Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency

Christopher Paul, Ph.D., RAND
15 June 2011
NATO Operational Analysis Workshop
VMASC, Suffolk, Virginia
Project Background

• Two years of effort for the irregular warfare division of the Capabilities Assessment and Program Evaluation office in the Office of the Secretary of Defense
• Two reports (depicted) published in July of 2010
• Using case study methods (to include Sociologist Charles Ragin’s Qualitative Comparative Analysis technique) assessed roughly 20 distinct approaches to counterinsurgency (COIN).
We Completed Case Study Analyses for 30 Selected Cases

- The cases are all insurgencies worldwide begun and completed between 1978 and 2008 (the 30 most recent resolved insurgencies)
  - Based on a list developed by Fearon and Laitin (2003)
    - Insurgencies ended by 1999
    - Involved fighting between agents of (or claimants to) a state and organized, non-state groups who sought either to take control of a government, take power in a region, or use violence to change government policies
    - Minimum of at least 1000 people killed over its course, with a yearly average of at least 100
    - At least 100 people were killed on both sides (including civilians attacked by rebels)
  - List updated in an Appendix to a RAND report by Martin Libicki
    - Excluded cases which could be classified as coups, counter-coups, or insurrections
    - added 13 post-1999 insurgencies
The Cases

- Nicaragua (Somoza) (1978 - 1979)
- Kampuchea (1978 - 1992)
- El Salvador (1979 - 1992)
- Senegal (1982 - 2002)
- Peru (1981 - 1992)
- Nicaragua (Contras) (1981 - 1990)
- Turkey (PKK) (1984 - 1999)
- Sudan (SPLA) (1984 - 2004)
- Rwanda (1990 - 1994)
- Moldova (1990 - 1992)
- Sierra Leone (1991 - 2002)
- Tajikistan (1992 - 1997)
- Georgia/Abkhazia (1992 - 1994)
- Bosnia (1992 - 1995)
- Chechnya I (1994 - 1996)
- Afghanistan (Taliban) (1996 - 2001)
- Kosovo (1996 - 1999)
- Nepal (1997 - 2006)
The Cases

- Nicaragua (Somoza) (1978 - 1979)
- Kampuchea (1978 - 1992)
- El Salvador (1979 - 1992)
- Senegal (1982 - 2002)
- Peru (1981 - 1992)
- Nicaragua (Contras) (1981 - 1990)
- Turkey (PKK) (1984 - 1999)
- Sudan (SPLA) (1984 - 2004)
- Rwanda (1990 - 1994)
- Moldova (1990 - 1992)
- Sierra Leone (1991 - 2002)
- Tajikistan (1992 - 1997)
- Georgia/Abkhazia (1992 - 1994)
- Bosnia (1992 - 1995)
- Chechnya I (1994 - 1996)
- Afghanistan (Taliban) (1996 - 2001)
- Kosovo (1996 - 1999)
- Nepal (1997 - 2006)
For Each of Those 30 Cases, We Determined The Presence or Absence of ~90 Factors

- Factors chosen to represent 20 approaches to COIN
  - Include strategic communication principles as well as core principles from contemporary COIN thinking (FM 3-24, “boots on the ground”) and classic COIN perspectives (development, pacification, democracy)
- We also included a variety of contextual factors (economic stagnation, ethnic or religious tension, expropriable resources)
- All factors scored for the decisive or terminal phase of the conflict, not their presence/absence for the majority of the period of conflict
- All cases assigned an outcome
  - Where the outcome was mixed, the project team has assigned them to either “mixed favoring COIN” or “mixed favoring insurgents”
Case Data Also Broken into Phases

- During our initial efforts to develop case studies we noted cases consist of several distinct phases, as the COIN, the insurgents, or the exogenous situation created changes in multiple factors.
- We have created a row of data for each phase:
  - 2-5 phases per case for a total of 86 phases
  - Phases also assigned an outcome, best considered in light of the ultimate case outcome:
    • Phase loss for the COIN in a case they lost
    • Phase loss for the COIN in a case they ultimately won
    • Phase win for the COIN in a case they ultimately lost
      - A particularly interesting outcome
    • Phase win for the COIN on the way to a case win
- Most analyses still at case level
Case Data Also Broken into Phases (2)

• The phased data are more difficult to analyze than case-level data
  – Phases are not independent; that is, they are part of a sequence of phases and what happens in one phase depends on prior phases
  – Phase outcomes are curiosities, but are not fundamentally interesting – we are really only interested in case outcomes

• Case data do provide several important contributions
  – Helped us to identify which phase of the case was the decisive phase and what the value of the factors were in that phase, sometimes difficult to do when treating a case as a single row of data
  – Show that poor practices early in a case do not doom a COIN; reform and improvement can lead to good practices and victory
  – Show that while phases can be won with certain sets of practices, many of these marginal practices lead to phase wins on the way to case losses
Factor Assessment

- Each of the ~90 factors scored present or absent (1 or 0) for each phase of each case
- Factor assessment made by the individual case analyst
  - Involves a judgment call
  - Sometimes difficult to adjudicate
  - Each analyst worked between 6 and 12 cases, so had multiple examples upon which to draw
  - Undoubtedly some individual assessments a true expert in a given case would dispute, but general findings are so robust as to be invulnerable to a small number of individual assessment errors
- Research team met regularly to discuss problematic factors and cases
  - Ensured common standards/thresholds through discussion
    - Impossible to do true inter-coder reliability exercise due to volume of material for each case, but reviewed standards for each factor and discussed those any of us struggled with
  - Revised language of some factors to refine ability to discriminate
  - Abandoned some factors as impossible to discern in many cases due to low frequency of related evidence
What Does Research of This Kind Help Us Understand?

• An approach like this brings concrete and systematic historical evidence to bear on contemporary (and future) COIN questions and issues
  – Much of the debate over COIN strategies and practices is thinly evidenced
    • “Logical” arguments, assertions based on one or two cases, or general (but vague) historical sense predominate

• This approach also saves us from several reasoning traps
  – The trap of ongoing operations (what we are seeing now is what we will always see)
  – The trap of individual cases (what happened to so-and-so in 19XX is particularly illuminating…)
  – The trap of bad analogy (every U.S. COIN effort is Vietnam)
Top Seven Takeaways

1. Effective COIN practices tend to run in packs
2. The balance of effective vs. detrimental COIN practices explains the outcome of all 30 cases without recourse to narratives of exceptionality
3. Strategic communication related factors are among the positive practices in which successful counterinsurgent forces engage
4. Poor beginnings don’t necessary lead to poor ends
5. Factors drawn from FM 3-24 (the COIN field manual) are among the positive practices in which successful counterinsurgent forces engage
6. Repression wins phases, but usually not cases
7. Insurgent support (the ability of the insurgents to replenish and gain personnel, materiel, finance, intelligence, and sanctuary) appears to be a critical center of gravity
“Good” and “Bad” COIN Practices/Factors

Fifteen “Good” COIN Practices:
• COIN force realized at least two strategic communication factors
• COIN force reduced at least three tangible support factors
• Government realized at least two government legitimacy factors
• Government realized at least one democracy factor
• COIN force realized at least one intelligence factor
• COIN force of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerillas
• Government a competent state
• COIN force avoided excessive collateral damage, disproportionate use of force, or other illegitimate applications of force
• COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with population(s) in area of conflict
• Short term investments, Improvements in infrastructure/development, or property reform in area of conflict controlled or claimed by the COIN force
• Majority of population in areas of conflict supported/favored COIN forces
• COIN force established and then expanded secure areas
• COIN force had and used uncontested air dominance
• COIN force provided or ensured basic services in areas they controlled or claimed to control
• Perception of security created or maintained among populations in areas COIN force claimed to control

Twelve “Bad” COIN Practices:
• COIN force used both collective punishment and escalating repression
• Primary COIN force an external occupier
• COIN force or government actions contribute to substantial new grievances claimed by the insurgents
• Militias worked at cross-purposes to COIN force/government
• COIN force resettled/removed civilian populations for population control
• COIN force collateral damage perceived by population in area of conflict as worse than insurgents'
• In area of conflict, COIN force perceived as worse than insurgents
• COIN force failed to adapt to changes in adversary strategy, operations, or tactics
• COIN force engaged in more coercion/intimidation than insurgents
• Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated
• COIN force or allies relied on looting for sustainment
• COIN force and government had different goals/level of commitment
## Good COIN Practices Run in Packs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Good Factors (15)</th>
<th>Bad Factors (12)</th>
<th>Good/Bad Factors</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Afghanistan (post-Soviet)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Somalia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chechnya I</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rwanda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Zaire (anti-Mobutu)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Nicaragua (Somoza)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sudan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Kosovo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Afghanistan (anti-Soviet)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Burundi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Bosnia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Moldova</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Georgia/Abkhazia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Liberia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Afghanistan (Taliban)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Nagorno-Karabakh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Congo (anti-Kabila)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Tajikistan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Kampuchea</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Nepal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Nicaragua (Contras)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Croatia</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>Win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Turkey (PKK)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Uganda (ADF)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>Win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Algeria (GIA)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>Win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. El Salvador</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+10</td>
<td>Win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Peru</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+11</td>
<td>Win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Senegal</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+13</td>
<td>Win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Sierra Leone</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+13</td>
<td>Win</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beyond Discrete “Good” or “Bad” Factors/Factor Sets, We Also Test Distinct Approaches to COIN

- We test both classic and contemporary approaches COIN
  - Each approach represented by between 2 and 10 factors
  - Many of these approaches have factors in common with each other
    - Not invented in a vacuum, and good ideas are good ideas
    - Many of these approaches include one or more of the 15 good COIN practices/factors listed previously
- Each approach and its component factors is evaluated separately
- Assessment is at the bivariate level
  - The factors representing the approach and outcome alone
We Use Our Data to Assess 20 Approaches to COIN

• Classic COIN Approaches:
  – Development (Classic “Hearts and Minds”)
  – Pacification
  – Primacy of legitimacy
  – Magic of democracy
  – Resettlement
  – Classic cost-benefit
  – Border control
  – “Crush them”
  – Amnesty/rewards

• Contemporary COIN Approaches:
  – Strategic Communication
  – COIN FM
  – “Beat cop”
  – “Boots on the ground”
  – “Put a local face on it”
  – Cultural awareness
  – Tangible support
  – Criticality of intelligence
  – Flexibility & adaptability

• Insurgent Approaches:
  – Insurgent support strategies
  – Continuation & contestation
We Use Our Data to Assess 20 Approaches to COIN

• Classic COIN Approaches:
  – Development (Classic “Hearts and Minds”)
  – Pacification
  – Primacy of legitimacy
  – Magic of democracy
  – Resettlement
  – Classic cost-benefit
  – Border control
  – “Crush them”
  – Amnesty/rewards

• Contemporary COIN Approaches:
  – Strategic Communication
  – COIN FM
  – “Beat cop”
  – “Boots on the ground”
  – “Put a local face on it”
  – Cultural awareness
  – Tangible support
  – Criticality of intelligence
  – Flexibility & adaptability

• Insurgent Approaches:
  – Insurgent support strategies
  – Continuation & contestation
Which Approaches Give the Most Consistent Results? Ragin’s Crisp Set Qualitative Comparative Historical Analysis

• Sociologist Charles Ragin’s qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) approach allows us to identify patterns in the data that predict the outcome
  – Process begins with a “truth table” where the rows represent the configurations of selected factors that occur in the data
  – The application of Boolean algebra (completed by Ragin’s software) reduces the data in the truth table into prime implicants
  – “Prime implicants” are the minimally sufficient pattern of factors present necessary to fully explain the data

• We use (QCA) to try to discriminate between the 12 approaches that receive strong support in the bivariate analysis
Which Approaches Give the Most Consistent Results? Ragin’s Crisp Set Qualitative Comparative Historical Analyses (2)

• Applying Ragin’s software produced 16 equally plausible prime implicant pathways
  – Equally plausible in that they:
    • All fully explain the data
    • Have no strong theoretical reason to accept one over the other (save Occam’s razor)
  – None requires more than three factors
• Because so many of the factors from the COIN approaches that our evidence support occur together it is impossible to adjudicate between them
  – If A and B both occur in every win and never in a loss, which is more important, A or B?
  – QCA still worth doing, as it offers multivariate confirmation of our core finding
### Truth Table for 12 Approaches Receiving Strong Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>both development factors</th>
<th>1+ pacification factor</th>
<th>2+ government legitimacy factors</th>
<th>reduced cross-border insurgent support</th>
<th>2+ strategic communication factors</th>
<th>2+ &quot;beat cop&quot; factors</th>
<th>3+ tangible support factors</th>
<th>reduced intelligence factor</th>
<th>flexibility and adaptability</th>
<th>COIN win</th>
<th>number of cases for the row</th>
<th>sum of approaches in row</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# time realized in a WIN = 4 8 7 5 8 8 7 8 6 8 6 8
#time realized in a loss = 0 1 2 0 1 2 1 4 2 0 0 6
Resulting Prime Implicants From the Application of Boolean Algebra

One prime implicant
1 at least 3 tangible support factors reduced
2 at least 2 strategic communication factors * flow of insurgent support across border(s) decreased or absent
3 at least 2 strategic communication factors * flexibility and adaptability
4 at least 1 pacification factor * flexibility and adaptability
5 at least 1 pacification factor * flow of insurgent support across border(s) decreased or absent
6 at least 2 "beat cop" factors * flow of insurgent support across border(s) decreased or absent

Two prime implicants

7 at least 1 intelligence factor AND at least 2 strategic communication factors * at least 3 COIN FM factors
8 at least 1 intelligence factor AND at least 2 strategic communication factors * at least 2 government legitimacy factors
9 at least 1 intelligence factor AND at least 3 COIN FM factors * at least 1 pacification factor
10 at least 1 intelligence factor AND at least 3 COIN FM factors * at least 2 government legitimacy factors
11 at least 1 intelligence factor AND at least 1 pacification factor * at least 2 government legitimacy factors
12 at least 2 cost-benefit factors AND at least 2 strategic communication factors * at least 3 COIN FM factors
13 at least 2 cost-benefit factors AND at least 2 strategic communication factors * at least 2 government legitimacy factors
14 at least 2 cost-benefit factors AND at least 1 pacification factor * at least 2 government legitimacy factors
15 at least 2 cost-benefit factors AND at least 3 COIN FM factors * at least 1 pacification factor
16 at least 2 cost-benefit factors AND at least 3 COIN FM factors * at least 2 government legitimacy factors

* denotes multiplication. For example, prime implicant group 2 consists of “at least 2 strategic communication factors * flow of insurgent support across border(s) decreased or absent.” When multiplying binary variables, if either is absent the product goes to 0 (1*0=0, 0*1=0, and 0*0=0). Only when both factors are present is the resulting product a 1, indicating presence of the combination.
Questions? Comments? Discussion?

Full report available at:
http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG964/

RAND POC:
Christopher Paul, Ph.D.
cpaul@rand.org, 412-683-2300 x4609
Backup
Development (Classic “Hearts and Minds”)

Dating to the Vietnam era, “development” is a population-centric COIN approach that posits that development leads to increased capacity and will to resist insurgents among the people as well as increasing popular support for the COIN force and/or government.

Factors:

• Short term investments, Improvements in infrastructure/development, or property reform in area of conflict controlled or claimed by the COIN force
• In area of conflict, COIN force NOT perceived as worse than insurgents

4 of 8 wins satisfy both factors while no losses do; At the phase level, 18/19 winning phases in losing cases have neither factor
“Pacification” is an umbrella for a handful of population-centric COIN approaches that focus on the local level. They emphasize development and security, hand in hand, in initially small but then expanding locales. Factors:

- Perception of security created or maintained among populations in areas COIN force claimed to control
- Short term investments, Improvements in infrastructure/development, or property reform in area of conflict controlled or claimed by the COIN force
- COIN force established and then expanded secure areas

All 8 wins have 1 or more pacification factor while only 1 loss does
Primacy of Legitimacy

These approaches maintain that insurgency is fundamentally a contest of legitimacy. From the writings taking this position, we extract two sets of factors: government legitimacy (left), and legitimate use of force (right):

- Government corruption reduced/good governance increased since onset of conflict
- Government leaders selected in a manner considered just and fair by majority of population in the area of conflict
- Majority of citizens viewed Government as legitimate in the area of conflict
- Government provided better governance than insurgents in area of conflict
- COIN force provided or ensured basic services in areas they controlled or claimed to control

- COIN force avoided excessive collateral damage, disproportionate use of force, or other illegitimate applications of force
- COIN force collateral damage NOT perceived by population in area of conflict as worse than insurgents’
- In area of conflict, COIN force NOT perceived as worse than insurgents
- Perception of security created or maintained among populations in areas COIN force claimed to control
- COIN force NOT viewed as an occupying force in the area of conflict

7 COIN wins have at least two government legitimacy factors, while only 3 losses do; legitimacy of force contributes positively, but is not as strongly correlated
Magic of Democracy

Democracy and democratization are posited to resolve grievances through democratic expression; democracy is equated with legitimacy. Factors:

- Government a functional democracy
- Government a partial or transitional democracy
- Free and fair elections held
- Government respects human rights and allows free press

All 8 wins have at least 1 democracy factor while only 7 losses do so
Resettlement

British success in Malaya (1948-1960) is partially attributed to a population-centric COIN approach in which the insurgents were separated from the population through resettlement. In the British version, the relocated population was cared for and/or compensated; in our cases, no COIN force managed to do that part. Factors:

• COIN force resettled/removed civilian populations for population control
• In the abstract, should include a factor “Relocated populations substantially compensated and quality of life improved” – we had this factor in preliminary data but it never occurred

Relocations occur in the decisive phase of 9 cases, only 1 of which is a COIN win (Turkey)
A Cost-Benefit approach treats insurgency as a system and suggests that the COIN force disrupt the system, increasing the costs of insurgent inputs and processes, and minimizing the impact of their outputs. Factors:

- COIN force efforts resulted in increased costs for insurgent processes
- COIN forces effectively disrupted insurgent recruiting
- COIN forces effectively disrupted insurgent materiel acquisition
- COIN forces effectively disrupted insurgent intelligence
- COIN forces effectively disrupted insurgent finance
- COIN forces effectively disrupted insurgent command and control

All 8 wins have at least 2 cost-benefit factors while only 2 losses do.
Border Control

Border control is a supporting approach related to both cost-benefit and legitimacy. Assuming that insurgents are receiving support from or taking sanctuary in a neighboring country, depriving them of those is a step on the path to victory. Factors:

- Flow of insurgent support across border(s) significantly decreased in this phase or remained dramatically reduced or largely absent.

All 8 wins involved decreasing or absent cross border support flow while only 1 loss did.
“Crush them”

This position suggests that if diagnosed early, a nascent insurgency can be annihilated through the vigorous application of force and repression. Factors:

• COIN force employed escalating repression
• Collective punishment employed by COIN force

The presence of both “Crush them” factors predicts 17/19 phase wins on the way to a case loss; 2 case wins do include repression (Croatia and Turkey)
## Phase Outcome Data for Escalating Repression and Collective Punishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Loss2Loss</th>
<th>Loss2Win</th>
<th>Win2Loss</th>
<th>Win2Win</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 factors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 factor</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 factors</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Amnesty/Rewards

Less a whole approach than a pragmatic suggestion, this position advocates the inclusion of amnesty programs to prevent the need for a “fight to the finish” and rewards programs as an efficient way to generate actionable intelligence. In terms of causal ordering, our amnesty data are suspect: several cases involved amnesty as part of a settlement rather than as a factor leading to that settlement. Factors:

- Amnesty or reward program in place
- Amnesty program reduced number of insurgents

5 of 8 wins involved effective amnesty programs, no losses did; but, causal ordering prevents conclusive test of this approach.
Strategic communication as an approach to COIN is population-centric and legitimacy-based. The COIN influences the population through actions and messages synchronized across the force and seeks to minimize the “say-do” gap. Factors:

- COIN force and government actions consistent with messages (delivering on promises)
- COIN forces maintained credibility with populations in the area of conflict (includes expectation management)
- Messages/themes cohered with overall COIN approach
- COIN forces avoid creating unattainable expectations
- Themes and messages coordinated for all government agencies in or impacting theater
- Earnest IO/PSYOP/SC/messaging effort
- Unity of effort/unity of command maintained

8 of 8 wins have at least 2 of 7 strategic communication factors while only 2 of 22 losses do
Field Manual 3-24 contains a population-centric approach to COIN with an emphasis on security, development, positive relations, and legitimacy. It is a hybrid built by combining traditional COIN approaches and new insights. Factors:

- Perception of security created or maintained among populations in areas COIN force claimed to control
- Government corruption reduced/good governance increased since onset of conflict
- Insurgents' claimed grievances substantially addressed since onset of conflict
- COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with population(s) in area of conflict
- COIN force provided or ensured basic services in areas they controlled or claimed to control
- Short term investments, Improvements in infrastructure/development, or property reform in AOC controlled or claimed by COIN force
- COIN forces received substantial intel from any population in AOC
- Majority of population in AOC supported/favored COIN forces
- COIN force avoided culturally offensive behaviors and messages

7 of 8 wins have at least 3 of 9 COIN FM factors while only 1 loss does.
“Beat Cop”

The “Beat Cop” approach is a corollary to pacification making explicit recommendations regarding the employment of security forces in areas pacified. Factors:

- Perception of security created or maintained among populations in areas COIN force claimed to control
- COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas they controlled or claimed to control
- Militias did not work at cross-purposes to COIN/government
- COIN forces received substantial intel from any population in areas of conflict
- In area of conflict, COIN force NOT perceived as worse than insurgents
- COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with population(s) in area of conflict

All 8 wins have 2 or more “Beat Cop” factors; 4 losses do too
“Boots on the Ground”

There are several proponents of minimum force ratios and presence of COIN forces in order to reassure the population and provide effective security. The logic behind these prescriptions is both population and legitimacy based. Factors:

• Perception of security created or maintained among populations in areas COIN force claimed to control
• COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas they controlled or claimed to control
• COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with population(s) in area of conflict
• NO parts of the area of conflict were no-go or otherwise denied to the COIN force

6 of 8 wins had at least 2 “Boots” factors while only 2 losses did
“Put a local face on it”

Practical advice from contemporary operations suggest that the pacification and development efforts of an external COIN force will meet with greater success if they “put a local face on it.” This implies a population-centric view that is mindful of cultural differences and threats to legitimacy explicit in a non-indigenous COIN force. Factors:

- COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas they controlled or claimed to control
- COIN force did NOT employ culturally inappropriate outsiders for significant fraction of operations
- Indigenous forces conducted majority of COIN operations
- Militias did NOT work at cross-purposes to COIN/government

We do not get to test this approach as all 3 external occupier cases do not attempt to “put a local face on it” (no variation)
Cultural Awareness

Offered as necessary but not sufficient and applicable only where the COIN force is not culturally homogenous with the population, this approach posits that cultural insensitivity can undermine otherwise good COIN practices. Factors:

- COIN force did NOT employ culturally inappropriate outsiders for significant fraction of operations
- COIN force avoided culturally offensive behaviors and messages
- COIN or government actions did not contribute to substantial new grievances claimed by the insurgents

29 of 30 cases had at least one of these factors; vast majority of cases (27) conducted by indigenous COIN where cultural difference should not be a factor
Tangible Support Reduced

Potentially allied to population-centered approaches, this position, much like classic cost-benefit, suggests that the support the insurgents receive, wherever they get it from, is the real center of gravity. Factors:

• Flow of insurgent support across border(s) significantly decreased in this phase or remained dramatically reduced or largely absent
• Important external support to insurgents significantly reduced
• Important internal support to insurgents significantly reduced
• Insurgents ability to replenish resources significantly diminished
• Insurgents unable to maintain or grow force size

• COIN force efforts resulted in increased costs for insurgent processes
• COIN forces effectively disrupted insurgent recruiting
• COIN forces effectively disrupted insurgent materiel acquisition
• COIN forces effectively disrupted insurgent intelligence
• COIN forces effectively disrupted insurgent finance

Having at least 3 of these 10 factors perfectly predicts case outcomes (8 wins/22 loses)
Where Popular and Tangible Support Diverge, Victory Follows Tangible Support

• In 25 of 30 cases, tangible support covaried with popular support (insurgents who had popular support maintained their tangible support, and vice versa)
• The 3 cases where the COIN force had popular support without effectively reducing the insurgents’ tangible support resulted in a COIN loss
• The 2 cases where COIN reduced the insurgents’ tangible support without winning popular support, the COIN force still won
• This suggests the addition of important nuance to received wisdom that “the population is the center of gravity”
  – Tangible support appears to be the center of gravity
  – It usually (but not always) stems from/connects to popular support
Many COIN proponents posit the importance of actionable intelligence to success in COIN. This is an insurgent focused position related to cost-benefit approaches. Factors:

- Intelligence adequate to support kill/capture or engagements on COIN forces' terms
- Intelligence adequate to allow COIN forces to disrupt insurgent processes or operations

6 of 8 wins have at least 1 of these intelligence factors while 0 losses do
Flexibility & Adaptability

While not a complete approach, this position posits the imperative for COIN forces to learn and adapt in the face of adaptive adversary. Factors:

- COIN force did NOT fail to adapt to changes in adversary strategy, operations, or tactics

16 of 22 losses featured a COIN force failing to adapt, while 0 wins did; all phases where a COIN failed to adapt were phase losses.
Insurgent Support Strategies

Recognizing that insurgencies have (at least) two sides, approaches for the insurgents suggests they will fare better through a variety of preferred practices. Factors:

• Insurgents demonstrated potency through attacks
• Insurgents discredit/delegitimize COIN/government

• Insurgents provided or ensured basic services in areas they controlled or claimed

These factors appear with high frequency in both wins and losses
Continuation & Contestation

This is the notion that insurgents win by not losing. If the insurgent force continues to exist and perpetuate the conflict, it will eventually prevail or at least secure a favorable settlement. Factors:

- Insurgents maintain or grow force size
- Insurgents discredit/delegitimize COIN/government
- Insurgents ability to replenish resources NOT significantly diminished
- Insurgents avoided critical strategic errors or failure to make obvious adaptations or voluntary exit from conflict

18 cases have all four of these factors, and all 18 are COIN losses; if insurgents can hang on, they do appear to win eventually
## Truth Table for 12 Approaches Receiving Strong Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>both development factors</th>
<th>1+ pacification factor</th>
<th>2+ government legitimacy factors</th>
<th>reduced cross-border insurgency support</th>
<th>3+ strategic communication factors</th>
<th>2+ &quot;beat cop&quot; factors</th>
<th>2+ &quot;boots on the ground&quot; factors</th>
<th>1+ intelligence factor</th>
<th>COIN win</th>
<th>number of cases for the row</th>
<th>sum of approaches in row</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Notes
- 4 8 7 5 8 8 7 8 6 8 6 8 = # time realized in a WIN
- 0 1 2 0 1 2 1 4 2 0 0 6 = # time realized in a loss
Resulting Prime Implicants From the Application of Boolean Algebra

One prime implicant
1 at least 3 tangible support factors reduced
2 at least 2 strategic communication factors * flow of insurgent support across border(s) decreased or absent
3 at least 2 strategic communication factors * flexibility and adaptability
4 at least 1 pacification factor * flexibility and adaptability
5 at least 1 pacification factor * flow of insurgent support across border(s) decreased or absent
6 at least 2 "beat cop" factors * flow of insurgent support across border(s) decreased or absent

Two prime implicants
7 at least 1 intelligence factor AND at least 2 strategic communication factors * at least 3 COIN FM factors
8 at least 1 intelligence factor AND at least 2 strategic communication factors * at least 2 government legitimacy factors
9 at least 1 intelligence factor AND at least 3 COIN FM factors * at least 1 pacification factor
10 at least 1 intelligence factor AND at least 3 COIN FM factors * at least 2 government legitimacy factors
11 at least 1 intelligence factor AND at least 1 pacification factor * at least 2 government legitimacy factors
12 at least 2 cost-benefit factors AND at least 2 strategic communication factors * at least 3 COIN FM factors
13 at least 2 cost-benefit factors AND at least 2 strategic communication factors * at least 2 government legitimacy factors
14 at least 2 cost-benefit factors AND at least 1 pacification factor * at least 2 government legitimacy factors
15 at least 2 cost-benefit factors AND at least 3 COIN FM factors * at least 1 pacification factor
16 at least 2 cost-benefit factors AND at least 3 COIN FM factors * at least 2 government legitimacy factors

* denotes multiplication. For example, prime implicant group 2 consists of “at least 2 strategic communication factors * flow of insurgent support across border(s) decreased or absent.” When multiplying binary variables, if either is absent the product goes to 0 (1*0=0, 0*1=0, and 0*0=0). Only when both factors are present is the resulting product a 1, indicating presence of the combination.
COIN Approach Prime Implicant Flowcharts (1)

1. at least 3 tangible support factors reduced

   Decisive phase of an insurgency → At least 3 tangible support reduction factors present?
   - Yes → COIN win
     - 8 cases
   - No → COIN loss
     - 22 cases

3. at least 2 strategic communication factors + flexibility and adaptability

   Decisive phase of an insurgency → At least 2 strategic communication factors?
   - Yes
     - 10 cases
     - 2 cases
   - No
     - 20 cases
     - 22 cases

   COIN force retained flexibility and adaptability?
   - Yes → COIN win
     - 8 cases
   - No

**COIN Approach Prime Implicant Flowcharts (2)**

5. **Decisive phase of an insurgency**
   - **At least 1 pacification factor?**
     - Yes: Flow of insurgent support across border(s) decreased or absent?
       - Yes: COIN win (8 cases)
       - No: COIN loss (9 cases)
     - No: COIN loss (21 cases)

9. **At least 1 intelligence factor AND at least 3 COIN FM factors**
   - **At least 1 pacification factor?**
     - Yes: COIN win (6 cases)
     - No: COIN loss (21 cases)
   - **At least 2 government legitimacy factors?**
     - Yes: COIN win (2 cases)
     - No: COIN loss (1 case)

10. **At least 1 intelligence factor AND at least 3 COIN FM factors**
    - **At least 2 government legitimacy factors?**
      - Yes: COIN win (2 cases)
      - No: COIN loss (1 case)

So, What? Implications from Takeaways

1. Effective COIN practices tend to run in packs
   • Commanders who have emphasized the importance of many mutually supporting lines of operation have the right idea. U.S. COIN forces must be prepared to engage in multiple effective COIN practices simultaneously if they are going to prevail. At the same time, they must avoid as many detrimental practices as possible.

2. While many cases considered individually seem to require a narrative of exceptionality (an explanation of the outcome that relies on distinctive or unique characteristics of the case), the balance of effective vs. detrimental COIN practices explains the outcome of all 30 cases without recourse to these exceptions
   • Without exception. Remember that the next time you hear “but every COIN is unique” or if you think you can go half-measures on 1, above.

3. Strategic communication related factors are among the positive practices in which successful counterinsurgent forces engage
   • If you want a force capable of winning a COIN, establish and maintain the practices, structures and resources necessary for effective strategic communication.
So, What? Implications from Takeaways (2)

4. Poor beginnings don’t necessary lead to poor ends
   • While it would be ideal to be on the right track from the start, just because things have gone poorly in a COIN doesn’t mean you have to throw in the towel. Maximize the balance of positive vs. detrimental factors if you are serious about victory.

5. Factors drawn from FM 3-24 (the COIN field manual) are among the positive practices in which successful counterinsurgent forces engage
   • Reject criticism of population-centric COIN. Develop and maintain a force capable of executing this doctrine, and adopt strategies that combine it with other effective COIN practices (see point 1, previous slide).

6. Repression wins phases, but usually not cases
   • Don’t draw the wrong lessons from Sri Lanka’s apparent victory over the LTTE.

7. Insurgent support (the ability of the insurgents to replenish and gain personnel, materiel, finance, intelligence, and sanctuary) does appear to be a critical center of gravity
   • Population-centric COIN requires a critical caveat: make sure the adversary is actually dependant on the population for support.
Opportunities for Further Research in COIN or Strategic Communication

• COIN case-based analysis could be expanded
  – Additional cases would increase confidence in results, perhaps increase variation for additional nuance
  – Current 30 case/86 phase data very rich; additional analyses possible
    • Estimates of cost of realizing various successful factors
• New COIN case studies selecting cases where the primary COIN force was non-indigenous (which the U.S. as a COIN force will always be)
• “What Determines the Duration of an Insurgency?”
  – Our research identifies phases and analyzes outcome, but does not predict determinants of duration; further research could
• Research on recurrence and post-insurgency transitions
  – Several of our cases occur in the same country (Afghanistan three times, Nicaragua twice, DRC twice); why? And more importantly, how do you avoid that?
Opportunities for Further Research in COIN or Strategic Communication (2)

• “Assessing Influence: Measurement and Evaluation for Soft Power”
  – An assessment/MOE study for strategic communication
• An analysis of alternatives for strategic communication
• Soup to nuts review of SC at one COCOM
  – Based on the 5 area decomposition proposed by the PI, review all SC activities, top to bottom, within a COCOM’s AOR
• Understanding culturally contextual legitimacy in the Islamic world
• “Combining Cylinders of Excellence”
  – A review of training and curricula in PA, PSYOP, IO, CMO, etc. with the intent to be explicit about what must change to prevent traditional stovepipes from preventing synthesis for effective soft power
• Technology and organization for rapid media response, including counter-propaganda
• Responsive BDA
  – The Taliban continues to falsify and exaggerate civilian casualties from coalition airstrikes. What would it take to have “nimble” publicly releasable BDA?