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The SWORD Model of Counterinsurgency:
A Summary and Update

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Introduction and Background

In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the United States military turned its back on counterinsurgency (COIN). Except for a few Special Forces officers and soldiers, and a handful of others, there was no interest or effort devoted to COIN. America was never again going to fight a war like that. All of the Army's attention was devoted to stopping the Soviet armored hordes on the North German Plain and in the Fulda Gap by means of the Active Defense promulgated in the 1976 edition of FM 100-5, *Operations*. By that time, the curriculum at the Army's mid-level school for officers, the Command & General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth, had almost completely eliminated any reference to COIN. In the late 1970s there was even a concerted effort to purge the CGSC files of any curriculum references to COIN! Only through the heroic efforts of LTC Don Vought, who hid the offending material in files on terrorism (which was the new topic *du jour*), were the lessons of the past saved for future generations of doctrine writers and officer students.

By 1981 there had been some minor changes. Communist insurgents (the FSLN) had seized power in Nicaragua in 1979. Other communist insurgents were attempting the same in neighboring El Salvador and the Carter Administration was beginning to support the government, however, unsavory. There was also a worrisome insurgency sputtering along in the Philippines and the U.S. was beginning to provide limited assistance to the anti-Soviet insurgents in Afghanistan. These developments resulted in a new manual, FM 100-20, *Low Intensity Conflict* (1981), which was primarily a rehash of the COIN manuals of the Vietnam era. In 1981, the United States Southern Command sent a team of officers to El Salvador, headed by Brigadier General Fred F. Woerner, to assess the situation and recommend a strategy for American support to the Armed Forces of El Salvador (ESAF). The result was the famous Woerner Report, produced in draft but

never finalized or published. Nevertheless, it provided the U.S. COIN support strategy until the war ended 11 years later. One of its recommendations was an expanded security assistance effort which resulted in the "birth" of the 55 man U.S. Mil Group. Its first commander was Colonel John Waghelstein who went to El Salvador with the promise that he would command the 7th Special Forces Group on his return.[2]

The war in El Salvador, which appeared to be going badly even into 1984, sparked some interest at the highest levels of the Army. That year, the Vice Chief of Staff, General Maxwell R. Thurman, asked the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) at the Army War College if it could conduct research to determine the "correlates of success" in COIN. The question, posed in that form, implied a quantitative study with a fairly large number of cases. Coincidentally, SSI had just hired Manwaring – then a Reserve Lieutenant Colonel, who had recently come off several years of active duty in the U.S. Southern Command (Southcom) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). In his civilian life, Manwaring had been an academic political scientist and was trained to design and conduct that type of research. Manwaring became the lead researcher on the project which resulted in the SWORD Model.

The intent of this article is threefold. First, it addresses the methodology and development of the SWORD Model in context. Second, it reports the findings of the research using the model. And, third, it addresses the utility of the model both in light of the two major strategic approaches to counterinsurgency and, especially, at the operational and tactical levels of war.

The Research Project

The first step in the project was to define its parameters. What constituted and insurgency? Were all insurgencies relevant or only some? If the latter, which ones? Manwaring and his SSI associates defined an insurgency as an effort to overthrow a *de jure* constituted government. They also decided to limit the task to insurgencies that had taken place since 1945. However, not all of the post-1945 insurgencies were of equal interest to the U.S. For example, an insurgency that was purely a local affair would hardly affect American national interests. Rather, insurgencies with useful and usable lessons would be those in which a Western power had intervened either as a belligerent or as a supporter of one of the belligerent parties. Thus, the universe of insurgencies that initially appeared to meet these criteria included 69 cases. Closer examination demonstrated that 26 of the cases represented small wars that did not meet the insurgency criteria and reduced the number of cases to 43 post–World War II insurgencies in which a Western Power either was a belligerent or had intervened in support of one of the parties, or was both. The 43 cases also constituted all the cases which met the selection criteria – in other words, they represented a total sample of all such cases or the entire population of such insurgencies.[3]

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[2] Personal communication with COL Waghelstein, 1982.

[3] It should be noted that since 1984 the number of cases in this population has expanded significantly. Several data bases show 89 cases (Rand) and over 100 as of 2008. Two decades ago, the universe had just 43 cases and subsequent research has only served to support the findings of this project.

Methodology and Data[4]

Having identified the population of cases to be addressed, Manwaring and his SSI associates began to consider the question of what caused the outcome of a particular insurgency.

Step 1: Rather than proceed *a priori* they consulted a number of civilian and military experts with significant experience in dealing with insurgencies. They also examined the pertinent literature on insurgencies, all to identify possible causal variables for a win/lose outcome of an insurgency. They further defined a COIN win as the constitutional government still in place when the fighting ended and a COIN loss as the government having been replaced by the insurgents. In all, this process yielded 71 hypothesized independent variables – variables that one or more source considered important to the outcome of the insurgency. There was also one dependent variable – the win/lose outcome – for a total of 72 variables.

Step 2: Manwaring and his colleagues developed a four point ordinal scale where a score of 1 was a rating of low importance to the outcome of an insurgency and 4 was of high importance. This scale was applied to the 71 variables as a questionnaire.

Step 3: The questionnaire was administered to one or more civilian or military officials or scholars who were experts on a particular insurgency. That expert was also asked to evaluate the insurgency as a win or loss for the government. As an example, Général de Division J. Salvan of the French Army responded to the questionnaire regarding the Algerian insurgency of 1954 – 1962. It was particularly interesting that Salvan had difficulty coming to grips with the fact that the outcome was a loss for France. As he argued, France had defeated the FLN at every turn, yet, in the end, Algeria was not longer French. It had achieved independence; therefore, it was rated a loss.

Step 4: At this point, it was clear that 71 independent variables would have to be reduced to some manageable number and considered in some kind of theoretical causal relationship.[5] Factor Analysis is a statistical technique designed to reduce a large number of variables to a smaller number, called Factors. The Factors statistically link related variables to each other so that each set of linked variables can be considered as a dimension of the model. The statistical analysis reduced the 71 independent variables to

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[4] Most of the rest of this article summarizes our original piece, published in *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol.3, No. 3, Winter 1992, pp. 278 - 310. The research was conducted while the authors were in SSI, at SWORD, and was written under government auspices. It is, therefore, the property of the USG and part of the public domain.

[5] The Manwaring and Fishel article cited above diverges from the current discussion at this point and focuses on comparing the SWORD Model with five other causal models. We have chosen here to discuss the development of the SWORD Model using Factor analysis and rely on unpublished work by Kimbra L. Fishel assisted by John T. Fishel. This effort was a partial replication of the Factor Analysis portion of the research using indicators for the 71 independent variables drawn from secondary sources that addressed all 43 insurgencies. Although this project stopped with the initial principal component analysis (prior to the introduction of a varimax rotation) it tended to confirm the original analysis reported in the cited article.

seven Factors. Listed below is the set of variables that comprise one Factor based on the questionnaire discussed earlier:

Q 10 – Intervening Power (IP) willingness to take casualties
Q 12 – Military support from the IP to the host nation (HN) consistent
Q 32 – Degree of domestic support within the IP
Q 44 – IP reinforcements available as needed
Q 49 – Perceived strength of IP commitment
Q 50 – Perceived length of IP commitment
Q 52 – Level of controversy surrounding the conflict in the IP
Q 64 – IP aid to HN withdrawn at any time.

Note that this Factor is not named. It could simply be given a number from 1 to 7 or a letter from A to G. The Factor, however, exists because these statistically related variables can be viewed indicators of some concept. That concept we chose to call "Support Actions of the Intervening Power" (SAIP).[6] And, Manwaring posited that it had a theoretical causal relationship to the win/lose outcome. Indeed, he would do this for each of the other six Factors. The result of Factor Analysis is a summary statistic called a Factor Scale Score which is important for any subsequent statistical analysis.

Before moving on to step 5, we should identify the names given to the other six Factors/concepts/dimensions:

➢ Military Actions of the Intervening Power (MAIP)
➢ Host Government Legitimacy (HGL)
➢ External Support to the Insurgents (ESI)
➢ Actions Versus Subversion (AvS)
➢ Host Government Military Actions (HGMA)
➢ Unity of Effort (UE).

Step 5: After the Factor Analysis of the 71 independent variables was completed and seven Factor Scale Scores calculated, multivariate Probit Analysis was employed to address the outcomes of the 43 insurgencies in the population. The idea was to treat the insurgencies as if they were ongoing rather than completed and predict their win/lose outcomes based on the way in which the seven Factors interacted. Probit is a statistical tool that allows for the treatment of ordinal data in such a way that it produces a statistic that can be treated as if it were the same as one designed for interval data.[7] Probit Analysis allows the researcher to produce a coefficient of multiple determination, called R-square. This is interpreted as a percentage so that an R-square of .8 means that the outcome varies with the independent variables 80% of the time. Researchers will also say that an R-square of .8 explains 80% of the variation in outcomes; they can also say that it

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[6] Fishel joined the research in SWORD in 1986 and was involved in the naming of the Factors/Dimensions/Concepts. We use the pronoun "we" when discussing research actions that took place from 1986 on.
[7] Ordinal data is rank ordered while interval data is not only rank ordered but the distance between any two data points can be measured.

predicts the outcome, correctly, 80% of the time. Probit is also useful as the basis for measuring statistical significance.[8]

The research also attempted to compare the SWORD Model, and its dimensions, with five other models of counterinsurgency. These were developed by a number of different organizations and individuals. In one case the model was derived from the written work of Sir Robert Thompson. The other models were: two from U.S. Southern Command, one from the CIA, and an earlier version of the SWORD Model developed at SSI. In each case, the dimensions of the model were populated by the variables from the questionnaire developed for the project, after which, each model was subjected to Probit Analysis to produce comparable R-square statistics.

Findings

Because the research task was to discover the "correlates of success" in COIN, it is useful to look at the R-square results of Probit testing each of the six models. Table 1 shows the models tested and their relative performance. The SWORD Model, clearly, performed better than any of the others. Its R-square of .900 explained 90% of the variation in the win/loss outcomes of the 43 insurgencies considered. This compares very favorably with the next best performing models, USSOUTHCOM 2 and SSI, with R-squares of .727 and .717 respectively. Put in the same terms as the SWORD Model, they each explained about 70% of the variation in the outcomes of the 43 cases. The drop off in explanatory power is significant for each of the last three models with R-squares of

Table 1: Relative Performance of Six COIN Models

Model Tested	R-square
SWORD	.900
USSOUTHCOM 2	.727
SSI	.717
CIA	.671
THOMPSON	.552
USSOUTHCOM 1	.384

.671, .552, and .384, respectively. In other words, the three poorest performing models explained between a little more than a third of the outcomes to two thirds of the outcomes. The next two models explained about seven out of ten outcomes while the SWORD Model explained nine out of ten.

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[8] Probit Analysis is based on the Chi-square distribution which is commonly used to determine statistical significance of ordinal data. This means that a particular Probit score (coefficient) could occur by chance alone some percentage of the time. Thus, if a particular Probit score was significant at the .05 level that would mean that the particular score could occur by chance alone only 5 times in 100. Whether or not a Probit (or other statistical) score is deemed significant or not is a matter of research convention. Most researchers agree that any score that is significant at the .05 level or below (.01, .001, etc.) is statistically significant. Most also agree that anything higher than .10 is not statistically significant. Some consider .10 to be significant; others do not. In the original article, we considered .10 as significant.

Because the SWORD Model was the best performer, it will be the focus of the rest of this article. It clearly met the requirement imposed on the researchers by General Thurman, but the mere fact that the model, as a whole, explained 90% of the variation in outcome is not of much use without further discussion of the Factors (or dimensions) that comprise it. Table 2 details the performance of the model. On the left side, the seven theoretical dimensions are listed. They were given content through the Factor Analysis process discussed above. The middle column identifies the Probit coefficients associated with each dimension. These allow judgments as to the relative importance of each dimension/Factor in explaining/predicting the win/lose outcomes. Finally, the right hand column shows the level of statistical significance for each dimension.[9] At the bottom of the table are several indicators of goodness of fit which address the impact of the model as a whole on the outcome.

Table 2: SWORD Model Probit Analysis

Dimension	Probit Coefficient	Significance
Mil Actions of theIP	- 1.68	.05
Spt Actions of the IP	2.56	.01
Host Govt Legitimacy	2.32	.025
Host Govt Mil Actions	0.01	N/S
Unity of Effort	0.13	N/S
Actions v. Subversion	0.34	N/S
External Spt to Insurgents	- 0.70	.10
Indicators of Goodness of Fit		
Estimated R-square = .90		
% Correctly Predicted =	88.37	
Log of Likelihood Factor =	- 8.004 Significant at less	than .001

Thus, the significance level of .05 associated with the dimension Military Actions of the Intervening Power (MAIP) indicates that there are only five chances in 100 that a coefficient that large could have occurred by chance. Moreover, the Goodness of Fit measures at the bottom of the table show very strong association/correlation between the independent variables (Factors/dimensions) and the win/lose outcome (dependent variable). For example, the R-square of .90 approaches a perfect correlation of 1.00. The number of cases predicted correctly is very high: 88.37%. Finally, the entire model is significant at the .001 level. That is to say, the chances of the SWORD Model explaining so well by accident or chance is less than one in 1000.

Further, more specific examination of the Probit analysis in Table 2 provides the basis on which principles of COIN can be postulated. First, the MAIP dimension proved to be significant but in the theoretically wrong direction. Thus, the more intense and

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[9] A dimension was deemed significant if the probability of the particular Probit coefficient occurring by chance alone was .10 or less. Any Probit coefficient that had a probability greater than .10 of occurring by chance alone (as shown by the Chi Square distribution) was deemed not significant (N/S).

voluminous the military actions of the intervening Western power, the more likely the incumbent government was to lose to the insurgents. This runs contrary to the idea that, because the enemy military force is the center of gravity, one must have a force ratio of five, ten, or 20 to one to achieve victory. However, what appears to have happened in the 43 cases studied was that the Western power generally did not commit its own forces until its ally was losing, and then, only, in a piecemeal manner – in response to a deteriorating situation. Thus, the more they did – militarily – the worse things got, which provides the rationale for the negative Probit coefficient.[10]

Second, ESI is also significant and also negative.[11] This, however, has the theoretically predicted relationship to the outcome; the greater the external (and internal) support to the insurgents the more likely they are to win and the counterinsurgents to lose. SAIP and HGL are also significant and have the predicted relationship to the win/lose outcome of an insurgency. Indeed, these two dimensions, which are principally non-military and almost entirely non-kinetic, are more powerful in their explanatory power than the other two significant dimensions which are heavily military and have major kinetic elements. Thus, it would appear that a winning COIN strategy would include major efforts by the IP to assist the HG in strengthening its legitimacy and even more strenuous efforts by the HG, itself.

Third, the dimensions called HGMA, AvS, and UE were not significant, individually. Nevertheless, the entire model is more significant than any of its dimensions (less than.001 for the model in its entirety compared to .01 for the most significant single dimension). Moreover, these three non-significant dimensions mark the essential difference between the SWORD Model and the next best performing model – R-square .900 and .727, respectively. We may, therefore, conclude that the three non-significant dimensions are, nonetheless, important in determining the win/lose outcome.[12]

Last, although the SWORD Model provided the best fit to the available data, it still predicted five cases incorrectly. Of these, three were close calls. Two of them, Muscat/Oman and Togoland, had a greater than 48% probability of turning out the way they did. The third case, Shifta/Eritrea, had a slightly greater than 40% probability of coming out as it actually did. In that case, a UN plebiscite also acted as an intervening variable. Thus, none of the three can be considered a serious error in the predictive/explanatory power of the model.

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[10] One might ask if this does not describe the "surge" in Iraq. There are several critical differences. First, there was a major infusion of combat forces (five brigades) in a very short period. Second, there was a major change in strategy that addressed dimensions that had either not been addressed previously or had been underserved or addressed in ways that were counterproductive. Third, there were changes in operations and tactics designed to achieve the new strategic objectives.

[11] Note that ESI's significance (.10) falls into the gray area where the convention is somewhat unclear.

[12] Any effort to determine the reason why three dimensions were not significant or their precise impact on the outcome would be speculative. It is well to remember that the data used to populate the model are ordinal, not interval and, therefore, have not been analyzed using a linear regression technique. Our R-square is an approximation based on the non-parametric Probit coefficient. If the data were interval, we might expect that there would be a high degree of multi-co-linearity among the dimensions and their component variables where the residuals might uncover the degree to which an individual dimension or even a variable impacted the outcome.

The two additional cases appear to be especially serious errors on the part of the model. In Aden, the model predicted only a 12% chance of a loss; in Cyprus only a 31% chance of a win. In each case, however, the outcome appears to have been due to intervening variables. In Cyprus, it was the decision of the British to hang on and pull through, regardless of the sacrifices that would have to be made. As the British commander said in an interview, "I promised the Queen I would not lose Cyprus."[13] In Aden, the intervening variable was the decision by the British to withdraw from East of Suez by a specific date – regardless of the situation on the ground. As Julian Padget has stated, "The announcement was a disastrous move from the point of view of the security forces, for it meant that from then onwards they inevitably lost all hope of any local support."[14] In both cases, the outcome appears to have been due to an act of will on the part of the IP that was beyond the power of our instrument to measure. In the Aden case, perhaps, that should be qualified by noting that one of the variables making up the SAIP dimension is the threat or actual withdrawal of IP support. Thus, it might be argued that this single variable overwhelmed all the other SAIP indicators, thereby producing the prediction error by the model.

Although the dominant variable in the Aden case was included in the dimension called SAIP, it was not among the strongest individual variables in that dimension. This is shown in Tables 3 and 4 which lay out the dimensions and their most important individual variables. Table 3 addresses the four statistically significant dimensions while Table 4 shows the three that were not statistically significant.

Table 3: Statistically Significant Dimensions' Most Important Variables

DIMENSION	Mil Actions of the IP	Spt Actions of the IP	Host Govt Legitimacy	External Spt to Insurgents
VARIABLES AS Q				
	Q1 # of troops	Q12 Mil spt consistent	Q34 Degree of domestic spt	Q40 Sanctuary available
	Q3 Types of acts	Q49 Perceived strength of commitment	Q46 HG seen as corrupt	Q43 Insurgents isolated from sources of spt
	Q5 Primary op objectives	Q50 Perceived length of commitment	Q51 HG ability to motivate people	Q60 Stage of war when sanctuary available
	Q69 unconventional operations		Q68 Pol violence common	

[13] Interview with the late Field-Marshal Lord Harding of Petherton, GCB, CBE, DSO, MC at Nether Compton, Sherborne, Dorset, Oct. 1985

[14] *Last Port in Aden* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), p. 159.

The MAIP dimension variables appear to be the most in need of interpretation. Number of troops, generally is best interpreted as the fewer the better. In this regard, the 55 man limit in El Salvador seems close to optimal. If, however, large numbers of IP troops are required then it is best to put them in at the outset. General Colin Powell's notion of overwhelming force is applicable. Clearly, in Iraq, there were not enough coalition *or Iraqi* forces available at the outset of the occupation with the limitations on US forces imposed during the planning and CPA Administrator, Jerry Bremer, ordering the disbanding of the Iraqi army.

Types of action refers explicitly to a focus on training HG forces, especially training the trainers. This clearly seems to be the most effective use of IP troops. Likewise, the primary operational objectives of IP forces should be to assist the HG forces in finding and defeating an elusive enemy in ways that support the legitimacy of the HG. Finally, IP forces should refrain from unconventional operations that involve the use of terror and torture as well as assisting the HG forces in those types of operations. For example, no matter how tactically effective French interrogation techniques (torture) were during the Algerian war, they were counterproductive and, in the end, discredited the army.

The variables of the SAIP and ESI dimensions are self explanatory, as are most of the variables of HGL. Only the variable labeled "HG ability to motivate people" needs significant explanation while the variable, "Political violence common" requires that its direction be made explicit. By ability to motivate, we mean that the HG generally delivers on required government services such as security, education, health, and welfare, at least, at an acceptable level. Political violence as the normal way of settling disputes simply demonstrates the illegitimacy of the government.

Table 4: Statistically Not Significant Dimensions' Most Important Variables

DIMENSION	Actions v. Subversion	Host Govt Mil Actions	Unity of Effort
VARIABLES AS Q			
	Q18 Pop controls	Q55 Discipline & trng reg troops	Q30 Perception of IP interests
	Q26 PSYOP	Q56 Discipline & trng para-mil	Q33 Clarity of terms of settlement
	Q27 Intel ops	Q59 Willing to take officer casualties	Q36 IP use of public diplomacy
		Q67 Aggressive patrolling	Q63 IP-HG pol polarity (similarity of pol objs.

Of the variables in Table 4, only Perception of IP interests in the Unity of effort dimension needs additional discussion. Here we are concerned with the notion that the HG sees the IP as having interests that are compatible with those of the HG. They do not have to be the same but they must not be perceived as being in conflict.[15]

Conclusions and Implications

The first and most important conclusion is that the whole of the SWORD Model is greater than the sum of its parts. If those parts are the individual dimensions, then what gives the model greater explanatory power than the next best performing models are the three not statistically significant dimensions. Moreover, those three dimensions are heavily military and kinetic. Only the MAIP dimension, among those that are statistically significant, is kinetic and then most successful when it is non-kinetic. The exception to this statement is that if IP force must be used, then it should be done as early as possible and overwhelmingly. The general conclusion that combat power is not the most important element among the dimensions is not to deny its relevance. Rather, as Sir Robert Thompson said, once the insurgent organization is established it will not be defeated by all the reform in the world. Instead, the Counterinsurgent must defeat the insurgent's organization by building a more capable combat organization and using it effectively.

A second conclusion is that the primary focus of the HG in an insurgency must be to defend and expand its legitimacy. This means providing security to the people first and foremost. It means being accountable and perceived, within the culture, as non-corrupt. And, it means being able to deliver the normal government services at an acceptable level. Closely related to these activities on the part of the HG are those of the IP in support. IP consistency is critical as was demonstrated in the anomalous case of Aden.

Third, every effort on the part of the HG and the IP should be directed toward eliminating the legitimacy, the internal and external support for the insurgents. If there are internal sanctuaries, if the insurgents have some degree of recognition and support from the outside, if the people believe that they will be better off if the insurgents win, then the HG and its IP supporters are losing the war for legitimacy.

Finally, the tools to achieve these objectives are found in the three non-significant dimensions. These are population and resource control measures – taken in a manner that enhances rather than degrades the legitimacy of the HG – psychological operations, coupled with civic action, directed at all three key targets (enemy forces, friendly forces, and the neutral, enemy, and friendly civil population), and operations targeted on the enemy forces by effective intelligence.[16] HG military and police forces are critical tools and need to be, and be perceived as being, thoroughly professional. Lastly, unity of effort

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[15] It must be reiterated that the variables in Tables 3 and 4 are not all of the variables that make up each dimension but only the statistically strongest. The entire list of variables is found in Appendix 2 of our original article.

[16] Note that intelligence can and should drive population and resource control measures as well as PSYOP and civic action operations.

between the IP and the HG is essential to victory as well as unity of effort within the military, police, and civil elements of the HG and IP. The bottom line is that any strategy to defeat an insurgency must be holistic and include all seven dimensions. The order of urgency attached to any dimension is part of the art of the strategist.

Subsequent Research

Following the development of the SWORD Model, a group of academics and practitioners has applied it to a number of different examples of contemporary conflict.[17] In 1992, Edwin G. Corr and Stephen Sloan published a collection of case studies of insurgencies entitled, *Low Intensity Conflict: Old Threats in a New World*.[18] The multiple academic and practitioner authors applied the model to seven insurgencies which were treated in depth. A year later, Manwaring brought together a group of authors to explore particular dimensions in greater detail especially with respect to such "gray area phenomena" as drug trafficking.[19] Then, in 1998, Fishel adapted the model to peace operations and applied it with a team of scholar/practitioners to nine cases of peacekeeping, aggravated peacekeeping, and peace enforcement.[20] The case studies consciously and rigorously applied the model in a qualitative test of its applicability to a different kind of small war than an insurgency. Fishel drew the conclusion from this project that the model was clearly adaptable to peace operations. Finally, Fishel and Manwaring brought together the previous research, updating a number of chapters, articles, monographs, along with some entirely new chapters in their 2006, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*.[21]

Future COIN Strategy and the SWORD Model

To conclude this article, it is useful to consider the model in light of David Kilcullen's "Two Schools of Classical Counterinsurgency" and its application to the tactical and operational levels of war. In his January 2007 post on the *Small Wars Journal Blog,*[22] Kilcullen posits two strategic and philosophical approaches to COIN. The first he labels "Enemy-centric" while the second he calls "Population-centric." He summarizes the enemy-centric approach as first defeating the enemy forces; all else will follow. The population-centric approach centers on protecting the population. And he notes that while some would argue exclusively for one or the other (he identifies Galula and FM 3-24 as insisting on a population-centric approach – with 3-24 not being as rigid), he argues that both have their place. In this, he echoes Sir Robert Thompson.

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[17] For a full list of books, book chapters, and articles that have made use of the SWORD Model see the Selected Bibliography compiled by Ambassador Edwin G. Corr in John T. Fishel and Max G. Manwaring, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*, (Norman, OK: 2006, University of Oklahoma Press), pp. 315 – 324.

[18] Boulder, CO: 1992, Westview Press.

[19] *Gray Area Phenomena: Confronting the New World Disorder*, (Boulder, CO: 1993, Westview Press).

[20] "*The Savage Wars of Peace:" Toward a New Paradigm of Peace Operations*, (Boulder, CO: 1998, Westview Press).

[21] Op. cit.

[22] January 27, 2007.

The SWORD Model can be used to illustrate the two different strategic approaches. This illustration is presented in Table 5. It makes the point that

Table 5: SWORD Model X Strategies

Strategies/ Dimensions	Enemy-centric	Population-centric
Mil Actions of the IP	IP forces engage enemy directly. Goal: destroy them	IP focuses on trainer role. Small numbers
Spt Actions of the IP	IP focus primarily on building HG security forces	IP focus broadly on building HG institutions, especially political & econ
Host Govt Legitimacy	Destroy insurgents which provides security – hence legitimacy	Responsive to people, not corrupt, provide effective services – critical is security
External Spt to Insurgents	Isolate & strike sanctuaries	Isolate sanctuaries, gain support for COIN among neutrals
Actions v. Subversion	Intel driven targeting insurgents & supporters to destroy; pop & resource control	Intel driven targeting of insurgents & supporters to win them away from insurgency, capture or kill, PSUOP focused on 3 targets. Pop & resource control
Host Govt Mil Actions	Focused on killing insurgents	Focused on protecting the population
Unity of Effort	Focused on security forces & allied military aid	Focused on all elements of govt & allied political, econ, & security assistance in order

the model can help identify the kinds of effective action needed to implement both strategies. The table also shows that, in most of the dimensions, the enemy-centric strategy is included within the population-centric. Only in the MAIP and HGMA dimensions is the philosophical difference completely visible. Moreover, as the research over more than two decades has shown, there are cases where an enemy-centric strategy is actually better than a population-centric one. These are usually early in the game when the armed insurgent really is the center of gravity.

The purpose of this illustration is to show that the SWORD Model retains its utility both as theory that underlies doctrine and as a guide as to where the COIN strategist might best focus the effort. Nevertheless, one might ask what practical considerations the model offers at the operational and tactical levels. Table 6 is drawn from a series of interviews conducted by Major Rob Thornton and his associates at the Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance (JCISFA) as essential research for a case study of Mosul, Iraq during 2006 and 2007. The interviews ranged from combat commanders through

Transition Team and Provincial Reconstruction Team leaders and members to contractors. The level of these actors was operational and tactical. Table 6 reproduces selected quotations from those interviews to illustrate how US military and civilian participants addressed elements of the seven dimensions of the SWORD Model.

Table 6: The SWORD Model at the Operational and Tactical Levels

DIMENSION	ACTORS' COMMENTS
MILITARY ACTIONS OF THE IP	It was clear that we were going to train the staff, but I think the training of the staff needs to be expanded into training the staff and sustaining it, maintaining and sustaining soldier skills, actually even developing them. (Brigade MiTT[23] Chief.)
SUPPORT ACTIONS OF THE IP	It was the ability of some of the MiTT and PTT[24] teams to go out there and start working with district leaders … that began to encourage them to communicate back up to the provincial government and from there take issues up to the central government. (Deputy PRT[25] Chief.)
HOST GOVERNMENT LEGITIMACY	[S]ervices in the provinces are driven by ministries in Baghdad, and they are stovepiped in a kind of irredeemable way owing to the fact that they have their own equities and interests and it's in their interest to maintain power in the ministries rather than in the provinces. (Civilian PRT Chief for Ninewah Province.)
EXTERNAL SPT TO THE INSURGENTS	Generally, we believed the terrorist influence over the judges was so pronounced that it essentially did not allow any kind of prosecution of cases for the previous three years. (PRT Lead, Rule of Law Line of Effort, Mosul)
ACTIONS v SUBVERSION	[T]he projects and programs that made the most impact were the ones that had a direct tangible effect, and in those cases we didn't even need to publicize it; it publicized itself. (PRT Governance Section Leader.)
HOST GOVT MILITARY ACTIONS	The MiTT team got more into instead of just saying, "Let's do combat operations with the I[raqi] P[olice]," because they got that piece, you have to transition now to a

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[23] MiTT = Military Transition Team
[24] PTT = Police Transition Team
[25] PRT = Provincial Reconstruction Team

	more traditional cop role of collecting evidence, collecting statements, and making sure that we're pushing that system along because we have to get them doing this totally themselves. (Cavalry Squadron Cdr.)[26]
UNITY OF EFFORT	[Y]ou've got a bunch of defense guys who are now working with some State [Department] guys with a few defense guys mixed in; was a lot of butt sniffing going on for a while where everybody's trying to figure out exactly what's going on. (Deputy Commanding Officer, BCT[27] in Mosul.)

As the actors' comments show, American advisors to the Iraqis, both civilian and military, along with American combat commanders, found themselves addressing all seven dimensions of the model. If they were not successful, it was often because they had failed to address one or more of the dimensions or had focused on it in inappropriate ways. Mosul was one of the American and Iraqi success stories during this period (2006 – 2007) because the advisory security force assistance effort did, in fact, deal with the range of actions that make up the dimensions of the model. That said, the model does not provide a cookie cutter for success. There is no "one best way" to achieve success with respect to each and all of the dimensions. Rather, as the interviewees show, they have to be flexible, adaptable, and willing to assume the risk of failure and bounce back to try again. The model is useful simply to keep an eye on the whole of the problem.

Final Thoughts

In this article, we have shown how and why the SWORD Model came about. We discussed the context which generated the critical question from the Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army and the serendipity that placed Manwaring in the right place at the right time. As the model was being finished, the Army and the Air Force established a "think tank" called the Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict (CLIC) at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia and began developing a new Low Intensity Conflict doctrine manual at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Coincidentally, the U.S. Southern Command established its own "think tank" – the Small Wars Operations Research Directorate (SWORD) – with both authors on its staff. SWORD focused its research on exploring the implications of the model in the context of the small wars in El Salvador, Peru, and Bolivia. It also engaged in a dialogue with the doctrine developers at Fort Leavenworth and the CLIC over the several drafts of the new manual.

The manual was published in 1990 and reflects the results of those interchanges. Its principles and precepts echo the dimensions of the SWORD Model. Although the names of the phenomena addressed by the manual changed over the years to Operations Other

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[26] A Squadron is a Battalion in a Cavalry unit.
[27] BCT = Brigade Combat Team

Than War (OOTW), Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), Stability and Support Operations (SASO), the principles remained the same incorporating the dimensions of the SWORD Model. Indeed, the latest doctrinal incarnation, the Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual (FM 3-24), retains those same principles and addresses their implications down to the Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures level.

What is particularly interesting, as this article demonstrates, is that the social science research that informs both the model and the numerous doctrinal manuals holds up well more than two decades later. Concepts such as enemy centric and population centric strategies fit well with the dimensions of the model. Meanwhile, military and civilian practitioners in Iraq make use of its precepts even if they don't know the source. All in all, the SWORD Model has had a good run – one that still is not over.

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