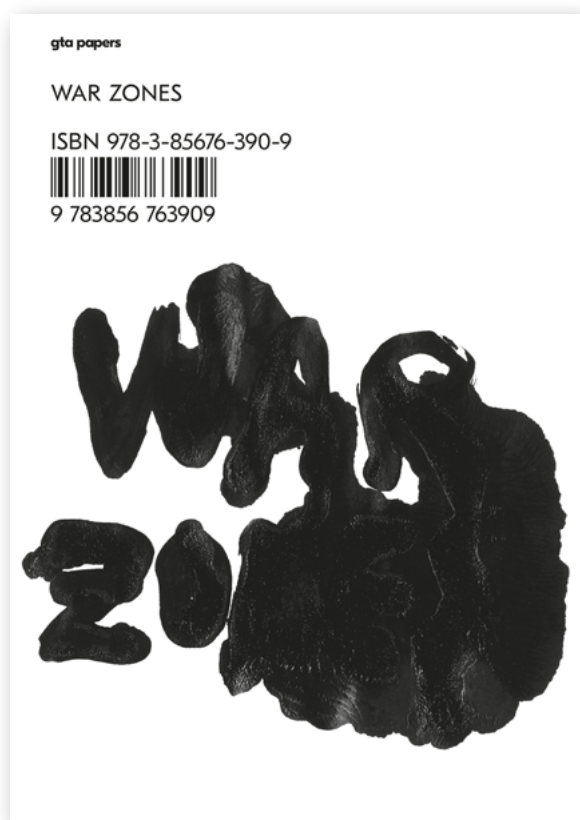


Introduction: From Colonial Wars to Counterinsurgency

Samia Henni

Henni, Samia. "Introduction: From Colonial Wars to Counterinsurgency." In Samia Henni, ed. *War Zones: gta papers* 2. Zurich: gta Verlag, 2019, 4–10; <https://doi.org/10.54872/gta-4401-01>



gta papers 2

ISBN (print) 978-3-85676-390-9

ISBN (pdf) 978-3-85676-440-1

<https://doi.org/10.54872/gta-pap-2>

Creative Commons License CC BY-NC-ND

Introduction: From Colonial Wars to Counterinsurgency Samia Henni

Samia Henni is Assistant Professor of History of Architecture and Urban Development at Cornell University's College of Architecture, Art, and Planning.

¹ See, for example, Robert Kolb and Richard Hyde, *An Introduction to the International Law of Armed Conflicts* (Oxford: Hart, 2008).

² See, for example, Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Russell Crandall, *America's Dirty Wars: Irregular Warfare from 1776 to the War on Terror* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Larisa Deriglazova, *Great Powers, Small Wars: Asymmetric Conflict since 1945* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2014); Peter A. Kiss, *Winning Wars amongst the People: Case Studies in Asymmetric Conflict* (Lincoln: Potomac Books, 2014).

³ The term *pacification* (literally peacemaking) was also used by the French monarchy during the sixteenth century; for instance, during the European wars of religion. On the French pacification and counterrevolution in colonized Algeria during the Algerian Revolution, see Samia Henni, *Architecture of Counterrevolution: The French Army in Northern Algeria* (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2017), 51–78.

⁴ On the policy of “winning hearts and minds,” see, for example, Hannah Gurman, *Hearts and Minds: A People's History of Counterinsurgency* (New York: The New Press, 2013).

In everyday parlance, a war zone suggests a region in which a war is being waged. In the context of international law, a war zone refers to a demarcated area, on land or at sea, within which the right of neutrality is not respected by belligerent nations.¹ After the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War, theaters of war became gradually blurred and often undeclared, and the very form of warfare changed significantly. Wars implied not only conventional symmetric models — armed conflicts between two or more military authorities in a defined battlefield — but also asymmetric conflicts and in some cases total wars. Whereas an asymmetric war is an armed struggle among state or non-state powers whose respective military resources are unequal,² a total war mobilizes all civilian-associated means and ends. However, symmetric, asymmetric, and total wars do not exclude one another; they frequently interact or coexist.

One of the possible instigators of asymmetric wars — also called “irregular wars,” “guerrilla wars,” “modern warfare,” “revolution/counterrevolution,” or “insurgency/counterinsurgency operations” — is colonial warfare, also referred to as “small wars” or “pacification.”³ A colonial war is a war waged to invade, conquer, and occupy populations, territories, and resources or to defend colonized entities against local and foreign powers. Colonial army officers were not exclusively concerned with military operations, however, but extended their missions to spatial, social, economic, political, and psychological practices. Colonial wars, and thereby asymmetric and total wars, were contingent on the subjugation and unconditional support of the civilian population. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this noteworthy condition formed an integral part of the “winning hearts and minds” strategy pursued by several European colonial schools;⁴ in particular, it characterized the paradigmatic French colonial military method, which in turn inspired military powers around the globe, including the United States of America.

The French colonial school was developed by some of the most influential military commanders and colonial administrators serving in France's overseas departments, colonies, and protectorates, including Marshals Thomas Bugeaud in colonized French Algeria; Joseph Gallieni in colonized Senegal, Reunion, Martinique, French Sudan, French Indochina, and Madagascar; and Hubert Lyautey in colonized French Algeria, Indochina, Madagascar, and the French protectorate of Morocco. ⁵ They endeavored to test and design tactics and strategies that annexed the civil realm—including the construction of new settlements—to military directives. These war theories and practices are particularly important to historians of architecture and urbanism because they involve or address the subdivision of territory, the distribution and movement of populations and goods, and the construction of routes, checkpoints, watchtowers, military posts, border fortifications, minefields, landing strips, camps, prisons, hospitals, housing, offices, public buildings, and so on.

In recent decades, critics and historians of the built environment have paid particular attention to the implications of the Second World War and the declared and undeclared war zones of the post-Second World War era in the design of infrastructures and buildings; in the execution of extrajudicial territorial occupations; in the urbanization of warfare; in the mechanisms of destruction, surveillance, and security; in the "Global War on Terror"; and in the mapping of discontinuities and differences among various military schools. ⁶ The present account aims at highlighting the legacies connecting nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial wars and twenty-first-century counterinsurgency and disclosing the intersections between the history of the built environment, colonial practices, and military operations. ⁷

The military characteristics and objectives of civil policies and landscapes are particularly evident in the French colonies. In the context of architectural history and theory, Lyautey is renowned for the various city plans he developed together with the French architect and urbanist Henri Prost for the Moroccan cities of Casablanca, Fès, Marrakech, Meknes, and Rabat, when Lyautey was Resident General in the

⁵ On the development of the French colonial school, see, for example, Douglas Porch, "Bugeaud, Gallieni, Lyautey: The Development of French Colonial Warfare," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, eds. Peter Paret, Gordon Alexander Craig, and Felix Gilbert (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 376–407.

⁷ In *Architecture of Counterrevolution* (see note 3), 79–98, I highlight another legacy: the transfer of knowledge from the Vichy regime to both colonized Algeria and the French Republic.

⁶ See, for example, Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007); Jean-Louis Cohen, *Architecture in Uniform: Designing and Building for the Second World War* (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2011); Martin Coward, *Urbicide: The Politics of Urban Destruction* (London: Routledge, 2008); Stephen Graham, ed., *Cities, War, and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004); Graham, *Cities under Siege: The New Military Urbanism* (London: Verso, 2010); Graham, *Vertical: The City from Satellites to Bunkers* (London: Verso, 2016); Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004); Gregory and Allan Pred, eds., *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence* (London: Routledge, 2007); Andrew Herscher, *Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Laura Kurgan, *Close Up at a Distance: Mapping, Technology, and Politics* (New York: Zone Books, 2013); Léopold Lambert, *Weaponized Architecture: The Impossibility of Innocence* (New York: dpr-barcelona, 2012); David Lyon, *Surveillance after September 11* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003); Lyon, ed., *Theorizing Surveillance: The Panopticon and Beyond* (Cullompton, UK: Willan Publishing, 2006); Felicity D. Scott, *Outlaw Territories: Environments of Insecurity/Architectures of Counterinsurgency* (New York: Zone Books, 2016); Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007); Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (New York: Zone Books, 2017).

⁸ See, for example, Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 104–25.

⁹ Hubert Lyautey, *Le Rôle social de l'officier* (Paris: René Julliard, 1946 [1891]), 37. This and all further translations are by the author.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹¹ Porch, "Bugeaud, Gallieni, Lyautey" (see note 5), 389.

¹² Gallieni quoted in Hubert Lyautey, *Du Rôle colonial de l'armée* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1900), 16.

¹³ On the "oil spot" policy, see, for example, Etienne de Durand, "France," in *Understanding Counterinsurgency Warfare: Doctrine, Operations, and Challenges*, eds. Thomas Rid and Thomas Keaney (New York: Routledge, 2010), 11–27, here 13–15.

¹⁴ Lyautey, *Du Rôle colonial de l'armée* (see note 12), 16.

¹⁵ During the Algerian Revolution, the French army established the *Affaires indigènes* (AI, Indigenous Affairs), the *Sections administratives spécialisées* (SAS, Special Administrative Sections), and the *Sections administratives urbaines* (SAU, Urban Administrative Sections) after Bugeaud's and Lyautey's institutions. On the spatial role of the SAU and SAS, see Henni, *Architecture of Counterrevolution* (see note 3), 149–204.

French Protectorate of Morocco from 1912 to 1924. ⁸ However, Lyautey's distinction in colonial, military, and political history is most closely associated with his influential theories on the role that colonial military officers can play in "winning hearts and minds" of the civilian population. He wrote several influential notes and articles, including "Du Rôle social de l'officier dans le service militaire universel" (On the social role of the officer in the universal military service) of 1891, and "Du Rôle colonial de l'armée" (On the colonial role of the army) of 1900, in which he urged the army to enlarge its perspectives and purposes.

In his first legendary article, published in the widely read *Revue des deux mondes*, Lyautey criticized the rigidity and inadequacy of French military education and training, claiming that French military schools should provide "a fruitful conception of the modern role of the officer in order to become the educator of the entire nation." ⁹ He also argued that it was essential to transform the deleterious facets of war into advantageous opportunities and thereby to "display, during the course of military service, not only violent and sterile fatigue, but also the broader field of social action." ¹⁰ Lyautey's viewpoint was both informed by his own military experiences and tutors in the French overseas colonies, especially Bugeaud and Gallieni, and influenced by the propositions of Catholic reformers General Louis Lewal and Captain Albert de Mun, who deemed the army an institution capable of reuniting political, social, and religious disparities. ¹¹

Lyautey explained his art of colonial warfare and the military strategies of "winning hearts and minds" in his second key essay, "Du Rôle colonial de l'armée." The newly promoted colonel stated that the prevailing means for achieving pacification — as his tutor Gallieni had claimed in 1898, now quoted in Lyautey's article — was "to employ a combined action of power and politics." ¹² To do so, Lyautey adopted Gallieni's notorious tactic of the *tache d'huile* (known in English as "oil spot" or "ink spot"), which entailed the gradual and methodical occupation of a territory only after overseeing its population and providing basic services, building infrastructure, and enabling economic activities. ¹³ Emulating Gallieni, Lyautey argued, "Whenever incidents of war require one of our colonial officers to act against a village or an inhabited center, he should not lose sight of its primary attention once the subjugation of the inhabitants is obtained, which is to rebuild the village, create a market, and establish a school." ¹⁴ Lyautey continued to develop his colonial civil-military and building methods in the French Protectorate of Morocco, where he created the *Bureaux de renseignements* (Intelligence Bureaus) after the Bureau of Arab Affairs that Bugeaud had established in colonized Algeria. ¹⁵

These methods were further elaborated in the mid-twentieth century during the Second World War, the First Indochina War (1945–1954), and the Algerian Revolution (1954–1962). The colonial school – now called *guerre moderne* (modern warfare) – was practiced and theorized by many French officers, some of whom were well-known for their roles in the infamous Battle of Algiers (1956–1957). Among these leading figures were Generals Paul Aussaresses, Jacques Massu, and Raoul Salan, and Colonels Marcel Bigeard, David Galula, Yves Godard, Charles Lacheroy, and Roger Trinquier. In her book and documentary entitled *Escadrons de la mort: L'École française* (Death squads: The French school), the French journalist Marie-Monique Robin interviewed some of these men and detailed both the methods of warfare applied by the protagonists and the secret export of these theories and practices to North and South America, notably to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and the United States during the 1950s and 1960s. ¹⁶

According to Colonel Trinquier, “the *sine qua non* of victory in *modern warfare* is the unconditional support of a population. According to Mao Tse-tung, it is as essential to the combatant as water to the fish. Such support may be spontaneous, although that is quite rare and probably a temporary condition. If it doesn’t exist, it must be secured by every possible means, the most effective of which is *terrorism*.” ¹⁷ For Trinquier, there were two systematic ways of obtaining the absolute subjugation of the civilian population: “since it is the population that is at stake, the struggle will assume two aspects: political – direct action on the population; and military – the struggle against the armed forces of the aggressor.” ¹⁸

In line with this thinking, Colonel Galula noted that “pacification would be achieved if we could gradually compromise the population in the eyes of the rebels.” ¹⁹ To meet this goal, Galula drew particular attention to the physical environments of the combatants and described the ideal territorial conditions for both the insurgent and the counterinsurgent. He argued,

“the ideal situation for the insurgent would be a large landlocked country shaped like a blunt-tipped star, with jungle-covered mountains along the borders and scattered swamps in the plains, in a temperate zone with a large and dispersed rural population and a primitive economy. [Whereas the] counterinsurgent would prefer a small island shaped like a pointed star, on which a cluster of evenly spaced towns are separated by desert, in a tropical or arctic climate, with an industrial economy.” ^{20/figs.1 a–b}

¹⁶ Marie-Monique Robin, *Escadrons de la mort: L'École française*, documentary (Ideale Audience, ARTE France, 2003); Marie-Monique Robin, *Escadrons de la mort: L'École française* (Paris: La Découverte, 2004).

¹⁷ Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View on Counterinsurgency* (London/Dunmow: Pall Mall Press, 1964 [1961]), 8. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁹ David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956–1958* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1963), 92. Galula is renowned among English-speaking military strategists and historians for his two publications originally published in English that he wrote while he was a research associate at Harvard University’s Center for International Affairs from 1962 to 1967.

²⁰ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006 [1964]), 25.

21 Service historique de l'armée de terre (SHAT) 1H 1119 D1, Bureau psychologique, X^e région militaire, "Étude sur les problèmes et les méthodes de pacification en Algérie," January 1957.

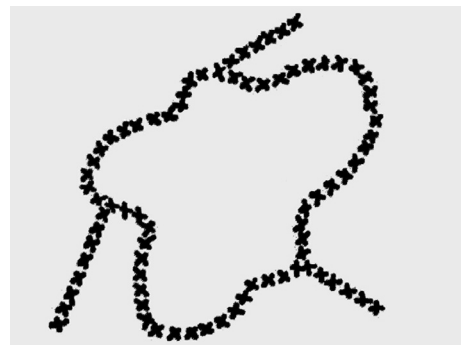
figs.1 a–b Galula's hypothesis on the ideal territorial configuration for the insurgent (a) and the counterinsurgent (b).

22 SHAT 1H 1119 D1, Bureau psychologique, X^e région militaire, Commandement supérieur interarmées, *Guide pratique de pacification à l'usage des commandants de sous-quartier*, 1958, 7.

23 In May 1958, Lacheroy was appointed Head of the Services de l'information et de l'action psychologique (Services of Psychological Action and Intelligence) of Algiers.

24 SHAT 1H 1118 D 3, Conférence du colonel Lacheroy, chef du service d'action psychologique et d'information du Ministère de la Défense Nationale, "Guerre révolutionnaire et l'arme psychologique," July 2, 1957, 4.

In 1957, a detailed military study entitled "Étude sur les problèmes et les méthodes de pacification en Algérie" (A survey on the problems and methods of pacification in Algeria) asserted that pacification should more energetically promote direct contact with the civilian population by means of the initiation of construction sites and the spread of schooling and training of the civilian population.²¹ A year later, the French Bureau psychologique (psychological bureau) of the Joint High Command in colonized Algeria released another military script, *Guide pratique de pacification* (Practical guidelines for pacification). The section on the various methods for implementing pacification reported that "it means making clear to every soldier that he must provide, in addition to a purely military action, a psychological action that is no less important and that is exerted by human contacts."²²



These psychological aspects of modern warfare served to introduce total warfare. In fact, these characteristics were depicted by Colonel Lacheroy in his lecture entitled "Guerre révolutionnaire et l'arme psychologique" (Revolutionary warfare and psychological weaponry), which he delivered to an audience of two thousand officers in the auditorium of the Sorbonne in Paris in 1957.²³ The colonel deemed this type of war as a "total warfare." He argued that it was

*"total, because not only does it mobilize in this effort all of the industrial, commercial, and agricultural powers of a country, but it also takes up in the war effort all women and children and elderly men, all who think, all who live, all who breathe, with all their forces of love, all their forces of enthusiasm, all their forces of hate, and it throws them into war. This is the new reality. Total war, because it takes the souls as well as the bodies and it yields them to the obedience of the war effort."*²⁴

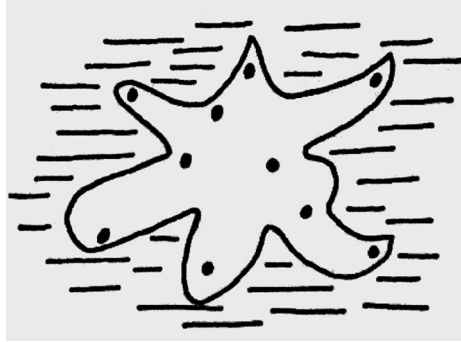
Following Lacheroy's statement, every individual was considered a potential suspect, and war zones became no longer restricted to conventional territorial boundaries but rather encompassed the whole territory and entire population.

French military practices and theories in colonized Algeria inspired and influenced many military authorities around the world during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including the U.S. Army. Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the United States has expressed overt interest in the French colonial military practices and theories tested in Indochina and Algeria—notably, the urban warfare methods of the Battle of Algiers portrayed in the mythic 1966 movie *La battaglia di Algeri*, directed by the Italian filmmaker

Gillo Pontecorvo and screened at the Pentagon in 2003.²⁵ Colonial protocols traveled from the colonies, protectorates, and overseas territories and departments to other parts of the world, where they were integrated and enforced.

²⁵ Michael T. Kaufman, "The World: Film Studies; What Does the Pentagon See in 'Battle of Algiers'?" *New York Times*, September 7, 2003.

Galula's traces can be found in the pages of the U.S. Army field manual *FM 3-24*, entitled *Counterinsurgency*, which the Department of the Army released in 2006 to direct U.S. soldiers fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. As Lieutenant General and U.S. Army Commander David H. Petraeus and Lieutenant General and U.S. Marine Corps Deputy Commander James F.



Amos note in their foreword, the purpose of the guidelines was to fill a doctrinal gap of twenty years for the Army and of twenty-five years for the Marine Corps.²⁶ The two lieutenant generals defined *counterinsurgency* as "a mix of offensive, defensive, and stability operations conducted along multiple

²⁶ David H. Petraeus and James F. Amos, *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2006), Foreword, n.p.

lines of operations. It requires Soldiers and Marines to employ a mix of familiar combat tasks and skills more often associated with nonmilitary agencies. The balance between them depends on the local situation."²⁷

²⁷ Ibid.

Galula's writing is frequently cited in the manual's second chapter, entitled "Unity of Effort: Integrating Civilian and Military Activities." Beginning with an opening citation from Galula's book *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, it states, "Essential though it is, the military action is secondary to the political one, its primary purpose being to afford the political power enough freedom to work safely with the population."²⁸ The chapter discusses the ways in which civil and military activities and organizations should be integrated, reporting and again citing Galula's argument that in this form of warfare "the soldier must be prepared to become ... a social worker, a civil engineer, a schoolteacher, a nurse, a boy scout. But only for as long as he cannot be replaced, for it is better to entrust civilian tasks to civilians."²⁹ In some declared and undeclared war zones, however, military officers were not replaced by their civilian counterparts but continued to influence the lives of civilians and the destruction and construction of borders, walls, camps, infrastructure, settlements, villages, and cities.

²⁸ Petraeus and Amos, *FM 3-24* (see note 26) 2/1.

²⁹ Ibid., 2/9.

In 2014, the U.S. Department of the Army issued a second version of the field manual *FM 3-24*, with a new title: *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*. The revised manual redefines *counterinsurgency* as "comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes."³⁰ This definition is similar to what Galula,

³⁰ U.S. Army, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5: Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2014), 1–2.

and other French colonial military officers before him, had proposed and theorized. However, references to these protagonists and to colonial doctrines, geographies, and terminologies were completely suppressed in the U.S. guidebook of 2014, despite the fact that the very logic of the civil-military operations had not been altered. Consequently, the unquoted and unreferenced colonial military protocols, deeply embedded in the U.S. field manual for contemporary counterinsurgency, became a norm.

The strategic rubrics of pacification, *guerre moderne*, and counterinsurgency belong to what Roland Barthes called *écriture cosmétique* (cosmetic writing), whose scope is not to communicate but to intimidate. In “Grammaire africaine” (African grammar), published in his 1957 book *Mythologies* — printed during the Battle of Algiers — Barthes argues that the official terminology used by the French representatives of colonial African affairs is purely axiomatic, a mask designed to divert attention from the nature of the war and cover the real facts with a “noise” of language. According to Barthes, this grammar is both ideologically burdened and politically loaded. In this context, he defines the term war as follows:

“War. — The goal is to deny the thing. For this, two means are available: either to name it as little as possible (most frequent procedure); or else to give it the meaning of its contrary (more cunning procedure, which is at the basis for almost all the mystifications of bourgeois discourse). War is then used in the sense of peace, and pacification in the sense of war.” ³¹

To write about “War Zones” thus also means to question cosmetic writings over the course of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, survey the historical involvements of architects in battlefields, examine the transfer of military practices and theories to civil realms, explore the ways in which wars have reshaped cities and human lives, understand the effect of symmetric and asymmetric wars on the development of architectural elements and the transformation of built environments, investigate the physical and psychological impacts of a besieged city, chronicle the challenging conditions for reconstructing a refugee camp, trace the foundation and protraction of the state of emergency, offer possible methodologies for mapping occupied and contested territories, and reveal the material or immaterial architecture of drone warfare.

³¹ Roland Barthes, “African Grammar,” in *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 103–9, here 105.

Note: Many thanks to Alessandro Petti for reviewing one of the contributions.