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Evipridis Tantalakis

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The Origins of Offensive Counterinsurgency During the Greek Civil War

EVRIPIDIS TANTALAKIS*

Research Institute for European and American Studies, Athens, Greece

Email: evripidisfcb@yahoo.gr

Abstract

The Greek Civil War is often studied as a historical event, but little attention is paid to it as a stage in counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine development. The key point of this war was that it presented the foreign armies that assisted the Greek Royalists with the opportunity to apply traditional and new tactics against the Greek communist guerrillas and learn valuable lessons. This article will trace the origins of the offensive COIN in Greece, the first step in a broader research project that will seek to determine the impact of the Greek Civil War on US Army COIN doctrine development.

Introduction

The Greek Civil War is a well-studied case in the history of the Cold War, as it is widely considered the opening act of this era. However, although it is often studied as a historical event, little attention is paid to it as a stage in COIN doctrine development. The course of the events and the outcome of the Second World War consolidated the perception that any future war would be fought by large battalions of armour and infantry supported by vast quantities of artillery and close air support to annihilate opposing forces, all backed up by unquestioning public support for the war effort.¹ Instead, the post-war period found the Western allies faced with a new type of threat, that of the communist-inspired insurgencies. The Greek Civil War was the first of this kind in the immediate post-war period and their involvement in it presented the foreign armies that assisted the Greek Royalists with the opportunity to apply

*Evripidis Tantalakis is a senior analyst at the Research Institute for European and American Studies. His research focuses on insurgency, counterinsurgency, intelligence, and Cold War history.

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¹John Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya to Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, (Westport Research Institute for European and American Studies CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002), p. 48.

traditional and new tactics against the Greek guerrillas and learn valuable lessons in terms of COIN doctrine development.

The purpose of this article is to take the first step in examining the Greek Civil War as a stage in the COIN doctrine evolution by tracing the origins of the Greek COIN doctrine. Focus will be given to the offensive principles of the doctrine, a focus suggested by the course of the events of the war, as the initial population-centric approach promoted by the US officials in Greece evolved in a largely enemy-centric campaign, where the destruction of the Greek guerrillas became the goal of the COIN effort. This shift was dictated by the constantly deteriorating military situation during the first two years of the war. That said, this article will argue that rather than reflecting an American preoccupation with population-centric COIN, the offensive tactical level of the Greek doctrine was a blend of enemy-centric German and British tactics. As such, the experience of the Greek Civil War suggests that population-centric COIN approaches are not as universally applicable as contemporary COIN doctrine/theory suggests.²

Toward this end, the first part of the article will discuss the key debates about COIN doctrine development. This will be followed by a brief presentation of the historical background of the civil war. This part will include an examination of the German COIN tactics, as applied in Greece during the Occupation era, and how this 'know how' was transferred to the Greek doctrine, the British role as the leader of the Greek National Army's (GNA) reorganization and training programme, and the US initiatives at the political and economic level. The third part of the article will examine the basic

²For more information on the good governance vs coercion debate see Jacqueline L. Hazelton, "The 'Hearts and Minds' Fallacy: Violence, Coercion, and Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare," *International Security*, 42:1, pp. 80-113; David H. Ucko and Jason E. Fritz, ISSF Article Review 87 on "The 'Hearts and Minds' Fallacy: Violence, Coercion, and Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare." Published by ISSF (13 October 2017), <https://networks.h-net.org/node/28443/discussions/422086/issf-article-review-87-%E2%80%9C-%E2%80%98hearts-and-minds%E2%80%99-fallacy-violence> Accessed 2 June 2021; Jacqueline L. Hazelton, Author's Response to H-Diplo/ISSF Article Review 87 on "The 'Hearts and Minds' Fallacy: Violence, Coercion, and Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare.", Published by ISSF (2 January 2018), <https://issforum.org/articlereviews/87-response> Accessed 2 June 2021; Huw Bennett, Response to H-Diplo/ISSF Article Review by David Ucko and Jason Fritz of Jacqueline L. Hazelton, "The 'Hearts and Minds' Fallacy: Violence, Coercion, and Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare," *International Security*, 42:1, pp. 20-113, Published by ISSF (4 January 2018), <https://networks.h-net.org/node/28443/discussions/1215419/bennett-response-issf-article-review-87> Accessed 2 June 2021.

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offensive principles of the Greek doctrine to determine what influence the German COIN experience and the foreign military missions that assisted the GNA had on it.

The primary source of information are the archives of the Hellenic Army History Directorate, which contain archival material regarding the planning, preparations, and execution of the military operations, the various successful or failed stages of the operations, and the distracting action of the Greek guerrillas. Further analysis will be based on US material derived from various archival sources such as the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) collection, which include documentation on the political, economic, and military efforts of the US officials in Washington and Athens. A number of secondary sources are used to support the main argument of this article, providing valuable insight on the issue under examination. Although this article draws from multiple primary sources, its key point is the use of Greek archival material. The Greek archives have been little used in US and British studies, a point that highlights the assertion that this article brings the Greek perspective to COIN literature, not only regarding the scholar's point of view but also in terms of primary sources.

COIN doctrine development key debates

This section will lay out the context behind the German, British, and Greek COIN doctrines, as they will be discussed later in the article. The US doctrine will not be included in this discussion given that no formal US Army COIN doctrine was available during the Greek Civil War. The US Army was in the process of writing its own COIN manual at the time of its involvement in the Greek COIN, and establishing to what extent the Greek campaign was a source of valuable lessons is a topic for an ongoing broader research project.

The beginning of German COIN strategy dates to the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), where irregular fighters supported the French Army. The Germans viewed these guerrillas as devious and reacted to their attacks with harsh countermeasures, such as the taking of hostages, collective reprisals, and executions.³ According to John Horne and Alan Kramer this attitude, in combination with an over exaggeration of the role of the French guerrillas, continued to exert an influence on the German military until 1914, and to some extent also during the Second World War.⁴ The second stepping stone in the development of the German COIN doctrine were the colonial wars in China (1900-1901), in Southwest Africa (1904-1906), and East Africa (1905-1907). According to Jürgen Zimmerer the brute force exercised in Southwest Africa,

³Henning Pieper, "The German Approach to Counterinsurgency in the Second World War," *The International History Review*, 37, no. 3 (2015), p. 631.

⁴John N. Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 142-143.

that went beyond the breaking of military resistance and was aimed at women and children as well, was the first genocide in German history.⁵ Finally, the pattern of colonial violence was repeated during the First World War, confirming a continuity in German military practices. Most acts of violence committed by German soldiers during the first months of the war were characterised by improvisation and were influenced by mentality and ideology, most importantly the German memory of the French guerrillas of the Franco-Prussian War.⁶

The use of brute force to suppress insurgencies, which Isabel Hull considers to be founded on a military culture of 'absolute destruction' inherent in Imperial Germany, continued to dominate German counterinsurgency doctrine throughout the Second World War.⁷ The case of Greece was not an exception, although ideology rather than ethic lines played a decisive role in the German approach to end the insurrection in the country.⁸ However, the focus of this article is on those offensive tactical aspects of the German COIN, as will be examined later, that eventually made it into the Greek doctrine. Although violence against civilians did play an occasional role in successful COIN operations, it never became an integral part of the Greek doctrine.

The application of brute force against civilians dominates the debate on British COIN doctrine as well. For example, Kim Wagner's study on the 1919 events in the Indian district of Amritsar, suggests that the Jallianwala Bagh massacre was the function of a colonial order that was never sufficiently confident to do without the spectacle of exemplary force. Although the official view was that the episode stood in singular and sinister isolation in the British colonial history, Wagner argues that it was neither

⁵Jürgen Zimmerer, 'Krieg, KZ und Völkermord in Südwestafrika. Der erste deutsche Genozid' in J. Zimmerer and J. Zeller (eds), *Völkermord in Deutsche-Südwestafrika: der Kolonialkrieg in Namibia (1904-1908) und seine Folgen* (Berlin, 2003), pp. 52-53.

⁶Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914*, pp. 75-77, 166-167.

⁷Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); See also Charles D. Melson, "German Counterinsurgency in the Balkans: The Prinz Eugen Division Example 1942-1944," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 20:4, (2007), 705-737; Philip Blood, *Hitler's Bandit Hunters: The SS and the Nazi Occupation of Europe* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2006); Colin D. Heaton, *German Anti-Partisan Warfare in Europe, 1939-1945* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2001); Ben Shepherd, *Terror in the Balkans: German Armies and Partisan Warfare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Alexander Hill, *The War Behind the Eastern Front: Soviet Partisans in North West Russia 1941-1944* (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁸Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

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without precedent nor foreign to the British way of doing things.⁹ Taylor Sherman highlights the discrepancy between official rhetoric and practice during the British rule of India, and especially between 1919 and 1956, as the state power exercised through the extensive use of spectacular and arbitrary violence, would contradict the official principle of 'minimum use of force'.¹⁰ Mathew Hughes' study on the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-1939, confirms a continuity in the British use of indiscriminate violence by British forces, highlighting the British civil officials' acknowledgement that 'military measures were most repressive and distasteful, nevertheless, repression of this kind – and it is drastic in the extreme – is most unpleasant work but it is essential if we are to make any headway'.¹¹ From a period after the Greek COIN, the suppression of the Mau Mau in Kenya in the 1950s stands out as yet another example of 'singular excess'. Huw Bennett highlighted the excessive and indiscriminate violence used by the British Army to suppress the insurgency in Kenya. As the head of the East Africa Command, General George Erskine declared, upon assuming office in 1953, stern measures might need to be taken to restore respect for the law. What the General essentially meant was that the security forces would have to break, or at least bend, the law to achieve 'an atmosphere of peace'.¹²

John Newsinger moves beyond the issue of brute force and suggests that the key to the British success in COIN was its 'divide and rule' strategy, stressing the British ability to establish a large enough political base among sections of the local inhabitants prepared to support and assist in the defeat of the insurgents.¹³ Of relevance to the Greek Civil War, in terms of COIN doctrine development, Andrew Mumford argues that the British were slow learners with the early phases of nearly every campaign in the post-war era marred by stagnancy, mismanagement, and confusion, concluding that the British had been consistently slow to instigate an effective strategy and achieve operational success.¹⁴ As will be demonstrated later, this was the case in the Greek COIN as well, since the British Military Mission (BMM) had, during the early stages of

⁹Kim A. Wagner, *Amritsar 1919: An Empire of Fear & the Making of a Massacre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), p. 257.

¹⁰Taylor C. Sherman, *State Violence and Punishment in India* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 171.

¹¹Mathew Hughes, *Britain's Pacification in Palestine: The British Army, the Colonial State, and the Arab Revolt, 1936-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 311.

¹²Huw Bennett, *Fighting Mau: The British Army and Counterinsurgency in the Kenya Emergency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 264-265.

¹³John Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency: From Palestine to Northern Ireland* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), p. 2.

¹⁴Andrew Mumford, *Puncturing the Counterinsurgency Myth: Britain and Irregular Warfare in the Past, Present and Future* (Carlisle Barracks PA: US Army War College, 2011), pp. 146-147.

the war in the spring of 1946, not realized the seriousness of the threat posed by the communist guerrillas, focusing the reorganisation and training of the GNA towards conventional warfare. Finally, Robert Egnell and David Ucko identify the absence of a unified, consistent approach to COIN as the main characteristic of the British doctrine stressing the British tendency to resort to tailored response rather than fall back on template solutions.¹⁵

As for the Greek COIN doctrine, relatively few studies examine the Greek Civil War in terms of COIN doctrine development. For example, Christina Goulter suggests that the Greek doctrine was a product of GNA thinking and the influence of the foreign military missions assisting it has been over exaggerated in the historiography. According to Goulter, the higher-level campaign planning was performed by the Greek General Staff (GGS) and not the field units with which the bulk of the advisors were involved.¹⁶ As such, the 'clear-hold-build' rationale of the Greek doctrine was a product of a hard learning process while fighting the war and should be attributed to the GNA's maturity that developed as the war escalated.¹⁷

Echoing Goulter, Spyridon Plakoudas argues that the GNA defeated the insurgents by evolving and adapting, as fixed laws in COIN do not apply. However, Plakoudas ascribes the operational improvement of the GNA to the foreign military missions which reorganised it for irregular warfare, with the formation of the Commando units, the light infantry, and the mountain warfare units, while advancing operational concepts, such as that of the constant pursuit of the guerrillas, to replace the unsuccessful tactic of encirclement.¹⁸

This article supports some of the above arguments while challenging others. For example, it argues that the 'clear' part of the Greek doctrine was a blend of German and British offensive tactics. Even if someone accepts that what Goulter describes as GNA inspired tactics could be, to a certain extent, what this article identifies as German originated practices, the British influence, as highlighted with the creation of the Commando units and the tactic of constant pursuit, cannot easily be ignored. Moreover, this article verifies Plakoudas' argument on the role of the military missions

¹⁵Robert Egnell and David H. Ucko, "True to Form? Questioning the British Counterinsurgency Tradition," in Beatrice Heuser and Eitan Shapir, eds., *Insurgencies and Counterinsurgencies: National Styles and Strategic Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 46.

¹⁶Christine J. M. Goulter, "The Greek Civil War: A National Army's Counterinsurgency Triumph," *The Journal of Military History*, 78 (July 2014), p. 1048.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 1055.

¹⁸Spyridon Plakoudas, *The Greek Civil War: Strategy, Counterinsurgency, and the Monarchy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), pp. 89-90.

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in improving the GNA's operational performance, but it challenges his position that the US advisors introduced the tactic of constant pursuit to replace that of encirclement. As this article argues, the constant pursuit principle was of British origin while encirclement was never abandoned; in fact, encirclement along with pursuit became the backbones of the Greek offensive doctrine.

Historical background

The Greek Civil War broke out in the spring of 1946 and ended in the summer of 1949 but had its roots before the Second World War. The belligerents were the Greek Communist Party (KKE) and its Democratic Army of Greece (DAG) on the one side, and the Royalist Government with the GNA and the British and US military missions assisting it on the other. The long period that preceded this civil conflict, created a highly polarised state within the country, a polarisation that was further intensified by the 'balance of power' games played between the wartime Allies. The pre-war ideological confrontation between the Greek Communists and the Royalists not only remained active during the occupation of Greece by the Axis Powers between 1941 and 1944, but it turned out that the passions and the obsessions of the past could not be overridden even in the face of a, theoretically, common enemy, the occupation forces.¹⁹

The wartime Allies also played their part in the development of this situation. The Soviets ostensibly respected the percentages agreement reached between Churchill and Stalin that separated the Balkans into spheres of influence.²⁰ This gave the UK and US 90% of the control of Greek internal affairs, and the Soviets did not encourage an armed conflict against the British. However, the Soviets did nothing to prevent their Balkan satellites from assisting the Greek Communists. The British never hid their strong interest in Greece and they were by no means willing to leave it to the Communists; in fact, it was the British, and especially Churchill himself, who torpedoed several efforts to deescalate the conflict.²¹ As for the US, when the British announced in early 1947 their intention to withdraw from Greece due to financial difficulties,

¹⁹See Andre Gerolimos, *An International Civil War: Greece 1943-1949* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2016); Mark M. Mazower, *After the War Was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation, and State in Greece, 1943-1960* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); David Brewer, *Greece, the Decade of War: Occupation, Resistance and Civil War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

²⁰Albert Resis, "The Churchill-Stalin Secret "Percentages" Agreement on the Balkans, Moscow, October 1944," *The American Historical Review* 83, no. 2 (April 1978), p. 368.

²¹For the British stance see Athanasios D. Sfikas, "'The People at the Top Can Do These Things, Which Others Can't Do': Winston Churchill and the Greeks, 1940-45," *Journal of Contemporary History* 26, no. 2 (April 1991), pp. 307-332.

President Truman decided to actively engage the US in Greek internal affairs with the promulgation of the Truman Doctrine.²²

German COIN doctrine

When the Greek Civil War broke out in the spring of 1946, the most recent COIN experience in Greece was that of the German Occupation forces. For that reason, a brief analysis of the basic principles of the German doctrine, as applied in Greece, will provide useful insights into the origins of the Greek doctrine. The principal axiom of the German COIN doctrine was that the ultimate objective of the fight against guerrillas would be their total annihilation and not just pursuing and pushing them out of one region. The basic rule of the German COIN operations was that encirclement, rather than frontal attack, would be the only possible way to defeat the guerrillas.²³ The prerequisites for the success of such operations were secrecy of preparations, intelligence as to the enemy situation, rapid initial movement, a methodical line of action, and firm command.²⁴ Another integral part of the German doctrine was aggressiveness which should be the key element for all the levels of command, from the division and regiment to the battalion and company commanders.²⁵

German doctrine placed particular significance on intelligence. Accurate knowledge of the combat methods and living habits of the guerrillas and the population supporting them was a principal prerequisite for success. For that reason, efforts were made to enrol native fighters as volunteers in the specially trained guerrilla warfare units called

²²The Truman Doctrine established the post-war US commitment to provide political, military, and economic assistance to all democratic nations under threat from external and internal authoritarian forces. For further details see Foreign Relations of the United States 1947, *The Near East and Africa: United States economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971).

²³Encirclement was not a product of Second World War German COIN experience, rather it marked a continuity in German tactical doctrine dating back to Imperial Germany. According to Robert Citino, the German way of war had always called for short, lively, and total campaigns fought through the violent encirclement of the enemy. See Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence: University Studio Press Kansas, 2005).

²⁴Alexander Ratcliffe, *Partisan Warfare, A Treatise Based on Combat Experience in the Balkans* (Stuttgart: US Army European Command, Historical Division, Foreign Military Studies, 1953), p. 61; Blood, *Hitler's Bandit*, pp. 177-179; Heaton, *German Anti-Partisan*, pp. 143-155.

²⁵Hubert Lanz, *Partisan Warfare in the Balkans* (Stuttgart: US Army European Command, Historical Division, Foreign Military Studies, 1952), p. 143.

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'hunting details'.²⁶ Detachments composed of indigenous personnel had the advantage of a thorough knowledge of guerrilla combat methods, the terrain and the language of the country. They were less dependent on supply shipments and more mobile than regular troops. On the other hand, absolute certainty of their trustworthiness was rarely possible. These units should be commanded by experienced officers, familiar with the country, include military cadre personnel, and be organised based on political considerations. However, German doctrine noted that experience had shown that the employment of political factionists tended to increase the already intense bitterness and savagery of guerrilla warfare.²⁷

This German 'know how' was transferred to the Greek doctrine through two separate sources. Firstly, during the Occupation, a considerable number of Greek Monarchist and Republican officers joined non-Communist resistance groups and became familiar with the German COIN tactics used against them. Secondly, in April 1943 when the collaborationist premier Ioannis Rallis established the Security Battalions to assist the German Occupation forces in suppressing the various resistance groups, several low and middle rank officers joined these formations and became familiar with the German tactics used to fight the Greek guerrillas.²⁸ After the liberation in October 1944, the Greek Government took the strategic decision to retain and utilise in the new armed and security forces the same officers.²⁹ This decision gave the Greek military authorities the advantage of staffing their ranks with men experienced both in guerrilla and counter-guerrilla warfare.³⁰ The admission by the Greek military authorities that

²⁶Ibid., pp. 146-149; Pieper, *The German Approach*, p. 368; Oberkommando der Wehrmacht. *Warfare Against Bands* (Berlin: 6 May 1944), eds. and trans. by Audrey C. Dixon and Otto Heilbrunn, in *Communist Guerrilla Warfare*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1955), pp. 116-163.

²⁷Ratcliffe, *Partisan Warfare*, p. 33.

²⁸Andre Gerolymatos, "The Role of the Greek Officer Corps in the Resistance," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 11, no. 3 (Fall 1984), p. 20.

²⁹Giorgos Karagiannis, *To Drama tis Ellados 1940-1952 Epi kai Athliotites* (Athens n.d.), pp. 230-234; Triantafyllos A. Gerozisis, *To Soma ton Axiomatikon kai h Thesis tous stin Sigchroni Elliniki Koinonia, 1821-1975* Volume 2 (Athens-Ioannina: Dodoni, 1996), pp. 827-828; Tasos Kostopoulos, *H Aftologokrimeri Mnini. Tagmata Asfaleias kai h Metapolemikh Ethnikofrosini* (Athens: Filistor, 2005), p. 73.

³⁰Members of former guerrilla groups were not only integrated into the GNA, but even held political positions within the government. For example, Napoleon Zervas, who was the leader of the second most powerful resistance group, the National Republican Greek League (EDES), was appointed Minister of Public Order on 23 February 1947. Although Zervas sold himself as the only Greek who knew how to defeat DAG given his prior experience in guerrilla fighting, his term at the ministry proved rather short. On 29 August 1947 he was removed from office under the

during 1946 the only GNA personnel familiar with guerrilla warfare tactics were those who had been members of former guerrilla groups is indicative of this fact.³¹

The British role

The British were undoubtedly familiar with guerrilla warfare and, as will be examined later in this article, during the war they pushed the GNA into adopting guerrilla style tactics. However, at the early stage of the war they had not realised the seriousness of the threat posed by the communist guerrillas, degrading it to the status of an internal security problem to be addressed by the Greek Security Forces. As a result, they initially failed to see the need for or create the specially trained and highly mobile troops necessary for defeating the guerrillas.³² The training programme established and followed by the British Military Mission (BMM) was focused on the creation of a modern, conventional army prepared to repel any external threat in a war with clear friendly and enemy territories, a war with a front line and peaceful rear areas. In fact, the idea of creating a large, tactical army which would, theoretically, unite and represent the whole Greek nation was popular among the political and military leadership of Greece as well. Thus, the officers and the rank and file of the GNA were trained in conventional war methods for use against an external enemy. Their training included close-order drill, equipment use, outpost duties, firing various types of weapons and combat at a squad and platoon level, although it did include lectures against communism as well.³³

The US Population-Centric Approach

When the US entered the Greek Civil War in the spring of 1947, officials in Washington and Athens adopted a population-centric approach. Their objective was to recreate confidence in the state and in the future of Greece as a western-type democracy, by removing the growing fear of inflation and increased misery through

pressure of British and US officials due to his failure to purge the Peloponnese peninsula of guerrillas despite his claim that he could achieve that with only 500 men, and due to the discontent caused by his harsh and indiscriminately vengeful stance against the general population. As such, his influence on the development of the Greek COIN doctrine cannot be fully assessed. See Thanasis Sfikas, 'Napoleon Zervas: H Ekdikisi tou Ittimenou, 1945-1947' in *Dodoni: Istoría kai Archeología*, vol. 34 Scientific Symposium (Ioannina: School of Philosophy, University of Ioannina 2005).

³¹Greek General Staff, *O Ellinikos Stratos kata ton Antisimmoriakon Agona (1946-1946): To Proton Etos tou Antisimmoriakou Agonos 1946* (Athens: Hellenic Army History Directorate, 1971), p. 61.

³²Dimitrios Zafeiropoulos, *O Antisimmoriakos Agon 1945-1949* (Athens, 1953), p. 263.

³³Konstantinos Giannakos, *H Anasigrotisi tou Ellinikou Stratou kata ti Diarkeia tou Emfyliou Poleμου kai o Rolos ton Ksenon Stratiotikon Apostolon – Ta Protá Chronia 1945-1947* Dissertation (Volos: University of Thessaly, 2013), p. 45.

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social, political, and economic measures rather than excessive military means.³⁴ The preconditions for this goal to be met were: the political unity of all loyal Greek parties while excluding the reactionary and totalitarian right as well as the Communists; a drastic reform in government administration and tax programmes; alongside American economic and financial aid.³⁵

Toward this end, in September 1947, US officials in Greece put pressure on the Greek Premier, Konstantinos Tsaldaris, leader of the Populist Party, to form a coalition government with the Liberal Party. The US officials stressed to Tsaldaris that it would be extremely difficult to maintain the support of the US public for the US economic assistance programme if the impression that this programme would strengthen certain Greek political groups rather than aid Greece as a whole prevailed.³⁶ As a result, Tsaldaris accepted the formation of a coalition government with Themistocles Sophoulis, the leader of the Liberal Party, assuming the premiership on 7 September 1947.

US financial assistance to Greece under the Truman Doctrine, was supplied to Greece, by the American Mission for Aid to Greece (AMAG) which was established to supervise and administer the programme. The principal mission of AMAG was to re-establish security, to stop inflation, to establish economic stability, and to bring hope and encouragement to the Greeks so as to resist the communist threat.³⁷ The joint US-Greek effort focused on issues such as balancing the budget, the balance of payments, the limiting of inflation, the establishment of institutions of a regulatory nature such as the Foreign Trade Administration and the Advisory Bank Board, an increase in industrial production, the restoration of agriculture, and the reconstruction of public works such as the national road and railroad networks.

However, the constantly deteriorating military situation in 1947, caused the US officials to reorient their approach and adopt the view that the internal security of the country should be given the same if not even more priority compared to the social, political, and economic measures then being promoted. As a result, they decided to establish on December 1947 the Joint United States Military Advisory and Planning Group (JUSMAPG) to assist the Greek Armed Forces in achieving internal security as soon as possible by providing stimulating and aggressive assistance in the form of operational and logistical advice.³⁸ When the JUSMAPG was activated, its officials

³⁴FRUS 1947, p. 28.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 30-31.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 323-324.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 219-224

³⁸US Army, *History of the Joint United States Military Advisory and Planning Group-Greece* Volume I (Independence MO: United States Army Unit Dairies, Histories and Reports, 139

reviewed the Greek tactical doctrine concluding that it appeared to follow the accepted doctrines and principles employed by any modern army in conducting anti-guerrilla warfare, while commending that the doctrines and principles adopted and issued by the GGS were sound and if followed, should enable the GNA to defeat the guerrillas.³⁹

Principles of Greek COIN Doctrine: Encirclement & Envelopment

Beginning with the axiom that success in COIN operations consisted neither in capturing and holding ground, nor gaining control of an area, but in destroying hostile forces, the Greek doctrine rejected direct frontal attacks.⁴⁰ Even when conducted by greatly superior numbers of organised forces, frontal attacks would achieve little more than keep the guerrillas moving from one location to another. For that reason, the doctrine posited that complete encirclement and double envelopment of the guerrilla forces should always be attempted from the outset to close avenues of escape promptly and simultaneously.⁴¹ If no escape route was left open, the guerrillas could only fight or abandon the struggle. When complete encirclement was not possible from the outset, the form of offensive manoeuvre adopted should be one which would turn the guerrillas towards and against an impassable barrier through which there were no escape routes.⁴²

The GNA operational planning staff remained faithful to the principle of encirclement throughout the war, at least in operations such as *Terminus*, *Dawn*, *Pigeon* and *Rocket*. Although GNA officers, such as Dimitrios Zafeiropoulos, claimed that the principle of encirclement was ill-suited for the fight against guerrillas and it was the major cause of failure for GNA operations during 1946-47, including *Terminus*. All the above operations were based on the principle of encirclement to prevent the guerrillas from escaping, to confine them within the screen, and eventually bring them to decisive battle and total destruction by the superior strength in numbers and armament of the GNA forces. According to Zafeiropoulos, the principle of encirclement failed to consider two major factors of guerrilla warfare: firstly, mistakenly assuming that guerrillas would remain in their position within the encirclement ring and fight, and, secondly, the peculiarity of Greece's mountainous terrain which in most cases made the complete encirclement of the guerrilla forces impossible.⁴³ Instead, he considered

Miscellaneous Units, Records Group 407, President Harry S. Truman Library, 1952), p. 16.

³⁹Greek General Staff, *Suppression of Irregular (Bandit) Operations* (Athens: Greek General Staff, 1948), p. 29.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴³Zafeiropoulos, *O Antisimmoriakos*, pp. 268-269.

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a constant pursuit of the guerrillas as the most efficient way to eliminate them.⁴⁴ Further analysis of the GNA doctrine, and operational plans and orders, reveals that the doctrine actually applied was a combination of encirclement and constant pursuit within a constantly compressing ring.

At the beginning of 1947, the British role was upgraded to offer the GNA operational as well as training assistance. The BMM proposed a 'clear and hold' strategy to defeat the guerrillas. This strategy called for the systematic clearance of guerrilla infested areas, followed by a security force that would maintain law and order and consolidate the government authority and so relieve forces to deal with subsequent areas.⁴⁵ The 'clear and hold' strategy was adopted by the GGS planning staff and, with various refinements and modifications, remained the main strategy, even when the US assumed exclusive responsibility for assisting the GNA. The purging of selected guerrilla-infested areas and the consolidation of the security forces to prevent guerrilla re-infiltration by re-establishing government authority had been the objective of the operations planned by the joint British-Greek and later US staffs.

However, there was an inconsistency between the basic principle developed in the Greek COIN manual and the 'clear and hold' strategy promoted by the BMM and adopted by the joint planning staffs. According to the manual, success in military operations against guerrillas consisted neither in capturing nor holding ground nor in gaining control of an area; only the destruction of hostile forces constituted success.⁴⁶ The same principle was repeated in several GGS orders describing GNA tactical doctrine. For example, in January 1947, a classified order on the internal security of the country named the destruction of the guerrillas as the objective of the GNA operations noting that the holding of villages just to maintain the population's morale would not bring victory.⁴⁷ In April 1947, a GGS order regarding the tactics to be applied against the guerrillas stressed that pushing them out of a region or scattering them would not bring a successful outcome to the communist problem; instead, only their total annihilation should be pursued.⁴⁸ Another order, later that month, again stressed that capturing ground was of no significance in the type of war the GNA was fighting.⁴⁹ Finally, in May 1949, the Greek Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 269.

⁴⁵Tim Jones, "The British Army, and Counter-guerrilla warfare in Greece, 1945-1949," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 8, no. 1 (1997), p. 89.

⁴⁶Greek General Staff, *Suppression*, p. 1.

⁴⁷Greek General Staff, *Civil War Archives* volume 3 (Athens: Hellenic Army History Directorate, 1998), p. 170.

⁴⁸Greek General Staff, *Civil War Archives* volume 4 (Athens: Hellenic Army History Directorate, 1998), p. 241.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 303.

Alexandros Papagos, complained that GNA troops were focusing more on capturing ground instead of aiming to kill or capture the guerrillas themselves.⁵⁰ This strategy largely echoed the German COIN approach where the objective was always to destroy the guerrillas, rather than scatter or drive them away from an area. To achieve that, the German doctrine posited that 'the army should seize the initiative and throw the guerrillas on the defensive, separate them from the population, deprive them of supplies from the countryside, limit their freedom of action, encircle them, break them up, and pursue them until they have been eliminated'.⁵¹

The 'German' approach of encirclement, that dominated the Greek COIN manual, was the primary tactic to confine the guerrillas and bring them to decisive battle during purging operations that lasted until the end of 1947. According to Zafeiropoulos, this tactic originated from the GGS, not the BMM.⁵² The British proposal included intelligence-based, air-supported offensives by highly mobile infantry, mountain artillery and reconnaissance units.⁵³ Eventually, the BMM approved the GGS plan that included the tactic of encirclement, despite the widespread view among its members that it was no longer effective.⁵⁴ Although Zafeiropoulos implies that after the 1947 the ill-suited tactic of encirclement was abandoned, essentially, it remained an integral part of the GNA's COIN strategy despite the different opinion of the BMM.⁵⁵

For example, during the spring of 1948, the BMM director insisted on replacing encirclement with relentless chasing of small 'bands' in the hills.⁵⁶ However, the remaining operations against the guerrillas incorporated encirclement along with constant pursuit to bring them to battle. The plan for operation *Dawn* in the spring of 1948, was aimed at purging DAG guerrillas and their collaborators and sympathisers in the Roumeli area, with GNA forces moving on three separate fronts along an axis from northwest to southeast. The objective of the GNA forces was to drive the guerrillas into the Giona Mountain area where they could be destroyed, while another GNA Division would execute a secondary effort from the northeast to contain the enemy located in the Mount Parnassos area. At the same time, 'A' and 'B' Commando Groups would guard the mountain passes through Mount Tymfristos to prevent the

⁵⁰Greek General Staff, *Civil War Archives* volume 13 (Athens: Hellenic Army History Directorate, 1998), p. 344.

⁵¹Edgar M Howell, *The Soviet Partisan Movement 1941-1944* (Washington DC: US Department of the Army, 1956), pp. 118-119.

⁵²Zafeiropoulos, *O Antisimmoriakos*, pp. 268-269.

⁵³Jones, *The British Army*, p. 94.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁵⁵Zafeiropoulos, *O Antisimmoriakos*, p. 268; Ioannis Bakanos, *Dimitrios St. Deligias. Stratiotika Enthymimata, 1947-1950* (Athens: Bakanos, n.d.).

⁵⁶Jones, *The British Army*, p. 99.

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guerrillas from escaping to the north.⁵⁷ Similarly, the first phase of the GNA plan for the destruction of the guerrillas in Peloponnese, codenamed *Pigeon*, ordered the purging of the northern part of the peninsula through a convergent GNA action from all directions and the destruction of the guerrillas in mount Mainalos, where they would eventually retreat under the pressure of the constantly compressing encirclement ring.⁵⁸ Finally, Operation *Rocket*, which was aimed at purging Central Greece of guerrilla forces in the spring of 1949, just before the final attack against the Grammos and Vitsi guerrillas' bases, provided for the encirclement and constant pursuit of the guerrillas, firstly, in the Roumeli area, and secondly, in the Agrafa mountains.⁵⁹ According to Papagos, the aim of this operation was to encircle the guerrillas, establish constant contact with them and annihilate them.⁶⁰

The success of the above operations in terms of the efficiency of encirclement can only be measured in conjunction with other factors. For example, in none of them did the GNA manage to totally confine the guerrillas within an encirclement ring. Although in every case the GNA declared the operation successful, as it managed to purge the targeted area of the guerrillas, the fact that a considerable number of the DAG fighters managed to escape, especially in the case of Operation *Dawn*, questions the GNA's assessment. After the first successful GNA attempt to clear the Roumeli region in the spring of 1948, the 'hold' part of the strategy was never implemented, and the DAG guerrillas managed to re-infiltrate the region and re-organize their forces there. The cases of Operations *Pigeon* and *Rocket* are different not only because the GNA managed to encircle and destroy larger numbers of guerrillas due to the more efficient use of constant pursuit but mainly because of the sequence of the operations. The fact that the operational plan for 1949 provided for the gradual purging of the country from south to north meant that the constantly reduced number of fleeing guerrillas would be pushed further north without having the ability to re-infiltrate the purged areas in the south. In this respect, the GNA operations before 1948 that used encirclement were in practical terms unsuccessful, while the success of the 1949 operations is attributed to more than the encirclement factor. In any case, what is interesting is that the German inspired encirclement concept was never abandoned and perhaps the fact that during the autumn of 1947 the US advisors made it clear to their British counterparts that they favoured encirclement played a role in the resilience of this tactic.⁶¹

⁵⁷US Army, *History*, vol 1, p. 75.

⁵⁸Greek General Staff, *Civil War Archives* volume 11 (Athens: Hellenic Army History Directorate, 1998), pp. 282-291

⁵⁹Zafeiropoulos, *O Antisimmoriakos*, pp. 590-592.

⁶⁰Greek General Staff, *Civil War*, vol 13, p. 143.

⁶¹Jones, *The British Army*, p. 97.

Principles of Greek COIN Doctrine: Reconnaissance & Patrolling

Another key aspect of the counter-guerrilla fight that was especially highlighted in the GNA doctrine was reconnaissance. The application of sound offensive reconnaissance was not only related to the security of GNA troops, but it also provided the commander with combat intelligence essential to sound planning and execution of the unit's manoeuvres.⁶² Active and constant reconnaissance patrolling was a key element of COIN and the principal missions of the troops conducting it were the following:

- a) To protect the main body of the troops from surprise, interruption, and annoyance by small hostile forces.
- b) To warn the main body of every contact with the hostile forces and to clear the area of small guerrilla forces ahead of the arrival of the main body.
- c) Once contact with the hostile force had been established, to maintain it; once established, the contact was not allowed to be broken until the guerrilla force had been destroyed.
- d) When contact with the main guerrilla force was established, to act aggressively, if necessary, to pin it down and prevent its escape, and to secure the time and manoeuvre space necessary for the commander to move the main body to suitable directions for decisive attack, deploy it and complete the encirclement of the guerrilla forces.⁶³

Once firm contact with the guerrilla formations had been established by the main body, the necessity of aggressive and decisive action with reconnaissance and combat patrols would become even more compelling. The weaker guerrilla formations, knowing that destruction was certain unless they escaped, would make supreme efforts to seek safety in flight. The very nature and extreme lightness of their equipment made it possible for them to break contact with the main body of regular troops quite rapidly and flee to another position or escape entirely. Hence, the doctrine suggested that aggressive and decisive action should be immediately taken in the form of light, highly mobile combat patrols, strong in automatic-weapons and light-mortar firepower.⁶⁴ It should be the unfailing mission of these patrols to overtake and close in upon escaping guerrilla formations, prevent them from breaking into small groups, pin them down with a withering fire and force them to give battle in position while the slower moving forces of the main body renew forward movement, select new directions of attack, and complete the encirclement and destruction.⁶⁵ For that reason, the manual suggested that offensive reconnaissance conducted by specially trained detachments (small groups of men selected for their ability to move rapidly

⁶²Greek General Staff, *Suppression*, p. 8.

⁶³*Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 11.

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across rough and steep terrain, for their physical endurance and courage, and for their initiative and determination) would invariably produce excellent results, while the use of local guides who could be trusted was invaluable.⁶⁶

This offensive reconnaissance and combat patrolling by specially trained detachments is another common feature in both the Greek and German doctrines.⁶⁷ These 'guerrilla hunting details', or Commando units as they were called by the GNA, would conduct long-range reconnaissance to locate and destroy, whenever possible, guerrilla groups or pin them down while leading larger groups of friendly troops to annihilate them. However, it should be noted that although the use of specially trained units to conduct offensive reconnaissance and combat patrolling appears to be a common feature between the German and Greek doctrines, the actual formation of GNA Commando units should be attributed to a British initiative based on its war time Special Air Service (SAS) experience. By 1946 the need to form specially trained units to conduct offensive reconnaissance and combat patrolling had become apparent to the GNA and BMM leadership. By December 1946, the GNA took the first step towards the adaptation of unorthodox tactics with the creation of such specially trained units. The GGS initially doubted that such units could survive so deep in an enemy controlled area without support, arguing that, contrary to respective war-time SAS operations, the Greek guerrillas were natives, who in most cases enjoyed the support of locals.⁶⁸ Eventually, in December 1946, Colonel Kallinskis was ordered to form 40 commando companies, and to speed up the training process he staffed them with former Greek guerrillas and the Sacred Company, a Greek military formation which had experience of successful and effective cooperation with the SAS during the Second World War.⁶⁹

However, the fighting record of the Commandos during the Greek COIN was rather disappointing. Except for their brilliant performance at Agios Vasileios during Operation *Pigeon* in the winter of 1949,⁷⁰ the Commandos' unsatisfactory record can be attributed to various reasons. For example, the US advisors' report on their poor

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 7; Lanz, *Partisan Warfare*, pp. 146-149; Ratcliffe, *Partisan Warfare*, p. 32; US Army, *German Antiguerilla Operations in the Balkans* (Washington DC: US Department of the Army, 1954), p. 48.

⁶⁸Giannakos, *H Anasigrotisi*, p. 82.

⁶⁹Tim Jones, *Postwar Counterinsurgency, and the SAS 1945-1952. A Special Type of Warfare* (New York: Routledge, 2001) p. 52.

⁷⁰For the Commandos performance at Agios Vasileios see Ioannis L. Lefas, *O Dimokratikos Stratos Peloponnissou (Dimiourgia-Anaptiksi-Htta)*, vol. 2 (Athens: Alfeios, 1998), p. 40; Kostas I. Papadogiannis, "H Polinekri Machi tou Agiou Vasileiou," (2011) Online available at: < <https://www.leonidion.gr/2011/02/22-1949.html> > Accessed on 11 December 2020.

performance put the blame on timid leadership and improper direction rather than a weakness in the enlisted ranks.⁷¹ The plan for Operation *Dawn* provided for the commando groups to be used to guard escape routes from the encirclement ring instead of conducting offensive reconnaissance and patrolling to infiltrate the guerrillas' areas.⁷² The GNA commanders were unfamiliar with the operational capabilities of the commandos, considering them simply elite infantry units. As a result, a report to Papagos on 9 June 1949 suggested that they should be employed as the leading assault units to pave the ground for conventional infantry attack, and then infiltrate deep behind the enemy lines to destroy its headquarters etc.⁷³ This tactic echoed closely the German approach on the effectiveness of 'guerrilla hunting details' in this type of action - as described by the Wehrmacht General Alexander Ratcliffe in his treatise on partisan warfare in the Balkans.⁷⁴

All in all, the use of offensive reconnaissance and patrolling was another aspect where the GNA performed rather poorly, at least during the operations of 1946-48. In their report on operation *Dawn*, the JUSMAPG advisors commented that many commanders did not seem to trust patrolling. During daylight, patrols used to advance only to the point where mortar fire could cover them. On the other hand, during the night, patrols were often avoided, even in cases where the circumstances favoured them, and when conducted they were often static, and more like ambushes. The report suggested that static patrols should be used only for guarding specific points; instead, reconnaissance patrols of small groups for gathering intelligence, and combat patrols of platoons for capturing enemies should be preferred. According to the JUSMAPG's officers, this lack of patrolling activity resulted in frequent loss of contact with the enemy. However, the US advisors stressed that contact with the enemy should be the primary target day and night and could be achieved if lower rank leaders were given more space for initiative in conducting patrols.⁷⁵

Principles of Greek COIN Doctrine: The Attack

According to the Greek COIN manual, upon contact with the enemy, the reconnaissance patrols should remain concealed unless their presence had been discovered, or unless the guerrilla formations were attempting to flee. Such patrols should dispatch immediately to the commander who sent them out the following information: location of the guerrilla formation, its size and general composition, its actions, the time contact was gained with it, and the character of the area it occupied.

⁷¹US Army, *History*, vol 1, p. 141.

⁷²Greek General Staff, *Civil War*, vol 7, pp. 470-471.

⁷³Greek General Staff, *Civil War*, vol 13, p. 507.

⁷⁴Ratcliffe, *Partisan Warfare*, p. 70.

⁷⁵Greek General Staff, *Civil War Archives F.1010/B/33, F/1010/B/38* (Athens: Hellenic Army History Directorate Digital Collection).

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Furthermore, directions from which the area could best be approached for attack or ambush should be provided by these patrols.⁷⁶ This was extremely important as the patrol should remain in close observation of the guerrillas at a halt and be able to guide the arriving friendly troops into the best position from which to launch an attack. If the guerrilla formation was attempting to flee before the advancing troops, any patrol gaining contact with it should open fire at once, attempt to pin it down and hold it until arrival of friendly troops. In general, the basic principle was that pursuit was a vital element in maintenance of contact and was always launched when guerrilla formations attempt to flee, day or night.⁷⁷

The superior troops, weapons, and firepower allowed the commander of the unit in contact speedily to smother the guerrilla formation with withering fire and close in upon it. This rapid and aggressive action would leave the guerrillas with only two options, namely: decisive combat on the present position, or an immediate unplanned flight. This form of action was especially appropriate when the area to be cleared had been completely encircled by the command, and the guerrillas could only flee to another position within the perimeter. This type of action would rapidly break up the guerrilla formations into smaller groups and keep them constantly moving (combat patrols and pursuing forces should be launched forward promptly to facilitate this). Moreover, that way the guerrillas would be kept constantly confused and prevented from reorganising into groups large enough to achieve coordinated action, and eventually they would be brought to bay as a disorganised and uncontrolled mob within the perimeter, and where their destruction was certain. For that reason, the basic axiom was that once the principal guerrilla formations had started moving, they should be kept moving until they were finally brought to decisive battle. This could only be accomplished by violent, aggressive action and maintaining constant contact.⁷⁸

This section of the Greek doctrine draws its origin from two different sources. The first part, which suggests that superior troops, weapons, and firepower allows the commander of the unit in contact to smother the guerrilla formation with a withering fire, originates from the German experience in fighting guerrillas. According to German COIN doctrine, light automatic weapons, machine guns, 20mm guns, mortars, and mountain artillery were regarded as ideal for mountain operations.⁷⁹ This superior firepower allowed the German troops to begin every attack with heavy fire against the encircled village or guerrilla pocket. When the target was located and during the process of encirclement, heavy weapons and artillery were brought up to either shell

⁷⁶Greek General Staff, *Suppression*, p. 16.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁹D.M. Condit, *Case Study in Guerrilla Warfare: Greece During World War II* (North Carolina: US Army Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, 1961), p. 248.

the village or to pre-soften the massed guerrillas. This became a standard German tactical method whenever they came upon villages and towns or pockets of strong guerrilla resistance. All in all, according to the Commander of the Wehrmacht troops operating in the western part of Greece, General Hubert Lanz, German artillery was extremely effective against guerrilla strong posts, as enveloping fire combined with direct assault put murderous pressure on local redoubts. For example, when analysing the attack against Communist guerrillas in the town of Leskovic, Lanz described what he called the standard procedure used against localities in an operational area. According to the Wehrmacht General, if the locality was occupied by partisans, the German troops would not launch a frontal attack but, if possible, would envelop the town to block the partisans' escape. If the partisans continued to defend themselves, the German troops would inch closer to the town under the protection of heavy weapons. According to Lanz 'artillery and mortar fire were continued until resistance collapsed. Supported by heavy and light machine guns, the assault troops then attacked from all sides, while artillery and mortars continued shelling the town'.⁸⁰

It is apparent that artillery, mortars, and machine guns were a pivotal element of the German attack method. It is also evident that this 'German' principle was transferred to the Greek COIN doctrine. The GNA commanders' persistence in using heavy artillery before every attack against the DAG guerrillas became a major point of frustration for the US advisors in the field. JUSMAPG attempted to remedy this over reliance on artillery fire by focusing the training programme of the GNA on close infantry-artillery cooperation as they believed that this 'German' inspired tactic was ill-used by the Greek troops. According to the US advisors, the GNA commanders relied too much on artillery fire, refusing to move their troops closer to the enemy unless the artillery covered them. For example, when the JUSMAPG field detachment commented on Operation *Dawn*, it stressed that the infantry relied mostly on air-force and artillery fire to destroy the enemy and had avoided approaching the target.⁸¹ As a result, the GNA could not take advantage of any damage caused to the guerrillas by the air force and artillery bombing.⁸² Similarly, the JUSMAPG report on Operation *Crown* noted that many commanders were unwilling to mount an attack without overwhelming air and artillery support.⁸³

The second feature of the Greek doctrine attacking method, the aggressive and constant pursuit of the guerrillas, was an undeniable British contribution. In December 1946 the British proposed to the GGS the use of highly mobile infantry in offensive

⁸⁰Lanz, *Partisan Warfare*, pp. 197-198.

⁸¹Goulter confirms the extensive use of artillery and airpower by the GNA during offensive operations. See Goulter, *The Greek Civil*, p. 1049.

⁸²Greek General Staff, Civil War Archives F.1010/B/33; F.1010/B/38.

⁸³US Army, *History*, vol 1, pp. 89-90.

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operations against the guerrillas.⁸⁴ This proposal was repeated by the BMM director, Major General Stuart Rawlings in October 1947, advising that the bulk of the GNA should be deployed in the hills as though they were themselves skilled guerrillas, with the object of obtaining information, gaining contact with the enemy, harassing him, and destroying him.⁸⁵ This relentless chase proposal became the 'search and destroy' tactic, which along with encirclement dominated GNA COIN doctrine. The point of divergence between the German and Greek doctrines was the significance placed by the Greek doctrine on the constant pursuit of the guerrillas to destroy them.

According to German doctrine, the pursuit of the guerrilla bands that had been driven from their hiding places or had broken out of encirclement posed special problems. The vast extent of the terrain, which was usually broken by mountain ranges or forests, and the marching capabilities of the guerrillas, made the maintenance of contact with withdrawing enemy forces difficult. The manpower and time required would preclude a thorough ferreting-out of the innumerable hiding places established by the partisans. Moreover, the bands, when routed, would usually re-assemble not long afterward in the rear of the pursuing troops.⁸⁶ At this point, an interesting fact that highlights the overall German influence upon Greek COIN doctrine should be noted. A classified order to the GNA Corps commanders issued on 12 December 1946 determined that the objective of the GNA should be the total annihilation of the guerrillas through relentless pursuit and constant patrolling.⁸⁷ However, one specific part of this order was lifted almost verbatim from the German doctrine.⁸⁸ It stressed that sending troops in pursuit of guerrillas who had fled was wasteful unless the possibility of establishing contact with them was high. Instead, motorised troops or cavalry, when available, should block their flight at suitable points.⁸⁹

In any case, the principle of aggressive and constant pursuit of the guerrillas became the key to their total annihilation, and the GNA and JUSMAPG reports on successful operations confirmed this. According to the GNA General Thrasivoulos Tsakalotos, one of the main reasons behind the successful purging of the Roumeli area during Operation Dawn in 1948, although that proved temporary as the guerrillas managed to re-infiltrate the area later, was the constant and restless pursuit of the guerrillas

⁸⁴Jones, *The British Army*, p. 94.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁸⁶Ratcliffe, *Partisan Warfare*, p. 71.

⁸⁷Greek General Staff, *Civil War*, vol 3, p. 52.

⁸⁸Ratcliffe, *Partisan Warfare*, p. 71.

⁸⁹Greek General Staff, *Civil War*, vol 3, p. 53.

despite the harsh weather conditions and the difficulties of the mountainous terrain.⁹⁰ Operation *Rocket* during the spring of 1949 managed to permanently purge Roumeli of guerrillas. The JUSMAPG field detachment's report on this operation praised the US supervised training programme that increased the combat effectiveness of the GNA units. This effectiveness was most noticeable in the continuous pursuit of the guerrillas during the entire campaign. Steady attrition, with continued pressure from the GNA, and insufficient guerrilla reserves to offset casualties, had an unfavourable effect on the guerrillas' morale and combat discipline. The JUSMAPG training programme managed to consolidate among the GNA troops the idea that a decisive guerrilla defeat could only be achieved when every fleeing guerrilla was pursued and annihilated, thus destroying the tactical integrity of small guerrilla groups as well as organised units. The JUSMAPG contention that continued pressure by GNA troops would force the guerrillas to assume the defensive was confirmed by the fact that during Operation *Rocket* they failed to carry out any sizeable looting or recruiting raids as they had done in the past.⁹¹

Conclusions

All in all, the Greek COIN doctrine was at its core enemy-centric; the primary target was to destroy the insurgents. Even though the US initial influence had a purely population-centric direction with a focus on political and economic measures that would re-establish the legitimacy of the Greek government and improve the standard of living in Greece, the brunt of the later effort was focused on the destruction of the enemy. This is not something unique to the Greek case. Prominent COIN theorists, such as David Kilcullen, while leaning towards a comprehensive approach that calls for massive involvement with the intent to transform the lives of the communities where COIN is undertaken, also admit that the ultimate goal of the campaign is the elimination of the insurgents through well-informed military operations.⁹²

The research behind this article composes the first step in a broader research project which will examine the impact of the Greek Civil War on COIN doctrine development. This article is a product of the initial research into the lessons learned during the Greek Civil War and shows that several basic offensive principles, that

⁹⁰Greek General Staff, *Civil War Archives* volume 7 (Athens: Hellenic Army History Directorate, 1998), pp. 474-475; Thrasivoulos Tsakalotos, *40 Chronia Stratiotis tis Ellados*, vol. 2 (Athens: Acropolis, 1960).

⁹¹US Army, *History of the Joint United States Military Advisory and Planning Group-Greece* Volume II (Independence MO: United States Army Unit Dairies, Histories and Reports, Miscellaneous Units, Records Group 407, President Harry S. Truman Library, 1952), pp. 34-36.

⁹²Andrei Miroiu, *Classical Counterinsurgency: A Comparison of Malaya, Algeria and Romania* PhD thesis (Sydney: University of New South Wales 2014), pp. 45-46.

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would subsequently be included in wider COIN doctrines, such as encirclement, patrolling, constant pursuit, and the use of heavy artillery fire, were consolidated during the Greek Civil War. Post-war US Army COIN doctrine development and the writing of the US manual took place at the time of the Greek insurgency, at a time when the US Army was involved in Greece on an advisory mission. Future research will examine if and how lessons learned in Greece influenced subsequent doctrine.