

**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

**Doctoral School of Military Science**

**SHORT THESIS OF**

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**The Impact of Counterinsurgency on Human Security in Fragile States**

**Under Asymmetric Warfare Conditions**

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) dissertation

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## 1. Overview of the research project

The main aim of this research is to identify the impact of counterinsurgency on human security in fragile states under asymmetric warfare conditions through analyzing three different cases: Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Specifically, it aims at analyzing how the divergent community structure combined with counterinsurgency affect human security in the three cases. It also seeks to test the vicious cycle model presented in this dissertation through studying the relevant variables: the number of people engaged in the conflict, the cohesion of the local communities, the desire to take over the control and their peoples' perception of their human security. Thus, the research uses the vicious cycle model of centrifugal force to study the effect of counterinsurgency on personal security, community security and political security.

The research explores the different definitions of human security taking into consideration the wide and narrow considerations of the term; it also analyzes the development of insurgencies, counterinsurgency and the concept of responsibility to protect. Furthermore, the research provides a detailed historical overview of the three cases to provide a better understanding of the local communities and the change in the social structure in each region.

### 1.1. Formulating a scientific problem

The key problem lies with the fact that counterinsurgency through third parties in fragile states adopts strategies that are state-centric rather than human-centric. It is focused on protecting, safeguarding and guiding the state from aggression rather than protecting the lives of citizens. This is especially the case when insurgency starts after external support of regime change. Such regime change creates states that are fragile and not able to protect its citizens, a state that lacks the trust of the citizens, and a state that is providing support for the new political elite in the country

The counterinsurgency strategy in cases of insurgency following external support of regime change is state-centric. This strategy is highlighted by the following factors:

- Number of civilians killed through the interventions exceeded the number of civilians killed before the regime change or even during the start of the insurgency.
- The extensive use of military intervention that included destruction of civilian constructions and sites.
- The government's concern to prevent insurgents from overthrowing the government as a first priority, which is intensively supported by the external counterinsurgents.

## 1.2. Research Goals

Despite the debate over the definition of human security, it is agreed that any denial of human basic needs lead to frustration and aggression, which drives more conflict. The state's inability or unwillingness to provide basic needs to all the people is a main driver to people's aggressiveness.

Counterinsurgency operations have started in Iraq and Afghanistan following regime change and in Libya after responsibility to protect and regime change measures, and they raise several questions. How did those measures affect the people? How did they start? Why did they start? Is there any similar sequence in the events? Are there any similarities between the resultants of each case? All these questions will be addressed throughout the discussions of this thesis. The goals of this research included the following:

***Analyze how the divergent community structure combined with counterinsurgency following regime change in fragile states under asymmetric warfare conditions affect human security.***

Thus, it analyzes how this affects the level of conflict, how they affect the number of people engaged in the conflict, and how they lead to a vicious cycle?

***Present the centrifugal force resulting from the vicious cycle.*** It studies the impact of the vicious cycle on the cohesion of the community, the influx of refugees and IDPs, and the possibility of separatism.

***Analyze the impact of the vicious cycle model on human security.*** More specifically, the impact of the vicious cycle on personal security, community security, and political security.

## 2. Methodology and hypotheses

### 2.1. Research methods

The thesis investigates the impact of counterinsurgency on human security in a particular way that studies the structure of the community, and how the heterogeneous structure combined with a regime change and the engagement of multiple players creates a new structure that is completely different from the original community structure thus leading to a deteriorated human security.

A qualitative research approach was used to help understand the phenomena and the underlying relevant factors. This method ensures a multifaceted interpretative approach that ensures analyzing the full picture and considering all the underlying factors.

The case study approach helped in ensuring an intensive holistic description of the context, history and socio-political system. This approach helped in analyzing the case over a prolonged period of time. It analyzed the structure and the context of the three cases under study including Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. The study analyzes the sequence of events: the divergent community structure in each country, how these formed a heterogeneous structure with lack of human security, the start of insurgency, regime change, and expansion of insurgency, counterinsurgency, and finally state collapse.

Analysis of the cases is based on primary and secondary data. Primary data were gathered through observation and interviews conducted in each country. Secondary data included analysis of various reports and available data in the three countries.

## 2.2. Frame of analysis

The research provides an analysis of the wide and narrow definitions of human security. However, it adopts the wide perspective given the importance of the different aspects affecting the individual in the different societies. This is reflected in the vicious cycle presented in the thesis. The term is also analyzed using the different international relations theory to show how it is reflected in each.

On the other hand, the insurgency life cycle is presented and analyzed to understand how it could affect the cohesion of the society. It also presents an analysis of its “marketing strategies” and propaganda to analyze the mechanisms with which counterinsurgency should be enforced.

The thesis also presents two unique models. The first model is the vicious cycle model that studies the origination of insurgencies, and complete chaos is formed after the intervention of external counterinsurgency leading to an irreversible status. It also presents the spill-over cross-over model that illustrates the impact of the asymmetric warfare on the neighboring countries.

The vicious cycle theory is then tested on three different cases. The applicability of the theory was illustrated by presenting the structure of the society as per the three different types: government and elites, minorities and neutral (dispersions, colloids and solvents), how insurgency starts, and the impact of counterinsurgency on human security of the people. The cases were selected on the basis of the fundamental criteria:

- They should compose the same context; insurgency starting after external intervention to change the existing regime. This better allows comparison between the cases.

- They should have adequate and accessible information about them.
- They are the most prevalent examples in the region for the chronological span: Afghanistan (2001-present), Iraq (2003-2011), Libya (2011-present)

Analysis of the cases was based on primary and secondary data. Primary data were gathered through observation and interviews conducted in each country. Secondary data included analysis of various reports and available data in the three countries.

### 2.3.Hypotheses

The research was based on the following hypotheses:

***Hypothesis 1:***

A divergent community structure combined with counterinsurgency following regime change in fragile states under asymmetric warfare conditions degrades human security dimensions.

- a. A divergent community structure combined with counterinsurgency following regime change in fragile states under asymmetric warfare conditions lead to increase in the level of conflict.
- b. A divergent community structure combined with counterinsurgency following regime change in fragile states under asymmetric warfare conditions lead to an increase in the number of people engaged in the conflict.
- c. A divergent community structure combined with counterinsurgency following regime change in fragile states under asymmetric warfare conditions lead to a vicious cycle.

***Hypothesis 2:***

The vicious cycle diminishes the level of cohesion within the community.

- a. The vicious cycle increases the influx of refugees and IDPs.
- b. The vicious cycle increases the possibility of separatism.

***Hypothesis 3:***

The vicious cycle creates different centers of mass and degrades human security.

- a. The vicious cycle degrades personal security.

- b. The vicious cycle degrades community security.
- c. The vicious cycle degrades political security.

### **3. Structure of the research**

The thesis is divided in two parts; the first part contains the literature review and the second part included the case studies. The first part consists of four chapters; the first three chapters represent the theoretical background and literature review of the two basic terms human security and counterinsurgency. The fourth chapter illustrates the metaphor and model that explains the impact of counterinsurgency on human security. The second part comprises the bulk of the substantive analysis that explains the application of the case studies on the metaphor suggested in the earlier chapters. It is composed of three chapters for the three case studies. The last chapter includes the conclusion and recommendations.

*Chapter one* addresses the human security concept and the different perspectives of human security. As such, the chapter answers the following questions:

1. What is the definition of human security?
2. What are the different perspectives of human security?
3. What are the critiques of the human security concept?
4. What are the principles of human security?
5. What are the threats of human security?

*Chapter two* addresses counterinsurgency. It includes two main parts, the first is on insurgency and examples of insurgency, and the second is on counterinsurgency and the various doctrines and strategies of counterinsurgency.

*Chapter three* addresses providers of human security in fragile states. It discusses how and what is provided through the state, insurgents, counterinsurgents, humanitarian organizations, civil society organizations, humanitarian interventions, peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. This chapter is then concluded by discussing the dynamics of the various players.

*Chapter four* presents the metaphor that explains the impact of counterinsurgency. It is composed of two parts; the first part is the core theory that explains the impact of counterinsurgency on human security and community structure. The second part discusses the impact of counterinsurgency on the neighboring countries.

*The second part* illustrates the description of the three case studies in three chapters; Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Each case study is discussed through the same mechanism with a presentation of the following: historical and political context, community structure, insurgency, counterinsurgency, vicious cycle, and the impact of the vicious cycle on human security. The same structure was used for the analysis of the three cases to allow comparison and lessons learnt from each case. The analysis gives the opportunity to understand the case study as a standalone case, while ensuring the comparison to illustrate the use of the suggested metaphor.

The Final chapter is the Conclusion and Recommendations. In chapter eight conclusions are addressed in reference to the research questions and hypothesis. It also presents scientific findings resulting from the application of the metaphor and the analysis of the cases.

#### **4. Summary of conclusions**

The aim of this research was to gain a better understanding of the consequences of counterinsurgency following regime change by the international community. This has been addressed through the analysis of the three case studies that underwent similar phases in the conflict: civil war, regime change through international intervention, immense level of insurgency, third-party counterinsurgency, followed and accompanied by complete chaos with a state of nature (a condition without government according to Hobbes).

This thesis demonstrates that counterinsurgency following change of regime is heavily and negatively impacting the entrenchment of political stability, thus creating economic and social challenges along with extensive militarization of the polity, demographic implications, and deterioration of all dimensions of human security.

Throughout the analysis of the three cases it was evident that the insurgency was a status of social contract failure. However, the international intervention formed the base for a weak national unity and shared identity. The intervention has caused an irreparable and irreversible state of affairs thus jeopardizing national reconciliation.

Despite the differences between the three cases, they passed through the same three phases: ***regime change, insurgency and counterinsurgency***; and they ended up with similar results and societal conditions. The results included an ***escalation of emigration*** level due to the lack of any support to the people on the ground and their lack of expectations for, and hope in the system. This was evident from the increasing rate of migration by time. The result was also an unprecedented ***creation of different parties, factions, opposition, and isolated communities***, the new floccules have minimal connections towards the state; however, their members' main connection and loyalty are directed towards the faction or the group rather than towards the state. This fragmentation led to different centers of mass, thus creating different centers of gravity for the different segments of the society. The result is a ***massive deterioration in human security***; a life full of fear, with no needs fulfilled and a life of indignity. This fragmentation and diverse centers of mass also lead to the ***formation of a new community that is not similar to the original structure any more***. The one community is now fragmented into several new communities; communities that cannot live together, and communities that are now of different aspiration, different cultures and different level of wellbeing. Some of these new communities believe that the only way forward is claiming independence from the state, or maintaining the state of war. The result of the vicious cycle is ***complete chaos*** approaching the status that Hobbes called the "State of Nature." It is a failure of the social contract and a "war of all against all." The vicious cycle is accelerated by increasing the support provided to the poles, it ***increases in people the willingness to control the government, elevates the violence level used and increases the percentage of the population engaged in the conflict***. Hence, followed the formula suggested through the metaphor.

## Sequence of Events in the Three Cases

### **How insurgency starts**

The incubation period of the insurgency's life span is not necessarily detected by the authorities, since it takes place below their attention threshold. However, it usually commences with establishing grievance and group identity, forming leadership, and starting to recruit and stockpile armaments. It starts out of grievance in areas with no governmental access or areas not served by the government; a complexed situation where lack of services is blended with an economic crisis. This strengthens the division of the local communities and creates more grievances; a fact that is utilized by the insurgents to recruit members, thus creating a basis for

a reinforced insurgency seeking to mobilize the population, by forming a group identity centered on ethnicity, religion or political affiliation.

The heterogeneous societies in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya created heterogeneous political structures and fragmented societies. This structuring and restructuring following regime change opened a Pandora's Box of internal conflict and fragmentation; this is evident in the resultant deep fragmentation. The sociocultural conditions led to the warlords gaining power and the rest denied all services leading to popular support to the insurgency. The connection to tribes, clans and communities were deeply strengthened following the spark of the conflict and during those situations of insufficient and inappropriate services and lack of security. This drove the change from the national interest to the regional interest.

### **Regime change**

The cases under study have all gone through regime change; a factor that was supported and implemented by external parties. In general, people in the three countries perceive that the governments are not credible and illegitimate, forced upon them by the external parties. According to the saying "if you break it you own it" if you bring down a government you will become the government – although not necessarily directly: it could be indirectly by influencing and guiding the new government. This has limited the possibility of a successful counterinsurgency. According to the US doctrine "Success in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations requires establishing a legitimate government" (US Army, 2014, p.199); however, this was not the case in the spark of the counterinsurgency. This illegitimacy empowered the insurgency, and helped increase popular support of the insurgents. It is evident that escalation of the insurgency followed the regime change in Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq.

The new regime itself generally is fragile. It lacks the capacity of power sharing and lack of accommodation of the different factions. The state was constructed on the basis of tribalism with a centralized system; thus, exclusion was evident more than under the previous regime.

The change of regime in the three cases has brought about change in personnel or in ruling party, but did not involve institution building. It did not involve formal and informal institutional change; it encouraged maintaining or reconfiguring the political elite, and institutionalized the society's fragmentation. The result is that the regime change created a paradoxical system in which a new government oscillates between striving to ensure its own

survival by satisfying the citizens' aspirations and satisfying the intervener's agenda which undermines the credibility of the new regime.

In fact, interventions and regime changes were not analyzed as per the results or the costs. The result was a real vicious cycle. And the cost encompassed military fatalities along both the local and international armies and civilians.

### **Escalating Levels of Insurgency**

The intensity level of the counterinsurgency increased following the regime change, with the population having close relationship to, and being protected by, the insurgents. This was possible when insurgents became the safe haven offering economic benefits, security from violence and basic services that were not delivered by the new regime.

In the three cases, the purpose of the international intervention was to support the new regime in response to the insurgency. However, in no time, this was the reason for the escalating intensity of the insurgency, as it was the international intervention itself that deprived the new regime of legitimacy and increased popular support (at least passive support) to the insurgents.

### **How and why did Counterinsurgency Fail?**

Insurgency in the three countries is still ongoing; meaning counterinsurgency hasn't been effective. In fact, counterinsurgency failed. Common factors were analyzed in the three cases that explain counterinsurgency failure on a policy and procedural levels.

In the three cases counterinsurgency had no clear political aims; it was completely in contrast with Galula's principle to establish a free, independent and united country which is politically and economically stable and viable. The focus was mainly on defeating insurgents rather than defeating political subversion. The intervention was not based on winning the population; it supported the disempowerment of the local population. Furthermore, counterinsurgency in the three cases used a platform that was inappropriate for the realization of human security principles. On the contrary, it led to the deterioration of all human security dimensions. It aspired to a near-term stability that limited possibilities of sustainable stability but also did not resolve the issues over grievance, greed, power-sharing, and separatism.

Empowerment of both insurgents and the government was a main factor behind the failure of counterinsurgency. Allowing external interventions to support the two poles increased the intensity of conflict. Support was provided to both sides of the conflict (flow of funds, fighters and supplies) that not only strengthened the insurgency but even led to establishing shadow governments. In Iraq there was the demand for Kurdish independence, in Afghanistan it was the Taliban that was capable of providing services for the people, and in Libya two competing governments functioned alongside the UN-supported third government. All insurgents or shadow governments were able to provide services to their people while the government was unable or unwilling to provide the services. Insurgents in the three cases started providing social and administrative services including health care, and even court system. This decreased the percentage of neutral population and increased the level of conflict and the number of those engaged in the conflict. As a result, the number of insurgent attacks, losses and fatalities increased drastically over time, with no trend of decrease.

## **5. New scientific results**

This research has helped develop theoretical frameworks and identified models that could be used in future research in the area of human security

1. A divergent community structure, beset by counterinsurgency following regime change in fragile states under asymmetric warfare conditions degrades human security dimensions. The affected community's security diminishes social cohesion and increases the level of conflict. It deteriorates the personal security; thus, dwindling the feel of safety and security. Political security is also missed with the lack of rule of law and increase in the level of corruption. Moreover, it exhausts the other dimensions of human security including economic, food, health, and economic security.
2. The vicious cycle created as a result of external support both to the insurgents and to the government diminishes the level of social cohesion within the community and alters the community structure. The ethnic, religious and tribal conflict increased drastically. People feel threatened because of their affiliation to certain tribes, ethnicities, sects or religions. The vicious cycle disrupts social networks, loyalty to the tribe or sect increases against the loyalty towards the state and the nation. Following the regime change, there is an absence of real political leadership, leaving the mantle of leadership with the ethnic or tribal leaders who are using the troubled regions for their tribal or ethnic advantage. This generates religious-radical or ethnic-radical movements.

3. The emergence of a non-homogeneous system leads to the disturbance of mass distribution. The center of mass for the system as a whole is far from the center of mass for the ideal situation and leads eventually to an irreversible condition. The main results of the centrifugal force resulting from the vicious cycle include: increase in emigration and internally displaced people, increasing affinity to the tribes, ethnicities or religions, as opposed to affinity to the state, and different centers of mass are created leading to a massive deterioration in human security amongst the different people.
4. The physical metaphor of the vicious cycle is unique as the model used a simple analogy between human security under the influence of asymmetric warfare in fragile states and the intermolecular forces and Newtonian laws. It provides a proxy model that helps understand the relationship between different variables while mapping the structure of the two domains. The thesis utilized a process model that considers both the concepts and the processes. The centrifugal force in the three cases was dependent on the variables suggested in the metaphor; these include: the external support to the insurgents and the government, the willingness to control the government, the level of violence used, and the percentage of the population engaged in the violence. The solution should be based on the factors defined in the vicious cycle model. Hence the following factors should be controlled: support provided to the poles, willingness to control the government, the violence level during the conflict, and the number of those engaged in the conflict.
5. The dissertation has suggested the insurgency life cycle that should be confronted in accordance to the phase in which insurgency operates. The model suggests that following the maturity phase insurgency will start the decline phase if its capacity is limited. However, if it is not defeated in this level it further develops and then will reach to the chronic level with more power, more capacity and more public support. This finding helps in defining the appropriate counterinsurgency strategy.

## **Recommendations for practical usage**

### Recommendations for Future research

1. Conduct comparative research covering the countries that underwent similar conditions: insurgency, regime change, insurgency and counterinsurgency. This will help identify the trends by time.

2. Test the model for countries that did not experience regime change and understand the impact of counterinsurgency on human security in fragile states. This will help generalize the model of the vicious cycle.
3. Conduct deep analysis of the seven dimensions of human security rather than focusing on personal security, community security and political security.

## Policy Recommendations

1. ***Use the Inspect-Control-Protect mechanism of responsibility to protect.*** This ensures protecting the people by making sure that there is no empowerment of the competing poles. Examine interventions and support of the countries and individuals, control the support to the poles by imposing sanctions on those providing support to the poles, and then provide protection to the people by empowering the government to enhance services provided to all. Interventions should be authorized and led by the UN .
2. ***Use an inclusive participatory governance approach:*** this is ensured by sharing information, dialogue with the community as a whole, and making decisions based on the consultation and dialogue with the public.
3. ***Control the level of violence:*** Violence creates more violence even when directed by international interventions aiming to counter the insurgency. Hence, interventions should be based on strengthening and empowering the systems rather than increasing the level of conflict.
4. Ensuring human security and equitable services: all interventions should be based on human security. Moreover, they should be focused on empowering the government to enhance service delivery.
5. COIN should start with state building, in which the role of the military should include tasks that are traditionally the responsibility of civilian organizations.
6. COIN doctrines should be analyzed to ensure sensitivity to human security in the strategies, objectives.
7. Integrate social cohesion into human security and community security programs.
8. Intervention should be based on empowering the government, and ensure a good governance system that promotes equity and protection of fundamental rights.
9. Interventions should focus on full integration of civil society to help improve service delivery, ensure social cohesion.

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