BUILDING THE GOLDEN BRIDGE: DOES MILITARY PRESSURE OR INCENTIVES BEST EXPLAIN INCREASED SUCCESS IN COUNTERINSURGENCY AMNESTY PROGRAMS?

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By

Travis Kaiser Weinger, B.A.

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This paper investigates the dynamics behind counterinsurgency amnesty programs and instances of mass insurgent defections. Using the two most prominent Western counterinsurgency theories – coercion theory and hearts and minds theory – as a foundation, the study seeks to determine whether military pressure or incentives offered better correlates with dramatic increases in insurgent defections. Using historical data from the Dhofar Rebellion in Oman, the Malayan Emergency, and the Vietnam War, the paper explores the relationship between insurgent defections and military pressure and incentives offered through amnesty programs. The study finds that in eight of the nine periods of mass defection under investigation, military pressure is a much better correlate than amnesty program incentives. Upon further analysis, novelty emerges as the key factor in explaining why some instances of military pressure encourage mass defections and others do not.
This thesis is dedicated to everyone whose patience, support, and advice helped me throughout this project.

Many thanks,
TRAVIS K. WEINGER
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THE GOLDEN BRIDGE IN HISTORY AND TODAY

Nearly two thousand years ago, the Roman author Vegetius noted that “when men find they must inevitably perish, they willingly resolve to die with their comrades… The maxim of Scipio, that a golden bridge should be made for a flying enemy, has much been commended.”¹ This ancient advice is relevant for counterinsurgency warfare today – it is more difficult and more costly to kill insurgents than to allow them to stop fighting. One major tool counterinsurgents use to encourage insurgents to lay down their arms in the midst of a conflict is an amnesty program.

The utility of amnesty programs in weakening insurgent groups by encouraging surrenders and defections has long been recognized, as evidenced by the widespread and accelerating implementation of such programs by counterinsurgents throughout the 20th and into the 21st century. A RAND study published in 2010 on how insurgencies end found that counterinsurgents had offered amnesties in 31 of the 89 insurgencies under consideration and in 12 of the 16 insurgencies being fought today.² Defections not only remove insurgents from the battlefield, they also provide counterinsurgents with a pool of potential collaborators and allies who can assist in a myriad of ways. An observer of the Malayan Emergency called defected insurgents “the most potent propaganda weapon,” and military units made up of former insurgents like the Dhofari

“firqats” and Vietnamese “Kit Carson Scouts” have distinguished themselves in combat against their former comrades-in-arms.³

Today, American military doctrine and civilian officials both highlight the importance of having amnesty programs in place during counterinsurgency and stability operations. Joint Publication 3-24: Counterinsurgency Operations states that “Counterinsurgents must leave a way out for insurgents who have lost the desire to continue the struggle… amnesty and reintegration programs provide the insurgents this venue,” and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has remarked in public statements that such programs will play a key role in changing the momentum in Afghanistan.⁴ With amnesty programs receiving high-level attention among American civilian and military policymakers and playing a role in three-quarters of today’s ongoing counterinsurgency campaigns, understanding the dynamics of amnesty programs is more relevant than ever.

Despite the ongoing relevance of amnesty programs in counterinsurgencies, the existing literature on insurgencies and sub-state conflicts is largely silent on the topic. There is extensive research on the causes of civil war onset, termination, and duration.

Post-conflict peace maintenance using disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and amnesty, reconciliation, and reintegration (AR2) programs has occurred more than 60 times since the early 1990s and has also attracted extensive academic and policy attention. Despite the relevance of amnesty programs to contemporary counterinsurgency policy and theory, there is no similarly well-developed body of literature studying amnesty programs and the conditions that engender their success or failure.

This study is an attempt to begin developing an understanding of the broad dynamics behind why, over the course of a conflict, amnesty programs are much more successful at attracting defectors at some times than at others. What encourages the mass defections of insurgents at different points over the course of a campaign? To that end, this paper examines three case studies of counterinsurgency amnesty programs, in the context of military pressure and incentives offered, to discern which set of factors correlates best with dramatic increases in the number of insurgent defectors.

Exploring the driving factors behind increased insurgent defections is a vital task today as the United States and its allies in Afghanistan continue their counterinsurgency campaign. The Taliban appear increasingly confident that they will outlast the American-led coalition, a belief reportedly shared by Afghanistan’s

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President, Hamid Karzai. General David Petraeus, tasked with reversing the Taliban’s apparent momentum, has highlighted amnesty and reintegration efforts as critical: “This is the way you end insurgencies… We’re on the cusp of beginning, of supporting, the Afghan beginning of integration.” Afghanistan’s current amnesty program for low-level insurgents, the Peace and Reconciliation Commission, is “almost dead” due to a lack of funding. General Petraeus’ comments imply a renewed emphasis on amnesty as a counterinsurgency tool and perhaps suggest that a reinvigorated amnesty program is soon to be launched.

General Petraeus’ comment that the United States is only about to start supporting the beginning of Afghan integration implies a long road ahead for any prospective Afghanistan amnesty program. Exploring what has led to dramatic successes in past amnesty programs can inform the development of a more effective program in Afghanistan, as well as in other conflicts in the future. In a more theoretical sense, exploring the dynamics behind dramatic success in counterinsurgency amnesty programs can help inform the debate between the two major schools of Western counterinsurgency theory.

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COERCION THEORY AND HEARTS AND MINDS THEORY: THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR EXPLAINING DRAMATIC SUCCESS IN COUNTERINSURGENCY AMNESTY PROGRAMS

The two main schools of Western counterinsurgency theory are the cost/benefit, or “coercion” theory, and the preferences, or “hearts and minds” theory.\(^9\) Coercion theory holds that success in counterinsurgency warfare depends on whether the insurgent or the counterinsurgent more effectively uses coercive force to gain the compliance of a population. According to this theory, insurgents are rational actors that can be defeated by harming them and/or their supporting population beyond their accepted “cost-tolerance level.” On the other hand, hearts and minds theory holds that success in counterinsurgency warfare depends on gaining the support of the population by providing security and economic and political development. Insurgents are driven by grievance and defeated by depriving them of popular support.\(^10\) Scholarly literature from the related civil war onset/duration/termination and DDR/AR2 fields mirrors this split, holding that either applying harm or providing incentives can significantly impact insurgent behavior. These different schools of counterinsurgency thought have very divergent theoretical implications regarding amnesty programs and differ regarding what will most effectively encourage dramatic increases in insurgent defections during a conflict.

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\(^9\) Throughout this study, the first school of thought will be referred to as coercion theory and the second as hearts and minds theory.

The theory that force is the best way to encourage insurgent defections is supported throughout the counterinsurgency, civil war, and DDR/AR2 literature. Cristina de Posada’s micro-quantitative analysis of reasons for demobilization among illegal armed groups in Colombia determined insurgents’ concern for their safety and the safety of their families was a main driver behind their decision to demobilize.\(^{11}\)

Navin A. Bapat’s research into the timing of negotiations during insurgencies finds that combatants’ beliefs about the balance of power play a key role in their decisions to negotiate.\(^{12}\) While Bapat’s research views insurgencies as unitary actors, it can be inferred that similar dynamics would exist on an individual level, with an insurgent’s belief about the balance of power impacting his or her decision to accept a settlement with counterinsurgents. The impact of the military balance on individual decision-making is further explored by Robert Moranto and Paula Tuchman, who examine peasant incentive structures during the Vietnam War:

> Decisions about whom to support depended less on ideology than on the package of goods offered by each side. The package mattered less than physical security. All these components were in turn decisively shaped by the perception of which side seemed to be winning.\(^{13}\)

Interestingly, David Galula, the intellectual founder of modern hearts and minds theory, states that offering amnesty should occur in the last step of suppressing insurgents,

\(^{11}\) Cristina Villegas de Posada, ‘Motives for the Enlistment and Demobilization of Illegal Armed Combatants in Colombia’, *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 15/3 (July 2009) 276.


because at that point the counterinsurgent’s relative military strength will make amnesty more appealing than at other points earlier in the conflict.¹⁴

The application of rational choice models to questions of amnesty in counterinsurgencies supports the primacy of military pressure in determining insurgent defections. In their research on how civil wars end, T. David Mason and Patrick J. Fett carry out a quantitative study that suggests political, economic, and social payoff variables have no effect on the likelihood of a settlement. On the other hand, factors that lowered the probability of victory for one side and increased the costs that side absorbed – factors like military pressure – made settling more attractive to participants.¹⁵ In another article, Mason creates a rational choice model of non-elite political behavior during insurgency. The model suggests that “nonelite behavior may be more determined by the calculus of fear than by the pursuit of selective objectives.”¹⁶ Charles Wolf and Nathan Leites, early proponents of coercion theory, note the importance and efficacy of encouraging defections. Their analysis, resting on rational choice assumptions, holds that the most effective way to modify behavior in insurceries is to apply coercive techniques that increase costs beyond the target’s tolerance level.¹⁷

This diverse view of coercion theory is intellectually interconnected in its explanations for behavior in insurgency. The military balance of power, fear for one’s safety, and the avoidance of pain are deemed to be the central determinants of behavior. This theory insists that military pressure is the counterinsurgent’s most effective method for positively influencing these determinants in its favor, and is therefore the key factor in influencing insurgents to defect.

On the other hand, the idea that incentives are the best way to encourage insurgent defections by shifting their preferences towards accepting the government is supported throughout the hearts and minds theory literature. The importance of insurgent and population preference is a common theme in the writings of insurgency and counterinsurgency practitioners Mao Tse-tung, Sir Robert Thomson, David Galula, and others. The notion of winning support by providing incentives is supported in academic works as well. Matthew Preston’s study of the civil war in Rhodesia between 1972 and 1980 found that political and economic self-interest of both the Rhodesians and the rebels was the central cause of the successful negotiations that ended the conflict. His study also critiques coercion theory by highlighting the difficulty combatants face in accurately determining the balance of power during an insurgency and claims this ambiguity renders questions of military balance useless in explaining

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insurgency termination. In their study of rebel-military integration as a peace-building strategy, Katherine Glassmeyer and Nicholas Sambanis determine that ex-insurgents seek integration into a government’s military apparatus because of the economic opportunities integration offers, rather than any security guarantees it provides. Mauricio Florez-Morris, in his micro-sociological study of factors that influence insurgents to stay within their organizations, finds that economic dependence on the group was a primary factor that influenced an insurgent’s decision to stay within the movement. These studies support the idea that providing political or economic incentives is central to crafting effective amnesty programs. General Petraeus has placed this theory at the center of his stated plan for promoting local reintegration in Afghanistan, emphasizing in his Counterinsurgency Guidance that addressing local grievances will encourage reconciliation.

The economic literature on insurgencies also supports the theory that incentives are most effective method to encourage insurgent defections. Herschell Grossman develops a theory of insurgency that treats it and its suppression as activities that compete with economic production for resources. This theory develops the concept of insurgency as greed, as peasants will choose to participate in an insurgency even though

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it lowers their total current income due to the fact that winning will lead to a higher expected income.\textsuperscript{23} By this logic, offering incentives that provide high enough income to insurgents will impact their decision about whether to continue to participate in a rebellion. Paul Collier develops a similar model of insurgency as “loot-seeking rebellion,” where the goal is not to defeat the government but instead to collect rents from controlled territories. Collier, along with Anke Hoeffler and Måns Söderbom, expand on the policy implications of this model, running a quantitative study that suggests employing “equitable economic development as a way of reducing the duration of a conflict.”\textsuperscript{24} Patrick Regan and Daniel Norton’s research on mobilization in civil wars finds that greed becomes an increasingly important motivator as the costs of rebellion increase. They suggest that rational individuals will seek to defect from insurgencies unless rebel leaders can provide enough selective benefits to their troops.\textsuperscript{25} Consequently, counterinsurgents could encourage defections by providing benefits to insurgents that rebel leaders cannot match, leading insurgents to switch their preference from rebellion against the government to loyalty towards it.

These works, though hailing from a myriad of academic fields, offer a similar explanation for the dynamics of insurgency. Hearts and minds theory views the seeking of income, opportunities, or political advantage as the central determinant of behavior in

insurgency. Providing economic, legal, and political incentives targeted at the foundational motivations of the insurgency, therefore, can be an effective method for encouraging the defection of insurgents individually according to this theory.

The available literature on coercion theory and hearts and minds theory develops counterinsurgency strategies based, at least in part, on each school’s understanding of what insurgents want. The reasons individuals have for joining an insurgency and the methods used by counterinsurgents to combat them are pregnant with implications for counterinsurgency amnesty programs. These implications, however, are yet to be explicitly assessed and investigated.

**CONTRIBUTION TO THE EXISTING LITERATURE**

Coercion theory and hearts and minds theory form the framework for the debate regarding counterinsurgency amnesty programs, a debate made explicit in a September 2010 article in *The New York Times* regarding the failure of the current program in Afghanistan:

> It is not clear whether [the lack of Taliban fighters defecting] is because of the lack of a program that would provide them with jobs, security guarantees and other incentives, or because most Taliban no longer see the insurgency as a losing proposition.\(^{26}\)

There is no systemic examination in the available literature of the relevance of the differing theories on how insurgent motivations impact the actual effectiveness of counterinsurgency amnesty programs that might help answer, or at least inform, this debate.

The most well-developed attempt at a theoretical examination of counterinsurgency amnesties of which this author is aware of is Major Patrick Williams’ overview of three case studies of AR2 in Peru, Algeria, and Iraq. The monograph is largely descriptive, however, and provides few insights into the “amnesty” part of the AR2 process in each study.\textsuperscript{27} De Posada, who was previously cited, states that her study is the only one she is aware of regarding motivations for demobilization by personal initiative.\textsuperscript{28} Since counterinsurgency amnesty programs operate as venues for demobilization by personal initiative during a conflict as opposed to after, there is a conspicuously large gap in the literature.

This study aims to begin filling this gap by explicitly focusing on whether military pressure or incentives best correlates with dramatic increases in the number of insurgent defectors who enter an amnesty program. Through a detailed and qualitative analysis of the amnesties offered during the case studies and the events surrounding instances of dramatic increases in defecting insurgents, we can begin to understand the dynamics of mass defections in counterinsurgency campaigns.

\textbf{Terms, Methodology, and Data}

This paper will qualitatively investigate whether military pressure or incentives correlate better with dramatic increases in insurgent defections. Key terms will be defined broadly in order to be applicable across case studies. \textit{Military pressure} is

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{28} Cristina Villegas de Posada, ‘Motives for the Enlistment and Demobilization of Illegal Armed Combatants in Colombia’, 277.
\end{footnotesize}
defined as major battlefield developments that improve the military situation of the counterinsurgent vis-à-vis the insurgency, which can include the initiation or ending of major operations, critical battles, or the implementation of other military or counterinsurgency tactics. Determining what events constitute military pressure will be determined by their historical context and accepted importance within the counterinsurgency campaign, necessarily subjective criteria based on the mainstream scholarship on the conflict. *Incentives* are defined as the political, legal, and economic rewards and guarantees that counterinsurgents publicize as benefits for defecting into an amnesty program. *Dramatic increases* will be defined as the top three greatest numerical increases in insurgent defections from one month or year to the next in the available data for each case study.

This study will be based on three case studies of Western-backed counterinsurgency campaigns that included amnesty programs. Western-backed counterinsurgency campaigns are being specifically considered in order to build the literature on counterinsurgency amnesty programs with like cases and to strengthen the policy relevance of any insights derived. The three cases examined will be the British counterinsurgency campaign in Oman between 1970 and 1975, the British counterinsurgency campaign in Malaya from 1948 to 1960, and the American involvement in Vietnam between 1963 and 1971. These case studies were chosen because of three key points: 1. insurgent defection data is available for significant portions of the conflict, 2. data is available on when amnesties were offered and what
incentives were included, and 3. detailed information on battlefield developments in the conflict is available.

In each individual case study, the first step will be to identify instances of dramatic increases in insurgent defections. This will be done by consulting the quantitative data regarding insurgent defections, as recorded by the counterinsurgent forces. After a dramatic increase is identified, it will be examined qualitatively and in the context of the counterinsurgency campaign being studied to determine whether military pressure or incentives best correlate with the dramatic increase in question.

The strength of the correlation between military pressure, incentives, and dramatic increases in defections will be determined by examining the relevant events in the lead-up to the dramatic increase. If military pressure correlates better with dramatic increases in defections, one would expect to see indicators of major military pressure before the increase. Conversely, if incentives correlate better with defections, one would expect to see the announcement of incentive offers before the increase.

A qualitative study such as this has natural limitations. Most importantly, the data is not complete and homogenous across all of the case studies, and can sometimes be inexact. The case studies vary in terms of the size of forces deployed, dates of the conflict, motivations of insurgents, types of incentives offered, religious and cultural context, counterinsurgent military strategy, and casualties suffered. While this variety will allow the findings to be more broadly applicable, it necessarily sacrifices precision. This study’s focus on amnesty programs also means that insurgents who quit without entering into an amnesty program will not be included as part of this analysis.
Additionally, questions of false defections or “redefections” to the insurgency will not be considered due to a lack of data. Finally, this study is limited to seeking correlations, and makes no claim of proving causality regarding dramatic increases in insurgent defections. An insurgent, like any other person, is not a purely rational actor in the theoretical sense, and a variety of factors influence decision-making besides promised benefits or threatened sanctions. However, in light of the sparse literature on the topic, correlations (or the lack thereof) across such disparate case studies will still provide useful findings.

**THE DHOFAR REBELLION**

Great Britain has been a pivotal player in Omani security issues since the late 18th century. Official Anglo-Omani cooperation dates from 1798, when the Sultan of Muscat promised to prevent any French incursions into his territory, and British troops were instrumental in putting down rebellions against the Sultan of Muscat in 1875, 1895, 1913, and 1915. The British were even more instrumental in the creation of Oman as a unified state, when between 1954 and 1959 they put down a rebellion in the interior of the country and expanded government control to encompass the entire country of Oman. Between 1970 and 1975, the British were intimately involved with putting down yet another rebellion, this time in Dhofar.

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The region of Dhofar occupies the southwestern corner of Oman, and is an ecologically unique region in the Arabian Peninsula with a tropical climate and fertile soil as a result of the yearly monsoon season. Dhofar had been added by force to the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman only in the early nineteenth century. Being such a late addition to the state and having such a unique climate set Dhofar apart from the rest of Oman, a fact that gained practical expression in its legal status: the region and all its inhabitants were considered the personal property of the Sultan. Sa’id bin Taymur, the paranoid and reclusive Sultan who ruled Oman from 1932 to 1970, acted accordingly. Dhofar’s forty to fifty thousand residents were treated as his slaves. He encouraged conflict between the different tribes and imposed large taxes on all goods imported, exported, or sold in the region. Bin Taymur’s policies ensured that Dhofar was even less developed than the rest of Oman.

Unrest began in roughly 1963 as a largely tribal, localized response to the abuse Dhofaris suffered at the hands of bin Taymur. Over the next five years, the forces arrayed against the Sultan underwent a critical ideological shift towards Communism. In 1968, the Dhofari rebels named themselves the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG) and “resolved ‘to adopt organized revolutionary violence as the sole means for defeating imperialism, reaction, the bourgeoisie, and feudalism’ and adopted ‘scientific socialism’ as its ideology.”

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34 Uzi Rabi, *The Emergence of States in a Tribal Society*, 189-190.
On July 23, 1970, the Sultan’s son, Qaboos bin Sa’id Al Bu Sa’id, led a coup and seized control of the Sultanate from his increasingly unpopular father. Qaboos, recognizing the danger that the PFLOAG posed to his regime, allowed the British to implement a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy. British pilots flew air support for the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF), development teams worked on public works projects in Dhofar, seconded and contract officers commanded the SAF, and Special Air Service (SAS) commando forces trained Omani troops and engaged in combat operations.\(^\text{36}\) Fixed defenses were established along insurgent supply lines to starve the PFLOAG of food and ammunition.\(^\text{37}\) Additionally, just days after seizing power, the new Sultan offered a comprehensive amnesty to the insurgents.\(^\text{38}\) This first offer likely reached the insurgents in rural Dhofar in early August 1970. Amnesty offers were also extended in March 1974 and March 1976. These offers included full amnesty and a cash grant on the conditions of laying down arms and cooperation with the government.\(^\text{39}\)

Importantly, former insurgents were given the opportunity to fight on the side of the SAF as part of irregular, SAS-trained units known as “firqats.” The opportunity to serve in a firqat gave former insurgents financial stability through steady employment, as well as influence and credibility in their communities.\(^\text{40}\) Though each amnesty offer after the first merely reiterated the first offer’s incentives and no time limits were ever placed on

\(^{36}\) J.E. Peterson, *Oman’s Insurgencies: The Sultanate’s Struggle for Supremacy*, 327.
\(^{39}\) For the dates of the two later amnesties, see J.E. Peterson, *Oman’s Insurgencies: The Sultanate’s Struggle for Supremacy*, 337-338 and 383. For the terms and conditions of the amnesties, see John Townsend, *Oman: The Making of a Modern State*, 102.
the offers, their separate propagations mean they will each need to be counted as a separate offer in this analysis.

Over the next five years, the SAF, supported by the British, battled for control of rural Dhofar against the PFLOAG. By March 1976, the SAF had driven the PFLOAG from Oman and forced the remnants of the insurgency to accept a ceasefire. Between August 1970, when the counterinsurgency campaign began in earnest, and March 1976, when it largely ended, the British and SAF estimated that 507 insurgents had been killed, 39 insurgents had been captured, and 1,591 insurgents had taken advantage of amnesty offers from the Sultan. Clearly, amnesty offers severely degraded PFLOAG fighting power over the course of the insurgency.

41 J.E. Peterson, Oman’s Insurgencies: The Sultanate’s Struggle for Supremacy, 383-384.
Figure 1. Graph of PFLOAG defections by month. Compiled by author from available data on surrendered enemy personnel detailed throughout J.E. Peterson, *Oman’s Insurgencies: The Sultanate’s Struggle for Supremacy*. Data for January, September, October and December in 1971, January, February, April, May, and June in 1972, September, October, and December in 1974, and January and February in 1975 is derived from SAF estimates as opposed to exact numbers.

The three dramatic increases in insurgent defections in this case study occur in January 1971 with an increase of 39 defections over December 1970, March 1971 with an increase of 55 defections over February 1971, and November 1975 with an increase of 91 defections over October 1975.\(^\text{42}\)

A first glance reveals that none of these dramatic increases occurred in the immediate aftermath of the publically-declared amnesties offered by the Sultan in late August 1970, late March 1974, or early March 1976. Despite this, it is clear that the August 1970 amnesty offer did have a salutary effect upon insurgent defections, with an increase in 35 defections in September 1970. This misses the cutoff to qualify as a

\(^{42}\) Refer to figure 1.
“dramatic increase” by five defections. That the amnesty offer itself engendered the increase in defections is strongly supported by the fact that the SAF halted offensive operations between August and late December 1970, meaning that military pressure was nonexistent during those four and half months.43 The other two amnesty offers did not stimulate any increase at all in defections the following months, perhaps because the offers were reiterations and lacked the novelty of the original amnesty. In the month after the March 1974 amnesty offer was announced, there were 12 fewer defectors than the month before. The March 1976 amnesty, announced early in the month, also did not lead to an increase in the number of defectors in March as opposed to February 1976 – in fact, there were 13 fewer defectors. Despite the clearly positive effect of the Sultan’s original amnesty announcement, the three most dramatic spikes in insurgent defections during the time under investigation did not occur in the wake of any incentive offers.

Military pressure, on the other hand, does correlate well with the three dramatic spikes seen in this case study. As previously stated, the SAF had not carried out any offensive operations between August and late December 1970. This self-imposed moratorium was lifted with the launch of the most ambitious operation of the war to date in late December, as the SAF put two battalions into PFLOAG-controlled territory and launched a series of five week-long offensives through January. These missions were designed to attrite PFLOAG strength and break up the larger units of insurgents operating in the central area of Dhofar, and have been called a “turning point” in the

43 J.E. Peterson, Oman’s Insurgencies: The Sultanate’s Struggle for Supremacy, 224, 249.
conflict as the SAF finally began inflicting heavy casualties on the insurgents.\textsuperscript{44} It seems likely that the dramatic increase in insurgent defections seen between December 1970 and January 1971 is strongly related to the unprecedented pressure the SAF placed on the PFLOAG after a significant hiatus.

Shortly after the SAF’s resumption of the offensive and the first dramatic spike in insurgent defections, a second dramatic increase occurred between February and March 1971. This increase correlates strongly with two major military developments. The first, Operation Everest, was a successful operation launched at the end of February to take and hold the insurgent-controlled coastal town of Sudh, the first operation of its kind. Both participants in and scholars of the Dhofar Rebellion have credited the capture of Sudh as being directly responsible for as many as 35 defections alone, leaving the PFLOAG temporarily with no presence in the eastern sector of Dhofar.\textsuperscript{45}

The second development, in early March, was the beginning of operations by the firqats, led by British SAS troops, into PFLOAG-held territory. The most ambitious of these operations, a two week stay in PFLOAG territory, is directly credited by British contemporaries with creating a “sharp rise” in insurgent defections in March.\textsuperscript{46}

The final dramatic increase, between October and November 1975, occurred during the last major offensive operation of the war. Operation Hadaf, also known as the Final Push, was characterized by an observer as “different in character from what had gone on before,” and was conducted “at the very top of the spectrum that

\textsuperscript{44} J.E. Peterson, Oman’s Insurgencies: The Sultanate’s Struggle for Supremacy, 255, 266.
\textsuperscript{45} Major General Tony Jeapes, SAS Secret War: Operation Storm in the Middle East, 71-81, and J.E. Peterson, Oman’s Insurgencies: The Sultanate’s Struggle for Supremacy, 257.
\textsuperscript{46} Major General Tony Jeapes, SAS Secret War: Operation Storm in the Middle East, 97.
characterizes revolutionary war… essentially akin to limited wars."\textsuperscript{47} This offensive marked the end of organized insurgency in Oman. The operation cut off the insurgents from their foreign sponsor, the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen, and seized the Shirshitti cave complex that served as the PFLOAG headquarters, crushing PFLOAG morale. The primary drivers motivating defectors in November were hunger and fear. The SAF even halted operations for a week in order to allow the more orderly processing of defecting insurgents. The offensive was so successful that it succeeded beyond its planners’ expectations, ending organized resistance in Dhofar on December 2, 1975.\textsuperscript{48} It seems highly unlikely that the most dramatic increase in defectors during the entire campaign had merely a passing connection to the military defeat of the PFLOAG as an organized force in Dhofar.

Strong correlations emerge during the Dhofar Rebellion between dramatic increases in insurgent defections and dramatic and successful SAF operations. It seems clear that the Sultan’s initial offer of amnesty and money, offered shortly after he took power in 1970, had a positive effect and encouraged some defections singlehandedly. Additionally, the initial amnesty offer served the vital purpose of providing the framework for insurgents to defect over the next five years. Later reiterations of the Sultan’s amnesty offer, though, seemed to have had no positive effect on the number of insurgent defections immediately after their announcement. The three dramatic increases, however, all correlate closely with high profile military successes by the SAF

\textsuperscript{47} J.E. Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies: The Sultanate's Struggle for Supremacy, 375.
\textsuperscript{48} J.E. Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies: The Sultanate’s Struggle for Supremacy, 374-377.
that markedly increased military pressure on the PFLOAG. A similar, though more nuanced, dynamic exists in another 20th century British counterinsurgency campaign, the Malayan Emergency.

**The Malayan Emergency**

British imperial control of what eventually became Malaya also dates from the late 18th century. First colonized by Britain in order to dominate the strategically vital Straits of Malacca, Malaya later also became a hub for exploiting numerous strategic resources. The British encouraged mass immigration from India and China in order to develop a labor force to exploit these natural resources, resulting in an ethnically-mixed colony predominantly populated by Malays, Chinese, and Indians. This demographic reality, along with the Japanese occupation during World War II, laid the foundations for the insurgency that raged between 1948 and 1960.

In a move that would be critical to the coming insurgency, the British maintained ethnic barriers as a matter of policy in order to maintain control of the island. Ethnic Malays, who made up 44 percent of the population, were dramatically overrepresented in the Malayan civil service and the elite. The Chinese population, who made up roughly 38.5 percent of the population, was discriminated against economically and politically. In reaction, some Chinese joined the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), formed in 1925, which consisted almost entirely of ethnic Chinese. By

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1940, the MCP had more than 50,000 followers. These destabilizing factors – endemic discrimination and a Chinese-dominated communist party – were exacerbated in the wake of the Japanese occupation of Malaya during World War II. The MCP vigorously resisted the Japanese, and was so effective that by 1943 the British were aiding them with arms and training. Critically, in the three weeks between the Japanese surrender in 1945 and the return of British troops, the MCP was the only organized armed force in Malaya and proceeded to target former collaborators with the Japanese, most of whom were Malay. Thus, the Japanese occupation ended with the MCP endurably associated with the Chinese population and armed, trained, and battle-hardened.

Postwar, the MCP turned to a policy of organizing strikes and limited terrorism to undermine the government. While it is difficult to establish an exact date for the start of the insurgency, the Malayan Emergency formally began in mid-June 1948 and was declared in response to growing political violence, peaking with the coordinated murder of three European planters on June 16th. It was the climax of three years of instability in post-war Malaya, marked by socio-economic upheaval, ethnic and political conflict, and revolutionary planning by the MCP. The armed wing of the MCP, the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA), began targeting the rubber and tin industries upon which Malaya’s economy depended. The overall British response has

been hailed by counterinsurgent practitioners and academics alike as a model counterinsurgency campaign.

The British counterinsurgency campaign evolved into a balanced response over the course of the insurgency. Until 1950, the British emphasized large scale “sweeps” of the jungle. With the arrival of Lieutenant-General Harold Briggs in April 1950, however, the British counterinsurgency campaign matured.\(^{57}\) Briggs emphasized policing, intelligence, unified command, a controlled move towards independence for Malaya, and population control. Food control and forced resettlement of Chinese Malayans played a primary role in separating the insurgents from the population and degrading the MNLA’s ability to recruit and resupply.\(^{58}\) By the end of 1955, the insurgency was militarily crippled, though conflict continued for nearly five more years.\(^{59}\)

Amnesties also played a significant role during the Emergency, with four distinct offers. The first amnesty, announced in September 1949, was only targeted towards those not implicated in capital crimes. It was ambiguous and disingenuous – it was unclear what constituted culpability for capital crimes, and widespread brutality towards defectors was common and widely known. In August 1950, the amnesty program was overhauled, all prosecutions of defected insurgents were halted, humane treatment was mandated, and a table of highly lucrative rewards for turning in weapons and insurgents was publicized. The third amnesty was offered in September 1955 and

\(^{58}\) R. W. Komer, \textit{The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect}, 14-16.
\(^{59}\) Anthony Short, \textit{The Communist Insurrection in Malaya 1948-1960}, 472.
continued the rewards policy of the previous amnesty, but the government maintained the right to detain and investigate defected insurgents if they did not renounce Communism. The last amnesty was launched September 3rd, 1957 and titled the “Independence Amnesty,” as Malaya had become independent just four days earlier. This amnesty offered the most liberal terms of the entire conflict, with full immunity granted for all crimes and a promise of no interrogation or investigation for defectors.60 All told, amnesty offers during the Malayan Emergency led to 2,735 defections, compared with 1,296 insurgents captured and 6,697 killed.61 With defections accounting for over a quarter of all MNLA attrition, amnesty offers clearly had a significant effect on insurgent strength throughout the conflict.

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60 Kumar Ramakrishna, ‘‘Bribing the Reds to Give Up’: Rewards Policy in the Malayan Emergency’, 337-340, 348-349.
The three dramatic increases in insurgent defections in this case study occur in 1949 with an increase of 195 defections over 1948, 1953 with an increase of 115 defections over 1952, and 1958 with an increase of 293 defections over 1957.\textsuperscript{62} With the available data on insurgent defections being broken down by year, this case study necessarily takes a much broader view of correlation in comparison to the other case studies, which have access to monthly data.

The dramatic increases in this case present a more complex picture than the Dhofar Rebellion, with one strongly correlated with the offering of new incentives and the other two with military pressure. The Independence Amnesty clearly correlates with

\textsuperscript{62} Refer to figure 2. Note that 1948 only accounts for a half year of defections, as the Emergency started in mid-June. However, even doubling the amount of defectors for 1948 to account for this advantage would still leave 1949 as a period of dramatic increase.
the final, and largest, dramatic increase of the counterinsurgency campaign. Initially only supposed to be open for three months, this amnesty was so successful that it was extended twice through July 1958. The Independence Amnesty was unique due to its very liberal terms, the fact that it was offered by an independent Malayan government, the military hopelessness of the Communist cause, and because the Malayan political leadership made clear that this would be the final offer of amnesty. Military pressure does not correlate well with this dramatic increase; MNLA casualties declined by over 37 percent and military contacts with insurgents declined by over 38 percent between 1957 and 1958. While the amnesty clearly took advantage of the fact that the military situation of the MNLA was widely perceived as hopeless, it is overwhelmingly likely the actual offering of the incentives is what encouraged the defections.

The other amnesty offers besides the Independence Amnesty did not have a similarly salutary effect. The first amnesty offer was not credible, as described above. While the second amnesty, launched shortly after the first to repair the damage done to the government’s credibility, did establish trust in the program for the duration of the conflict, it did not produce a dramatic increase in defections in the wake of its announcement. The third amnesty, offered in September 1955, was so unsuccessful that

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64 Kumar Ramakrishna, “Bribing the Reds to Give Up”: Rewards Policy in the Malayan Emergency’, 349.
it was cancelled in February 1956 having only generated 74 defectors.\textsuperscript{66} None of these other amnesties correlate with the remaining two dramatic increases in 1949 and 1953.

Military pressure, on the other hand, does correlate with the dramatic increase in defections in 1949. From the start of the Emergency through December 1949, the British consciously pursued a strategy of “counter-terror” – coercion, collective punishments, deportations, and loose rules of engagement. The large scale jungle sweeps carried out in late 1948 and 1949, though condemned as ineffective later, were directly credited with increased intelligence collection, which allowed for better targeting.\textsuperscript{67} That this strategy was unsustainable and of dubious effectiveness on the insurgency overall is strongly suggested by the fact that it was replaced by a “hearts and minds” strategy in 1950.\textsuperscript{68} Despite its strategic failings, the existence of a coherent campaign of coercion does correlate strongly with the dramatic increase in defections in 1949, especially in light of the fact that no credible incentives for defection were offered until August 1950.

The dramatic increase in defections in 1953 also correlates well with military pressure. In this case, however, the military pressure applied was not due to collective punishment and jungle sweeps, but to a hearts and minds strategy relying on more effective Malayan forces and population and food control. Throughout 1952 and 1953, the British implemented an extensive training program for the Malaya Police Force,

\textsuperscript{66} Kumar Ramakrishna, “‘Bribing the Reds to Give Up’: Rewards Policy in the Malayan Emergency’, 338-339, 348.
\textsuperscript{68} Huw Bennett, “‘A very salutary effect’: The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949’, 441.
which dramatically improved intelligence collection and shifted the initiative to the counterinsurgents in 1953.\(^{69}\) In October 1952, the policy of forcibly resettling over 450,000 Chinese Malayan laborers into controlled villages had been completed. Thereafter, the almost entirely Chinese MNLA no longer had access to the pool of manpower and resources it needed to operate effectively.\(^{70}\) Resettlement has been called “the operational turning point of the insurgency.”\(^{71}\) Despite orders from MNLA leadership to avoid engagements, improved intelligence work and population control allowed the security forces to maintain the number of contacts they initiated between 1952 and 1953, a clear indication in a shift in the initiative.\(^{72}\) These significant improvements in population control measures and host nation forces throughout 1952 and into 1953 correlate very well with the dramatic increase in defections observed during 1953.

The Malayan Emergency provides a more complicated case than the Dhofar Rebellion, as the first two dramatic increases correlate strongly with military pressure while the last correlates with incentives offered. The military pressure applied by both the coercive strategy of 1948 through 1949 and the implementation of the hearts and minds strategy in 1952 correlates with dramatic increases in defections. Of the four amnesty offers over the course of the Emergency, only the Independence Amnesty, offered in late 1957, correlates with a dramatic increase. The combination of contextual


\(^{71}\) R. W. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect*, 16.

factors surrounding this amnesty – the complete military hopelessness of the MNLA’s situation combined with the fact that it was offered by a credible, independent Malayan government expressly advertising it as the last chance for amnesty – may explain why this amnesty had such resounding and immediate success in comparison with the others. On the other hand, during the Vietnam War, as will be shown in the next case study, credibility and the prospect of victory continually eluded the counterinsurgents.

**THE VIETNAM WAR**

Though the United States was to devote an extraordinary amount of manpower and resources to fighting the Vietnam War, the roots of the conflict are found in the French colonial experience there. Similarly to Malaya, the ousting of the French by the Japanese during World War II created a power vacuum that Vietnamese nationalists and Communists rushed to fill in the aftermath. The Vietminh, a Communist front organization formed in 1941, had been fighting the French since they returned in 1945. Through a series of shocking military victories, the Vietminh forced the French to accept their suzerainty in the north of the country in 1954.\(^{73}\) In 1959, the Politburo of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) began an insurgency to destabilize the South and pave the way for the unification of Vietnam under Communist control.\(^{74}\)

Direct American involvement in Vietnam began in 1950, when the United States created a US Military Assistance Advisory Group in Saigon, and pledged $10 million in

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support of the French military effort there. By 1953, the United States was funding fully one third of French war costs. Over the next 12 years, the United States deepened its financial, political, and military advisory commitment to the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam).\(^75\) In February 1965 the American air war began with Operation Rolling Thunder, and the ground war began with the deployment of Marines in March 1965.\(^76\) For the next eight years, the United States was intimately involved in the counterinsurgency campaign in Vietnam.

The insurgency waged against the United States and South Vietnam was directed primarily by North Vietnamese leadership. In December 1960, insurgents in the South announced the creation of the National Liberation Front. Dominated by former Vietminh members, the NLF worked closely with North Vietnam to establish supply routes throughout Indochina and to coordinate military operations.\(^77\) Throughout the conflict, the NLF largely used guerrilla attacks and booby traps to contest with American and South Vietnamese forces for control of the countryside, though in the spectacular Tet Offensive of January 1968 the NLF switched to conventional attacks.\(^78\)

The American counterinsurgency campaign in Vietnam went through two broad periods. Under General William Westmoreland, American strategy followed the coercive school of counterinsurgency. Marked by massive firepower, the aim was to reach a “crossover point” where the NLF was taking more casualties than it could


In April 1968 General Creighton Abrams was appointed to replace General Westmoreland. General Abrams shifted the American strategy to one of population control and security. In short, American strategy shifted from “search and destroy” to “clear and hold.” In the end, a conventional invasion from North Vietnam overran the South in 1975 – two years after the United States had withdrawn its ground forces and ceased its significant military backing of South Vietnam.

The Chieu Hoi program was the amnesty program available to NLF insurgents throughout the conflict. Started in April 1963, the Chieu Hoi program was originally little more than a mechanism for insurgents to surrender, as few benefits were offered and even fewer honored beyond the guarantee of amnesty. A weapons reward program was undermined by the tendency of American and South Vietnamese units to keep defectors’ weapons as trophies and not provide compensation. A program to provide monetary awards to third parties, such as families of insurgents who encouraged their relatives to defect, was crippled by corruption. Overall, the failure of the Chieu Hoi program to provide economic opportunities for defectors was acute throughout its history. The offer of amnesty itself remained the most consistent incentive throughout the life of the program.

The Chieu Hoi program was expanded in April 1967 by the Proclamation of National Reconciliation. The Proclamation declared that all Chieu Hoi defectors would

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not only be given amnesty and guaranteed their political and civil rights, but would also be helped with finding careers equivalent to their “experience, ability, and loyalty.”

These promised incentives were targeted at mid- to upper-level NLF commanders. Implementation was scattered at best, however, and Chieu Hoi remained a program lacking a significant incentive structure beyond the offer of amnesty.\(^\text{84}\) Despite these shortcomings, between 1963 and 1971 the Chieu Hoi program processed 193,418 defectors, an extraordinary number.\(^\text{85}\) Though it did not singlehandedly create strategic success, Chieu Hoi was responsible for removing a huge number of insurgents from the battlefield.


As seen in figures 3 and 4, data is available by month between April 1963 and March 1967, and otherwise is available by year from 1963 to 1971. In order to take advantage of the availability of data on both the broad yearly trends (figure 4) and the more detailed monthly totals (figure 3), this study will examine the two largest dramatic increases from the monthly data and the largest dramatic increase from the yearly data.


Incentives offered do not appear to correlate with any of the three dramatic increases. Though there is no data available for the months after the April 1967 Proclamation of National Reconciliation, the historical account strongly implies that it did not evoke a dramatic increase in insurgent defections. The defector rate for 1967 is described as “high” in the first quarter, a contention backed by the available data, but as being in a “steady decline” for the rest of the year due to corruption, mistreatment of defectors, and the NLF’s tight control of its cadres in preparation for the 1968 Tet Offensive. Defections dropped from just over roughly 2,000 in August 1967 to only 889 that December. Thus, the historical evidence, contemporary accounts, and available data all indicate that the Proclamation of National Reconciliation did not cause a dramatic increase in insurgent defections. This is perhaps unsurprising, as the incentives

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86 Refer to Figures 3 and 4.
it offered were targeted at NLF officials and commanders – both a smaller pool of potential defectors and likely a more ideologically committed one.

Military pressure on the other hand correlates very well with dramatic increases in insurgent defections in this case study. This was explicitly noted at the time. In his end-of-year report for 1967, USAID Director of the Chieu Hoi program Ogden Williams wrote: “it became clear in 1967 that massive returnee rates could be expected only when new areas and new ‘populations’ were opened up and transferred suddenly from [NLF] to [South Vietnamese] control.” Ogden’s analysis appears correct in hindsight, as the two dramatic increases in February 1966 and February 1967 both correlate with increases in military pressure in previously NLF-held territory.

Operations in January and February 1966 applied military pressure in new ways to the NLF. Operation Crimp, launched in early January, destroyed the NLF’s staging area for attacks in the Saigon area. Operation Masher, launched in late January in the NLF stronghold province Binh Dinh, was the largest search and destroy mission launched to date. The dramatic increase in insurgent defections in February 1967 correlates very well with increased military pressure as well. Operations Niagara Falls and Cedar Falls in Binh Duong province, cited by contemporaries as a major cause of defections, expanded counterinsurgent presence into previously uncontested territory. Operation Cedar Falls, carried out throughout January 1967, was the largest single ground operation of the entire war. An unprecedented display of force, it succeeded in

almost completely depopulating the “Iron Triangle,” an area near Saigon that previously had an extensive NLF presence. These operations are noteworthy not because of the casualties caused or damage done to NLF forces, but because they each expanded counterinsurgent presence in NLF-held areas in unprecedented ways.

The dramatic increase in defectors surrendering in 1969 correlates very strongly with increased military pressure. The increase of 28,852 defectors over 1968 is directly attributed by contemporaries to security developments. Throughout the year, counterinsurgent forces expanded their presence into formerly NLF-controlled or contested areas, providing new pools of potential defectors. Additionally, the Regional Forces/Popular Forces (RF/PF) program was revived and improved, providing a constant paramilitary rural security presence. This decreased the dangers of NLF retribution for defectors and their families. Most importantly, the military failure of the 1968 Tet Offensive dramatically increased the pressure on remaining NLF cadres, which had been decimated, and forced them to abandon extensive territory to counterinsurgent forces. The long-term transfer of territorial and population control from the NLF to the South Vietnamese in the wake of the 1968 Tet Offensive correlates very well with the dramatic increase in insurgent defections in 1969.

The dramatic increases examined in this case study all correlate much better with military pressure than with changes in incentives. As noted by contemporaries,

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mass defections followed the transfer of territory from NLF to counterinsurgent control via large-scale clearing operations. With the Chieu Hoi program only once expanding its meager incentives offered and its promises lacking credibility, it is unsurprising that its improved incentives do not correlate with any dramatic increase in defections.

**Findings**

Throughout these three case studies, dramatic increases in insurgent defections were overwhelmingly correlated with changes in military pressure. Changes in incentives offered only correlated well with only one of the nine dramatic increases examined – all others correlated better with changes in military pressure. What sets these specific changes in military pressure apart from the constant shifts that occur during conflict is that they all share the common trait of novelty.

During the Dhofar Rebellion, dramatic increases in insurgent defections were all marked by simultaneous or immediately preceding novel developments in military pressure. The surprise resumption of offensive operations after over four months of inactivity, the first clear and hold operation of the campaign and penetration of insurgent territory, and the massive pseudo-conventional assault on the headquarters area of the insurgency all were truly novel developments in the military situation.

As the data for the Malayan Emergency was year-based, tracking correlation is necessarily less detailed than with the Dhofar Rebellion. However, the trait of novelty is again a prominent factor in explaining why some developments in military pressure correlate with dramatic increases in insurgent defections and others do not. Massive jungle sweeps and the intelligence they developed, though a strategically bankrupt
approach in the long term, were dramatically different from what the MNLA had previously experienced. Similarly, the draconian measures of population and food control that the British instituted in Malaya in 1952 and 1953 fundamentally shifted the environment in which the MNLA operated in the counterinsurgent’s favor.

The Vietnam case is the most complex in this study, as the insurgency there was geographically and numerically far more widespread than either the Dhofar Rebellion or the Malayan Emergency, and it received massive foreign support in manpower, direction, and material in the context of an ongoing conventional war. Even in such a complex case study, however, the importance of novelty again is revealed. Like the early British jungle sweeps in Malaya, the massive depopulating operations in NLF strongholds in early 1966 and 1967 were novel operations in terms of their scale. What had previously been safe staging areas were subjected to massive assaults. The 1968 Tet Offensive proved decimating to the NLF, allowing for the expansion of counterinsurgent control to previously uncontested areas, while the simultaneous reemergence and expansion of the RF/PF program allowed security gains in rural areas to be solidified to a degree not possible before.

There is no one profile of military pressure that best correlates with dramatic increases in insurgent defections. Across the case studies, a myriad of strategies and operations proved effective – massive search and destroy sweeps, population and food control, surprise offensives, and the taking of towns and territory. Despite the clear strategic failure of some of these approaches – massive sweeps of jungle did not lead to strategic success in Malaya or Vietnam – their lack of efficacy in engendering strategic
counterinsurgency success seemed to have no impact on their correlation with dramatic increases in insurgent defections. The critical factor appeared to be the novelty of the operation or military development.

Of all the amnesties considered, only one – the Independence Amnesty during the Malayan Emergency – clearly correlated with a dramatic increase in insurgent defections. It is inherently difficult to generalize findings from one data point, but when viewed alongside the first amnesty offered during the Dhofar Rebellion, a more interesting picture emerges. While that first amnesty was not followed by enough insurgent defections to count as having caused a dramatic increase, it did have a very positive effect on the number of defections in the wake of its announcement. These two amnesties – the most effective in increasing the number of insurgent defections in the wake of their immediate announcement across the three case studies – share a number of traits that point towards more general findings regarding successful amnesty programs. Both combined monetary awards policies with credible promises of amnesty and good treatment. Finally, and interestingly, both were novel – in Oman, the July 1970 amnesty offer was the first after nearly seven years of conflict and was offered by a newly-crowned Sultan, and in Malaya, the Independence Amnesty was explicitly advertised by the newly independent government as the last chance for insurgents.

The other amnesties examined in the case studies do not share these traits. Instead, those amnesties offered either political or economic incentives (but not both), were not credible due to widespread counterinsurgent corruption, mismanagement, or brutality, or were simply reiterations of previous offers. Perhaps unsurprisingly,
financially and politically generous and credible amnesty programs that expanded upon previously offered incentives were the most effective.

**Areas for Future Research**

The findings of this study point to a number of fruitful areas for future research, and future analyses of this specific topic could improve upon this study in a number of ways.

First, future studies could investigate insurgent defections across the span of an entire conflict, instead of focusing solely on dramatic increases. How do changes in military pressure and incentives impact the broad trends in insurgent defections over the course of a conflict? By focusing on a single conflict and utilizing detailed archival research, future researchers may develop a more intricate understanding of both the number and motivations of insurgent defections in a given case study, allowing for a much more complex process trace across the entire conflict. The case of the Dhofar Rebellion is particularly ripe for such an in-depth case study. Not only are the pertinent documents already declassified or able to be so, the relatively small number of combatants and the tiny geographic scope of the conflict lends itself to a manageable deep dive analysis as described above. By examining one case study in detail, the basic findings of this broader study can be tested across an entire conflict.

Secondly, further research into the impact of the support structure behind amnesties might be fruitful in explaining differences in long-term success. Programs such as Chieu Hoi had elaborate bureaucratic apparatuses responsible for their functioning. Does the manner in which these bureaucracies propagate their message to
insurgents matter? Do perceptions of an amnesty program’s bureaucracy specifically or the counterinsurgent broadly impact amnesty credibility more? This study focused on the insurgent decision making. Future research into these questions can help refine our understanding of this topic by shedding light on the role of the other side of the equation – the counterinsurgent’s bureaucratic structure and follow-through behind amnesty offers.

Third and finally, this study highlighted the overwhelming correlation between military pressure and dramatic increases in insurgent defections. Future research could isolate the forms of military pressure most effective in inducing defections. Is it the cutting of supply routes, turning the population against the insurgents, brutal coercive operations, or something else? This would allow for more detailed policy recommendations from the military pressure standpoint.

**Policy Recommendations**

According to current administration officials, the United States’ goals in Afghanistan are to prevent the Taliban from retaking power and to prevent the country from again becoming a haven for Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. With American officials seeing an effective amnesty program as central to degrading the Afghan insurgency and achieving these goals, this study’s findings are directly relevant.

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to current efforts aimed at encouraging defections among low and mid-level Taliban fighters in Afghanistan.

The strong correlation between dramatic increases in insurgent defections and military pressure simplifies much of the current debate on the optimal development, implementation, and timing of an Afghan national reconciliation program. Based on the findings of this study, any amnesty developed for Afghanistan under current military conditions will probably not induce mass defections. Any new amnesty program will not meet with dramatic success unless it is paired with novel increases in military pressure against the insurgency.

After an amnesty program is articulated, set up, and announced, the United States and its allies should seek to apply military pressure in dramatic and novel ways against Afghan insurgents. The one tactic highlighted by this study that is politically and military feasible at this juncture in Afghanistan would be a renewed effort at local defense forces, similar to the RF/PF program in Vietnam. The recently approved “community defense initiative” in Afghanistan provides an excellent way to increase military pressure on the Afghan insurgency within the constraints imposed by the United States and its allies. The other effective tactics highlighted in this study –

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draconian population control, complete depopulation of large swathes of territory, the
destruction of the insurgency’s headquarters, among other things – are currently
unfeasible from an operational, political, or moral standpoint. Community defense
forces, on the other hand, provide military pressure within the hearts and minds
counterinsurgency strategy in place in Afghanistan.

In order to maximize any successes engendered from the application of novel
and dramatic military pressure, an Afghan amnesty program should contain a number of
elements. Importantly, the amnesty must contain a combination of financial incentives
and credible legal and political incentives. Insurgents must know that the Afghan
government will indeed follow through on its promises of amnesty, good treatment, and
financial reward, no matter how the specific incentives are developed. If possible, the
amnesty program must advertise itself as novel in some meaningful way. This could
occur through the offering of new and comparatively generous financial or political
incentives, or other methods as the context demands. At a minimum, the amnesty
program should disassociate itself entirely from the underfunded Peace and
Reconciliation Commission that currently exists.

In conclusion, in the three case studies examined, novel military pressure had
the strongest correlation with dramatic increases in insurgent defections. Clausewitz’s
maxim that “Whenever [surprise] is achieved on a grand scale, it confuses the enemy
and lowers his morale; many examples, great and small, show how this in turn
multiplies the results” holds true for the relationship between novel military pressure
and insurgent defections. The results are indeed multiplied, as insurgents voluntarily remove themselves from the battlefield and place themselves in the control of the counterinsurgent under the auspices of an amnesty program.

However, it should not be forgotten that a credible counterinsurgency amnesty program must be in place in order to take advantage of this reaction. The “golden bridge” Scipio spoke of must be built before the insurgent can be driven across it into the counterinsurgent’s arms.

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