Guerre Révolutionnaire, Counter-insurgency, and U.S. Domestic Extremism

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Abstract

There is no shortage of academic literature regarding U.S. military veterans and their susceptibility to domestic extremist recruitment. However, this essay identifies a new potential culprit: military doctrine itself. Around 2006, amidst a deteriorating situation in Iraq, the U.S. military looked to history for innovative ideas on how to address a deteriorating counter-insurgency conflict. Unfortunately, they drew from several dubious historical examples, most notably, the documents crafted by French theorists during and after their 1954-1962 war in Algeria. We theorize that by heavily citing these French theorists without considering their conspiratorial underpinnings known as *guerre révolutionnaire*, the resulting product (FM 3-24, Counter-insurgency) inadvertently legitimized *guerre révolutionnaire's* philosophies to U.S. military members. With the rise in domestic extremist groups correlating with FM 3-24's publication, we examined whether *guerre révolutionnaire's* concepts were present in modern extremist rhetoric. While it was not possible in this introductory study to establish a direct relationship between FM 3-24 and the rise in U.S. domestic extremism, we find that 1) *guerre révolutionnaire's* tenets are present in U.S. extremist rhetoric, 2) there are subtle differences in rhetorical attitudes between veteran and non-veteran domestic extremists within their respective groups, and 3) previous concerns regarding the improper use of history for doctrine appear valid. Finally, we consider these results in the context of future studies regarding FM 3-24's effects and the need for an interdisciplinary approach.

Introduction

Most Americans are likely unfamiliar with the *guerre révolutionnaire* concept underpinning France's brutal efforts in Algeria during the war from 1954-1962 (Finch, 2018). Disconcertingly, U.S. and allied military theoreticians in Iraq—who rediscovered *guerre revoltionairre*-inspired authors in the mid-2000s and incorporated their teachings into FM 3-

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24, Counter-insurgency (COIN)—appear to have dismissed or not recognized the conspiratorial philosophy associated with mid-20th century French efforts (Porch, 2013).

With reporters and political scientists noting the susceptibility of U.S. veterans to domestic extremist recruitment, it is worth examining the 1960s-era *guerre révolutionnaire* philosophy and how eerily it reflects sentiments commonly expressed by groups like the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers. *Guerre revoltionairre*, which posited that France was fighting a global subversive war against communism, abroad and at home, produced a military "willing to employ torture as a military expedient, and even to take France to the brink of civil war" (Finch, 2018). Similarly, Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes asked, "What do you have right now if nothing but a communist insurrection intent on overthrowing our Constitution?" (Lucas, 2021) shortly before the group's leading role in the January 6th insurrection (Lokay et al., 2021).

Is there a connection between the willingness of COIN leaders in the U.S. military to accept *guerre révolutionnaire* as source material and the concept's similarities with fundamental extremist doctrine? Did the U.S. military's embrace of COIN and the rise of the "COINistas" (Mikolashek & Kalic, 2011) inadvertently aid domestic extremist groups? Are anti-government attitudes—such as those evoked by convicted veteran/January 6th rioter Larry Brock, who sought to "begin interrogations using measures we used on Al Qaeda to gain evidence on the coup" (AP, 2023)—simply reflective of a polarized political climate, or was it inevitable that the legitimacy lent to *guerre révolutionnaire* (GR) via FM 3-24 would benefit domestic extremism in the United States? FM 3-24's authors undoubtedly had the best intentions, but this essay identifies potential consequences associated with "cherry-picking" from history, even during a non-existential military conflict.

Approach

This essay compares *guerre révolutionnaire* to modern extremist doctrines and examines the potential relationship between post-2006 COIN efforts and modern extremist movements. We first reviewed GR's literature, the circumstances surrounding FM 3-24's creation, and the

corresponding rise of U.S. domestic extremism. These efforts allowed us to simplify GR's main tenets into consolidated codes to compare GR to modern extremism rhetoric.

We then conducted a more rigorous analysis by evaluating the rhetoric used by various social media accounts (specifically, from Twitter and Gettr) of prolific users self-identifying as members of the Proud Boys, Three Percenters, or Oath Keepers. We used Epistemic Network Analysis (ENA) (Shaffer et al., 2017), a tool that utilizes quantitative and qualitative analysis to review large datasets to develop meaningful connections in cognitive interactions and draw correlations between the subjects' social media posts and GR's main tenets.

Results

We found considerable similarities between GR and modern domestic extremist rhetoric, but there were differences between veterans and non-veterans regarding which GR tenets were more emphasized. Non-veteran extremists were more likely to believe that violence was justified to reach political goals, even though veteran extremists shared conspiratorial mindsets. This study did not attempt to prove that FM 3-24 directly influenced the domestic groups that grew shortly after its publication, but the striking similarities between the philosophies upon which the U.S. military drew and modern extremism—when combined with the fact that *something* must be contributing to the subtle differences between veteran and non-veteran extremists—implies that a hypothesis regarding FM 3-24's inadvertent impact on U.S. domestic extremism is worthy of further study. Ultimately, we find evidence supporting Porch's (2013) claim that FM 3-24's considerable reliance on GR created permission structures for sinister approaches towards COIN, as the attitudes Porch cites have extended well beyond the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Furthermore, our findings constitute an introductory effort to bridge the gap between the academic fields of military history and domestic extremism. While both fields have identified the connections between veterans and domestic extremism, the concept of military doctrine's potential effect on anti-government worldviews remains unexplored. On the surface, it would appear there are striking similarities between the philosophies of GR and modern domestic extremists.

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Literature Review

French Colonial Wars and the Rise of GR

France entered the conflict in Algeria (1954-1962) on tenuous terms. Algeria was no simple colonial possession: in 1848, the Second Republic declared the vast territory an integral part of France, and in both world wars, "Algerian *tirailleurs* fought with great bravery, and loyalty, alongside French metropolitan troops" (Horne, 1979). The causes of the Algerian conflict were many, but in short, approximately one million Europeans—nicknamed *pied noirs*—were "surrounded" in Algeria by nine million indigenous Muslims, a small minority of which (the FLN) revolted in 1954 (Horne, 1979).

The brutal French reaction to the FLN did not happen in a vacuum. In 1945, as WWII ended, the British Indian Army intervened against the Viet Minh in Indochina to resecure French control over the area (Marston, 2006). However, President Eisenhower (after strongly considering it) declined to intervene directly in France's war against Ho Chi Minh and General Giap, and in 1954, the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu fell (Logevall, 2010). The French managed a peace agreement that left Diem in charge of South Vietnam, but this was little comfort to the defeated French military (Logevall, 2010). France had fought a costly and brutal war against the Vietnamese, only to leave under humiliating circumstances (aside from some garrisons in South Vietnam). That same year, the FLN attacks in Algeria began (Porch, 2008).

Without going into detail on France's reaction to the FLN and the war's course, it is essential to understand that worryingly for the French government, the Indochina defeat "put a portion of the (French) army in a bad mood" and GR was, to a certain extent, an intoxicating accelerant. (Porch, 2008, p. 63). Colonel Lacheroy, one of the 1950s GR thought leaders, built his theories on personal perceptions of Mao Zedong and his role in a perceived global communist threat. Mao significantly impacted French theorists because his victory in China led to what Ho Chi Minh would declare to be decisive aid in his battle against France (Duiker, 2007), and the veracity of Ho's claims mattered little to French theorists eager for a scapegoat. Lacheroy's theories "fell like a conversion experience on a generation of

professional officers humiliated by France's defeats in 1940 and 1954, baffled by how poorly armed insurgents could defeat a modern army" (Porch, 2008, p. 64).

Lacheroy wrote of "parallel hierarchies," which explained how the Viet Minh could "control" its population by status, territory, and party leadership. These hierarchies "constituted the means by which psychological propaganda could be made effective: control over bodies ensured control over minds" (Lacheroy, 1958, p. 317). Lacheroy's ideas first met resistance, but by 1956 (as the war in Algeria festered), they became widespread and gained official acceptance (Finch, 2018). Later authors, most notably Roger Trinquier, expanded on Lacheroy's concepts that GR was a total war "which takes souls as well as bodies and bends them to obedience and the war effort" (Lacheroy, 1958, p. 309). Hogard (1958, p. 1304) wrote:

> The war of today, of yesterday and of tomorrow is only one. The world has been in an uninterrupted war since 1917; no one can predict the end of the conflict. There are no different wars, different forms of war. Qualifiers deceive us. If there must absolutely be one, the only one which is suitable would be that which expresses the nature of the war of our time, the term chosen by those who conceived and incited it, those who conduct it, it would be the adjective: 'REVOLUTIONARY'. [It is] Inexpiable and permanent because it is ideological, pursuing the destruction of all that is foreign to communism and the construction of a new humanity, universal because it is driven by a subversive organization spreading all over the globe; total because it uses and combines all available forces, already resorting where it must, where it is possible, to traditional forms of violence (terrorism, guerrilla, classic operations), one day perhaps to nuclear weapons, the war of our time is in keeping with Clausewitz's ideal: it is chameleon-war, WAR in all senses of the word.

"In this manner, Lacheroy, Hogard, and Trinquier cast the revolutionary war as a theory of war on a grand scale: a subversive war in which what mattered was not just what was at stake, but how the game was being played" (Finch, 2018). Total war—which GR adherents believed they were engaged in—is a controversial concept within military academia, but GR

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was unique because it advocated severe, total war-esque measures (which are generally associated with world wars) (Chickering, 2000) to treat *even colonial conflicts as existential*.

Decades later, when searching for "lessons learned," U.S. theorists seized on the works of David Galula, a French major who wrote two books considered "rigorous and capable of self-criticism" (Marlowe, 2010). A French colonial officer who served in Algeria from 1956 to 1958, Galula was a marginal character during his lifetime (Finch, 2013). Porch (2013) concluded that FM 3-24's authors found Galula appealing because of his ignorance of Clausewitz's irrational influences and the idea that tactics—not strategy—were a sufficient answer to their problems. Furthermore, Galula allowed his readers to examine France's alleged successes isolated from their "context of racism, brutality, and the implosion of French civil-military relations" (Porch, 2013, p. 175).

However, not only did Galula's "hearts and minds" approach contradict his actions, which included war crimes amid wildly unrealistic society-changing efforts (Paret, 1964), the French catastrophically lost in Algeria despite applying the very principles Galula claimed they neglected (Porch, 2013). Galula simply told the COINistas what they wanted to hear: FM 3-24's authors ignored that Galula was never a significant presence in France and that more credible French authors declined to use Galula's preferred term, "counter-insurgency." Other French writers preferred such "terms as *guerre en surface*, *guerre subversive*, *guerre psychologique*, and above all *guerre révolutionnaire*" (Durand, 2010). The more influential— and noted torture advocate—Trinquier, emphatically did *not* mention counter-insurgency, although its English translation misleadingly includes the term in a subtitle (Finch, 2018). Instead, Trinquier wrote about total war via GR, and he believed that events in colonial areas were directly tied to subversive plots to undermine Paris itself. These facts, it would seem, escaped FM 3-24's authors.

GR Philosophy and Ramifications

GR was, at its core, a conspiratorial philosophy that could not compete with reality (Showalter, 1998). GR was not solely responsible for the French atrocities in Algeria, but it served as a convenient justification mechanism, even if Charles de Gaulle scoffed at its tenets (Finch, 2018) (de Gaulle was not laughing when GR's adherents attempted a coup in 1961)

(Horne, 1978). Lacheroy's demonology ignored complexities and grossly mishandled how Clausewitz elucidated the intermingling of military and political factors (Strachan, 2013), even though GR understood those principles' importance during revolutionary war (to an extent) (Paret, 1964).

Overall, the enabling dogma of GR, humiliations of post-WWII, and critically, a history of allegedly successful colonial suppressions pre-WWI (Finch, 2013) combined to form a toxic psyche amenable to torture, forced relocations, and other severe efforts that made Western allies (including the United States) uncomfortable (Paret, 1964). The French succeeded tactically in Algeria but inadvertently helped the FLN's fledgling cause, and the Third Republic collapsed as the Gaullists—somewhat with military support—and Charles de Gaulle came to power in 1958 (Tyre, 2002). The French military initially saw reason to be hopeful in the aftermath of de Gaulle's return to power, as General Challe led a series of successful offensives in 1960 (Horne, 1979). However, by 1961, the war had been lost on the political and diplomatic fronts, an unacceptable reality for GR's military adherents (Horne, 1979). The coup that followed was as poorly planned as it was executed, but the psychological impact on an exhausted France was severe (Horne, 1978).

Paret (1964) noted that while many of GR's adherents were implicated in the 1961 coup, some officers resisted the philosophy's more extreme tenets. However, Colonel Godard, an officer who eventually took over the OAS (a French far-right paramilitary/terrorist organization), was a GR follower/writer, as were the coup's leaders. "That in very many cases the same officers who had elaborated GR took up arms against the state constitutes a heavy indictment of the doctrine" (Paret, 1964, p. 113). France was riddled with GR-related documents in the aftermath of the military's failure in Indochina and issues in Algeria; in many cases, GR went beyond the colonial battlefield in perceiving enemies on the home front. "The army fights in vain if the political conditions needed for its operations are not fulfilled" (Anonymous, 1957, p. 16), cautioned a pamphlet extolling the virtues of insurrection, if necessary, to maintain support in Paris. In short, GR covered for French inadequacies after the humiliations of WWII and Indochina by misinterpreting world events and justifying total war efforts and, eventually, a coup (Paret, 1964).

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Unfortunately, FM 3-24's authors did not reckon with France and GR's earlier roots. Writing about the allegedly progressive French occupations/pacifications conducted in Tonkin and Madagascar between 1885 and 1900, Finch noted that, like GR, the Gallieni-Lyautey methods consisted of a mixture of "leniency and severity, force and politics" (Finch, 2013, p. 236). The U.S. Army did not pull directly from Gallieni and Lyautey, but by cherry-picking from Galula without considering historical depth or context, FM 3-24 inadvertently cited their controversial policies.

Given that Gallieni saw his efforts in the framework of war (not colonial policing), it makes sense that Lacheroy and Trinquier, working in the aftermath of existential failures in WWII and Indochina, took their doctrine to a particularly dark place (Paret, 1964). "History gives us an uncomfortable insight: that occupations of brutality can succeed. The gentler gamester is not always the soonest winner" (Porter, 2009, p. 57). As ominous as it is that FM 3-24 wrought its ideas from Galula, the complete history provides an even grimmer context that belies the difficulties facing the U.S. military in 2006.

FM 3-24

Officially, the military defines doctrine as the "fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives" (Spencer, 2016). Put simply, doctrine consists of various documents the services publish, including "the tactics and techniques taught to new members during training" (RAND, 2023). There are multiple types of doctrine, but this essay focuses on a specific U.S. Army field manual, which generally describes "how missions are planned, prepared, executed, and assessed in practice" (Tetreau, 2020). Non-military readers should also understand that while every servicemember is familiar with doctrine's existence, they are not sacrosanct documents: military journals are replete with articles begging officers to take doctrine seriously (Fust, 2019). Similarly, controversies over the best way to write and use doctrine (Spurlin, 2017) are as least as old as modern military thought itself (Howard, 2009).

FM 3-24, *Counter-insurgency* is unique due to the relative fame it achieved and the explosion of military literature it caused (Jensen, 2016). The Pentagon became concerned about civil unrest as early as 2003 in Iraq (Kaplan, 2013), and in 2004 and 2005, the DoD

held an Irregular War Conference and similar meetings with renowned military thinkers like Eliot Cohen and David Kilcullen (Jensen, 2016). After several overlapping efforts and the incorporation of "lessons learned" from the ongoing conflict, General Petraeus eventually inherited an ongoing process at the Combined Arms Center to complete a formal counter-insurgency manual (Kaplan, 2013). Petraeus gathered his "COINistas" and campaigned within the Army for a new mental model surrounding counter-insurgency (Petraeus, 2006). The result, FM 3-24, was built around two big ideas:

> First, that protecting the population was the key to success in any counter-insurgency campaign, and second, that to succeed in counter-insurgency, an army has to be able to learn and adapt more rapidly than its enemies. Neither of these ideas was especially new, but both were fundamental changes for an American Army that had traditionally relied on firepower to win its wars. The writing team drew upon the lessons of previous successful and unsuccessful counter-insurgency campaigns, confident that, just as there are principles of conventional war that have endured for hundreds of years, there are **lasting principles** of "small wars" and insurgencies that are also relevant to the wars of today (Nagl, 2010).

It was these "lasting principles" that critics of FM 3-24 would soon find troubling. However, the document also has its defenders. Writing to counter Porch (2013) (who savaged counter-insurgency and its historical roots in colonialism) and Gentile (2015) (who challenged the notion that counter-insurgency had ever or could ever work), Ucko (2014) argued that both authors exaggerated the negatives of FM 3-24 without providing a viable alternative. This essay—while biased towards Porch's views—does not intend to weigh in on this argument, nor do we doubt the intentions of FM 3-24's authors, who were attempting to solve an inscrutable problem in an incredibly challenging political environment (where even the terms counter-insurgency or civil war were controversial) (Editorial Board, 2007). However, it is worth noting that the original draft of FM 3-24 (Department of the Army, 2006) differs considerably from more recent versions (Department of the Army, 2014). For example, the annotated bibliography with references to "successful" COIN efforts that Porch (2013) found

so problematic is gone, as are any questionable references to Malaya or Galula. Criticisms of FM 3-24 clearly did not go ignored: while there are no direct criticisms of the 2006 version in 2014, the introduction's lack of emphasis on problematic histories is notable.

Regardless of FM 3-24's success or failures, the question remains whether the sources its authors drew from had inadvertent effects on the soldiers that employed its recommendations. Despite the military geniuses of Petraeus and Mattis, what were the effects on soldiers who examined the works cited or might have found inspiration in the routinely brutal actions of colonial powers espousing a conspiratorial worldview?

Troublingly, the preface of the 2006 version of FM 3-24 begins with a quote from Galula emphasizing the importance of shared mental models (Department of the Army, 2006). Historians might find this quote concerning, as the shared mental model, in Galula's case, referenced the brutal underpinnings of GR and the mindset that would eventually drive a failed coup. Galula's name appears five times in FM 3-24, and Algeria appears nine. Of the latter, the first two references make generalized statements about the FLN's successes in Algeria, while the following three (to FM 3-24's credit) decry the use of torture by the French. The final four are in the annotated bibliography.

Historians have taken issue with the generalized lessons offered by FM 3-24 (Finch, 2013, 2018; Horne, 1979; Porch, 2013) and the implications of even the manual's well-intended statements. While FM 3-24 plainly states that the French failed in Algeria and that their brutal actions contributed to the FLN's success, the implication is that without those mistakes (or, more accurately described, brutal measures), the French might have succeeded. This assumption is the underpinning of Porch's (2013) criticism that modern COINistas accepted Galula because he "sanitized his account of the Algerian war" by only implying the sinister realities behind reassuring, supporting, and controlling the population (Porch, 2013, p. 175). The term GR does not appear in FM 3-24, but a faithful soldier or marine, either by internalizing the document or reading the works suggested in the bibliography, could be imbibing a highly conspiratorial worldview in GR. Even in its most benign form, the emphasis on COIN as a "hearts and minds" campaign papered over sinister attitudes inherent to the practice. As an American officer serving in Iraq stated: "With a heavy dose of *fear and violence*, and a lot of money for projects, I think we can convince these people that we are

here to help them" (Porch, 2013, p. 191). Even *more* ominous is how FM 3-24 fails to recognize what Galula also missed: "If French psyops enjoyed little success with Muslims, it proved very influential among French counter-insurgents and played a central role in the politicization of the French army, largely because it was directed at France as much as Algeria" (Porch, 2013, p. 194).

In short, by employing history in a well-intentioned but questionable manner, FM 3-24 might have had two inadvertent impacts on its readership. First, obedient soldiers might have absorbed the lessons from GR that justified a total war mindset (Horne, 1979) and justified the brutal suppression of a population. Second, by adopting the colonial attitude that a whole-of-government or long-term effort was necessary for COIN success (Department of the Army, 2006), FM 3-24 contributed to the "stabbed-in-the-back" narrative (Chickering, 2000) that soldiers and marines would eventually bring home after the failures in Iraq and Afghanistan. If FM 3-24 was to be believed, any losses, just like the French in Algeria and Indochina (Tyre, 2002), would be indicative of a public that failed to support its military:

> At the strategic level, winning and maintaining the support of the American people for a protracted deployment is arguably the critical COIN activity. Military commanders are almost never directly involved in this process, which is properly a political activity (p. 29).

Finally, while FM 3-24 drew from several historical examples, the Malayan Emergency merits closer inspection. Unlike the French in Algeria or the United States in Vietnam, the British are generally considered to have been successful in their long-term effort to quell a Chinese communist uprising in Malaya (Deighton, 2010). FM 3-24 suggests that a strategy change enabled British successes; thus, 2006-era soldiers should have taken heart that a new doctrine could provide a viable blueprint. However, FM 3-24 overstated how much Britain changed its strategy in Malaya (Hack, 2009) and undersold the routine brutality the British and Malayans exercised (Hack, 2012). The British acknowledged their overwhelming numerical advantage (Briggs, 1951) and how their alliance with local Malayans enabled their resettlement and police-building efforts (Marston, 2006). As Hack (2021, p. 451) noted:

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This unbalanced representation [that emphasized "hearts and minds"] was particularly unfortunate because it fed into general counter-insurgency discourse with, for instance, the 2006 U.S. Army/Marine counter-insurgency manual FM 3-24 claiming that Malaya stalemated until after police reform in 1952. In reality the strategic tide had already turned by then, police retraining only accelerated in the latter part of that year and the rate of improvement in incidents, contacts and eliminations slowed down by 1953. It also depicted the battle as fundamentally one for legitimacy, without asking how far legitimacy was predicated first and foremost on the adequacy of protection and ability to enforce rules... Arguably, such partial readings of the Emergency contributed to an unrealistic appreciation of the scale, duration and intensity of geodemographic control and operations (framework and priority) that might be required to dominate, protect and then 'clear' areas in places such as Afghanistan in the early twenty-first century.

Again, while acknowledging the lack of maliciousness behind FM 3-24's authorship, we are left with the uneasy conclusion that the document was one of many doctrinal efforts in a long and disturbing history of counter-insurgency efforts. To separate each COIN effort from its predecessor risks ignoring the effects that indoctrinating soldiers and marines with inaccurate histories and narratives about domestic responsibility for failures had on post-war environments. The parts of the French military that embraced GR attempted a poorly orchestrated coup (Horne, 1978) with eerie parallels to the January 6th insurrection.

The Waves of Far-Right Extremism

Examining the increase in U.S. domestic extremism in relation to FM 3-24 is difficult because of the multitude of potential contributing factors affecting recent U.S. politics. It is alarming that a spike in far-right activity coincides with the period in which soldiers reading FM 3-24 or absorbing its lessons would have been leaving the military (post-2006), but so do other important events. The rise in domestic extremist groups in the United States has occurred in a political environment where violence is increasingly seen as acceptable (Kalmoe

& Mason, 2022). Political radicalization due to a perceived loss of personal significance (economic or social) predicts a predilection for violence, as does the presence of radicalized friends in a social network (Jasko et al., 2017).

Additional factors associated with political polarization appear to influence the acceptance of political violence, a reality far-right extremists take full advantage of (Moskalenko, 2021). Social media and echo chambers enable perceived policy illegitimacies (Lundy & Jennissen, 2022), which induce respondents to approve of political violence (Andersen, 2023). Actual crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, cause high anxiety levels that exacerbate hatred toward outgroups (Balmas et al., 2022). Polarization increased some citizens' perceived burden of COVID-19, which correlated with an increased inclination toward violence (Bartusevičius et al., 2021).

Conspiracy theories, which extremist movements across the political spectrum routinely embrace (van Prooijen et al., 2015), are often associated with narcissism (Cichocka et al., 2022; Sternisko et al., 2023) and Machiavellianism (Hughes & Machan, 2021). These traits correlate with those possessed by elite military groups targeted by extremist recruiters (Koehler, 2022). Military veterans opting for extremism overwhelmingly favor far-right groups (McCauley, 2021) despite mixed evidence over whether Republicans and conservatives are more predisposed towards conspiratorial thinking (Enders et al., 2022)

Within the "radical right," McCauley (2021) argues that there are two distinct movements: one that revolves around the fear of losing racial supremacy and one focused on cultural grievances (the latter, he argues, drove the events on January 6th). More detailed analyses identify five subsections of the far-right milieu; the most relevant to this essay is the "anti-government extremists" category (Beutel & Johnson, 2021). The modern militia movement in the United States began in the early 1990s but subsided by 2000 (despite high-profile events like the Waco incident and the Oklahoma City bombing). Militia movements sparked sharply after President Obama's election in 2008 and the rise of the Tea Party (Doxsee, 2021), but current groups are not always racist in terms of their rhetoric. The Tea Party's association with racist undertones and conspiratorial thinking (Parker & Barreto, 2013) might help explain the confusion regarding the lack of overtly racist attitudes in the

most prominent militia movements (McCauley, 2021), as such beliefs are inherent or well-hidden (Kalmoe & Mason, 2022).

2016 brought a "third wave" to the modern militia movement that validated far-right beliefs and emboldened various militia leaders (Doxsee, 2021). As counted by the Southern Poverty Law Center and displayed by Beutal and Johnson (2021), the phenomenon is graphically striking:
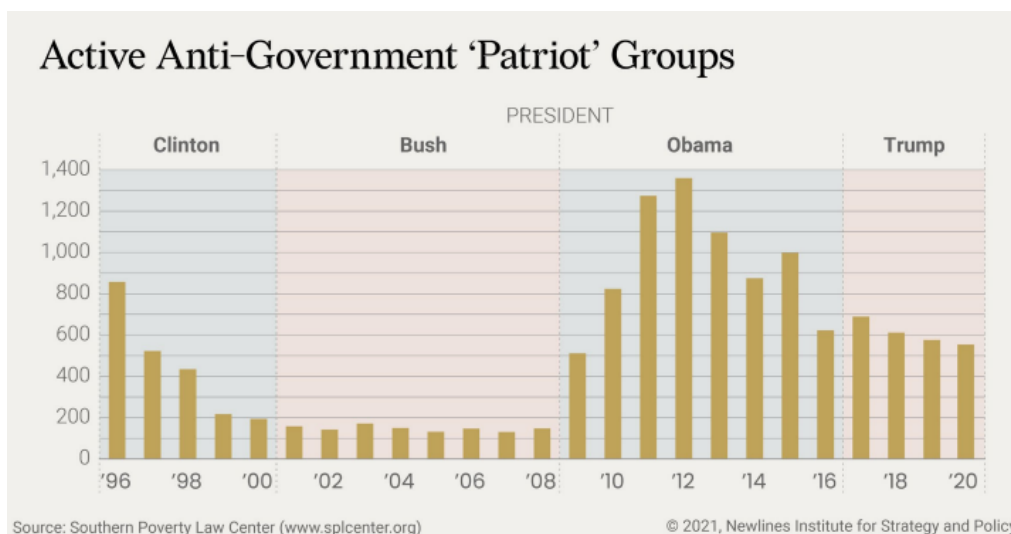
This essay focuses on three major far-right groups (the Oath Keepers, Proud Boys, and Three Percenters) because of their relatively large memberships (Steinhauer, 2020), documented participation on January 6th (Corse, 2021), and acknowledged recruitment of military veterans (Shinkman, 2021). Additionally, there is a reasonable level of research into these groups by government and academic sources to draw supporting data.

Oath Keepers

The Oath Keepers are a right-wing militia whose recruitment efforts are focused on current or former members of the military and law enforcement (McCauley, 2021) and have made veteran membership critical to its mission (Steinhauer, 2020). Founded in 2009, the Oath Keepers have chapters across the country that portray themselves as the modern

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protectors of the Founders' legacy (Lokay et al., 2021). Their leader, Stewart Rhodes, is a U.S. Army veteran whom the Army discharged after a parachuting accident (Lederman, 2021). Rhodes eventually attended law school at Yale and founded the Oath Keepers after working on Rand Paul's 2008 presidential campaign. Initially, Rhodes claimed that he founded the Oath Keepers to "remind those in current service of their obligations to refuse unlawful orders" (Lederman, 2021), but he became increasingly radicalized in response to post-2020 claims of voter fraud (Lokay et al., 2021). Like most extremist movements, the Oath Keepers ideology is not solidified in doctrine, although the group has a declaration of ten orders they will not obey that revolve around theoretical tyrannies (we will not blockade cities, we will not confiscate weapons, etc.) (McQueen, 2021). Most experts estimate Oath Keepers membership to be approximately 5,000, two-thirds of which are former military or law enforcement (McQueen, 2021).

Proud Boys

The Proud Boys are not a traditional anti-government militia: founded in 2016 by Gavin McInnes as a "pro-Trump men's club" (McCauley, 2021), the Proud Boys had a strong anti-Semitic platform and focused largely on brawling with left-wing protestors before McInnes' resignation as leader in 2017. While the Proud Boys are "violent, nationalistic, Islamophobic, transphobic and misogynistic," the ADL does not classify them as white supremacists (ADL, 2020). Like the Oath Keepers, the Proud Boys played a significant role in the January 6th insurrection, as led by their current leader, Enrique Tarrio (McCauley, 2021). The Proud Boys do not have the explicit connection with the military members that the Oath Keepers do, but the relationship exists: 4 out of 5 of the Proud Boys indicted for sedition after January 6th were veterans (Scribner, 2022).

Three Percenters

The Three Percenter movement is an anti-government militia movement fixated on the government but, like the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers, expresses malleable "anxiety toward historically disenfranchised racial/ethnic/religious minorities" (Beutel & Johnson, 2021, p. 3). Founded in 2008 by Michael Brian Vanderboegh (Beirich & Potok, 2009) in response to

President Obama's election (per their website: "The movement was started on December 17, 2008, in response to the election of Barack Obama.") (Beutel & Johnson, 2021), the name Three Percenter comes from the notion—never historically validated—that only three percent of colonists fought against the British during the Revolutionary War (Beutel & Johnson, 2021).

The Military and Domestic Extremism

Multiple studies have noted the correlation between military veterans and membership in far-right groups (Moskalenko, 2021). Several data leaks have suggested that some Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, or Three Percenters members are *still* on active duty (Wilson, 2021). These far-right groups are relatively small compared to the number of believers in general conspiracies (like QAnon), but they are responsible for three-quarters of violent extremist incidents since 9/11 (GAO, 2017). Moskalenko (2021) found that group isolation and threat, group polarization, and slippery slope (gradual desensitization to violence) in the military contribute to "unfreezing," a process in which military veterans lose social connections and a sense of purpose. Koehler (2022) found that elite formations in the Army and Marines were significantly more susceptible to right-wing recruitments than those in the Air Force and Navy. Elite forces, Koehler theorized, are indoctrinated into elite subcultures that encourage echo chamber effects and an "us vs. them" mentality (Koehler, 2022).

The military might have also been uniquely susceptible to extremist recruitment amid rising U.S. polarization, as programs to prevent extremism among Muslim Americans (Weine et al., 2019) inadvertently played into the hands of far-right groups (McDermott et al., 2022). The Department of Defense (DoD) has consistently prohibited its members from advocating for extremist groups and punishing those breaking those rules. However, the military has remained a fertile ground for militia recruitment (Posard et al., 2021). The military is not infested with white supremacists or extremists; in the aftermath of the Jan 6th insurrection, reports that the military was overrepresented in far-right groups (Valasik & Reid, 2021) were quickly contested (Dunlap, 2022). Other research found that while extremism and white supremacy were relatively rare in the U.S. military, there were larger issues of racial bias (Krishnamurthy, 2022) within the ranks. Whether these rates are unique to the military or

reflective of society (Lundy & Jennissen, 2022) is beyond the scope of this paper, but if studies on political violence within larger society are correct (Krouwel et al., 2015), military veterans certainly do not appear *less* susceptible than their fellow citizens despite explicit oaths of loyalty. Concerningly, military separation offers inadvertent pathways to extremism when a veteran's service either ends involuntarily or the member does not receive the "war hero" status expected (Simi et al., 2013). This latter point is potentially relevant to Iraq and Afghanistan: given the correlation between the rise in extremist groups and their return from a particularly traumatic period from 2006-2008, this paper suggests that the same stimuli that affected Arab veterans might have similarly damaged U.S. participants (Hafez, 2009).

Literature Review Conclusion

The field is still researching and debating the relationships between the military and domestic extremism, but at a minimum, one might hope that the oaths associated with military service would serve as a barrier to extremist recruitment. Unfortunately, that does not appear to be true for many veterans. The DoD has taken admirable steps toward combating extremism within its ranks, and academics have done outstanding work analyzing the psychological aspects of military service that make veterans susceptible to extremist recruitment. However, a gap in the literature remains: why did a spike in far-right groups correlate with the period in which many FM 3-24 indoctrinated troops would have been ending their service? Did FM 3-24, by drawing from a war based largely on a conspiratorial philosophy, inadvertently aid far-right recruitment? What is the general philosophy of far-right groups like the Proud Boys, Oathkeepers, and Three Percenters, and how does it compare with the tenets of GR?

Methods

In order to answer our research question on whether there is a connection between FM 3-24 and U.S. domestic extremism, we conducted a literature review of GR and modern domestic extremism (summarized above) before utilizing ENA to 1) establish whether GR's tenets exist

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in modern extremist philosophies and 2) whether there is a significant difference between veteran and non-veteran extremist members.

We began our analysis by relying on Paret (1964) to encapsulate GR's worldview. Paret pulled from hundreds of French primary documents, most of which the authors wrote during the Indochina and Algerian conflicts. Paret's seminal work, *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria*, was written in the context of the U.S.'s rapid escalation in Vietnam and Paret's alarm that researchers were focusing on "French actions in North Africa rather than on the ideas behind them" (1964, p. 5). We created the list below to define GR's tenets more explicitly, which allowed us to compare modern U.S. domestic extremism to GR. We separated GR's main tenets into four overall codes to facilitate the ENA process:

Conspiracies

- Traditional conflicts (nuclear or conventional) are distractions from the real threats to the state (Insidious Threats).
- Contemporary events can be understood only in light of a worldwide Communist conspiracy (Global Communist Conspiracy).
- Colonial experiences are the frontline of this anti-Communist fight (Colonialism).

False Realities

- Full domestic support is necessary to defeat insurgencies (Stabbed in Back).
- Psychological warfare is necessary to preempt enemy efforts (Psychological).
- The enemy will use large-scale violence only after effectively brainwashing a population (Initial Brainwashing).

Violence Justifications

- Authoritarianism is likely necessary to secure domestic support (Authoritarianism).
- Insidious threats justify the use of total war and torture (Torture).
- Insidious threats justify coups or suspension of domestic freedoms (Coup).
- Domestic authorities are either ignorant of the real threats or complicit in embracing them to remain in power (Deep State).

Intentions

- A maze of self-deception hides the true goal: seizing power (Control).

- A variant of strong nationalism, closely tied to conservatism or Christianity, provides the best national path forward (nationalism).

It was challenging to design a study that looked at extensive data sets on social media and compared them to GR and FM 3-24 rhetoric. Our initial hope was to look at a broad user base of the Twitter and Gettr platforms by searching platforms' APIs and requesting the tweets/posts of users using specific hashtags commonly associated with the respective groups reviewed. However, this was difficult as many of these hashtags were being actively censored by Twitter, and results generated from API calls to the specific hashtags resulted in nominal results. Thus, we decided to change our approach and look for prolific accounts of users, and in some cases, the leaders of the Proud Boys, Three Percenters, Oath Keepers, and other military users who were not only actively commenting but were followed by more than 1000 users with active sharing of their tweets/posts. Using API calls and a data scraping tool, we gathered 20,800 posts from 24 different accounts (Twitter and Gettr).

Once we completed our data gathering, we compiled the data and coded each tweet/post using a trained AI webtool called nCoder (C. L. Marquart et al., 2019). Since our dataset included over 20,000 posts, we utilized the nCoder tool in which reviewers code the same 80 tweets/posts, followed by a shared review of each post to determine if there is interrater reliability. Our interrater reliability scores, measured by kappa, were significant enough considering the size of the dataset (C. L. Marquart et al., 2019).

After coding, we imported our data into the ENA web tool to apply epistemic network analysis (Bowman et al., 2021; D. Shaffer, 2017; D. Shaffer & Ruis, 2017; D. W. Shaffer et al., 2016) to our data using the ENA Web Tool (version 1.7.0) (C. Marquart et al., 2018). We defined the units of analysis as all lines of data associated with a single value of *Military* (either identifying as a part of the military or not), subsetted by *Affiliation* to one of the three militia groups (or being unaffiliated but still extremist).

The ENA algorithm uses a moving window to construct a network model for each line in the data, showing how codes in the current line are connected to codes that occurred previously (A. Ruis et al., 2019; Siebert-Evenstone et al., 2017), defined as four lines (each line plus the three previous lines) within a given conversation. The resulting networks are

aggregated for all lines for each unit of analysis in the model. In this model, we aggregated networks using a binary summation in which the networks for a given line reflect the presence or absence of the co-occurrence of each pair of codes.

Our ENA model included the following codes: False Realities, Intentions, Violence Justifications, and Conspiracies. The ENA model normalized the networks for all units of analysis before they were subjected to a dimensional reduction, which accounts for the fact that different units of analysis may have different numbers of coded lines in the data. For the dimensional reduction, we used a singular value decomposition, which produces orthogonal dimensions that maximize the variance explained by each dimension (see Bowman et al., 2021; D. W. Shaffer et al., 2016 for a more detailed explanation of the mathematics).

Networks were visualized using network graphs where nodes correspond to the codes, and edges reflect the relative frequency of co-occurrence, or connection, between two codes. The result is two coordinated representations for each unit of analysis: (1) a plotted point, which represents the location of that unit's network in the low-dimensional projected space, and (2) a weighted network graph. The positions of the network graph nodes are fixed, and those positions are determined by an optimization routine that minimizes the difference between the plotted points and their corresponding network centroids. Because of this co-registration of network graphs and projected space, the positions of the network graph nodes—and the connections they define—can be used to interpret the dimensions of the projected space and explain the positions of plotted points in the space. Our model had co-registration correlations of 0.97 (Pearson) and 0.94 (Spearman) for the first dimension and co-registration correlations of 1 (Pearson) and 0.99 (Spearman) for the second. These measures indicate that there is a strong goodness of fit between the visualization and the original model.

ENA can be used to compare units of analysis in terms of their plotted point positions, individual networks, mean plotted point positions and mean networks, which average the connection weights across individual networks. Networks may also be compared using network difference graphs. These graphs are calculated by subtracting the weight of each connection in one network from the corresponding connections in another.

Findings

Table 1 below lists GR tenets and describes whether those concepts consistently appeared in the speeches, social media posts, and other transcripts during our literature review and ENA process. This table provides a useful technique to identify the similarities between GR and individual groups, but it does not tell us the strength of correlations or any differences between veteran and non-veteran extremists. The main difference between GR and modern extremists focuses on the role of colonialism: whereas the French saw maintaining their colonial possessions as integral to stopping global communism (Paret, 1964), modern domestic extremists are far less concerned with a global role.

Table 1

Presence of GR tenets in extremist rhetoric

Tenet	GR	Oath Keepers	Proud Boys	Three Percenters
Insidious Threats	X	X	X	X
Global Communist Conspiracy	X	X	X	X
Colonialism	X			
Stabbed in Back	X	X		X
Psychological	X	X	X	X
Initial Brainwashing	X		X	X
Authoritarianism	X		X	
Torture	X	X	X	X
Coup	X	X	X	X
Deep State	X	X	X	X
Control	X			
Nationalism	X	X	X	

*Military versus Non-Military (All Groups)*

We used ENA to determine whether current DE thought leaders consistently advocated the four main GR pillars and whether significant differences existed between veteran and non-veteran members of all three extremist groups. Figure 1 below demonstrates

that all four GR pillars consistently appear in DE posts, although *False Realities* are less prevalent than the other three codes. Additionally, Figure 1 shows two significant differences between veterans and non-veterans:

Figure 1

ENA for veterans versus non-veterans in all domestic extremist groups
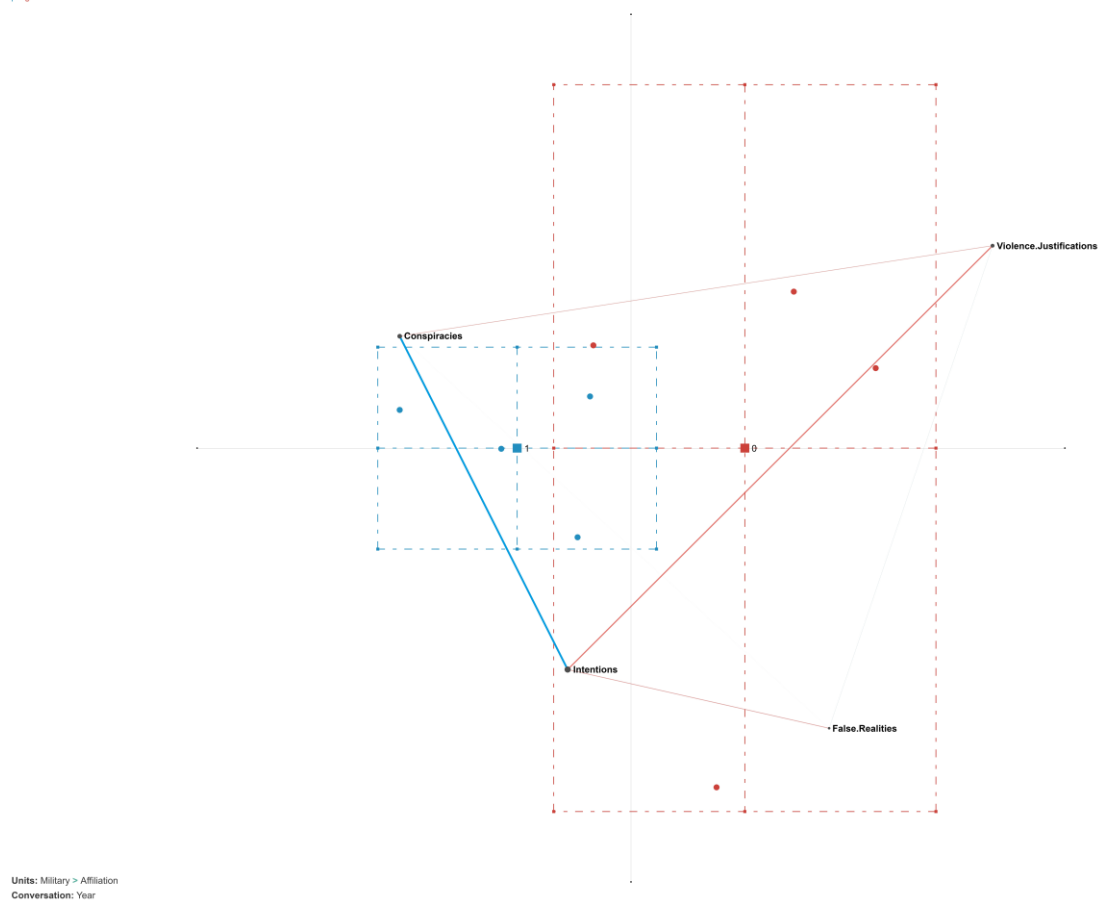
Note: Non-veteran members are in red, veteran members are in blue.

First, the military accounts we surveyed had a much tighter grouping between the four GR codes, implying less variation between the number of times each attitude manifested in social media posts. Second, while the strongest correlation for military extremist members was between *Conspiracies* and *Intentions*, non-military extremists favored a correlation between *Violence Justifications* and *Intentions*. The clear distinction between military and

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non-military extremists implies some causal link, which might have been FM 3-24 or the general military experience.
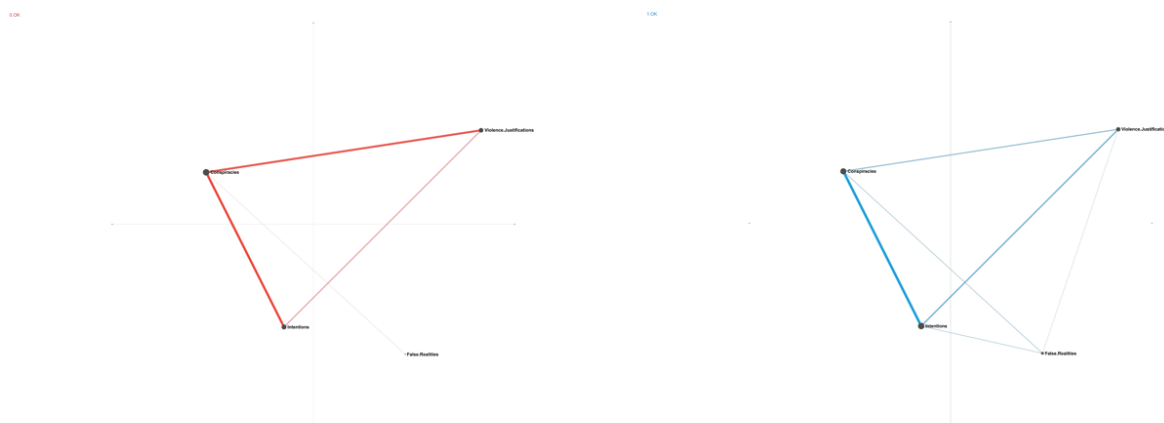
While Figure 1 alone implies the need for further study, we also examined each extremist group individually, once again splitting the groups between veterans and non-veterans.

Oath Keepers

Figure 2 demonstrates the veteran and non-veteran differences between Oath Keeper thought leaders. Both groups had limited interactions with *False Realities* and demonstrated strong correlations between *Conspiracies* and *Intentions*, implying that all Oath Keepers, regardless of their military affiliation, saw nationalism or the inherent need to seize political power as justified by perceived conspiracies against them. However, military veterans were far less likely to link *Conspiracies* with *Violence Justifications*. Oath Keeper veterans might believe in the same conspiracies as their non-veteran compatriots, but they are less likely to justify violence without clearly displaying intentions to seize power.

Figure 2

ENA for veterans versus non-veterans in Oath Keepers

Note: Non-veteran members are in red, veteran members are in blue.

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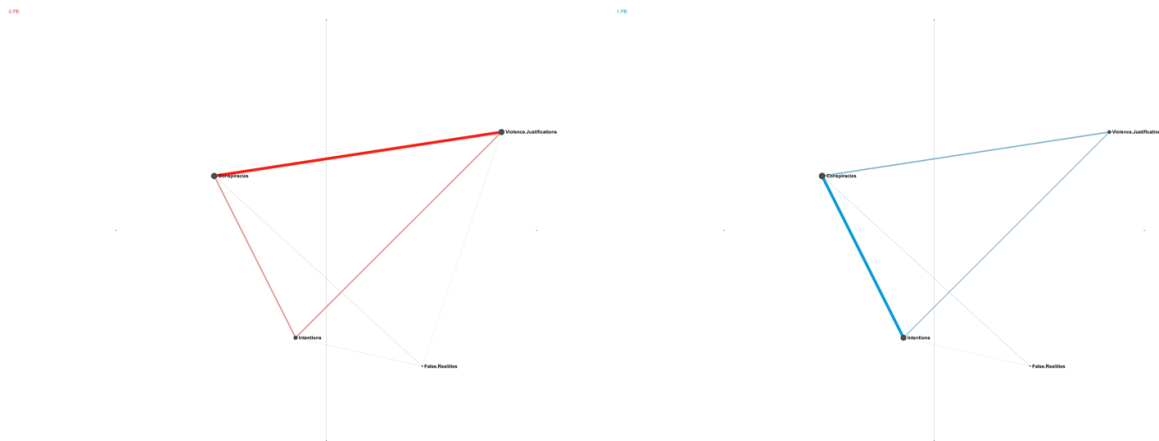
Oath Keepers Rhetoric Example (Stewart Rhodes)

"You can't hide in (indiscernible) in Texas because you'll be surrounded. You think Congress would let the free Texas survive? It's not happening. So don't give up the ground. Don't give up the entire rest of the continent to the commies, regardless of what you have of free Texas. You've got to fight for the whole country now. You know, the Chinese are implanting their puppet in the White House" (Rabinowitz, 2022).

Proud Boys

Similarly, within the Proud Boys, non-veteran affiliation was more strongly correlated with a willingness to accept violence, but military veterans were more likely to correlate *Conspiracies* with *Intentions* to control. Given the chauvinist nature of the Proud Boys (ADL, 2020), the data implies that something about military affiliation drives a need for power separate from the group's traditional philosophies.

Figure 3

ENA for veterans versus non-veterans in Proud Boys

Note: Non-veteran members are in red, veteran members are in blue.

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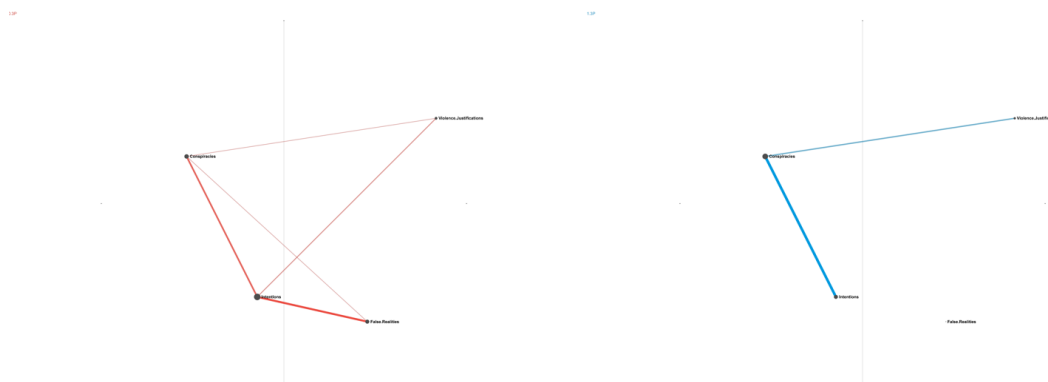
Proud Boys Rhetorical Example (Rebel Talk)

"And it's really that simple. And it, you know, the fact is that the matter is that the people that are still kind of this, the Luke Warm Patriots or the these. Want to be communists or the entity for themselves that constantly criticize us and bash us for, oh, they're coming to be violent in DC again. It's like man, really. Is it that easy for you to not find the different like differentiate between us and them? Is it really that like complicated or are you? Do you have some hidden agenda and you're just bashing? You know, that's what I've come to kind of terms with is that these people. That are constantly bashing us despite what we've sacrificed" (Usero et al., 2023)

Three Percenters

Unlike the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys, the Three Percenters displayed a strong inclination towards *False Realities*, but only amongst the non-veteran members. Non-veteran Three Percenters also saw *Violence Justifications* correlations with *Conspiracies* and *Intentions.* The strength of the *False Realities* code with non-veteran Three Percenters might derive from the fact that the group's moniker comes from a historical myth (Beutel & Johnson, 2021). What drives veteran Three Percenters towards a different emphasis is open to speculation.

Figure 4

ENA for veterans versus non-veterans in Three Percenters

Note: Non-veteran members are in red, veteran members are in blue.

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Three Percenter Rhetorical Example (Michael Vanderboegh)

"Let me tell you a home truth we know down in Alabama, and I say it to you and I say it to all the Bill Gates and Paul Allens and Michael Bloombergs of the world...when democracy turns to tyranny the armed citizenry still gets to vote. So be careful what you wish for, you may get it. And I am not joking when I say that you are now behind enemy lines" (Neiwert, 2014)

Domestic Extremists with No Declared Affiliation

Finally, Figure 5 displays domestic extremists who declared no affiliation with a specific group. Interestingly, for these thought leaders and their most visible posts, the differences between veteran and non-veteran members were less stark than for the identifiable extremist groups. However, non-veterans were considerably more inclined towards violence when wanting to exert political control.

Figure 5

ENA for veterans versus non-veterans, domestic extremist but no specific group

Note: Non-veteran members are in red, veteran members are in blue.

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Discussion

Our ENA study found strong correlations between the social media accounts studied and the four codes: False Realities, Intentions, Violence Justifications, and Conspiracies. With the inclusion of more Gettr and Twitter accounts, more evidence might strengthen the direct link between FM 3-24 and the rise in militant extremist groups in the United States. (Of note: the Gettr counts were noticeably more extreme than those on Twitter; this was irrelevant to this paper's focus, but for more information, please contact the authors).

Lacking focus groups or interviews with veteran domestic extremists, we can only point out a nonetheless alarming observation: whether by coincidence or not, the philosophies that encouraged an abortive coup in France—not to mention devastating total war efforts in Algeria—are strongly present in U.S. domestic extremist movements. Several contributing factors might explain this correlation, but FM 3-24, a popular doctrine legitimized by the U.S. military, cannot be discounted as a significant contagion.

Finally, this study implies that even if FM 3-24 or the general military experience leads to differences between veteran and non-veteran extremists, it is impossible to know whether the considerable veteran presence within extremist groups exists as a moderating or accelerant factor. Our introductory analysis implies that the (relative) veteran disinclination towards violence might actually moderate extremist group behavior. This finding reflects a recent study by RAND, which found that the "majority of veterans who expressed support for extremist groups did not endorse political violence" (Helmus et al., 2023). The same RAND study also found that Marines expressed the highest levels of extremist support among the branches, potentially mirroring Koehler's (2022) findings on the relative susceptibility of special forces to radicalization.

However, it is just as possible that veterans offer a source of legitimacy for extremists, much as GR did for the French or FM 3-24 did for the military in Iraq. The RAND Corporation (Helmus et al., 2023) found that, overall, veterans "did not manifest higher support (for extremist groups) than the general population," but this does not change the fact that so many extremist members are veterans (Haugstvedt & Koehler, 2023).

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Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, we find strong similarities between the philosophies underpinning GR and modern U.S. domestic extremism tenets. While the different extremist groups surveyed emphasized different aspects of GR, there was a clear distinction between veteran and non-veteran members of domestic extremist groups. The limited nature of this introductory paper makes it impossible to determine whether FM 3-24 contributed to or caused the distinction between veterans and non-veterans, but we find evidence that the field should consider the counterfactual in which the lack of FM 3-24 makes veteran recruitment to domestic extremism groups more difficult. Alternatively, perhaps veterans were already predisposed to extremist recruitment, and FM 3-24 and its relation to GR provided domestic extremist groups with more expansive philosophies via veteran perspectives they might not otherwise have had.

That both GR and recent U.S. domestic extremism contributed to abortive coup attempts—the former led by French military leaders and the latter, in part, by U.S. veterans—should underscore the need for continued research into the links between extremist recruitment and military service. This paper's findings also suggest that addressing the military/extremist problem requires more than anti-extremism training or similar programs. Military leaders and academic researchers continuing to do quality research (Breen & Harbaugh, 2023) should be cognizant of what Belew (2018) recently outlined regarding the relationship between Vietnam and white power movements: that "war cannot be contained in time and space."

Well-intentioned military leaders, like FM 3-24's authors, routinely look to history to provide context, rationale, and almost certainly a sense of hope for troops fighting a difficult war. However, this paper underscores the potential for a disastrous Catch-22, as providing troops with historical "lessons learned" in contemporary wars risks stabbed-in-the-back myths or sympathy for convoluted conspiracies. There is an inherent danger when an institution as credible as the U.S. military offers justifications for a conflict that might not be winnable, particularly when doctrine cites previous efforts that could introduce curious officers and enlisted personnel to conspiratorial worldviews apt to provide psychological crutches.

Political and military leaders must be very cognizant of the effects of a given war on its veterans. Doctrine and military decisions must be couched in recognizing how their actions might play into the hands of domestic extremists. The primary danger of FM 3-24 was that it presented itself as the "answer" to an inherently flawed conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan that required much more nuanced, strategic solutions. The secondary danger appears to be that it introduced future domestic extremists to a seemingly credible source for conspiratorial worldviews, false realities, the need for authoritarianism, and violence justifications.

This paper sought to expand upon the identified relationships between military and domestic extremism by attempting to connect the relatively disparate academic fields of extremism studies and military history. Further research is necessary to determine the extent to which FM 3-24 affected its readership and whether the correlations between GR and modern domestic extremism are coincidental or reflective of anti-government groups throughout the post-Cold War era.

Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE)

If the COIN efforts in Iraq and FM 3-24 inadvertently contaminated the minds of U.S. soldiers, how might we mitigate such an infection? While we discuss more specific countering methods below, the most significant and immediate P/CVE action necessary regarding doctrine's inadvertent effects on extremism must be an effort at bridging the gap between current military-to-extremist experts and military historians. There is no perfect solution for such a nuanced problem with numerous contributing factors of various effect sizes. However, we firmly believe that military historians can provide a new level of depth for researchers unfamiliar with doctrine and the relationships between military leaders and civilian theorists. Multiple theorists (see Glazzard et al., 2021; Haugstvedt & Koehler, 2023; Koehler, 2022) note that the field of P/CVE is relatively new and that much work is necessary before any consensus is possible. This essay proved the viability of a specific hypothesis regarding the relationship between military doctrine and extremism, and it seems likely that increased coordination between academic fields would provide for fascinating new concepts on the origins of extremism within the veteran community (thus enabling new P/CVE efforts).

Regarding specific efforts, we respect the alarm associated with the Pentagon's reported slow-walking of previously identified reforms meant to address the link between military service and extremism (Carless, 2023). However, there are two significant issues with placing the blame primarily on the Pentagon. First, as previously noted, while it is unfortunate that military oaths do not necessarily prevent extremism tendencies (keeping in mind this essay's research found data suggesting that veteran status *does*—at least—reduce the attractiveness of actual violence), RAND's data implies that the military is failing less at *preventing* extremism than it is *eliminating* extremist tendencies that are imbedded within the U.S. population (Helmus et al., 2023). In simpler terms, the Pentagon might be finding that it has limited tools to fix a nation-wide societal issue directly.

Second, in the context of the military's desperation to remain non-partisan, even the seemingly innocuous desire to eliminate white supremacism from military ranks brings accusations of "wokeness" and "anti-conservatism" (Jenks, 2022). Regardless of whether these accusations are merited, U.S. military culture generally abhors the idea of taking sides in the current polarized environment (Brooks, 2020; Cohen, 2002). Debates continue over whether such an apolitical attitude is still appropriate, but for P/CVE, relying on the Pentagon to solve these issues alone is wishing thinking, at best. This essay does offer specific advice for current and future military leaders in the last paragraphs of this essay, but recent academic efforts are also imperative to provide the semblance of a holistic P/CVE effort.

Regarding specific P/CVE actions in this area, Haugstvedt and Koehler's (2021) explorative efforts, which indicate that "far-right radicalized individuals with military backgrounds are more likely to suffer from trauma, a diminution of social standing, having difficulties in romantic relationships, and exclusion from participation in social groups or organizations, compared to far-right radicalized individuals without military backgrounds," offer intriguing lessons in the context of a highly polarized U.S. political climate prone to violence (Kalmoe & Mason, 2022). Focusing on adapting current P/CVE actions towards military members transitioning to civilian life (Haugstvedt & Koehler, 2023), likely in coordination with mandatory out-processing programs, might be an effective way to immediately apply current academic research and allow the Pentagon to dismiss criticisms that it is indoctrinating its current forces.

Given the echo-chambers observed in this essay (Choi et al., 2020) that enable extremist recruitment and indoctrination, Koehler's (2022) observation that the most direct manner to reduce extremist tendencies in secretive and elite military organizations is via boosting diversity also seems valid. However, it seems unlikely that the Pentagon would be able to easily pursue such efforts within raising significant controversy in a cultural-war prone environment.

Finally, given the oft-underestimated relative unpopularity of political violence within the nuances of U.S. polarization (Kalmoe & Mason, 2022) (while recognizing that even slight increases can be catastrophic), it might be appropriate to consider recent recommendations from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) that include a focus on well-meaning donors (Glazzard et al., 2021). The RUSI authors suggest that "donors should coordinate police reform and CT and P/CVE programs," an intriguing solution when any Pentagon-led efforts might raise suspicions and see limited funding. Private funding in coordination with mandatory out-processing programs could include allowing P/CVE researchers to monitor and scope deprogramming efforts, especially when addressing links between U.S. veterans and extremist recruitment requires specific research-based tactics (Glazzard et al., 2021).

Regarding how to best "decontaminate" U.S. veterans potentially influenced by FM 3-24 and currently participating in extremist organizations, our research, unfortunately, does not offer obvious solutions. Even if future research confirms the existence of a link between FM 3-24 and far-right extremism, fixing doctrine will do little to help veterans already down the extremist rabbit hole. While fixing the rampant problems associated with the Veterans Association (Korb & Toofan, 2021)—potentially with focused donor support (Glazzard et al., 2021)—might enable programs to conduct veteran outreach and deprogramming, it seems unlikely such efforts will have a large-scale effect. Given the relative sympathy for extremism in both veteran and non-veteran groups (Helmus et al., 2023; Kalmoe & Mason, 2022), structural political reforms designed to reduce polarization are likely necessary (Drutman, 2020) to significantly impair extremist recruitment efforts.

Returning to Pentagon-focused policy solutions, our research implies that preventing/countering radicalization in the military requires establishing a potentially revolutionary attitude toward conflict; otherwise, even the best-executed deprogramming

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would be reactive and inherently limited. We suggest that upon entering any conflict requiring new and innovative doctrine, civilian and military leaders be cognizant of the danger inherent to drawing upon historical "lessons learned" without a full accounting for the lessons that frustrated troops might learn from exploring given sources. Depth, width, and context are essential pillars of any historical investigation (Marston, 2006), and ignoring either aspect can cause negative results.

Training and resources offered during and after military service are a laudable initial effort, but the roots of domestic extremism among veterans go deeper than previously identified and require significant scholarship on how best to write doctrine amid difficult civilian-military wartime relationships. COIN was never a replacement for a viable strategy in Iraq, and academics should be alarmed that even after the struggles of Algeria, Vietnam, and Iraq, "small wars" theorists suggested COIN for use against U.S. citizens in Chicago (Bertetto, 2012).

Overall, strategy and the civilian-military relationship might seem an odd place to conclude this paper, but our findings add minutiae to the complexity of strategy that many (see Freedman, 2013; Marston, 2023; Strachan, 2019) have exhaustively researched. Leaving war to the generals (Cohen, 2002) is irresponsible not just for the strategic reasons identified by Clemenceau in WWI but also for the likelihood that domestic threats can emerge from foreign wars. At all costs, the apoplectic attitudes of men like Trinquier—"We would no longer be defended. Our national independence, the *civilization we hold dear*, our very freedom would probably perish"—must be proactively combated.

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