

FOUNDATIONS OF THE STATE IN THEORY AND PRACTICE:
READING BREMER AND THE COUNTERINSURGENCY FIELD MANUAL

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<http://home.uchicago.edu/~rmyerson/research/fieldman.pdf>

1. Bremer: *"I've got three 'red lines' about Iraq. We must leave behind a professional uncorrupt police force, attentive to human rights; we must not have an army involved in internal affairs, and no militia; we should pass sovereignty to an Iraqi government elected on the basis of a constitution."*

1.1 Primacy of the constitution

Representativeness of the initial governing council

Necessity of a constitution?

Democratic adoption of constitution?

1.2 Professionalization of security forces

1.3 Other themes in Bremer's social thought

Social shock absorbers

De-Ba'athification

Economic reforms

2. The Field Manual: *"Killing insurgents – while necessary, especially with respect to extremists – by itself cannot defeat an insurgency. Gaining and retaining the initiative requires counterinsurgents to address the insurgency's causes through stability operations as well. This initially involves securing and controlling the local population and providing for essential services. As security improves, military resources contribute to supporting government reforms and reconstruction projects. As counterinsurgents gain the initiative, offensive operations focus on eliminating the insurgent cadre, while defensive operations focus on protecting the populace and infrastructure from direct attacks. As counterinsurgents establish military ascendancy, stability operations expand across the area of operations and eventually predominate. Victory is achieved when the populace consents to the government's legitimacy and stops actively and passively supporting the insurgency."*

2.1 Addressing the root causes of the insurgency (grievances, administrative weakness)

2.2 Attacking extremists and isolating insurgents (dangerous beliefs of extremists?)

2.3 The crucial question of legitimacy (in its broad pragmatic amoral sense)

When would you inform against the insurgents... self-fulfilling expectations of power.

(Why ideology is important at start of insurgency.)

"Consents to" or "recognizes" legitimate authority? Hume, Schelling's focal-point effect.

Legitimacy from public goods and security, or from cultural traditions (endorsements of recognized social leaders, resistance to foreign influence, but submission to conquest).

2.4 Expanding areas of control

2.5 Providing effective governance: Clean dealings, no favoritism. Diverse recruiting.

3. Admitting rents for government agents

Becker-Stigler: law enforcement, malfeasance, back-loaded rewards for officials.

Banerjee-Iyer: zamindar feudal rule.

Clean dealings and no favoritism? (How are allies recruited in a dangerous struggle?)

Did corruption undermine Chiang Kai-shek? (Failure of discipline, or endgame effects?)

Social networks are not just for insurgents: building them locally as mission #1 for COIN.

"This is the true meaning of the phrase 'hearts and minds,' which comprises two separate components. 'Hearts' means persuading people that their best interests are served by counterinsurgency success. 'Minds' means convincing them that the force can protect them and that resisting it is pointless. Note that neither concerns whether people like Soldiers and Marines. Calculated self-interest, not emotion, is what counts."

(...Does this mean privileges for local agents or local public goods? Amoral legitimation.)

Galula: ultimate goal of COIN is to extend govt's political network throughout nation:

"The strategic problem of the counterinsurgent may be defined as follows:

to find the favorable minority, to organize it in order to mobilize the population against the insurgent minority. Every operation, whether in the military field or in the political, social, economic, and psychological fields, must be geared to that end." ([G] p. 77)

Organization requires leaders and active agents, who are motivated by privileges of power.

4. The role of political leaders in establishing the state

Alchian-Demsetz: the top has responsibility for monitoring and rewarding appropriately.

Leader must be able to make credible promises of backloaded rewards,

but he profits when some are denied. Problem: make good judgment credible.

Solution: institute a high council where high officials collectively monitor leader's judgments

We should question the Field Manual's bottom-up plan for building chain of command.

Breaking up tribal groups in units of security forces: recipe for paralysis?

With Mao, leadership of insurgency was never left undefined.

Galula: *"A single boss must direct the [military, policing-judicial, and political] operations [of counterinsurgency] from the beginning to the end."* ([G] p87)

Will local defense units organized by US army find a place in the national political network?

Advantage of democracy, when local leaders can expect seats in legislative councils.

5. Democratic leadership and constitutionalism

Now suppose we want to build a *democratic* state...

5.1 From leaders' personal reputations to constitutional norms.

Which comes first, political leadership or constitution?

Hypothesis: political reputations are fundamental.

Political leaders need reputation for rewarding supporters, implying "personal constitutions" which may constrain or sustain formal political constitution of a nation.

5.2 Reputations for democratic leadership.

Democracy is about political leaders competing for voters' approval.

To cultivate successful democracy, leaders need opportunities to develop independent reputations for providing public service while exercising patronage.

If Bremer allowed early local elections and gave control of spending to local leaders... ?

Bremer's role in assigning ministries for Ayad Allawi's interim government.

5.3 Advantages of democracy in counterinsurgency.

Might democracy weaken state-building by reducing expected rents from future power?

Electoral barriers to entry under plurality voting might be an advantage.

Democracy can strengthen guarantees of broader distribution of benefits of power.

Marshall: English colonial institutions were well designed for foundations of democracy, but free-riding of local governments was a regular problem.

6. Conclusion. Bremer sees a constitution as the essential foundation of a democratic state. FM emphasizes local security operations and effective governance to establish legitimacy. Both emphasize professionalization and indoctrination of government security forces, airbrushing away the fact that state-building gives privileges of power to favored individuals. I would put more emphasis on the fundamental moral-hazard problem of government: motivating the government officials and political leaders who make the government work.

Some favoritism and privilege is inevitable in the administration of power.

Effective governance depends on how leaders control the distribution of privileges.

A government's internal incentive system requires credible assurances that higher officials will honor commitments to lower officials, to judge and reward them appropriately.

At top, personal reputations of political leaders become essential building blocks of the state.

Insurgent leaders can build their networks in any identifiable group of people who are disconnected from the government's political networks of trust and patronage.

Democratic government requires many leaders with reputations for (1) rewarding loyal supporters who provide public services and (2) abiding by rules of democratic competition.

To cultivate democracy, encourage politicians to build reputations for responsible and tolerant governance, by giving them clear opportunities to exercise power in different areas.

Galula: "*[The essence of counterinsurgency warfare] can be summed up in a single sentence:*

Build (or rebuild) a political machine from the population upward." (p. 136)

Or: Help build a democratic system of political networks that reach out to all the population.