
Chapter 3

If I could sum up the book in just a few words, it would be: "Be polite, be professional, be prepared to kill."

- John Nagl, The Daily Show with Jon Stewart

Soon after the U.S. Army and Marine Corps published the new Counterinsurgency Field Manual in December 2006, the American public was subjected to a well orchestrated publicity campaign designed to convince them that a smart new plan was underway to salvage the lost war in Iraq. In policy circles, the manual became an artifact of hope, signifying the move away from the crude logic of "shock and awe" toward calculations that rifle-toting soldiers can win the hearts and minds of occupied Iraq through a new scholarly appreciation of cultural nuance.

Things were going poorly in Iraq, and the American public was assured that the Counterinsurgency Field Manual contained plans for a new intellectually fueled "smart bomb" for victory in Iraq. This contrivance was bolstered in July 2007, when the University of Chicago Press republished the manual in a stylish, olive drab, yam-field ready edition, designed to slip into flack jackets or Urban Outfitters accessory bags. The Chicago edition included the original foreword by General David Petraeus and Lieutenant General James Amos, with a new foreword by counterinsurgency expert Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl and introduction by Harvard's Sarah Sewell. Chicago's republication of the Counterinsurgency Field Manual spawned a media frenzy, and Nagl became the manual's poster boy, appearing on NPR, ABC News, NEC, and the pages of The New York Times, Newsweek, and other publications, pitching the manual as the philosophical expression of Petraeus' intellectual strategy for victory in Iraq.

The Pentagon's media pitch claimed the manual was a rare work of applied scholarship, and old Pentagon hands were shuffled forth to sell this new dream of cultural engineering to America. Robert Bateman wrote in the Chicago Tribune that it is "probably the most important piece of doctrine written in the past 20 years," crediting this success to the high academic standards and integrity that the Army War College historian, Conrad Crane, brought to the project. Bateman touted Crane's devotion to using an "honest and open peer review" process, and his reliance on a team of top scholars to draft the Counterinsurgency Field Manual. This team included "current or former members of one of the combat branches of the Army or Marine Corps." As well as being combat veterans, "the more interesting aspect of this group was that almost all of them had at least a master's degree, and quite a few could add 'doctor' to their military rank and tide as well. At the top of that list is the officer who saw the need for a new doctrine, then-Lt. Gen. David Petraeus, PhD."

The manual's PR campaign was extraordinary. In a Daily Show interview, John Nagl hammed it up in uniform with Jon Stewart, but amidst the banter Nagl stayed on mission and described how General Petraeus collected a "team of writers [who] produced the [counterinsurgency] strategy that General Petraeus is implementing in Iraq now." When Jon Stewart commented on the speed with which the manual was produced, Nagl remarked that this was "very fast for an Army field manual; the process usually takes a couple of years;" but for Nagl this still was "not fast enough." The first draft of each chapter was produced in two months before being reworked at an Army conference at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The speed with which the Counterinsurgency Field Manual was produced should have warned involved academics that corners were being cut, but none of those involved seemed to worry about such problems. The manual's insertion into mainstream American
popular culture was part of the military's larger scheme to use willing glossy outlets to convince the American public that new military uses of culture would lead to success in Iraq. While one conservative magazine criticized these efforts (The American Spectator), the liberal press (The New Yorker, Elle, More, Wired, Harper's, etc.) climbed on board, running glossy uncritical profiles of the cultural counterinsurgency's pitchmen in glamorous write-ups portraying this new generation of anthropologists as a brilliant new breed of scholars who could culturally co-opt foreign foes and capture the hearts and minds of those we'd occupy. The willing press pitched the Pentagon's message that top scholars were now using scholarship to prepare America for victory in Iraq.

The American public was assured that in Iraq and Afghanistan the military was implementing the manual's approach to the use of culture as a battlefield weapon. Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) embed anthropologists with troops operating in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Counterinsurgency Field Manual was hailed as the intellectual tool guiding their coming success.

The Secrets of Chapter Three

The heart of the Counterinsurgency Field Manual is Chapter Three's discussion of "Intelligence in Counterinsurgency." It introduces basic social science views of elements of culture that underlie the manual's approach to teaching counterinsurgents how to weaponize the indigenous cultural information they encounter in specific theaters of battle. General Petraeus bet that troops working alongside HTTs could apply the manual's principles to stabilize and pacify war-torn Iraq and Afghanistan.

When I read an online copy of the Counterinsurgency Field Manual in early 2007, I was unimpressed by its watered-down anthropological explanations, but having researched anthropological contributions to World War II, I was familiar with such oversimplifications. Like any manual, it is written in the dry, detached voice of basic instruction. But when I reread Chapter Three a few months later, I found my eye struggling through a crudely constructed sentence and then suddenly being graced with a flowing line of precise prose:

A ritual is a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects performed to influence supernatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests.

The phrase "stereotyped sequence" leaped off the page. Not only was it out of place, but it sparked a memory. I knew that I'd read these words years ago. With a little searching, I discovered that this unacknowledged line had been taken from a 1972 article written by the anthropologist Victor Turner, who brilliantly wrote that religious ritual is:

a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests.

The manual simplified Turner's poetic voice, trimming a few big words and substituting "supernatural" for "preternatural." The Counterinsurgency Field Manual used no quotation marks, attribution, or citations to signify Turner's authorship of this barely altered line. Having encountered students passing off the work of other scholars as their own, I know that such acts are seldom isolated occurrences; this single kidnapped line of Turner got me wondering if the manual had taken other unattributed passages. With a little searching, I found about 20 passages in Chapter Three showing either direct use of others' passages without quotes, or heavy reliance on unacknowledged source materials.

The numerous instances I found shared a consistent pattern of unacknowledged use. While any author can accidentally drop a quotation mark from a work during the production process, the extent and consistent pattern of this practice in the Counterinsurgency Field Manual is more than common editorial carelessness. The cumulative effect of such non-attributions is devastating to the manual's academic integrity, and claims of such integrity are the heart and soul of the Pentagon's
claims for the manual—claims that the military hoped to bolster with the republication of the Counterinsurgency Field Manual at a top academic press.

The use of unquoted and uncited passages is pervasive throughout this chapter. For example, when the manual's authors wanted to define "society" they simply "borrowed" every word of the definition used by David Newman in his Sociology textbook; they lifted their definition of "race" from a 1974 edition of Encyclopedia. Britannica; and their definition of "culture" was swipe from Fred Plog and Daniel Bates' Cultural Anthropology textbook. The manual's definition of "tribe" was purloined from an obscure chapter by Kenneth Brown, and not only is Victor Turner's definition of "ritual" hijacked without attribution, but the manual's definition of "symbols" was a truncated lifting of Turner. Several sections of the Counterinsurgency Field Manual are identical to entries in online encyclopedia sources. The manual's authors used an unacknowledged truncated version of Anthony Giddens' definition of "ethnic groups." Max Weber's definition of "power" is taken from Economy and Society and used without attribution. And so on. Each of these passages was taken without the use of either quotation marks or any acknowledgment that real scholars had originally written these words (For an earlier version of this critique and examples and sources of these passages see: http://www.counterpunch.org/price10302007.html).

Other sections of the manual have unacknowledged borrowings from other sources. Roberto Gonzalez discovered that the manual's Appendix A was "inspired by T.E. Lawrence, who in 1917 published the piece 'Twenty-seven articles' for Arab Bulletin, the intelligence journal of Great Britain's Cairo-based Arab Bureau." Gonzalez compared several passages of Lawrence with David Kilcullen's Appendix A, and found parallel constructions where paragraphs were reworded but followed set formations between the two texts. Gonzalez observed that while these parallel constructions can be seen, "Lawrence is never mentioned in the appendix." Gonzalez shows that Kilcullen's other written work makes a passing reference, "but does not acknowledge the degree to which Lawrence's ideas and style have been influential."

A complicating element of the Counterinsurgency Field Manual's reliance on unattributed sources is that the manual includes a bibliography listing of over 100 sources, yet not a single source I have identified is included. My experience with students trying to pass off the previously published work of others as their own is that they invariably omit citation of the bibliographic sources they copy, so as not to draw attention to them. Even without using bibliographic citations, the manual could have just used quotes and named sources in the same standard journalistic format used in this chapter, but no such attributions were used in these instances.

The inability of Chapter Three's authors to come up with their own basic definitions of such simple sociocultural concepts as "race," "culture," "ritual," or "social structure" not only raises questions about the ethics of the authors, but also furnishes a useful measure of the manual and its authors' weak intellectual foundation. In all, I quickly found over a dozen examples of lifted passages from uncredited sources.

When I published an expose in October 2007 documenting the extent of the Counterinsurgency Field Manual's plagiarized passages in CounterPunch, the military had a variety of responses. Officially, US Army spokesman Major Tom McCuin issued a doublespeak statement declaring a mistakes-were-made-but-the-message-remains-true admission that passages were indeed used in an inappropriate manner. Less officially, a mob of blood-boiling counterinsurgency believers furiously blogged on the Small Wars website attacking me, my credentials, and my reputation and discussed plots designed to get me fired from my job—those involved in this plagiarism have suffered no negative consequences, while tenured academics like Ward Churchill on the left are made to suffer for any involvements in any form of plagiarism. Nagl issued a statement claiming that the manual, as military doctrine, did not need footnotes or attributions of any type. Nagl's response skirted the issue of the manual's lifting exact sentences (and of slightly modifying others) and reproducing them in the manual without quotation marks as if the problem were simply one of missing footnotes and citations and not of lifted quotations. Nagl wrote that it was his "understanding that this longstanding practice in doctrine writing is well within the provisions of 'fair use' copyright law." A few military scholars, like historian Lieutenant Colonel Gian Gentile of West
Point publicly criticized Lieutenant Colonel Nagl's lame excuses and argued that the academic credibility of the manual had been undermined.

In one sense, the particular details of how the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* came to reprint the unacknowledged writings of scholars do not matter. If quotation marks and attributions were removed by someone other than the chapter's authors, the end result is the same as if the authors intentionally took this material. The silence on the reproduction of these passages, the lack of any authorial *erratum*, and the failure to add quotation marks even when Chicago Press republished the manual seems to argue against the likelihood of a simple editorial mix-up, but who knows? The ways that the processes producing the manual so easily abused the work of others inform us of larger dynamics in play when scholars and academic presses lend their reputations, and surrender control, to projects mixing academic with military goals.

Criticizing the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual's* rejection of the most basic of scholarly practices is not (as Nagl later tried to argue) holding it to external standards; it is to hold the manual to its own standards. Nagl later argued that using the unattributed passages of others is acceptable when writing military doctrine. But the preface of the University of Chicago Press's edition of the manual clearly says: "This publication contains copyrighted material. Copyrighted material is identified with footnotes. Other sources are identified in the source notes." According to doctrine's preface, doctrine has footnotes. The instances in which the manual does use quotes and attributions provides one measure of its status as an extrusion of political ideology rather than scholarly labor, as these instances most frequently occur in the context of quoting the apparently sacred words of generals and other military figures—thereby, denoting not only differential levels of respect but different treatment of who may and may not be quoted without attribution.

After my critique was published, the *Small Wars* website posted a document full of citations and quoted passages that purported to be an original draft of one problematic section of the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual's* third chapter. Even as a draft this document has a lot of problems. While it has an impressive use of footnotes, there remain sentences (often marked with footnotes) that have no quotation marks yet are the words of others. I don't know the provenance of this document, but even if it were the original draft of a chapter that was later altered by unknown citation-and-quote-removing editors, it does not answer basic questions of why chapter three's authors remained silent when the University of Chicago Press republished a work they would have then known to have contained the unacknowledged work of others. If this is what happened, why was no *errata* forthcoming? The mysterious production of this claimed early draft without any explanation solves nothing, and raises more questions than it answers.

The numerous footnotes in this supposed "draft" document do shed more light on the extent of anthropologists whose work was consulted in the production of this chapter; these anthropologists include: Clifford Geertz, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Napoleon Chagnon, Raymond Firth, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Ralph Linton, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Sherry Ortner. I assume that many of the "draft's" cited non-anthropologist radicals such as C. Wright Mills, Antonio Gramsci, or Pierre Bourdieu, would have been disgusted to see their work used to manipulate public opinion in support of military occupation.

The few published critical examinations of the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* focus on the text's provenience and philosophical roots. In *The Nation*, Tom Hayden links the manual to the philosophical roots of US Indian Wars, reservation policies, and the Vietnam War's Phoenix Program. In *Anthropology Today*, Roberto Gonzalez observed that the manual "reads like a manual for indirect colonial rule." (That a press as drenched in "reflexive" critiques of colonialism as Chicago would publish such a manual is an ironic testament to just how depoliticized many of postmodernism's salon-bound critiques have become.) A *New York Times* op-ed by Richard Shweder voiced a stance of relativist inaction from which the travesties of the Human Terrain System could be lightly critiqued while anthropologists were urged not to declare themselves as being "counter-counterinsurgency."
The Politics of Republication

The role of University of Chicago Press in bringing the Counterinsurgency Field Manual to a broader audience is curious. That such shoddy scholarship passed so briskly through the Press' editorial processes raises questions concerning Chicago's interest in rushing out this faux academic work. Rushing a book through the production process at an academic press in about half a year's time is a blitzkrieg requiring a serious focus of will. There was more than a casual interest in getting this book to market—whether it was simply a shrewd recognition of market forces or reflected political concerns or commitments. The Press enjoyed robust sales of a hot title (it was proclaimed as one of Amazon.com's top 100 in September 2007); to what extent was this due to large advance orders from the Pentagon itself, for example? This is damaging to the Press' reputation.

To highlight the Counterinsurgency Field Manual's scholarly failures is not to hold it to some over-demanding, external standard of academic integrity. It is important to recognize that claims of academic integrity are the very foundation of the manual's promotional strategy. Somewhere along the line, Petraeus' doctorate became more important than his general's stars, touted by Petraeus' claque in the media as tokening a shift from Bush's "bring 'em on" cowboy shoot-out to a nuanced thinking man's war. University of Chicago Press acquisitions editor, John Tryneski, told me the manual went through a peer review process, but there are unusual dynamics in reviewing a previously published work whose authors are not just unknown (common in the peer review process), but in effect unknowable. Tryneski acknowledged that peer reviewers came from policy and think tank circles. When I asked Tryneski if there had been any internal debate over the decision by the Press to disseminate military doctrine, he said there were some discussions and then, without elaboration, changed the subject, arguing that the Press viewed this publication more along the lines of the republication of a key political document. This might make sense if this was an historic document, not a component of a campaign being waged against the American people by the Pentagon, surging to convince a skeptical American public that Bush hadn't already lost the war in Iraq.

Its republication transformed the manual from an internal document of military doctrine into a public "academic" document designed to convince a weary public that the war of occupation could be won: it is an attempt to legitimize the war by "academizing" it. It is troubling that those scholars who worked on the Counterinsurgency Field Manual remained silent about attribution problems when they learned of Chicago's plans to republish the manual. If, as some later claimed, quotation marks and citations had been removed by others in the editorial process after the initial draft was submitted, these contributors should have alerted the University of Chicago Press to this. In at least one case, one of the contributors to manual Chapter Three was notified that Chicago would be republishing the manual, but the Press was not alerted to any of these problems.

That militaries commandeer food, wealth, and resources to serve the needs of war is a basic rule of warfare—as old as war itself. Thucydides, Herodotus and other ancient historians record standard practices of seizing slaves and food to feed armies on the move; and the history of warfare finds similar confiscations to keep armies on their feet. But requirements of modern warfare go far beyond the needs of funds and sustenance; military and intelligence agencies also require knowledge, and these agencies are evidently looking to commandeer scholarship in ways not intended by their authors.

Commandeering Scholarship for Dirty Wars

The requisitioning of anthropological knowledge for military applications has occurred in colonial contexts, world wars, and proxy wars. After World War II, Carleton Coon recounted how he produced a 40-page text on Moroccan propaganda for the OSS by taking pages of text straight from his textbook, Principles of Anthropology:
I padded it with enough technical terms to make it ponderous and mysterious, since I had found out in the academic world that people will express much more awe and admiration for something complicated which they do not quite understand than for something simple and clear.

The most egregious known instance of recycling of an anthropological text by the military occurred in 1962, when the US Department of Commerce secretly, and without authorization or permission from the author, translated into English from French the anthropologist Georges Condominas' ethnographic account of Montagnard village life in the central highlands of Vietnam, *Nous Avons Mange la Foret*. The Green Berets weaponized the document in the field. The military's uses for this ethnographic knowledge were obvious, as leaders of assassination campaigns tried to hone their skills and learn to target village leaders. For years, neither publisher nor author knew this work had been stolen, translated, and reprinted for military ends. In 1971, Condominas described his anger at this abuse, saying:

> How can one accept, without trembling with rage, that this work, in which I wanted to describe in their human plenitude these men who have so much to teach us about life, should be offered to the technicians of death—of their death!... You will understand my indignation when I tell you that I learned about the "pirating" [of my book] only a few years after having the proof that Srae, whose marriage I described in *Nous Avons Mange la Foret*, had been tortured by a sergeant of the Special Forces in the camp of Phii Ko.

Today, anthropologists serving on militarily "embedded" Human Terrain Teams study Iraqis with claims that they are teaching troops how to recognize and protect noncombatants. But as Bryan Bender reports in the *Boston Globe*:

> one Pentagon official likened [Human Terrain System anthropologists] to the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support project during the Vietnam War. That effort helped identify Vietnamese suspected as communists and Viet Cong collaborators; some were later assassinated by the United States.

This chilling revelation may clarify the role that Pentagon officials envision for anthropologists in today's counterinsurgency campaigns.

**Militarized Anthropology**

There is a real demand within the military and intelligence community for the type of disarticulated and simplistic view of culture found in the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* not because it is innovative but because, beyond information on specific manners and customs of lands they are occupying, this simplistic view of culture tells them what they already know. This has long been a problem faced by anthropologists working in such confined military settings. My research examining the frustrations and contributions of World War II era anthropologists identifies a recurrent pattern in which anthropologists with knowledge flowing against the bureaucratic precepts of military and intelligence agencies faced often impossible institutional barriers. They faced the choice of either coalescing with ingrained institutional views and advancing within these bureaucracies, or enduring increasing frustrations and marginalized status. Such wartime frustrations led Alexander Leighton to conclude in despair that "the administrator uses social science the way a drunk uses a lamppost, for support rather than illumination." In this sense, the manual's selective abuse of anthropology—which ignores anthropological critiques of colonialism, power, militarization, hegemony, warfare, cultural domination, and globalization—provides the military with just the sort of support, rather than illumination, that they seek. In part, what the military wants from anthropology is to offer basic courses in local manners and local mapping so that they can get on with the job of conquest. The fact that so many military anthropologists appear disengaged from questioning conquest exposes a fundamental problem with military anthropology.
As the occupation of Iraq presents increasing concrete problems for the manual’s lofty claims of counterinsurgency, its "authors" and defenders take on an increasingly cult-like devotion to their guiding text, a devotion that even finds some betraying the lost cause of Iraq in an effort to save the manual’s sacred doctrine. In a December 24, 2007 interview, Charlie Rose gently questioned Sarah Sewell about ongoing disasters in Iraq; Sewell quickly deserted the war she had been recruited to rationalize in order to save the manual, insisting:

the surge isn't the field manual; Iraq is not the field manual. And I think many Americans tend to conflate these things at their peril. And I think they risk throwing out the baby with the bathwater. If and when we look back on Iraq, it will not mean that the manual was wrong, it will mean that Iraq had very different problems, starting with the legitimacy of the invasion to begin with.

With this twisted logic, the Counterinsurgency Field Manual’s use as an instrument of domestic propaganda comes full-Orwellian-circle, as the public is asked to forget that just months earlier a barrage of media appearances by Lieutenant Colonel Nagl and others had pitched the manual as the intellectual foundation for victory in Iraq.

But those selling the Counterinsurgency Field Manual to the American public know full well, as it says in the new Counterinsurgency Field Manual, that counterinsurgencies, just like "insurgencies, are not constrained by truth and create propaganda that serves their purposes," and the manual’s tactics are embraced by intellectual counterinsurgents battling the American public’s wish to abandon the disastrous occupation of Iraq.