center of gravity — the destruction of enemy forces. The Army continued to fight the war through search operations designed to destroy the enemy and their strongholds (Ricks 2006 and 2007: 392-394, 398, 413, 414, 418; Woodward 2008: 54, 75-76, 91, 93, 94-97; Ucko 2009: 76; Mansoor 2010: 77-79). Bing West, who served in a Marine Combined Action Platoon during Vietnam, noted that Casey’s academy did little to change the way the Army was fighting. “By and large, the battalions continued to do what they did best: conduct sweeps and mounted patrols during the day and targeted raids at night” (Ricks 2007: 398-405 and 2009: 11-12,

35). US commanders continued to stress the overwhelming use of violence against the enemy.⁸⁰

In September 2005, two months before his surprise announcement that the Army would completely rewrite its counterinsurgency manual, Petraeus had returned from Iraq. He had been chosen to become the new commander of the US Army's Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth. Considered by some to be tantamount to exile, the posting made Petraeus responsible for the Army's Command and General Staff College. It also made him responsible for seventeen other Army schools and training programs as well as many of the organization's professional journals (Robinson 2008: 76; Cloud and Jaffe 2009: 216-217; Ricks 2009: 17-18; Ucko 2009: 75). Unsure and initially concerned about the assignment, Petraeus quickly realized that it afforded him the autonomy necessary to address the Army's performance in Iraq (Ricks 2009: 18, 23; Crane 2010; 59).

In the aftermath of the spring 2003 invasion, (then) Major General Petraeus worried that the Army's existent doctrine was ill-suited to achieve US national security objectives. As the commander of the 101st Airborne Division, Petraeus had realized that existent doctrine did not fit the post-invasion operational context (Ricks 2007: 165, 228-232). To an embedded reporter, he rhetorically asked — “Tell me how this ends?” (Atkinson 2007; Robinson 2008: 67-70). As Petraeus watched the insurgency erupt and give rise to a sectarian civil war, he became convinced that the performance gap

⁸⁰ Colonel Michael Steele, a brigade commander in the 101st Airborne Division, provides a particularly powerful example. He routinely stressed to his troops the need to act aggressively. “Anytime you fight, you always kill the other sonofabitch. Do not let him live today so he will fight you tomorrow. Kill him today.” See Ricks (2009: 35-36).

between existent doctrine and the national security objective the Army was tasked with achieving was growing wider. By the time his second tour ended in 2005, Petraeus believed the Army's operational center of gravity needed to change — more needed to be done to protect the Iraqi population. Petraeus also had come to the conclusion that the actions of individual lieutenants and corporals were more important in achieving success than large unit sweeps aimed at killing or capturing the enemy (Petraeus 2006; Robinson 2008: 71-74).

From his new position at Fort Leavenworth, Petraeus pulled in massive amounts of information from Iraq. He expanded the Army's Lessons Learned programs in order to speed the flow of insights from the battlefield back to the education and doctrinal centers under his command (Ricks 2007: 419; Robinson 2008: 76; Ucko 2009: 75; Crane 2010: 59). Petraeus used the incoming information to alter training scenarios at Fort Irwin, California and Fort Polk, Louisiana where tactical reports were used to test concepts and prepare troops for future deployments (Crane 2010: 59).

Even before his November 2005 announcement that a new counterinsurgency manual would be produced, Petraeus had begun to reach outside the organization for insights into how the Army might arrest the deteriorating situation in Iraq. Among the first to be contacted was Eliot Cohen, a professor at the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. It was Cohen who suggested that to change the Army's operational center of gravity, a complete rewrite of the Army's new counterinsurgency manual would be necessary (Robinson 2008: 77; Crane 2010: 60). *FMI 3-07.22* would have to be thrown out. Over the course of the next year, a new

counterinsurgency field manual would become the embodiment of the doctrinal innovations Petraeus believed necessary.

Initially, Petraeus assembled a small group to draft the new manual. Work began the day Lieutenant Colonel Nagl received his surprise tasking. Over beer and hamburgers, Nagl, one other active duty lieutenant colonel, a former captain who had served in Iraq, and a graduate student, sketched out upon a cocktail napkin the core principles and tasks of a new doctrine (Nutt 2008; Crane 2010: 60). This small group quickly expanded.

Determined to provide the widest potential base of support for his innovations, Petraeus brought into the process as many people as possible. The Commander of the Army's Combined Arms Center reached out to members of the British Military and individuals from the Rand Corporation to solicit their thoughts about Iraq, counterinsurgency, and the need to change doctrine (Ucko 2008: 294; Crane 2010: 61). Determined that the innovations should represent more than the perspective of a single armed service, Petraeus also contacted his Marine Corps counterpart, Lieutenant General James Mattis. Mattis agreed with Petraeus about the insurgency and the need to innovate. The two generals decided the new manual would be issued as a joint Army/USMC publication. They also decided to establish a joint Army-USMC counterinsurgency center at Fort Leavenworth (Robinson 2008: 77; Woodward 2008: 152; Ucko 2009: 108; Crane 2010: 61). Over the next few weeks, Petraeus pulled together various pockets of counterinsurgency experts — establishing himself at the center of a growing community.

Production of the new field manual moved forward quickly. Conrad Crane, a historian at the Army's War College who had written a monograph on the challenges facing the US military in Iraq, was enlisted to serve as principal author (Nagl 2007 and 2010b: 118; Robinson 2008: 77; Ricks 2009: 18-19; Crane 2010: 60). Lieutenant Colonel Jan Horvath, who had written the 2004 field manual, *FMI 3-07.22 Counterinsurgency Operations*, also was brought in. Once a team of authors was assembled, each individual was assigned responsibility for the development of a given chapter. By February 2006, the first draft was ready (Nagl 2007; Robinson 2008: 78; Ucko 2009: 103-106; Crane 2010: 63).

At the core of the manual were two major innovations in doctrine. The first was a shift in the operational center of gravity away from the destruction of enemy forces toward the protection of the civilian population. The second was an emphasis on small unit operations in which the use of firepower was heavily restrained and contact with the local population constantly maintained (*FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency* 2006: 5-2; Ricks 2009: 26-29; Nagl 2007 and 2010b). The first chapter of the manual laid out the importance of population security, small unit tactics, and the restrained used of force:

Ultimate success in COIN is gained by protecting the populace, not the COIN force. If military forces remain in their compounds, they lose touch with the people, appear to be running scared, and cede the initiative to the insurgents. Aggressive saturation patrolling, ambushes, and listening post operations must be conducted, risk shared with the populace, and contact maintained.

Any use of force produces many effects, not all of which can be foreseen. The more force applied, the greater the chance of collateral damage and mistakes. Using substantial force also increases the opportunity for insurgent propaganda to portray lethal military activities as brutal. In contrast, using force precisely and discriminately strengthens the rule of law that needs to be established. As noted above, the key for counterinsurgents is knowing when more force is needed . . . This judgment involves constant assessment of the security situation and a sense of timing regarding insurgents' actions.⁸¹

In addition to these two major innovations, the manual stressed the importance of legitimacy, information, politics, and the rule of law in Army operations (Crane 2010: 61-63). Based on both classical counterinsurgency theories as well as practical lessons from Iraq, the entire set of proposed innovations quickly became known not by the publication's formal title *Army Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency* — but by the shorthand COIN.⁸²

As the new manual was being developed, Petraeus leveraged the Army's professional journal *Military Review* to begin a conversation about the performance gap in Iraq as well as the value of COIN (Ricks 2009: 25; Ucko 2009: 77). In December 2005, the journal published a stinging critique by British Army Brigadier Nigel Aylwin-

⁸¹ See *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency* (2006: 1-27).

⁸² The manual is official known in the US Marine Corps as *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5 Counterinsurgency*.

Foster of the US Army's performance in Iraq (Aylwin-Foster 2005; Crane 2010: 63; Nagl 2010a). In early 2006, Petraeus authored an article "Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq" (Petraeus 2006; Robinson 2008: 77). This was followed by a piece written by Cohen, Crane, Nagl, and Horvath. In their article, "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency," the coauthors laid out the core principles of the new doctrine (Robinson 2008: 78). Over the course of the next year, *Military Review* would produce an issue dedicated to COIN and establish a COIN writing contest.

Soon articles started appearing from individuals serving in Iraq. Among the best known, a summer 2006 article by Lieutenant Colonel Douglas Ollivant. Ollivant's article, "Producing Victory: Rethinking Conventional Forces in COIN Operations," was important for both its content (it echoed the draft manual's innovations) and because Ollivant was serving as the chief of plans for the military division responsible for securing Baghdad (Ollivant and Chewning 2006; Robinson 2008: 120-122).

Debate about COIN quickly bled over into the Army's other journals, including *Parameters*, the journal of the US Army War College. In *Parameters*, as in *Military Review*, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, and others, articles in support of innovation began to appear. Writing in a spring 2006 article, Lieutenant Colonel Wade Markel argued the importance of population control in counterinsurgency. His argument drew heavily on British experiences. Later that year, USMC Colonel Michael Melillo argued that the military's culture and preference for 'big wars' was inhibiting innovation (Markel 2006; Melillo 2006).

Articles challenging COIN and arguing in defense of conventional warfare as well as the efficacy of existent doctrine also appeared. In a *Parameters* article published in the summer of 2006, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Cassidy offered a defense of General Casey's emphasis on the training of Iraqis forces as the best means for hunting down insurgents and stabilizing Iraq. In late 2006, a *Military Review* article by Lieutenant Colonel Chris Gibson, entitled "Battlefield Victories and Strategic Success: The Path Forward in Iraq," argued against shifting the operational center of gravity toward population security. Gibson made the case for counterinsurgency warfare in which the focus was first and foremost upon killing the enemy. This, he believed, provided the best means for providing security (Cassidy 2006; Gibson 2006). These articles and others fueled an internal debate about the organization's performance gap in Iraq, the merits of existent doctrine, COIN, as well as the role of the Army, and the very meaning of counterinsurgency (Bacevich 2008; Ucko 2008: 294-295).

In February 2006, Petraeus convened a workshop at Fort Leavenworth to critique and build support for the just completed first draft of the new *Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency*. The workshop, cosponsored by Harvard University, gathered more than one hundred individuals with counterinsurgency relevant knowledge and expertise. In attendance were US and foreign military leaders, members of the president's national security staff, individuals from think tanks and universities, journalists, representatives from the Central Intelligence Agency, lawyers from human rights groups, and members of various non-governmental organizations. For two days the audience combed through

the manual's provisions debating their merit and suggesting revisions (Nagl 2007; Robinson 2008: 78-79; Ricks 2009: 24-26; Ucko 2009: 104-106; Crane 2010: 63).

In June 2006, a second draft was distributed throughout the Army and Marine Corps. The draft spurred responses — some in support of innovation, others deriding the proposed concepts. This second draft would be publicly debated by members of the uniformed military, retired military, politicians, the press, and academics (Schultz and Dew 2006; Nagl 2007; Ricks 2009: 27; Crane 2010: 68-69).

Throughout 2006, the Army continued to engage in large sweeps designed to clear Iraq of insurgents. Motivated by the assumption that US forces acted as an irritant fueling the insurgency, General Casey had established large forward operating bases that isolated American forces from the Iraqi population (Cloud and Jaffe 2009; 221-222).⁸³ From these bases, US troops conducted targeted raids or temporarily swept into local areas, established security, and pulled out (Russert 2006; Robinson 2008: 14-16; Woodward 2008: 75-76; Ricks 2009: 49-51; Ucko 2009: 112; Nagl 2010b). Casey's plan was to increase offensive operations to deny insurgents a safe haven from which to operate (Ricks 2007: 398-405 and 2009: 11-12, 35; Woodward 2008: 54, 91, 93-97). Although ostensibly engaged in counterinsurgency, these acts did little to reduce violence or move the Army closer to securing the national security objective of a stable and democratic Iraq. The situation in Iraq continued to deteriorate as insurgent violence

⁸³ Cloud and Jaffe (2009) argue that General Casey was also motivated by a desire to protect the Army. Casey began his career at a time when the effects of Vietnam had shattered the organization. As a lieutenant, Casey had been forced to address drug and discipline problems that at times forced him to stand guard over his own men with a loaded side arm. As conditions in Iraq deteriorated, Casey was keenly aware of the strain being placed on troops and sought to shield the organization within the large forward operating bases.

increased (Finer and Sebti 2006; Shanker 2006; Robinson 2008: 38-39; Woodward 2008: 80-81, 84, 179-180, 182; Ucko 2009: 114-115).

As the Army struggled to quell the violence, a split about how to respond developed within the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and among other senior military leaders. Some called for an accelerated transition of the war to Iraqi forces. Having achieved the goal of deposing Saddam Hussein, some argued the US should simply pull out. Others argued in support of current operations, but made the case for an increase in the number of troops on the ground. Many, however, agreed with General Peter Pace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. General Pace felt that the military had accomplished its part of the mission to secure US objectives. Pace, and others, felt more ought to be done to push the US' civilian agencies to take on the role of stabilizing and democratizing Iraq (Ricks 2007: 110-111 and 2009: 57, 93; Woodward 2008: 53, 168-174; Ucko 2008: 298-301, 306-308).

In response to the faltering war effort, the intra-military debate about COIN, and growing political pressure from the White House, General Pace launched a panel review of Iraq policy in September 2006. The panel, dubbed 'the council of colonels,' was tasked with determining whether or not the strategy in Iraq was working. The council included two members with close ties to Petraeus — Colonel Peter Mansoor, who directed the Counterinsurgency Center at Fort Leavenworth, and Colonel H.R. McMaster (Robinson 2008: 26-27, 109; Ricks 2009: 90, 101).

McMaster was a key member of the community supporting the implementation of COIN in Iraq. In 2005, while commanding the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment in Iraq,

McMaster had employed counterinsurgency principles in his area of operations. His success at Tall Afar had garnered the attention of President Bush. Although still on active duty, McMaster worked in support of retired General Jack Keane's efforts at the American Enterprise Institute to generate political support for a COIN based strategy in Iraq. It was Petraeus who had convinced the JCS Chairman to place McMaster on the council of colonels (Robinson 2008: 98; Woodward 2008: 36-38; Ricks 2009: 95-96).⁸⁴

During its review process, the council of colonels met several times with the JCS. In October, the council stressed the importance of helping Iraq establish a stable civil society. The JCS rejected the notion as beyond the military's purview. In November, the council informed the JCS that the current strategy was not working. The colonels argued that the US was running out of time within which it could accomplish its objectives. They highlighted the fact that the Iraqi government was unable to meet the needs of its people and that the level of violence in the country was increasing. This time, none of the JCS challenged the colonels' findings, nor did they offer any substantive response. In December 2006, the council delivered their final report. The colonels warned that the current strategy, based on existent doctrine, was failing. The colonels themselves, however, could not come to agreement about the exact cause of the Army's performance failure — or about what should be done to address it. Some recommended surging troops and materials while maintaining the current strategy, others argued for the implementation of COIN, others made the case for pulling out all together (Robinson 2008: 27; Woodward 2008: 167-169, 180-181, 200-201; Ricks 2009: 101-104).

⁸⁴ McMaster is particularly good example of the learning that was going on during this period. McMaster been trained in accordance with, and had excelled at, traditional doctrine. He had earned a silver star during the tank battle at 73 Easting during the 1991 Gulf War.

Later that same December, the JCS briefed President George Bush and Vice President Richard Cheney. The JCS argued against the adoption of COIN, against a surge of troops, and in favor of an increased emphasis on hunting down terrorists. The Chiefs believed that the US military ought to begin pulling out and transition the effort over to US civilian agencies and the Iraqis. Their recommendations were supported by General Casey (Grier 2006; Wright and Baker 2006; Wright and Tyson 2006; Robinson 2008: 14-20, 26-29; Woodward 2008: 5,6, 10, 53, 58-59, 231-237, 241-252, 264-265, 283, 285-289; Ucko 2009: 119-120).

The final version of *Army Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency* was published in December 2006. Made available on both the Army and Marine Corps websites, the manual was downloaded more than one million times in the first month. It was reviewed in *The New York Times*, covered by *Newsweek*, and eventually republished by the University of Chicago Press (Power 2007; Ucko 2009: 109; Crane 2010: 68). More importantly, it was widely read and debated within the Army itself. Faced with strategic defeat, the consensus supporting existent doctrine had disappeared — few believed the Army could kill its way to victory in Iraq. As an organization, the Army was now questioning its own doctrine — it was prepared to learn something new.

The Espousal Phase — Midterm Elections and a Change of Command

“Democrats Take House: Victories Across Country End 12 Years of GOP Control” — was the morning headline in Washington, DC on Wednesday, November 8, 2006. In the previous day’s midterm elections, President George W. Bush and the Republican

Party had suffered a major defeat. Gone was Republican control over the House of Representatives, the Senate, and six governorships. The Democrats now controlled Congress. President Bush's ability to effect the policies and legislative priorities of his party and administration — particularly in regard to Iraq — was now an open question (Branigin 2006; Klein 2006; Page 2006; *The Washington Post* (November 8) 2006; Woodward 2008: 205; Ricks 2009: 58-59, 74).

Despite the wide spread perception that the elections would be close, the party was shocked by the outcome. Hearing news of the results, Representative Peter Hoekstra who had just lost the powerful chairmanship of the House Intelligence Committee “wanted to throw the breakfast dishes through the TV.” The president called it a “thumping.” Arizona Senator John McCain responded with, “We’ve lost our way.” Dick Arney, former Republican majority leader in the House noted, “There's going to be a lot of folks in the party who are going to want an assessment of who we are . . . and what our priorities are.” Many Republicans blamed the war in Iraq for the political disaster that had befallen them — some were ready to abandon both the conflict and the president (Abramowitz and Ricks 2006; “Bush Transcript, Part 3: Election Loss a 'Thumping'” 2006; Page 2006; Walsh 2006; West 2008: 201; Woodward 2008: 206). The sentiment was mirrored in the general mood of the American public.

On the day of the midterm elections, a majority of Americans believed a Democratic victory would result in a more rapid withdrawal of US forces from Iraq. A belief borne out in the returns. Nationwide, fifty-six percent of voters told exit polls they supported removing some or all US troops from Iraq. The Democrats had made the

growing violence in Iraq and the war's apparent failure a central issue in the campaign, now voters expected them to act on it (Milligan 2006; Nagourney and Thee 2006; Siegel 2006; Novak 2007; Woodward 2008: 61, 80-83).

The 2006 midterm elections sparked a critical juncture crisis regarding US policy in Iraq. Rather than reevaluate the national security objectives for which the war was being fought, President Bush called for a wholesale reevaluation of military operations (Abramowitz and Babington 2006; Kreiser 2006; Stockman 2006; Robinson 2008: 19; Woodward 2008: 207, 210). Little time was available, the incoming Democratic congressional majority believed it had a mandate to exit Iraq. If the administration did not change the course of the war, the 110th Congress would (Roberts 2006a; Schleicher 2006; Robinson 2008: 19; Woodward 2008: 262).

The day after the elections, President Bush responded to the crisis by announcing the resignation of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. To replace Rumsfeld, Bush nominated Robert Gates — who had served as the head of the Central Intelligence Agency under George H. W. Bush. Gates, the president asserted, would provide a fresh perspective on the war and help turn around the faltering effort (Roberts 2006b; Zacharia 2006; West 2008: 201; Ricks 2009: 76, 78). Bush then ordered his National Security Council staff initiate a complete review of the war in Iraq (Robinson 2008: 25; West 2008: 201; Woodward 2008: 205, 207).

The political crisis brought about by the midterm elections had been brewing for eighteen months. The insurgency that began in the summer of 2003, and expanded in 2004 and 2005 — in 2006 erupted onto American newspapers and televisions. News

stories and political pundits increasingly focused on rising US casualties, increased sectarian violence, and the gap between conditions in Iraq and pronouncements of progress in Washington and Baghdad. By October, members of the press were asking whether or not Iraq had devolved into a civil war (Lasseter and Landay 2005; "'1,300 Dead' in Iraq Sectarian Violence" 2006; Caryl and Hastings 2006; Conan 2006; Council on Foreign Relations 2006; Daragahi 2006; Hurst 2006; Reid 2006; Shuster 2006; Wong 2006; Robinson 2008: 14; Woodward 2008: 180). Poll numbers indicated declining support for both the president and the war (Milbank and Deane 2005; Page 2005; Brand 2006; Fletcher 2006; Kirkpatrick and Nagourney 2006; Lester 2006; Murray 2006; Roberts 2006c). As a result, members of the Republican Party increasingly worried about how the war might affect their political careers.

Earlier that June, Democrats in the Senate began offering resolutions calling for the withdraw of US forces from Iraq. Democratic leaders sought to highlight the growing violence as a sign the war was failing. Although such resolutions were defeated by the majority held by Republicans — the debates exposed a growing rift between the president and members of his own party (Roberts 2006). Republican Senators Chuck Hagel and Gordon Smith chided their parties' leaders from framing the Democrats position as 'cut and run' and called for a substantive review of the war (Congressional Record — Senate, June 21, 2006). In August 2006, Representative Christopher Shays, a Republican supporter of the war changed course. Shays called for US withdraw and transitioning the war to Iraqi forces (Asthana 2006).

The concerns evident in the summer's media reports were preceded by a series of questions and debates within Washington's official and unofficial policy circles. The Republican controlled 109th Congress responded to these concerns by establishing the bipartisan Iraq Study Group. Created in March, the group was commissioned to search for a way to stabilize Iraq and resolve the war. Members of the group devoted much of their time to examining the "security of Iraq and key challenges to enhancing security within the country" (Barrett 2006; Chaddock 2006; "Fact Sheet - Iraq Study Group" 2006; "Time - Iraq Study Group" 2006; Woodward 2008: 42-43; Ricks 2009: 53).

During this same period, Washington witnessed the 'revolt of the generals.' From February through April, a series of retired flag officers publicly questioned the handling of the Iraq War. The retired generals raised specific questions about pre and post war troop levels and the Army's ability to address the growing insurgency. The revolt sparked a secondary debate about the degree to which civilian authorities in the White House and Pentagon were listening to military leaders, and the appropriateness of the retired officers' public criticisms (Bacon 2006; Blumenthal 2006; Cloud, Schmitt, and Shanker 2006; Lehrer 2006; Ricks 2009: 38-40).

By late summer, Stephen Hadley, the president's national security advisor, was also questioning the Army's performance in Iraq. Hadley worried that the commander of the US led Multinational Forces in Iraq (MNF-I), General George Casey, did not have a clear understanding of how to reduce the level of violence and accomplish the president's objectives. In October, Hadley and his deputy, Megan O'Sullivan, traveled to Baghdad to

get a first hand assessment of the situation (Robinson 2008: 21-24; Woodward 2008: 73-79, 161).

Hadley's concerns were fueled by the assessments, expertise, and insights of his deputy. Tracking events in Iraq was O'Sullivan's responsibility. Each night, she authored a memo on the status of the war for the president. In 2003, while serving with the Provisional Authority in Iraq, O'Sullivan had met (then) Major General David Petraeus. The two stayed in contact. Later, as Petraeus developed his proposed COIN innovations, he invited her to attend one of the review conferences for the new *FM 3-24* (Bumiller 2006; Coll 2008; Robinson 2008: 21; West 2008: 199; Woodward 2008: 299). By the summer of 2006, O'Sullivan had grown increasingly worried about the level of violence in Iraq, the appropriateness of General Casey's strategy, and his plan to reduce the number of US troops at the end of the year. Her memos reflected her concerns (Robinson 2008: 14, 22-24; West 2008: 197-200; Woodward 2008: 60-61, 299-300; Woodward "Doubt, Distrust, Delay" 2008b).

Over the course of 2006, the work of the Iraq Study Group, the revolt of the generals, and public debates about the war, had led groups within the White House and Pentagon to consider what might be done to arrest the deteriorating situation and rescue the US war effort. Most of these reviews had been fairly self-contained, limited to the organization, group, or individuals who had undertaken them. The president's search for a way to salvage the war and achieve his stated objectives in Iraq altered this dynamic. Beginning Veteran's Day weekend, external pressure from the White House highlighted the individual streams of inquiry. Furthermore, the belief that a decision was imminent

created a sense of urgency (Abramowitz and Babington 2006; Hadley 2006; Kreiser 2006; Stockman 2006; Robinson 2008: 19-26; Woodward 2008: 204-210, 261-262; Ricks 2009: 49-59, 74, 76-79; Ucko 2009: 112-113). As Bush's review process began, two potential responses emerged — transition the war to the Iraqis and begin the process of pulling out, or increase the number of US forces in Iraq in an attempt to reduce the level of violence (Reynolds 2006; Robinson 2008: 25; Woodward 2008: 212-218).

Arguments in favor of transitioning the war to the Iraqis were put forward by the Iraq Study Group, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), and General Casey. The Iraq Study Group argued that the “most important questions about Iraq's future [were] now the responsibility of Iraqis.” Accordingly, the group called for Iraqi forces to take primary responsibility for combat operations and for American military units to transition to training and support tasks. The group's recommendations included a phased withdraw of US forces. Barring unforeseen developments, they believed all American combat brigades could exit Iraq by early 2008 (Iraq Study Group 2006: 7; “Recommendations of the Iraq Study Group” 2006; Robinson 2008: 28; Woodward 2008: 128, 251-252; Ricks 2009: 114-115). The Joint Chiefs also argued in favor of transition. From their perspective, the uniformed military had accomplished all they could in Iraq and that it was now vitally important to begin repairing and restoring the force. Furthermore, the JCS worried that the military's force level in Iraq was creating a dangerous inability to meet potential threats. The JCS argued that it was imperative that the burden imposed by the Iraq War be reduced (Bowman 2006; West 2008: 203; Woodward 2008: 168-169, 223, 234, 236, 243, 247, 249-250; Ricks 2009: 93). General Casey, believing American forces acted as

an irritant fueling the insurgency, also argued for a reduction in US military's presence and operations in Iraq. The Commander of MNFI favored transitioning the war effort to Iraqi forces. Even as violence spiked during the summer, Casey argued that the war should be made the full responsibility of Iraqi forces by late 2007 or early 2008 (Robinson 2008: 15-16, 20; West 2008: 221; Woodward 2008: 215; Ricks 2009: 52).⁸⁵

Arguments in favor of surging forces into Iraq were put forward by members of the National Security Council staff (including Hadley and O'Sullivan), members of the informal 'council of colonels' assembled by JCS Chairman General Peter Pace, and one member of the Iraq Study Group. Hadley and O'Sullivan believed Casey was wrong about the irritant effect of US forces. They argued that additional US forces were a prerequisite for reducing the level of violence in Iraq and securing US objectives (Hadley 2006; Hoar 2006; Murphy 2006; Robinson 2008: 26; Cloud and Jaffe 2009: 244).

Although the colonels made the case for a substantial influx of additional forces — they doubted the Army had such available. Instead they recommended the US send what forces it could muster and attempt to reduce the level of violence — especially in Baghdad (Robinson 2008: 27; Ricks 2009: 103-104). Charles Robb, a Vietnam veteran and former senator serving on the Iraq Study Group, also supported the deployment of additional US forces to Iraq. Although Robb had been unsuccessful in getting other members of the panel to embrace a surge proposal, he continued to speak out in favor of additional forces. Robb felt that increased military effort could still about the objectives

⁸⁵ It is also worth noting that the transition argument was being made by Democrats. The idea of transitioning the war to the Iraqis enjoyed strong support from Senator Carl Levin — soon to be Democratic Chairman of the Senate's Armed Services Committee. See "Recommendations of the Iraq Study Group" 2006

for which the war was being fought (Northam 2006; Sanger and Zernike 2006; Woodward 2008: 81-82, 117-120, 128; Ricks 2009: 53).

Arguments in favor of transition gained little traction with the president. Transition proposals skirted questions about whether or not such would lead to the achievement of US objectives. Transition proposals privileged the need of disengagement over the president's stated national security objectives of a stable and independent Iraq (Iraq Study Group 2006: 31; Woodward 2008: 202-203, 210-211). Because such arguments failed to gain support from Bush, no sustained opposition developed — this was not the case with proposals for a surge.

Opposition to the idea of sending additional forces into Iraq came from within the State Department, the chain-of-command in Iraq, and the JCS. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice argued against sending additional forces. She questioned their utility. Rice worried that additional units would become embroiled in the growing civil conflict, act as an irritant, or simply prove to be irrelevant (and thus a waste of resources). The Secretary of State argued that rather than surge, the Army ought to pull back its forces. If need be, Rice argued, the US should scale back its objectives in Iraq (Barnes 2008; Brooks 2008; Robinson 2008: 25; Woodward 2008: 220, 232-234, 245-247, 267). General Casey agreed. Casey lobbied against the deployment of additional units. Like Rice, he doubted their utility. Furthermore, Casey felt that US forces prevented Iraqis from taking responsibility for their own security. The Commander of MNFI argued that more soldiers would simply foster Iraq's dependence on the United States. Casey made the case for a pulling out. To both White House and congressional authorities he said the

Army needed to “leave to win” (Barnes 2008; Brooks 2008; Robinson 2008: 29; Woodward 2008: 215, 231, 236, 241-242, 252, 286-289; Ricks 2009: 53, 104). The JCS, like Rice and Casey, argued that additional forces would have little positive effect and might prove detrimental to the situation on the ground. The Chiefs repeatedly argued that a surge would leave the US without contingency forces should a crisis develop in another part of the world. Furthermore, the JCS felt that the domestic political situation in the United States would not support additional deployments (Bowman 2006; Barnes 2008; Robinson 2008: 27; Woodward 2008: 173-174, 223, 234, 236, 242-244, 247-251; Ricks 2009: 93, 113-114).

With the White House searching for a solution to the failing war effort, members of the COIN community began to lobby for innovation. As Petraeus and his team worked to complete *FM 3-24*, they used the manual’s publication to promote population-centric counterinsurgency innovations. Beginning in October, John Nagl, Jack Keane, Conrad Crane, and others who had helped craft the COIN manual began appearing in the popular press. In the media, members of the community provided the basic tenets of population-centric counterinsurgency. Members of the community noted the complexity of the war in Iraq and the benefits of COIN. They argued that their innovations would help soldiers and marines become more savvy, thus more effective, operators. COIN was presented as a tool for salvaging the war effort and achieving US objectives in Iraq (“Army, Marines Write New Counterinsurgency Strategy” 2006; Barnes 2006a; Barnes 2006b; Chadwick 2006; Gordon 2006; Horan 2006).

At the same time they began to make a public case for COIN, members of the community began to work the backchannels of US civil-military relations. These informal networks of personal contacts provided the COIN community with access to senior officials in the White House, Pentagon, and the MNFI command structure. Through backchannels, members of the community argued three things ought to be done. First, the Army should adopt a strategy based on the population-centric counterinsurgency doctrine contained in *FM 3-24*. Second, to support said strategy all available Army combat brigades should be deployed to Iraq. Third, David Petraeus should replace George Casey as the commander of MNFI. Leading the community's push was retired General Jack Keane — a former Army Vice Chief of Staff with established connections in Washington, DC (“Interview General Jack Keane” 2007; Robinson 2008: 30-35; Woodward 2008: 129-138, 142-146; Ricks 2009: 74-105).

Throughout November, members of the COIN community worked backchannel conduits to develop specific plans for how their innovations could be operationalized in Iraq. From within Pace's ‘council of colonels,’ Peter Mansoor and H.R. McMaster gathered information about what resources might be available. By-passing General Casey, Keane reached out directly to Lieutenant General Ray Odierno. From Odierno, the new Deputy Commander of MNFI, Keane received information about how additional forces could be used to implement COIN in Iraq (Bennett 2008; Woodward 2008: 296; Ricks 2009: 91-92, 111-114).

On Friday, December 8, Keane, a few of Colonel McMaster's subordinate officers, and a collection of retired military officers and civilian academics participated in

an exercise hosted by the American Enterprise Institute — a conservative think tank in Washington, DC. The institute’s Fred Kagan ran the exercise. Kagan was closely connected to both Keane and McMaster. Kagan had shared an office with McMaster when the two taught at West Point. The exercise provided a forum for using the Army planning processing to work out the logistics of a troop surge. Based on their perceptions of the troops available and the most important security priorities — the participants developed a plan calling for the deployment of five additional brigades to Iraq (Woodward 2008: 276-278; Ricks 2009: 94-98, 119-121).

The afternoon of the American Enterprise Institute exercise, Keane received a call from the White House. President Bush had gotten word, likely from Megan O’Sullivan, of Keane’s concerns regarding existent doctrine’s ability to bring about success in Iraq. The president had also been told that the former Army Chief of Staff might have a solution that the JCS were overlooking. The president wanted to see Keane (“Interview General Jack Keane” 2007; West 2008: 221; Ricks 2009: 98).

The following Monday, December 11, Keane joined the president, vice-president, Karl Rove, Stephen Hadley, Eliot Cohen, retired General Barry McCaffrey, Steven Biddle, and a few others in the Oval Office. One at a time, each individual provided their assessment of the crisis as well as recommendations regarding what actions the president ought to take. When his turn came, Keane presented his assessment and COIN. Keane was frank with the president. He argued that COIN offered the best chance for success — for achieving Bush’s national security objectives in Iraq. Yet, he also cautioned the president that implementation would require a surge of additional forces and that he

should prepare himself for the increase in US casualties that would occur as soldiers moved out of their heavily fortified bases and began to live and operate among the people. Keane then warned the president that time was running out (“Interview General Jack Keane” 2007; Kaminski 2008; Robinson 2008: 30, 32-33; Woodward 2008: 279-281; Kagan 2009; 27-29; Ricks 2009; 98-100).

Reactions to Keane’s argument were split. Barry McCaffrey and another retired general, Wayne Downing, disagreed. The two retired generals argued that surging forces was a “fool’s errand.” Like Casey and the JCS, McCaffrey and Downing argued that additional forces would have little sustained effect on the level of violence or the war. Cohen and Biddle, however, agreed with Keane — they supported his call for COIN and the deployment of additional forces (Robinson 2008: 34; Woodward 2008: 281; Ricks 2009: 100).

President Bush then asked about General Casey’s performance as Commander of MNFI. On this, there was unanimous agreement. Regardless of their views of COIN or a potential surge, each individual recommended George Casey be replaced with David Petraeus. That evening, Keane received a phone call from the White House — the meeting had been decisive (“Interview General Jack Keane” 2007; Robinson 2008: 34-35; Ricks 2009: 100-101).

On December 19, the day after Robert Gates was sworn in as Secretary of Defense, he called Petraeus. Gates had been overwhelmingly confirmed by the Senate. Many senators, including Ted Kennedy, voice support for Gates with the understanding the he would bring a dramatic change in policy — not just a change in personnel

(Transcript of Robert Gates Confirmation Hearing 2006).⁸⁶ Now the new secretary was about to travel to Iraq. He wanted advice regarding what to look for and the questions he ought to ask. Petraeus had reviewed the American Enterprise Institute's exercise and was still in routine contact with O'Sullivan and other members of the National Security Council staff. He told the new Secretary of Defense to simply focus on one thing — whether or not the current approach was working (Ricks 2009; 116).

By mid-December it had become obvious to Casey and Pace that Petraeus and Keane were engaged in backchannel communications with the White House and the chain-of-command in Iraq. To reassert control over the military advice being presented to the president, Casey and Pace attempted to close off MNFI from Petraeus and Keane. Casey's executive officer called Petraeus. He relayed a message from his four star boss to the three star commander of the Combined Arms Center — “Hey man, don't be calling [Odierno].” Keane and Kagan had been scheduled to visit Central Command (CENTCOM), the US military's regional command responsible for the Middle East and MNFI's the superior headquarters. Suddenly their trip was cancelled (Woodward 2008: 310; Ricks 2009: 104, 112).

After Christmas, Pace travelled to Texas to visit Bush at the president's vacation home in Crawford. Sensing that the president was determined to surge forces into Iraq, Pace presented a modest plan to deploy additional brigades. The plan, developed with Casey, called for the introduction of one brigade immediately — and the second later, if deemed necessary by Casey. Three more brigades would be readied, and deployed one at

⁸⁶ In fact, the only two no votes were cast by Republican Senators Rick Santorum and Jim Bunning. The two disagreed with the perceived need to change policy in Iraq.

a time if the situation warranted it (Robinson 2008: 36; West 2008: 219; Woodward 2008: 303).

When Keane learned of Pace's proposal, he called Hadley. Keane argued that the piecemeal introduction of troops without the implementation of COIN would fail — militarily and politically. Keane insisted that to have the desired effect, all additional forces must be introduced at once. Furthermore, Keane argued that the White House should prepare itself for the fact that any turn around in the war would not happen immediately. Keane also informed Hadley that there was now an open struggle within the MNFI chain-of-command: Casey, with the support of the JCS, was working against COIN and the surge, while Odierno was moving to try and implement it. Keane followed up his comments to Hadley with additional phone calls to the White House — including one to John Hannah, the vice president's chief of staff (Woodward 2008: 296-299; Ricks 2009: 118-119).

The night of December 27, Bush dined with Secretary of State Rice. Rice had opposed the surge. She had made the case that the US had other vital interests and that the US ought to reduce its goals in Iraq and transition the fight to the Iraqis. During the post election review process, however, the president had proven unwilling to sacrifice his objective of a stable and independent Iraq. Given this, Rice now argued in favor of COIN and the surge: "I think you probably have to do it," she told the president (Woodward 2008: 303-304).

On December 28, the rest of the president's national security team flew to Texas. Bush reiterated the stated national security objectives and stressed the importance of a

reduction in violence as a prerequisite for political reconciliation in Iraq. Bush then told his team that the deployment of additional troops would represent a sustained effort, not simply a one time surge. Furthermore, the president said he would not commit to a timetable regarding how long the increased troop levels would last. The president then made the case for a change in command. Bush wanted David Petraeus to take over as Commander MNFI — George Casey would be promoted to Army Chief of Staff (Martin 2006; Woodward 2008: 305-306).

The first week of January, Gates called Petraeus to confirm that the general was willing to accept command of MNFI. Petraeus gave a conditional yes — he told the secretary that he had to be given the authority to accomplish the mission as he saw fit. Gates agreed. General Pace also called Petraeus to inform him of the president's intention to nominate him to become Commander MNFI. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs asked Petraeus what he was going to request in terms of additional troops and resources. Petraeus asked Pace if he could consult with Odierno before responding. Pace agreed. When asked, Odierno told Petraeus to request everything — all five brigades. Later, Petraeus informed the president of his intentions regarding COIN and the surge, telling his commander-in-chief “this isn't double-down...this is all-in” (Robinson 2008: 47-50, 88; West 2008: 221-223; Woodward 2008: 308-309; Ricks 2009: 127-128; Bowden 2010).

On January 5, 2007, President Bush announced that he was nominating (then) Lieutenant General David Petraeus as General George Casey's successor in Iraq. Five days later, Bush made a televised address to the nation regarding a “New Way Forward”

in Iraq. The president announced the deployment of additional forces and publicly espoused his support for the adoption of COIN. In pursuit of a stable and independent Iraq, the Army would now focus its efforts on securing neighborhoods and protecting the local populations (Bush 2007; Gordon and Shanker 2007; Robinson 2008: 40, 43; Woodward 2008: 210; Ricks 2009: 122-123; Ucko 2009: 114).

Three months later, in March 2007, Democratic Senators would introduce a resolution calling for the withdraw of US combat forces from Iraq within two years. The bill, put forward by the new Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, highlighted the Army's performance gap in Iraq and the growing violence. In the House of Representative, the Appropriations Committee would pass legislation calling for withdraw (Toner and Zeleny 2007). Despite the president's support, Petraeus would have little time to attempt implement doctrine innovation.

The Implementation Phase — Petraeus mints COIN

In late January 2007, the Democratically controlled Senate unanimously confirmed David Petraeus as George Casey's replacement as Commander Multi-National Force Iraq (MNF-I). Although President George W. Bush had publicly espoused the need for the adoption of COIN, he did not want Casey embarrassed by the fact he was being relieved. Technically General Casey was being promoted — he would become the new Army Chief of Staff. As he briefed his replacement, Casey continued to express his doubts about COIN and the surge. "What we're seeing here is a major shift in strategy from them doing it to us doing it. Whatever you do, whatever you decide, just be clear

about it, because it's a major change" he told Petraeus. General Petraeus assumed formal command in Iraq on 10 February 2007 (West 2008: 224-227; Kagan 2009: 29; Woodward 2008: 327-328; Cloud and Jaffe 2009; 253-254).

In addition to the change of command at MNFI, President Bush changed the leadership at Central Command (CENTCOM). Formally, CENTCOM sat between MNFI and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). General John Abizaid was relieved and retired. To replace him, Bush chose Admiral Fox Fallon. During his confirmation hearing, Fallon expressed uncertainty about COIN, the surge, and the war. "Maybe we ought to redefine the goals here a bit, and do something that's more realistic..." he told the Senate. Fallon too would be confirmed as CENTCOM's new commander and in March assumed his position as Petraeus' boss (Donnelly and Waller 2007; Zacharia and Fireman 2007; Woodward 2008: 327; Kagan 2009; 29).

Preparations for the implementation of COIN began before the official change of command. Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, the Deputy Commander of MNFI, had already developed a detailed plan regarding how to implement Petraeus's counterinsurgency doctrine. Odierno's strategy called for the redeployment of existing forces outside of the large forward operating bases established by General Casey. In addition, Odierno's plan established population security as the primary task of the US Army — with an emphasis on security in and around Baghdad. When Odierno briefed the incoming commander on 08 February, he reported that operations orders had already been issued to change the way the Army was fighting in Iraq. No longer were large unit sweeps to be used to attack and drive out enemy forces. Subordinate commands were

now being told to “clear, control, and retain areas” in order to provide security and reduce violence (Odierno 2007; Robinson 2008: 103-105; West 2008: 229; Kagan 2009: 29-33, 37, 45; Ricks 2009: 132-133; Mansoor 2010: 77-78, 81).

Petraeus did not arrive in Baghdad alone. Prior to his departure, the incoming commander assembled a team composed of as many members of the COIN community as possible. With the support of Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, orders were changed or cancelled. To return to Iraq, some of the colonels (including Bill Rapp) that would make up Petraeus team were forced to relinquish their own commands — an important part of their professional development and something normally considered essential for promotion (Robinson 2008: 86, 90, 109-113, 121; West 2008: 246; Ricks 2009: 133-138). As a result of his efforts, Petraeus took command with a staff fully versed in COIN, the specifics of the operational environment in Iraq, and with substantial experience working with (if not for) the new Commander MNFI.

Upon assuming command, Petraeus altered many of the organizational structures that had existed under General Casey. Petraeus established a Joint Strategic Assessment Team (JSAT) to devise strategy and oversee the operationalization of COIN. JSAT was staffed by members of the COIN community, including civilians, and led by (then) Colonel H.R. McMaster. Petraeus also established the Commander’s Initiatives Group (CIG). Led by Colonel Bill Rapp, CIG was tasked with asking ‘what if’ questions about potential developments that might alter the operational environment. Together, JSAT and CIG operated as in-house think tanks taking over many of the functions traditionally carried out by the operations section of the general’s staff — a section traditionally led by

a lieutenant general (Robinson 2008: 98-100, 114-117; West 2008: 246-247, 273; Woodward 2008: 335-337; Wright and Reese 2008: 176-180; Ricks 2009: 133-138, 140-141).

Petraeus changed the way MNFI was commanded. General Casey led the Army in Iraq, devised strategy, and managed the war. These tasks were accomplished primarily through his subordinate generals on his formal staff. Confident that Odierno, JSAT, and CIG understood the war, COIN, and his intentions as commander — Petraeus provided guidance rather than explicit instructions and delegated strategy and management to his Deputy Commander and in-house think tanks. The formal command staff of general officers was charged with managing MNFI as an organization. In short, they were responsible for the processing of information, personnel management, and resource issues inherent to an organization of some 160,000 individuals (Harnden 2007; Robinson 2008: 90-100, 136; West 2008: 250-251, 273-274; Woodward 2008: 335-337; Cloud and Jaffe 2009: 266; Ricks 2009: 165).

The Commander of MNFI focused his attention on mentoring the Army — particularly at the brigade level and below. Petraeus spent his time making sure COIN was understood. He monitored how junior officers put into practice the tenets of population security. The day he assumed command, Petraeus issued a short letter to everyone in his command. The letter made his intent clear. “We will conduct a pivotal campaign to improve security for the Iraqi people” he wrote (Petraeus 2007; Robinson 2008: 93; West 2008: 227, 247, 250; Woodward 2008: 329; Ricks 2009: 129-130, 161-165, 240).

To ensure implementation, the general traveled into the field. “We’re going out with the troops. We’re going on some patrols and we’re going to do it in Baghdad.” Petraeus informed his personal staff. The general intended to see how the Army was fighting, to observe first hand how well the Army was altering the manner in which it was fighting the war. Those lieutenant colonels, majors, and captains who found new and inventive ways to implement COIN were invited to join Petraeus during his morning runs. During these moments of personal contact, Petraeus solicited the input of his junior officers regarding what had worked in their particular area, and why. To those who took risks and found inventive ways to implement COIN, he offered the moral and material support of their commanding general (Robinson 2008: 238-239, 251-253; Woodward 2008: 329, 335, 362-363; Broadwell 2009; Ricks 2009: 161-162, 252-253; Haith 2010).

From January through June 2007, the Army established joint security stations and combat posts to operationalize COIN. The process began before Petraeus took command, as Odierno began moving the Army out of the massive forward operating bases established by Casey. Most of these bases had housed numerous brigades. Under Casey, brigades would be directed by MNFI to conduct raids or assaults to clear an area of insurgents. After which, they would return to their base. Under Petraeus, the majority of the brigades were given responsibility for a specific geographic area. Within their respective area, each brigade would establish several joint security stations — normally manned by one battalion each. Through the security stations, JSAT operationalized the small units tactics and the principle that troops should provide security by living among the people. The stations ensured that the Army would no longer commute to the fight

(Woodward 2008: 330, 335-337; Kagan 2009: 31, 34-39, 151; Ucko 2009: 115-116, 120; Ricks 2009: 141, 168-169; Mansoor 2010: 81).

At the joint security stations, each US battalion was paired with an Iraqi counterpart. The stations allowed the forces to train and eventually carry out combined operations. Furthermore, the stations increased the visibility of US forces by spreading them out among Iraq's population. Radiating out from these security stations, each brigade established its combat (later coalition) outposts. These outposts, established in neighborhoods, were manned by one of the brigade's companies. From these outposts, soldiers patrolled their neighborhoods and established relationships with local Iraqis (Robinson 2008: 121-123, 181-270; West 2008: 229-230, 274-276; Kagan 2009: 32-39, 52, 104-107; Ricks 2009: 174-176; Ucko 2009: 126; Mansoor 2010: 79). Establishment of the joint security stations and combat outposts effectively reduced the primary unit of action from the division and brigade to the battalion and company.

At the same time Petraeus and his team were reorienting MNFI to small unit tactics and population security, they flattened the command hierarchy of the organization. As surge forces arrived, Odierno doubled the number of battalions assigned to each brigade. This effectively reduced the number of subordinate commands between Petraeus and the troops that manned the joint security stations and combat outposts. It became normal for guidance to be communicated directly to the seventy-five battalion commanders under Petraeus. The concept of making the battalion, rather than brigade the primary unit had come from a *Military Review* article written by Lieutenant Colonel

Doug Ollivant. Petraeus passed the idea along to Odierno and JSAT (Robinson 2008: 121-123; West 2008: 250-251, 331; Ricks 2009: 153-155).

While MNFI was implementing COIN, proponents of traditional doctrine and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) continued to express concerns about both the war. General Richard Cody, Major General Robert Williams, General Lance Smith, and (then) Lieutenant Colonel Gian Gentile were among the most vocal critics of General Petraeus and COIN. Through lectures, articles, and media appearances they questioned the appropriateness of COIN — as well as the validity of Petraeus' innovations. The JCS continued to resent the backchannel manner in which the COIN innovations had been brought about. Many wanted to re-exert the strength of the military's formal institutions (McMichael 2007; Cody 2008; Raz 2008; Robinson 2008: 89, 294-296, 338-341; Ricks 2009: 149-150, 217-219; Ucko 2009: 135-136, 177). Admiral Fox Fallon, the new head of Central Command, turn out to be among those who sought to reestablish the traditional conduits of civil-military relations.

Driven by his concerns regarding the strategy being pursued and the resource requests being by MNFI, Fallon attempted to exercise control over Petraeus. Upon taking command at CENTCOM, Fallon ordered his team to review the Army's mission in Iraq. He then ordered all MNFI requests be reviewed and approved by CENTCOM. Later, Fallon sent one of his staff officers, Rear Admiral James Winnefeld, into Iraq to observe and advise Petraeus. Fallon's actions slowed operations in Iraq and created friction between the two commands (Robinson 2008: 295; Woodward 2008: 337-338, 340, 342-343, 348-349, 393; Ricks 2009: 230-237).

After Petraeus assumed command, retired General Jack Keane continued to operate as a backchannel conduit between the general and the White House. The same month Petraeus assumed command, he invited Keane to Iraq. Keane stayed two weeks. In March, the retired general returned to Washington and briefed Vice President Dick Cheney on his trip. Over the course of the next eighteen months, Keane maintained the information conduit by routinely traveling between Washington and Baghdad (Ward 2008; Woodward 2008: 331-333, 375-378, 386-390, 412-416).

When Fallon complicated MNFI's ability to get needed resources, Keane interceded on Petraeus' behalf — a fact that further irritated the JCS. General Casey, now Army Chief of Staff, confronted Keane. Casey argued that Keane's actions were dangerous — given that Keane was retired and thus 'unaccountable.' Nonetheless, Keane continued to enjoy the support of the president and vice-president. Keane's backchannels allowed him to communicate information about war to the White House. When necessary, they also allowed him to rally the president in the face criticism. For his part, President Bush relied on Keane as a channel through which he could express his personal support for Petraeus (Woodward 2008: 356-361, 371, 386-390, 399-401; Ricks 2009: 236-237).

The level of violence and number of US casualties continued to increase during the first half of 2007. Despite warnings from Petraeus that such would be the case as US forces moved to protect the people of Iraq, political support for the war and the surge continued to decline. In March 2007, the Democratic Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi confronted President Bush. She pressured the president to

compromise with the Democratically controlled Congress. The president's response was curt: "My views are well known, I've made myself clear." President Bush continued to voice support for both Petraeus and his new strategy — vetoing a congressional resolution that would have forced troops to begin withdrawing from Iraq by October (Abramowitz and Baker 2007; Woodward 2008: 338-340, 345-346, 349-351; Kagan 2009: 48-49; Cloud and Jaffe 2009: 262; Ricks 2009: 178-188).

To ensure that General Petraeus would have the additional resources promised by the president, it became necessary to extend Army tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Each brigade would now deploy for fifteen months — rather than twelve. The Secretary of Defense briefed General Casey on the decision the day Casey assumed his new position as the Army Chief of Staff. Gates and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Peter Pace had already received Bush's approval. The decision was announced in April (Woodward 2008: 341-342; Ricks 2009: 185).

In July 2007, with the joint security stations and combat outposts established and the surge troops in position, MNFI began offensive operations against the insurgency. Although coordinated at the brigade level and above, offensive operations were carried out by the battalions. These operations were informed by intelligence developed as a result of the new relationships that had developed between US forces and local Iraqis. Furthermore, although some brigade and Special Forces units were employed as mobile strike teams that could sweep into a given area — most operations were carried out by forces operating out of the joint security stations. US forces were now clearing, holding,

and securing the area in which they lived and operated (Robinson 2008: 164-168, 179-216; West 2008: 274-276; Kagan 2009: 113-147; Ricks 2009: 190-194, 200-202).

During the last half of 2007, the level of violence in Iraq began to drop. The implementation of COIN had resulted in better security for local Iraqis, increased cooperation between between US forces and local tribes (including the movement that became known as the Sons of Iraq), and a reduction in the level of insurgent activity (Robinson 2008: 267-270; West 2008: 278, 280-292; Ricks 2009: 170-171, 237-243).

The Army's success in Iraq produced effects in Washington. First, it reduced the level of vocal opposition to the surge. When Petraeus testified in September offering a progress report, Democratic criticism had softened and focused more on the political situation in Iraq and the military mission. Petraeus' announcement that the decline in violence would allow MNFI to begin to return to pre-surge levels further lessened political criticism. By the following spring, it had all but disappeared. Second, success in Iraq led to Petraeus' selection in November 2007 as the chair of the Army's promotion board selecting which colonels would be advanced to brigadier general. Of the thousand considered, forty were selected. Many of them were members of the COIN community — including H.R. McMaster, the leader of Petraeus' JSAT. The rise of the COIN colonels to brigadier general signaled a change, McMaster had been passed over twice before (Robinson 2008: 293-305, 342-347; West 2008: 317-323, 331-333, 355-356; Ricks 2009: 243-254; Ucko 2009: 131).

The attempt to implement COIN in Iraq had been successfully completed by 2008. By January, the Army had successfully altered the way it was fighting in Iraq.

That same month, President Bush flew to Kuwait to meet with Petraeus and extend his thanks and pledge his continued support. That fall, Petraeus would be nominated by President Bush to replace Fox Fallon as Commander of CENTCOM. Petraeus would be confirmed by the Senate and assume responsibility for both the war in Iraq and that in Afghanistan. Odierno would be tapped to replace Petraeus as Commander MNFI — a position he would hold until the official end of combat operations in August 2010 (Robinson 2008: 324-326, 346-347; Woodward 2008: 405-406, 408-411; Ricks 2009: 274-277; Ucko 2009: 131-132).

Shortcomings of Traditional Explanations

Barry Posen and Stephen Rosen argue that major innovations in military doctrine rarely occur during wartime. Despite disagreement about the catalysts and mechanisms that drive innovation, on this point their arguments align. Posen contends that countries will forgo wartime attempts because the confusion wrought is likely to engender disaster. Rosen holds that the time frame of war is too short to allow for major innovation. He argues that a generational shift within the organization is necessary to establish the incentives that alter behavior and bring about major innovations in doctrine (Posen 1984; Rosen 1991). Neither scholar would expect, *a priori*, the events observed during the Iraq War. Nonetheless, it is important to consider whether or not traditional arguments explain innovation in Iraq.

Four potential explanations can be derived from traditional arguments concerning innovation. Two of the arguments rest upon perceptions of the international balance of

power, one based on the perceptions of civilian authorities (an external argument), and one based on the perceptions of those within the Army itself (an internal argument).⁸⁷ A third traditional explanation rests upon the degree to which civilian authorities pushed for doctrinal innovation (a second external argument).⁸⁸ The fourth potential explanation offered by traditional arguments relies on the degree to which incentives within the Army supported innovation (a second internal argument).⁸⁹ In this instance, none of these traditional arguments offer a satisfactory explanation.

Arguments about the effects of the perceived balance of power turn on the relative importance of Iraq — and to some extent, the importance of regional stability in the Middle East. At issue is this: was the national security objective viewed as sufficiently important as to warrant the costs and risks of innovation? The answer is a qualified no. There existed no stable consensus among civilian authorities or the uniformed military regarding the nature or magnitude of US national security interests in Iraq. There was no push from civilian authorities for major innovation in Army doctrine.

Within the administration of George W. Bush, Iraq's importance to US national security varied among individuals and overtime. Even before the 2000 presidential election, some members of the president's future foreign policy team advocated regime change in Iraq. Condoleezza Rice, Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld and others argued in favor of removing Saddam Hussein. Their position took on a 'march of history' quality, it posited a world view in which balance of power concerns were colored by

⁸⁷ The externally derived version of this argument follows the logic of Posen (1984), the internally derived version that of Rosen (1991).

⁸⁸ Based on the logic of Posen (1984).

⁸⁹ Based on the logic of Rosen (1991).

ideological components. As a result, their arguments held that the democratization of autocratic nation-states was an important part of national security (Rice 2000; Packer 2005: 18-24, 24-32). The affect of this logic, however, waxed then waned throughout Bush's tenure as president.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, President Bush adopted the view that the transformation of Iraq into a democratic ally of the United States represented a vital national security objective. This argument was expressed in Bush's January 2002 State of the Union Address. It was also clear the following month in a presidential address at the American Enterprise Institute: "The world has a clear interest in the spread of democratic values, because stable and free nations do not breed ideologies of murder. They encourage the peaceful pursuit of a better life. . . . A new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region." This sentiment would be repeated during his May 2003 speech announcing the end of major combat operations in Iraq, and in the 2003 National Security Strategy (Bush 2002, 2003a, and 2003b; Packer 2005: 41-46, 62-64; Gardner 2008: 116-148). This emphasis on democratic transition, however, would be short lived.

As the Army became bogged down in Iraq — the president's objectives changed. They became more circumscribed. By August 2005, the president defined the US national security objective in Iraq as simply being "a free nation that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself" (Bush 2005; Packer 2005: 306-332; Wright and Knickmeyer 2005; Gardner 2008: 116-148). The empirical evidence in this case suggest

Bush's perception of the relative importance of Iraq wavered.⁹⁰ During the review process that occurred in late 2006, Bush told his national security advisor, Stephen Hadley, and others that he expected them to tell him if what he was asking for in Iraq was impossible. The president wanted to achieve his goals, but the record suggests that he did not hold Iraq to be of overriding importance to US national security. Bush was willing to reduce his objectives and transition out of Iraq, if his national security team believed such was necessary (Woodward 2008: 207, 212-214, 244-248; Ricks 2009: 13-15).

In the case of Iraq, neither the push for a surge or the adoption of COIN originated from within the White House. Civilian authorities came to support such as a means to stabilizing Iraq — and in response to the critical juncture crisis brought by the 2006 midterm elections. Civilian perceptions regarding the balance of power in Iraq (or the greater Middle East region) did not, however, provide the catalyst for innovation.

The internally derived version of the balance of power argument also fails to offer a satisfactory explanation, military perceptions regarding the balance of power cannot explain doctrinal innovation in Iraq. Prior to the 2003 invasion, key senior leaders within the Army disagreed with civilian pre-war planning and Department of Defense arguments concerning the number of troops that would be needed for the invasion (and later occupation) of Iraq. Some within the organization expressed concern about the Army's ability to conduct post-war stability operations, then Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki raised the specter of Vietnam. These concerns, however, did not represent a

⁹⁰ It is worth noting that even Condoleezza Rice's belief in the importance of democratization appeared to weaken as the Army struggled to secure Iraq. For much of 2006, Rice argued that the president ought to consider reducing the US objectives in Iraq rather than surge additional forces. See, Robinson (2008: 25) and Woodward (2008: 220, 232-234).

consensus view within the military (Crane 2002; Ricks 2007: 69-70, 78-84, 96-97, 109-111, 130-132, 157, 184). Furthermore, none of these pre-war concerns can be traced back to perceptions regarding the international balance of power.

As the insurgency grew more intense, there was disagreement within the military about whether or not US interests would be better served via an increased effort or by withdrawing altogether — a fact mirrored within the ‘council of colonels’ established by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Peter Pace. The Joint Chiefs of Staff eventually expressed concern over the fact that commitment of forces required by the war was leaving the US without a contingency force (Bowman 2006; Woodward 2008: 249-250). Yet, this was a general concern and not expressed in regard to the specific capabilities of a given nation-state or any changes (realized or expected) in the international balance of power. The debate about whether or not US forces should transition the effort to Iraqi forces and withdraw or implement COIN was not framed in reference to the international balance of power.

Balance of power arguments are unable to provide a satisfactory explanation (whether externally or internally derived) for why the Army attempted major innovations in doctrine during the Iraq War. In this instance, no stable consensus regarding the balance of power implications existed — among civilian authorities or the military. As a result, perceptions of the balance of power could not have acted as an effective catalyst for (or resistor to) doctrinal innovation.

There is an additional reason why traditional balance of power arguments are unsatisfactory in this case. Even if one selects a specific perspective, for example, that of

President George W. Bush, and holds it to have had a constant and overriding effect — balance of power arguments fall short.⁹¹ For by themselves, perceptions of the balance of power cannot explain why innovation occurred under David Petraeus but not George Casey, or why change occurred in 2007 and not 2005, or the role played by retired General Jack Keane or other backchannel elements of US civil-military relations. At best, traditional balance of power arguments provide the necessary antecedent conditions — the perceived need. They do not provide a satisfactory accounting of the sequence of events nor the outcome.

The third potential explanation provided by traditional arguments concerns the degree to which civilian authorities pushed for doctrinal innovation. This argument is similar to the externally derived balance of power argument, however, it differs in one key aspect. It is based upon civilian promotion of identified doctrinal innovations on the basis that such have utility and ought to be part of the armed service's repertoire — before or regardless of the conflict at hand.⁹² This traditional argument also fails to provide a satisfactory explanation regarding innovation during the Iraq War.

Civilian authorities in the Bush administration made no effort to bring about doctrinal innovation — before or during the war in Iraq. There was no attempt to encourage the military to expand doctrine or take on additional tasks. There was, however, a push to increase the armed services' ability to more effectively carry out conventional missions. This intent was signaled during the 2000 presidential campaign,

⁹¹ As noted earlier, the empirical evidence of this case does not support such.

⁹² For example: Prior to World War I, and long before Pacific battles of World War II, Secretary of the Navy George von Lengerke Meyer pressed for the development of naval aviation. See Beers (1946) and Dorwart and Wolf (2001).

George W. Bush routinely criticized President Bill Clinton for what it saw as an overuse of military forces in non-traditional missions.⁹³ Once in office, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld pressed this issue by highlighting the so-called ‘revolution in military affairs’ — which sought to expand US dominance of technology in order to become a faster, more lethal force. This push on the part of civilian authorities, however, had more to do with weapons procurement than doctrine. It left intact traditional assumptions regarding the operational center of gravity and the use of firepower (Rumsfeld 2002; Kaplan 2003; Cockburn 2007: 108-118, 126-129, 202).

There was no civilian push for counterinsurgency doctrine prior to the Iraq War. Nor was there a push for such during the war. As noted earlier, civilian authorities eventually pressed for a commitment of additional forces as a means for achieving success in Iraq. They did not, however, press for a change in doctrine (Hadley 2006; Hoar 2006; Murphy 2006; Robinson 2008: 26). Not until pressured by the COIN community did civilian authorities consider and come to support doctrinal innovation (Martin 2006; “Interview General Jack Keane” 2007; Robinson 2008: 34-35, 40-43; Woodward 2008: 305-306; Ricks 2009: 100-101, 122-123).

The fourth potential explanation offered by traditional arguments relies on the degree to which organizational incentives acted as a catalyst for (or resistor to) doctrinal innovation. Like traditional balance of power arguments, those involving organizational incentives are unable to establish a clear and sustained effect. During the Iraq War, organizational incentives reinforced traditional doctrine *and* fueled innovation.

⁹³ Bush raised the issue during the second presidential debate. See Suarez (2000).

Military doctrine is the basis for professional education and development, for evaluation, and a key part an armed service's organizational essence. From the 2003 invasion through the tenure of General George Casey — adherence to traditional doctrine was rewarded. Awards were issued and promotions granted on the basis of how well officers conducted the tasks of traditional doctrine — and on their basis to maintain low casualty rates among their troops. This reinforced, even further encouraged, the use of large unit sweeps and reliance on firepower (in the hopes of avoiding US casualties). It also fostered the use of large forward operating bases that shielded, and separated, Army units from Iraqi populations (Downie 1988; Nagl 2005; "When Deadly Force Bumps into Hearts and Minds" 2005; Ricks 2007: 170-171, 195, 214, 234; Robinson 2008: 38-39; Ucko 2009: 61).

Although doctrine represents a significant component of an armed service's organizational essence, it is not the singular element. Essence is also derived from the purpose of the organization. The purpose of the organization also creates incentives (Clark and Wilson 1961; Halperin, Clapp, and Kanter 1974: 28, 39-40). David Petraeus, H.R. McMaster, and other members of the COIN community were motivated to innovate by organizational incentives to achieve the US national security objective — the organizational purpose of the Army. During the course of the war, the incentives of professional development and those of purpose became linked. A condition best illustrated by the selection of General Petraeus to chair the promotion board choosing which colonels would advance to brigadier general (Ucko 2009: 131).

It is impossible to understand how and why innovation came about without discussing the role of organizational incentives. Yet, a traditional argument relying on the incentive effects cannot explain the outcome. During the Iraq War, the Army's professional incentive system worked to inhibit *and* support innovation. Within the organization, various incentives existed. What was important was the manner in which rewards were determined and distributed — something determined by bureaucratic politics within the Army (Clark and Wilson 1961; Cohen 1984: 436-440).

Was Innovation Inevitable?

In hindsight, it is tempting to view innovation in Iraq as inevitable — of course the Army would do whatever was necessary to secure the national security objectives and achieve victory. In a world of complex and challenging security concerns, the adoption of such a narrative is reassuring. Yet, it glosses over the fact that there existed powerful actors both within and outside the Army who supported traditional doctrine and opposed COIN. Furthermore, viewing innovation as inevitable under-appreciates the inherent difficulty of organizational learning.

Recognition of a performance gap does not naturally bring about innovation. When faced with strategic failure — organizations often continue to operate in accordance with established practices, until something or someone stops them. During a crisis, it is normal for effort to be increased. Rarely, however, are assumptions regarding the appropriateness of tasks reexamined. The result is an observed dilemma in which greater effort to secure an objective makes its attainment less likely.

This phenomenon occurs for two reasons. First, it occurs because individuals have a tendency to privilege prior experiences and beliefs, disconfirming information is discounted. Thus, individuals and organizations often fail to recognize that traditional assumptions no longer fit the operational context. Second, it occurs because individuals often view their expertise, rank, and position within the organization as being dependent upon the validity of existing practices. To protect themselves or their subunit within the organization, they will defend and promote said practices — complicating organizational learning (Cyert and March 1963: 278-279; Axelrod 1973; Bergerson 1980; Posen 1984: 224; Larson 1994; King 1998: 18-19; Argyris 2004: 1-2, 8-9, 212; Sauquet 2004: 377-378). This was the case in Iraq. Despite the existence of a recognized performance gap, prior beliefs and defensive behaviors reinforced traditional doctrine.

The events of this case highlight the salience of doctrine and the difficulty of innovation. By late 2003, the Army recognized and accepted the fact that it was engaged in an insurgency. Yet, within the organization the assumptions of traditional doctrine remained dominant — that firepower intensive tactics aligned against enemy forces represented the surest path to victory. These assumptions continued to act as the basis for assessments of the situation and the development of strategy in Iraq (West 2008: 26-105; Ucko 2009: 60-71).

Throughout 2004 and 2005, the Army struggled to adapt to the war. The organization developed concept papers regarding how to operate in Iraq. It modified and enhanced its mock training villages at Fort Erwin and Fort Polk. Then in September 2004, the Army issued *FMI 3-07.22 Counterinsurgency Operations*. At the core of each

of these endeavors the assumptions of traditional doctrine remained. In 2005, as the performance gap increased, George Casey established a counterinsurgency academy in Iraq. Again, with little appreciable effect. Each of these efforts attempted to make the Army more successful in Iraq. Yet each failed. Army Brigades in Iraq continued to sweep through areas in an attempt to hunt down and kill the enemy forces. Although the Army expressed a recognized need to adopt non-lethal skills (psychological operations, policing, and interagency coordination) the traditional assumptions remained in place — the Army continued to focus on “offensive operations to disrupt and destroy insurgent combat formations” (*FMI 3-07.22 Counterinsurgency Operations* 2004: 2-3; Ricks 2007: 392-405 and 2009: 12; West 2008: 98-105; Ucko 2009: 65-71).

Within the Army, proponents of traditional doctrine resisted the dissemination and implementation of COIN. Motivated by a sincere belief in the utility of existent doctrine and a desire to protect the organization, they promoted traditional arguments about possible solution to the growing performance gap. Proponents of traditional doctrine argued that better intelligence, an increase in the use of attrition warfare, more resources, and better coordination among military units (as well as between military and civilian agencies) could correct operational deficiencies. Others argued that the war was ill conceived or its failure the result of deficiencies on the part of civilian agencies (like the State Department). Advocates of traditional doctrine also advanced arguments about the need to protect the organization and its conventional war fighting capabilities. These arguments were often based upon either an expressed belief that traditional threats continued to pose the most likely and pertinent threat, or an unstated position that equated

traditional doctrine with Army's organizational essence (Cassidy 2006; Gibson 2006; Grier 2006; Peters 2006; Wright and Baker 2006; Wright and Tyson 2006; Ricks 2007: 193-194; Robinson 2008: 14-20, 26-29; Bacevich 2008; Ucko 2008: 119-120, 294-295; Woodward 2008: 5,6, 10, 53, 58-59, 231-237, 241-252, 264-265, 283, 285-289; Cloud and Jaffe 2009).

General David Petraeus' attempt to change how the Army fought in Iraq required him to use his bureaucratic positions, as Commander of the Army's Combined Arms Center and later as Commander of Multinational Forces in Iraq, to wage a political struggle to accomplish three tasks. He had overcome resistance within the organization, capture the material support of civilian authorities, as well as disseminate and implement COIN (Millett, Williamson, and Watman 1986; Evangelista 1988; Avant 1993; Utterback 1994; Argyris 1999 and 2004; Johnson and Tierney 2006; Lieber 2007). None of these tasks were inevitable.

Access, Autonomy, Authority and Innovation in Iraq

Convinced that traditional doctrine would lead to strategic defeat in Iraq, David Petraeus sought to change the way the Army fought. Petraeus attempted two major innovations in doctrine. The first was a shift in the operational center of gravity. Existent Army doctrine assumed that the destruction of enemy forces provided the best means for securing victory — even within the context of a recognized insurgency. In Iraq, Petraeus sought to replace this assumption with one based upon the protection of civilian populations. His second innovation was an emphasis on small units that would live

among the people and restrain their use of firepower. This challenged the traditional assumption that large unit firepower intensive operations represented the most effective use of force (*FM 1 The Army* 2001: 3-1; *FM 3 Operations* 2001: 1-18; *FMI 3-07.22 Counterinsurgency Operations* 2004; *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency* 2006: (1-)24-(1-)29; West 2009: 120-123; Kagan 2009).

By changing these core doctrinal assumptions, Petraeus hoped to shift the Army away from a strategy based on sweeping through an area in order to clear out or destroy insurgents — in favor of a strategy based on providing security for the local population. Petraeus believed these innovations were necessary to achieve the US objective of a stable and independent Iraq (*FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency* 2006: (1-)24-(1-)29; Petraeus 2006 and 2007; Robinson 2008: 47-50, 76-81, 85-117; Ricks 2009: 127-199). In Iraq, General Petraeus' attempt was successful. Through a series of events lasting from 2005 through 2008, David Petraeus brought about doctrinal innovations and changed the way the Army fought.

To bring about major innovations in Iraq, Petraeus established a new consensus within the organization regarding Army doctrine. This required the achievement of the following tasks. First, he had to demonstrate convincingly within the organization the requirement for innovation. Second, he had to leverage opportunities in the larger political ecosystem in order to garner the support of civilian authorities — including the president. Third, he had to acquire the authority necessary to implement his innovations. To accomplish these tasks, Petraeus leveraged his bureaucratic access, autonomy, and

authority to shepherd the Army through the preparation, espousal, and implementation phases of the organizational learning process.

The following sections examine what this case tells us about how bureaucratic access, autonomy, and authority affect the organizational learning process and doctrinal innovation. This will be done by evaluating the hypotheses introduced in the first chapter. The final section of this chapter analyzes General Petraeus' attempt at doctrinal innovation during the Iraq War.

The Preparation Phase

During the preparation phase, the organization must be made ripe for learning and innovation. To achieve this, the organization must become aware of the doctrinally based performance gap observed by the innovator. Such organizational awareness represents the dependent variable of this phase. An individual's ability to bring this about is held to be a function of his/her access to battlefield information, access to an audience within the organization, and autonomy to engage in innovation. These are the independent variables of the preparation phase. In Chapter 1, the following two hypotheses were offered for evaluating the effects of these variables.

H.1: As an individual's bureaucratic autonomy increases, his/her ability to develop innovative responses to performance failure increases.

This hypothesis is consistent with the events that took place during Iraq. David Petraeus' bureaucratic autonomy allowed him to act as an innovator. As the commander of the Army's Combined Arms Center, Petraeus had complete autonomy to study the organization's performance in Iraq, test potential solutions at the Army's Fort Erwin and Fort Polk training centers, and prepare potential responses via the organization's educational systems (Robinson 2008: 77; Ucko 2009: 108; Crane 2010: 59-61).⁹⁴ Petraeus' position gave him the autonomy to access multiple sources of information, including battlefield information via the Army's Center for Lessons Learned. Through the Army War College and Army Center of Military History, Petraeus also had access to the Army's theoretical and historical war fighting knowledge. This allowed Petraeus and his staff to draw upon insights from the Army's previous counterinsurgent experiences. The autonomy granted by his position also allowed Petraeus to seek out and gain access to important information outside the Army — including information regarding anthropology, human rights, and economics. Through the development and review of *FM 3-24*, such information was used to provide a clearer understanding of the operational context and formulate the best possible guidance regarding how the Army ought to fight in Iraq (Nagl 2007; Robinson 2008: 76; Crane 2010: 59; Nagl 2010). Ultimately, the autonomy provided by Petraeus' position endowed him with the ability to provide a detailed assessment of the Army's performance gap in Iraq and develop a specific set of recommendations (COIN) for overcoming it.

⁹⁴ Furthermore, his position gave the autonomy to create new organizations within the Army's educational system — included the US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center located at Fort Leavenworth.

H.2: As an individual's access to an audience within the organization increases, his/her ability to bring into question existent doctrine's core assumptions increases.

This hypothesis is consistent with the events of the Iraq case. David Petraeus' position gave him the ability to disseminate his arguments to a large audience within the organization. Petraeus' position atop the Army's educational system, provided access to the majority of the organization's members. He exercised this access in two significant ways. First, Petraeus leveraged the Army's professional journals to launch an organization wide discussion about the performance gap in Iraq and the merits of traditional versus COIN assumptions. Because the journals are widely read and represent an important part of the professional education and development of soldiers — they provided Petraeus with unfiltered access to individuals throughout the organization (Robinson 2008: 76; Ricks 2009: 17-18; Ucko 2009: 75). Second, Petraeus distributed *FM 3-24* as it was being developed. The second draft was distributed to some 600,000 individuals — with a request for feedback. This invited individuals throughout the organization to participate in the process and allowed him to preemptively address many of the concern raised by service personnel. Furthermore, the final draft was made available online, easily downloadable by individual soldiers (Schultz and Dew 2006; Nagl 2007; Ricks 2009: 27; Crane 2010: 68-69). Petraeus' wide access to individual soldiers throughout the Army allowed him to bring about an organization-wide questioning of traditional doctrine — thus increasing the Army's absorptive capacity for learning.

The Espousal Phase

The espousal phase begins with a critical juncture crisis that forces administration officials to reevaluate the operational nature of the conflict. During the espousal phase, the material and political support of the president must be captured. Presidential support for innovation represents the dependent variable of this phase. An individual's ability to bring this about is held to be a function of his/her access to elite opinion makers and access to senior civilian officials — including the president. These are the independent variables of the espousal phase. Two hypotheses were offered for evaluating the effects of these independent variables.

H.3: As the public visibility of the community of innovators increases, political pressure on the president to support innovation increases.

This hypothesis inconsistent with the events of this case. Although Petraeus and the COIN community generated public visibility and potential political rewards for supporting innovation — such were overshadowed by those arguing that the Army ought to transition the effort to Iraqis and withdraw. The political ecosystem was dominated by groups recommending the US find a way to exit the war — including the Iraq Study Group and the incoming the 110th Congress ("Fact Sheet - Iraq Study Group" 2006; Woodward 2008: 42-43; Ricks 2009: 53). The least politically viable option for the president, however, remained a continuation of the war strategy set by General George Casey (Carpenter 2006; Schorr 2006). Thus, it is plausible that the visibility of the COIN

community offered a third way — a partial counterbalance to those who saw transition and exit as the only viable solution. Although Petraeus and the COIN community did not substantially affect political rewards, they did serve as a publicly visible elite opinion. The COIN community offered the president public legitimacy for continuing on in Iraq — if he accepted their recommended innovations. It cannot be argued that Petraeus and the COIN community supplied political incentives for supporting innovation, but they did offer President Bush the means (and a degree of political freedom) to continue the pursuit of his stated objectives.

H.4: As the doctrinal entrepreneur's backchannel access to executive branch officials increases, the likelihood of presidential support for innovation increases.

This hypothesis is consistent with the record of events that led to innovation during the war in Iraq. David Petraeus, Jack Keane, and other members of the COIN community used backchannel exchanges to secure the support of the president. Throughout the first ten months of 2006, Petraeus and others used their existing connections to civilians (including individuals like Megan O'Sullivan and organizations like the American Enterprise Institute) to present their arguments about the Army's performance failure and the benefits of COIN. As the frequency and number of these exchanges increased members of the president's staff began to question Casey's management of the war. The frequency of backchannel communications increased late in the summer of 2006 and then rose dramatically during the post-election review process.

It is at this point that they began to have a significant effect. Repeated backchannel civil-military exchanges between the White House and members of the COIN community blunted the traditional arguments of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the combatant commander. In the six weeks between mid-November and the end of the year, these backchannel exchanges affected the nature of presidential intervention — they moved President Bush from a policy of increased effort (the surge alone) to espoused support for innovation (the surge with COIN).

The Implementation Phase

During the implementation phase, innovations must be disseminated throughout the organization and become the basis for military operations. This represents the dependent variable of the implementation phase. An individual's ability to bring this about is held to be a function of his/her authority to task the combatant command, authority to remove subordinates and control incentives, and their autonomy to act free of the structures and routines based on prior doctrinal assumptions. These are the independent variables of the implementation phase. In Chapter 1, two hypotheses were offered for evaluating the effects of these independent variables.

H.5: As the presence of a community of innovators at each level of command increases, the likelihood that innovations will be operationalized increases.

This hypothesis is consistent with the events of this case. During the attempt at innovation in Iraq, the COIN community continued to expand throughout the Army. The widespread presence of those supporting implementation sped the operationalization of the new doctrine. By the time Petraeus took command in February 2007, COIN adherents had already begun implementation within the US led Multinational Force in Iraq (MNFI). COIN was particularly salient at the battalion level and below, this made it easier to develop, assign, carry out, COIN based tasks. The presence of innovators throughout MNFI, made it possible for Petraeus to quickly establish the joint security stations necessary to establish population security as the Army's center of gravity. After more than three years of war, in less than six months, Petraeus changed the way the Army was fighting in Iraq.

H.6: As innovative tasks become the basis for evaluation, the likelihood of resistance to innovation decreases.

This hypothesis is consistent with the events that took place in Iraq. As members of the Army became convinced that their ability to implement COIN would be rewarded — implementation became more widespread. For junior officers, incentives included contact with and support from their commanding general. Such positive attention was granted for taking risks and being willing to find inventive ways to apply the principles of COIN. Incentives also included being singled out for exceptional performance in the achievement of the new metrics — such as a decrease in sectarian violence or civilian

casualties. Both of these incentives served to enhance advancement opportunities by making it more likely junior officers would be tapped for leadership positions or given the chance for additional professional development by attending the Army's War College (West 2008: 246-316; Kagan 2009; Ricks 2009: 174-185, 237-241). For colonels the incentives were more specific. Given the command structure implemented by Petraeus and Odierno, their performance in Iraq would now be rated by superiors who fully supported COIN. The incentive became that much greater once Petraeus was selected to sit on the board determining which colonels would be promoted to brigadier general (Tyson 2008; Ucko 2009: 131).

Table 3: Hypotheses Results, Iraq Case

	Consistent with Events in Iraq	Inconsistent with Events in Iraq	Inconclusive in regard to Events in Iraq
H.1 (Preparation Phase):As an individual's bureaucratic autonomy increases, his/her ability to develop innovative responses to performance failure increases.	✓		
H.2 (Preparation Phase):As an individual's access to an audience within the organization increases, his/her ability to bring into question existent doctrine's core assumptions increases.	✓		
H.3 (Espousal Phase):As the public visibility of the community of innovators increases, political pressure on the president to support innovation increases.		✓	
H.4 (Espousal Phase):As the doctrinal entrepreneur's backchannel access to executive branch officials increases, the likelihood of presidential support for innovation increases.	✓		
H.5 (Implementation Phase):As the presence of a community of innovators at each level of command increases, the likelihood that innovations will be operationalized increases.	✓		
H.6 (Implementation Phase):As innovative tasks become the basis for evaluation, the likelihood of resistance to innovation decreases.	✓		

Analysis of Petraeus' Attempt at Innovation

General David Petraeus implemented two major innovations in Army doctrine during the Iraq war. His attempt was successful because the attributes of his bureaucratic positions within the organization endowed him with the ability to do three things:

overcome resistance from within the Army, capture the political and material support of the president, and disseminate and operationalize his innovations.

Innovation requires organizational learning. Such learning takes place via a preparation, espousal, and implementation phase. What is learned, however, is the result of political contests within the organization (March and Simon 1958; Nye 1987; Tsoukas and Vladimirov 2001). An actor's bureaucratic autonomy, access, and authority determine how successfully they will engage the political contests that shape the learning process. Petraeus' bureaucratic resources allowed him to forge a community of innovators and triumph in these political struggles. As the victor in such, Petraeus was able to shepherd the learning process, establish a new consensus opinion about doctrine, and bring about innovation.

During the preparation phase, Petraeus' position gave him the autonomy and access necessary to act as an innovator, establish a community of like-minded individuals, and increase the Army's capacity to absorb new knowledge. As the Commander of the Combined Arms Center, Petraeus had the autonomy to investigate the Army's performance failure in Iraq. In doing so, he had the freedom to expand the scope of the inquiry beyond tactics or strategy and question how well the assumptions of traditional doctrine fit the operational environment and the achievement of the US' national security objectives. Petraeus also had the autonomy to use the Army's professional journals and the development of *FM 3-24* launch an organization-wide discussion regarding the appropriateness of traditional doctrine. In doing so, Petraeus

effectively engaged the organization in double-loop learning and increased the organization's absorptive capacity.

As Petraeus shepherded the learning process, his access to information and to audiences allowed him to build a community of innovators. As the Commander of the Combined Arms Center, he had access to battlefield information. Furthermore, the Army's education system provided Petraeus with access to subject matter experts outside the Army. Petraeus used this network and the information it provided to develop a clear description of the performance failure, theoretical understandings of counterinsurgency, and specific recommendations regarding the innovations needed to secure victory (COIN). In the process, he began to establish a community of innovators with himself at the center. At the same time, Petraeus used the Army's professional journals and the construction of *FM 3-24* to communicate his arguments and expand the COIN community. Petraeus' access to information and audiences allowed him to communicate the doctrinal nature of the performance gap in Iraq and the benefits of COIN to the bulk of the organization's membership.

By the end of the preparation phase, the Army was prepared to learn. Petraeus had used his autonomy and access to act as entrepreneur for doctrinal innovation and established himself at the center of an expanding COIN community. In accomplishing these tasks he had presented the organization with an argument concerning the likelihood of strategic failure and weaken the salience of traditional doctrine.

During the espousal phase, Petraeus and the COIN community captured the material and political support of President Bush. Although Petraeus and the community

failed to provide significant political rewards for supporting COIN, they came to represent a form of elite opinion. As such, they provided a challenge to the expertise and advice being provided by the formal structures of the military. Furthermore, the network of contact provided by the community yielded backchannel access to the president and his national security staff. Often this access was exclusive — occurring absent the presence of formal military advisors. This allowed COIN to be presented to civilian authorities without immediate rebuttal by proponents of traditional doctrine. Through the community and these communications, alternative information and options were presented to the president. Bush became willing to support Petraeus and his innovations because they offered the only path to his stated national security objectives in Iraq. By extracting from President Bush his espoused support for COIN, a condition Petraeus set before accepting command, Petraeus increased his latitude for implementation. With the public support of the commander-in-chief, Petraeus made it difficult for those of his superiors who might oppose innovation to deny him the resources or authority he would need.

During the implementation phase, Petraeus' position as the Commander of the Multinational Forces in Iraq (MNF-I), the support given him by the president, and the existence of a large COIN community within the organization granted him the authority and autonomy to implement major innovations in Army doctrine. His formal authority as Commander of MNF-I was of secondary importance. It endowed Petraeus with the ability to flatten the Army's command structures in Iraq — making the battalion and below the primary unit with which the Army would fight the war. This reduced the levels of

hierarchy that existed between himself and the units that would actually implement COIN. This allowed him to change the way in which the war had been managed.

Implementation was ultimately a function of the authority and autonomy Petraeus exercised via informal channels. Before Petraeus assumed command in February 2007, implementation had already begun. The Deputy Commander, (then) Lieutenant General Ray Odierno had already begun to pull US forces out of the large forward operating bases established by General Casey. The widespread salience of COIN made it easy to ensure that supporters of COIN occupied leadership positions. The public support of the president made it easier for Petraeus to isolate proponents of traditional doctrine. In essence, support from the COIN community and the president freed Petraeus from the organizational structures of traditional doctrine. This allowed Petraeus to turn over the development of war strategy to the Joint Strategic Assessment Team and Lieutenant General Odierno — and guarantee tasks would be based on the assumptions of COIN. Petraeus was then able to focus on monitoring the implementation of COIN, making sure the concept was being understood and operationalized throughout Iraq. Such close monitoring by Petraeus altered incentive structures. It promoted the notion that performance would be evaluated on the basis of COIN.

By 2005, David Petraeus was convinced that to avoid strategic defeat the Army needed to change the way it was fighting in Iraq. From his position as the Commander of the Army's Combined Arms Center he was able to drive the organizational learning processes necessary to challenge existent assumptions and prepare the Army to learn. The community of innovators he forged became the core of a new consensus regarding

how the Army ought to fight. Petraeus and the COIN community leveraged the crisis brought by the 2006 mid-term elections to capture President George Bush's support for innovation. By the time Petraeus assumed Command of the US led Multinational Forces in Iraq, his innovation had garnered wide acceptance throughout the Army. With COIN's operationalization and battlefield success a new consensus emerged and the innovations he had recommended became the established doctrinal norm. Petraeus' success was the product of his bureaucratic autonomy, access, and authority.

Chapter 4: Conclusion — the US Army and Innovation Under Fire

“In the end we retain from our studies only that which we practically apply.”

— Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe⁹⁵

Twice in the last half century, the United States Army has come perilously close to suffering defeat. In both Vietnam and Iraq, the Army found itself fighting a materially weaker adversary engaged in insurgent warfare. In each occurrence, the organization recognized the danger of a growing performance gap between how it was prosecuting the war and the achievement of the national security objectives established by the president. In each case, within the organization there were individuals who argued that the Army’s existent doctrine was ill fitted to the operational context and objectives at hand. In both Vietnam and Iraq, individuals within the Army argued in favor of major innovations in military doctrine. In Vietnam, an attempt to innovate the manner in which the Army was fighting failed.⁹⁶ In Iraq, a similar attempt succeeded. Why? What accounts for the divergent outcomes?

This dissertation attempts to answer the above by explaining the causal mechanisms behind major innovations in US military doctrine, specially those that occur in the face of wartime failure. To evaluate the variables and mechanisms involved, two

⁹⁵ Taken from a translation by Goethe, Eckermann, Soret, and Oxenford (1875:61).

⁹⁶ As noted earlier, Lewis Sorley (1992, 1998 and 1999), whose research this dissertation makes great use of, contends that the Army did innovate under General Abrams. Although Abrams managed the war differently and sought to implement doctrinal innovations, he was unable to bring about an updating of military doctrine or move the Army closer to the achievement of its national security objectives in Vietnam. His subordinate commanders, particularly at the corps and division levels, continued to fight the war in accordance with the assumptions of existent doctrine. They continued to emphasize the use of large unit firepower intensive tactics as a means for destroying enemy forces — based on the assumption that this represented the best path to victory. They eschewed the small unit restrained firepower population centric innovations put forward by Abrams.

instances of attempted innovation were examined — the attempt by General Creighton Abrams during the Vietnam War and the attempt by General David Petraeus during the Iraq War. In each case, the outcome is best explained by bureaucratic politics within the United States Army.

This chapter will review the findings of each case, evaluate the model presented, and provide a revised argument concerning those variables and mechanisms that increase the likelihood of doctrinal innovation. It will end with brief comments about the practical implications of this argument.

Strategic Failure — the Need for Innovation

As noted earlier, military doctrine provides professional armed services with a conceptual understanding of how to fight wars and achieve the political objectives that motivate them. A given doctrine represents an explicit articulation of the means by which armed forces are to secure national security objectives (Posen 1984; Rosen 1988; Avant 1993; *US Army Field Manual 3-0* 2001). If doctrine is well fitted to the strategic goals and operational context of a situation, military forces can be expected to perform well.⁹⁷ When it is not, the achievement of national security objectives via the use of force becomes difficult — if not impossible. Strategic failure, with all its implicit ramifications, becomes likely.⁹⁸ Military forces that find themselves in this position are faced with a need to innovate.

⁹⁷ As before, it should be noted that performing well does not equate to victory. Military forces may exercise great skill, yet be out performed by their opponent. All things being equal, when armed services perform well, the goals for which they fight become more attainable.

⁹⁸ Strategic failure, as opposed to tactical failure, is defined as being unsuccessful in the achievement of those national security goals delineated by civilian authorities.

For American military forces to be confronted with such, presents a mismatch between outcome and expectation. Despite the gravity of the situation, when faced with strategic failure, members of the armed services will be reticent in their consideration of the role military doctrine may play in any performance gap. Because of doctrine's referential position within military organizations, it is the defining standard against which performance is normally measured, members will be unlikely to reexamine basic assumptions regarding how the organization fights — even in the face of defeat (Posen 1984: 224; Romjue 1984: 1; Galloway 1986; Utterback 1994; Murray 1996; Farrell 1997; Hennessy 1997; Downie 1998; Lock-Pullan 2006). Consideration of the operational validity of military doctrine will be further stymied by the pathologies of organizational learning, including desire on the part of individuals to protect their position within the organization (Cyert and March 1963: 278-279; Sauquet 2004: 377-378). For all the reasons above, the need to innovate is a necessary, but insufficient condition to explain major changes in military doctrine. In short, potential failure is not itself a catalyst for innovation.

What the Hypotheses Tell Us

As noted in Chapter 1, military doctrine represents a consensus set of assumptions held by members of the organization regarding the nature of war and how military forces are to fight (Osgood 1957; Bidwell and Graham 1982; Posen 1984; Galloway 1986; Rosen 1988; Avant 1993; Farrell 1997). Major innovations in military doctrine require the forging of a new consensus (March and Simon 1958; Nye 1987: 381; Argyris 2004:

1-2, 8-9). This requires the organization engage in the internal debates and double-loop learning processes that bring into question doctrinal assumptions — making the updating of prior beliefs possible (Starry 1979; Posen 1984: 13; Clausewitz 1984: 595-596; Rosen 1991: 7; Murray 1996: 306). Even with active debate and double-loop learning, the process remains difficult. Major innovations will be resisted because they challenge the assumptions upon which military education, operations, and career advancements are based. For these reasons, and because of the inherent difficulty of learning something new, major innovations in military doctrine are difficult to bring about (Romjue 1984: 1; Galloway 1986; Utterback 1994; Murray 1996; Farrell 1997; Hennessy 1997; Downie 1998; Lock-Pullan 2006).

To forge a new consensus and implement innovations, doctrinal entrepreneurs within the US military must demonstrate the need for change within the armed service, leverage opportunities outside the organization to garner the support of civilian authorities, and gain the bureaucratic authority within the organization's combatant command needed to implement new ideas. Chapter 1 presented a model to explain this process. That model held that in order to achieve success, doctrinal entrepreneurs must leverage their bureaucratic access, autonomy, and authority to shepherd the learning process through a *preparation, espousal, and implementation* phase.

To evaluate the model presented, specific independent and dependent variables were identified and hypotheses constructed in order to highlight the sequence of events and evaluate the causal arguments of the model. The hypotheses were then tested using Vietnam and Iraq era attempts at major doctrinal innovation as case studies. The

following sections compare the findings from each case and examine the validity of each hypothesis.

Preparation Phase

In the preparation phase, the dependent variable was whether or not the doctrinal entrepreneur had brought about the organizational recognition of a performance gap based on doctrine. The independent variables were the individual's access to battlefield information, access to an audience within the organization, and autonomy to engage in innovation. The following two hypotheses were used to evaluate the affect of the independent variables.

H.1: As an individual's bureaucratic autonomy increases, his/her ability to develop innovative responses to performance failure increases.

This hypothesis was consistent with the events in each case. It supports the model's argument regarding the importance of bureaucratic autonomy and access. Events during the Vietnam and Iraq Wars give credence to the hypothesized notion that an innovator's autonomy affects his/her ability to highlight the doctrinal basis of the performance gap and develop specific innovations in response.

As Vice Chief of Staff, Creighton Abrams had the autonomy to work on a set of innovations known as *A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam* (PROVN) (Karnow 1983: 437; Gibbons 1995: 201-201; Sorley 1998; Birtle

2008; Long 2008). As Vice Chief of Staff, Abrams had the autonomy to study the Army's growing performance failure in Vietnam. In this task, Abrams and the PROVN team had access to battlefield information as well as access to historical and theoretical information regarding previous insurgent wars in Indochina. Such information allowed the PROVN team to recommend major doctrinal innovations and to accompany them with specific supporting tasks designed to bring about operationalization (*PROVN* Volume I 1966: 19-27). Abrams autonomy, however, was limited in a functional sense. Overseeing PROVN began as a tasking from Army Chief of Staff General Harold K. Johnson, one not directly connected to his primary responsibility of managing the organization's operations.⁹⁹ Yet, Abrams was limited by the fact that only ten officers were assigned (by General Johnson) to study the Army's performance in Vietnam and make recommendations for how to address it. Furthermore, Abrams lacked the autonomy to create additional structures to aid in the innovation process.

David Petraeus' position as the Commander of the Combined Arms Center provided him with autonomy far greater than Abrams' position as the Vice Chief of Staff. Petraeus' position gave him complete autonomy to develop a set of innovations collected and published as *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency (COIN)*. As head of the Army's Combined Arms Center it was Petraeus' duty to oversee the organization's educational and professional development — and maximize the organization's capacity for performing its mission (Robinson 2008: 76; Ricks 2009: 17-18; Ucko 2009: 75). The study and

⁹⁹ As Vice Chief of Staff, he was charged with overseeing Army operations while his superior, Army Chief of Staff General Harold Johnson, fulfilled his duties as a member of the Joint Chiefs. See US Code; Title 10 — Armed Forces; Subtitle B — Army; Part I — Organization; Chapter 305 — The Army Staff and Davidson (1988: 577).

improvement of the Army's war fighting capability in Iraq was directly tied to Petraeus' primary organizational responsibilities. Furthermore, Petraeus had the autonomy to create additional structures (such as the COIN Center at Fort Leavenworth) to aid in the learning process (Robinson 2008: 77; Woodward 2008: 152; Ucko 2009: 108; Crane 2010: 61).

As the Commander of the Combined Arms Center, David Petraeus' position gave him the autonomy to access to battlefield information as well as historical and theoretical works on insurgent warfare. In his position, Petraeus had the autonomy to direct the Army War College and Center for Military History to gather and analyze information about the war. Petraeus could effectively increase his access to information by increasing the number of individuals working to define the performance gap and develop innovative solutions — a series of events that eventually led to the new counterinsurgency field manual.

Although their positions endowed both Abrams and Petraeus with the autonomy hypothesized as necessary — there were key differences in their positions. The level of autonomy bestowed by Petraeus' position as the Commander of the Army's Combined Arms Center was far greater than that granted by Abrams' position as the Army Vice Chief of Staff. Given the observed outcome in each case, this difference provides additional support for this hypothesis.

H.2: As an individual's access to an audience within the organization increases, his/her ability to bring into question existent doctrine's core assumptions increases.

This hypothesis is consistent with the events in each case. This hypothesis supports the model's argument that an innovator's access to an audience is vital to the learning process. Based on the sequence of events from the two cases, access to an internal audience is critical in preparing the organization to accept change — it provides the means for organizational recognition of the problem and the development of a consensus about the merits of innovation.

As Vice Chief of Staff, Abrams position was powerful — yet insulated. General Abrams had direct access to only a few high ranking individuals within the Army and Department of Defense. He could do little to communicate to a larger audience his concerns about the war's progress, the validity of doctrinal assumptions, or the need to innovate. This fact was illustrated by his inability to distribute PROVN (*The Pentagon Papers*, Volume 2, Chapter VI 1971: 560; Davidson 1988: 410; Gibbons 1995: 210-211; Sorley 1998; Nagl 2005: 160; Record 2006: 11; Birtle 2008: 1244; Long 2008: 11). At the end of the preparation phase in the Vietnam case, only some one hundred individuals had been briefed on Abrams' proposed innovations.¹⁰⁰

In contrast, Petraeus' position as the Commander of the Combined Arms Center was relatively weak — yet, it gave him access to potentially every soldier in the Army.

¹⁰⁰ Each copy of PROVN was numbered; no more than one hundred copies were produced. See *PROVN* (1966).

Petraeus used his access to launch an organization wide debate about the Army's performance in Iraq, doctrinal assumptions, and the validity of COIN (Robinson 2008: 76; Ricks 2009: 17-23; Ucko 2009: 75; Crane 2010: 59). At the end of the preparation phase during the Iraq case, more than one million individuals had either been exposed to the COIN debate occurring with the Army's professional journals or had downloaded *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency* (Petraeus 2006; Schultz and Dew 2006; Nagl 2007; Ricks 2009: 25; Ucko 2009: 77; Nagl 2010a). In a practical sense, the entire organization was aware of Petraeus' recommended changes in doctrine.

Espousal Phase

In the espousal phase, the dependent variable was whether or not presidential support for doctrinal innovation had been captured. The independent variables were the individual's access to elite opinion makers, senior officials, and the president. The following two hypotheses were used to evaluate the affect of the independent variables.

H.3: As the public visibility of the community of innovators increases, political pressure on the president to support innovation increases.

This hypothesis is inconsistent with the evidence from these two cases. The sequence of events from the attempts made during Vietnam and Iraq fail to support the hypothesized relationship between the visibility of elite opinion makers and the creation of political rewards. The size, diversity, and visibility of those supporting innovation

from outside the organization had little effect on the level of presidential support. This hypothesis suggests the model was incorrect in the assertion that elite opinion makers create political rewards that motivate civilian authorities to support innovation.

During the Vietnam era, before and during Abrams' attempt at innovation, there existed a relatively large and diverse group of individuals willing to support innovation — including Walt Rostow, Roger Hilsman, George Ball, and Bill Moyers (Hilsman 1962; Rostow 1962; Hennessy 1997: 17-18, 20-21; Gaddis 1999: 200). Yet, this group lacked visibility. During the war in Iraq, there existed a large, diverse, and visible group outside the service willing to support innovation. Nonetheless, popular support for doctrinal innovation never developed. During the Iraq War, the visibility of supporters of doctrinal innovation outside the military was overshadowed by those opposed to the war and by those arguing for the withdrawal of US forces. It is reasonable to assume that external supporters during the Vietnam era would have similarly been overshadowed — had their efforts achieved greater visibility. No significant evidence exists to suggest these external groups effected the types of political incentives envisioned by the model.

H.4: As the doctrinal entrepreneur's backchannel access to executive branch officials increases, the likelihood of presidential support for innovation increases.

This hypothesis is inconclusive in regard to the events of the Vietnam and Iraq cases. The sequence of events in these cases provide general support for the model's

argument that backchannel access to senior officials and the president provide important opportunities for securing the political and material support necessary for implementation. Yet, because of variance between the two cases — the results suggest that although access is necessary, it is alone insufficient to acquiring and maintaining presidential support for doctrinal innovations.

In the Vietnam case, this hypothesis is inconsistent with what happened. Non-traditional exchanges had little effect on presidential support for innovation. Abrams enjoyed direct contact with President Lyndon Johnson — often without the knowledge (or outside the control) of General William Westmoreland or the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Sorley 1992: 222-223). This contact, however, was sporadic and its effects unclear. In each instance, the president initiated contact out of a desire for specific information or in the hopes of acquiring a second (more favorable) opinion for a decision he was already inclined to make.¹⁰¹ In an apparent repudiation of the traditional approach, President Johnson relieved Westmoreland as the commander of US forces in Vietnam — replacing him with Abrams. President Johnson espoused support for his new commander in Vietnam, yet he never publicly espoused support for doctrinal innovation or a change in strategy (LaFeber 1993: 257-258; Herring 2002: 251-252).

This hypothesis is, however, consistent with what happened in the Iraq case. The sequence of events in the Iraq case provide clear evidence that backchannels exchanges were decisive in promoting doctrinal innovation to the level of the president — and in

¹⁰¹ A typical example is provided by the March 24, 1968 meeting between Abrams and President Johnson. The president had summoned Abrams from Vietnam to get the (then) Deputy Commander's opinion on troop levels. Unknown to Abrams, Westmoreland had requested additional troops. When asked, Abrams told the president no additional troops were needed. See Sorley (1992: 222-226).

acquiring his espoused support for Petraeus and COIN. It was through non-traditional civil-military exchanges that the COIN community was able to present their innovations to President George W. Bush as an alternative to the recommendations being made by civilian authorities or the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Bumiller 2006; “Interview General Jack Keane” 2007; Coll 2008; Robinson 2008: 21, 30-35; West 2008: 199; Woodward 2008: 129-138, 142-146, 299; Ricks 2009: 74-105). Once established, these exchanges increased in frequency and moved from being a network of contacts with senior White House staffers and became a direct conduit for reaching the president himself (“Interview General Jack Keane” 2007; Kaminski 2008; Robinson 2008: 30, 32-34; West 2008: 221; Woodward 2008: 279-281; Kagan 2009: 27-29; Ricks 2009: 98-100).

Implementation Phase

In the implementation phase, the dependent variable was whether or not the dissemination and operationalization of new knowledge occurred. The independent variables were the doctrinal entrepreneur's authority to task the combatant command, remove subordinates, and control incentives; and, his/her autonomy to act free of the structures and routines based on prior doctrinal assumptions. The following two hypotheses were used to evaluate the effect of the independent variables.

H.5: As the presence of a community of innovators at each level of command increases, the likelihood that innovations will be operationalized increases.

This hypothesis is consistent with events in both cases. It supports the model's arguments concerning the importance of authority and autonomy. It suggests that the entrepreneur must have the ability to task the combatant command with actions in support of innovation and the ability to move the organization beyond the routines of the armed service's previous doctrine. The results from this hypothesis suggest that the widespread presence of a community supporting innovation is critical. Without the presence of such a community, the Army's preexisting hierarchy, bound by the tenets of past doctrine, will work against the implementation of innovations.

During Abrams' attempt to implement PROVN, innovators had little vertical or horizontal presence within the organization. At any given time, Abrams only managed to get three or four members of the PROVN team assigned to the US command in Vietnam (MACV) (*PROVN*, Volume I 1966; Sorley 1992: 201-202, 234; Sorley 1999: 4-5, 19). Such a minuscule presence had no discernible effect on the organization's hierarchy or behavior. Without the presence of a community of innovators within MACV, Abrams spent much of his time attempting to educate his command staff and subordinate generals about his proposed innovations (Sorley 1999: 36-38, 60-61, 129-130, 191-192, 288; Sorley 2004; Lock-Pullan 2006: 35).

In an attempt to implement the new doctrine, Abrams managed the war through weekly command meetings. During these meetings he attempted to explain the importance of his innovations and alter the behavior of his corps and division commanders ("One War — MACV Command Overview, 1968-1971" 1971; "One War —

MACV Command Overview, 1968-1972 — Status Report" 1972; Davidson 1988: 609-610, 613-614; Krepinevich 1986: 253-254; Sorley 1999: 66, 113, 123-124; Sorley 2004). Despite this, his subordinate generals continued to fight the war on the basis of traditional doctrine. Abrams' subordinates often took actions in direct contradiction of PROVN, and occasionally in direct contradiction of his command guidance. The operationalization of PROVN was fatally complicated by the fact that Abrams' corps and division commanders failed to understand (or were unwilling to implement) what was being asked of them.¹⁰² Yet without a community of innovators within MACV, Abrams had to rely on his traditionally bound corps and division commanders to fight the war. Abrams was trapped by their adherence to the assumptions of traditional doctrine.

During Petraeus' attempt to implement COIN, a widespread community of innovators was in place throughout US forces in Iraq (MNFI). So prevalent was this community, that the implementation of COIN began prior to Petraeus' arrival as the new commander (Odierno 2007; Robinson 2008: 103-105; West 2008: 229; Kagan 2009: 29-33, 37, 45; Ricks 2009: 132-133; Mansoor 2010: 77-78, 81). The presence of the community throughout MNFI allowed Petraeus to focus on monitoring implementation — leaving the war's management to his deputy, General Raymond Odierno and the newly created Joint Strategic Assessment Team (Harnden 2007; Robinson 2008: 90-100, 136; West 2008: 250-251, 273-274; Woodward 2008: 335-337; Ricks 2009: 165). COIN had become the consensus opinion regarding how the Army ought to fight in Iraq. As a

¹⁰² Lieutenant General Julian Ewell provides the most egregious example of the resistance Abrams faced from his subordinate generals. Ewell openly challenged PROVN during staff meetings; he repeatedly refused to adhere to Abrams' innovations in doctrine. See Lewy (1978: 138-144) and Sorley (2004: 212-213).

result, the operationalization of innovation was effectively reduced to the determination of *what* tasks ought to be performed *where*.

H.6: As innovative tasks become the basis for evaluation, the likelihood of resistance to innovation decreases.

This hypothesis is consistent with the events of each case. It lends credence to the model's arguments concerning the importance of authority and autonomy. It suggests that the entrepreneur must have the ability to move beyond organizational structures based on the military's previous doctrine.

During the Vietnam War, the Army never moved away from an incentive system based on traditional doctrine. Although placed in command of MACV, Creighton Abrams lacked the authority to modify the organization's incentive system — even within the combatant command. Promotion, assignments, and even the length of tours of duty continued to be controlled by proponents of traditional doctrine. This included General Westmoreland, who became Army Chief of Staff after leaving Vietnam (Gallucci 1975: 126-127; Krepinevich 1986: 260; Thompson 1990: 25; Baritz 1991: 330; Fisher 1994: 324-342; Sorley 1999: 22; Nagl 2005: 171; Lock-Pullan 2006: 34). As a result, Abrams lacked the ability to effectively control, much less remove, subordinates who failed to implement PROVN (Lewy 1978: 138-139; Sorley 1999: 192). Traditional behaviors, fighting with large unit firepower intensive operations, continued to be the focus of Army operations.

During the Iraq War, the Army's incentive system shifted. In Iraq, individual and unit performance began to be evaluated on the basis of mission success — as defined by COIN. Protection of the population and the use of small unit patrols exercising restraint in the use of firepower, became the basis for advancement and award. The effects of this were most dramatic at the brigade level and below — where officers began to experiment with the most effective mechanisms for operationalizing COIN within their areas of operation (West 2008: 246-316; Kagan 2009; Ricks 2009: 174-185, 237-241). Adherents to traditional doctrine found themselves isolated and bypassed. Through the establishment of new structures, including the Joint Strategic Assessment Team, Petraeus nullified the actions of subordinate generals who did not adhere to his innovations (Robinson 2008: 98-100, 114-117; West 2008: 246-247, 273; Woodward 2008: 335-337; Wright and Reese 2008: 176-180; Ricks 2009: 133-138, 140-141). Though backchannel communications with the president, Petraeus even overcame the resistance of his superiors — including Admiral Fox Fallon and General George Casey (Woodward 2008: 341-342, 356-361, 371, 386-390, 399-401; Ricks 2009: 185, 236-237). Petraeus' ability to control the incentive system was most dramatically evidenced by his chairing of the board tasked with selecting which colonels would be promoted to brigadier general (Tyson 2008; Ucko 2009: 131).

Table 4: Hypotheses Results

	Results Consistent with Model's Prediction	Results Inconclusive in regard to Model's Prediction	Results Inconsistent with Model's Prediction	Consistent with Vietnam Case	Consistent with Iraq Case
H.1 (Preparation Phase): As an individual's bureaucratic autonomy increases, his/her ability to develop innovative responses to performance failure increases.	✓			✓	✓
H.2 (Preparation Phase): As an individual's access to an audience within the organization increases, his/her ability to bring into question existent doctrine's core assumptions increases.	✓			✓	✓
H.3 (Espousal Phase): As the public visibility of the community of innovators increases, political pressure on the president to support innovation increases.			✓		
H.4 (Espousal Phase): As the doctrinal entrepreneur's backchannel access to executive branch officials increases, the likelihood of presidential support for innovation increases.		✓			✓
H.5 (Implementation Phase): As the presence of a community of innovators at each level of command increases, the likelihood that innovations will be operationalized increases.	✓			✓	✓
H.6 (Implementation Phase): As innovative tasks become the basis for evaluation, the likelihood of resistance to innovation decreases.	✓			✓	✓

Conclusions

Testing the hypotheses against the sequence of events associated with attempts to innovate in Vietnam and Iraq generates support for most aspects of the model presented in Chapter 1. The results also indicate that the model was incorrect about the hypothesized relationship between the creation of political rewards and the likelihood of capturing presidential support. Visible public rewards for presidential support did not play a role in either the Vietnam or Iraq cases. In neither attempt at innovation was presidential support ‘captured’ as the result of external pressure. As a result, the espousal phase of the model requires revision.

Securing the political and material support of the president remains the primary task that must be completed during the espousal phase. Presidential support provides the opportunity and resources needed for implementation. Based on the case studies, however, it appears that presidential support is ‘won’ rather than captured. Although the processes are, from the perspective of the innovator, similar — the distinction is important.

Winning presidential support requires access via backchannel conduits separate from the formal structures of US civil-military relations. It is through these conduits that opportunities for presidential support are garnered. Based on the events observed in the Iraq case, such access is most likely when the doctrinal entrepreneur's position allows them the autonomy to develop their own network of informal civil-military associations. For example, as the Commander of the Combined Arms Center, David Petraeus was able to further develop and expand relationships with civilian advisors and policymakers —

including Megan O’Sullivan. This network facilitated access to the president and provided conduits for presenting proposed innovations to civilian authorities. Furthermore, it increased the effectiveness of said access by ensuring that innovations were presented in such a manner as to increase presidential receptiveness. It also allowed the COIN community to educate White House advisors about the innovations being proposed. This network of informal channels allowed the COIN community to effectively tailor how the innovations were presented to President George W. Bush.

The espousal phase begins with a critical juncture crisis. The doctrinal entrepreneur and community of innovators must leverage this crisis to secure presidential support for innovation. The likelihood that the entrepreneur will be able to achieve such is based on their bureaucratic autonomy to develop their own informal civil-military relationships and gain exclusive access to the president. These two elements allow the doctrinal entrepreneur and community of innovators to by-pass organizational proponents of existent doctrine. With this access entrepreneurs may present their innovations to the president as the alternative most likely to allow for the realization of previously expressed national security objectives.¹⁰³

Explaining Innovation Under Fire — Learning in the Face of Defeat

During wartime, major innovations in US military doctrine are brought about through a three phase learning process — the outcome of which is shaped by bureaucratic

¹⁰³ The lack of an observed effect resulting from external political rewards (or pressures) for innovation, such as that envisioned by the original model, is likely explained by the fact that presidents are already trapped by the failure to achieve stated national security objectives. Thus innovators who gain exclusive access to the president may win over support for doctrinal changes by offering the president a way out — by presenting their innovations as the best means possible for securing previously stated objectives.

politics. The process is catalyzed by an individual within the organization who perceives a performance gap between how the armed service is fighting and the national security objectives it seeks to obtain. In order to bring about innovation, the individual must demonstrate the need for change within the organization, leverage opportunities outside the organization in order to garner the support of civilian authorities, and then gain authority within the organization to implement new ideas. To achieve success, entrepreneurs must leverage their bureaucratic access, autonomy, and authority to shepherd the process through the *preparation*, *espousal*, and *implementation* phases.

The preparation phase begins when an individual within the service comes to the conclusions that existent doctrine is ill-suited to the current conflict and unlikely to achieve strategic success.¹⁰⁴ It is the perceived presence of such a gap that necessitates the need for innovation (Downie 1998: 2). During the preparation phase, the organization must be made ripe for learning and innovation. This is done by bringing into question the core assumptions and essential workings of the service's existing doctrine.

The likelihood that an individual will be able to make the organization ripe is predicated on three attributes of his/her bureaucratic position within the service: his/her access to battlefield information, access to an audience within the organization, and his/her bureaucratic autonomy. These three attributes determine the innovator's ability to describe the doctrinal source of strategic failure and recommend a set of new assumptions and tasks to members of the organization.

¹⁰⁴ Strategic success, as opposed to battlefield success, is defined as the achievement of those national security goals delineated by civilian authorities.

Doctrinal innovation requires that any potential innovator have enough bureaucratic access and autonomy to diagnose the source of the performance gap and develop a response. It also requires they have enough access and autonomy to establish themselves as the focal point for those seeking change. For innovation to occur, someone must take on the role of a doctrinal entrepreneur and act as the *primus inter pares* — of a community of innovators based on new doctrinal assumptions.¹⁰⁵ This community serves as a mechanism for disseminating knowledge about ongoing performance failure and proposed innovations. Based on the desire to accomplish the organization's assigned mission, the entrepreneur's leadership and the community's sense of purpose binds them together and provides a sense of legitimacy and authority. By highlighting the purpose and mission of the organization, this sense of legitimacy and authority plays a vital role in challenging existent doctrine's position as a dominant design (Clark and Wilson 1961: 135-136; Bergerson 1980: 15). The doctrinal entrepreneur serves to coordinate the efforts of the community of innovators and acts as a focal point of political power within the organization (Murray 1996: 307; Wenger 1999; Huysman 2004).

To bring about innovation, the doctrinal entrepreneur must expand the absorptive capacity of the organization. To achieve this, the entrepreneur must have enough

¹⁰⁵ Krogh, Ichijo, and Nonaka (2002), Nonaka, Toyama, and Byosiene (2001), Argyris (2004) present a similar idea in regard to how managers may promote learning within firms. Argyris breaks the process down into five steps: (1) "Managers discover new strategies and market opportunities by wandering inside the firm;" (2) "Managers facilitate creative and essential dialogue, 'abductive' thinking, and the use of metaphors to foster concept creation;" (3) "Managers assemble data used to plan strategies and operations;" (4) "Managers interact with cross-functional groups, they search for and share new values and thoughts, they share and try to understand management's vision and values by communicating with fellow managers;" (5) "Managers foster a spirit of challenge within the organization." It also fits with the arguments of Boer, van Baalen, and Kumar (2004) regarding the establishment of "communal sharing relationships" for the search for and dissemination of new knowledge; and those of Bogenrieder and Nooteboom. (2004) regarding "communities of practice." It is similar to Haas' (1992) notion of epistemic communities.

autonomy and access to launch a debate within the organization about the need for innovation. Debates about the appropriateness of existent doctrine and the recommended innovations engage double-loop learning processes that question the validity of core assumptions. If innovation is to occur, individuals must update their beliefs about the utility of doctrine in favor of innovation. If enough individuals update their beliefs, a new consensus emerges weakening existent doctrine's dominant position. The preparation phase is complete when the entrepreneur is able to supplant the mandate provided by existent doctrine with that provided by the need to achieve strategic objectives.¹⁰⁶

The espousal phase begins with a critical juncture crisis.¹⁰⁷ Such a crisis takes the form of a real or perceived battlefield loss, or an experienced or expected political setback for the president. Regardless of its exact manifestation, the phase begins with an external shock that forces administration officials to reevaluate the operational nature of the conflict. To avoid the domestic political costs associated with backing down, it is assumed that executive branch authorities will avoid abandoning or scaling back previously stated national security objectives. Civilian authorities will instead focus on the performance of the military (Fearon 1994; Lieber 2007; Tomz 2007). This creates opportunities for the doctrinal entrepreneur and community of innovators. During the

¹⁰⁶ Bergerson (1980: 12-15) suggests that there are several different sources of authority and identity within the US military. Doctrine and mission are a chief source for both. A point support by Lock-Pullan (2006: 4). This suggests doctrinal skeptics may use the authority and identity supplied by mission to undermine the authority and identity supplied by doctrine.

¹⁰⁷ Capoccia and Keleman note that during critical junctures, influences are significantly relaxed and the range of plausible choices expands. Such crisis do not necessarily produce changes in behavior or policy; yet they increase the likelihood of such. See, Collier and Collier (1991) and Capoccia and Keleman (2007). During such periods, decision-making is more uncertain. Bergerson (1980: 39) notes that there are critical points in the environment that affect both tasks and their underlying legitimacy.

espousal phase, the political and material support necessary to implement innovation must be secured.

During the attempt at innovation, the president plays the role of a potential counterbalance to the power that adherents to traditional doctrine wield within the armed service. Although he or she is not the source of doctrinal innovation, the president is vital to its success. As the commander-in-chief of the military and the head of the US government, the president is in the position to supply the political and material resources that provide the entrepreneur an opportunity to implement doctrinal change. During the Vietnam War, President Johnson failed to supply Abrams with the support necessary to implement PROVN's recommendations and counterbalance Westmoreland and the other Joint Chiefs of Staff. In contrast, during the Iraq War, President Bush provided consistent material and political support for Petraeus and COIN. Presidential intervention in support of the doctrinal entrepreneur and community of innovators is not, however, guaranteed — despite the chief executive's vested interest in avoiding strategic failure.

The likelihood that the doctrinal entrepreneur will gain the presidential support necessary to implement innovation is predicated on two attributes of his/her bureaucratic position: his/her autonomy to develop an informal network of associations outside the organization, and his/her access to backchannel conduits reaching senior officials in the White House — including the president. These attributes determine whether or not the community of innovators has the opportunity to win political and material support from the president.

If the doctrinal entrepreneur and community of innovations can develop an informal network that provides increasing access to the White House and president, the likelihood that they will win needed support increases. In providing access, this informal network allows innovators to by-pass organizational proponents of existent doctrine and present their innovations directly to civilian authorities. Because the interests of the president (the achievement of his/her stated national security objectives) align with those of the community of innovators — access provides an opportunity to garner support by equating support for innovation with the achievement of the president's stated national security objectives. For innovation to occur, the espousal phase must end with the president granting the doctrinal entrepreneur and community of innovators the political and material resources necessary for implementation.

The implementation phase begins with the entrepreneur being placed at the head of the combatant command and the service's adoption of the entrepreneur's doctrinal innovations — a product of the espousal phase. Adoption, however, does not equate to implementation.

During the implementation phase, innovations must be disseminated throughout the organization. During implementation, the core assumptions and essential workings of the service must change and become the basis for altered military operations. Although a new doctrinal consensus in favor of innovation exists, resistance is likely on the part of senior leaders who continue to value past doctrine.

The likelihood that the entrepreneur will be able to disseminate innovations and actually change the way the service fights is predicated on three attributes of his/her

bureaucratic position: his/her authority to assign tasks based on changes in doctrinal assumptions; his/her authority to relieve subordinate commanders, to alter incentive systems, and allocate resources; and, his/her autonomy to make decisions free from the organizational structures and proponents of the previous doctrine.

Major innovations in doctrine require innovators occupy positions of leadership throughout the combatant command.¹⁰⁸ This allows the entrepreneur to disseminate and receive information without such being filtered by proponents of the previous doctrine.¹⁰⁹ It also provides the high levels of acceptance needed to establish an operational consensus regarding new assumptions (Bergerson 1980: 39; Rosen 1988: 141). This allows the entrepreneur to communicate to the organization actionable knowledge about changes in how it is supposed to fight. The doctrinal entrepreneur must have the authority and autonomy to remove those that will not or cannot adhere to doctrinal innovations and replace them members of the community of innovators.

Authority and autonomy also affect the entrepreneur's ability to ensure that doctrinal innovations become the new metric for evaluating individual and unit performance (On incentive systems, see Clark and Wilson (1961) and Lewin and Massini (2004)). As the new metric, the innovations assume the position of a dominant design. They become the criteria against which individuals and units hone their abilities (Murray 1996: 311-314). This provides mechanisms for managing the organization's ability to

¹⁰⁸ Argyris (1999 and 2004) discusses the general importance of leadership/authority on successful organizational learning. Nye (1987) discusses the effects of political power within organizations on learning. March and Simon (1958) explore the role dominant coalitions play in organizational learning. Halperin, Clapp, and Kanter (2006) discuss information flow and its effects on implementation. This model borrows logic from each of these.

¹⁰⁹ At this point, the presence of the community of innovators with the organization provides transmission belts to help bring about implementation of the doctrinal innovations.

carry out novel tasks. It allows the entrepreneur to ensure compliance with doctrinal innovations.

Implementation requires that the armed service itself accept and operationalize doctrinal innovations. This requires that subordinate units and individuals receive and understand novel tasks based on innovations in doctrine. Implementation continues with the recognition that units and individuals have a stake in complying with doctrinal innovations. Implementation is complete when subordinate units and individuals have internalized doctrinal innovations, accept them as important in their own right, and self initiate actions to operationalize them.

Major innovations in military doctrine come about via organizational learning. What is learned and eventually operationalized, however, is a result of bureaucratic politics. Presidential support is vital to the process. Yet, the outcome is ultimately determined by an internal consensus regarding the appropriateness of existent doctrine or innovation. Those with the autonomy, access, and authority to maintain or foster an internal consensus regarding how the service ought to fight — decide whether or not innovation occurs.

Unlike past examinations of doctrinal innovation (Posen 1984, Rosen 1991), this dissertation argues that such are possible during wartime. In the face of strategic defeat, the attempt to innovate begins with members of the armed service. These individuals must convince their colleagues to revisit long held assumptions and forge the nucleus of a new consensus. They must then ‘exit’ the organization and present the need for doctrinal change to civilian authorities and convince them to intervene in support of their proposed

innovations. With civilian intervention, innovators ‘re-enter’ the organization with the additional resources and authority necessary to attempt to overcome resistance to innovation and change operational behavior. In this manner, innovators employ bureaucratic politics to construct a new internal consensus in support of innovation, present innovations to civilian authorities and win their support, and gain control over the organizations operations and incentive systems.

Implications — What these Cases Tell us about Wartime Innovation

Two instances of attempted wartime innovation were the focus of this dissertation. The Vietnam and Iraq cases were chosen because they offered an opportunity to study doctrinal innovation while controlling for the effects of differences in the characteristics of national militaries, domestic and international political contexts, and different time periods. Insights provided here regarding control over the learning process, access to resources, and the authority that comes from consensus, offer value in explaining other instances of attempted wartime innovation.

Preparing an organization to learn is ultimately about control over the institution’s inner dialogue. Individuals with the ability to control internal discussions about the appropriateness of existent doctrine have an advantage in either fostering or preventing innovation. In addition to the Vietnam and Iraq cases, this insight helps explain US Army innovations during the Philippine Insurrection, the US Army’s development of helicopter aviation, and British Army innovations during the Malayan Emergency (Bergerson 1980; Linn 1989; Nagl 2005). Based on interviews with Iraqi Generals, this also helps explain

the lack of innovation in the Iraqi Army during the Iran-Iraq War and between the 1991 Gulf War and the US led invasion in 2003 (Woods 2009). In each of these cases, the outcome was affected by a doctrinal entrepreneurs' relative ability to communicate the need for innovation within the organization.

Winning political support and gaining the resources to implement innovation are critical. As was the case in Vietnam and Iraq, the ability to achieve such tasks affected the World War II adoption of a strategic bombing doctrine by the US Army Air Corps (Rosen 1991). Political leaders became willing to supply the resources necessary for the implementation of strategic bombing after being presented with targeting analysis of the damage caused by such (Rosen 1991: 148-149). This insight also helps explain why attempts within the Soviet Army to innovate during their war in Afghanistan failed. When doctrinal entrepreneurs within the Soviet Army attempted to adopt counterinsurgency doctrine, political leaders in Moscow were unwilling to supply the additional resources and manpower necessary (Dudik 2009).

The need to forge a new consensus in support of innovation, one that allows for implementation, also adds to our understanding of other cases. The German Imperial Army's innovation of an elastic defense in World War I was made possible through the forging of a new consensus. Lieutenant General Erich Ludendorff was able to establish general support for changing how the German Army was fighting (Lupfer 1981). In contrast, attempts by doctrinal entrepreneurs in the French Army during the war in Algeria failed because a stable consensus could not be established. As an organization,

the French Army of the 1950s was unable to agree about how best to fight the insurgent war they faced (Alexander and Kieger 2002; Horne 2006).

These very brief examples, broken down to illustrate key points of the model presented in this dissertation, highlight what has been learned from the Vietnam and Iraq cases — and illustrate how such is applicable to other instances of wartime innovation. In each of the instances referenced above, the success or failure of attempts to innovate are best explained by reference to organizational learning. The outcome in each case was the product of a doctrinal entrepreneur's ability to prepare his organization for learning, the ability of a community of innovators to secure the resources necessary, and his ability to implement a new doctrine through the creation and operationalization of a new consensus about how to fight. Each of these examples suggest that elements of the model 'travel well' and offer utility in explaining other cases — yet, the model's primary value lies in its ability to explain the totality of the innovation process and address events both within and outside military organizations. The model's ability to 'travel well' and provide analytical utility in explaining other cases is suggested by its capacity to explain the US Navy's World War II doctrinal innovations in regard to anti-submarine warfare.

At the end of World War I, German U-boats were threatening to choke off the supply lines that sustained and supplied the Allies and their war efforts. The American and British navies, self defined by the capabilities and doctrine of their surface fleets, responded to the threat by increasing the defensive strength of their front line and merchant vessels. Through coveys, mines, and other adaptive changes, the Allies attempted to make U-boat attacks more difficult for the German Navy. Their efforts,

however, proved inadequate. The Allied navies never developed a successful anti-submarine warfare doctrine. After the war, British and American naval leaders effectively abandoned efforts to integrate submarine warfare into existent doctrine and maintained their focus on capital ships (Meigs 1990: 5-16).

The outbreak of World War II, brought a return to the challenges posed by U-boat attacks. Once again, the US Navy responded by attempting to increase the defensive capabilities of surface ships. Submarine and anti-submarine doctrine continued to be an organizational after thought — a concern secondary to core assumptions regarding the decisive nature of surface combat.

Within the Navy, however, there existed officers who recognized the performance gap presented by the organization's approach to anti-submarine warfare. Captain Wilder Baker, Rear Admiral F.S. Low, and Rear Admiral Charles Lockwood each used the attributes of their respective bureaucratic positions to push for doctrinal innovation to change the way the Navy fought.

Baker, tasked with developing an anti-submarine warfare manual to be disseminated throughout the fleet, worked to craft a community of innovators both within and outside the service and prepare the Navy to accept doctrinal innovation. Baker and his community recommended two key innovations. First, they recommended a shift from primarily defensive tactics designed to protect surface fleets and merchants to offensive tactics that recognized the submarine as a vital part of the fleet and targeted U-boats as a threat equal to surface vessels. Second, Baker and the community of innovators recommended aircraft be given a primary role in anti-submarine warfare — a

shift away from reliance upon sub-hunting service ships. These innovations challenged basic assumptions regarding the primacy of surface vessels in naval warfare. They also challenged the organizational relationship that existed among the Navy's surface, submarine, and aircraft units (Meigs 1990).

Low, as Assistant Chief of Staff, championed the types of innovations recommended by Baker. Like Baker, Low helped prepare the organization for innovation. He promoted innovations in anti-submarine warfare to military leaders within the Navy and expanded the audience to which anti-submarine innovations were presented. Low also helped secure the espoused support of civilian leaders. Low increased the size of the community of innovators' network of civil-military contacts and helped present anti-submarine innovations to civilian authorities.

Lockwood, as commander of submarine forces in the Pacific, began to operationalize innovations. Lockwood monitored and protected officers that innovated. Lockwood's actions allowed the community of innovators to present evidence that innovations in anti-submarine doctrine would close the recognized performance gap created by the Navy's existent doctrine. In doing so, Lockwood furthered the implementation process by demonstrating the combat effectiveness of such innovations in anti-submarine warfare. Lockwood's efforts expanded the size of the internal consensus supporting doctrinal innovation (Meigs 1990).

As in the Vietnam and Iraq cases, this sequence of events illustrates a familiar pattern. Innovators within the organization prepared the Navy to learn by challenging the core assumptions of existing doctrine. As before, a community of innovators was

established and networks of backchannel relationships carried proposed changes in doctrine to civilian authorities (Cote 2003). As in Vietnam and Iraq, a critical juncture presented itself. At the Casablanca Conference of January 1943, civilian leaders recognized that they were losing the war against German U-boats. At Casablanca, US (and British) authorities provided espoused political and material support for doctrinal innovation. As in the Iraq case, this support allowed innovators to overcome internal resistance from proponents of traditional Naval doctrine (Meigs 1990).

Consistent with the model presented, innovations in anti-submarine warfare were brought about through an organizational learning process shaped by bureaucratic politics. To innovate US Navy anti-submarine warfare doctrine, innovators had to establish a new consensus by convincing their colleagues to revisit long held assumptions. They then had to ‘exit’ the Navy and secure the resources necessary to attempt innovation. With civilian intervention, innovators ‘re-entered’ the service with the authority to establish and monitor new tasks supported by new measures of success and incentives.

In contrast to past works, including those by Barry Posen (1984) and Stephen Rosen (1991), the cases presented here demonstrate that attempts at wartime innovation do occur. As noted at the outset of Chapter 1, a faltering war effort provides the necessity for innovation. Faced with defeat, military organizations may surrender, try harder, or try something else. War contributes to military innovation by providing the need and opportunity, yet necessity is not itself a catalyst for innovation. Innovation is the product of organizational learning — war, however, impedes such. During wartime, armed services have little organizational slack (in either a material or cognitive sense) with

which to engage in the active questioning and reconsideration of beliefs and behaviors. Thus, for many members of the organization the response is to try harder. In creating conditions that both foster the need for innovation and impede organizational learning, wartime conditions heighten the intensity of the bureaucratic contests between adherents to existent doctrine and proponents of innovation. The attempts at innovation made during the Vietnam and Iraq wars illustrate this point. In both wars, the debates about whether or not innovation was necessary (or even occurred) were so heated that they continue today — years after the fact.

Recommendations for Future Study — The Role of Consensus and Intervention

The model presented here rests upon previous scholarly work — it borrows most heavily from that of Barry Posen and Stephen Rosen. It argues that during wartime, major innovations in US military doctrine are driven and ratified by processes within the armed services themselves. Yet, it also contends that innovation requires doctrinal entrepreneurs secure the support of the president. Presidential intervention is viewed as critical in overcoming resistance on the part of senior members of the organization.¹¹⁰ This element of the model raises an interesting question for future study — one that returns to the debate between Posen and Rosen.

Posen and Rosen disagree about the need for civilian intervention. Posen contends that civilian intervention is the primary catalyst driving major innovations in

¹¹⁰ As initially assumed by the model, and later supported by the case studies, senior leaders in the organization are expected to be more resistant to major innovation — such individuals are more likely to engage in the defensive reasoning routines that prevent double-loop learning. See Argyris (1999: 135-136 and 2004: 1-2, 212).

military doctrine (Posen 1984). Rosen disagrees, arguing that major innovations are the product of generational changes in career paths created by individuals within the armed services (Rosen 1991). Whereas Posen and Rosen present either an externally or internally derived explanation, the model presented here — though privileging internal dynamics — argues that innovation is the product of both internal and external events.

Future research should attempt to further define the circumstances under which external and/or internal variables have greater effects on likely outcomes. Within the context of the United States, two potential questions present themselves. First, is it possible, under either conditions of war or peace, to generate an internal consensus large enough to eliminate the need for civilian intervention? Second, do conditions of peace affect the ability to secure presidential support (given that president's may be inclined to pay less attention to the military) — if so, is congressional support a viable alternative? Given past work, these questions highlight the most prominent and productive areas for further work regarding major innovations in US military doctrine.

Implications of this Argument — Why Learning Matters

Recently, Stephen Walt and others raised questions about the degree to which political science is relevant. Their worry is that scholars have become too concerned with how events and arguments affect theories and paradigms — and have lost sight of how such affect the real world. Implicit in the question is an argument that political science research should be accessible and applicable, that it should study practical issues and attempt to provide utility for address them. Because of such concern, the American

Political Science Association held a panel to address the issue at its 2010 annual conference (Cohen 2009; Jaschik 2010; Walt 2010). Thus, with the above in mind, the following is offered.

For decades, especially in the wake of the Vietnam War, American military leaders have argued that it is vitally important that the armed services be effective learning organizations (Gerras 2002; DiBella 2010). Yet, doctrine appears to have become more rigid. At the same time, military leaders have increasingly spoken of “battlefield dominance” — a condition made possible by the military’s increasing competence in regard to traditional doctrine (Weigley 1977: 192-222, 312-362; Kaminski 1996; Lewis 2007: 42-43). In the 20th century, dominance was the product of increasing US military effectiveness in the execution of a specific set of doctrinal assumptions. This was made possible by the fact that the most likely, and most worrisome, conditions under which force would be used — remained static. Things have changed.

In the 21st century it is increasingly likely that American military forces will be assigned a diverse range of national security objectives.¹¹¹ Furthermore, given the range of potential enemies, battlefields, and tactics (including cyber warfare) — the very nature of war may change quickly and vary situationally. The US military will likely be increasingly called upon to operate in a multitude of environments in pursuit of divergent, perhaps changing objectives. If the above conditions are realized, strategic success will require the US military become the learning organization so often called for in the past. The era of one-size-fits-all doctrine will have passed. Battlefield dominance will most

¹¹¹ General John Abizaid gives voice to this point. He has argued that one of the lessons of Iraq is that the US military does not get to pick the wars it is asked to win (Cloud and Jaffe 2009: 288).

likely be the product of learning — of an ability to adapt or innovate more quickly than one's adversaries.

To increase the US military's ability to learn and innovate more quickly and effectively, the research above suggests the following changes. First, military and civilian leaders should flatten the hierarchy of the armed services. To accomplish this, the number of headquarters ought to be reduced. In practice, this would mean fewer divisions and fewer generals — but more battalions and colonels. A flatter hierarchy would shift the organization's essence in favor of mission over doctrine. Second, when forces are deployed, ad hoc assessment and strategy teams comprised of area and subject matter experts ought to be assembled. These teams ought to be given responsibility for mission success while standing headquarters exercise responsibility for supporting and maintaining the physical, personnel, and material needs of the force. Third, the professional journals (and perhaps blogs) of the armed services should be expanded. Ideally, soldiers should be incentivized at all ranks to read and contribute to the discussions and debates that occur within. Furthermore, more should be done to connect and cross-pollinate the arguments published in military journals with those that appear in academic works, policy publications, and general interest periodicals that cover international affairs. Doing this would promote both the single-loop learning that allows for increased proficiency as well as the double-loop learning and assessment that fosters innovation.

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