

# BEYOND “HEARTS AND MINDS”

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By

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# BEYOND “HEARTS AND MINDS”

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## ABSTRACT:

Ever since Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer proclaimed that “the answer lies not in pouring more troops into the jungle, but in the hearts and minds of the people,” common wisdom suggests that the key to military victory in counterinsurgency is “winning hearts and minds.” As interpreted in modern doctrine, Templer’s dictum requires that the counterinsurgent promote economic, social and political reforms (to give everyone a “stake” in society) and minimize its use of force (to avoid popular backlash). My dissertation shows that 1) historically, most successful counterinsurgencies have not been fought this way; 2) when this approach has been tried, it rarely proves effective; and 3) instead, military victory comes from successful population control. Population control, in turn, employs some combination of three sets of tactics: physical measures (e.g. walls, resource controls and forced resettlement), cooption (of local elite and often the insurgents themselves) and “divide and rule” strategies. I demonstrate these claims through detailed analyses of four influential modern counterinsurgencies—the Malayan Emergency, the Mau Mau Rebellion, the Vietnam War and the Iraq War, along with a study of local opinion data from the Vietnam, Iraq and Afghan Wars. Ultimately, as far as military victory is concerned, whether the counterinsurgent wins “hearts and minds” matters far less than whether it can control them.

## **Acknowledgements**

Dissertations are, by their nature, solo sports. For years, one lives in ones' own little world. Unlike professional schools, there are no set deadlines, group projects or common assignments; the process is unique and completely self-motivated. And yet, no dissertation is possible without the help of others and so, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge their contributions.

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and slowly transitioning to academic life. I also spent a summer at the National Defense University's Center for Complex Operations, beginning my academic work on counterinsurgency. Most importantly, I was also privileged to spend a year at the Brookings Institution as predoctoral fellow from 2013 to 2014, finishing writing the dissertation and also breaking out of the academic bubble and engaging with the policy world.

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## Chapter 1: Beyond Hearts & Minds

Ask most soldiers, pundits and scholars today about how counterinsurgencies are won, and the answer will likely be by winning “hearts and minds.” This shorthand for modern counterinsurgency doctrine entered the popular lexicon with the British experience in Malaya. In 1952, British High Commissioner to Malaya Gerald Templer famously remarked, “The answer [to the uprising] lies not in pouring more troops into the jungle, but in the hearts and minds of the people.”<sup>1</sup> As interpreted by the military’s *Counterinsurgency Manual*, Templer’s dictum requires the counterinsurgent to provide security, undertake major political and economic reforms, and embark on an extensive public diplomacy campaign—all to shift the population’s loyalties and thereby cut the insurgency off from its lifeblood.

Despite its popularity, the need to win “hearts and minds” remains a deeply problematic assertion for two reasons. On a basic level, counterinsurgents “won” these conflicts long before Gerald Templer ever popularized the phrase: in fact, democratic counterinsurgents “won” 40 of 58 these wars before Malaya, but only 6 of 27 times afterwards.<sup>2</sup> Second and more importantly, “hearts and minds,” as a theory, suffers from a missing data problem. Historically, few counterinsurgents systematically measured popular attitudes, often leaving little comprehensive record of what the population actually thought or felt. More problematically, from what can be drawn from anecdotal accounts, some of the most successful counterinsurgents were anything but popular with the locals. For example, after experiencing Roman counterinsurgency tactics firsthand, one embittered British chieftain characterized, “To robbery, butchery, and rapine, they

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<sup>1</sup> Clutterbuck 1966, p. 3

<sup>2</sup> From the dataset used in Lyall 2010. Democracy was determined by a Polity score of 7 or higher. Ongoing counterinsurgencies were dropped from the dataset and the Iraq War was counted as a victory.



[the Romans] give the lying name of 'government;' they create desolation and call it peace."<sup>3</sup>

And the Romans were not an exception. Even leaving aside extreme examples such as the Nazis against the partisans or the Soviets against the Ukrainians, Marshal Bugeaud conquered Algeria for the French, General Sherman brought the Confederacy to its knees, and the Lord Kitchner crushed the Boers—all through methods other than “winning hearts and minds.”

This dissertation looks beyond “hearts and minds” and today’s tropes about counterinsurgency. In doing so, it asks *does winning “hearts and minds” actually “win” counterinsurgencies, and if not, what does?* This chapter lays the groundwork for answering this question. First, I clarify the commonly used, but often ambiguously defined term “counterinsurgency.” Next, I turn to an even thornier definitional question: what does it mean to “win” these wars. Third, I translate “winning” into metrics that can be quantified on local level. Fourth, I explain my methodology and choice of case studies. Fifth, I outline the chapters of the dissertation. Finally, I overview the dissertation’s central claim: *the key to military victory in counterinsurgency is not winning “hearts and minds,” but controlling them.*

## **What Is Counterinsurgency?**

For a word at the center of so many of the strategic debates over the past decade, “counterinsurgency” proves a remarkably amorphous concept. Breaking it down into its two components provides little definitional clarity. What, after all, counts as an “insurgency”? And what does it mean to “counter” it? Other doctrinal areas specify a primary actor (e.g. “military police operations”), a means (e.g. “psychological operations”) or even a vague location (e.g. “Air-Sea Battle”), but not so with counterinsurgency which leaves the primary actor, the means and the location open to interpretation. Many conflate counterinsurgency with other equally nebulous concepts—irregular warfare, asymmetric conflicts and counterterrorism—and yet

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<sup>3</sup> Tacitus 1970, ch. 30, p. 81

these terms only capture what counterinsurgency is by what it is not—namely conventional warfare. Still, others prefer more colloquial names such as “long wars” or “savage wars of peace,” but though poetic, these terms do little to define these conflicts.<sup>4</sup> In fact, counterinsurgency as a term is a relatively recent innovation and the latest of several attempts to find an appropriate label for this type of conflict.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, official military writing’s often referred to “small wars” instead of to counterinsurgencies. During the Napoleonic era, small wars referred to a nebulous category of irregular campaigns fought between partisans and conventional troops, often as sideshows to major conventional European wars. For example, when Carl Von Clausewitz lectured on “*Kleiner Krieg*” in the Prussian military academy in 1810-1811, he focused on small, irregular units launching raids, collecting intelligence, and conducting sabotage operations in support of conventional militaries.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, when Napoleonic-era French officers referred to *petite guerre*, they described partisan warfare fought in conjunction with regular forces.<sup>6</sup>

Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, British and American strategists broadened “small wars” to include all irregular wars—whether or not they were connected with conventional conflicts. In his 1896 doctrinal masterpiece entitled *Small Wars*, Colonel C. E. Callwell defined his topic: “Practically it may be said to include all campaigns other than those where both sides consist of regular troops,” or only somewhat more precisely, “operations of regular armies against irregular, or comparatively speaking irregular, forces.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the United States Marine Corps’ *Small Wars Manual* (1940) explains, “The ordinary expedition of the Marine Corps which does not involve a major effort in regular warfare against a first-rate power may be termed a small war.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A phrase first coined by Rudyard Kipling in his poem “The White Man’s Burden” about the American effort in Philippines, but later used by others to describe a variety of counterinsurgencies—from Alstair Horne’s famous history of Algeria to Max Boot’s history of American small wars. See Kipling 1989, p. 322, Horne 2002, Boot 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Laqueur 1975, pp. 350-351.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 344-346.

<sup>7</sup> Callwell 1976, p. 21

<sup>8</sup> SWM 1-1, p. 1-2

In short, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, “small war” included everything except conflicts between two western conventional militaries.

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the term “small wars” began to disappear from official military writing likely for three reasons. First, the term was ambiguous. Even the Marine Corps’ *Small Wars Manual* admits “the term “Small War” is often a vague name for any one of a great variety of military operations.”<sup>9</sup> Second, labeling these operations as “small” was at best misleading, if not an outright mischaracterization. As Callwell notes, “The expression “small war” has in reality no particular connection with the scale on which any campaign may be carried out.”<sup>10</sup> Small wars, in fact, were often not small: many involved hundreds of thousands of combatants, spanned vast geographical areas, and played out over several years. Finally, the label of “war” was incomplete. While these operations included a kinetic component, they also involved a substantial nonlethal element, as well. Even the *Small Wars Manual* recognized that unlike traditional wars, in these operations, “military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such interests as are determined by the foreign policy of our nation.”<sup>11</sup> And so, strategists cast around for another label instead.

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, American strategists focused on primarily combating a conventional (and later nuclear) Soviet military threat. To the extent the United States Army cared about irregular warfare, it was as early 19<sup>th</sup> century European strategists had viewed it—as a subset of conventional operations. The Army’s 1954 version *FM 100-5 Field Service Regulations Operations*, the doctrinal manual which outlines the Army’s functions, included a short section on guerilla warfare but only as a special operations forces’

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<sup>9</sup> SWM 1-1, p. 1

<sup>10</sup> Callwell 1976, p. 21

<sup>11</sup> SWM 1-1, p. 1

mission.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the Army's *FM 31-21 Organization and Conduct of Guerilla Warfare* (1951) states in its introduction, "Whenever possible guerilla forces should be organized and their efficiency developed to such a level that they will be able to give active assistance to the military operations of regular forces."<sup>13</sup> As a result, early Cold War doctrine simply referred to these operations by the nature of the enemy, such as *FM 31-20 (1951) Operations Against Guerilla Forces*, in much the same way as the military needed to operate against other more conventional threats.<sup>14</sup>

Beginning in the early 1960s, with the Communist insurgencies spreading throughout the Third World and the United States' increasing involvement in Vietnam, a new term—"counterinsurgency"—entered the military's lexicon. The Army slowly realized that these operations involved more than just a military struggle and changed its terminology to reflect the broadening focus. In 1961, Army introduced the term "counterinsurgency forces" for "those elements of the Army specifically designated to help third world countries combat Communist subversion, primarily by providing advice and support, rather than direct action."<sup>15</sup> Simultaneously, the Army distinguished between "counterinsurgency" and "counter-guerilla" training: whereas the latter primarily focused on the kinetic tasks associated with irregular warfare, the former included training on everything from nation building to Maoist insurgency doctrine.<sup>16</sup> The term also caught on in academic works, as well: for example, both David Galula's *Pacification in Algeria* (1963) and *Counterinsurgency: Theory and Practice* (1964) chose to refer to French operations as counterinsurgencies, rather than using other terms for this form of warfare.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> FM 100-5, 1954, pp. 171-173.

<sup>13</sup> FM 31-21, p. 1

<sup>14</sup> For discussion of FM 31-20, Birtle 2006, pp. 134-142

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 247

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 268

<sup>17</sup> Galula 1964; Galula 2006

Despite its increasing popularity, many still objected to “counterinsurgency” as too nebulous a term. In 1965, Army Chief of Staff General Harold Johnson struck the word from Army doctrine in favor of “internal defense” and “internal development,” arguing that “we need to express what we are for, rather than what we are against.”<sup>18</sup> British General Frank Kitson seconded Johnson’s more positive terminology, claiming that this demonstrated that “the United States is well ahead of Britain in its thinking on the overall direction of counterinsurgency and counter-subversive operations.”<sup>19</sup> Much to Johnson and Kitson’s chagrin, however, “counterinsurgency” was still widely used throughout the Army and the rest of the United States Government.<sup>20</sup> And for better or worse, “counterinsurgency” remains the preferred label today: it titles the latest Army and Marine Corps’ field manual as well as the interagency “guide” on the subject and is regularly used in popular and academic works on the subject.<sup>21</sup>

Although the preferred term of art changed over the centuries, counterinsurgency’s characteristics have remained relatively constant. Like today, early counterinsurgencies were often interagency operations: in fact, the Marine Corps earned itself of the nickname of “State Department Troops” because it worked hand-in-glove with the former when conducting small wars.<sup>22</sup> Like today, early counterinsurgents also wrestled with the fact that “small wars break out unexpectedly and in unexpected places,”<sup>23</sup> but require in-depth knowledge of “the habits, the customs, and the mode of action on the battlefield of the enemy.”<sup>24</sup> Like today, early counterinsurgents wrestled with logistical challenges—maintaining supply and communications lines.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps, above all, early counterinsurgents held similar views of these wars as modern

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<sup>18</sup> Birtle 2006, p. 420

<sup>19</sup> Kitson 1971, p. 52

<sup>20</sup> Birtle 2006, p. 421.

<sup>21</sup> For example, see FM 3-24, 2006. USG 2009, and Kilcullen 2006/2007

<sup>22</sup> SWM 1-7, p. 11-12

<sup>23</sup> Callwell 1976, p. 43

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 33

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 57-70

soldiers do: “As a general rule the quelling of rebellion in distant colonies means protracted, thankless, invertebrate war.”<sup>26</sup>

And yet, for all the evolution in terminology over the years and all the lists of attributes, the counterinsurgency still lacks a clear and concise definition. Instead of defining the term, the *Counterinsurgency Manual* lists the dimensions of this form of warfare. “Counterinsurgency is military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat an insurgency.”<sup>27</sup> This definition—to the extent it functions as one—is problematic on several levels. Historically, counterinsurgencies have not included all the dimensions listed in the *Manual’s* definition: while almost all counterinsurgencies include a military and a political component, the degree to which counterinsurgents use economic, psychological and civic action tools vary by case. Moreover, “actions” is an all encompassing term: after all, practically anything the counterinsurgent does, however indirect, can be considered an “action to defeat an insurgency.”

For its part, the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) definition of counterinsurgency is no better. In its 2012 version “Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency,” the CIA adopts the rather bland definition of “the combination of measures undertaken by a government to defeat an insurgency.”<sup>28</sup> The CIA then infuses its definition with a presumption about how counterinsurgencies *should* rather than *are* fought: “Effective counterinsurgency integrates and synchronizes political, security, legal, economic, development, and psychological activities to create a holistic approach aimed at weakening the insurgents while bolstering the government’s legitimacy in the eyes of the population.”<sup>29</sup> This definition makes a value judgment about efficacy—a claim that first needs to be tested, before it is accepted.

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<sup>26</sup> Callwell 1976, p. 27

<sup>27</sup> FM 3-24 2006, p. 1-1.

<sup>28</sup> CIA 2012, p. 1

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Perhaps, a more rigorous definition starts with insurgencies. The *Counterinsurgency Manual* defines insurgency “organized movement(s) aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict.”<sup>30</sup> For its part, the CIA uses similar terminology, defining insurgency as “a protracted political-military struggle directed toward subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government or occupying power and completely or partially controlling the resources of a territory through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations.”<sup>31</sup>

Parsing these definitions yields five seminal characteristics of all counterinsurgencies. First, all counterinsurgencies are directed against *organized* entities. While some terrorist groups are part of insurgencies, insurgencies are larger and more organized (for academic purposes, I follow the traditional, if arbitrary political science convention of 1,000 combatants). Second, all counterinsurgencies are *movements*, not states. While some insurgencies enjoy state sponsorship and all have ambition to become states, insurgents are different than states employing irregular warfare tactics. Third, as both definitions make plain, insurgencies come in different flavors—ideological, ethno-nationalist and religious, but share a desire to overthrow a *constituted government* and control state resources. As a result, all counterinsurgencies must include the use of force to prevent the armed overthrow (i.e. the lethal component) and then a plan for governing the disputed territory afterwards (i.e. a political component). Fourth, all counterinsurgencies are unconventional conflicts. As highlighted in the CIA definition, insurgencies include *irregular military forces* and often feature guerilla warfare. Finally, all counterinsurgencies are two-sided conflicts. Counterinsurgency, in this respect, is different than genocide. While mass killing can be a counterinsurgency tactic, these efforts must be directed against a group that actively engages in *armed conflict* against the government in this

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<sup>30</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-1.

<sup>31</sup> CIA 2012

effort. With these five traits to define the pool of cases, we can now turn to what it means to win these wars.

### Understanding “Winning”: Counterinsurgency as a Two Level Game

“You know you never defeated us on the battlefield,” said the American colonel. The North Vietnamese colonel pondered this remark a moment. “That may be so,” he replied, “but it is also irrelevant.”<sup>32</sup>

Harry Summers begins his classic *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* with this telling personal anecdote from his time as negotiator in Hanoi, Vietnam in 1975. As Summers correctly notes, “we (the United States) succeeded in everything we set out to do”—except, of course, win the war.<sup>33</sup> Summers’ exchange with his North Vietnamese counterpart points to a fundamental difference between counterinsurgencies and conventional conflicts. In the latter, operational success usually aggregates into strategic victory: win multiple battles and eventually win the war. For example, during the Second World War, the United States won victories in North Africa, at Normandy, in Ardennes Forest and so on, to eventually defeat Nazi Germany. By contrast, in counterinsurgencies, one plus one does not necessarily equal two: the counterinsurgent may “win” every engagement, but lose the war, as occurred in Vietnam. As the *Counterinsurgency Manual* states, “tactical success guarantees nothing.”<sup>34</sup>

Operational success, however, is not unimportant either; it is merely incomplete to guarantee victory. For a counterinsurgency strategy to be truly effective, it must fulfill two different sets of conditions. On the one hand, the strategy must work on a political level. Ever since Carl von Clausewitz stated that “war is merely the continuation of policy by other means,”

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<sup>32</sup> Summers 1982, p. 1

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> FM 3-24 2006, p. 1-28



strategy has been seen as an outgrowth of political objectives and pressures.<sup>35</sup> The strategy must be acceptable to the counterinsurgent's domestic core constituency and increasingly, to the broader international community as well. After all, if the counterinsurgent faces a revolt at home or overwhelming international pressure, it may lose the war—regardless of its battlefield performance. At the same, the tactics prescribed must defeat the insurgents in the field: they must reflect the counterinsurgent's military capacity, target the insurgencies' vulnerabilities and adapt to local conditions.

In essence, counterinsurgency functions like Robert Putnam's two-level game. In a two level game, a negotiator must navigate between competing domestic and international requirements. Both spheres constrain the negotiators' range of options and a successful agreement can only be achieved when the two sets of requirements or "win-sets" overlap.<sup>36</sup> Although Putnam's theory was developed for trade agreements, a similar construct applies to here: victory in counterinsurgency—like in trade agreements—requires reconciling competing operational and political constraints. While this dissertation focuses on the operational side, it is important to mention how counterinsurgency's second political level also shapes strategy.

Liberal democracies, in particular, have struggled to solve counterinsurgency's two-level game, particularly when it comes to the use of force. Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, democracies faced normative and political constraints in these wars. In outlining his strategy for Algeria, Marshall Bugeaud supposedly said, "these murmurs seem to say that the [French] Chamber finds this method too barbarous. Gentlemen, war is not made philanthropically; he wills the end wills the means."<sup>37</sup> Similarly, when Sherman gave the orders for the March to the Sea, he ran headlong into a norm against punishing civilians, although in this case it was trumped by necessity. A major on Sherman's staff wrote, "It is a terrible thing to consume and destroy the

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<sup>35</sup> Clausewitz 1984, p. 87

<sup>36</sup> See Putnam 1988

<sup>37</sup> January 15, 1840 address. D'Ideville 1884, p. 300

sustenance of thousands of people,” but if it saves the Union, “it is mercy in the end.”<sup>38</sup>

Likewise, “a South Carolina woman whose house was plundered recalled that the [Union] soldiers ‘would sometimes stop to tell me they were sorry for the women and children, but South Carolina must be *destroyed* (emphasis in the original).’”<sup>39</sup>

If anything, the tension between domestic palatability and operational expediency for democracies has only increased in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As David Kilcullen observes, “modern communications compress the operational level of war, so that almost any tactical action can have immediate strategic impact.”<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Charles Townsend explained the British commitment to “minimum force” in counterinsurgency in the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

But if this was so, it was due not to military preferences but to the constraints of British law and the ingrained British political determination to maintain the supremacy of the civil power. Only where they were far distant from the sources of political control—as notably in the Sudan—were British military forces free to experiment with the ruthless use of force.<sup>41</sup>

According to Townsend, the British military only could be ruthless, when they were free of British politicians. David French makes a similar claim, although he attributes British constraints more to media attention and the growth of influential human rights groups.<sup>42</sup> Robert Taber goes one step further. “Again, they (modern democratic states) are vulnerable because they must maintain the appearance of normalcy; they can be *embarrassed* (emphasis in the original) out of office... They cannot openly crush the opposition that embarrasses and harasses them. They

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted in McPherson 1989, pp. 810-811.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 826.

<sup>40</sup> Kilcullen 2006/2007, p. 117

<sup>41</sup> Townsend 2008, p. 36. Even here, as David French notes, British supposed commitment to minimum force must be taken with a grain of salt, since through the much of the mid-twentieth century campaigns, “there was not consensus about what that principle (minimum force) meant.” French 2011, p. 82

<sup>42</sup> French 2011, p. 253

must be wooers as well as doers.”<sup>43</sup> More recent research suggest confirms Taber’s intuitions: liberal democracies are constrained in their use of force, particularly in irregular warfare.<sup>44</sup>

To a lesser extent, counterinsurgency strategy has also become bound up in promoting democracy, human rights, development and economic liberalization. During in the Cold War, development and democracy promotion were instruments to combat the spread of Communism: in fact, many United States Agency for International Development (USAID) personnel viewed such projects as “gimmickry.”<sup>45</sup> As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, development and democracy promotion became goals in their own right. As former deputy administrator of USAID Carol Lancaster argues, there developed “an international norm that the governments of rich countries should provide public, concessional resources to improve human conditions in poor countries.”<sup>46</sup> And so, today, the United States Government *Counterinsurgency Guide*, the interagency analog to the military’s *Counterinsurgency Manual*, cautions against “supporting an oppressive, authoritarian or abusive government,” fearing that “the credibility and moral authority of the United States may be tarnished or compromised by too close a relationship with such a regime.”<sup>47</sup> Instead, the United States must seek out—or else create—governments that are “fundamentally democratic” and “morally sound.”<sup>48</sup> This idea lay at the core of President George W. Bush’s so-called “freedom agenda.”<sup>49</sup> Increasingly then, democratic counterinsurgents promote democracy, human rights and economic liberalization for reasons other than operational expediency.

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<sup>43</sup> Taber 2002, p. 15

<sup>44</sup>For the debate about democracy and counterterrorism/counterinsurgency, see Pape 2003; Abrams 2007; Lyall 2010. Political constraints can also factor into counterinsurgency decisions in other ways as well—including time and causality sensitivity.

<sup>45</sup> Birtle 2006, p. 228

<sup>46</sup> Lancaster 2007, p. 5

<sup>47</sup> Department of State 2009, pp. 37-38

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 2009, p. 38

<sup>49</sup> Bush 2003

Ultimately, any study of democratic third party counterinsurgency strategy has these normative and political concerns lurking in the background and these considerations can determine whether counterinsurgents win or lose wars. That said, neither the normative nor domestic political considerations directly impact the outcome of the operational fight. Counterinsurgents can successfully pacify an insurgency *within* the disputed country—even if they are losing the broader political war raging beyond its borders. Admittedly, I deal with only one of counterinsurgency's two levels here and half of what wins these wars in the end. For the most part, I bracket what is politically prudent or ethically correct. Instead, I look at a narrower question: what makes counterinsurgencies operationally successful?

### **The Dependent Variable: Military Victory**

What, however, is “operational” success and just as importantly, how should we measure it? The answer is not straightforward: even strategic victory in counterinsurgency is controversial. John Nagl, for example, remarks, “The first point of comparison, victory, may be an unfair one, as the achievement of national objectives depends to a great extent on factor outside the control of the army conducting a counterinsurgency campaign, including geography, strength of the local government and of the insurgents, and the degree of popular support for the campaign in the nation supporting the beleaguered nation.”<sup>50</sup> Fair or not though, there is still utility in asking who won. Indeed, political scientists have categorized the outcomes of the past two hundred years of counterinsurgencies as wins, losses or draws.<sup>51</sup>

Studying “operational success,” if anything, often proves more complicated, because counterinsurgents approached these wars with very different goals. For many colonial and

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<sup>50</sup> Nagl 2002, p. 29

<sup>51</sup> I will be building off of the “DemoWar 3” dataset in Lyall 2010, which in turn is based largely on the Correlates of War project.

authoritarian conflicts, the aim was simply the population's subservience; for many Cold War American counterinsurgencies, the objective was anti-Communist regimes; today, these wars are often bound up in attempts to create liberal democracies. In order to study operational effectiveness across cases, there needs a common standard. Even within individual cases, however, political objectives change over the course of the conflict. While one could count any shift in war aims as defeats (leaving only a handful of victories), this would obscure the fact that political objectives change for the counterinsurgent's own domestic politics or because of counterinsurgencies' second level (which is, as previously mentioned, beyond the scope of this work).

And so, while I deal in passing with political objectives, my dependent variable is military victory or *when do the insurgents cease to pose an armed threat to the constituted government*. The advantage to this choice is three-fold. First, by divorcing counterinsurgency (strictly defined) from nation-building and other grander goals, it better enables across case comparisons: while political objectives vary, all counterinsurgents want to stop armed opposition the government's rule. Second, by focusing on military victory, I can bracket the counterinsurgent's domestic political and normative concerns, which as previously mentioned are topics unto themselves. Third, on a practical level, progress towards military victory tends to be easier to capture than movement towards more amorphous political objectives—like creating liberal democracies or strong allies.<sup>52</sup>

Measuring military victory, however, still is not easy. In most conventional conflicts (leaving aside pyrrhic victories), progress can be neatly measured in square miles captured and loss ratios. Not so with counterinsurgencies. Even during the darkest periods of the most prominent twentieth century counterinsurgency debacles—like Algeria, Vietnam and Iraq, the

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<sup>52</sup> To their credit, some analysts have developed proxy measures for these political objectives. For example, as applied to Afghanistan, see Kilcullen 2010, p. 51-76.

counterinsurgent enjoyed almost complete freedom of movement around the battlefield and on paper at least, very lopsided loss ratios. Sometimes progress can be marked by climatic events—like the death of Velupillai Prabhakaran in Sri Lanka’s battle against the Tamil Tigers or the fall Saigon in the Vietnam War. That said, not all counterinsurgencies have such defining moments.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, pinpointing “winning” strategies in more complex counterinsurgencies, where multiple strategies are employed roughly simultaneously, requires parsing the outcomes and adopting more nuanced measures. Add to this that all measures of effectiveness need to consistently documented across all cases and time periods for across case comparison, and the problem of measuring operational success becomes even more difficult.

Historically, three metrics typically have been consistently collected across cases. Probably, the most common metric is the number of attacks conducted by the insurgents.<sup>54</sup> This, however, is far from a foolproof measure, since the lack of activity might be either a sign of a defeated insurgency or that the counterinsurgent functionally ceding the ground. Perhaps, better metrics include the sophistication and coordination of the insurgents’ attacks, and the ratio of spoiled (e.g. roadside bombs found before detonation) to successful attacks, as proxies for the insurgent’s overall capacity to conduct operations. The latter metrics, however, are harder to come by, more difficult to quantify (particularly when it comes to judging sophistication and coordination), and to a degree, more apropos to modern counterinsurgencies than historical ones (after “found” roadside bombs is only a relevant measure, if there are bombs to find).

Second, most counterinsurgents measure their progress in terms of costs. Historically, costs are typically weighed in blood (both troops and civilians harmed) and treasure (resources spent). More sophisticated or at least more modern counterinsurgents also include measures of time (patrols conducted, hours flown, meetings attended and so on). Like incident data, costs

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<sup>53</sup> Sambanis 2004, for example, notes that most civil wars lack clear start and end dates.

<sup>54</sup> This is the metric of choice in Lyall 2009, Shapiro and Wiedmann 2011 and other studies.

are also imperfect measures: blood, treasure and time capture inputs, rather than outputs. Even inputs that attempt capture the quality of effort—such as number of intelligence driven patrols—often are imprecise and inaccurate measures (after all, what counts as an “intelligence driven” patrol?). Most problematically, focusing on costs produces a perverse incentive: perhaps, the best way to reduce costs is for the counterinsurgent to unilaterally declare victory and head home.

Finally, some counterinsurgent estimate their progress relative to the size insurgency—the number of insurgents killed, captured or “reformed” versus estimates of the total insurgency and recruitment levels. Body count metrics notoriously suffer from accuracy questions: insurgents often are not readily identifiable and so who counts as insurgents is left up to counterinsurgent who, in turn, often has incentive to inflate these numbers.<sup>55</sup> Second, body counts are only an effective measure *relative to the overall size the insurgency*. Since accurately capturing the latter metric often proves elusive, body counts—in absolute terms—is at best a half-measure. Above all, the preoccupation with body counts can lead to pernicious effects. Lieutenant Victor H. General Krulak, then the Commanding General Marine Force Pacific, “The raw figure of VC (Viet Cong) killed... can be a dubious index of success since, if their killing is accompanied by devastation of friendly areas, we may end up having done more harm than good.”<sup>56</sup>

While incidents, costs and body counts are problematic when tracking progress in real-time, ironically, these same metrics actually provide fairly accurate benchmarks for historical campaigns. Once memoirs are published and archives become accessible, it becomes relatively clear whether declines in incidents and costs are due to the counterinsurgent ceding the fight or having real success. Body counts still prove tricky even in historical cases because measuring the overall size of insurgencies at any given time is often still difficult. Insurgents—

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<sup>55</sup> One study of the Phoenix program in Vietnam found that only 1% of those targeted were likely Viet Cong. Kalyvas and Kocher 2007, p. 201.

<sup>56</sup> Nagl 2008, p. 139

either for reasons of sophistication and operational security—may not to leave behind a paper-trail. Still, from piecing together what documents do exist, post-war insurgent memoirs and the counterinsurgents intelligence estimates, one can usually arrive at least a ball park figure, making even the much maligned body count metric a useful measure of effectiveness. Add to this more tailored metrics unique to each counterinsurgency, and there begins to be a relatively clear picture of progress towards military victory. Armed with working definitions of “counterinsurgencies” and “operational success,” I now turn to the question of how best to study the relationship between the two.

### **How to Study Operational Efficacy:**

There are two principle ways to study counterinsurgency—large “n” statistical work and “micro-foundations” case studies.<sup>57</sup> While both methods have their pros and cons, large “n” approaches face a series of challenges when applied to the study of operational efficacy.<sup>58</sup> First, in terms of the key independent variable, most counterinsurgencies—particularly modern protracted ones—employ multiple different strategies simultaneously. Cross-national statistical work often cannot account for this level nuance and specify what strategies are actually producing battlefield effects. Second, as for the dependent variable, there are multiple ways to measure success in counterinsurgencies, but statistical models are often reduced to a single measure of effectiveness—typically, win, loss and draw. Finally, large “n” studies have a hard time separating operational from strategic success. Thanks to counterinsurgency’s two level nature, operational success (victory on the battlefield) is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for victory in the overall campaign. As a result of these limitations, I do not conduct

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<sup>57</sup> For example of the large “n” approach, see Abrahms 2007 and Lyall and Wilson 2009. For examples of case study method, see Kalyvas, 1999, or oft-cited individual narratives such as West 2003 or Lawrence 1991.

<sup>58</sup> For the limitations of the large n statistics, specifically applied to civil wars, see Sambanis 2004.



a large “n” study here and instead, delve deeper into specific cases to understand what worked, what did not and why.<sup>59</sup>

The question then is which of the more than 300 counterinsurgencies over the last two hundred years alone to study. I first narrow my pool of cases by time. I exclude cases that occurred prior to 1945, since only after this time period are there multiple ethno-nationalist, religious and ideological (specifically Communist) insurgencies occurring roughly simultaneously.<sup>60</sup> The post-1945 cutoff also helps hold the technology variable constant, which some suggest may be a significant factor in counterinsurgent success.<sup>61</sup> In many 19<sup>th</sup> century campaigns, “technology developed for European battlefields was often ill-adapted to colonial conditions, so that artillery or even the Gatling or Maxim guns seldom supplied the critical edge abroad.”<sup>62</sup> After 1945, this changed. Counterinsurgents—and increasingly insurgents as well—had access to a range of weapons, communication systems and transportation means that could be employed in these conflicts to great effect. As John Nagl noted, “The proliferation of portable extremely effective killing machines in the wake of World War II dramatically increased the amount of firepower available to groups wishing to overthrow the governments and continues to be a substantial problem today.”<sup>63</sup>

Second, since I am primarily interested in the implications for the western democratic counterinsurgents in general and the United States in particular, I select for only “third-party” (as opposed to local or domestic) counterinsurgents. As the *United States Counterinsurgency Guide* notes, “A nation faces very significant conceptual and practical differences between conducting COIN within its own national boundaries and intervening in a foreign country in

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<sup>59</sup> For a more complete discussion of the comparative values of quantitative versus qualitative work, see the first chapter of George and Bennett 2005, p. 3-36.

<sup>60</sup> Hoffman 2006, p. 43.

<sup>61</sup> For example, see Lyall and Wilson 2009.

<sup>62</sup> Porch 2013, p. 14

<sup>63</sup> Nagl 2002, p. 24.

support of another government.”<sup>64</sup> In particular, “local” counterinsurgents face different strategic calculations when it comes to withdrawal, and often possess different advantages too, such in depth knowledge of an area.

Third and for similar reasons, I also exclude autocratic counterinsurgents from my pool of cases. Autocracies face different political pressures and may operate within different normative constraints, especially when it comes to using force. While I am primarily concerned with operational success (and not the domestic politics side of the equation), I still want to ensure that the tactics employed at least fall within the range of what liberal democracies have been willing to do in the past, so as to increase the relevance of the findings for future liberal democratic counterinsurgents. Applying these three criteria—post 1945, third party democratic counterinsurgents—leaves 26 possible cases, with three primary counterinsurgents—the United States, United Kingdom and France (see table 1).

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<sup>64</sup> USG 2009, p. 13

Table 1: Pool of Possible Case Studies. (End dates have been updated to reflect current data)

Name of the Conflict	Dates		Counterinsurgent	Insurgent
Indochinese	1945	1954	France	Vietnam
Indonesian Independence	1945	1949	Netherlands	IPA
Shifta Insurgency (Eritrea)	1945	1952	UKG	Shifta
UKG v. Zionist movement	1945	1948	UKG	Irgun and LEHI
Madagascar	1946	1948	France	MDMR
Huk Rebellion	1946	1951	Philippines (US help)	Huk
Malagasy Revolt(Madagascar)	1947	1948	France	Malagasy
Malayan Insurgency	1950	1960	UKG	Communists
Tunisian Independence	1952	1954	France	Tunisians (Habib Bourguiba)
Kenya/Mau Mau Emergency, 1952-1956	1952	1956	UKG	Mau Mau
Moroccan Independence	1953	1956	France	Moroccan
Algerian	1954	1962	France	Algerians
British-Cypriot	1954	1959	UKG	EOKA
Cameroon Insurgency	1955	1960	France	Rebels
UKG in Aden	1963	1967	UKG	FLOSY, NLF
Colombia v. FARC	1965	2006	Colombia (US help)	FARC
Vietnam War	1965	1975	USA	Vietcong/NVA
Northern Ireland (The Troubles)	1968	1998	UKG	IRA
Philippines v. ASG/MILF	1970	2006	Philippines (US help)	ASG, MILF
El Salvador v. FMLN	1979	1992	El Salvador (US help)	FMLN
US v. Somali rebels	1991	1993	USA	Adeed
Operation Enduring Freedom	2001	2014	USA	Taliban
Operation Enduring Freedom	2001	2014	USA	Haqqani Network
Operation Enduring Freedom	2001	2014	USA	Al Qaeda
Operation Iraqi Freedom	2003	2011	USA	Sunni Nationalist/FRE
Operation Iraqi Freedom	2003	2011	USA	Saadrist
Operation Iraqi Freedom	2003	2011	USA	Al Qaeda

From this pool of cases, I choose three “best-case” scenarios for “heart and minds” strategies—namely, the Malayan Emergency, the Vietnam War and Iraq War. As mentioned before, winning “hearts and minds” was popularized by Gerald Templer. Conversely, many accounts attribute the dramatic reduction in violence during the 2007 “Iraq Surge” as due in part to the “hearts and minds” strategy’s modern embodiment in the form of the *Counterinsurgency*

*Manual*.<sup>65</sup> The Vietnam War is a more ambiguous case, since the war eventually ended a decisive American defeat. Still, some argue that the counterinsurgency portion—the conflict fought against the local Viet Cong, rather than the North Vietnamese Army—was successful.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, this success is often attributed to American adoption after 1968 of a pacification strategy and more of a “hearts and minds” friendly approach.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to these three cases, I add one more—the British during the Mau Mau Rebellion. Though the case rarely appears in modern western counterinsurgency doctrine, the Mau Mau Rebellion was fought almost simultaneously with the Malayan Emergency and many British officers—including future generals like Frank Kitson—fought in both campaigns. Despite this fact, the Mau Mau’s historical legacy could not be more different than Malaya: rather than an example of “hearts and minds,” it is often painted as a study in brutality.<sup>68</sup> This stark contrast, however, makes the Mau Mau Rebellion a useful foil to the Malaya Emergency and an insightful comparison for deciphering what does—and does not—win counterinsurgencies more generally.

Finally, I should explicitly state what is not covered by this empirical approach—namely preempting insurgencies before they ever start. While no doubt an interesting topic and prevention may be the best counterinsurgency strategy of all, identifying these negative cases and much less measuring the success of these far-sighted government policies proves empirically difficult. More importantly, the question of how to best preempt an insurgency lies beyond the scope of this work. This dissertation focuses at a point down farther down on the decision tree: once one is faced with a full-blown insurgency, what is operationally the best

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<sup>65</sup> Robinson 2008; Ricks 2009; Fick and Nagl 2009; Davidson 2010, 173-185; Boot 2013.

<sup>66</sup> For the relative failure of the VC insurgency post-1968, see Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 291, 363. Also see the more detailed quantitative metrics in the Vietnam chapter.

<sup>67</sup> For example, see Krepinevich 1986, pp. 10-16; Porch 2013, p. 206-207.

<sup>68</sup> See for example Anderson 2005

option for countering it? With this caveat noted, I turn to outlining the structure of the rest of the dissertation.

### **The Structure of Dissertation:**

I divide the remainder this dissertation into four sections. First, I define different counterinsurgency models in chapter 2 and then in chapter 3, argue why one model in particular—namely population control—should prove more effective than the leading alternative, namely a “hearts and minds” approach. In chapters 4 through 7, I turn to a series of four in-depth military analyses to test my theory. Third, chapter 8 outlines the implications of my findings both for the future of counterinsurgency strategy and research. Finally, in the appendix to this dissertation, I examine some of the central claims of “hearts and minds” theory through local polling data from three conflicts. A more detailed outline proceeds below.

Chapter 2: "Four Models of Counterinsurgency". The debates over the use of force and the role governance provide a simple but powerful way of categorizing counterinsurgency models. In this chapter, I trace the intellectual lineage of both arguments and claim that both debates can be reduced to the differences between maximal versus minimal force strategies and direct versus indirect rule. Together, these dichotomies characterize four basic strategic models, two of which— “population control” and “hearts and minds”—dominate the debate about how to fight counterinsurgencies.

Chapter 3: "A Control Based Theory of Counterinsurgency." Building on the framework outlined in the previous chapter, I dissect the “population control” and “hearts and minds” strategies and explore how both models propose that tactics translate into military victory. I argue that while “population controls” mechanisms are increasingly difficult to successfully execute in the modern age, on balance, the theory still rests on a logically

more sound foundation than “hearts and minds.” I also outline specific hypotheses when “population control” should be more effective.

Chapter 4: “Back to the Future: Victory in Malaya Revisited.” One of the most studied counterinsurgencies of the post-Second World War era, the Malayan Emergency is also one of the most misunderstood. In this chapter, I ask whether the British actually won “hearts and minds” in Malaya. Contrary to conventional wisdom, I argue that far from being a transformational event for counterinsurgency strategy, the British owed their success in Malaya to “population control” tactics, namely a traditional combination of resource denial, cooption and divide and rule policies.

Chapter 5: “Anvils and Hammers: Counterinsurgency Efficacy in the Mau Mau Rebellion.” If the Malayan Emergency is the poster child for “hearts and minds” strategies, then the Mau Mau Rebellion is usually described as an archetypical colonial counterinsurgency—a chilling use of mass punishment, with a minimal use of nonlethal inducements. Like the Malaya, the Mau Mau Rebellion is more complicated than meets the eye. In this chapter, I dissect what won Mau Mau Rebellion, and argue that it was the same combination of resource denial, cooption and divide and rule that prove so effective in Malaya.

Chapter 6: “Paved with Good Intentions: Victory and Defeat in Vietnam.” Though fought on an unparalleled scale, the Vietnam War teaches a traditional lesson. Despite the attempts of some who claim that the Vietnam War demonstrates the importance “hearts and minds,” I argue that American success against the insurgency during the second half of the war came not from economic aid or political development, but successful resource—and particularly food—denial or from same formula of population control that proved so successful in the British cases.

Chapter 7: “Sisyphus & the Surge.” Many popular accounts argue that the Iraq Surge’s success underscores the effectiveness of the *Counterinsurgency Manual*’s “hearts and minds” approach. In this chapter, I argue that this reading of Iraq is incorrect. I demonstrate how the United States actually pursued many “hearts and minds” policies early on in the Iraq War, but its counterinsurgency effort still failed miserably because it did not employ population control. I then show how Surge’s success resulted not from “hearts and minds,” but from a mixture of co-option, “divide and rule” and walls.

Chapter 8: “That Nauseating Phrase I Think Invented.” In this chapter, I turn to the policy implications of this work. In particular, I highlight three sets of lessons—about the nature of love and strategy, control and brutality, and finally, counterinsurgency and nation building. I then turn these more abstract lessons into concrete recommendations for next iteration of the *Counterinsurgency Manual* and suggest directions for future research. I finally conclude by suggesting the proper role for “hearts and minds” in a post-Iraq and Afghanistan world.

Appendix: “Neither Necessary Nor Sufficient: Popular Support and Counterinsurgency Victory.” Despite all the talk of “hearts and minds” being the key to counterinsurgency, local public opinion is rarely studied and when it is, it often yields surprising conclusions. Through analyzing polling data from Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, this appendix shows that public opinion is less malleable, more of an effect rather than a cause of tactical success, and a poor predictor of strategic victory. As a result, modern counterinsurgency doctrine’s emphasis on winning popular support at its core may need to be rethought.

**The Principle Argument & Onwards:**

Ultimately, this dissertation makes three major empirical claims. First, for all the talk of “winning hearts and minds” being crucial to victory, most successful counterinsurgencies have not been fought this way. Second, even in cases where the counterinsurgent attempted to win popular support, these efforts did not cause the counterinsurgent’s military victory. To the contrary, the counterinsurgent often needed to first defeat the insurgency on the battlefield before political or economic reforms could take hold. Finally and most importantly, the key to military victory in these conflicts is the counterinsurgent’s ability to control the population—preventing them from aiding the insurgency not because they have a change of heart but because they have no other choice.

Control can come from both lethal and nonlethal means. Most directly, population control takes a physical form—through the extensive use of walls and forced resettlement—often with the aim of resource denial, limiting the insurgency’s access to key resources (most notably food). There are also more subtle means of control—coopting key powerbrokers and securing their allegiances through a mixture of bribes and “divide and rule” strategies. Historically, these powerbrokers were kings and tribal chieftains. Today, these powerbrokers are often more nefarious characters—criminals, warlords and most importantly, the insurgents themselves.

With Iraq over and Afghanistan winding down, the United States today is reassessing its approach to these wars. And while strategy remains the focus of practitioners, current research focuses on structural explanations<sup>69</sup> or else single tactics—from building cell phone towers,<sup>70</sup> large-scale foreign aid projects,<sup>71</sup> or even drunken artillery bombardments<sup>72</sup>—in isolation not as part of a coherent strategy. This work aims to fill this void and shape this broader strategic reassessment. The task is a crucial one. Despite all the talk of American war weariness, if

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<sup>69</sup> For example, see Edelstein 2004

<sup>70</sup> Shapiro and Weidmann 2011

<sup>71</sup> Beath, Fontini and Enikolopov 2011

<sup>72</sup> Lyall 2009



history is any guide, the United States will become enmeshed in these types of conflicts again in the future. As C.E. Callwell noted more than a century ago, "But each small war presents new features, and these features must if possible be foreseen or the regular troops will assuredly find themselves in difficulties and may meet with grievous misfortunes."<sup>73</sup> And with warning in mind, I proceed to classifying different strategies in "Four Models of Counterinsurgency."

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<sup>73</sup> Callwell 1976, p. 33

## Chapter 2: Four Models of Counterinsurgency

Two opposite but equally debilitating myopias run through the study of counterinsurgency today. On the one hand, many—especially in Western democratic circles—take a monolithic approach and preach that “the cornerstone of any counterinsurgency effort is establishing security for the civilian populace.”<sup>74</sup> This, however, has not always been true: the premise was largely absent from successful democratic counterinsurgency strategy just a century ago. And even when counterinsurgency strategists agree upon an end state—like population security, they often differ on the means. Case in point, both French counterinsurgency theorist Roger Trinquier and the authors of the *Counterinsurgency Manual* agree on the need to secure the population. For the latter group, however, this focus means promoting the government’s legitimacy, encouraging political and economic development and establishing the rule of law, along with any military effort.<sup>75</sup> By contrast, for Trinquier, controlling the population means regulating “food, circulation of persons, goods, animals, etc.”<sup>76</sup> and when an insurgent is captured, “no lawyer should be present for such an interrogation” and if he still proves recalcitrant, “specialists must force his secret from him.”<sup>77</sup>

Equally problematic, others treat all counterinsurgencies as idiosyncratic. For example, an Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institute report begins, “Every insurgency is unique, requiring a unique counterinsurgency strategy. The most egregious error in conducting a counterinsurgency campaign is to attempt a cookie-cutter approach from one insurgency to another.”<sup>78</sup> Similarly, another article published the Army’s War College’s semi-official journal *Parameters* concludes, “It behooves strategists and policymakers to pay more than lip service to

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<sup>74</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-23

<sup>75</sup> Cohen et. al. 2006, pp. 49-50

<sup>76</sup> Trinquier 2006, p. 70

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 19

<sup>78</sup> Millen 2005

the notion that every insurgency is unique.”<sup>79</sup> While this assertion is empirically valid—all insurgencies (like all conventional wars) have unique characteristics, it underestimates the similarities across cases and underplays the value of across case comparisons.

And so, before studying what makes for effective counterinsurgency strategy, we need to first find the happy medium between the monolithic and idiosyncratic schools and categorize what those different models of counterinsurgency are. In this chapter, I develop such a typology by examining two of counterinsurgency’s most controversial aspects, namely how should counterinsurgents use lethal force and how involved should they be in the shaping the politics and economics of insurgency-prone societies. This chapter proceeds in three parts. In the first two sections, I trace the intellectual lineage of both debates. I claim that questions about how force should be used rests on the difference between maximalist versus minimalist theories of counterinsurgency, while the debate over governance boils down to direct versus indirect rule. In the third section, I show how these dichotomies characterize four basic strategic models, but argue that two of them—namely “population control” and “hearts and minds”—dominate Western counterinsurgency practices. With this framework in mind, I then turn exploring how, when and why on a theoretical level these two dominant models should prove effective in the next chapter—“A Control Based Theory of Counterinsurgency.”

## **Maximal versus Minimal Force**

Traditionally, coercion is divided into two forms—punishment and denial. Punishment is, as Schelling defined, “the power to hurt,”<sup>80</sup> to inflict pain on civilian and military personnel until the opposition ceases to resist.<sup>81</sup> Conversely, denial employs military force in a more targeted

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<sup>79</sup> Hoffman 2007, p. 84.

<sup>80</sup> Schelling 1966, p. 2

<sup>81</sup> See Pape 1996, p. 13

manner—degrading the opposition’s military capabilities in order to “prevent the target from attaining its political objectives or territorial goals.”<sup>82</sup> While Schelling’s work focuses on a very different context—interstate threats and war at the dawn of the nuclear age, his basic dichotomy parallels a longstanding divide in counterinsurgency strategy: should overwhelming force be used to pressure a population at large into submission (the maximalist school) or should only limited force be used against a select few key insurgents so as not to antagonize the population (the minimalist school). Indeed, as John Nagl commented, “these two different approaches—annihilating versus turning the loyalty of the people—are the foundation of the two approaches to counterinsurgency to which armies have turned throughout history.”<sup>83</sup>

The Bible records some of the earliest prescriptions of how to handle insurgencies. Throughout the Israelites’ forty years of wandering in the desert, there were a series of attempts to overturn the existing order. Some of them were religious rebellions, such as the Israelites’ mass turn to idolatry with the sin of the golden calf;<sup>84</sup> others were political rebellions, such as Korah’s attempt to challenge Moses and Aaron for the leadership.<sup>85</sup> In almost every case, however, the response was the same—mass punishment. After the golden calf, Moses commands, “each of you put sword upon thigh, go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay brother, neighbor and kin,” and the Levites—the praetorian guard of their day—went through the camp, slaughtering 3,000 to restore order.<sup>86</sup> In the case of Korah’s rebellion, “the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up with their households, all Korah’s people and all their possessions.”<sup>87</sup> To be sure, these Biblical rebellions differ from their modern equivalents (they were short-lived affairs and lacked a territorial dimension, for starters), but the message was clear: insurgencies must be ruthlessly crushed.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Nagl 2002, p. 26

<sup>84</sup> Exodus 32

<sup>85</sup> Numbers 16

<sup>86</sup> Exodus 32: 27-28 (translation: JPS 1999)

<sup>87</sup> Numbers 16: 32 (translation: JPS 1999)

The Romans also ascribed to the maximal force theory of counterinsurgency. They viewed counterinsurgency as a challenge to imperial rule, and mass punishment—often in the form of mass slaughter—provided a simple, if brutal solution. One of the most famous descriptions of the Roman pacification strategy comes from an early British tribal chieftain, Calgacus, in Tacitus' classic *Agricola*. "To robbery, butchery, and rapine, they [the Romans] give the lying name of 'government; they create desolation and call it peace."<sup>88</sup> The Romans' brutality was not simply wanton violence: it was undergirded by a strategic logic. As Josephus explains, "He [Emperor Nero] was wondering whom he could entrust the East in its disturbed state, with responsibility for punishing the Jewish upheaval and preventing the spread of infection."<sup>89</sup> Josephus' medical analogy is particularly apt: the Romans saw rebellion as a cancer which needed to be expunged before it spread to the rest of the empire. According to Josephus, the Romans followed through on their theory: more than 1.1 million Jews died—combatants and civilians alike—in the siege of Jerusalem, the grisly climax of the revolt.<sup>90</sup> In doing so, Romans sent a clear message about the consequences of rebellion. As Josephus writes towards the end of *The Jewish War*, "the purpose of the foregoing account has been less to eulogize the Romans than console their defeated enemies and to deter any who may be thinking of revolt."<sup>91</sup>

After Rome fell and empire gave way to centuries of wars in Europe, early political philosophers accepted that brutality was the price of maintaining political order. Niccolò Machiavelli, for instance, claims, "For in truth, there is no secure mode to possess them (captured cities) other than to ruin them. And whoever becomes patron of a city accustomed to living free and does not destroy it, should expect to be destroyed by it..."<sup>92</sup> Machiavelli lauds Italian Duke Cesare Borgia for counterinsurgency done right. When his newly acquired

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<sup>88</sup> Tacitus 1970, ch. 30, p. 81

<sup>89</sup> Josephus 1959, p. 176

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 337

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 381

<sup>92</sup> Machiavelli 1998, pp. 20-21

province of Romagna proved to be “commanded by impotent lords” and “full of robberies, quarrels and every other kind of insolence,” Borgia turned to Messer Remirro de Orco “a cruel and ready man” who “reduced it to peace and unity” in a short time.<sup>93</sup> Realizing that this policy might provoke a backlash, Borgia then ordered Remirro de Orco cut in two and left in the piazza, leaving the people in Machiavelli’s words “satisfied and stupefied.”<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Thomas Hobbes argues, “subjects who deliberately deny the authority of the commonwealth established the vengeance is lawfully extended, not only to the fathers, but to the third and fourth generation not yet in being... [This] is a relapse into the condition of war, commonly called rebellion and they that so offend suffer, not as subjects, but as enemies.”<sup>95</sup> For Machiavelli and Hobbes, counterinsurgency meant total war: with the very existence of the state at stake, all means were justified, no matter how brutal they might be.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, maximalist strategies grew more sophisticated, as the European colonial powers needed to control nomadic populations in the further reaches of their empires. One of the more important strategists of day was Marshall Thomas-Robert Bugeaud of France. As a young soldier, he fought against Spanish partisans during the Napoleonic War. In an 1809 letter, he summed up the problem of irregular warfare as “we are strong enough to beat the enemy, but not to pursue him after the victory. This cursed Peninsula is so large and so mountainous, that it would take three hundred thousand men to hold it in such a way to ensure its speedy subjection.”<sup>96</sup> The experience made a lasting impression on Bugeaud. Decades later, in 1836, Bugeaud led a French expedition to Algeria. Drawing explicitly on his Peninsula experience, he ordered his troops to travel light—“like the soldiers of Rome”—to pursue Arab irregular forces.<sup>97</sup> Despite their increased mobility, French troops could still not catch the Arab

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pp. 29-30

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>95</sup> Hobbes 1994: ch. xxviii, p. 23

<sup>96</sup> Letter to Mdle. Phillis de la Picconnerie, September 29, 1809. D’Ideville 1884, p. 64

<sup>97</sup> See statements in 1836. D’Ideville 1884, pp. 211-212

forces. And so, in a January 15, 1840 address to the French Chambers, Bugeaud outlined his new system of war for Africa: instead of fruitlessly chasing the Arabs across the desert, he intended to “prevent them from sowing, reaping their harvests and their cattle.” He explained, “The Arabs can fly from your columns into the desert; but they cannot remain there, they must capitulate.”<sup>98</sup> As one of Bugeaud’s intellectual heirs, General Boniface de Catellane summed up, “In Europe, once (you are) master of two or three large cities, the country is yours. But in Africa how do you act against the population whose only link to the land is the pegs of their tents? ...The only way is to take the grain which feeds them, the flocks which clothe them. For this reason, we make war on (grain) silos, war on cattle, the *razzia* (raid).”<sup>99</sup>

Advocates of maximalist strategies were not relegated to one side of the Atlantic. During the latter stages of the Civil War, on November 9, 1864, Major General William Tecumseh Sherman ordered his Corps Commanders shortly before his infamous “March to the Sea:”

In districts and neighborhoods where the army is unmolested, no destruction of such property should be permitted; but should guerillas or bushwhackers molest our march, or should the inhabitants burn bridges, obstruct roads, or otherwise manifest local hostility, then army commanders should order and enforce devastation more or less relentless, according to the measure of such hostility.<sup>100</sup>

Sherman justifies collective punishment somewhat differently than Bugeaud. Whereas the French model used collective punishment to starve the insurgents of supplies, Special Field Orders 120 sought to teach the South a brutal lesson about the consequences of rebellion. Still, like the French approach to Algeria, Sherman’s use of collective punishment was a strategy and not simply a break down in good order and discipline of his army. Moreover, it

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<sup>98</sup> January 15, 1840 address. D’Ideville 1884, p. 300

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Few 2010, p. 3. For similar 18<sup>th</sup> century policy, see General Lazare Hoche’s policies against Bourbon revolts, Porch 2013, pp. 5-6

<sup>100</sup> Special Field Orders, No. 120. Chaliand 1994, p. 762

reflected a widely-held assumption in the 19<sup>th</sup> century strategy, namely that irregular warfare necessitated brutality in response.

Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, strategists moved away from maximalist strategies to cow the population into submission and towards using force in a more targeted manner to protect the population. This shift is neatly captured by the differences between C. E. Callwell's *Small Wars* (adopted as doctrine for the British Army in 1896) and United States Marine Corps' *Small Wars Manual* (first published 1935 and then revised in 1940). For Callwell, the objective of "small wars" is "the crushing of a populace in arms and the stamping out of disaffection by military methods."<sup>101</sup> Force should be used to "overawe" the enemy in order to secure a lasting peace.<sup>102</sup> Callwell sanctions "cattle lifting and village burning" as necessary evils—citing Marshall Bugeaud's experiences in Algeria and American experiences against the Indians.<sup>103</sup> By 1940, however, attitudes towards the use of force were different. Unlike Callwell, the *Small Wars Manual* does not advocate using force to instill awe and instead, proposes the Marines adopt a more cooperative tone towards the population. Instead, it recommends, "while curing the passions of the people, courtesy, friendliness, and firmness should (also) be exhibited."<sup>104</sup> To be sure, the *Small War Manual* is far from pacifistic either: it instructs Marines to "adopt an aggressive attitude in order to seek out, capture, destroy or disperse hostile groups and drive them from the country."<sup>105</sup> Still, these two doctrinal masterpieces mark a turn in Western strategic thought.

By the 1960s, some leading strategists explicitly rejected maximalist strategies. In his landmark study *Pacification of Algeria: 1956-1958*, French Lieutenant Colonel David Galula concludes, "collective punishment is to be avoided at all cost. It only serves to unite the

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<sup>101</sup> Callwell 1976, p. 26

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 42

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 40

<sup>104</sup> Small Wars Manual 1940, p. 1-9

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 6-3



population against the authorities, more often than not without benefit.”<sup>106</sup> Similarly, drawing on the British experience in Malaya, Sir Robert Thompson argues that large scale security operations do “positive harm to the government’s cause... and psychologically suggests to the people that the guerilla mosquito is proof against the government sledgehammer.”<sup>107</sup> Importantly, Galula and Thompson did not reflect a consensus opinion of all French and British counterinsurgency practitioners at the time: some—notably, Trinquier—still viewed counterinsurgency in a far more kinetic light. Moreover, even Galula and Thompson recognize times when collective punishment is acceptable. Galula remarks, “It is different, however, when the population as a whole has to suffer indirect hindrance and harassment on account of this or that rebel or agent; then the blame is laid on a specific person.”<sup>108</sup> Similarly, Thompson notes that large scale sweeps are acceptable to “keep the insurgents off balance while the clear and subsequent hold operations are being carried out.”<sup>109</sup>

Counterinsurgency strategy today, arguably, takes Thompson and Galula’s logic to an extreme. Not only does Western counterinsurgency doctrine forbid mass punishment, but it takes a cautious approach to the use of force in general. In his influential ““Twenty-Eight Articles”: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency,” David Kilcullen writes, “Actions—even killing high-profile targets that undermine trust or disrupt your networks—help the enemy.”<sup>110</sup> He also counsels, “Try not to be distracted or forced into a series of reactive moves by a desire to kill or capture the insurgents.”<sup>111</sup> Similarly, an article encapsulating the core of the emerging new American counterinsurgency doctrine, published in the semi-official *Military Review*, argues “any use of force generates a series of reactions, so, it is best to use the

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<sup>106</sup> Galula 2006, p. 287

<sup>107</sup> Thompson 1966, p. 112

<sup>108</sup> Galula 2006, p. 287

<sup>109</sup> Thompson 1966, p. 112

<sup>110</sup> Kilcullen 2006, p. 105

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 107

minimum possible force in resolving any situation”<sup>112</sup> and “the best weapons for counterinsurgency do not fire bullets.”<sup>113</sup> And the *Counterinsurgency Manual* itself stresses “sometimes, the more force is used, the less effective it is” and “the more successful the counterinsurgency is, the less force can be used and the more risk must be accepted.”<sup>114</sup> For better or worse, one of the central tenets of today’s counterinsurgency doctrine is that all force—even targeted operations against enemy leaders—will provoke some sort of backlash and should therefore be minimized.<sup>115</sup>

To be sure, maximalist strategies never wholly went out of style. Indeed, the twentieth century contained some of the most brutal uses of maximalist strategies in counterinsurgency history. The Nazis adopted this approach against the partisans in Occupied Europe; the Soviets employed this strategy against the Ukrainian rebels and more recently, Sri Lanka employed this tactic against the Tamil Tigers. Moreover, while many now advocate minimal force strategies like those espoused in the *Counterinsurgency Manual*, there is not uniform agreement even in Western democratic circles.<sup>116</sup> Edward Luttwak, for example, argues that counterinsurgents must “out-terrorize the insurgents; [this is] the necessary and sufficient condition of a tranquil occupation.”<sup>117</sup> Still, from this brief overview of the evolution of counterinsurgency strategy, two major observations emerge: over the centuries, there has been a move from maximal to minimal force strategies in Western counterinsurgency, but there still remains an active debate about how force should be employed in this form of warfare.

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<sup>112</sup> Cohen et. al. 2006, p. 51. For the centrality of this article to the *Counterinsurgency Manual*, see Nagl 2010.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 52

<sup>114</sup> FM 3-24 2006, p. 1-27. Also see Cohen et. al. 2006; Kilcullen 2006

<sup>115</sup> Some British counterinsurgency strategists also reach a similar conclusion. For example, Mark Urban, in his study of British Special Air Service operations in Northern Ireland, concluded even precision lethal operations (which killed 32 Irish Republican Army members from 1976 to late 1987—a fraction of previous counterinsurgencies) do not lower terrorist incidents and “on the contrary, such operations carry significant human and moral costs.” (Urban 1993, pp. 238, 241)

<sup>116</sup> For modern advocates of a more kinetic version of counterinsurgency, see Luttwak 2007; Gentile 2008, 2009; West 2009.

<sup>117</sup> Luttwak 2007, p. 42

## Indirect versus Direct Governance

A similar, if somewhat less pronounced debate exists on the nonlethal side of the equation: the counterinsurgent can adopt either an indirect or direct approach to governing. With the indirect approach, the counterinsurgent co-opts and rules through a select few local representatives, assuming this indirect governance will be more acceptable to the masses and therefore, less likely to provoke armed insurrection. By contrast, with a direct approach, the counterinsurgent largely bypasses the existing elite, enacts widespread economic development and political reforms, and thereby, undercut the grievances fuelling the insurgency. Like the maximal versus minimal force dichotomy, the indirect versus direct approach debate also follows a historical progression—although it is less defined than controversy over the use of force. For much of the nineteenth century, indirect and direct governance strategies were largely viewed as a way of preempting insurgencies or consolidating power post-conflict; in the twentieth century, however, these techniques were wrapped into the conduct of counterinsurgency itself.

As with lethal strategy, the debate over nonlethal approaches traces their intellectual roots to the Romans and their use of both direct and indirect means—client kings and zones of influence—to govern their empire.<sup>118</sup> In *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*, Edward Luttwak claims that the Romans used a series of client kings—or more formally, “friends of the Roman people”—help maintain internal security of the empire.<sup>119</sup> Luttwak claims that particularly in the Julio-Claudian period, roughly from the late Republic through the first century of the Common Era, the Romans governed through puppet rulers like Herod or Cleopatra,

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<sup>118</sup> Wheeler 1993a, p. 30

<sup>119</sup> Luttwak 1976, p. 21. For on the debate whether this relationship was driven by internal or external security concerns or was even part of a strategy at all, see Isaac 1992, Wheeler 1993a, 1993b and Kagan 2006.

giving the empire a local face. “If direct Roman intervention did become necessary, its goal could be limited to the essential minimum of protecting local Roman assets and keeping the client ruler in control of his people.”<sup>120</sup> And even Luttwak’s critics accept that the Romans used client kings as a method of imperial control. Benjamin Isaac, for instance, claims that since the Romans focused on conquering people rather than land, using client kings to maintain the integrity of those nations made strategic sense.<sup>121</sup>

At the same time, the Romans also employed a direct approach to governing as well. Luttwak claims that as the Empire developed into late first and early second century, the system of client kings became increasingly troublesome: some kings proved rebellious or too weak to ward off threats, and as a result, the Empire needed to directly control its dominions.<sup>122</sup> To do so, the Romans attempted to win over the masses by inserting themselves more into the people’s daily lives. “They (the Romans) found that when the soldiers were doing constructive work which was clearly of benefit to the people, this did a great deal to make their presence acceptable and to keep the peace.”<sup>123</sup> The Romans built coliseums, aqueducts, roads and temples, partially to spread to Roman civilization but also to bind the empire together: after all, roads served as routes for Rome’s trade and troops, and temples cemented a conquered people’s loyalty often by turning Roman leaders in demigods.<sup>124</sup> As Luttwak characterizes the time period, “A growing prosperity and a voluntary Romanization [were] eliminating the last vestiges of nativistic (sic) disaffection and creating a strong base of support for the unitary regime.”<sup>125</sup> To be sure, there are differences between ancient and modern governance, but these early Roman experiences foreshadow the indirect versus direct rule choice facing later counterinsurgents.

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<sup>120</sup> Luttwak 1976, p. 25

<sup>121</sup> Isaac 1992, p. 395

<sup>122</sup> Luttwak 1976, pp. 113-114

<sup>123</sup> Clutterbuck 1980, p. 51

<sup>124</sup> Le Glay, Voisin and Le Bohec 2002, pp. 204-207, 229-231

<sup>125</sup> Luttwak 1976, p. 193

Centuries later, the colonial powers also employed indirect and direct rule strategies. Much of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century counterinsurgency literature often focused more on the logic of indirect rule. For example, while Marshal Bugeaud was known for his use of harsh maximal force strategies to pacify Algeria, he also favored ruling indigenous populations through traditional authorities whenever possible.<sup>126</sup> He reinstated the *bureaux arabes*, established relationships with the native leadership and rather than trying to turn the Arabs into Frenchmen, “tried to emulate the local society’s tribal structures.”<sup>127</sup> Bugeaud explained, “Good policy demands that for secondary jobs, we should have Arabs administering Arabs, with the French provincial and subdivision commanders in a supervising role.”<sup>128</sup> The policy was controversial: French colonists accused the *bureaux arabes* of being “more Arab than the Arabs.”<sup>129</sup> Bugeaud, however, viewed indirect rule as a strategic decision: after all, “the best way to check and to minimize (the tribal leaders’ influence) is to make them serve our purposes.”<sup>130</sup>

Other French colonial administrators adopted Bugeaud’s ideas of co-opting the local elite and structure, rather than trying to transform these societies wholesale. Serving as the French army chief of staff in Hanoi, Indochina at turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Marshall Louis-Hubert Lyautey argued, the French should:

...aim for a protectorate and not direct rule. Instead of abolishing the traditional systems, make use of them. Rule with the mandarin and not against him. Once the mandarins are our friends, certain of us and need us, they have only to say the word and the country will be pacified, at far less cost and with greater certainty than by all the military expeditions we could send there.<sup>131</sup>

For Lyautey, forming protectorates—co-opting the local mandarins, as he termed it—was the ultimate counterinsurgency tool: the strategy prevented rebellions before they ever began.

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<sup>126</sup> Sullivan 1983, pp. 94, 99-100

<sup>127</sup> Rid 2010, pp. 737-738

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 738

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 742

<sup>130</sup> Rid 2010, p. 739

<sup>131</sup> Quoted in Hoisington 1996, p. 6

Whether the French actually practiced indirect rule in its colonial holdings is debatable, protectorate theory attracted a sizeable following among French colonial administrators.<sup>132</sup>

In some respects, Sir Fredrick Lugard's concept of indirect rule parallels Lyautey's protectorate theory except in a British context. After retiring as the governor general of Nigeria, Lugard wrote a handbook on colonial rule, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, first published in 1922. In it, he noted that the British Empire consisted of Crown colonies (those officially annexed to the British Empire) and protectorates, states which "maintained [their] internal but not external sovereignty."<sup>133</sup> Lugard preferred the latter approach: he believed that the British Empire "has only one mission—for liberty and self-development on no standardized lines, so that all may feel their interests and religion are safe under the British flag."<sup>134</sup> He, therefore, advocated that the "consistent aim of the British staff [should be] to maintain and increase the prestige of the native ruler, to encourage his initiative, and to support his authority."<sup>135</sup>

Indirect rule, however, was not simply about "liberty and self-development." Quoting another former Governor of East Africa, Sir P. Girourad's 1909-1910 report, Lugard argues:

If we allow the tribal authority to be ignored or broken, it will mean that we, who numerically form a small minority in the country, shall be obliged to deal with a rabble, with thousands of persons in a savage or semi-savage state, and making themselves a danger to society generally. There could only be one end to such a policy and that would be eventual conflict with the rabble.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Porch 1986, p. 384

<sup>133</sup> Lugard 1965, pp. 35-36

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 94

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 204

<sup>136</sup> Lugard 1965, p. 216

In other words, a strategy of indirect rule—empowering and ruling through local elites—made strategic as well as normative sense: it ensured long term stability within the empire. Tinkering with these social and political structures, on the other hand, risked “catastrophe.”<sup>137</sup>

The colonial empires did not always follow this indirect approach. Particularly in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many advocates of colonial rule argued that the West should take a more direct hand in reshaping the politics and economics of their colonies, rather than governing through local elite. In 1874, in his influential book, *On Colonization by Modern Peoples*, French Academic Paul Leroy-Beaulieu claimed that “an advanced society had an economic, intellectual, social and moral duty to colonize.”<sup>138</sup> Many Frenchmen believed they had “a national duty to shed ‘the light of French Christian civilization’ on lands sunk in dark and ignorance.”<sup>139</sup> Similarly, in 1899, as the United States fought an insurgency in the Philippines, British poet Rudyard Kipling wrote of “the White Man’s burden,” a broad moral imperative to bring Western civilization to “the silent, sullen peoples of the world,” “to seek another’s profit and work another’s gain” and “fill the full mouth of famine and bid the sickness cease.”<sup>140</sup> For Kipling and many others in Victorian England, there was a moral obligation to bring political and economic enlightenment to the third world.

As with the Romans, this direct approach to governing often fell to the military to execute and also served a strategic, as well as a normative logic. While 19<sup>th</sup> century armies were primarily a tool of conquest, they also often engaged in public works projects, as part of an attempt to curry favor with masses in order to prevent insurgencies. In an 1820 note to the Quartermaster General, Zachary Taylor famously wrote, “The axe, pick, saw and trowel have

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<sup>137</sup> Porch 2013, p. 191

<sup>138</sup> Windrow 2010, p. 78

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Kipling 1989, p. 322

become more the implement of the American soldier than cannon, musket and sword.”<sup>141</sup>

Similarly, Royal Engineer officer turned academic Richard Clutterbuck observed, the British Army’s construction work throughout the empire “helped to get this soldier his reputation as ‘Britain’s best ambassador.’”<sup>142</sup>

The revolutionary wars of the 1950s and 1960s marked a turning point in the Western approach to the nonlethal aspects of counterinsurgency. Unlike previous eras where direct and indirect governance techniques were viewed as ways of either preempting insurgencies or else consolidating control post conflict, strategists now argued that nonlethal operations were another front in the wars themselves and urged counterinsurgents to “win” over the population to their cause. In his classic work on Malaya and Vietnam, *Defeating Communist Insurgencies*, Robert Thompson argues that after the Second World War upended colonial governance and pitted the British against Communist movements, their former allies against the Japanese, the government needed to regain “control of the population... and its support won.”<sup>143</sup> Similarly, perhaps the most influential strategist of this period, David Galula argues that any counterinsurgency effort must aim at “the permanent isolation of the insurgent from the population, isolation not enforced upon the population but maintained by and with the population.”<sup>144</sup>

This focus on winning over the population produced strategies that directly attempted to shape the politics, economics and even the popular opinion of insurgency-prone societies. Thompson, for example, urged counterinsurgents to provide health clinics, new schools and agricultural development projects, as a sign of the government’s benevolence and its

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<sup>141</sup> Clutterbuck 1980, p. 51

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Thompson 1966, pp. 51. For the influence of World War II on British counterinsurgency strategy, see *ibid.*, pp. 13-17

<sup>144</sup> Galula 1964, p. 57.



commitment to the population.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, Galula emphasizes propaganda to sell the counterinsurgent's message to the people during every phase of combat.<sup>146</sup> Engaged in a global battle against communism, democratic counterinsurgents needed to appeal to the population at large, not just the local powerbrokers, in order to win the broader ideological struggle.

If anything, the focus on directly reshaping insurgent-prone societies has only grown recently in modern Western counterinsurgency thought. The United States military's *Counterinsurgency Manual* (published 2006) emphasizes the need to directly and proactively mold the political and economic infrastructure of the state. It argues that three of the five "logical lines of operations" of any successful counterinsurgency campaign must spotlight developing the economy, improving governance and providing essential services in a broad-based and comprehensive manner.<sup>147</sup> For example, the essential services line focuses on "addressing the life support needs of the HN (host nation) population" in order to gain or at least not lose "the populace's respect" as whole.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, economic development seeks to address "immediate problems such as large-scale unemployment" and stimulate "indigenous, robust and broad based economic activity," not just reward the counterinsurgents' friends or buy off key elites.<sup>149</sup>

While the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* advocates direct large scale intervention in the economy and politics, the indirect rule school also remains alive and well today. For example, in his influential book *The Strongest Tribe*, former Marine and assistant secretary of defense Bing West sums up his ten counterinsurgency lessons from the Iraq War and pushes back against the premise that counterinsurgency requires reshaping societies. He argues that

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<sup>145</sup> Thompson 1966, pp. 112-113

<sup>146</sup> Galula 1964, pp. 78-97

<sup>147</sup> FM 3-24 2006, p. 5-3

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 5-14

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 5-16

“installing ‘good government’ is not a U.S. military mission” (lesson three) and that “the U.S. military has no competence to restructure an economy” (lesson six).<sup>150</sup> Instead, West advocates leaving the social structure more-or-less intact. Indeed, the title of the book comes from a statement of an Iraqi colonel during the 2004 Battle for Fallujah that “Americans are the strongest tribe” in Iraq and reflects West’s belief about how the American military should function in these situations—acting as the strongest tribe in a tribal society.<sup>151</sup> Insofar as the counterinsurgent engages in nonlethal aspects, West advocates bribing key officials and recommends that “every platoon and advisory team should have a monthly allowance of several thousand dollars to disperse for goodwill and information.”<sup>152</sup>

#### **Four Models of Counterinsurgency with Two Dominant Forms**

When taken together, these two dichotomies—maximal versus minimal force and indirect versus direct rule—produce a rough four-part typology of how, in abstract, to fight these types of wars (see figure 1). Reality, of course, is never as clear-cut as two-by-twos, as counterinsurgents often try multiple approaches within the context of a single conflict. Still, this framework captures the rough contours of many counterinsurgency campaigns.

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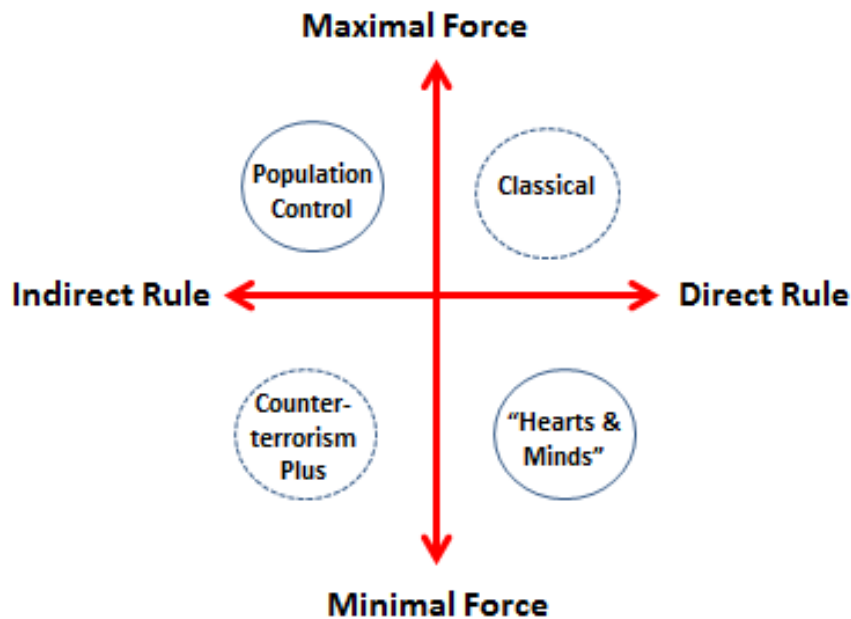
<sup>150</sup> West 2008, p. 399-400

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 361. Indeed, this arguably is a similar message to West’s previous work. In *The Village*, an autobiographical account of Marine platoon conducting counterinsurgency in Binh Nghia, Vietnam, West implicitly that Marine’s success at counterinsurgency from integrating into, not changing, this rural Vietnamese village. See West 2003.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 400

FIGURE 1:

## Four Models of Counterinsurgency



During the colonial period, there is the “population-control” model of counterinsurgency—involving mass punishment and indirect rule. At its core, the strategy operates by a relatively simple logic: in traditional societies with defined tribal or feudal hierarchies, the counterinsurgent can often buy off the local elite, turning them into its vassals or puppet rulers. When violence is needed, however, the counterinsurgent should use mass punishment both to repress the immediate threat and to send a larger message. As mentioned before, Marshall Bugeaud’s theories for governing Algeria help define the colonial model: he believed in governing through local Arab leaders, but then holding tribes collectively responsible and severely punishing it for any misdeeds.<sup>153</sup>

This approach, however, was not limited to the French: the British adopted a similar model in India. As early as 1750, the British East India Company cut deals with the various Indian

<sup>153</sup> Sullivan 1983, pp. 101-106. Additionally see the description of the French strategy of the *Razzia* in Rid 2009, pp. 632-633

principalities to slowly wrest control of India from a decaying Mughal Empire.<sup>154</sup> While this indirect form of governance slowly degraded over next century, this system was at least partially intact until 1857.<sup>155</sup> In 1857, the Company's Indian troops mutinied and the East India Company adopted a maximalist strategy in response. In the words of one East Indian Company officer, "Mutiny is like a smallpox. It spreads quickly and must be crushed as quickly as possible."<sup>156</sup> Enraged by atrocities committed by the rebels, British and loyal Indian forces eventually quelled the rebellion, sometimes using amnesty offers but also employing brutality—shooting, hanging, or blowing from the cannon suspected insurgents and looting rebel cities.<sup>157</sup>

As the colonial empires collapsed after the Second World War, the Western powers developed what is sometimes referred to as "classical" approach to counterinsurgency.<sup>158</sup> In abstract, many of the core tenets of "classical" approach resembled modern Western counterinsurgency strategy. In particular, these efforts often focused on "winning hearts and minds," often through large-scale development projects.<sup>159</sup> Beginning in Malaya and continuing on throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the British Army conducted large scale development projects in thirty four different developing countries, as part of ongoing counterinsurgency efforts or in an attempt to preempt unrest before it occurred.<sup>160</sup> Similarly, beginning in the mid-1950s, the United States turned to "development-centered counterinsurgency" models and claimed that insurgencies could be defeated with economic development, good governance and protection

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<sup>154</sup> See Bryant 2004, pp. 432-433

<sup>155</sup> By 1857, the East India Company was in direct control about two-thirds of subcontinent, with allied principalities in control of the remaining third. During this period, the East India Company increasingly adopted a policy "Anglicanization," which further interfered directly in local culture and customs. David 2002, pp. 9, 73

<sup>156</sup> John Nicholson, deputy commissioner of Peshawar. Ibid., p. 139

<sup>157</sup> For example, see the descriptions in ibid, pp. 233, 239, 328, 359

<sup>158</sup> For a discussion of the differences between modern and classical counterinsurgency, see Kilcullen 2006/7.

<sup>159</sup> The term "hearts and minds" actually originated General Henry Clinton during the American Revolution. The original formulation had a more ominous tone to it—"to gain the hearts and subdue the minds" of the Americans. Boot 2013, p. 70

<sup>160</sup> Clutterbruck 1980, p. 52

from insurgent attacks.<sup>161</sup> In fact, during Kennedy's presidency, economic development and political reform became two of the "three pillars" of the administration's counter Communism strategy.<sup>162</sup> For similar reasons, Kennedy also believed in the utility of highly-trained, foreign language-proficient Special Forces to better understand the local populations and thereby, more deftly counter Communist subversion.<sup>163</sup>

At the same time, however, Western counterinsurgents never fully abandoned the older, colonial methods. As shall be show in the subsequent chapters, while the nature of indirect rule changed during decolonization, western counterinsurgents often still co-opted and eventually relinquished formal power to their preferred local cutouts in order to accomplish their political ends—often tied to preventing Communism. Perhaps, more importantly, while classical counterinsurgents preached "minimal force," they often proved more than willing to resort to maximal force strategies in practice.<sup>164</sup> "More than a few (French officers) were ready to follow the logic of *guerre révolutionnaire* to its grisly end—in the final confrontation between Good and Evil, all means were justified."<sup>165</sup> As French General Paul Aussaresses recounts, in Algeria, "summary executions were... an inseparable part of tasks associated with keeping law and order" and "the use of torture... was tolerated if not actually recommended."<sup>166</sup> And so, the British forcibly resettled populations in Malaya, French isolated the Casbah in Algeria and the United States conducted "search and destroy" missions in Vietnam.<sup>167</sup> In some sense, the "classical" model of counterinsurgency—though in abstract best fits in the direct rule/maximal

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<sup>161</sup> Gumz 2009, pp. 563-564

<sup>162</sup> Birtle 2006, p. 223

<sup>163</sup> For example, see Kennedy 1961. Indeed, Special Forces have sometimes even been likened to "armed Peace Corps" for this reason (see Hastings 2010).

<sup>164</sup> See Dixon 2009; Reis 2011

<sup>165</sup> Shy and Collier 1986, p. 853.

<sup>166</sup> Aussaresses 2002, pp. 127-128

<sup>167</sup> For the description of Malayan strategy summed up as punishment with direct economic rewards and its application to Vietnam, see Tanham 2006, pp. 72, 98-99

force quadrant—in reality layered elements of a modern “hearts and minds” approach on top of colonial style “population control” strategies.

In the rebirth of counterinsurgency after 9-11 (and more specifically, mid-way through the Iraq War), strategy moved more firmly into the “hearts and minds” camp, stressing a direct approach to governing and minimal force. Like the 1950s and 1960s, American counterinsurgency efforts tried to proactively and directly reshape the politics and economics of both Iraq and Afghanistan for political/normative reasons, but also for strategic ones as well. For example, in their influential *Military Review* article, then Major General Peter W. Chiarelli and Major Patrick R. Michaelis attribute 1<sup>st</sup> Calvary’s success in Sadr City, Baghdad to its focus on sewage, electricity and water projects for all the city’s residents. And while all acknowledge a need to use force, they argue that counterinsurgency problems occur when the nonlethal side gets short shrift vis-à-vis more kinetic operations.<sup>168</sup>

If current American counterinsurgency doctrine preaches an ambitious and broad-based approach to nonlethal strategy, then its lethal strategy tends to be targeted, if constrained. Indeed, despite all the attention given to civilian casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan, Coalition Forces actually was far more restrained than in previous eras and only became progressively more concerned about sparing civilian populations as the conflicts progressed.<sup>169</sup> For example, in his “commander’s guidance” for Iraq, General David Petraeus stressed that Coalition forces should “identify and pursue Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and other extremist elements tenaciously.”<sup>170</sup> At the same time, not only were maximalist strategies not allowed, Petraeus warns, “we cannot kill our way out of this endeavor” and must attempt to politically reconcile—rather than simply capture or kill—as many insurgents as possible.<sup>171</sup> As Petraeus counterinsurgency adviser

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<sup>168</sup> Chiarelli and Michaelis 2005, pp. 4-5, 17

<sup>169</sup> See Kahl 2007

<sup>170</sup> Petraeus 2008, p. 2

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. pp. 2-3

David Kilcullen explains, any foreign intervention—particularly in terms of lethal operations—will prompt local backlash and fuel the insurgency.<sup>172</sup> And so, any kinetic operation—however targeted—bears some cost.

Today, some advocate a “counterinsurgency light” or “counterterrorism plus” model, characterized by minimal force and an indirect approach to governance, as an alternative to the full-fledged “hearts and minds” approach.<sup>173</sup> This model limits activity to targeting insurgent networks and working with a select few local actors on the nonlethal aspects, but avoids large-scale attempts to promote economic development or enact political reforms. In other words, rather than attempting to find a grand strategic solution and decisively defeat the insurgency in a single blow, the “the counterterrorism plus” approach advocates a more modest, tactical approach—slowly wearing down an insurgency through attrition, but leaving the fundamental fabric of these societies more-or-less unchanged.

There are a handful of examples of the “counterterrorism plus” option being shaping national strategy. One prominent articulation of this model came from Vice President Joseph Biden, his national security adviser Tony Blinken and General James “Hoss” Cartwright’s vision for Afghanistan, prior to the so-called “Afghan Surge.” Instead of reshaping Afghanistan, the United States should send 20,000 troops—half dedicated to conducting precision raids against the Taliban and Al Qaeda forces and half dedicated to preparing the Afghans to take over governance and security for themselves.<sup>174</sup> In the end, the Obama Administration did not adopt this strategy, but rather chose a larger-scale “hearts and minds” approach instead. There are, however, cases where “counterterrorism plus” did become official policy. Considering just the American experience for a moment, arguably, the campaigns in Philippines and Yemen also fit

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<sup>172</sup> See Kilcullen 2009, p. 37

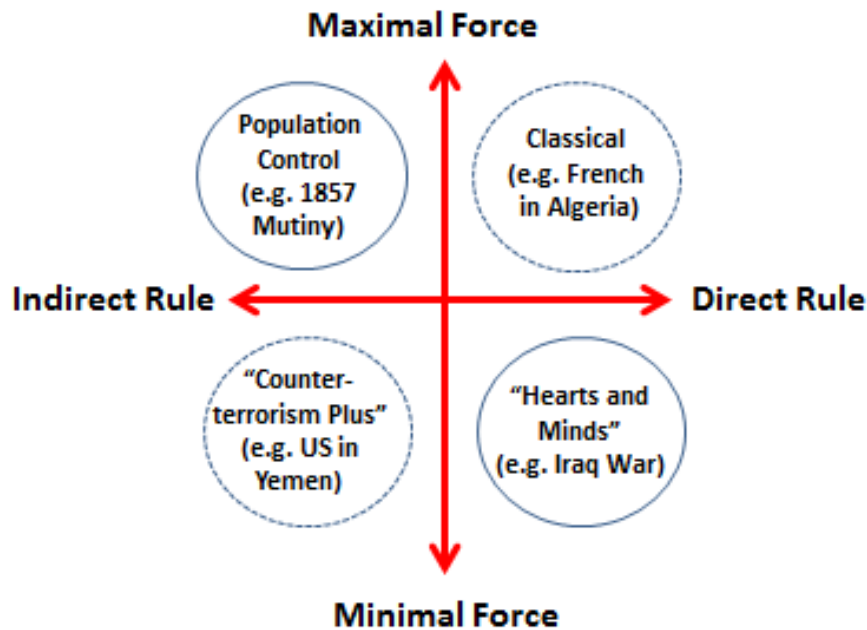
<sup>173</sup> Youssef 2010; Also see Woodward 2010, p 102

<sup>174</sup> Woodward 2010, pp. 159-160; 236-238

neatly into this model, as well the American support for Philippines efforts first against the Huk Rebellion and now, Abu Sayyaf.<sup>175</sup>

FIGURE 2:

## Four Models of Counterinsurgency



Ultimately, while a cursory glance of the development of Western counterinsurgency reveals historical examples of all four types (see figure 2), not all these approaches are of equal importance. In particular, two modes tend to dominate the debate—the “population control” (which characterizes much of 19<sup>th</sup> century warfare) and the “hearts and minds” model (which as embodied the *Counterinsurgency Manual* is, arguably, dominant paradigm today). While “classical” campaigns—like the British in Malaya—are so often held up as triumphs of innovative counterinsurgency strategy, as shall be shown in the forthcoming case studies, they often represented a hybrid of older, colonial and more modern strategies—rather than a new,

<sup>175</sup> For an examination of this small footprint, special operations heavy approach to counterinsurgency, specifically in the Philippines, see Maxwell 2004, 2013.



coherent model in their own right.<sup>176</sup> By contrast, the “counterterrorism plus” model, though often talked about, have at so far have been largely, relegated to smaller, lesser known and arguably, less important conflicts. And so going forward, the “population control” and “hearts and minds” approaches will dominate much of the analysis.

## **Onwards:**

Counterinsurgency has taken many forms over the centuries and the way the *Counterinsurgency Manual* recommends fighting these conflicts wars historically has not been the way all strategists have approached this problem. In particular, two central debates run through the counterinsurgency literature, between maximal versus minimal lethal force strategies and between indirect versus direct nonlethal strategies. Together these two dichotomies outline in abstract four rough strategic archetypes—a “population control” model, a “classical” model, “heart and minds” model and finally a “counterterrorism plus” model. Of course, in reality, warfare is far messier than this neat typology allows and often multiple approaches are employed within a single conflict. Still, this framework helps strike a balance between monolithic and idiosyncratic myopias that so often plague the study of counterinsurgency. From this foundation, we can now exploring the logic that undergirds the two dominant paradigms—“population control” and “hearts and minds”—is the subject for the next chapter, “A Control Based Theory of Counterinsurgency.”

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<sup>176</sup> For example of classical counterinsurgency be heralded as breakthrough in innovation, see Nagl 2002

## Chapter 3:

# A Control Based Theory of Counterinsurgency

“If a tactic works this week, it might not work next week; if it works in this province, it might not work in the next.”<sup>177</sup>

Too many discussions of efficacy in counterinsurgency begin and end with caveats like this one from the *Counterinsurgency Manual*. The statement is, of course, true but also less than useful. Counterinsurgency—like all forms of warfare—is a dynamic environment, where the combatants are constantly trying to undermine their rivals’ plans and gain the upper hand. As a result, there are no surefire silver bullets for either side. That said, while individual tactics may become outmoded, broad strategies—like the dichotomies between maximal and minimal force and direct and indirect rule outlined in the previous chapter—have longer life spans. More importantly, for the study and practice of counterinsurgency to progress, then we must move beyond “it may not work” caveats and answer the more thorny question of “what works when.”

Over the next three sections, I propose that contrary to the *Counterinsurgency Manual*’s statement, the core of successful counterinsurgency actually has remained relatively constant in recent years and revolves around successful population control. First, I explain how “population control” works, situate it within the broad dichotomies about force and rewards from the previous chapter and outline three primary methods of control—physical, cooption and divide and rule. Second, I explain why successful population control may prove challenging in the modern age and outline hypotheses when each of its three principle mechanisms should work prove cost

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<sup>177</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-28

effective. Third, I consider the logic of population control's most prominent rival at least for liberal democratic counterinsurgents today, namely “hearts and minds” strategies, and explain why these strategies often prove impractical. Ultimately, I claim that military victory in modern counterinsurgency has little to do with winning “hearts and minds” and everything to do with controlling them.

### **A “Population Control” Theory of Victory:**

While counterinsurgents often try attrition strategies—killing, capturing or reforming insurgents in effort to cause the insurgency’s collapse from a lack of members, these strategies often run into significant problems. First, in order for attrition to work, counterinsurgents need the capability to identify and target insurgents—which often is no small feat.<sup>178</sup> Second, attrition takes time, since counterinsurgents must exhaust the insurgency’s regenerative ability. And as mentioned before, especially where withdrawal is an option, time often is not on the counterinsurgents’ side. Third and most importantly, for attrition to be successful, counterinsurgents must maintain a favorable insurgent loss to recruitment ratio and therefore, must attempt to control both sides of the equation. And while counterinsurgents can control how many insurgents it kills and captures, denying the insurgents’ ability to recruit proves trickier. After all, insurgents—like many terrorists—are inherently engaged a risky, if suicidal enterprise and therefore, may not be easily deterred from joining.<sup>179</sup> As a result, attrition strategies need to be combined with additional methods to ensure victory.

Population control operates a lot like a naval blockade or a conventional siege. All insurgencies need the local population to provide them with combatants and resources. These

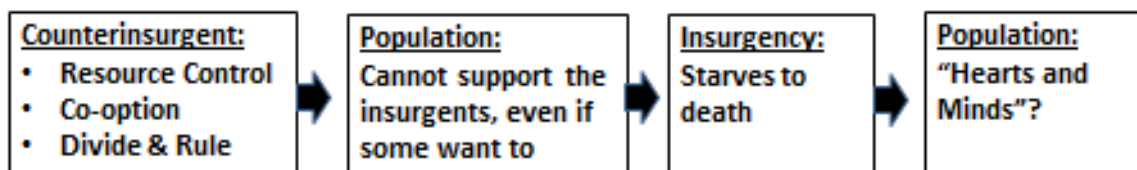
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<sup>178</sup> For the debate about technology and its role in allowing for the successful targeting of insurgents, see Galula 1964, pp. 54, 68; Kitson 1971, pp. 137-139; Lyall and Wilson 2009

<sup>179</sup> For a sample of the debate particularly about deterring terrorists, see Jenkins and Davis 2002; National Security Strategy 2002; Pape 2003, 2005; Trager and Zagorcheva, 2005/6; Schmitt and Shanker 2012; Frankel 2013

resources can include military-related items (e.g. weapons and ammunition) and intelligence, but almost more importantly, often are basic life necessities—food, clothing and shelter. After all, if insurgents spend their days fighting the government, then they will need an alternative means of supporting themselves. The extent to which the insurgencies require this support depends on both supply (e.g. degree of foreign backing) and demand factors (e.g. size of the insurgency).<sup>180</sup> That said, even those insurgencies with significant foreign backing—like the Viet Cong in Vietnam or more recently, the Taliban in Afghanistan—often face significant logistical constraints in moving supplies in from abroad and consequently, must raise much of their nonmilitary resources—like food—from the local population. Population control severs this lifeline, denies the insurgency its’ lifeblood and functionally (and sometimes literally) starves it to death.<sup>181</sup> To do so, counterinsurgents rely on three primary mechanisms—physical control, indirect rule/cooption, and divide and rule (see chart 1).

CHART 1: Logic of Population Control



First and most directly, the counterinsurgent can use physical means to control the population—namely, walls, forced resettlement and resource denial. Walls have a long, if sordid history in counterinsurgency—not just protecting the population, but preventing them from aiding the insurgency.<sup>182</sup> Walls force people to travel through a finite number of access points, where security forces can check travelers for contraband. Taken to its extreme, walls

<sup>180</sup> For the negative impact of foreign safe havens on counterinsurgency efforts, see Salehyan 2007

<sup>181</sup> For the starvation tactic explained, D’Ideville 1884, p. 300; Trinquier 2006, p. 70; Joes 2008, p. 42

<sup>182</sup> West 2008, p. 284

can prevent the population from moving altogether, blockading trade and enforcing a defacto form of house arrest until the insurgency subsides.

Walls are often used in tandem with forced resettlement. After all, walls only work insofar as there are sufficient guards to patrol the perimeter and man the checkpoints. If every populated area needed to be secured this way, counterinsurgents likely would face exorbitant demands on their manpower.<sup>183</sup> As Benjamin Valentino argued about colonial powers, “The purpose of an empire is to extract wealth from conquests, but empires would be prohibitively expensive to maintain if each subject city, state, or province had to be defeated by force and then policed to a man.”<sup>184</sup> An expedient solution to this problem typically has been to centralize the population, consolidating smaller outlying villages into guarded camps.

Finally, in perhaps the most draconian form of physical control, counterinsurgents can limit the population’s access to resources as an indirect means to starve the insurgency itself. Taken to its natural end, the logic of resource denial eventually justifies mass killing—where the population stops supplying the insurgency because there is no one alive to do so.<sup>185</sup> As Benjamin Valentino commented, “Some regimes have found it easier, therefore, to wage war against a guerilla army by depriving it of its base of support in the people than by attempting to target the guerillas directly. In the terms of Mao’s analogy, this strategy seeks to catch the fish by draining the sea.”<sup>186</sup> While thankfully only a handful liberal democratic, third-party counterinsurgents have resorted to such methods, many—including the United States and the United Kingdom—have engaged in food denial.<sup>187</sup> Food denial often builds on the previous two

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<sup>183</sup> For the debate over manpower and counterinsurgency, see Quinlivan 1995/1996 and Friedman 2011

<sup>184</sup> Valentino 2004, p. 89

<sup>185</sup> For an example of this argument, Valentino, Huth and Balch-Lindsay 2004. Of note, the authors cast doubt on the efficacy of this approach. *Ibid.*, p. 403

<sup>186</sup> Valentino 2004, p. 82

<sup>187</sup> For example, Valentino, Huth and Balch-Lindsay’s dataset of mass killings during guerrilla conflicts only three would meet the criteria of liberal-democratic, third-party counterinsurgents—the French in Indochina (1945-1954),

physical control measures. Once the population is centralized in guarded areas, counterinsurgents then reduce the population's food supplies to subsistence levels and give the population an ultimatum: stop feeding the insurgents or risk starvation. In sum, on the maximal-minimal force spectrum outlined in the previous chapter, physical control strategies represents maximal force: even without mass killing, wall, resettlement and resource denial strategies inherently involves brutal collective punishment.

There are also nonlethal methods of control—starting with indirect rule. As mentioned in the previous chapter, historically, imperial counterinsurgents often co-opted—rather than supplanted—local governance structures to control conquered territories. Theoretically, this policy offered a number of benefits. First, it preempted rebellions. By working through local proxies, it avoided the foreign power directly interfering with daily life and shifted some of the onus for controversial decisions to these local cutouts. Second, coopting local elites was expedient. The counterinsurgent could exploit an already established hold over the population for its own purposes, rather than reinvent the wheel. Importantly, cooption was not about creating true local self-government, but rather subordinating these local proxies to the counterinsurgents' aims. As Daniel Byman remarks, “cooptation, however, differs from true power sharing. Co-opted leaders do not have a genuine voice in the political process, and as a result their communities benefit far less.”<sup>188</sup>

Cooption worked particularly well in feudal or tribal societies. After all, these societies have clear social hierarchies with a few well-entrenched leaders—be they kings or tribal chieftains—sitting atop these pyramids. For example in his explanation of why cooption as a pacification strategy worked particularly well in the Middle East, Daniel Byman focuses on the “high level of

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the French in Algeria (1954 to 1962) and the United States in Vietnam—and the Algeria case is questionable since it was formerly part of France at the time. Valentino, Huth and Balch Lindsay 2004, pp. 403-404

<sup>188</sup> Byman 2002, p. 82

stratification of Middle Eastern Societies.”<sup>189</sup> As a result, there are “individuals who command disproportionate power due their ability to convince, buy, or otherwise force others to their bidding.”<sup>190</sup> Of course, even here, cooption is not completely cost free. At very least, counterinsurgents often must bribe these local leaders with promises of wealth, power or status and often must accept the additional inefficiency that comes from working through these local intermediaries. That said, as Byman concludes, “Despite these limitations, it is important to remember that cooptation has few disadvantages relative to its rewards. Unlike [direct] control [of the local population], it simply fails rather than backfires.”<sup>191</sup>

Bribes, however, only work so far and eventually, coopted leaders may wonder whether they might be better off striking out on their own or trying to cut better deals with rival forces. And so, counterinsurgents often couple greed with fear to ensure control. This, in turn, raises a follow on question: how best to scare the population into submission. Of course, counterinsurgents can always threaten the population with repercussions for “bad” or “disloyal” behavior, but this approach risks prompting a popular backlash against its rule. As Niccolò Machiavelli advised, a Prince should “contrive to avoid hatred.”<sup>192</sup> Far better, Machiavelli argued, for someone else to do the dirty work.<sup>193</sup> More recent scholarship seems to confirm Machiavelli’s intuition. Rather than deterring bad behavior, mass punishment can easily encourage populations to “rally around the flag” and strengthen their resolve to resist.<sup>194</sup> In other words, rather than forcing the population into submission, blunt uses of force can inflame the rebellion.

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p. 83

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Byman 2002, p. 99

<sup>192</sup> Machiavelli 1998, p. 68

<sup>193</sup> For example, Machiavelli tells how one of his heroes Cesare Borgia used Messer Remirro de Orco “a cruel and ready man” to put down a rebellion in Romagna, but then had Remirro killed and body publically displayed, leaving “people at once satisfied and stupefied.” Ibid., pp. 29-30.

<sup>194</sup> See, for example, Pape 1996, 1997 and 1998

Consequently, a far more effective option is often “divide and rule strategies”—the third leg of population control. Essentially, the counterinsurgent pits factions against each other, often by privileging certain groups at the expense of their peers. This strategy solves the disloyal elite problem by making them dependent on the counterinsurgent, not only for their pocketbooks but also for their very lives. After all, should the counterinsurgent fall, loyalists can often face bitter reprisals at the hands of their previously disenfranchised rivals, which in and of itself can be a powerful driver of loyalty. As a result, divide and rule strategies have been the staple of many counterinsurgency successes. Oxford historian Hew Strachan, for example, attributes divide and rule strategies as one of the primary reasons why the British won in Malaya and Kenya—dividing Chinese from Malay, landowning from dispossessed Kikuyu.<sup>195</sup>

Ultimately, a “population control” strategy’s theory of victory rests on compliance by coercion. Sometimes, coercion takes a physical form—forced resettlement into walled off enclosures and denying the population access to key resources. Other times, coercion is more psychological nature—playing off of individuals’ greed and fear. At no time, however, is population control particularly pretty or popular. At its core, it means embracing nefarious but influential elements while punishing innocents, all in an effort force the population into a position where it must submit to the counterinsurgents’ will. And as this happens, the population control argues that the insurgency—as measured through violent incidents, body counts, recruitment ratios and others—should be on its decline, as it slowly starves to death (table 1).

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<sup>195</sup> Strachan 2007, pp. 9-10



Table 1: The Indicators of Successful Population Control

The Insurgency Will Decrease After...	Measures
...the counterinsurgent walls off population centers, even if such a policy is unpopular	Popularity of the policy can be judged from memoirs, polling data, interviews
...counterinsurgent resettles the population, even if such a policy is unpopular	Popularity of the policy can be judged from memoirs, polling data, interviews
...counterinsurgent reduces the population's food supplies	Starvation (insurgent prisoner reports, memoirs, etc.)
...the counterinsurgent bribes former guerillas and local leaders	Cooption of a single leader causing mass defections
...as the counterinsurgent exploits sectarian fears	Cooption of vulnerable minority populations

At the same time, successful population control often requires counterinsurgents to walk a fine line. If counterinsurgents underestimate the amount violence, they may only succeed in antagonizing the population. Conversely, if counterinsurgents overestimate the amount violence, they may well produce a pyrrhic victory. Indeed, Madagascar administrator and French General Joseph Gallieni curtailed the collective punishment as a tool of counterinsurgency in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century for this reason. He explained, "It is necessary to treat the country and its inhabitants decently, since the former is intended to receive colonial enterprises and the latter will be our principle agents and collaborators to carry those enterprises to fruition."<sup>196</sup> Arguably, the same is true with nonlethal methods of control. Bribe too few people and be unable to control population; too many and be vulnerable to extortion. Similarly, divide and rule strategies—if overdone—can cause a full blown sectarian civil war that even powerful third-party counterinsurgents cannot control. In sum, population control's brutality must be done strategically, but done correctly, it offers a relatively reliable and effective means to bring an insurgency to its knees.

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<sup>196</sup> Chaliand 1994, p. 814

## When Does Population Control Work?

Population control has become progressively more difficult to successfully employ in the modern era. For starters, firearms and black market trade can hamper the counterinsurgent's ability to implement physical control measures. At the turn of last century, C. E. Callwell, presciently observed, "Even savages, who a few years ago would have defended themselves with bows and arrows, are often found now-a-days with breach loading rifles—the constant smuggling of arms into their territories, which the various Powers concerned seem wholly unable to suppress, promises that small wars of the future may involve very difficult operations."<sup>197</sup> Not only does the proliferation of firearms complicate any attempt to restrict access to weapons, but they also negate the need for insurgents to be physically strong or particularly skilled to pose a threat. As French counterinsurgency theorist Camille Rougeron noted, "When armor was a luxury only a few warriors could afford, it conferred on them such superiority that the warrior had nothing to fear from the wrath of the locals. The advent of the crossbow and more so, of firearms turned the tables in favor of those who could set an ambush."<sup>198</sup> Moreover, modern weaponry allows insurgents to operate smaller groups and still inflict serious damage.<sup>199</sup> In sum, technology broadens the pool of potential insurgents, increases each insurgent's individual lethality and necessitates that the counterinsurgent to adopt even more invasive physical control measures.

As a result, physical control strategies work best under certain conditions. Most directly, physical control strategies work best with a permissive international environment and a domestic public supportive of or at least apathetic to the employment of these tactics. While this

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<sup>197</sup> Callwell 1976, p. 24

<sup>198</sup> Rougeron 1982, p. 39

<sup>199</sup> For the relative ineffectiveness of the 19<sup>th</sup> century insurgencies against conventional armies, see Hoffman 2006, p. 83; Laqueur 1975, p. 376.

is possibly the most important precondition to the counterinsurgent's implementation of successful physical control strategies, the domestic public and international reactions to counterinsurgency tactics fall—as mentioned in the first chapter—in the “second level” of counterinsurgency's two level game, shaping what wins the wars politically, rather than operationally, and so, mostly outside the scope of this dissertation. As a result, these conditions are not examined in any depth here.

Other conditions, however, can partially mitigate the operational challenges posed by illicit trade and broadening insurgent support bases. First and most obviously, physical control strategies work best when the insurgency draws its support from distinct minority groups. Practically speaking, the problem with physical control strategies—particularly with walls and forced resettlement—is that the counterinsurgent rarely has capability to detain everyone. And so, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a minority population, it allows the counterinsurgent to better concentrate its resources. Similarly, the counterinsurgent can better target its detention practices if the insurgent's support base looks visibly different from the general population. Importantly, in both cases, detention remains a relatively blunt instrument—detaining entire groups, with little determination of individual guilt.

H<sub>1A</sub> Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a minority group.

H<sub>1B</sub> Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a distinct group.

More subtly, physical control often proves more decisive against rural insurgencies, since they often have more vulnerable to supply shortages. While mountains, deserts and jungles provide insurgents places to hide, train and plan, these locations rarely supply sufficient quantities of basic life staples—shelter, clothing and above all, food—to sustain large military

forces absent supply lines running from major population centers.<sup>200</sup> In other words, rural insurgencies' austere living conditions create exploitable vulnerabilities. Moreover, while rural insurgencies' support bases may be intermingled with the rest of the population in cities, the combatants depend on desolate terrain, rather than people, to hide and protect them.<sup>201</sup> While this may not make the insurgents any easier to hunt down per se (mountains, jungles and deserts cause their own problems for the counterinsurgents' targeting efforts), the physical separation between the insurgency's passive wing and its actual combatants allows the counterinsurgent—through walls and force resettlement—to more easily restrict the flow of key resources of the insurgency.

Urban insurgencies, by contrast, are not nearly as vulnerable to resource denial. First, urban insurgents have easier access to key resources. Obviously, urban insurgents can more readily obtain shelter and clothing in major cities, than those in jungles and mountains. And while urban insurgents may not be able to grow or hunt their own food like their rural counterparts, they can usually simply purchase or steal the goods they need. While counterinsurgents can attempt rationing, few can fully prevent a black market trade for critical items. More importantly, unlike rural insurgencies, the combatants may be intermingled with the general population, complicating—if not preventing—any effort to starve these insurgencies into submission.<sup>202</sup>

H<sub>1c</sub> Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, when employed against rural insurgencies.

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<sup>200</sup> Fearon and Laitin 2003

<sup>201</sup> Example of rural insurgencies that fit this pattern are the Malayan Emergency, the Mau Mau Rebellion and to a certain extent, Vietnam as well.

<sup>202</sup> The exception to this, of course, is if an urban insurgency draws its support primarily from one religious, racial or ethnic group and the city is subdivided into ethnic enclaves. In this case, the counterinsurgent may be able to wall off the support base in much the same way as it can against a rural insurgency.

Cooptation also proves more difficult in the modern age, as tribal and feudal societal structures have broken down.<sup>203</sup> With the growth of Communism, insurgencies became popular revolts, not just the rebellions of disgruntled elites. As Walter Laqueur characterized Friedrich Engels' philosophy, "*levée en masse*, revolutionary war, guerillas everywhere—this was the only means through which a small people could defeat a bigger one, by means of which an army could resist a stronger and better organized one."<sup>204</sup> John F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey even believed that "Maoist revolutionary warfare represented nothing less than 'a bold new form of aggression which could rank in military importance with the invention of gunpowder.'"<sup>205</sup> And while Communism has mostly vanished as a political force, the boundless, egalitarian natures of insurgencies have not, nor have developed societies regained defined social hierarchies. As a result, answering the "who" to coopt question in modern counterinsurgencies proves considerably more difficult.

For many counterinsurgents, the answer has been to co-opt the guerrillas themselves. In abstract, this approach provides multiple advantages. Most directly, since the counterinsurgent and insurgent are locked in a zero-sum game, every guerilla turned is one fewer insurgent to kill or detain. Additionally, co-option can spread distrust within the insurgency, as combatants cannot differentiate between "loyal" insurgents versus former compatriots turned government agents. Moreover, co-opting guerillas can provide a wealth of intelligence information: after all, who better to find and hunt insurgents, than their former comrades. Finally, particularly if the co-opted insurgents are senior figures or from an elite subset within the insurgency, the counterinsurgent also can hope for a cascade effect, triggering mass defections to the government side.

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<sup>203</sup> Douglas Porch argues even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, indirect rule was often based on "a romanticized, Orientalized Western vision of a timeless indigenous society." Porch 2013, p. 58

<sup>204</sup> Laqueur 1975, p. 372

<sup>205</sup> Birtle 2006, p. 224

H<sub>2</sub> Cooption strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, when targeted against the insurgents themselves.

At the same time, co-opting insurgents also poses significant challenges. First, co-opting insurgents often proves challenging. Religious and ideological insurgents—assuming they believe in their causes—may be less inclined to be “bought” through promises of wealth, power or prestige. Second, counterinsurgents also need to ensure these insurgents’ loyalty and that they are not, in fact, double agents. Third, individual insurgents may matter less to the survival of modern insurgencies. Already in the first mid-twentieth century, Mao Zedong—perhaps the most important insurgency strategist of the age—stressed egalitarianism, minimizing the distinctions between the insurgents’ previous professions and between the officers and the men.<sup>206</sup> And insurgencies are increasingly “flat” today: as David Kilcullen argues, modern insurgencies “employ diffuse, cell-based structures resembling ‘leaderless resistance’ and create “mass movements without mass organization.”<sup>207</sup> Finally, because cooption targets guerrillas rather the population at large, this strategy may not prevent new insurgent groups from challenging the counterinsurgents’ rule. And so while co-opting insurgents still can provide the counterinsurgent with distinct advantages, cooption as a strategy may not be as powerful a tool as it was in earlier eras.

Finally, divide and rule strategies also have become increasingly complicated primarily because of shifting strategic objectives. Pitting factions off of each other to enhance the power of the third-party counterinsurgent makes sense, if the third-party plans to control the territory for the long-haul. If, however, the counterinsurgent hopes to quickly depart and leave behind a liberal democratic state in its wake (as the United States intended to do in Iraq and Afghanistan), then counterinsurgent can be caught in a political-military conundrum. From a

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<sup>206</sup> Kitson 1971, pp. 73, 91

<sup>207</sup> Kilcullen 2006/2007, pp. 118-119. For discussion of new media’s impact on terrorism and insurgency, see Stern 2003, pp. 33-35; Hoffman 2006, pp. 197-228

military standpoint, the more the factions hate each other (relative to the third-party), the more likely divide-and-rule strategies will succeed at controlling insurgency in the short-term. From a political standpoint, however, the more factions hate each other, the less likely the counterinsurgent will be able to create long-term stability.

Bracketing this catch twenty-two for a moment and focusing only the military aspect, “divide and rule” strategies are particularly effective at controlling violence, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a distinct, minority population. Third-party counterinsurgencies are often bound up in civil wars, with the local population splitting their support between the counterinsurgent and insurgent. In this context, minorities can be forced into precarious positions, especially if they align with one side and if, as result, the civil war then turns to ethnic cleansing. In this case, the counterinsurgency becomes not just a war for who governs, but who survives. While this may not bode well for future stability, in the short run, a third-party counterinsurgent can leverage this fear by becoming the guarantor the minority’s safety in exchange for them ceasing support for the insurgency. By contrast, majority populations may need to fear for their survival to the same degree, lessening counterinsurgents’ leverage and overall effectiveness of divide and rule strategies.

H<sub>3</sub> Divide and rule strategies will be more successful when the insurgency comes from a minority group.

Ultimately, successful population control is not easy. Particularly, as norms against collective punishment strengthen, as insurgencies cease to be tribal or feudal affairs, and counterinsurgents increasingly want to not conquer territory but to build free and independent states, population control has become increasingly difficult to execute successfully. Even on a strictly military level, population control is not equally effective everywhere. Certain conditions—particularly if the insurgents represent a distinct, minority—enable the successful implementation of these strategies. That said, as difficult as it is to successfully employ

population control in the modern era, its principle alternative—namely wining “hearts and minds”—may prove untenable as a strategy.

### **Why “Hearts & Minds” Does Not Work:**

Perhaps, due to the challenges with “population control,” western liberal democratic counterinsurgents today increasingly opt for an alternative approach altogether—namely a “hearts and minds” strategy. To begin, it is worth noting that “hearts and minds” is not always a single, coherent theory: the term started off more as a slogan rather than a full-fledged strategy. To extent there is a consensus about what a “hearts and minds” strategy consists of today, however, it can be found in works like the *Counterinsurgency Manual* or the *United States Government Counterinsurgency Guide*. Like “population control,” the “hearts and minds” shares a focus on the population with the basic theory of victory revolving around strangling the insurgency by denying its access to supplies. Unlike “population control,” its primary method is not coercion, but involves convincing the population—the majority of whom are neutral—to actively support the counterinsurgent’s side or at very least to stop supporting the insurgents.<sup>208</sup>

Essentially, “hearts and minds” demands a two-fold approach. First, it argues that the counterinsurgent should minimize its use of force.<sup>209</sup> Of course, “heart and minds” theorists recognize that counterinsurgencies require killing certain irreconcilables, but they argue this should be done sparingly, in order to prevent popular ill will which could spur additional insurgent recruitment. As one strategist put it, counterinsurgents have a “do no harm” mandate.<sup>210</sup> This is especially true when it comes to inflicting any hardships on civilians. Since most of the population is believed to be neutral at start of the conflict, unintentional collateral damage and even more so, deliberate collective punishment of civilian population can drive the

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<sup>208</sup> For this presumption, see Thompson 1996, p. 63; FM 3-24, p. 1-20

<sup>209</sup> Cohen et. al. 2006, Kilcullen 2006, FM 3-24, p. 1-27

<sup>210</sup> Kilcullen 2006, p. 128



population into the arms of the insurgency and be profoundly counterproductive. As the *Counterinsurgency Manual* states, “The more force applied, the greater the chance for collateral damage and mistakes. Using more force also increases the opportunity for insurgent propaganda to portray lethal military activities as brutal. In contrast, using force precisely and discriminately strengthens the rule of law that needs to be established.”<sup>211</sup>

Second and more importantly, “hearts and minds” theory emphasizes that the counterinsurgent should simultaneously maximize its use of direct rule inducements—political, economic and social, in order to win over the population’s loyalties. In fact, the *Counterinsurgency Manual* states explicitly, “The primary objective of any counterinsurgency operation is to foster the development of effective governance by a legitimate government.”<sup>212</sup> This not only serves a normative goal, but also has a strategic function. “Hearts and minds” theory claims that as the population’s legitimate grievances—like poverty, inequality or disempowerment—are addressed, they will cease to support the insurgency—either out of gratitude or because they have a stake in the new world order.<sup>213</sup> For these reasons, David Galula advocated land reform and Robert Thompson promoted other public works projects as counterinsurgency tools.<sup>214</sup> And today the *United States Government Counterinsurgency Guide* states, “Success in COIN can be difficult to define, but improved governance will usually bring about marginalization of the insurgents to the point at which they are destroyed, co-opted or reduced to irrelevance in numbers and capability.”<sup>215</sup> In sum, “hearts and minds” largely accepts “population control’s” theory of victory, but rests on winning rather than coercing support (see chart 2).

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<sup>211</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-27. For similar arguments, see Kilcullen 2006, p. 32; Fick and Nagl 2009

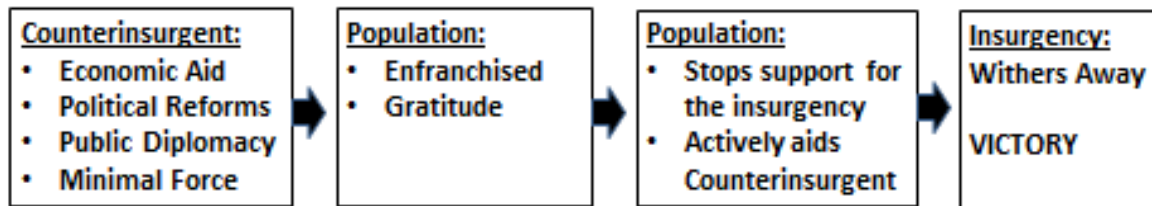
<sup>212</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-21

<sup>213</sup> General David Petraeus, reflecting on Iraq strategy, made this exact argument. “The point of “winning hearts and minds” is not to make the people love us or thank us but rather to ensure they have a stake (emphasis in the original) in the progress of the new Iraq.” (Kaplan 2013, p. 142)

<sup>214</sup> Galula 1964, pp. 15-18; Thompson 1966, pp. 112-113

<sup>215</sup> USG 2009, p. 4

CHART 2: Logic of “Hearts and Minds”



Perhaps, the distinction between “hearts and minds” and “population control” becomes more apparent when the theory is translated into observable indicators (see table 2). Functionally, “hearts and minds” predicts that the insurgency will abate as the general population’s wellbeing improves. Economic growth, rising standards of living and more representative political structures should undercut the insurgency’s ability to recruit and sustain itself. While the counterinsurgent decreasing its use of violence—and particularly of collective punishment—may not defeat the insurgency per say, it will enable these other nonlethal measures to work, by keeping popular ill will to a minimum. Above all, perhaps, “hearts and minds” predicts that counterinsurgents’ military success should be tied to its popularity: only after counterinsurgents successfully woo populations away from the insurgents, will violence decline.

Table 2: The Indicators of a Successful “Hearts and Minds” Strategy

The Insurgency Will Decrease After...	Measures
...the population's economic well-being improves	GDP growth, rising per capita GDP, diminishing income inequality
...the population has more of a political stake in society	Elections, representation in the bureaucracy/civil service
...the population has more of a stake in security institutions in society	Broadening security forces recruitment; home guards
...the population becomes "happy"	Polling data
...the counterinsurgent curtails its use of force	More restrictive rules of engagement, avoids collective punishment
...the counterinsurgent explains its message through propaganda	Insurgent debriefs (i.e. former insurgents have a "change of heart")

There are several reasons to question “hearts and minds” practicality as a strategy. First, recent studies cast doubt on whether economic liberalization and political reforms actually undermine the causes of substate violence.<sup>216</sup> Second, even if economic liberalization and political reforms produced tranquility, it is not clear whether most counterinsurgents are capable of imposing such a transformation. After all, most militaries are not designed to rebuild economies or reshape political institutions, nor is it clear that this capacity exists in other parts of modern governments either. For example, while the American military often turned to the State Department for assistance in Iraq and Afghanistan, the number of American soldiers dwarfs the number of Foreign Service officers and even if the gap was somehow corrected, diplomats are trained to negotiate agreements, not to govern states themselves.<sup>217</sup> Third, even if such a transformation could be imposed, radically reshaping societies almost undoubtedly will be expensive and time-consuming endeavors. Especially liberal democratic third-party

<sup>216</sup> See Krueger and Maleckova 2003; Shapiro & Fair 2009/2010 and Beath, Christia and Enikolopov 2011

<sup>217</sup> Ironically, early colonial counterinsurgents may have been better suited to these functions. The British, for example, had a Colonial Office whose personnel were trained to act as administrators.

counterinsurgents, who can always withdraw from the conflict, will likely need to show concrete results—for domestic political reasons, if nothing else, long before any of these macro-changes can take hold.

The two-sided mechanism behind “hearts and minds”—enfranchisement and gratitude—may also be problematic. While political and economic reforms may extend benefits to new elements within the population, it will also involve a clash with the existing elite who presumably want to maintain the status quo. Indeed, historically, new democracies have been volatile and belligerent entities, partly because of this reason.<sup>218</sup> And even if this initial wave of intransigence can be mitigated, any new order—presumably based on democracy and capitalism—will also produce its share political and economic winners and losers. While one could hope even the losers in such a system would still accept it—provided the process is seen as fair and impartial, this certainly is not guaranteed.

Earning the population’s gratitude also may prove a difficult task. As the *Counterinsurgency Manual* itself acknowledges, even a “hearts and minds” approach requires some amount of force and invariably, this will inflict collateral damage.<sup>219</sup> Violence—and its corresponding emotional toll—should harden the populations’ views of combatants, complicating counterinsurgents’ efforts to win the population’s loyalties. More fundamentally, the local population’s response to these macro-social engineering attempts can just as easily be resentment as gratitude. Rudyard Kipling predicted this reaction to the American counterinsurgency efforts in the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century: “The blame of those ye better, the hate of those ye guard—the cry of hosts ye humour (ah, slowly) to the light—“why brought ye us from bondage, our love Egyptian night?”<sup>220</sup> And arguably, the same dynamics are true today. In March 2003, when President George W. Bush announced the Iraq

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<sup>218</sup> Mansfield and Snyder 1995

<sup>219</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-27

<sup>220</sup> Kipling 1989, p. 322

War, he framed it in humanitarian terms: "We come to Iraq with respect for its citizens, for their great civilization and for the religious faiths they practice. We have no ambition in Iraq except to remove a threat and restore control of that country to its own people."<sup>221</sup> And yet, this benevolent framing did not prevent the Iraqi population—at insofar as polling data indicates—from turning against the American-led occupation in fairly short order.<sup>222</sup>

Above all, "hearts and minds" strategies may simply not be feasible, until well after the insurgency subsides. First, in order for economic, political and social reforms to take hold, they require a certain amount of tranquility. After all, it is far easier to disrupt reform efforts than implement them. Second, personal security, arguably, ranks as a higher concern compared to political freedom or economic opportunity. In that case, aid and reforms may have little impact on popular attitudes, so long as violence remains present. Finally, as the *Counterinsurgency Manual* admits, insurgencies do not require a majority or even a plurality of the population to survive.<sup>223</sup> As a result, the counterinsurgent needs to *overwhelmingly* win the "hearts and minds" of the population—a particularly difficult task so long as insurgent violence forces the counterinsurgent to undertake unpopular and less savory tasks like using force in response. Ultimately, winning the "hearts and minds" at large may simply not be possible until *after* peace is restored and if so, then it should not be considered a counterinsurgency strategy at all, but rather an approach to postwar reconstruction.

The possible "hearts and minds" response here is that while it may not be able to defeat an insurgency in its own right, it can be combined with "population control" tactics to great effect.<sup>224</sup> Unfortunately, "population control" and "hearts and minds," however, do not neatly go hand in

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<sup>221</sup> Bush 2003

<sup>222</sup> See the Appendix to this dissertation for an analysis of the shifts in Iraqi public opinion

<sup>223</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-20

<sup>224</sup> At times, the *Counterinsurgency Manual* seems to imply that population control is the perquisite to "hearts and minds," as part of "clear, hold, build" approach (e.g. FM 3-24, pp. 5-18 to 5-20); at other times, it suggests that "hearts and minds" tactics compliment lethal operations and should be conducted simultaneously (e.g. FM 3-24, pp. 5-3 to 5-6)

hand. Physical control measures—walls, force resettlement and resource denial—can wreak havoc on local economies and violates liberal prescriptions against arbitrary arrests and mass arrests. Similarly, cooption runs contrary “hearts and minds” conception of “clean” government, since it often reinforces patronage networks through bribes and state-sanctioned corruption. Moreover, if indirect rule includes allowing private militias in the name of cooption and control, then the *Manual* opposes such a policy since “they constitute a long-term threat to law and order,” and recommends that “the intelligence staff track them just like insurgent and other armed groups.”<sup>225</sup> Finally and most acutely, “divide and rule” run directly contrary to any notions of developing “legitimate” or “effective” governance: in fact, these entire strategies are predicated on local animosity, not forming unity governments.

In many ways, “hearts and minds” theory represents a sterilized version of “population control.” “Hearts and minds” theory of victory closely mirrors that of “population control,” but replaces population’s control reliance on force, greed and fear, with a carrots-heavy, liberal norms abiding approach. Moreover, it argues—in essence—that counterinsurgency and nation-building can be one in the same: the key to defeating insurgencies comes from building successful, prosperous, well-run states. There, however, are reasons to be skeptical whether counterinsurgency can succeed this way in practice.

### **Onwards:**

Operational success may not guarantee victory in counterinsurgency, but few counterinsurgencies are won without it. This chapter has described two primary ways to achieve operational success—“population control” versus “hearts and minds” approaches. Using the dichotomies laid out in the preceding chapter, the strategies fall on different ends of

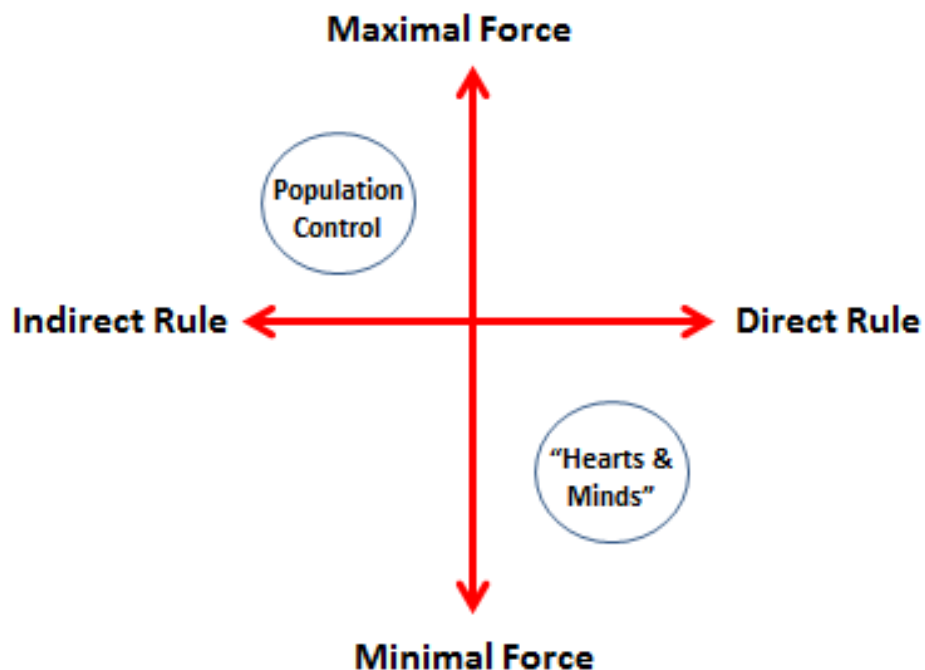
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<sup>225</sup> FM 3-24, p. 3-20

the spectrum, both in terms of the counterinsurgent's willingness to use force as a blunt means of coercion, as well as its use nonlethal tools (see chart 3). Importantly, as depicted in chart 3, these two approaches represent archetypes—rather than an exhaustive list—of all possible strategies. Nevertheless, the two approaches discussed here are, arguably, the most common.

CHART 3:

## Population Control & the Alternatives



The essential argument of this chapter, and indeed of this dissertation, is that “population control” lies at heart of successful counterinsurgency. In practice, there are three primary mechanisms to ensure control—physical means, co-option and divide and rule and the success of these three tactics depends on specific characteristics of the insurgency. While successful “population control” has grown increasingly difficult to execute successfully, its principle alternative “hearts and minds” is laden with so many possible points of failure that it often

proves impractical as a strategy for winning a war. The subsequent chapters will test these claims and show that military victory can be traced to successful population control. And so, while employing “population control” approach successfully in the 21<sup>st</sup> century may not be easy and at times may not even possible, victory can rarely be achieved without it—as we shall see in the next chapter, “Back to the Future: Victory in Malayan Emergency Revisited.”



## Chapter 4: Back to the Future?

### Victory in the Malayan Emergency Revisited

Few modern counterinsurgencies have been more influential in the development of Western counterinsurgency thought than the British experience in Malaya. Fought between 1948 and 1960, the Malayan Emergency demonstrated that these wars indeed are winnable and starkly contrasted with other prominent debacles of the period—namely, the United States in Vietnam and the French in Algeria.<sup>226</sup> The conflict also popularized perhaps the most famous refrain in counterinsurgency. In 1952, British High Commissioner to Malaya Gerald Templer remarked, “The answer [to the uprising] lies not in pouring more troops into the jungle, but in the hearts and minds of the people.”<sup>227</sup> Arguably, this phrase captures the theory of victory underlying today’s doctrine: counterinsurgents win these wars by “winning over the population”—through political and economic development, while minimizing the hardships imposed on the populace. Framed in terms of the models discussed in Chapter 2, this theory undergirds the “hearts and minds” theory of counterinsurgency—a minimal force based lethal strategy with a direct rule nonlethal/governance strategy. There, however, is another explanation for the British victory in Malaya—namely “population control.” According to this interpretation, the British won because they deliberately used maximal force (particularly, resource denial) combined with indirect rule and divide and conquer strategies to bring the insurgency to knees, making Malaya more akin 19<sup>th</sup> century counterinsurgencies than today’s doctrine.

In this chapter, I reexamine the British success in Malaya and tease out whether “hearts and minds” or “population control” produced victory over the next four sections. First, I introduce the Malayan Emergency, explain why it counts as a victory, apply the hypotheses from Chapter

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<sup>226</sup> Multiple authors compare Malaya and Vietnam including Thompson 1966, Komer 1972 and Nagl 2002.

<sup>227</sup> Clutterbuck 1966, p. 3

3 and outline what—in abstract—should be their observable implications here. Second, I show how the skillful use of maximal force strategies drove British success. In the third section, I turn to the nonlethal side of the equation and argue that the British victory was due less to how it reshaped Malayan society and more to what it left to the local leadership. Finally, I compare the campaigns in two Malay states—Pahang and Johor—to show which tactics actually won Malaya and highlight the conditions when these tactics prove more or less successful. Ultimately, I argue that rather than being a new or transformational step in counterinsurgency doctrine, victory in the Malayan Emergency was due to a traditional but effective, combination of resource denial, cooption and divide and rule.

### **Two Explanations of Victory: “Hearts and Minds” versus “Population Control”**

In 1948, few could have predicted that the Malayan Emergency would become the exemplar of successful counterinsurgency. The Emergency occurred in the wake of the Second World War, in the context of a waning British empire, and at the start of a global wave of Communist and anti-colonial insurgencies. Malaya was ripe for conflict. Geographically, its jungle offered ample areas for insurgents to hide and train. Malaya also had simmering sectarian tensions: it was uneasily divided between 2.9 million Malays, 2.2 million Chinese, 700,000 Indians and 100,000 others.<sup>228</sup> The Malayan Communist Party already had experience with irregular warfare and ironically, even had been trained by British to fight against the Japanese during the Second World War.<sup>229</sup> The insurgents typically were ethnic Chinese men in their mid-twenties (older than the average British military recruit at the time), battle hardened with an average of five years of the jungle warfare experience and approximately 40% self-identifying as “very

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<sup>228</sup> TNA CAB 129/74 “Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1954,” January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1955, p. 1

<sup>229</sup> For discussion of the Communists’ relationship with the British Force 136, a division of the Special Operations Executive, see Short 1975, pp. 23-25

loyal” to the cause.<sup>230</sup> While active combatants only numbered in the thousands, they relied on a much larger, Chinese squatter population to provide them with supplies and logistics.<sup>231</sup> In short, Malaya should have proven a fertile ground for a successful insurgency.

History, however, turned out differently. The insurgency eventually collapsed: according to one classified British military history, the Malayan Communist Party went from 12,590 members in 1947 to 564 combatants in 1960, almost all of whom resided across the border in Thailand.<sup>232</sup> On a strategic level, despite granting Malaya independence, Britain met its goals of defeating the Communism, forming “a link in the chain of noncommunist countries from Japan to Pakistan,” and securing the South China Sea.<sup>233</sup> By the end of the conflict, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations characterized the British relationship with newly independent Malaya in an internal secret memorandum as “extremely friendly” and “uninterested in the Afro-Asian neutralism prevalent in so many neighboring countries.”<sup>234</sup>

There are at least two major explanations of the British victory in the Malayan Emergency.<sup>235</sup> In what Joshua Rovner labels as the “heroic” reading of the Malayan Emergency, Templer saved the British from an otherwise disastrous campaign. As Rovner summarizes, “According to the standard narrative, early British counterinsurgency tactics were disorganized, clumsy, and counterproductive.”<sup>236</sup> In 1952, Templer assumed command and introduced a “hearts and

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<sup>230</sup> See TNA WO 291/1785 “Memorandum No. 13/54: Some Statistics Relating to Communist Terrorist in Malaya,” 1954

<sup>231</sup> Komer 1972, p. 8

<sup>232</sup> TNA AIR 10/5549 “The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960,” June 1970, p. 157

<sup>233</sup> MI5 director described these goals in a lecture on Malaya in July 1954, TNA KV 4/408 “The Problems We Faced in Malaya and How They Were Solved,” p. 5. Documents dating to 1951 emphasize defeating the communist insurgency, over maintaining Malaya as part of the British Empire. See TNA CAB 129/48 “The Situation in Malaya,” November 20, 1951, p. 105

<sup>234</sup> TNA CAB 129/96 “Cabinet: Malaya,” February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1959, pp. 135-136

<sup>235</sup> This dichotomy builds on a broader historical debate about what actually won Malaya—with Templer saying the key to success was “75% [of the Malayan Emergency] was ‘the battle for the hearts and minds of the people,’” with other taking a darker read. (See Purcell 1954 and Templers’ response, NAM 1974-10-29 “20<sup>th</sup> Century-February 1954,” p. 1). See Stubbs 1989, Hack 1999, Smith 2001, Ramakrishna 2003, Hack 2009, Rovner 2012. In particular, it expands on the resettlement and food denial centric explanation of victory outlined in Hack 1999.

<sup>236</sup> Rovner 2012, p. 221

minds” strategy.<sup>237</sup> On the lethal side, he abandoned large scale uses of force for small unit raids—thereby decreasing collateral damage and minimizing ill will.<sup>238</sup> On the nonlethal side, he improved the ethnic Chinese population’s quality of life, increased their representation in state institutions, and engaged in a far-reaching propaganda campaign to bolster support for the government. At the core of the heroic reading lies on a simple causal claim: Templer wooed the Chinese population away from the Communists, causing the insurgency to eventually peter out and die.

By contrast, there is a darker reading of Malaya. In this narrative, the British owed their success less to “hearts and minds,” but to age-old, population control tactics—involving maximal force (and specifically resource denial) and indirect rule. Indeed, one 1957 British Army study argued that their tactics “followed the Roman precedent in Ancient Britain.”<sup>239</sup> For all the talk of “hearts and minds,” the British used collective punishment extensively. A 1951 Colonial Office memorandum stated, British policy should explore “how to secure the active cooperation of the Chinese, if necessary by a more forceful policy towards those who fail to ‘come off the fence.’”<sup>240</sup> Templer restricted entire villages’ access to food, if they aided the Communists or failed to provide government forces with information.<sup>241</sup> And a 1957 operational research memorandum concluded, “The principle of rewarding and punishing individual villages on their records has been followed in both countries (Malaya and Kenya).”<sup>242</sup> On the nonlethal side, the key to success was less what the British did, but rather what they did not do. By empowering local leaders and promising Malaya independence, the British prevented a largely Chinese

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid., pp. 221-222

<sup>238</sup> For example of this reading, see Ucko 2007

<sup>239</sup> TNA WO 291/1670 “Report No. 1/57: A Comparative Study of the Emergencies in Malaya and Kenya,” p. 35

<sup>240</sup> TNA CAB 129/48 “The Situation in Malaya,” November 20, 1951, p. 105. The memorandum then says, “Some Chinese leaders do, in fact, feel that the Government should increasingly issue instructions and enforce compliance instead of relying on voluntary cooperation.” Ibid., p. 109

<sup>241</sup> For example, see NAM 1974-10-29 “Address to By his Excellency the High Commissioner to the People of Malacca,” September 3, 1953; NAM 1974-10-29 “Speech at Sepang,” September 16, 1953; NAM 1974-10-29 “Speech at Sungei Pelek,” September 16, 1953

<sup>242</sup> TNA WO 291/1670 “Report No. 1/57: A Comparative Study of the Emergencies in Malaya and Kenya,” p. 36

communist insurgency from metastasizing into a general nationalist revolt. Furthermore, the British exploited a preexisting rift between the ethnic Malay and Chinese populations to prevent the spread of the rebellion. In this reading then, British strategy in Malaya bears more in common with Marshal Bugeaud's theories of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, than the *Counterinsurgency Manual* of today.

Ultimately, this debate touches on larger questions. Did the maximal force strategies win the Malayan Emergency or did softer side of British policy prevail in spite of them? Did direct rule strategies undercut the cause of the insurgency or did British success lie in their use of cooption and divide and rule? Depending on the answers, the Malayan Emergency's lessons are very different.

There are a number of telltale signs which interpretation of Malaya is more accurate. On the most basic level, there is the question of timing: did the fortunes of the counterinsurgency effort in Malaya actually "turn around" with Templer and the shift to a "hearts and minds" strategy? If so, then there is at least a superficial case that a combination of minimal force and direct rule strategies actually won the war. If not, then perhaps other factors were at play. Even if the timing adds up, however, since Templer's actions in Malaya were multifaceted, we still need to parse the effects of the different strategies. If a "hearts and minds" strategy actually won the Malayan Emergency, then we should see—presumably after Templer takes command and before any downturn in violence—an aversion to collective punishment. In fact, collective punishment should spur Communist recruitment and prove counterproductive. On the nonlethal front, if direct rule strategies were behind the Malaya's turnaround, then as Chinese political participation, representation in the security forces and civil service and general economic wellbeing increased, the insurgency should show signs of collapse.

By contrast, if “population control” won Malaya, then there should be a series of different indicators. The use of force—and collective punishment—should not always bode ill for the counterinsurgent and at times, may even be the key to success. British success should correlate with the implementation of strict—if oppressive—measures to control the flow of supplies to the insurgency. Physical control tactics should work particularly well to the extent they targeted a distinct, minority population (hypothesis 1a and 1b) and to the extent the insurgency was located in rural areas—and hence dependent on the urban populations for their food and other supplies (hypothesis 1c). On the nonlethal end, if indirect rule strategies were responsible for the victory, then British attempts to improve the ethnic Chinese population’s welfare should matter less than their attempts to co-opt and exploit the local elite. In particular, co-option should prove most effective when it was aimed at bribing guerilla leaders (hypothesis 2). Moreover, success should hinge on divide and rule strategies—particularly exploiting Malaya’s deep ethnic divides between ethnic Chinese, Malays and Indians—especially because the former was both the primary support base for the insurgency and a minority population in the country at the time (hypothesis 3). And with this theoretical framework in mind, we can turn to examining the empirics of the Malayan Emergency.

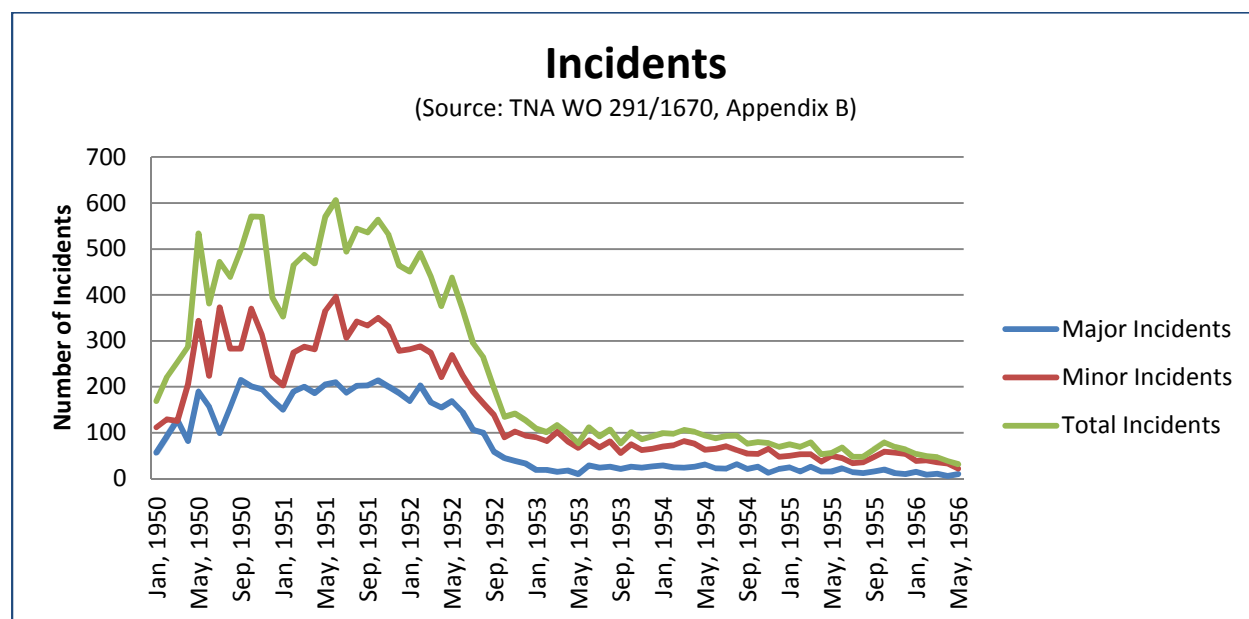
### **Did Maximal or Minimal Force Win Malaya?**

On a superficial level, there is strong argument that the British won Malaya by limiting their use of force, particularly by abandoning the earlier ham-fisted, brutish tactics for a select number of precision, intelligence driven raids. Closer analysis, however, reveals three mistruths in this reading of events. First, the turnaround in Malaya predates Templer’s arrival. Second, despite the “hearts and minds” rhetoric, Templer actually embraced many forms of collective

punishment. Finally and most importantly, far from being the cause of Great Britain's near defeat in Malaya, maximal force strategies, in fact, underpinned its victory.

First, contrary to the heroic narrative, Malaya's turnaround did not begin with the arrival of Templer and the supposed switch to a "heart and minds" strategy. While the steepest decline in violence occurred during the mid-1952, violence levels peaked in June 1951 and were already tapering off before Templer took command in February 1952, much less by the time he could have implemented any major shift in policy (see figure 1). Major incidents in particular—those resulting in deaths or thefts of more than \$1000 Strait Dollars or £115—peaked a little later in October 1951, but also were also declining.<sup>243</sup> Figure 2 tells a similar story: both security forces and civilian casualties show their most dramatic reductions in 1952, but were also improving by late 1951. Finally, British estimates of armed insurgent strength also show that the pivot point was in 1951, not 1952 (see figure 3).

Figure 1:



<sup>243</sup> TNA WO 291/1741 "Memorandum No. 9/54: A Statistical Examination of Terrorist Inspired Incidents in Malaya," p. 1

Figure 2:

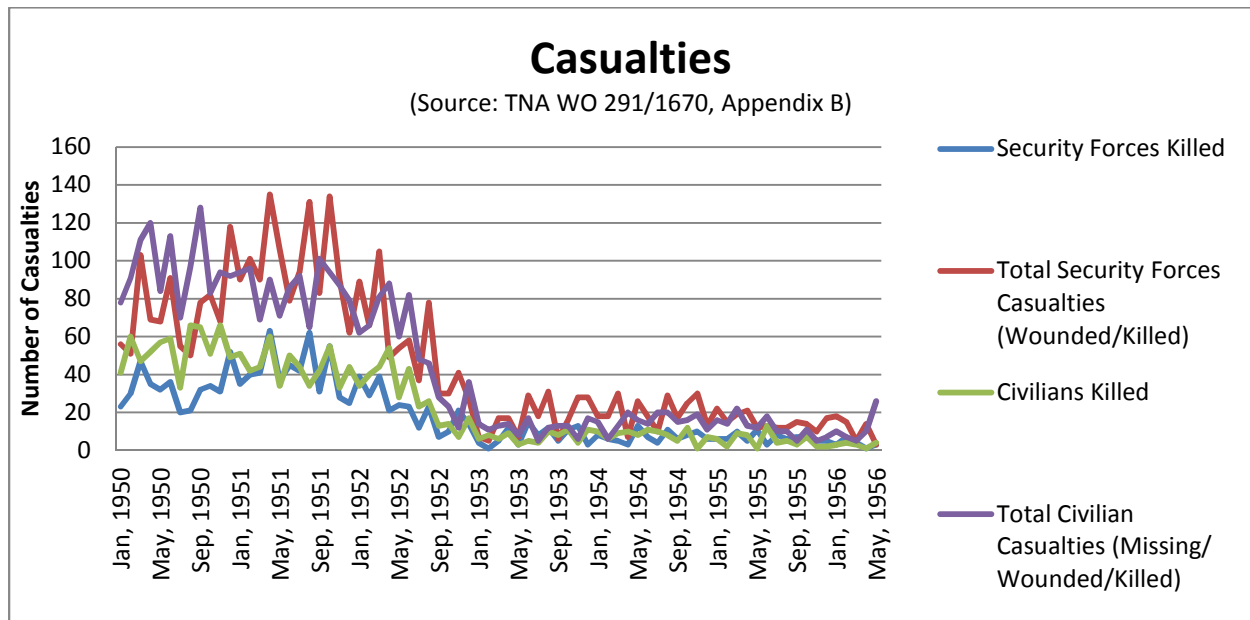


Figure 3:



Instead, the mid-1951 turning point corresponds to the institution of the Briggs Plan. Developed by British Lieutenant General and Malaya Director for Operations Harold Briggs, the plan sought to separate the insurgency's active combatants from their support base—the Chinese squatter population. To do this, the British forcibly resettled more than 400,000



people—one twelfth of the total population and over 20 percent of the Chinese population—into “New Villages,” where they could be watched, controlled and prevented from supplying—and in particular, feeding—the combatants in the jungle.<sup>244</sup> And as the Director of Operations characterized in a 1957 report, the Briggs Plan “had begun to mature” in late 1951, as this forced resettlement was mostly completed.<sup>245</sup>

In fact, before Templer took over, the senior British military leadership believed that the Briggs Plan had turned the tide. In a classified December 28, 1951 report, Brigg’s successor as director of operations, Robert Lockhart wrote that the Briggs plan has “achieved wonders.”<sup>246</sup> Similarly, in a January 20, 1952 memorandum from General Sir Charles Frederic Keightley, commander of the Far East Land Force, to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshall Sir William Slim, Keightley argued:

The actual bandit war has of course not deteriorated in the way some papers have said in the last few months. On the contrary, in some areas there have been encouraging signs of more information from civilians, which is the thing we require above all else. What has happened is that the Briggs’ policy of using the Army to protect estates and workers (inevitable at the moment) is allowing the bandits to concentrate more, and so incidents are sometimes apt to be larger scale and therefore more serious than they used to be.<sup>247</sup>

While some of Keightley’s optimism can be chalked up to a subordinate wanting to give a positive report to his boss, his remarks seem to dovetail with the quantitative trends.

Second, Templer’s assumption of command in Malaya marked less of a break from the past than sometimes portrayed. To be sure, Templer reformed certain elements of British operations: the British abandoned battalion plus sweeps of the jungle and instead, used the

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<sup>244</sup> See NAM 1995-01-165 “Statement by Higher Commissioner for the Federation of Malaya,” June 19, 1952, p. 5; Bennett 2009, p. 416. Short, however, puts the number at upwards 500,000 (Short 1975, p. 184, fn. 9). Clutterbuck estimates that over 740,000 rural Chinese were forcibly resettled (Clutterbuck 1973, p. 176).

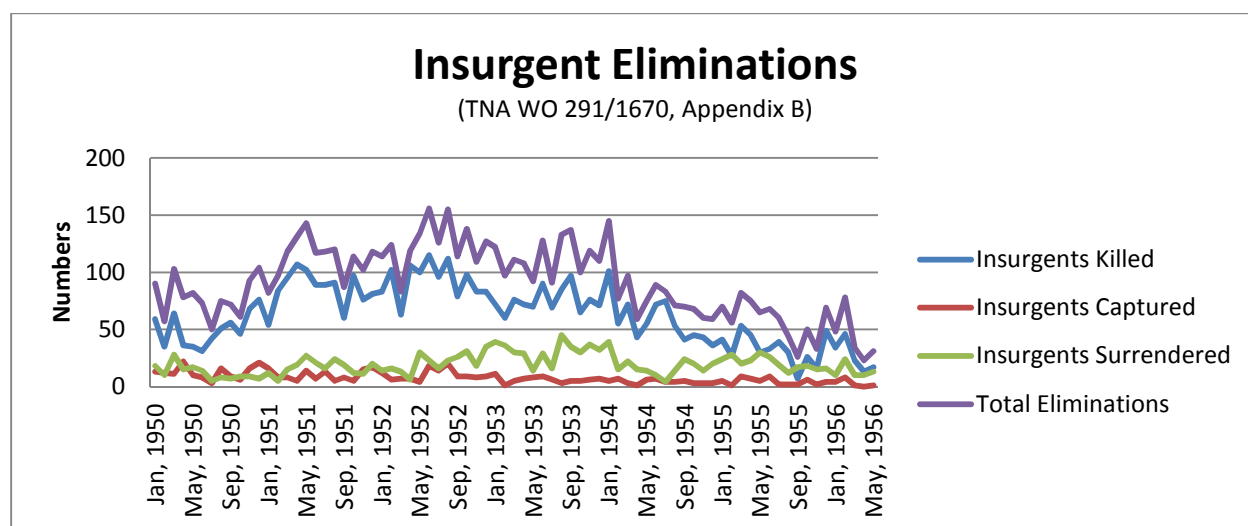
<sup>245</sup> TNA WO 106/5990 “Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957,” September 1957, p. 9

<sup>246</sup> NAM 1995-01-165-53, “Extracts from a Note by Director of Operations dated 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1951,” p. 6

<sup>247</sup> TNA WO 216/806, Keightley to Slim, January 20, 1952, p. 1

Special Air Service to target remote insurgent hideouts.<sup>248</sup> These changes, however, were less about ingratiating the British to the locals and more about maximizing lethality. Operational research indicated that smaller, intelligence driven patrols performed better. As one analysis for July and August 1952 concluded, “The ambush on no information is as unsuccessful as ever and we now have reached a total of 58,000 hours spend in ambushes on no information to achieve a kill of 15 (compared with 17,000 hours [on] direct or indirect [information] to achieve 124 kills).”<sup>249</sup> Even under Templer, success was mostly measured by body count—not by “hearts and minds” won.<sup>250</sup> And indeed, as depicted in Figure 4, British forces killed more insurgents under Templer’s tenure than prior to his arrival. Viewed in this light, Templer’s reforms were more evolutionary than transformational and the basic goal—neutralizing insurgents—remained constant.

Figure 4:



<sup>248</sup> Komer 1972, p. 50-51; TNA CAB 129/74 “Malaya: Review of the Situation,” April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1955, p. 2. For the employment of Special Air Service, developed under Templer although executed after his tenure, see CO 1030/19 “Planning Guidance for 1955,” p. 3 August 11, 1954.

<sup>249</sup> TNA WO 291/1723, “Memorandum No. 3: Operational Research for July and August 1952,” October 1952 p. 2; for similar earlier set of statistics see TNA WO 291/1722 “Memorandum No. 2: Operational Analysis for June 1952,” p. 2-3. Also see reports on correlation between intelligence and contacts, TNA WO 291/1726 “Memorandum No. 1/53: Salient Features of Patrol and Ambushes in the Malayan Emergency,” p. 1; TNA WO 291/1725 “Memorandum 5/52: Patrolling in the Malayan Emergency,” p. 10

<sup>250</sup> For an example of British operational research’s focus on lethal measures of effectiveness, see TNA WO 291/1725 “Memorandum 5/52: Patrolling in the Malayan Emergency,” p. 1

Moreover, this approach had its roots in the Briggs period, as well. According to multiple classified assessments, much of British intelligence came from the police's Special Branch.<sup>251</sup> Set up in 1950 under Briggs but expanded under Templer, led by British expatriates and select ethnic Chinese interlocutors, Special Branch gleaned information largely through a mixture of recruited agents, prisoner interrogations, and tips from the public.<sup>252</sup> Interestingly, according to British military assessments, the single most important determinant of Special Branch's ability to collect intelligence was not British ability to win "hearts and minds," but rather "the success of the SF (security forces) in killing CTs (communist terrorists) and in protecting the public."<sup>253</sup> Moreover, as Director of Intelligence, J. P. Morton admitted that even during the Templer period, intelligence was still imprecise and "many of the prisoners were innocent."<sup>254</sup>

Most importantly, the British never abandoned collective punishment. For all the talk of "hearts and minds," Templer continued to implement the Briggs Plan. While he increased the focus on small unit operations, he also increased the number and intensity of large scale food denial operations.<sup>255</sup> In June 1954, towards end of Templer's tenure, the Director of Operations even published a pamphlet instructing units on how to best conduct these operations.<sup>256</sup> Even after Templer's time, food denial remained the cornerstone of British strategy. In 1956, the British created the "Emergency Food Denial Organization" to organize these efforts for the first time on the Federal level.<sup>257</sup> And a 1957 British operational research report characterized

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<sup>251</sup> TNA CO 1030/10 "Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1956 by the Director of Operations, Malaya," pp. 6-7; TNA WO 106/5990 "Review of the Emergency from June 1948 to August 1957," September 1957, pp. 15-16, 23, 27

<sup>252</sup> TNA WO 106/5990 "Review of the Emergency from June 1948 to August 1957," September 1957, pp. 15-16

<sup>253</sup> Ibid. p. 16

<sup>254</sup> French 2011, p. 113

<sup>255</sup> Komer 1972, pp. 59-60; Clutterbuck 1973, p. 212-213

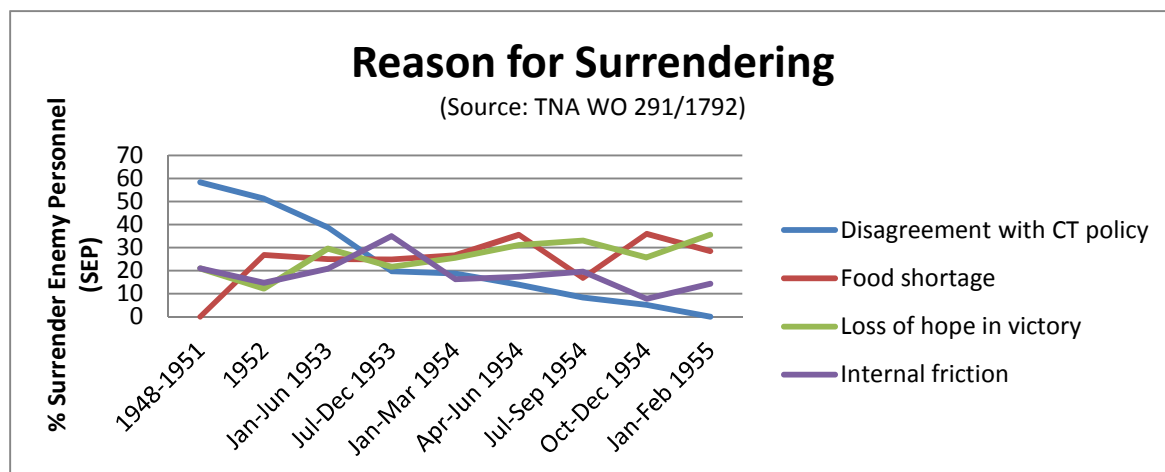
<sup>256</sup> KCL Talbot 3/8, "Director of Operations Instruction No. 36: Food Denial Operations," June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1954

<sup>257</sup> TNA WO 106/5990, "Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957," September 1957, p.

“normal” battalion and brigade missions as months-long food denial operations.<sup>258</sup> In short, the British never away shifted from maximal strategies, but rather changed the type of collective punishment to a more effective one.

The grim truth of the Malayan Emergency was that resource denial worked. As depicted in Figure 5, British operational research tracked why enemy personnel surrendered throughout the Emergency. Prior to 1951, food shortages never were given as a reason for surrendering. After the Briggs Plan went into effect, roughly a quarter of all surrendered enemy personnel stated the food shortages drove their decision, making it either the first or second more important cause (along with “loss of hope in victory,” which also may be tied to food shortages). Moreover, self-identified “committed” insurgents routinely stated that food denial was more effective than propaganda or any softer method in convincing them to surrender.<sup>259</sup>

Figure 5:



On an anecdotal level, senior leaders on both sides believed that food denial was the most effective counterinsurgency tactic of the campaign. In a top secret “Appreciation of the Military

<sup>258</sup> TNA WO 291/1670 “Report No. 1/57: A Comparative Study of the Emergencies in Malaya and Kenya,” p. 52

<sup>259</sup> TNA WO 291/1763 “Memorandum No. 1/53: A Study of Surrender Behaviour Among Chinese Communists in Malaya,” pp. 6-7, 12

Situation in Malaya on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1953,” Lieutenant General Hugh Stockwell commented, “The value of food control measures as a potent weapon has been amply proven, and food denial operations remain the only method which promises to clear up an area permanently.”<sup>260</sup> Similarly, a 1954 Director of Operations’ instruction pamphlet stated, food denial will “in the end prove decisive.”<sup>261</sup> Likewise, the Director of Intelligence and MI5 officer for Malaya, John P. Morton noted, “Food control was a particularly effective tactical weapon against terrorism.”<sup>262</sup> Perhaps, the most important assessment comes from the insurgents themselves. In a post war interview, when asked why he lost, Malayan Communist Party leader Chin Peng downplayed the importance of popular support and instead, focused on “the resettlement” and the resulting food shortages: “we (the Malayan Communist Party) got a lot of money, but can’t get a bit of food. If it turned into rice, it would be very good.”<sup>263</sup>

While it was effective, resettlement was deeply unpopular.<sup>264</sup> Historian David French recounts, “Resettlement was done at gunpoint, and not just to prevent the insurgents from interfering.”<sup>265</sup> As Chin Peng described, “...People cannot resist them (British attempts at forcible resettlement). The British did not tell you when they would come. Suddenly they came, and surrounded the village, and forced the people to move. The Army moved your belongings with your agreement or not...”<sup>266</sup> He continued, “They forced you to go, and they burned all your house (sic). And then if you want to resist, you stay in the house, they don’t

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<sup>260</sup> KCL Talbot 3/5 “An Appreciation of the Military Situation in Malaya on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1953,” p. 28. In the same report, he also concluded, “The most effective way of preventing recruiting is by the limitation of supplies of arms and food to the terrorists.” Ibid., p. 9

<sup>261</sup> KCL Talbot 3/8/2 “Director of Operations Instruction No. 36: Food Denial Operations,” June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1954, p. 1

<sup>262</sup> TNA KV 4/408 “The Problems We Faced in Malaya and How They Were Solved,” p. 19; for more on Morton, see Komer 1972, p. 43

<sup>263</sup> Chin and Hack 2005, pp. 160-162. For more on Chin Peng’s assessment that food shortage—not popular attitudes—causing the collapse of the Communist Party, see *ibid.*, pp. 208-209

<sup>264</sup> Komer 1972, pp. 60-61

<sup>265</sup> French 2011, p. 119

<sup>266</sup> Chin and Hack 2005, p. 153

care, they would burn you.”<sup>267</sup> While the British publically justified these measures as necessary for the population’s protection, they were designed to prevent the population from aiding the insurgents.<sup>268</sup> Even long after the Emergency was over, many of the New Villages remained.<sup>269</sup> Moreover, forced resettlement uprooted farms, reduced the acres under cultivation by almost 30% from 95,727 acres in 1948 to only 67,465 acres in 1951 and caused significant adverse effects for the economy.<sup>270</sup>

Food denial operations extracted an even heavier toll on the civilian population. A 1954 pamphlet, titled “Food Denial Operations,” instructed British forces: “If the degree of non-cooperation of the area merits it, the imposition of the reduced ration should be regarded as punitive and the people told that the ration will be increased to normal when they show a change of heart.”<sup>271</sup> Units could restrict men’s weekly rice rations from five to three katis, women’s rations from four to two and half katis, and children’s rations from three to two katis for a period of up to six months.<sup>272</sup> Moreover, emergency regulations allowed the British to imprison anyone for upwards of five years for merely possessing food outside of the perimeter fences without authorization and to conduct invasive searches.<sup>273</sup> The logic was simple but brutal: by cutting rations to subsistence levels, the population lacked surplus food to give to the insurgents.

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid., p. 155

<sup>268</sup> TNA CO 1022/30 “Perimeter Lighting in New Villages;” TNA CO 1022/29, “Resettlement and the Development of New Villages in the Federation of Malaya, 1952,” p. 104. For a similar interpretation, see 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion King’s African Rifles account of resettlement: NAM 1988-08-57 “Operations in Malaya,” p. 4

<sup>269</sup> In early 1960s, an estimated 400 New Villages still existed with a population of 300,000. Jackson 1991, p. 21

<sup>270</sup> TNA CO 1022/29 “Resettlement and the Development of New Villages in the Federation of Malaya, 1952,” p. 106

<sup>271</sup> KCL Talbot 3/8 “Director of Operations Instruction No. 36: Food Denial Operations,” June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1954, p. 11

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., p. 10. Each kati is about 1.3 pounds. This form of collective punishment continued at least through mid-1956. See, for example, TNA CO 1030/30 “Operational Rice Ration Kluang” June 4, 1956.

<sup>273</sup> TNA CO 1030/73 “Report on the Conduct of Food Searches at Semenyih,” pp. 3-4, March 30, 1956. In fact, in 1956, British forces conducted a village-level “strip tease.” An investigation concluded that the incident created “very real and substantial dissatisfaction,” but that this is “no reason why measures necessary to the public interest should not be undertaken.” Ibid., p. 22. Also see French 2011, p. 80-81

Ironically for a campaign that today is so much associated with the softer side of counterinsurgency, the Malayan Emergency's success came with the institution of the Briggs Plan and the forced resettlement of hundreds of thousands civilians into guarded, fenced in camps. Templer built on this success by controlling the population and at times, cutting their rations to starve the insurgents out of the jungle. Neither tactic was pretty, but both were effective. Operating in the inhospitable jungle and lacking outside support, the Malayan Communist Party needed to draw its supplies from the population.<sup>274</sup> For their part, the British realized this was the insurgency's Achilles heel and ruthlessly exploited it.

### **Did Direct or Indirect Rule Win Malaya?**

Why did resettlement and food denial work in Malaya? Indeed, modern counterinsurgency theory predicts that collective punishment should spark popular resentment and feed insurgent recruitment. As with the lethal strategy, there are two major explanations. In the heroic narrative, British bought Chinese loyalties through direct measures—economic inducements, political reforms and propaganda and convinced them that they had more of a stake in the status quo than in supporting the insurgency.<sup>275</sup> By contrast, in an alternative thesis, the British secured popular support for the counterinsurgency less through what it did, but rather what it did not do—namely retain Malaya as colony.

Perhaps, in the cornerstone of the heroic narrative, Templer won the Chinese population over through his efforts to improve the lives of Chinese squatters. British officials believed that economics held the key to Chinese loyalties. As a 1959 Commonwealth Relations Office

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<sup>274</sup> A "Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957" concluded, "There is no evidence of any appreciable financial backing from sources outside the Federation." (TNA WO 106/5990, "Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957," September 1957, p. 5) Similarly, in a postwar interview, Chin Peng argued, "...We didn't receive any foreign aid. Some suspected we receive something from [an]other country, from China or some other. Actually no, not even a bullet." (Chin and Hack 2005, p. 150)

<sup>275</sup> For an example of this explanation of victory in Malaya, see Barber 1971, p. 204

memorandum stated, “As long as business is good and the Chinese can make money, they are willing to go along and seem to be good if rather superior neighbors to the Malays.”<sup>276</sup> In fact, the British attempted to improve the lives of the poor ethnic Chinese population. At first glance, these efforts seemed to have worked. A February 1959 report by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations boasted, “the standard of living of the average Malayan is still the highest in Asia... One feature of this high standard of living is the exceptionally advanced facilities for education.”<sup>277</sup> And so, the heroic narrative claims, raising the standard of living of the average Malay (and particularly the ethnic Chinese) citizens drained the insurgency’s support base.

On closer look, however, the theory that economic inducements won the counterinsurgency begins to fray for three reasons. First, the relatively high GDP per capita statistics mask the fact that British interests and a small local elite controlled most of this wealth.<sup>278</sup> In fact, in 1953, well into the turnaround in the security situation, Europeans still owned 83 percent of all rubber cultivation and British settlers owned 60 percent of all tin output.<sup>279</sup> Second, to the extent that the standard of living did increase, this may be due to the Korean War driving up demand for Malaya’s rubber and tin exports, not to British aid per say.<sup>280</sup> Third, the connection between economic conditions and the insurgency remains tenuous. The insurgency never gained traction among the ethnic Malay population, despite being the poorest of Malaya’s three major

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<sup>276</sup> TNA CAB 129/96 “Cabinet: Malaya,” February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1959, p. 135

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134

<sup>278</sup> Khan 2002, p. 5, fn. 5; for the Gini coefficient data (the measure of income inequality), also see *ibid.* p. 11, fn. 13

<sup>279</sup> Newsinger 2002, p. 41

<sup>280</sup> Stubbs 1989, pp. 107-114 ; Templer notes the increasing American demand for rubber sales as the “major reason why Malaya is the leading earner of American dollars in the Commonwealth.” NAM 1995-01-165-- “Statement by Higher Commissioner for the Federation of Malaya,” June 19, 1952, p. 7.



ethnicities.<sup>281</sup> In fact, in 1947 the average Malay income per capita was \$258 (in Straits Dollars) compared to \$560 for an ethnic Indian and \$656 for the average ethnic Chinese resident.<sup>282</sup>

Even within the Chinese population, there is no clear correlation between quality of life and insurgent violence. Violence declined in the second half of 1951 and early 1952 (see Figures 1, 2 & 3), even though the conditions in the New Villages were still subpar at best. Although the Briggs Plan included medical, educational and agricultural aid to the New Villages, Briggs was lukewarm on these efforts. In Malaya Directive 13, he instructed, "While it is important that every effort should be made to prevent the settlement turning "sour," clearly they [the Chinese population] should not be pampered or provided with advantages which they are not available to the population long resident in the neighborhood."<sup>283</sup> Unsurprisingly then, in a January 14, 1952 letter to Slim, Lockhart, Brigg's successor, admitted that the New Villages' living conditions were "far from adequate."<sup>284</sup> Similarly, the Colonial Office assessed that as of April 1952, "we cannot measure it exactly, the immediate effects of resettlement on local food production were considerable" and "rubber production [the primary export] must have also been affected."<sup>285</sup> That same month, the British Medical Association declared that the New Villages were at risk of epidemics and slammed British administrators for ignoring public health concerns.<sup>286</sup> Similarly, on January 4, 1953, one senior British officer said that he believed "75 per cent of these people [the ethnic Chinese] are choking with animosity against us, but being Chinese they have got thick enough skin to contain their feelings."<sup>287</sup> While conditions thankfully improved in the New Villages later on (indeed, medical spending in the New Villages doubled between 1952 and

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<sup>281</sup> Khan 2002, p. 5; For the ethnic Malays' lack of support to the insurgency, see TNA WO 291/1670 "Report No. 1/57: A Comparative Study of the Emergencies in Malaya and Kenya," p. 14

<sup>282</sup> Clutterbuck 1973, p. 35

<sup>283</sup> TNA CO 1022/32 "Director of Operations, Malaya Directive, No. 13," February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1951, p. 2.

<sup>284</sup> TNA WO 216/806, Lockhart to Slim, January 14, 1952, p. 6

<sup>285</sup> TNA CO 1022/29, "Resettlement and the Development of New Villages in the Federation of Malaya, 1952," p. 106

<sup>286</sup> Short 1975, p. 399; Stubbs 1989, p. 103

<sup>287</sup> French 2011, p. 177

1954), violence declined *before* these quality of life improvements.<sup>288</sup> Even then, some British soldiers were skeptical about whether Chinese peasants actually became more favorably disposed to them.<sup>289</sup>

Another key element of the heroic narrative argues that the British successfully bought Chinese loyalty—not with economic benefits, but through political enfranchisement. According to this theory, Malaya's ethnic Chinese population opposed the government because they were not represented by it.<sup>290</sup> As a result, during Templer's tenure, the British actively recruited ethnic Chinese into the security forces and because Chinese units were now policing their own, this mitigated any popular backlash. Indeed, the page long case study in the *Counterinsurgency Manual* primarily chalks the British victory up to an extensive overhaul of the Malayan Police Force and an intensive effort recruit more ethnic Chinese into the police and other political institutions.<sup>291</sup>

Despite an active British recruiting effort, however, ethnic Chinese remained underrepresented in the security forces. Although comprising roughly 40% of Malaya's total population, ethnic Chinese made up only 2,488 of 28,000 police in 1952.<sup>292</sup> And these figures did not improve much over the course of the conflict. By June 1, 1956, there were only 2,713 Chinese members out of a 47,310 man police force—or a paltry 5.72%.<sup>293</sup> The Malay Army was better but still disproportionate, with ethnic Chinese eventually comprising 23% of the officer

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<sup>288</sup> From 1.25 to 2.5 million Strait Dollars. TNA CO 1030/277 "Telegram No. 143 from Sir. D. MacGillivray to the Secretary of State for the Colonies," March 12, 1955.

<sup>289</sup> French 2011, pp. 193-194

<sup>290</sup> For an example of this argument, see Stubbs 1989, p. 77

<sup>291</sup> FM 3-24 2006, pp. 6-21, 6-22

<sup>292</sup> Komer 1972, p. 38; a 1954 report placed the total estimate lower at only 4% of the police force. See TNA CAB 129/74 "Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1954," January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1955, p. 20. Even Templer realized that the Chinese underrepresented in the police force. NAM 1995-01-165, "Message from H.E. the High Commissioner to the Chinese Community," March 1952.

<sup>293</sup> TNA CO 1030/37 "Police Strength by Races as at 1<sup>st</sup> June 1956"

corps by the end of 1956.<sup>294</sup> The only exception to these otherwise dismal statistics was the Home Guard—which employed nearly 300,000 predominantly ethnic Chinese men, but this program produced at best mixed results: many of the Guard’s weapons and ammunition stocks fell into the hands of the Communists and ultimately, the Guard was slashed to almost a third of its original size.<sup>295</sup>

Ethnic Chinese were similarly underrepresented in Malaya’s political institutions. They held only one of five local representative slots on the Director of Operations’ committee,<sup>296</sup> and filled only 13,000 of 106,000 positions in the Malayan Civil Service in 1956.<sup>297</sup> Moreover, in the federal elections of 1955, “only one in four adult Chinese who had been eligible to vote had registered to do so,” and ethnic Chinese made up only 11.2% of all registered voters in the election—significantly below their share of the population and hardly indicative of a newly enfranchised part of society.<sup>298</sup> And so while the ethnic Chinese stake in Malayan institutions increased, political enfranchisement likely did not play a decisive role in defeating the insurgency.

Finally, insofar as interrogation reports reveal, propaganda only marginally impacted the war’s outcome. On the one hand, as depicted in figure 6, under Templer, more Communist insurgents saw, believed and acted on British propaganda. That said, the propaganda campaign did not lessen the insurgents’ fear of being hanged, if they surrendered: in fact, a greater percentage of former insurgents reported that “fear of hanging” prevented them

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<sup>294</sup> TNA CO 1030/37 “Quarterly Report from the Minister for Internal Defense and Security Last Quarter, 1956,” p. 1.

<sup>295</sup> TNA WO 106/5990, “Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957,” September 1957, p. 20-21. Importantly, the ethnic composition of the Home Guard changed over the Emergency—from 116,437 Malays and 71,041 ethnic Chinese in March 1952 to 120,375 Malays and only 62,101 Chinese by November 1953. TNA CO 1022/35 “Home Guard Totals By States/Settlements as in March 1952;” TNA CO 1022/35 “Unsalaries Home Guards Strength at 30<sup>th</sup> November 1953”

<sup>296</sup> TNA CAB 129/74 “Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1954,” January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1955, pp. 22-23

<sup>297</sup> Komer 1972, p. 68

<sup>298</sup> Stubbs 1989, p. 218

surrendering sooner as the insurgency progressed—from about 26.3% of all insurgents who surrendered between 1949 to 1951 to 38.1% at the end of 1954.<sup>299</sup> Propaganda also seemingly did not shake most insurgents' faith in their cause: to the contrary, fewer surrendered insurgents report disagreeing with the Malayan Communist Party's policies as the conflict progressed (again, see figure 6). More likely, as one operational research study concluded, "there is evidence that [propaganda] leaflets had a "last straw" or "nudging" effect in three cases, even though we have no evidence that they initiated the original idea of surrender."<sup>300</sup> As British General, Malaya veteran and counterinsurgency expert Frank Kitson remarked of Psychological Warfare Teams' performance in the conflict, "I am not a supporter of the more starry-eyed manifestations of this type of activity and consider it is a complete waste of time to tell a terrorist that he is a good man at heart and that he should therefore surrender so as to hasten the day when freedom and democracy can bring peace and plenty to everyone."<sup>301</sup> The best use of psychological warfare, Kitson continues, is "telling the enemy exactly how they can surrender and explain the implications of not doing so."<sup>302</sup> In other words, while propaganda helped, it likely only mattered on the margins.

Figure 6:

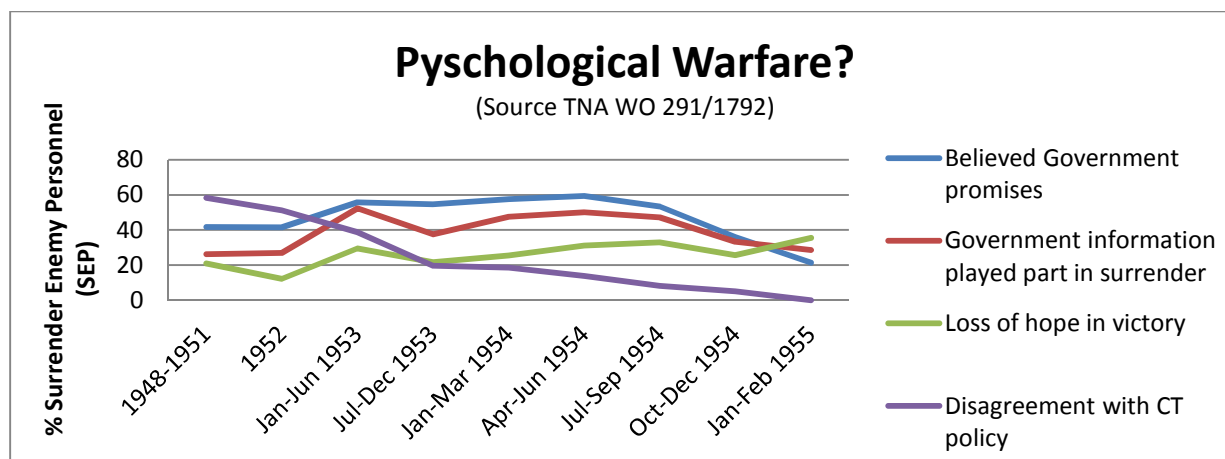
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<sup>299</sup> TNA WO 291/1783 "Memorandum 11/54: A Study of Surrenders in Malaya during the Period January 1949 to June 1954," July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1954, p. 6; TNA WO 291/1792 "Memorandum No. 6/55: A Review of Recent Trends in Surrender Behaviour," March 17, 1955, p. 4

<sup>300</sup> TNA WO 291/1763 "Memorandum No. 1/53: A Study of Surrender Behaviour Among Chinese Communists in Malaya," p. 9

<sup>301</sup> Kitson 1977, p. 147

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.



Perhaps, the key driver of public opinion during the Emergency lies less in what the British did, but more in what they let others do: throughout their tenure, the British deliberately ruled indirectly through the local Malay leaders. While the British exerted considerable influence through treaty arrangements and advisers beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, officially, the Malay States were never British territory.<sup>303</sup> The indigenous Malay sultans retained significant influence over their states, in fact so much so that the British needed to fight to liberalize citizenship laws to include more non-ethnic Malays.<sup>304</sup> This autonomy helped the British secure the local elite and more broadly, ethnic Malay population's support from the beginning of the conflict.

More importantly, Britain's willingness to cede power undercut the Communists' attempts to paint themselves as anti-colonial nationalists.<sup>305</sup> For example, while ethnic Malays also served the Malayan Civil Service and Public Service, they filled only 36 of the top 300 positions.<sup>306</sup> Early on in April 1951, Sir Henry Gurney granted a number of ethnic Malays ministerial status.<sup>307</sup>

<sup>303</sup> Jackson 1991, pp. 4-5

<sup>304</sup> Chin and Hack 2005, p. 280

<sup>305</sup> Chin Peng at the time claimed that "the aim of the armed revolt organized by my Party was to oust the Colonial power and fight for the independence of Malaya." FCO 141/14904 "Chan (sic) Peng to Prime Minister Persekutuan Tanah Melau," December 9, 1957.

<sup>306</sup> Komer 1972, pp.67-68

<sup>307</sup> Jackson 1991, p. 116

The British also included local politicians in sensitive posts—including as members of the Director of Operations' committee.<sup>308</sup> And by 1956, of the 106,000 employees of the Malayan Civil Service, all but approximately 3,000 came from Malaya's three major ethnicities.<sup>309</sup> Most importantly, the British granted Malaya independence. As one British report concluded, "The establishment of a predominantly Malay elected government and the promise of independence in 1957 have deprived the Malayan Communist Party's claim to represent Malayan Nationalism of its validity."<sup>310</sup> Similarly, another later report remarked, "The Malayan statesmen who took over the control from the British government possessed integrity and ability, and enjoyed the support of the population."<sup>311</sup>

Ironically, indirect rule might have also diminished Chinese support for the insurgency as well. From at least as early as 1951, the British understood that "the main division of the population between Malays and Chinese closely affects the Emergency."<sup>312</sup> Because the local ethnic Malayan leadership often loathed the ethnic Chinese, the British became the guarantor of the Chinese rights in Malaya.<sup>313</sup> Prior to the insurgency, the British pushed for greater rights for Chinese citizens.<sup>314</sup> After the Emergency began, ethnic Malayan leaders "urged very strongly that strenuous efforts should be made to increase the flow of Chinese deportees from Malaya," while British authorities called for restraint.<sup>315</sup> As a result, the British could legitimately claim to be the protector of the Chinese population, even while they were overseeing forced resettlement and using food denial. Moreover, indirect rule also added another dimension to the Emergency:

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<sup>308</sup> TNA CAB 129/74 "Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1954," January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1955, pp. 22-23

<sup>309</sup> Komer 1972, pp. 67-68

<sup>310</sup> TNA WO 291/1670 "Report No. 1/57: A Comparative Study of the Emergencies in Malaya and Kenya," p. 6

<sup>311</sup> TNA WO 106/5990, "Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957," September 1957, p. 25

<sup>312</sup> NAM 1995-01-165-53, "Extracts from a Note by Director of Operations dated 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1951," p. 3

<sup>313</sup> For this as a deliberate policy choice, *ibid*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>314</sup> Chin and Hack 2005, p. 280

<sup>315</sup> See classified meeting notes from meetings of the Council of Rulers in 1951. NAM 1995-01-165-21 "Precis: Matters Relating to the Emergency." Also see the TNA CAB 129/48 "The Situation in Malaya," November 20, 1951, p. 109; TNA WO 216/806 Lockhart to Slim January 14, 1954, p. 6.

with Malaya moving to independence, the Chinese had to consider the future of communal politics on the peninsula over the long term.

Ultimately, cooption and divide and rule explains the lack of a backlash to the heavier handed British tactics. While maximal force strategies may fuel resentment during some insurgencies, this may not be true when the counterinsurgent employs these methods primarily against one element of the population, while deliberately courting the support of another. The British empowerment of local Malay leaders secured their continued support and dissuaded ethnic Malays from rallying to the Communist cause in the name of nationalism. More debatably, divide and rule also curtailed some of the popular support for the insurgency among the Chinese population as well, by placing the insurgency in the context of the delicate state of race relations on the peninsula.

### **Operations in Johor versus Pahang**

While maximal force and indirect rule may have won the Malayan Emergency for the British, this combination was not equally successful in all regions of the country, as demonstrated by comparing two Malay states, Johor and Pahang. On one level these two states were quite similar. Geographically, they are neighbors—both located in the southern half of the Malay Peninsula. Politically, both were semi-independent and ruled by a local Malay Sultan. Militarily, British intelligence estimated that about 1,070 “Communist Terrorists” (21% of their total strength) lived in the Johor/Malacca Region, while another 1,360 or (or about 26% of the total end strength) resided in the Pahang area.<sup>316</sup> The Malayan Communist Party regarded Pahang

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<sup>316</sup> TNA WO 291/1732, “Memorandum 7/53: A Statistical Examination of Events in Relation to SF and CT in Malaya,” table 1

as “the most important state in the Federation,” while Johor was militarily “the greatest threat.”<sup>317</sup> Admittedly, the comparison is not perfect: Johor had roughly three times Pahang’s population in 1953, while Pahang is roughly double Johor in size.<sup>318</sup> Despite these differences, the comparison is still instructive. Pahang’s insurgency petered out relatively quickly and finally collapsed in 1956, while Johor’s insurgency continued on for several more years, prompting the question: why did the formula for victory in Pahang work less well in Johor?<sup>319</sup>

The difference was not due to the types of insurgent forces. According to British intelligence estimates (dating to October 15, 1953), the command and control structures almost mirrored each other. In Johor, the Communist forces were organized under two regimental headquarters—the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment in the north and the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment in the south of the state, with a smaller independent platoon along the Johor/Malacca border.<sup>320</sup> Similarly, Pahang also had two regiments (the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup>) dividing the north and south and two independent platoons operating along the eastern coast of the state.<sup>321</sup> And the quality of the insurgents also did not vary dramatically between regions: if anything, Pahang’s insurgents were more experienced than their counterparts in Johor. According to one 1954 study, insurgents who surrendered in

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<sup>317</sup> KCL Talbot 3/5 “Appreciation of the Military Situation in Malaya on 15 October 1953,” pp. 6-7. Chin Peng allegedly said promised early on, “It’s in Pahang that I want to establish Communism’s first Liberated Area.” Barber 1971, p. 84. Similarly, Templer, in his farewell speech in 1954, characterized, “Here in Pahang the Emergency has proved a more stubborn nut to crack than in many other places.” NAM 1974-10-29 “Notes for His Excellency’s Speech to the State Councillors (sic) Division 1 Officers and Officers of the Security Forces in Kuala Lipis on Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1954,” p. 2.

<sup>318</sup> Johore’s population in mid-1953 was about 873,000 (15.3% of Malaya), while Pahang was only about 279,590 (4.9%). International Bank for Reconstruction and Development 1955, p. 474. For the comparative area, see *ibid.*, 339

<sup>319</sup> For the assertion that Pahang’s insurgency collapsed by the end of 1955, see TNA WO 291/1670 “Report No. 1/57: A Comparative Study of the Emergencies in Malaya and Kenya,” pp. 17, 45; Clutterbuck 1966, p. 167; Smith 1985, p. 32.

<sup>320</sup> KCL Talbot 3/5, “An Appreciation of the Military Situation in Malaya on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1953,” pp. 2-3

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4



Pahang had spent on average 55.4 months in the jungle, while Johor's insurgents had spent only 40.1 months.<sup>322</sup>

The Johor insurgency's resilience was also not due to a lack of British effort. Despite Pahang's larger insurgent population and geographical size, the British dedicated almost twice as many forces to Johor as to Pahang.<sup>323</sup> From the beginning, Johor had more roughly twice the number of special constables (7,324 compared to 3,139), more auxiliary police (21,564 compared to 18,568) and eight times the number of home guards (24,592 to 3,467) as Pahang.<sup>324</sup> And by March 1953, Johor's home guard grew to 58,854, compared with Pahang's 26,057.<sup>325</sup>

British forces were also just as active in Johor as in Pahang. Figure 7 depicts a snapshot of British operations in both states from September 1952 to July 1953. The security forces in Johor killed and captured more insurgents, fired twice as many artillery rounds and flew eight times the number of offensive air sorties as their counterparts in Pahang. While these actions sometimes produced short term decreases in violence, they did not work for long. Johor had more than three times the number of "incidents" as Pahang did over the period. The British also dedicated more aid to Johor than Pahang, roughly in keeping with its larger population. For example, by the beginning of 1952, the British built twice as many schools in Johor as in Pahang (54 to 27), nearly three times as many classrooms (298 to 111) and dedicated more than three times the amount of money to education in the state,<sup>326</sup> yielding by mid-1953 roughly

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<sup>322</sup> TNA WO 291/1792, "Memorandum No. 6/55: A Review of Recent Trends in Surrender Behaviour," March 17, 1955, p. 2

<sup>323</sup> Also see Short 1975, pp. 139, 226, 282.

<sup>324</sup> NAM 1995-01-165-13, "Special Constabulary Strength at 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1951;" NAM 1995-01-165-13, "Consolidated Quarterly Strength State- Auxiliary Policy for Period Ending 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1951;" NAM 1995-01-165-13, "Consolidated Strength of Home/Kampong Guards, Tenant Registration and Kampong Guards not Absorbed as on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1951."

<sup>325</sup> TNA CO 1022/35, "Consolidated Home Guard Strength Return of States/Settlements for the Month of March 1953"

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., p. 112. Additionally, see the description in Osborne 1965, p. 16

similar school enrollment percentages.<sup>327</sup> Similarly, in 1953, the British spent almost identical sums medical aid per capita in both areas.<sup>328</sup>

Figure 7:

<b>OPERATIONS IN JOHOR VS. PAHANG SEPTEMBER 1952 TO JULY 1953</b>			
Source: TNA WO 291/1732		Johor & Malacca	Pahang
Comparative Strength	Estimated Number of CT in 1953	1,070	1,360
	Security Forces (average # of companies per month)	36.5	20.8
Counterinsurgent Activity	Contacts	451	296
	CT Killed/Captured	276	209
	CT Surrendered	87	81
	Food Dumps Found	95	107
	Propaganda Leaflets (x1,000)	8,151	11,019
	Offensive Air Sorties	956	141
	Artillery Rounds Fired	26,870	13,643
Insurgent Activity	Major Incidents	141	24
	Other Incidents	355	142
	Total Incidents	496	166

A closer examination of Figure 7, however, hints at three possible explanations for the relative British success in Pahang—namely the increased use of propaganda, more success at finding food dumps and increased surrenders in Pahang than Johor. To begin with the most noticeable metric, the large numbers of the propaganda leaflets dropped in Pahang may be less significant than they might seem at first. Given Pahang's significantly larger but also more rugged terrain, whether the leaflets even made their way into the insurgents' hands—much less influenced their actions—is open for debate. For example, the British launched a massive leaflet drop—Operation Bison—between October 28, 1953 and January 31, 1954, dropping more than 18 million leaflets all over Malaya—but targeting Pahang and Johor in particular—to

<sup>327</sup> Pahang had roughly 65% of the eligible population enrolled in Primary school, while Johore had only 59.5%, but the two had roughly same secondary education levels. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development 1955, p. 464-465

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., p. 573

encourage group surrenders.<sup>329</sup> Post-operation analysis concluded that thanks to problems with accurately dropping leaflets from planes, “only about one-third of the SEP (surrendered enemy personnel) who surrendered in the 3 months after ‘Bison’ could have seen Bison leaflets.”<sup>330</sup> Moreover, the study found that the leaflets did not appreciably increase the number of group surrenders or discussions of surrender. In sum then, the increased use of propaganda leaflets in Pahang seem unlikely to have been the primary reason for the British success there.

The food dump and surrender metrics—though less impressive in absolute terms—are perhaps more important. British operations in Pahang focused on food denial, destroying insurgent food dumps and squeezing the local population’s supplies (and by extension the amount of food which could be given to the insurgents). For example, the British 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, who controlled much of Pahang, had as one of its four major objectives in 1954—along with increasing the surrender rate, eliminating more insurgents and general providing security—was “denying *all* supplies and recruits to the CT (emphasis in the original).”<sup>331</sup> And in 1955, the British launched four major operations (Rooster, Huntsman, Latimer North and South) in Pahang—all designed to deny food to the insurgents in the area.<sup>332</sup>

Food denial proved extremely effective in Pahang. The operations account for Pahang’s relatively high surrender rate during the time period depicted in Figure 7, but also throughout much of the insurgency.<sup>333</sup> One study of surrendered insurgents, in fact, found that detainees from Pahang were most likely to list food shortages as their top reason for surrendering,

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<sup>329</sup> TNA WO 291/1784 “Memorandum 12/54: An Estimate of the Effectiveness of Operation ‘Bison’ As a Means of Bringing about Group Surrenders,” August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1954, p. 1

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6

<sup>331</sup> KCL Talbot 3/9, “Operational Policy January to June 1954,” p. 1

<sup>332</sup> Jackson 1991, p. 53-55

<sup>333</sup> Another study found that Pahang had almost twice the number of surrenders as other locations. See TNA WO 291/1783 “Memorandum 11/54: A Study of Surrenders in Malaya during the Period January 1949 to June 1954,” July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1954, p. 2

whereas insurgents from Johor tended to give “dislike of leaders” as their primary motivation.<sup>334</sup>

Ultimately, food denial operations caused the collapse the insurgency in Pahang. One official British military account commented, “During 1955 the policy of concentrating SF (security forces) on the weaker areas first was rewarded by a conspicuous success in Pahang, where the CTO (Communist Terrorist Organization) and its masses organization disintegrated after a series of four intensive food denial operations.”<sup>335</sup>

The British also attempted food denial in Johor. In fact, from very early on, Johor received the “highest priority” under the Briggs Plan, with British completing resettlement into New Villages by May 1, 1951<sup>336</sup> and was soon followed by the Plan’s first major military operation there that June.<sup>337</sup> The policy continued under Templer and by the end of the Emergency, Johor had the second most number of New Villages in Malaya (with 129), almost 50 more than Pahang, and Johor’s New Villages tended to be larger too.<sup>338</sup> Moreover, in 1955 at the same time as the major food denial operations in Pahang, British forces conducted “snap food checks” at the gates of the Johor’s New Villages.<sup>339</sup> The British also tried other measures to restrict Johor’s food supply: in fact, some of the earlier experiments in spraying the jungle with herbicide to destroy food cultivations occurred in Johor.<sup>340</sup> And these efforts had significant, if terrible, consequences for Johor’s civilian population: the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Johor estimated that food denial measures in 1954 led to “fifty thousand half-starved people,

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<sup>334</sup> TNA WO 191/1792, “Memorandum No. 6/55: A Review of Recent Trends in Surrender Behaviour,” March 17, 1955, p. 4

<sup>335</sup> TNA WO 106/5990, “Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957,” September 1957, pp. 10-11.

<sup>336</sup> TNA CO 1022/29, “Resettlement and the Development of New Villages in the Federation of Malaya, 1952,” p. 98

<sup>337</sup> Short 1975, p. 241; Stubbs 1989, p. 99.

<sup>338</sup> Komer 1972, p. 57; NAM 1974-10-29 “Johore: H.E.’s Address to and DWECs 13<sup>th</sup> May 1954,” p. 2

<sup>339</sup> See KCL Talbot 3/9 “JSWC 1616/5: Johore State War Committee General Operations No. 3: Employment of British Troops in Villages.”

<sup>340</sup> WO 291/1749 “Memorandum 3/53: Report of the Results of Spraying in Jungle Clearings in Johore,” September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1953. The British employed similar spraying techniques in Pahang, see WO 291/1755 “Technical Note 2/55: The Operational Use of CMU Against Communist Terrorist Cultivations in Malaya,” July 1955.

many whom were too ill or too weak to work.”<sup>341</sup> Unlike in Pahang, however, these efforts failed to defeat the insurgency in Johor, prompting of the question of why not?

Geographically, the insurgency in the more rural state of Pahang was more susceptible to starvation than those in Johor. According to Chin Peng, the Malayan Communist Party originally wanted to make the more rural and mountainous state of Pahang the headquarters for the insurgency.<sup>342</sup> Borrowing a page from Mao, the Malayan Communist Party established deep jungle bases in isolated areas as safe havens. While this isolation prevented British forces from operating freely in the area, it also forced the Communists to rely almost exclusively on the local area for their resources. In fact, one study of surrendered enemy personnel found that 98% of all Communist camps were within a two mile radius either of a cultivated area or a population center.<sup>343</sup> Living in the inhospitable jungle where transportation was a continuous problem, insurgents were particularly vulnerable to the British severing these tenuous lifelines.

By contrast, Johor’s insurgency was not purely locally supplied and consequently, food denial proved less effective. As Malaya veteran Brigadier Richard Clutterbuck recounted, “With a strong Communist Party among a population 75 per cent Chinese, Singapore presented little problem in smuggling men and supplies into the port and across the half mile stretch of water that separates the island from the jungles of south Johor.”<sup>344</sup> Similarly, a 1953 British intelligence assessment concluded that Johor’s insurgents drew some of their supplies from Singapore.<sup>345</sup> And even when the coastal region was eventually secured, insurgents still

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<sup>341</sup> Quoted in Short 1975, p. 483

<sup>342</sup> Chin and Hack 2005, p. 137

<sup>343</sup> TNA WO 291/1728, “Memorandum No. 3/53 Communist Terrorist Camps in Malaya,” p. 3

<sup>344</sup> Clutterbuck 1966, pp. 152-153; Similarly, Templer predicted in 1954, “I am sorry to say that I think that Johore will be one of the last places to be cleared up, not because I do not have confidence in your efforts, but because of the specially difficult conditions and past history here in Johore.” NAM1974-10-29 “Johore: H.E.’s Address to SWEC and DWECs 13<sup>th</sup> May 1954,” p. 3.

<sup>345</sup> KCL Talbot 3/5 “Appreciation of the Military Situation in Malaya on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1953.”

smuggled food in from neighboring districts.<sup>346</sup> As result of this porous border, even in late April 1958, after Johor became the focus for all operations in Malaya, the British never fully prevented the flow of food to the insurgents.<sup>347</sup>

Ultimately, Johor's insurgency collapsed in a series of mass surrenders between 1958 and 1959, but more because of cooption rather than resource denial. In Clutterbuck's account, the elimination of two key insurgent leaders prompted the collapse of much of the insurgent network in Johor.<sup>348</sup> In particular, Clutterbuck cites the importance of surrender of Hor Lung, the head of Malayan Communist Party's South Malaya Bureau: after his own surrender, Hor Lung convinced 160 of his subordinates to surrender and within four months of Hor Lung's initial surrender, only an estimated 70 insurgents remained in Johor.<sup>349</sup>

While Hor Lung's centrality to the insurgency's collapse is widely accepted, historians are divided about his motivations, much less why his subordinates followed him. Clutterbuck's attributes the surrender to economic incentives: ultimately, the Government paid \$469,000 (Strait Dollars) in rewards to the surrendered insurgents, including \$247,000 to Hor Lung personally.<sup>350</sup> That said, the British previously offered rewards to encourage group surrenders, without much success.<sup>351</sup> Others, like Richard Stubbs, argue that mass surrenders were the results of "the advantages which had gradually accrued to the Government" finally taking the toll on insurgents.<sup>352</sup> While this may be true, it does not explain the timing and why, after relatively few surrenders in 1956 (with only 134), was there a reversal of fortune in 1958.<sup>353</sup> Still, others

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<sup>346</sup> Clutterbuck 1973, p. 253

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> Clutterbuck 1966, pp. 166, 169

<sup>349</sup> Clutterbuck 1973, p. 255

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., p. 254

<sup>351</sup> For example, Operation Bison was premised on this idea and by the British force's own admission, it failed. TNA WO 291/1784 "Memorandum 12/54: An Estimate of the Effectiveness of Operation 'Bison' As a Means of Bringing about Group Surrenders," August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1954

<sup>352</sup> Stubbs 1989, p. 240

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

point to the amnesty, but there were similar offers were made as early as 1949 without the same success.<sup>354</sup> Finally, Kumar Ramakrishna links the collapse of the insurgency in 1958 to the political fallout of the previous year. On August 31, 1957, Malaya officially became independent, removing “the ostensible reason for the MCP’s armed struggle—the attainment of freedom from ‘British Imperialist’ domination.”<sup>355</sup>

The cause of the collapse, however, was more complicated than Malaya being freed from British rule. After all, Johor, historically, was part of the “unfederated” Malaya States and more independent than the crown colonies like Singapore or Penang.<sup>356</sup> In fact, the Sultan of Johor was so wealthy that he gave British £500,000 to help cover the costs of the Second World War.<sup>357</sup> Johor’s Chinese population also had localized autonomy through village councils, the first of their kind in all of Malaya, as early as 1952.<sup>358</sup> In fact, a 1954 era report singled out these councils as relatively functional, while Pahang’s councils had “achieved less than mediocre success.”<sup>359</sup> In other words, if the only road block to surrender was self-governance, then the Johor’s insurgency should have collapsed sooner, while the insurgent strongholds should have been located in areas with comparatively less autonomy.

Instead, Malayan independence—at the state level—added a degree of finality to the conflict. Independence enhanced the government’s credibility, both as institution (because it was no longer a British proxy) and on a personnel level (since insurgents trusted the new Malay Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman).<sup>360</sup> While this added credibility to the government’s promises of good treatment, the same can be said of the threat attached to all amnesty offers:

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<sup>354</sup> Ramakrishna 2003, p. 115-116

<sup>355</sup> Ibid., p. 129

<sup>356</sup> Stubbs 1989, p. 22

<sup>357</sup> Barber 1971, p. 16. To be fair, the Sultan was also particularly pro-British and even spoke out against premature independence. Ibid., 228-229..

<sup>358</sup> Stubbs 1989, p. 213

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., p. 215

<sup>360</sup> Ramakrishna 2003, pp. 119-122

“there will be no relaxation of security forces operations, so accept this offer it is too late.”<sup>361</sup>

From the insurgents’ standpoint, these circumstances were as favorable as they were likely to get: the amnesty offer was generous (freedom from prosecution or safe passage to China); the new prime minister was more pro-Chinese than many other Malay politicians (Tunku even adopted several Chinese children); and he led an interethnic party that included Chinese ministers.<sup>362</sup> Future Malay governments likely would not be so forgiving.<sup>363</sup> Even if this did not sway hard core guerrillas, the offer enticed the supporters who supplied them.<sup>364</sup> Ultimately then, independence forced the remaining insurgents to make a stark choice: accept generous terms of surrender or face the prospect of a far bleaker future.

In sum, while food denial and resettlement may have been the primary drivers of British success during the Malayan Emergency, this did not work equally well everywhere. They worked in Pahang because the insurgency was concentrated in a relatively isolated stretch of jungle, allowing the British to physically separate the combatants from their food supplies. They worked less well in Johor because the border proved more permeable, allowing the insurgents’ multiple means of support. Under the latter conditions, victory stemmed more from indirect rule—granting independence to Malaya and giving the remaining insurgents credible ultimatum: surrender on favorable terms or face the consequences.

## **Conclusion: Back to the Future?**

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<sup>361</sup> Ibid., p. 116

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., pp. 116, 121; Stubbs 198, p. 262. For an early demonstration of Tunku’s attempts to ensure racial harmony in Malaya, see the account of “Baling Amnesty Talks” of 1956. TNA CO 1030/30 “Memorandum from the Chief Minister and Minister for Internal Defense and Security: Baling Talks,” pp. 2, 4, 8. April 30, 1956.

<sup>363</sup> Importantly, despite his pro-Chinese sentiments, even Tunku cited the “the danger of a preponderance of [the] Chinese population” as a reason against including Singapore and North Borneo in the future state. TNA CO 1030/1024 “Memorandum from Tunku Abdul Rahman to Secretary of State for Colonies,” 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1962.

<sup>364</sup> Ramakrishna 2003, pp. 130-131



Despite the attention given to the Malayan Emergency, it may not be the best model for future counterinsurgency campaigns. After all, the British were fighting on a peninsula, in an area where they had deep colonial roots, against an insurgent group that had minimal foreign support and looked physically different than much of the population. Even then, the British needed to spend over a decade fighting the Communists before they could declare victory.

To the extent it can serve as a paradigm, however, Malaya reaffirms an old counterinsurgency formula, rather than anything new or novel. Indeed, Field Marshal Templer's Malaya was more similar to Marshal Bugeaud's Algeria than General Petraeus' Iraq. Like in other colonial counterinsurgencies, the lynchpins of British victory in Malaya were forced resettlement and food denial, starving the insurgents into submission, but also harming hundreds of thousands of civilians in the process.<sup>365</sup> On the nonlethal side, the key to victory was indirect rule—which relied on local Malayan proxies at every turn and exploited ethnic divisions in Malayan society. To be sure, there was a softer side to the Malaya campaign and these efforts should be lauded for humanitarian reasons, if nothing else. Tactically speaking, however, these methods were likely not the most decisive ones to the outcome. Perhaps, one British infantryman who served in Malaya put in best, "In the end, we won, and perhaps it was done by capturing the hearts and minds. But in a dirty little war, when you win their hearts and minds, you also have them by the balls."<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Douglas Porch, for example, calls Malaya as "Boer War redux" where Chinese new villages became "crime-infested "rural ghettos" guarded by barbed wire enclosures and searchlights that combined all the comforts of Kitchner's concentration camps minus the "Ladies Committee."" (Porch 2013, pp. 253, 255)

<sup>366</sup> French 2011, p. 251

Figure 8:

Hypotheses:	Result:	Evidence:
H1A Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a minority group.	TRUE	The Briggs Plan worked because the British could resettle and control the Chinese squatter population--a minority population--into "New Villages."
H1B Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a distinct group.	TRUE	Violence declined with the institution of resettlement and food controls. Memoirs from former guerillas confirm the effectiveness of these measures.
H1C Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, when employed against rural insurgencies	TRUE	Food denial proved particularly effective in rural areas in Pahang. In more urban areas, like Johore, food denial proved comparatively less effective.
H2 Cooption strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, when targeted against the insurgents themselves.	TRUE	The collapse of the insurgency in Johore with the defection of Hor Lung demonstrates this point.
H3 Divide and rule strategies will be more successful when the insurgency comes from a minority group.	TRUE	The ethnic Chinese were a minority population in Malaya and the British used this sectarian animosity to their advantage.

The Malayan Emergency also underscores the conditions when this model works best (see figure 8). First, it shows that not all forms of maximal force work: early British attempts in 1948-1949 at counter terror proved ineffective, just as Johor demonstrates that battlefield results do not necessarily correlate with artillery rounds fired or offensive air sorties flown.<sup>367</sup> Second, Malaya demonstrates that even successful maximal force tactics—like food denial and resettlement—worked better in more isolated, rural areas such as in Pahang, and not in more populous and porous places like Johor. Third, on the nonlethal side, indirect rule proved successful in Malaya because of the divisions between ethnic Malays and the minority Chinese population, a defined local power structure to co-opt and a willingness on the part of the British to relinquish control of the territory at the end of Emergency. If these conditions had not

<sup>367</sup> Bennett 2009

applied, the British strategy cooption and divide and rule strategies might have worked less well.

In sum then, the Malayan Emergency may represent a step “back to the future” for counterinsurgency strategy: rather shifting the counterinsurgency paradigm, it defines when a set of counterinsurgency tactics as old as the Romans in Britain work best in a modern age.

## Chapter 5: Anvils & Hammers

### Counterinsurgency Efficacy in the Mau Mau Rebellion

Few counterinsurgencies evoked as strong and as contradictory emotions at the time as the Mau Mau Rebellion, also known as the Kenyan Emergency. The rebellion garnered worldwide attention: autobiographies, academic studies and even court proceedings from the rebellion were published by commercial presses.<sup>368</sup> Many on the political left, cast the Mau Mau Rebellion in glowing terms, as a great proto-nationalist movement. Robert Edgerton, for example, refers to the rebellion as “the first great African liberation movement.”<sup>369</sup> By contrast, the official British assessment in the 1960 Corfield Report argues, “To sum up, I would say this. *Mau Mau* is a movement which in its origins and in its development, is wholly evil. It is the worst enemy of African progress in Kenya. It has about it all the horror of ‘the powers of darkness; of spiritual wickedness in high places.’”<sup>370</sup> To many, the Mau Mau were the ultimate bogymen akin to every threat to the British empire past and present—from the Thugs of India to Israel’s Stern Gang, from Africa’s communists to “the American gangster of Prohibition days.”<sup>371</sup>

Despite the attention it attracted at the time, the Mau Mau Rebellion does not appear in either *Counterinsurgency Manual* or the *U.S. Counterinsurgency Guide*.<sup>372</sup> To the extent modern accounts acknowledge the Rebellion, it is as the evil twin to the near simultaneous Malayan Emergency. If common wisdom is that “hearts and minds” won Malaya, then the Mau Mau Rebellion teaches that “in order to deal effectively with the Mau Mau problem, a number of

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<sup>368</sup> For example, see Stoneham 1953, Slater 1955, Baldwin 1957, Henderson and Goodhart 1958

<sup>369</sup> Edgerton 1989, p. vii. Similarly, left wing sociologist, Frank Furedi comments, “Here was a mass movement not susceptible to cooption. The colonial administration had no choice but to destroy it.” Furedi 1989, p. 139

<sup>370</sup> Corfield 1960, p. 162. Similarly, General George Erskine, commander of the East Africa Command responsible for the counterinsurgency effort, commented, “This (the rebellion) was no sudden outburst, but the cold-blooded unfolding of a carefully prepared programme.” See Erskine 1956, p. 11

<sup>371</sup> Stoneham 1953, pp. 27, 28, 73; Slater 1955, p. 35

<sup>372</sup> FM 3-24 and USG 2009

concepts held dear in democratic societies must be discarded” and “Mau Mau is like a cancer in Kenya--and no one ever used aspirin to cure cancer.”<sup>373</sup> And these are lessons that Western democratic militaries would rather not learn.

And yet, arguably, the Mau Mau Rebellion deserves as much attention as the Malayan Emergency for two reasons. First, if “hearts and minds” are the key to success, then the Mau Mau counterinsurgency effort raises important, if uncomfortable questions about this received wisdom. Second, despite their different historical legacies, the British military applied lessons from Malaya to the Mau Mau Rebellion, providing a natural comparison.<sup>374</sup> In this chapter, I reexamine the Mau Mau Rebellion in five sections. First, I introduce the conflict, argue that the Mau Mau’s defeat was not overly determined and apply the hypotheses from Chapter 3. Second, I show that the British success came from successful resource denial. Third, I look at the often neglected nonlethal half of the counterinsurgency effort and argue that indirect rule played a critical role in the conflict. In the fourth section, I examine the operations in the Nairobi area from 1952 to 1954 and the Aberdares and Mount Kenya region from 1954 to 1956. Finally, I compare the Mau Mau Rebellion to the Malayan Emergency and highlight the lessons of both efforts. Ultimately, I argue the British success in Kenya resulted from the same combination of resource denial and indirect rule that proved effective in Malaya.

### **A Possible Success Turned into a Sound Defeat**

Running from 1952 to 1960, the Mau Mau Rebellion was a brutal, racially, religiously and politically charged war. The Corfield Report paints the rebellion as a clash of civilizations: “The seeds of potential unrest are sown whenever any primitive society is brought in close contact

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<sup>373</sup> Baldwin 1957, p. 178, 180

<sup>374</sup> Majdalany 1963, p. 134. Of note, the Mau Mau Rebellion and Malayan Emergency’s lessons were also applied to the Cyprus counterinsurgency effort. (See *ibid.*)

with a more highly civilized society.”<sup>375</sup> The counterinsurgency pitted a small, aristocratic though slowly diversifying white European community against one of the largest tribes in East Africa, the million plus strong Kikuyu.<sup>376</sup> The British compensated for their numerical inferiority by using ample force: “The success of a political settlement depended on containing the mass movement and crushing the troublemakers.”<sup>377</sup> And yet, beneath the racial overtones, many British officers respected their opponents at some level, lauding the Kikuyu for “acumen beyond most African peoples” and being “most receptive, quick-witted and adaptable.”<sup>378</sup> Moreover, the Mau Mau Rebellion also was a civil war, more than 90% of the deaths resulted from Kikuyu on Kikuyu violence.<sup>379</sup> In this sense, the Mau Mau Rebellion also was a battle for future of the Kikuyu and Kenya at large.

The British won the Emergency on two levels. First, the British soundly defeated the Mau Mau. At the beginning of the Emergency, in 1953, the Mau Mau had an estimated 15,000 combatants (not including passive supporters).<sup>380</sup> By September 19, 1955, British military intelligence estimated the Mau Mau had only 3,385 combatants,<sup>381</sup> and Special Branch placed the number even lower.<sup>382</sup> A year later, most of the major Mau Mau leaders were detained and violence had dropped dramatically.<sup>383</sup> In the process, the British suffered minimal casualties. From the outbreak of the Rebellion to May 1956, the British lost only 58 European civilians killed and wounded, 63 European security forces killed, and another 101 European security forces

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<sup>375</sup> Corfield 1960, p. 7

<sup>376</sup> Edgerton 1989, p. 17, 25; Majdalany 1963, p. 29

<sup>377</sup> Furedi 1989, p. 167

<sup>378</sup> Stoneham 1953, p. 65; Majdalany 1963, p. 29

<sup>379</sup> Branch 2007, p. 292. For similar characterization see, Kitson 1977, p. 12; Anderson 2005, pp. 13, 84, 118

<sup>380</sup> Edgerton 1989, p. 112; Mumford 2012, p. 64

<sup>381</sup> “Minutes of the Commander and Chief’s Operational Conference held on 19 September 1955.” TNA WO 276/422, p.2

<sup>382</sup> Special Branch estimated insurgent strength at 2,857 combatants according to a November 7, 1955 memorandum. The chief army intelligence officer, however, called this estimate “absurd” and “utterly misleading and dangerous for Int (the intelligence section) to publish estimates in such detail.” TNA WO 276/426

<sup>383</sup> TNA WO 291/1670, Appendix C

wounded.<sup>384</sup> In fact, the Mau Mau killed fewer European civilians than Nairobi traffic accidents did during the war.<sup>385</sup> Add to these totals “loyal” Asian and African forces, the numbers rise to 1,116 security forces and 2,844 civilians casualties, compared with 30,798 Mau Mau casualties (killed, captured and surrendered) during the same period.<sup>386</sup> By way of perspective, 12,000 Frenchmen and another 150,000 Algerians died during the French counterinsurgency effort in Algeria.<sup>387</sup> Judged by the balance sheet then, the Mau Mau Rebellion was a resounding success.

On a political level, the Mau Mau Rebellion’s outcome is less clear. The British eventually granted Kenya independence and Jomo Kenyatta, president of Kenya Africa Union and former Mau Mau Rebellion detainee, became its leader. Kenya’s European population plummeted after the Emergency: from about 60,000 at the end of the Emergency in 1960 to 41,000 in 1988, only 5,000 of whom were Kenyan citizens.<sup>388</sup> That said, the British withdrew on their own terms and left behind a state that was more British than Mau Mau. Moreover, unlike some feared at the time, Kenya did not become a Communist satellite. And so, on a political level, the Mau Mau Rebellion also can be considered a British victory as well.

At the outset, however, many factors actually favored the Mau Mau—starting with the terrain. With over 200,000 square miles, much of it mountainous and forested, Kenya offered the insurgency ample places to hide, train and plan.<sup>389</sup> As one account noted, “the forests of Nyandarua and Kirinyaga [provide] excellent terrain for hit-and-run guerilla warfare.”<sup>390</sup> To

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> Edgerton 1989, p. 106

<sup>386</sup> TNA WO 291/1670, Appendix C; Later accounts put the Mau Mau casualties higher, Anderson 2005, p. 4

<sup>387</sup> Edgerton 1989, p. 204

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., p. 231. Numbers do not include the 9,000 Americans in Kenya in 1988.

<sup>389</sup> Fearon and Laitin 2003

<sup>390</sup> Clough 1998, p. 30

compound these advantages, many of the British Army battalions deployed to Kenya during the Emergency lacked forest and mountain warfare training.<sup>391</sup>

Second, the geopolitical situation favored the Mau Mau. Still recovering from the Second World War, Great Britain was fighting multiple counterinsurgencies simultaneously—in Malaya and later in Cyprus—straining its already limited resources. Moreover, 75,000 Kenyans served in the British Army during World War II, including many future Mau Mau leaders.<sup>392</sup> In fact, one of the forerunners to the Mau Mau was Anake a 40 or Kiama Kia 40 (The Forty Group), comprised of Kenyan veterans of the King's African Rifles.<sup>393</sup> Their experiences taught them about military operations. Waruhiu Itote, later known as “General China,” learned the basics of soldiering from his time as a noncommissioned officer fighting the Japanese in Burma.<sup>394</sup> Indeed, the Mau Mau proved a relatively disciplined force, organized into 250-300 man companies and capable of mounting large-scale, coordinated attacks.<sup>395</sup> And so, “despite their ludicrous ranks and titles, most Mau Mau officers were tough, capable men who were able to keep the respect of their soldiers.”<sup>396</sup>

Third, the Mau Mau developed a sophisticated intelligence network. British archeologist, naturalist and Kenyan settler spokesperson, Louis Leakey commented, “The value of a good intelligence system has always been appreciated by the Kikuyu ever since the days of the ancestral wars with the Masai and the Mau Mau organised a system of getting their own followers into key positions where they could find out what was happening and report to their

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<sup>391</sup> Clayton 1984, p. 22; Anderson 2005, p. 239

<sup>392</sup> Clough 1998, p. 88

<sup>393</sup> Itote 1967, p. 37

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27

<sup>395</sup> Edgerton 1989, p. 78-79, 83. Itote's memoirs detail how the Mau Mau developed field craft to operate in the woods undetected. (Itote 1967, pp. 70-74) Even Mau Mau's detractors C. T. Stonham commented, “The organisation has been framed in exact imitation of Communist methods.” (Stoneham 1953, p. 27). For the British intelligence assessment of the Mau Mau's structure, see TNA WO 276/426.

<sup>396</sup> Edgerton 1989, p. 116. Also see the assessment of General China. Lonsdale 1990, p. 415; Edgerton 1989, p. 89



leaders.”<sup>397</sup> Similarly, in his post-war memoirs, Mau Mau leader Josiah Mwangi Kariuki commented, “By the end of 1953 this secret organization (the Mau Mau’s passive wing) had reached a standard which can seldom have been equaled. We had even penetrated into Government House and G.H.Q. and there was little that went on in any District Commissioner’s Office in Central Province without our knowledge.”<sup>398</sup>

Finally, the Mau Mau possessed a countrywide communications and supply network. “The insurgents’ logistic support, from a very large percentage of the of the population, gave them lines of supply for food, money, recruits, information and medical equipment stretching right thorough Kikuyuland to Nairobi.”<sup>399</sup> And while the Mau Mau were chronically short of firearms and ammunition, they even developed on a limited ability to build their own.<sup>400</sup> In sum, while the Mau Mau certainly faced an uphill struggle, they were not destined to fail, raising in turn the question of how the British won.

Using the theories from Chapter 3, we can sketch out roughly what we should expect to see if different counterinsurgency strategies were driving the results. If a “hearts and minds” was at work in Kenya, then any use of collective punishment should prove counterproductive and boost the Mau Mau’s cause. As the British eased off of heavy-handed tactics, estimates of insurgent strength (measured by intelligence estimates) and activity (measured by incident data) should decline as well. On the nonlethal side, if direct rule was responsible, then British success should correlate with increased political enfranchisement, economic opportunities, cultural reforms and propaganda. Support for the government (and declines in violence) should come with dramatic changes in the standard of living, participation in the security forces and representation in the political decision-making process, only when granted to *all* Kikuyu—not

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<sup>397</sup> Leakey 1954, p. 38

<sup>398</sup> Kariuki 1964, p. 62

<sup>399</sup> Clayton 1984, p. 22. For an account of the communications network, see Leakey 1954, p. 37.

<sup>400</sup> Itote 1967, p. 103-108; Edgerton 1989, p. 130

just a narrow elite. Above all, there should be evidence that the British, in fact, won the “hearts and minds” of the Kikuyu population.

By contrast, if a “population control” model was behind the British victory, then the observable outcomes should be very different. The use of force should not necessarily be counterproductive. At times, collective punishment may even correlate with greater British success (as captured by declines in insurgent strength and activity), provided it is used to control the population and starve the insurgency of resources. Physical control measures should be particularly effective to the extent the support base could be isolated to a distinct, minority population (hypotheses 1a & 1b) and to the extent that rural combatants can be separated from their urban passive supporters (hypothesis 1c). On the nonlethal side, British success should hinge on co-opting a select few tribal and guerilla leaders (hypothesis 2), not winning over the Kikuyu population at large. Additionally, British success should come from “divide and rule” strategies—exploiting economic and tribal cleavages first to prevent the rebellion from spreading beyond the Kikuyu tribe and then fracture support within it. These strategies should also be particularly successful to the extent the population’s support base represent a minority population within Kenyan society (hypothesis 3). With this in mind, we can now turn to what won the Mau Mau Rebellion for the British.

### **Brutality versus Control**

The British took a maximalist approach to force in the Emergency. Major General W. R. N. Hinde’s Emergency Directive 1 in April 1953 stated, “Only through maximum security and alertness *combined with offensive action* (emphasis in the original) can success be denied to

the Mau Mau and its morale thus destroyed.”<sup>401</sup> Similarly, a 1955 top secret memorandum from the Commander in Chief of British East Africa to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff confided, “From an operational point of view some form of shock treatment is required to destroy the Terrorists’ will to resist.”<sup>402</sup> In practice, this translated into everything “from a shoot first, ask questions later” mentality to even more grisly displays of brutality.<sup>403</sup> Collective punishment was authorized, if not encouraged: security forces were instructed to bring “pressure to bear upon the relatives of terrorists remaining at large and also upon the villages to which it is known they belong...”<sup>404</sup> And so, the analytical challenge becomes less whether maximal force was used, but determining which of these heavy-handed tactics actually drove success.

Perhaps, the simplest explanation is that the British killed their way to victory. Indeed, the British killed a lot of suspected Mau Mau—over 10,500 from October 1952 to May 1956,<sup>405</sup> and some estimates are as high as 50,000.<sup>406</sup> By comparison, the British killed only 6,710 insurgents in Malaya.<sup>407</sup> In the first six months of the insurgency, 430 Mau Mau were shot dead “while trying to escape.”<sup>408</sup> Even those who were brought to trial often received death

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<sup>401</sup> TNA WO 32/217222, p. 7. Similarly, the British Army’s *Handbook on Anti-Mau Mau Operations* include the “elimination of terrorist gangs in the Native Reserves” and “the complete destruction of all terrorists in prohibited areas i.e. Aberdare and Mount Kenya Forests.” The other two missions were assisting police and civil authorities and preventing attacks on European farms. TNA WO 276/545, p. 12-13

<sup>402</sup> TNA CAB 21/2906

<sup>403</sup> For rules of engagement, see Reis 2011, p. 255; for examples of Security Forces’ brutality towards the Mau Mau, see Baldwin 1957, p. 79; Edgerton 1989, p. 159, 168.

<sup>404</sup> TNA WO 276/426, p. 1. For more orders directing collective punishment, see FCO141/6247 “Intensification of the Measures Against the Passive Wing,” November 22, 1954; WO “Operation Anvil: Outline Plan by Joint Commanders,” February 22, 1954, pp. 21-22 (description of Emergency legislation allowing for communal and preventative detention)

<sup>405</sup> TNA WO 291/1670, Appendix C

<sup>406</sup> Newsinger 2002, p. 80

<sup>407</sup> The French also killed 11,000 insurgents during the counterinsurgency campaign in Madagascar (1947-1948). Many more insurgents and civilians died from starvation and disease than by counterinsurgent bullets. Clayton 1984, fn 100, p. 54.

<sup>408</sup> Newsinger 2002, p. 68

sentences: of the 3,000 tried between 1952 and 1958 for Mau Mau related offenses, 1,090 were hanged.<sup>409</sup>

The problem with the killing-the-way-to-victory thesis is two-fold. First, on an anecdotal level, killing provoked a backlash—not just in the Kikuyu population—but also amongst the Europeans as well. For example, the Psychological Warfare Division abandoned travelling gallows (in order to hang inmates in their hometowns as a warning), after prison officers refused to use it.<sup>410</sup> Similarly, in an internal December 1954 memorandum, Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police G. R. H. Gribble worried, “Bearing in mind the Army’s views of what is the passive wing, one could add to what I have said and “reduction ad absurdum” on the same logical grounds by having CID sufficient to investigate and persecute the bulk of the Kikuyu nation for its assistance to Mau Mau and we should finish by hanging a million people.”<sup>411</sup> Even defenders of British operations admitted that “a few shameful acts by the police and the soldiers, especially those who were locally born and therefore more committed.”<sup>412</sup>

Second, killing may not have reduced Mau Mau violence. Of the over 10,500 Mau Mau killed in offensive actions during the Rebellion, more than two thirds—7,785—were killed before December 1954.<sup>413</sup> Similarly, of the approximately 1,090 individuals hanged for Mau Mau related offenses during the Emergency, 896 were hanged between October 1952 and December 1954.<sup>414</sup> Despite the bloodshed, however, *Mau Mau attacks continued to rise until about six month later—peaking during the summer of 1955* (see figure 1). A January 5, 1955 memorandum from the Governor of Kenya, Sir Evelyn Baring to the Secretary of the State for the Colonies explains why killing failed to reduce insurgent violence. Of the 579 individuals

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<sup>409</sup> Mumford 2012, p. 55. Others give a somewhat lower figure—1,086. See Clayton 1984, p. 53-54.

<sup>410</sup> Clayton 1984, FN 29, p. 15

<sup>411</sup> TNA WO 276/427, p. 18

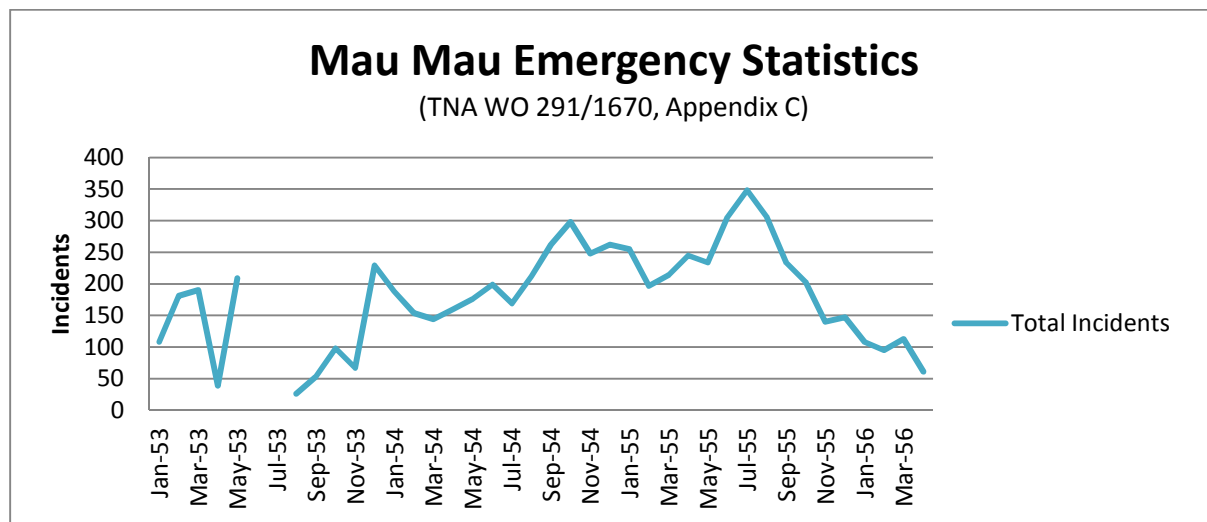
<sup>412</sup> Majdalany 1963, p. 227

<sup>413</sup> TNA WO 291/1670

<sup>414</sup> Clayton 1984, p. 15. Of note, David Anderson gives a different timeline from between April 1953 to June 1955 for the peak hangings—in which case the evidence would be less conclusive. Anderson 2005, p. 281

executed for Mau Mau offenses during 1954, only a fraction of the individuals were actually engaged actual combat (98 were hanged for “murder” and this number presumably also includes ordinary criminals). Of the rest, 171 were hanged for “consorting,” 185 for “possession of arms,” 74 for “possession of ammunition” and the rest for administering oaths and other miscellaneous offenses.<sup>415</sup>

Figure 1:



Perhaps, a more compelling explanation for British success is effective resource denial. As in Malaya, the British forcibly resettled the insurgency’s support base. The British detained over 80,000 Kikuyu suspected of aiding the Mau Mau and many more—by some estimates as many as 1,077,500 people—were resettled into 854 “new villages.”<sup>416</sup> Entire populations were moved

<sup>415</sup> TNA CO 822/778, p. 25

<sup>416</sup> Mumford 2012, p. 53; Newsinger 2002, p. 74; Anderson 2005, p. 294. Caroline Elkins estimates 1.5 million—or almost the entire Kikuyu population. Elkins 2005, p. xiv. Primary sources place the figure closer to a quarter million. DO 35/5353 “Kenya Emergency,” October 20, 1954. Mass detentions consumed British policy: prisons in 1954 made up the single largest expenditure—amounting over £3.3 million—to include Army and Royal Air Force. FCO 141/5700 “Memorandum by the Minister of Finance and Development,” November 16, 1954. Elkins, similarly, notes that from 1954-1957, “community development and rehabilitation” made up 0.5% of the colonial budget, compared to 20% for the “maintenance of law and order.” Elkins 2005, p. 148

from insurgent hotbeds like the Rift Valley to relatively quiet ones like Central Province.<sup>417</sup>

These policies' purpose also paralleled Malaya—"protecting" these populations from the Mau Mau but also preventing them from supplying food to the insurgency.<sup>418</sup> Additionally, food and weapons restrictions—as early as Emergency Directive Number 1 issued in 1953—were imposed on the non-Kikuyu population to complete the stranglehold on the Mau Mau's supply lines.<sup>419</sup>

While the commander of British forces General George Erskine "made it very plain that the Army did not hold people and certainly did not ill-treat the people they detained temporarily,"<sup>420</sup> resource denial tactics did not ingratiate British forces to the population. While some Kenyan settlers claimed that "real" African loyalists "cheerfully accept the inconveniences they have to suffer," others were less sure.<sup>421</sup> Kenya Governor Evelyn Baring, in fact, was so troubled by the Army's draconian mass detention plans that he wrote an urgent top secret telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies detailing his moral, economic and political concerns over the policy (although he accepted scaled down measures).<sup>422</sup> Lower level officers worried about losing "the battle for the hearts," while a March 1955 Department of Information study found widespread discontent even among loyalist Kikuyu.<sup>423</sup> More concretely, according to one estimate, 26,000 children under the age of 10 died due to "malnutrition and diseases encountered in the villages."<sup>424</sup> Restrictions on grazing and agriculture (to prevent the Mau

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<sup>417</sup> As many as 100,000 Kikuyu were moved between these regions. Branch 2009, p. 89.

<sup>418</sup> TNA FCO 141/5699 "Directive on Settled Areas," May 6, 1954; Edgerton 1989, p. 93; Mumford 2012, p. 54; Elkins 2005, p. 101

<sup>419</sup> TNA WO 32/217222, p. 13. For early attempts to destroy food supplies, see Clough 1998, p. 147.

<sup>420</sup> Erskine 1956, p. 14. Other accounts were less pleasant. In a 23 April 1953 editorial in the *East African Standard*, settler Sir Richard Woodley advocated putting captured insurgents on a starvation diet, stating that the results would "likely to be more effective than ten or twenty years of an ordinary sentence." Clayton 1984, p. 51

<sup>421</sup> Leakey 1954, p. 122

<sup>422</sup> Governor to Secretary of State, January 27, 1954, p. 2. TNA WO 276/514; TNA CAB 129/65, p. 3

<sup>423</sup> FCO 141/5702 "Future Operations," August 6, 1954, p. 4; WO 276/457 "Survey of Kikuyu Opinion," March 1955

<sup>424</sup> Branch 2009, p. 113. For similar description of prisons and camps, see Anderson 2005, p. 316

Mau's access to food) caused an estimated 25 percent decrease in production.<sup>425</sup> And historian Caroline Elkins found from her post-war interviews that of all the horrors of the Mau Mau Rebellion, food denial was what "the Kikuyu women of the Central province remember most about the years of the Emergency."<sup>426</sup>

While resource denial did not win "hearts and minds," it was effective. The British classified Mau Mau attacks into four categories—attacks against security forces and civilians, "offenses against property," and food thefts and livestock thefts. As depicted in Figure 2, attacks against security forces and civilians peaked in September of 1954 and then dropped dramatically, while incidents of livestock and food thefts rose dramatically during the first half of 1955. In other words, by the end of 1954, Mau Mau attention shifted away from attacking civilians and towards stealing food and livestock to survive.<sup>427</sup> This timeline correlates with the surge in detention and resettlement operations in 1954, particularly Operation Anvil in Nairobi. Similarly, special Branch Officer Ian Henderson recounts that by late 1955, "For months the sole preoccupation of all of these terrorists had been mere survival. They lived like animals. They survived because of their animal skills, and when caught they react like trapped animals."<sup>428</sup> Moreover, food denial also increased friction within the Mau Mau and decreased their operational effectiveness. As British officer Frank Kitson remarks, "More feuds [within the Mau Mau bands] started as a result of unfair sharing of food than from any other cause."<sup>429</sup>

Figure 2:

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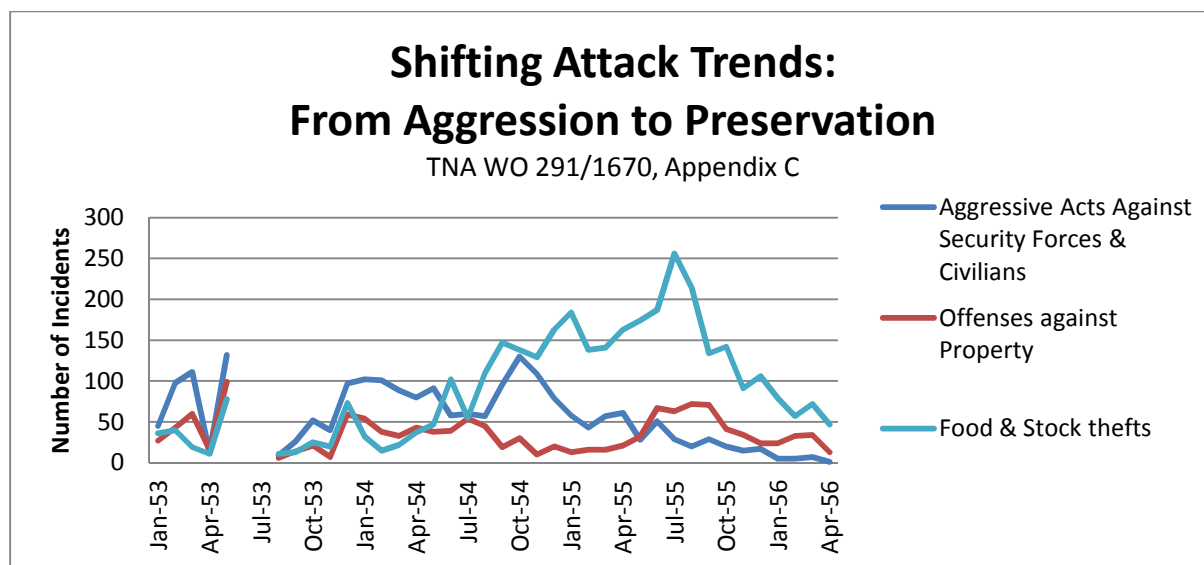
<sup>425</sup> Majdalany 1963, p. 217

<sup>426</sup> Elkins 2005, p. 259

<sup>427</sup> For similar assessments, see TNA WO 276/449 "Appreciation of the by the Commander-in-Chief of the Operational Situation in Kenya in June 1955," pp. 2-5; Edgerton 1989, p. 138.

<sup>428</sup> Henderson and Goodhart 1958, p. 149

<sup>429</sup> Kitson 1960, p. 179



Surrender statistics also confirm the impact of food denial. A British intelligence study of Mau Mau who surrendered from August 1953 to October 1, 1954 found that 25% cited hunger as one of their primary reasons for surrendering, just slightly less than ground or air action (each which were cited as a factor about 30% of the time).<sup>430</sup> The study also found that the number of surrendered Mau Mau rose rapidly since July 1954 (correlating with more rigid food control measures) and more importantly, the ratio of combatants to camp followers also increased dramatically as well—from 1:5.5 for August to October 1953 to 1:2 for July to October 1954.<sup>431</sup> In other words, food denial increased both the overall number of surrendered personnel and the ratio hard-core combatants who surrendered.<sup>432</sup> Indeed, the number of Mau Mau who surrendered climbed through mid-1955—even while other metrics of British offensive operations (e.g. killed and captured insurgents) remained relatively constant (See figure 3).

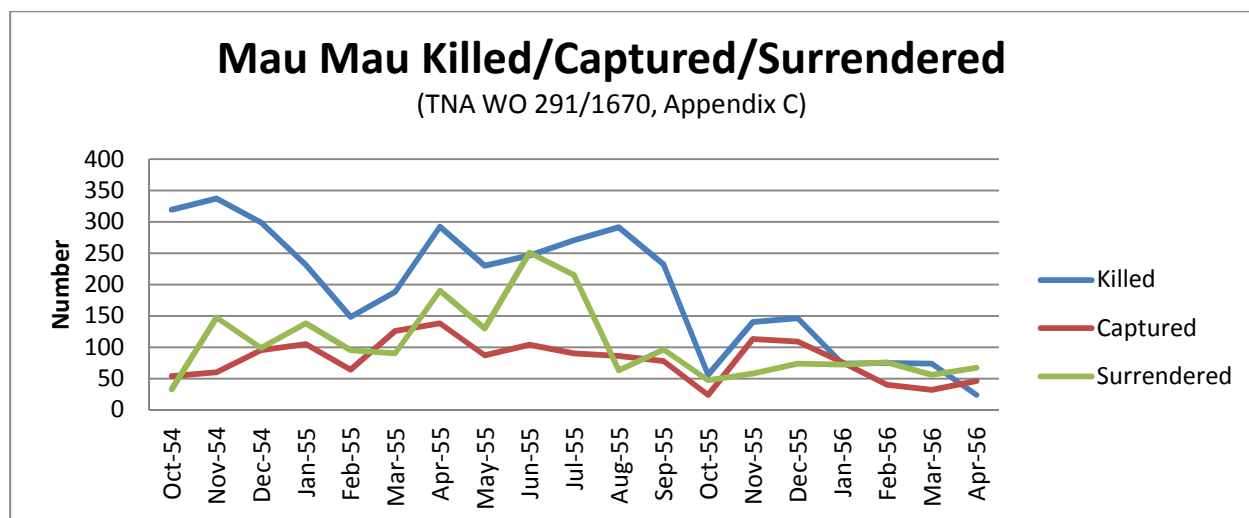
Figure 3:

<sup>430</sup> EAC/62719/INT(a), TNA WO 276/427.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid., pp. 2, Appendix B.

<sup>432</sup> In fact, Evelyn Baring also concluded that food denial not only increased the number of surrenders, but also proved more successful against the targeting leadership than other methods. See TNA DO 35/5354 Telegram from Evelyn Baring to the Secretary of States for the Colonies, August 25, 1955.





While food denial played a key role from late 1954 onwards, weapons denial kept the Mau Mau in check particularly during the initial years. Lacking foreign supply lines, the Mau Mau acquired most of their weapons from within Kenya. To exploit this vulnerability, the British forces imposed strict controls on weapons and ammunition.<sup>433</sup> As a result, even at their peak, the Mau Mau had at most 1,100 “precision weapons” or manufactured firearms (as opposed to the Mau Mau’s cruder homemade weapons).<sup>434</sup> Ultimately, weapons shortages became so acute that they drove much of the Mau Mau’s operational planning: as one Mau Mau leader Waruhiu Itote recounts, “At times our shortage of weapons made our activities seem like a series of battles to get weapons to fight more battles.”<sup>435</sup> In fact, the British captured Itote in a botched January 1954 operation to capture weapons and he later admitted that “had more ammunition been available... the Mau Mau attacks would have been even more widespread.”<sup>436</sup>

<sup>433</sup> Corfield 1960, pp. 225-234.

<sup>434</sup> A 1955 “Arms and Ammunition Investigation Unit” concluded that the Mau Mau had 1,030 weapons, although British interrogation reports concluded the number was more like 400. Corfield 1960, p. 232. More recent histories estimate that the Mau Mau had between 700-1100 precision weapons in 1953. Mumford 2012, p. 64

<sup>435</sup> Itote 1967, p. 97. Also see, *ibid.*, pp. 41-44. The anecdote squares with British intelligence assessments at the time, see TNA WO 276/409, p. 2; Croker 1955, p. 48.

<sup>436</sup> Itote 1967, p. 161; Croker 1955, p. 49

Why did resource denial prove effective? Arguably, three conditions allowed this strategy to work. First, as General Erskine realized, “The Kikuyu are to some extent boxed in, and although their country is probably the most fertile in Kenya, it carries a very heavy population.”<sup>437</sup> Likewise, the wilderness did not provide much sustenance either: the Mau Mau “gangs can exist in the forest on game and plants, but only barely.”<sup>438</sup> As a result, the insurgency was vulnerable to starvation. Second, while the Mau Mau reportedly contacted India, Uganda and Russia, they never established foreign supply lines, and so needed to be wholly self-reliant.<sup>439</sup> Finally, as Major General W.R.N. Hinde assessed, food denial was used instrumentally, because “you cannot get any sense out of people who are hungry.”<sup>440</sup> Food denial forced the Mau Mau to focus on their own survival. As one historian remarked, “the Mau Mau national leaders realized that their main problem was not so much sending people to the forest as securing regular supplies of food, arms and other materials essential for carrying out a sustained resistance.”<sup>441</sup> Once weakened and deprived of the wherewithal to fight, the remaining Mau Mau could be captured or killed in more targeted operations.<sup>442</sup>

## **Cooption and Divide & Rule**

Why did heavy-handed British tactics not alienate the population and prove counterproductive? Early on, observers predicted such a backlash. In October 1952, American Consul Edmund Dorsz commented, “Arbitrary methods used by the police are also playing into

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<sup>437</sup> Erskine 1956, p. 12

<sup>438</sup> TNA WO 276/513, “Appreciation on Future Military Policy in Kenya,” p. 2

<sup>439</sup> Mumford 2012, p. 67; Clayton 1984, p. 21-22. For attempts to reach out to Russia and Uganda, see Corfield 1960, pp. 110, 112; for India, see Edgerton 1989, p. 146

<sup>440</sup> TNA WO 276/411, p. 9

<sup>441</sup> Tamarkin 1976, p. 133

<sup>442</sup> For example of the more focused operations—often conducted by Special Forces and/or pseudo-gangs—in late 1955-early 1956, see TNA WO 276/422

the hands of the Mau Mau by alienating the good-will of the law-abiding Africans.”<sup>443</sup> Even the British military acknowledged that the disproportionately high ratio of killed to captured insurgents while “inevitable in the peculiar type of present operations, but which nevertheless has unfortunate political repercussions.”<sup>444</sup> And yet, this popular backlash never became a powerful enough to check the counterinsurgency’s progress.

The first possibility is—despite everything—the British actually won the “hearts and minds” of the Kikuyu people. Certainly, some British officers thought this was the case. Emergency Directive 1 speaks at length about, “*fostering confidence in our good intentions towards the Kikuyu in the future*” (emphasis in the original).<sup>445</sup> More concretely, General Erskine ordered, “every officer in the Police and the Army should stamp out at once any conduct which he would be ashamed to see used against his own people.”<sup>446</sup> And Erskine certainly believed he won “hearts and minds.” Writing to his wife on October 9, 1953, he said, “It is a curious thing that the Africans will talk to me and the Army—particular the British Army—on the most friendly terms. They have a fair amount of confidence in the Government Administrative officers but not in the government as a whole.”<sup>447</sup>

The idea that the British actually “won over” the Kikuyu seems unlikely. First, British authorities estimated that upwards of 90% of all Kikuyu swore an oath to support—or at least not oppose—the Mau Mau.<sup>448</sup> Second, given the mass internment camps and the security forces’ abuses, it seems unlikely that the British won over most of the population. Third, even if

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<sup>443</sup> Quoted in Mumford 2012, p. 60. Also see Lonsdale 1990, p. 396.

<sup>444</sup> TNA WO 276/196, p. 1

<sup>445</sup> TNA WO 32/217222, p. 11. These sentiments are echoed later on in the document, as well. See *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>446</sup> Order from June 23, 1953. Printed in its entirety. Clayton 1984, p. 38-39.

<sup>447</sup> Clayton 1984, FN 69, p. 35.

<sup>448</sup> The 90% figure is commonly cited secondary sources (see Edgerton 1989, p. 61; Newsinger 2002, p. 68; Mumford 2012, p. 52). The Corfield Report, however, cites an April 1952 estimate of only 10%, rising to 80% by October 1952 (Corfield 1960, pp. 130-131, 248). Other accounts accuse the oath of being a money making venture (Corfield 1960, p. 63), being administered by force (“Appreciation on Future Military Policy in Kenya,” TNA WO 276/513, p. 2; Anderson 2005, p. 42) or simply, not being taken seriously (Leakey 1954, p. 85). Regardless of the actual figure, however, all accounts suggest that the Mau Mau enjoyed overwhelming support among the Kikuyu.

the British military was liked, the African community still despised the police force and the settlers. Even Erskine admits in his letter to his wife, “They (the Africans) hate the police and they absolutely loath the settlers. It is difficult to realize how much the settler is loathed and the settler does not realize it himself.”<sup>449</sup> Finally, if popular opinion improved, it was likely not due to British actions. Much of the British propaganda effort consisted of loosely veiled threats, rather than an effort to woo the population.<sup>450</sup> Indeed, the British worried more about European morale—not the African population.<sup>451</sup> And by most accounts, the event that changed public attitudes towards the rebellion the most—the Lari Massacre where Mau Mau forces killed 93 Kikuyu loyalists in March 1953—was due to a Mau Mau misstep, rather than a British attempt to “win hearts and minds.”<sup>452</sup>

A second theory focuses on economics. In 1948, 30,000 European settlers occupied 12,000 square miles, while the far more numerous Kikuyu were relegated to poorer quality land (by one estimate 250,000 were restricted to a 2,000 square miles).<sup>453</sup> To add to these grievances, 1946 anti-squatter regulations caused “a drastic decline in living standards” from 2,500 shillings per year in 1940 to approximately 400 shillings in 1946,<sup>454</sup> while the price of staples like maize meal increased between 600 and 800% from 1939 to 1953.<sup>455</sup> As a result, some argue that the British averted a public backlash, by launching the Swynnerton Plan in 1953, allocating £5 million for agriculture and £7 million for development and reconstruction.<sup>456</sup> They also relaxed regulations on coffee, allowing profits to rise from £5.2 to £14 million over the

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<sup>449</sup> Clayton 1984, FN 69, p. 35.

<sup>450</sup> See TNA WO 276/422, p. 3; Furedi 1989, p. 115

<sup>451</sup> See TNA WO 276/514, p. 2; TNA WO 276/518, p. 2

<sup>452</sup> For anecdotal accounts of Lari’s effect on public opinion, see Leakey 1954, p. 101; Majdalany 1963, p. 147; Furedi 1989, p. 122; Anderson 2005, p. 127, 177

<sup>453</sup> Newsinger 2002, p. 61. For similar economic arguments, see Berman 1976, p. 145; Tamarkin 1976, p. 121. Needless to say, British settlers countered that the land was mostly unowned and the small percentage that was not (some 297 square miles) was fairly compensated. Corfield 1960, p. 16; 19; Baldwin 1957, p. 55

<sup>454</sup> Furedi 1989, p. 55

<sup>455</sup> Edgerton 1989, p. 33

<sup>456</sup> Mumford 2012, p. 55

course of rebellion.<sup>457</sup> A few senior British leaders even cast the forced labor policies as a way to pay the “unemployed and likely to starve” fair market wages.<sup>458</sup>

These economic reforms, however, likely did not win the war. First, the economic motivations for Mau Mau Rebellion is debatable,<sup>459</sup> and even some historians who ascribe to this theory admit that socioeconomic status did not directly correlate with support for the insurgency.<sup>460</sup> Multiple accounts suggest the Kikuyu were actually comparatively better off than the other African tribes.<sup>461</sup> Moreover, the Kenyan economy grew at 13% per year from 1947-1954, so economic conditions were already improving prior to the Rebellion.<sup>462</sup> And the British applied economic inducements unevenly: while embracing certain reforms, they also exempted themselves from “any damage which may be caused by the security forces in carrying out their duties.”<sup>463</sup> Additionally, the Swynnerton Plan primarily benefited a select few, loyalist Kikuyu elite—not the Kikuyu population at large and most of the reforms were fully implemented after the turning point in the insurgency.<sup>464</sup> Finally, these reforms may not have fundamentally changed Kenya’s economic dynamics: “by 1960, 4,000 European farms accounted for 83 percent of total agricultural exports of the country.”<sup>465</sup> Similarly, while the average African wage in Nairobi more than doubled between 1949 and 1956, the wage increases were less impressive in real terms: in 1956, the average African wage was only 11% above the statutory minimum.<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Newsinger 2002, p. 76

<sup>458</sup> TNA WO 276/411, p. 17; TNA CAB 129/65, p. 1

<sup>459</sup> Stoneham 1953, p. 140; Kitson 1974, p. 31

<sup>460</sup> Tamarkin 1976, p. 119

<sup>461</sup> Majdalany 1963, p. 30; Henderson and Goodhart 1958, p. 12. Even former Mau Mau Josiah Mwangi Kariuki admits that contrary to reports of widespread malnutrition (Edgerton 1989, p. 37), as far he could see, “there was no real shortage of food.” Kariuki 1964, p. 32.

<sup>462</sup> Berman 1976, p. 159

<sup>463</sup> FCO 141/5698 “Operation Anvil: Legislation,” March 22, 1954

<sup>464</sup> Branch 2009, pp. 122, 145-146, 174; Elkins 2005, p. 127

<sup>465</sup> Furedi 1989, p. 9

<sup>466</sup> Anderson 2005, pp. 185-186

A third set of arguments suggest that the British won through cultural reforms. In the eyes of many Europeans, the driving force behind the Mau Mau was deep seated antipathies to Western customs and Christianity.<sup>467</sup> They pointed to the Mau Mau's ban on European cigarettes and hats, adoption of pagan oathing rituals, and adaptation of Church of Scotland hymns into nationalist songs.<sup>468</sup> For example, Special Branch officer Ian Henderson remarks, "When the troubles began the congregation at many of the mission churches in the Kikuyu reserve fell by 90 percent, and authoritative observers believe that 90 percent of the tribe was prepared to give the Mau Mau some support at some time during the Emergency."<sup>469</sup> And so, the British fought a cultural battle for Kikuyu society—proselytizing, instituting "modern clubs" and even hiring their own witchdoctors.<sup>470</sup>

The efforts' impact on the outcome of the Mau Mau Rebellion, however, is likely fairly marginal. The counteroathing ceremonies conducted by British hired witchdoctors were poorly attended and produced mixed results.<sup>471</sup> The Church of Scotland's presence and importance in Kenya was also likely inflated.<sup>472</sup> Moreover, former Mau Mau leaders scoffed at the idea that proselytizing meaningfully effected the Kikuyu population.<sup>473</sup> In fact, post-war historians argue that proselytizing was "counterproductive."<sup>474</sup> And so, while historically interesting, these cultural efforts likely did not determine the insurgency's outcome.

Perhaps, the final direct governance argument was that the British won by enfranchising the Kikuyu's population. According to one former Mau Mau, "There is no doubt that reasonable concessions at any time, concessions that would have shown that the British genuinely wished

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<sup>467</sup> Slater 1955, pp. 171, 192-198; Clough 1998, pp. 34-35

<sup>468</sup> Slater 1955, pp. 129-133; 232; Tamarkin 1976, p. 131; Clough 1998, p. 98

<sup>469</sup> Henderson and Goodhart 1958, p. 12

<sup>470</sup> Leakey 1954, p. v; Lonsdale 1990, pp. 412-413; Branch 2009, p. 142; Luongo 2006, p. 460, 463

<sup>471</sup> Branch 2009, p. 41-22

<sup>472</sup> In 1929-1930, Church of Scotland Mission Schools catered to only 6,496 of 82,455 students. Corfield 1960, p. 172

<sup>473</sup> For example, see Itote 1967, p. 123

<sup>474</sup> Elkins 2005, p. 174

Kenya to obtain its independence under an African Government within a foreseeable period, would have been sufficient to stop much that followed.”<sup>475</sup> According one reading of the Mau Mau Rebellion, the British actually granted these concessions. They increased the Kenyan Police and the Home Guard by 20,000 apiece.<sup>476</sup> They also held elections in 1957 and increased the number of seats given to Africans on the Legislative Council (one of the original demands made by the Kenya Africa Union—the political predecessor to the Mau Mau).<sup>477</sup> And so, the theory goes, by addressing the Kikuyu’s political grievances, the British neutralized the Mau Mau’s purpose for existence.

The political enfranchisement argument, however, falls short on several dimensions. First, even after the reforms, the Kikuyu were still underrepresented on the Legislative Council.<sup>478</sup> Second, while the British broadened certain political institutions, they cracked down on other forms of Kikuyu political power—particularly the trade unions.<sup>479</sup> Even relatively liberal British voices advocated restricting voting to “those who were actively against the Mau Mau movement,” both to punish the Kikuyu and to warn other tribes about the consequences of rebellion.<sup>480</sup> As a result, only a fraction of the Kikuyu actually voted in the 1957 elections: in the Central Province, for example, loyalty tests meant that only 7.4% of the adult population registered to vote.<sup>481</sup> As a result, both the semi-official Corfield report and leftwing histories questioned the authenticity these political reforms.<sup>482</sup>

Likewise, British success also did not result from giving the Kikuyu more of a stake in their own security. The British feared that the Mau Mau Rebellion would spread to African raised

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<sup>475</sup> Kariuki 1964, p. 43. For similar assessments, *ibid.*, p. 41 and Furedi 1989, p. 7-8.

<sup>476</sup> Mumford 2012, p. 56

<sup>477</sup> Corfield 1960, pp. 292-295

<sup>478</sup> The proposals for Legislative Councils included 14 seats for the 30,000 settlers; 6 for the 100,000 Asians; 1 for the 24,000 Arabs and 5 for the million Africans. Newsinger 2002, p. 62.

<sup>479</sup> Corfield 1960, p. 257

<sup>480</sup> Leakey 1954, p. 151

<sup>481</sup> Branch 2009, p. 154

<sup>482</sup> Corfield 1960, p. 283; Berman 1976, p. 170.

regiments.<sup>483</sup> Consequently, they deployed British raised forces—including the Lancashire Fusiliers and the Black Watch.<sup>484</sup> Moreover, the police functioned more as a paramilitary force during the Emergency, focusing on hunting down Mau Mau rather than protecting the population.<sup>485</sup> To the extent they cared about protecting anyone, it was the European community—not the Kikuyu.<sup>486</sup> Finally, while the Kikuyu had a “home guard,” the Guard was established prior to the Emergency, was partially compulsorily enlisted and generally performed poorly in combat.<sup>487</sup> More importantly, the Guard committed an untold number of war crimes against their fellow Kikuyu—including rape, theft and murder.<sup>488</sup> Indeed, historian Caroline Elkins describes the Home Guard posts as “epicenters of torture.”<sup>489</sup> While some British authorities defend the Guard’s actions, they likely did not win many friends among the Kikuyu population at large.<sup>490</sup>

Ultimately, British success came less from their attempts to change at macro-economic, political and cultural conditions, and more from their adoption of their cooption of a small number of local elite. As historian Daniel Branch remarked, “The construction of alliances with colonized peoples was a particular skill of British imperialists. Indeed, such alliances can be seen as a defining feature of modern European imperialism.”<sup>491</sup> Early on, the British colonialist “selected certain influential men in each area mainly from existing committees to help administer

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<sup>483</sup> Stapleton 2009, pp. 1175-1176, 1182, 1192

<sup>484</sup> Mumford 2012, p. 56

<sup>485</sup> As one police officer described, “Police duties in the Reserve are primarily military in thought and execution. And the G.S.U. (General Services Unit) is more than any branch. Before you're through with us, you'll think you're back in the service.” Baldwin 1957, p. 72. For the focus on improving kill ratios—particularly through pseudo-gangs, see TNA WO 276/518

<sup>486</sup> TNA WO 276/513, p. 3

<sup>487</sup> Mumford 2012, p. 59; Branch 2007, p. 293. One account describes the Home Guard as “‘a confused rabble’ and easily outflanked by their opponents.” Branch 2009, p. 55.

<sup>488</sup> Clayton 1984, p. 29, 49; Edgerton 1989, p. 123; Branch 2007, pp. 303-304; Branch 2009, p. 80

<sup>489</sup> Elkins 2005, p. 244

<sup>490</sup> Erskine 1956, p. 15; TNA WO 32/217222, p. 6

<sup>491</sup> Branch 2009, p. 26; for a similar assessment, see Elkins 2005, p. 361



the country.”<sup>492</sup> One of the reasons for the rebellion—at least in one British observers’ opinion—was the waning influence of these elders and new elements seeking to challenge their influence within Kikuyu.<sup>493</sup>

The British also premised their counterinsurgency strategy on this principle, giving a veneer of Kenyan self-determination without actually losing political control.<sup>494</sup> By controlling the elections to the Legislative Council, they ensured that power would remain in the hands of the largely pro-British “alumni of Alliance High School, Makerere, Fort Hare and Oxford.”<sup>495</sup> Ultimately, these efforts helped “reconstruct networks of patronage and the moral economy of Central Kenya” and consolidate “strength of the loyalist elite long into the post-colonial period.”<sup>496</sup>

Co-option also fractured the Mau Mau’s support base. By cutting deals with the other tribes, the British largely prevented the Mau Mau Rebellion from spreading beyond the Kikuyu tribe.<sup>497</sup> More importantly, indirect rule also fractured the Kikuyu tribe itself—largely along class lines. From the British standpoint, this was one of the primary benefits of the Home Guard. As military historian Anthony Clayton characterizes, “The Kikuyu Guard represented the Kikuyu “establishment,” chiefs, headmen, property owners, traders and landowners faced with demands for a share of their land from long-lost and distant relatives, the “repatriated” squatter from the Highlands.”<sup>498</sup> Viewed in this light, the Home Guard’s abuses matter less from an operational (though not a moral) perspective: after all, their purpose was less to win the Kikuyu

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<sup>492</sup> Kitson 1977, p. 4

<sup>493</sup> Kitson 1960, p. 14. For example, see Anderson 2005, p. 57

<sup>494</sup> Ibid., p. 296

<sup>495</sup> Branch 2007, p. 314. By employing indirect rule, British policy allowed the Mau Mau to claim a victory for Kenyan Nationalism, while the settlers could be appeased by the fact that power was still functionally in the hands of a pro-British elite. See Leakey 1954, pp. 111-112; Kariuki 1964, p. 127

<sup>496</sup> Branch 2009, p. 120

<sup>497</sup> For a demonstration of this balancing act between Kikuyu, Embu and Meru tribes, see FCO 141/5704 “Appreciation by the Commander-in-Chief East Africa, January 1956,” p. 10

<sup>498</sup> Clayton 1984, p. 18-19

population's "hearts and minds" and more to ensure that loyalist Kikuyu remained so.<sup>499</sup> In fact, some Mau Mau leaders recognized and feared this tactic: "The Government quickly realized that the only chance of defeating the Land Freedom Armies in the forest was to divide the Kikuyu tribe."<sup>500</sup>

"Pseudo-gangs"—groups of Kenyans disguised to look like Mau Mau and then used to infiltrate and destroy Mau Mau bands—served a similar function. They were recruited from the Kikuyu's traditional tribal enemies, the Masai, Kikuyu loyalists and eventually from former Mau Mau themselves.<sup>501</sup> Not only did this make tactical sense (after all, who better to find guerrillas than former ones), but it also exploited the seams within Kenyan society.<sup>502</sup> The program worked. Just as total Mau Mau incidents peaked in Kenya in the summer of 1955, Lieutenant General Gerald Lathbury expanded the number of pseudo-gangs and importantly, for the first time, "ex-terrorists were being used operationally without the direct control of Europeans."<sup>503</sup> Soon thereafter and in Lathbury's opinion, because of this policy shift, incidents declined dramatically (see figures 1 and 2 earlier). Indeed, the British credited pseudo-gangs with the capture or death of 375 "active hard-core terrorists," including a half dozen senior leaders.<sup>504</sup>

And so, the British nonlethal efforts during the Mau Mau Rebellion hinged less on their efforts to transform Kenya at large, and more on co-opting local elite and fracturing Kenyan society. While the British attempted to change cultural, political and economic conditions, a critical analysis concludes that these efforts for the most part either proved ineffective or else benefited only a relatively small segment of the Kikuyu population. The latter, however, was all

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<sup>499</sup> For the British preoccupation with maintaining the loyalty of this segment despite war-crimes see TNA DO 35/5353 Telegram Acting Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies, February 5, 1955; Telegram Sir Evelyn Baring to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, January 9, 1955. For description of British deliberately fueling the civil war see Elkins 2005, p. 19, 69

<sup>500</sup> Kariuki 1964, p. 64

<sup>501</sup> Kitson 1960, p. 107; Anderson 2005, p. 285

<sup>502</sup> Kitson 1960, pp. 60, 76; Leakey 1954, p. 105

<sup>503</sup> TNA WO 276/516, pp. 8, 17

<sup>504</sup> FCO 141/5704 "Press Release: Withdrawal of the Army from Operations," November 13, 1956, p. 3

that was necessary. Through co-opting and then devolving power to a select few but influential elite, the British prevented the rebellion from gaining broad-based appeal, undermined the Mau Mau's cause and ultimately, helped defeat the rebellion.

## **The Battle in Nairobi & Aberdares and Mount Kenya**

Under General Erskine, the British military divided Kenya into four operational regions: "These were the native land units, the forests of Aberdares and Mount Kenya, the European settled areas, and last but not least Nairobi City."<sup>505</sup> Of these regions, two stand out—the Nairobi Area and the Aberdares and Mount Kenya region. According to British intelligence estimates, both were home to approximately 1000-1500 Mau Mau combatants each in 1954.<sup>506</sup> Both areas were particularly important to the insurgency: Nairobi was the supposed center for the Mau Mau's passive wing,<sup>507</sup> whereas the forested, mountainous Aberdares and Mount Kenya region was the historical sanctuary for Kikuyu in times of trouble and home to several key Mau Mau leaders.<sup>508</sup> And in both areas, the British tried multiple strategies before settling on a winning formula—indirect rule combined with resource denial.

### *Nairobi:*

Often considered the war's turning point, the operations in Nairobi—from 1952 to 1954—provide an opportunity to judge the impact of minimal and maximal force strategies in a single setting.<sup>509</sup> At the outbreak of the Mau Mau Rebellion, Nairobi was home to about 150,000 inhabitants, including 15,000 Europeans and the economic, cultural and political center of

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<sup>505</sup> Erskine 1956, p. 16

<sup>506</sup> TNA WO 276/427, EAC/62709/Int(a) Appendix B, p. 11a. Some British intelligence place the number of Mau Mau in 1954 slightly higher—approximately 1400. TNA WO 276/427, "Comparative Estimates of Terrorist Strengths Nov 54 and Mar 55," Appendix A, p. 34a

<sup>507</sup> TNA WO 276/427, p. 33c

<sup>508</sup> TNA WO 276/411, p. 6; Henderson and Goodhart 1958, p. 14

<sup>509</sup> Newsinger 2002, p. 73

Kenya.<sup>510</sup> While the Europeans lived in relative luxury, the African population—which increased dramatically in the post war period (by 20% between 1945 and 1947 alone)—crowded into slums with poor sanitation and limited access to running water.<sup>511</sup> That said, the African population played an increasingly important role in Nairobi’s economy: in 1953, roughly 45,000 of the 60,000 adult males employed in Nairobi were from the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru tribes.<sup>512</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Mau Mau Rebellion took hold in Nairobi’s slums. As British military saw it, “the Kikuyu constitute 75% of the working population of Nairobi” and “the great majority of the Nairobi Kikuyu are either active or passive supporters of [the] Mau Mau, or are in tacit sympathy with the movements aims.”<sup>513</sup>

From a military standpoint, Nairobi presented a two-fold challenge. First, according to British military assessments, Mau Mau operatives would kill, rob or intimidate loyal Kikuyu civil servants, merchants and workers.<sup>514</sup> Second and more importantly, Nairobi functioned as the primary support zone for the national Mau Mau movement. General Erskine, for example, argued that Nairobi’s importance was three-fold:

(a) The City provides a convenient and rich source of supply of recruits, arms, ammunition and money. (b) It makes available a secure base for the mounting of operations within the city itself, and in the adjoining settled areas (c) It forms the focus of the dissemination of Mau Mau doctrines amongst other tribes, particularly the Kamba.<sup>515</sup>

In other words, at least in Erskine’s assessment, Nairobi provided the the manpower and resources that allowed the rebellion to thrive.

The British tried two different approaches in Nariobi: first, a series of precision raids and later, mass detentions. In one of the campaign’s first actions, the British forces launched

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<sup>510</sup> Edgerton 1989, p. 27

<sup>511</sup> Clough 1998, p. 89. The British estimated that the Kikuyu male population increased by 40% during 1953 alone. FCO 141/5696 “Draft for Press Handout,” April 22, 1954.

<sup>512</sup> TNA WO 276/513, p. 5

<sup>513</sup> TNA WO 276/448, “Operation Anvil: Outline Plan by Joint Commanders,” February 22, 1954, p. 6

<sup>514</sup> TNA WO 276/513, p. 4

<sup>515</sup> Ibid., p. 3

Operation Jock Scott. Organized by the police force and drawing on Special Branch intelligence, Operation Jock Scott sought to decapitate the Mau Mau movement. Beginning on October 20, 1952, suspected key leaders were arrested in targeted operations.<sup>516</sup> Ultimately, approximately 8,000 arrests followed over the four weeks—mostly concentrated in the Nairobi area.<sup>517</sup> The results of the operation are hotly contested. According to a December 1954 internal memorandum, Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police G. R. H. Gribble claimed that Jock Scott and the follow-on operations eliminated two-thirds of the Mau Mau organization.<sup>518</sup> Unfortunately, for Gribble, the British Army and later historians concluded that Jock Scott proved largely ineffective at curbing Mau Mau support within Nairobi, much less at quelling the insurgency at large.<sup>519</sup>

As a result of the perceived failure of Jock Scott, the British switched to an even blunter approach and Operation Anvil was born. Anvil aimed “to remove a large number Kikuyu adult males from Nairobi” and “to prevent the return to Nairobi of those removed.”<sup>520</sup> The operation placed intense and prolonged pressure on Nairobi’s Kikuyu population: while the bulk of the operations occurred in April 1954, War Council Directive Number 1 outlined a policy of increased security force presence and continued security checks from May through end of August 1954.<sup>521</sup>

Unlike Operation Jock Scott, Operation Anvil did not even make a pretense of precision. As Erskine later remarked, “We did not claim that all those who were removed were guilty, but we

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<sup>516</sup> Edgerton 1989, p. 67

<sup>517</sup> Newsinger 2002, p. 67

<sup>518</sup> TNA WO 276/427, 18b

<sup>519</sup> Edgerton 1989, p. 67; Clough 1998, p. 114

<sup>520</sup> TNA WO 276/513, p. 11

<sup>521</sup> TNA WO 276/514

did claim that their credentials required careful examination.”<sup>522</sup> Operation Anvil divided the Kikuyu living in Nairobi into three groups: in theory, “white” denoted those “who were judged to be free from Mau Mau taint;” gray were “Mau Mau adherents, but not hopelessly so;” and black designated the “hard-core terrorist, the fanatic who was often beyond redemption,” with some exemptions for those essential to the city’s economic wellbeing and for humanitarian reasons.<sup>523</sup> In practice, according to police and Mau Mau accounts, most detainees were listed as “black” unless proven otherwise, ultimately doubling the Kenya’s detainee population.<sup>524</sup> Between April 25 and May 26, 1954, the British detained over 19,000 Kikuyu men (approximately half of those screened) and deported another 2,000 dependents of the detainees to the reserves—with only a fraction of these individuals actually being linked to the insurgency.<sup>525</sup>

Although the operation prompted a flurry of criticism particularly from Kenya’s churches, Anvil was decisive.<sup>526</sup> General Erskine argued that thanks to Anvil, “Supplies were cut off, and the whole Mau Mau movement received a shock from which it never recovered.”<sup>527</sup> The Corfield Report claims, “Operation Anvil in Nairobi, however, resulted in the disintegration of the No. 3 Land Freedom Army and “central” (headquarters).”<sup>528</sup> Similarly, British Member of Parliament Philip Goodhart argues, “In summer 1954 “Operation Anvil” (the search of Nairobi) destroyed much of the central passive organisation in Nairobi and broke up the best supply pipeline.”<sup>529</sup> Many post-rebellion accounts are equally laudatory of the operation’s results though not its tactics. British journalist Fred Majdalany labels Anvil as the “decisive stroke,” while historian

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<sup>522</sup> Erskine 1956, p. 16. The operations order for Anvil instructed British forces to detain anyone who “neglect[s] to support the processes of law and order in the maintenance of the Queen’s peace in the Colony.” TNA WO 276/513, p. 21

<sup>523</sup> Baldwin 1957, p. 40; TNA WO 276/513, p. 7, 10

<sup>524</sup> Ibid. and Kariuki 1964, p. 89

<sup>525</sup> TNA WO 276/7, p. 4. Other estimates are as high as 37,000, only 700 were identified as “Mau Mau judges” by Special Branch. TNA DO 35/5352 Governor’s Deputy to Secretary State for Colonies, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1954; Telegram N. 70, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1954. Also see, Anderson 2005, p. 205

<sup>526</sup> Anderson 2005, p. 208-209

<sup>527</sup> Erskine 1956, p. 16 For a similar assessment, see DO 35/5353 “The Kenya Emergency,” October 20, 1954, p. 2

<sup>528</sup> Corfield 1960, p. 261

<sup>529</sup> Henderson and Goodhart 1958, pp. 14-15.

Anthony Clayton concludes, “After Operation Anvil in Nairobi in April/May 1954 the intelligence victory was total.”<sup>530</sup> British officer and Mau Mau Rebellion veteran, Frank Kitson remarked, “internment without trial is not an attractive measure to people brought up in a free country, but in Kenya it undoubtedly saved many lives by shortening the conflict and removing from the scene people who would otherwise have become involved in the fighting.”<sup>531</sup>

The quantitative data confirms the Operation Anvil’s impact. As seen in figure 2, a few months after Anvil, the Mau Mau shifted from attacking security forces and civilians to primarily stealing food and livestock—consistent with the notion that Anvil successfully cut off the insurgency’s supply lines. On a local level, according to British intelligence, Nairobi averaged 483 criminal incidents per month in February and March 1954, 950 in April, but only 152 incidents after Operation Anvil in May.<sup>532</sup> Similarly, robberies in Nairobi averaged 54 a month during the first few months of 1954, dropped to only 7 after Anvil.<sup>533</sup> Finally, British intelligence estimates of Mau Mau strength in Nairobi dropped dramatically—from 1,000 pre-Anvil (in March 1954) to a mere 300 in November 1954.<sup>534</sup> While British intelligence believed that the Mau Mau presence in Nairobi rose to 600 in March 1955 as security forces shifted their attention to other areas, Anvil’s effects were still felt over a year later.<sup>535</sup>

Why then did Anvil succeed where Jock Scott had failed? The answer is three-fold. First, British intelligence—especially in the run-up to Jock Scott—was relatively poor. Many detained in Jock Scott were active in Kikuyu nationalist causes, but their ties to the Mau Mau were tenuous. For example, one of the star detainees was Kenya Africa Union President Jomo Kenyatta. While the settlers believed he was one of the five “principal organisers of Mau Mau—

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<sup>530</sup> Clayton 1984, p. 35

<sup>531</sup> Kitson 1977, pp. 58-59

<sup>532</sup> TNA WO 276/427, EAC/627 09/Int (a)

<sup>533</sup> Baldwin 1957, p. 41

<sup>534</sup> TNA WO 276/427, EAC/62709/Int(a) Appendix B, p. 11a

<sup>535</sup> TNA WO 276/427, “Comparative Estimates of Terrorist Strengths Nov 54 and Mar 55,” Appendix A, p. 34a

its management committee,” the authorities only presented indirect evidence of his involvement at his trial.<sup>536</sup> In words of Kenyatta’s attorney, while there was evidence of his political involvement in Kikuyu causes, “there is not a tittle of evidence of any Mau Mau transaction of any description that ever took place over the two years’ period mentioned in the charge sheets—not a meeting, not a photo, not a microphone, not a report from police watchers.”<sup>537</sup> If Kenyatta’s case is indicative, Jock Scott primarily targeted political supporters, not actual combatants—an observation confirmed by former Mau Mau post-war memoirs.<sup>538</sup> While British intelligence may not have improved in time for Anvil, it was not necessary. Given its sweeping approach, Anvil was almost bound detain the guilty, if only by happenstance.

Second, Anvil worked because it restricted the flow of resources to the insurgency. In his memoirs, former Mau Mau detainee Josiah Kariuki recounts, “This (Operation Anvil) had started in April 1954 and was designed to break up all the “Mau Mau” committees in Nairobi and to destroy the sources of medical and military supplies which were still finding their way up to the forests.”<sup>539</sup> From a military standpoint, this task was logical and concrete: resource denial impacted the insurgency’s ability to operate and was well within the security forces’ capability to execute successfully.

Finally, Anvil worked because the Mau Mau’s supply lines in underdeveloped Kenya could be cut relatively easily. Nairobi was far enough away from other key insurgent strong holds—in the Aberdares, Mount Kenya and Rift Valley regions—to enable these operations. A June 1954 British intelligence assessment estimated that it took Mau Mau letters a minimum of two and up

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<sup>536</sup> Leakey 1954, p. 2

<sup>537</sup> Slater 1955, p. 135. Even the British government eventually realized that the Kenyan African Union was distinct from the Mau Mau. Anderson 2005, p. 59

<sup>538</sup> The Mau Mau marked promotions with additional oaths. Many of Jock Scott’s detainees had not taken the second oath, indicating they were low level supporters. Kariuki 1964, p. 61

<sup>539</sup> Kariuki 1964, p. 88



to 11 days to reach the relatively nearby Fort Hall area.<sup>540</sup> Presumably, bulkier supplies took even longer to transport. As a result, Nairobi could be isolated from the rest insurgency—a fact that the British capitalized on to great effect.

### *Aberdares Forests & Mount Kenya*

If the Mau Mau Rebellion ended with Operation Anvil, then the lesson might be simply that brutality works: the truth, however, is more nuanced. After Anvil, British efforts turned to the outlying areas. Unlike Nairobi, where detaining suspects proved relatively easy, the British found operating in the Aberdares and Mount Kenya region more difficult. British troops proved ill-adapted to the terrain, while in Erskine's estimation, "The Kikuyu are natural forest people—they moved silently and swiftly and are completely at home in the forest..."<sup>541</sup> As a result, cornering the Mau Mau was not an easy task. And yet from January 1955 through 1956, British forces focused on this region "with considerable success."<sup>542</sup> According to British intelligence estimates, Mau Mau presence in the Aberdares and Mount Kenya region dropped from approximately 1400 in November 1954 to 800 in March 1955, and continued to decline afterwards.<sup>543</sup> Like in other parts of Kenya, British success came from a combination of food denial and cooption.

Early British operations tried to directly engage the Mau Mau with little success. Operation Buttercup conducted in June to July 1953 used a mixture of units—the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> King's African Rifles, the Kikuyu Home Guard and the Police—to "sweep" through forests and destroy the Mau Mau bands hiding there. Unsurprisingly, this clumsy, large-scale operation found Mau Mau camps, but "no major contact was made in the forest with a gang," as the Mau

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<sup>540</sup> TNA WO 276/426, EAC/62734/6/Int, Appendix D, p. 2

<sup>541</sup> Erskine 1956, p. 18

<sup>542</sup> Ibid., p. 19

<sup>543</sup> TNA WO 276/427, "Comparative Estimates of Terrorist Strengths Nov 54 and Mar 55," Appendix A, p. 34a. Mau Mau estimates start even higher with 6,000 combatants in the Aberdares and 5,000 in Mount Kenya in 1953. Anderson 2005, p. 261

Mau fled long before when security forces arrived.<sup>544</sup> Indeed, while the precise disposition of Mau Mau forces shifted to avoid British operations, British intelligence estimated that the total insurgent presence in the Aberdares and Mount Kenya area remained roughly unchanged throughout 1954.<sup>545</sup>

And so, in late 1954, British forces changed tactics. Rather than fruitlessly chasing the Mau Mau through inhospitable terrain, security forces instead opted for the same strategy they employed in Malaya—starving the insurgents out of the forests. As Evelyn Baring described, “Operation Hammer was the first example of this change of Policy. Hammer was not intended to be end in itself but merely the beginning of a series of operations designed to make the forests untenable to terrorists.”<sup>546</sup> The operation patrolled along the forest fringes, driving the Mau Mau deeper into the forests and away from food supplies.<sup>547</sup> Additionally, in 1955, security forces constructed a “great ditch,” 18 feet wide, 10 feet deep, stakes in the middle and police posts every half mile, stretching 50 miles along the eastern and southeastern border of the Mount Kenya forest to deny the Mau Mau access to food supplies.<sup>548</sup> In this respect, British operations in the Aberdares and Mount Kenya region shared similar objectives as those in Nairobi: both aimed at strangling the flow of resources to the insurgency.

Successful resource denial, however, was only one cause of the British victory in the region; the rest hinged on cooption. While food denial limited the Mau Mau’s numbers and forced those remaining to focus on their own survival, it did not destroy the organization. To finish off the

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<sup>544</sup> TNA WO 276/409, p. 1

<sup>545</sup> See comparative estimates of insurgent strength between March and November 1954. TNA WO 276/427, EAC/62709/Int(a) Appendix B, p. 11a.

<sup>546</sup> FCO 141/5703 Telegram Baring to Secretary of State for the Colonies, February 1955.

<sup>547</sup> TNA WO 276/427, “Intelligence for Hammer I,” p. 14; TNA WO 276/448 “Planning for OP Hammer One,” October 14, 1954. Importantly, other intelligence estimates suggest Mau Mau presence began decreasing before Hammer in the summer of 1954, but they also attribute the success to food denial. TNA WO 276/455 “Kenya Intsum 21/54,” August 24, 1954

<sup>548</sup> Majdalany 1963, pp. 216-217. Preparation for patrol bases along the fringes began as early as mid-1954, but food denial operations intensified in 1955. See: FCO 141/5697 “Appreciation Phase II Rift Valley Province,” July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1964; FCO 141/5701 “Review of Progress Under War Council Directive No. 5,” August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1955

Mau Mau, the British turned to pseudo-gangs—a program where British security forces would recruit former Mau Mau to hunt down remaining insurgents. Often individual units' success directly resulted from how well they adopted this strategy, as illustrated by Sherman Baldwin and Ian Henderson. Both Baldwin and Henderson were policemen, serving in the Aberdares and Mount Kenya region, at almost the same time: Baldwin served there in 1954; Henderson in 1955-1956. Consequently, both had similar resources, faced a similar adversary and had a similar mission—to defeat the Mau Mau. And both published memoirs within a year of each other documenting their experiences. There, the similarities end: the two employed different tactics and achieved dramatically different results.

Baldwin fought his war with brutality, little finesse and minimal success. At the start of his assignment, a midlevel police official told him that “the only good Mau Mau is a very, very dead one,” and Baldwin followed his advice.<sup>549</sup> His account is filled with grisly descriptions of abuse and summary executions.<sup>550</sup> Bracketing the moral considerations, these actions often proved ineffective: captured Mau Mau were often executed before they could be properly interrogated. Unsurprisingly, Baldwin complains about the lack of quality intelligence, “Our work proved fruitless. Night after night we ambushed likely trails (for Mau Mau insurgents) but nothing came by.”<sup>551</sup> Baldwin, however, had ample opportunities to collect information: he recounts incidents where insurgents decided to surrender (thanks to the effects of food denial),<sup>552</sup> or were killed and captured by sheer luck.<sup>553</sup> He even participated in some of the initial experiments with

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<sup>549</sup> Baldwin 1957, p. 63

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-17, 84-90, 104-108, 214-215, 241

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104

<sup>552</sup> Baldwin 1957, pp. 96-97

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221; 230-232.

pseudo-gangs although his contempt for these former Mau Mau arguably limited the utility of this tactic.<sup>554</sup>

By contrast, Ian Henderson, a special branch officer working in the same region, had a different perspective. First, he understood the problem of “finding the terrorist needle in the vast haystack of a mountain.”<sup>555</sup> “By the end of 1955 only fifteen hundred of these terrorists were left at large, roaming over an area of more than six thousand square miles. Ordinary methods of warfare were clearly not going to dislodge them, and they could not be left to rot.”<sup>556</sup> While he certainly had no love for the Mau Mau, Henderson worked with former Mau Mau for tactical advantage.<sup>557</sup> As the principle interrogator of “General China” in 1954, he used the former Mau Mau leader to encourage mass surrenders during Operation Wedgewood.<sup>558</sup> When he was assigned to Aberdares in 1955, Henderson exploited the pseudo-gang concept to its fullest potential. Unlike Baldwin, Henderson cared for the wellbeing of his former Mau Mau turncoats.<sup>559</sup> More importantly, he coopted the Mau Mau’s power structure, casting himself as “a rival and more powerful gang leader” and operating through former Mau Mau proxies whenever possible.<sup>560</sup>

This style of indirect rule—combined with a skillful use of food denial—proved to be a winning formula for Henderson. Tasked with dismantling the Mau Mau band under Dedan Kimathi, Henderson’s former Mau Mau slowly developed inroads into Kimathi’s organization, rotting the organization from the inside out. Henderson also capitalized on rigid food controls to

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<sup>554</sup> Baldwin 1957, p. 164. For example, Ian Pritchard—a field intelligence officer who developed the pseudo-gangs concepts with Baldwin—was skeptical about the future of this tactic. See “Minutes of the C in C’s Operational Conference held in 28 Nov 55,” TNA WO 276/422.

<sup>555</sup> Henderson and Goodhart 1958, p. 39

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16

<sup>557</sup> For example, Henderson remarked about Mau Mau leader Dedan Kimathi, “Killing was his sole interest, and as he never found the opportunity of killing outside of his mountain domain, he killed lavishly within it.” *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>558</sup> Henderson and Goodhart 1958, p. 32. For more on Wedgewood and General China’s role in it, see Mumford 2012, pp. 62-63 and Croker 1955, pp. 49-52.

<sup>559</sup> For example, see Henderson and Goodhart 1958, pp. 134-135; 220-221.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149-150. In particular, Henderson used a former mid-level Mau Mau named Gati as his right hand man. See *ibid.* 161.

focus his forces on the few remaining sources of food available to the Mau Mau—such as beehives, potato farms and fruit trees.<sup>561</sup> Slowly but surely, Kimathi's band was whittled down and his supply lines cut, until Kimathi himself was captured after attempting to steal food in October 1956 and soon thereafter, Mau Mau resistance in the Aberdares collapsed.<sup>562</sup> In the words of Lieutenant General Sir Gerald Lathbury, Erskine's successor as the commander of East Africa Command, "Ian Henderson has probably done more than any single individual to bring the Emergency to an end."<sup>563</sup>

## Conclusion:

Figure 4: The Mau Mau Rebellion & the Hypotheses on Counterinsurgency

Hypotheses:	Result:	Evidence:
H1A Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a minority group.	MIXED	The Kikuyu were the largest tribe in Kenya at the time. The British, however, overcame this obstacle by massive force and a large scale resettlement program.
H1B Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a distinct group.	TRUE	The Kikuyu looked physically different than the settler population. Other distinctions--between Kikuyu and Masai and between landed and landless Kikuyu--were less readily apparent.
H1C Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, when employed against rural insurgencies	TRUE	The Mau Mau was primarily a rural rebellion. The British successfully physically isolated the combatants from the support base in Nairobi (Operation Anvil) and from smaller population centers (in the Aberdares).
H2 Cooption strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, when targeted against the insurgents themselves.	TRUE	As demonstrated by Ian Henderson and others, the British co-opted and then used former Mau Mau insurgents to great effect.
H3 Divide and rule strategies will be more successful when the insurgency comes from a minority group.	MIXED	While the Kikuyu were one of the largest tribes in Kenya, the British fractured the group along socio-economic lines, reducing the Mau Mau's support base to a minority group.

<sup>561</sup> Henderson and Goodhart 1958, p. 72-73; 139-141; 200

<sup>562</sup> Ibid., pp. 233-237. For a confirmation of Henderson's account, see TNA WO 276/516, pp. 19-26.

<sup>563</sup> Henderson and Goodhart 1958, pp. 35-36

Bracketing the moral issues and focusing on operational efficacy, the Mau Mau Rebellion further validates the population control model of counterinsurgency—resource denial combined with indirect rule and divide and rule—and the conditions when this model will be most effective (see figure 4). Brutality for the sake of brutality proved largely ineffective; just as most of the attempts at wholesale economic, political and cultural reforms produced only marginal effects on the battlefield. Ultimately, the British won by coopting key elites among rival tribes and within the Kikuyu themselves and starving the rebellion of its lifeblood—weapons, ammunition and most importantly, food. As a result, the Mau Mau’s combat strength slowly degraded and eventually the insurgency collapsed. In this sense, despite their very different historical legacies, the winning formula for the Kenyan Emergency proved to be almost the same as in Malaya. Methods—like Operations Anvil and Hammer—may not make for a pretty combination, but they are effective.

## Chapter 6: Paved With Good Intentions

### Victory & Defeat in Vietnam

As counterinsurgencies go, the Vietnam War is the ultimate outlier. At its peak, the United States deployed more than three times the number of soldiers to Vietnam as during the Iraq Surge. In fact, the United States lost more soldiers in Vietnam, than the British had deployed at the height of Malayan and Kenyan Emergencies combined.<sup>564</sup> Likewise, few insurgencies match the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong (VC) in size and sophistication.<sup>565</sup> North Vietnam sent over 1.3 million tons of supplies and 500,000 combatants to fight in the South, a force orders of magnitude larger than the British faced in Malaya,<sup>566</sup> and just one interdicted supply ship, sunk in 1965, contained more than three times the number of rifles and submachine guns than the Mau Mau ever possessed.<sup>567</sup> The war caused almost unimaginable human suffering. The United States lost over 58,000 killed, 300,000 wounded and 2,500 missing or taken prisoner.<sup>568</sup> The South Vietnamese military suffered over 224,000 killed and another million wounded; the NVA and the VC lost an estimated million killed and another 600,000 wounded; and an untold number civilians were caught in the crossfire.<sup>569</sup>

And yet, the Vietnam War's size and complexity present a unique opportunity to study what works in counterinsurgency. In this chapter, I explore the American counterinsurgency effort over the next four sections. First, I introduce the war, show how the conflict turned in the United States' favor sometime between 1967 and 1968, offer three alternative theories for this reversal

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<sup>564</sup> Figure does not include indigenous forces, like the home guard.

<sup>565</sup> Admittedly, the size of VC attacks varied during the conflict. See PP, IV.C.6.(a), p. 46, 62.

<sup>566</sup> Guan 2004, p. 134; Duong 2008, p. 180

<sup>567</sup> DoS 1965, p. 17

<sup>568</sup> Colby and McCargar 1989, pp. 7-8; Duong 2008, p. 223

<sup>569</sup> Nhut and Arevian 2009, p. 23. Estimates on Vietnamese losses vary. Nick Turse, for example, places South Vietnamese losses at 254,000 killed and more than 783,000 wounded and cites a Harvard University study estimating 3.8 million combatant and civilian deaths. Turse 2013, pp. 11-13

of fortunes—conventional, “hearts and minds,” and population control—and apply the hypotheses from Chapter 3. Second, I show how resource denial best explains the United States’ later success, despite being partially undermined by American preoccupations with winning “hearts and minds.” Third, I turn to American nonlethal policy and argue that the United States’ success in Vietnam had little to do with efforts to win “hearts and minds” or more concretely, social, economic or political reforms. Rather, to the extent that success came from nonlethal means, it was from the same combination of cooption and divide and rule that proved successful in Malaya, Kenya and elsewhere. Fourth, I compare two early counterinsurgency efforts with different historical legacies—the Diem Regime’s strategic hamlet program versus the Marine Corps efforts in I Corps Tactical Zone and show how both efforts’ success hinged not on whether they won “hearts and minds,” but on whether they adopted population control. Ultimately, despite being in many ways outlier, the Vietnam War reflects a traditional lesson: population control—not “hearts and minds” or brute force—is the key to counterinsurgency.

### **One War, Two Fronts, Three Strategies:**

Winning in Vietnam was never going to be easy. From the outset, the United States faced far less favorable conditions, than the British did in Malaya and Kenya. Geographically, South Vietnam was only slightly smaller than Washington State (roughly 66,200 square miles), but its 900 miles of land borders and 1200 miles of coastline (or 300 miles longer than that of California) made it ideal for foreign infiltration.<sup>570</sup> South Vietnam’s neighbors—Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam—were either unwilling or incapable of controlling their borders and offered

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<sup>570</sup> Army 1962, pp. 31, 471-472



ideal sanctuaries for VC and NVA units.<sup>571</sup> And South Vietnam's terrain—a mixture of jungles, mountains, grasslands and swamps—offered its own share of potential hiding spaces.

Demographically, South Vietnam was considerably larger than Malaya or Kenya. In 1962, an estimated 14,650,000 people lived in South Vietnam and 16,350,000 lived in North Vietnam, many of whom later participated in the conflict.<sup>572</sup> Compared with Malaya, South Vietnam was relatively ethnically homogenous, divided between a million ethnic Chinese, 350,000 Cambodians and the rest Vietnamese.<sup>573</sup> That said, South Vietnamese society was far from united either. The more politically salient cleavages were between the 10% urban dwelling elite and the 90% rural peasantry, and between Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Roman Catholicism, and a variety of smaller religious sects.<sup>574</sup> These rifts tore at the seams of South Vietnamese society throughout the conflict.<sup>575</sup>

Vietnam also proved a politically thorny problem. The VC enjoyed substantial support from North Vietnam, China and the Soviet Union. These foreign ties provided the VC with vast quantities supplies and eventually, the NVA took over the lion's share of the fighting in South Vietnam, while Russian and Chinese troops provided advice and training in North Vietnam.<sup>576</sup> On the other side of the equation, South Vietnam's internal politics posed a litany of challenges. As a newly independent former French colony, South Vietnamese democracy was still in its nascent stages. Throughout the war, the South Vietnamese government fought amongst itself, all while trying to fight the VC and NVA. And so unlike the British in Kenya and Malaya, the

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<sup>571</sup> Senate Republican Policy Committee 1967, p. 27

<sup>572</sup> Army 1962, p. 47

<sup>573</sup> Ibid., p. 3

<sup>574</sup> Ibid., p. 47

<sup>575</sup> Army 1962, p. 127

<sup>576</sup> In 1965, McNamara estimated that North Vietnam received between 5,800 and 14,000 tons of supplies per day. McNamara and VanDeMark 1996, p. 288. MHIV gives a different number, 275,000 tons in 1972—and says this was an increase in aid, consistent with the claim that China picked up aid around this timeframe. See MHIV 2002, p. 301, Guan 2004, p. 68. Also see Duong 2008, p. 166; Nguyen 2012, p. 75

United States could not co-opt a select few leaders with promises of wealth, status and future independence.

Above all, the NVA and VC also posed a far more formidable adversary than the British faced in either Kenya or Malaya.<sup>577</sup> In terms of raw size, the Mau Mau numbered only 15,000 combatants at its peak (but only 1,100 of these had manufactured firearms),<sup>578</sup> and the number of “Communist Terrorists” in Malaya peaked at 7,292 in 1951.<sup>579</sup> By comparison, the NVA alone was—according to its own records—over a million strong in 1973, not including the VC irregulars, and the 170,000 Chinese troops and 1,165 Soviet “advisors” that assisted the war effort from North Vietnam.<sup>580</sup> The NVA and VC were also better trained and equipped. The United States and its South Vietnamese allies suffered over 150 times the number of security forces killed as the British did in Malaya and more than 470 times the number the British suffered in Kenya.<sup>581</sup> Restricting the ratio to only Americans killed in Vietnam and Europeans killed in Kenya (a mere 63), Vietnam was fought on 920 times the scale of the Mau Mau Rebellion.<sup>582</sup>

Independently, none of these factors should have doomed the American effort. Geographically, the British controlled a larger and equally inhospitable area in Kenya and turned ethnic, socio-economic and religious cleavages to its advantage in both Malaya and Kenya. The United States previously dealt with meddlesome neighbors and foreign sanctuaries during the Greek Civil War, and successfully fought the Huk Insurgency in the newly independent Philippines. And while the VC and NVA were more formidable than any other insurgency of the age, the United States—a global superpower and the world’s largest economy—had far more

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<sup>577</sup> The NVA’s firepower increased during the war. “The firepower of an infantry division in 1960 was equal to the firepower of our entire army at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.” MHIV 2002, p. 29

<sup>578</sup> Edgerton 1989, p. 112; Mumford 2012, p. 64; Corfield 1960, p. 232

<sup>579</sup> TNA AIR 10/5549, p. 157

<sup>580</sup> MHIV 2002, p. 202, Nguyen 2012, p. 80

<sup>581</sup> Calculated using Nhut and Arevian 2009, p. 23 and TNA WO 291/1670, Appendices B and C

<sup>582</sup> TNA WO 291/1670, Appendix C

resources than the economically devastated, politically-spent, post-war Britain. Collectively, however, these factors made the Vietnam War an uphill battle with little room for error, but unfortunately, American strategy was far from perfect or even coherent: indeed, over the course of the war, the United States pursued at least three distinct ones.

The first can roughly be termed the conventional approach. Particularly prevalent prior to 1968, this view looked at Vietnam primarily as a conventional war and called for a two pronged strategy based on attrition and punishment. On the ground, Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) commander General William Westmoreland, General Earle Wheeler and many Army officers advocated an attrition strategy—hunting down Communist forces in rural areas before they could harass major cities.<sup>583</sup> They argued that if American and South Vietnamese forces killed or captured VC and NVA forces at a greater rate than they suffered, then eventually the Communists would realize that “military victory was impossible and then would not be willing to endure further punishment.”<sup>584</sup> Simultaneously, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, the Air Force and others advocated coercing North Vietnam to cease its support for insurgency.<sup>585</sup> As National Security Advisor Walt Rostow explained, “By applying limited, graduated military actions, reinforced by political and economic pressures, against a nation providing external support for an insurgency, we could cause that nation to decide to reduce greatly, or eliminate altogether, its support for the insurgency.”<sup>586</sup> And while attrition and punishment later fell out of favor, some—particularly in the Army—still ascribed to it.

A second school can be described as the “heart and minds” approach.<sup>587</sup> Perhaps, best articulated in his influential book, *The Army and Vietnam*, Andrew Krepinevich attributes the Army’s failure prior to 1968 to what he terms the “Army Concept,” a doctrine developed for a

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<sup>583</sup> See: PP, IV.C.5, pp. 91, 97, 116-117; PP, IV.C.6.(a), p. 61; PP, IV.C.6.(c), p. 43

<sup>584</sup> PP, IV.C.6.(a), p. 8

<sup>585</sup> McMaster 1997, pp. 250, 281. Also see PP, IV.C.1, p. 103

<sup>586</sup> McMaster 1997, p. 156

<sup>587</sup> For a similar “hearts and minds” formulation of the Vietnam War, see Porch 2013, pp. 206-207

conventional European war that emphasized massive firepower to save American lives.<sup>588</sup>

Applied to Vietnam, the Army Concept meant that the Army concentrated on destroying the enemy often at cost of alienating the population.<sup>589</sup> Instead, Krepinevich argues, Vietnam required controlling the population through small units patrolling and local police forces, but also largely through winning “hearts and minds.”<sup>590</sup> The strategy claimed that winning popular support through public works, political participation and social reforms would deny the insurgency a support base and eventually starve the insurgency in submission. As Krepinevich argues, “Guerillas can adjust their tempo of operations and remain inactive during periods when ammunition and/or weapons are in short supply, but they must eat. They therefore cannot maintain sizeable forces over a protracted period of time without access to a rather substantial food supply.”<sup>591</sup> And while Krepinevich does not focus on the Army’s performance after 1968, at least one reading of the conflict is that the United States adopted more of a “hearts and minds” approach, once General Creighton Abrams replaced Westmoreland as the MACV commander.<sup>592</sup>

Finally, a third strategy could be labeled the “population control” approach. Perhaps, best summed up in the quote often attributed to Richard Nixon special counsel Charles “Chuck” Colson—“grab ‘em by the balls, and the hearts and minds will follow,” the population control shares the “hearts and minds” school’s focus on the population and on starving the insurgency, but differs on the means—namely coercion rather winning popular support.<sup>593</sup> On the lethal end, control takes a physical form—destruction of food supplies, forced resettlement, and blunt

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<sup>588</sup> Krepinevich 1986, p. 5. Also, see DoS 1969, Part D Section II, p. 9

<sup>589</sup> Krepinevich 1986, pp. 210, 213

<sup>590</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-16. Indeed, Krepinevich frames the counterinsurgency explicitly as about “winning the hearts and minds of the people.” Ibid., p. 12

<sup>591</sup> Krepinevich 1986, p. 11

<sup>592</sup> Krepinevich hints at this argument and states that Abrams attempted—if not always successfully—“to alter Army operations away from their conventional mindset.” Ibid., p. 240, 252-254

<sup>593</sup> Elliott 2007, p. 255. For a more academic analysis about using coercion to shape the population’s cost-benefit calculation, see Leites and Wolf 1970

uses of force. On the nonlethal end, control is only somewhat more subtle—co-opting elite and leveraging rifts within society. Ultimately, as summed up in table 1, each of three strategic models contends that different lethal and nonlethal combinations would produce victory.

Table 1:

	Lethal Strategy	Nonlethal Strategy
Conventional School	Attrition & Punishment	N/A
"Hearts and Minds"	Minimal Force	Political & Economic Enfranchisement
Population Control	Resource Denial	Cooptation; Divide & Rule

The question, of course, is which—if any—of these approaches actually “worked” and here, the Vietnam War must be viewed with more nuance than the endless, bloody quagmire of popular imagination. While South Vietnam fell to the Communists within three years of the American withdrawal, it did not collapse in a popular revolt. To contrary, much to their frustration and bewilderment, the North Vietnamese “general offensive, general uprising” strategy failed to provoke a large-scale revolution from below in 1964, 1968 and 1972.<sup>594</sup> South Vietnam, ultimately, fell in a mostly conventional, NVA-led offensive in 1975—with, in Director Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) and later Director of Central Intelligence William Colby’s opinion, “no substantial guerilla action.”<sup>595</sup> Indeed, Colby even titles the period from 1971 to 1972 as “victory won” in his memoirs.<sup>596</sup> And so, while the Vietnam War as whole was an abject American defeat, the counterinsurgency campaign’s outcome was more ambiguous, if not a success.

Moreover, quantitative measures indicate that the United States was winning, if only for a time. “Enemy initiated incidents”—attacks, sabotage, antiaircraft fire, terrorism and

<sup>594</sup> Nguyen 2012, pp. 65-68, 111, 122, 310

<sup>595</sup> Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 363

<sup>596</sup> Ibid., p. 291

harassment—steadily declined from a peak of 38,319 in 1967 to just over 20,000 by 1971.<sup>597</sup> Likewise, the number of South Vietnamese killed or abducted fell from 6,552 killed and 10,659 abducted in 1968 to 4,000 killed and 5,426 abducted in 1971.<sup>598</sup> More controversial metrics—like the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) (a measurement for government control of rural areas) and the Pacification Attitude Analysis System (polling data of Vietnamese civilians)—also improved. By 1971, 95.4% of all surveyed villages earned an A, B or C on the HES, signifying extensive control of the countryside, while polls showed the government with 92% approval ratings.<sup>599</sup> While these gains either stalled or reversed themselves with the American withdrawal in 1972, clearly the United States enjoyed some success in Vietnam—albeit short-lived.

Using the theories from Chapter 3, we can chart out observable implications, if the conventional, “hearts and minds,” or population control models were responsible for Vietnam’s turnaround after 1968 (see table 2). If the conventional approach caused the turnaround, then success should correlate with body counts—as the United States pursued both its attrition and punishment strategies to their natural conclusions. By contrast, if “hearts and minds” was responsible, then success should come from limiting the use—or at least enhancing the precision—of lethal firepower. More importantly, military success should come from large-scale political and economic reform efforts, and correlate with noticeable improvements in the population’s standard living.

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<sup>597</sup> NARA RG 472, A1 32, Box 5, United States Military Assistance Command, *Command History 1967*, p. 84; NARA RG 472, A1 32, Box 9, United States Military Assistance Command, *Command History 1971*, vol. 1, p. III-25

<sup>598</sup> NARA RG 472, A1 473, Box 10 "Information Requested for Sir Robert Thompson," January 31, 1973

<sup>599</sup> “Status of Pacification, Republic of Vietnam,” NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 39, pp. 1, 4; Sorley 2004, p. 569

Table 2:

Strategy		Observable Implications in Vietnam
Conventional	Lethal: Attrition & Punishment	The more violence used, the more successful the US effort; major conventional victories were the primary cause for victory
	Nonlethal: N/A	N/A
"Hearts and Minds"	Lethal: Minimal Force	Less force used and the more targeted it is, the more successful the US effort
	Nonlethal: Political & Economic Enfranchisement	Victory comes from improvements in South Vietnamese population's lives
Population Control	Lethal: Resource Denial	Violence declines as resource denial takes effect; signs of resource constraints impeding NVA/VC operations
	Nonlethal: Bribery, Divide & Rule	Success comes with leveraging rifts within South Vietnamese society and the cooption of key leaders

By contrast, if population control was behind the post-1968 reversal, then the observable indicators should be different. On the lethal front, success should stem from starving the insurgency into submission, particularly as a largely a largely rural insurgency, the VC and NVA depended on supplies from urban centers (hypothesis 1C). Food denial efforts may partially be undermined by the fact that the VC and NVA's supporters were not limited to distinct minority segment and so could not be easily isolated and controlled (hypotheses 1A and 1B). On the nonlethal end, success should come more from co-opting a select few former VC, rather large-scale economic development projects (hypothesis 2). Rather than uniting Vietnam, control should prove most effective when exploiting fault lines in Vietnamese society and particularly with minority groups (hypothesis 3). And with these indicators in mind, we can then turn to empirics.

### **Resource Denial & the Success Post-1968 Lethal Strategy:**

At first glance, each of the three major strategic schools can find empirical support in post 1968 lethal strategy. Perhaps, the simplest explanation is that the earlier attrition and punishment strategies eventually yielded results and the VC and NVA's defeat in the conventionally-fought, firepower intensive 1968 Tet offensive was the primary cause of the reversal of fortunes. By contrast, the "hearts and minds" school might claim the turnaround came with the shift in commanders away from the "Army Concept" to the Phoenix program which selectively "neutralized" key VC shadow government officials, thereby not alienating South Vietnam's population, while still mitigating the VC threat. Finally, population control might chalk up the later success to increasingly effective resource denial which functionally starved the insurgency. And so, each three explanations must be examined in turn.

First, despite its superficial plausibility, the conventional approach did not cause the United States' later success. The early bombing campaign had a negligible effect on the North Vietnamese economy: most consumer goods were not affected and while food production fell from 4.4 to 4 million tons from 1966 to 1967, an estimated 600,000 tons of Chinese rice aid offset the decrease.<sup>600</sup> Most North Vietnamese—in the words of one analyst—regarded the bombing as a "nuisance."<sup>601</sup> Moreover, even if the North Vietnamese population had felt the effects, bombing could have just as easily strengthened their resolve to fight and even if they had turned against the war, this still may not have changed policy. North Vietnam was, after all, a brutal authoritarian regime (and therefore, presumably less responsive to popular pressure), and many of its key leaders—perhaps, most notably Lê Duẩn General Secretary of the Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam—believed in unifying Vietnam whatever the costs.<sup>602</sup> As a result, despite dropping over 2.8 million tons of bombs from 1965 to 1968—more than the Anglo-American bomber offensive on Axis Europe during World War II, the United

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<sup>600</sup> Clodfelter 2006, p. 137

<sup>601</sup> Ibid.

<sup>602</sup> See Nguyen 2012



States never deterred North Vietnam from supporting the insurgency and eventually, most American policymakers realized that aerial punishment was deeply flawed strategy.<sup>603</sup>

The United States' later success in Vietnam also did not vindicate its earlier attrition strategy.<sup>604</sup> As steep as the NVA and VC's casualties were, they never outstripped the approximately 200,000 North Vietnamese eligible for the draft annually.<sup>605</sup> In a May 1, 1967 memo to McNamara, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Analysis Alain Enthoven argued that even if MACV's loss-ratios were accurate, the VC and the NVA likely could "control their losses to a level low enough to be sustained indefinitely."<sup>606</sup> Second, even under the best case scenario, attrition took time and manpower—both of which were limited commodities. As the Vietnam Task Force commented, "Force levels for the search and destroy strategy had no empirical limits. The amount of force required to defeat the enemy depended entirely on his response to the build-up and his willingness to continue to fight."<sup>607</sup> Indeed, some estimates of American forces levels needed for victory ranged as high as a million men, even then victory would still require time, making it politically unfeasible.<sup>608</sup> Finally, attrition presumed both sides viewed casualties similarly, when in fact the two had very different pain tolerances. As Army Lieutenant Colonel turned CORDS advisor John Paul Vann wrote, "I think they (U.S. military command) are failing to realize that the Communists obviously feel that it is a fair trade if they lose 5 to 1."<sup>609</sup>

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<sup>603</sup> Clodfelter 2006, p. 8-9 (for World War II statistics) and p. 129 (for Vietnam). For the skepticism over the air campaign's chances of success, see DoS 1969, Section A, Part V, p. 34; PP, IV.C.5, p. 71; McNamara and VanDeMark 1996, p. 203

<sup>604</sup> See PP, IV.C.6.(b), p. 105; Summers 1982, pp. 115-116; Krepinevich 1986, pp. 170, 196; MacGarrigle 1998, p. 18; Carland 2000, p. 152; Doung 2008, p. 227; Nhut and Arevian 2009, p. 65

<sup>605</sup> MacGarrigle 1998, p. 439

<sup>606</sup> PP, IV.6.C.(b), p. 122

<sup>607</sup> PP, IV.C.5, p. 8

<sup>608</sup> PP, IV.C.6.(a), p. 40; PP, IV.6.C.(b), p. 122

<sup>609</sup> "Debrief of John Paul Vann, A CORDS Executive, III Corps Tactical Zone, Vietnam, 1963-1968." NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 4, p. 3

Finally, the claim that the United States' later success stemmed conventionally fought 1968 Tet offensive is only partly true. To be sure, Tet inflicted, perhaps, the most serious blow to the VC infrastructure of the war.<sup>610</sup> That said, if Tet was principle cause of the later success, then the various measures of effectiveness should decline sharply during 1968, before levelling off during 1969. In actuality, however, most metrics changed gradually. Villages receiving an A or B HES ratings began increasing in June 1968, just as the offensive entered its latter phases—and continued through the early 1970s.<sup>611</sup> Incidents declined continuously from 1967 to 1971, with the most dramatic decreases occurring between 1970 and 1971.<sup>612</sup> Similarly, according to MACV estimates, VC recruitment in South Vietnam peaked at 8,000 per month in late 1968 and then declined dramatically afterwards to about 1,500 a month by the end of 1971.<sup>613</sup> In other words, while Tet dealt a significant blow to the VC infrastructure, it offers only a partial explanation.

The “hearts and minds” explanation also does not stand up to scrutiny. The Army never abandoned the “Army Concept.” Reflecting on the use of firepower during his time as I Field Force commander between February 15, 1970 and 9 January 1971, Lieutenant General Arthur S. Collins commented, “the US Army carries the use of firepower to an extreme” and “we routinely follow the overwhelming firepower route, regardless of enemy strength and size.”<sup>614</sup> By contrast, the 9<sup>th</sup> Division and later II Field Force commander, Lieutenant General Julian Ewell, so-called “Butcher of the Delta,” agreed with Collin’s assessment, but was unapologetic about the tactic. As a division commander in 1969, he argued, “one must clobber the

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<sup>610</sup> Guan 2004, p. 16; Nhut and Arevian 2009, p. 71. Some at the time argued that the Tet Offensive harmed pacification efforts (DoS 1969, Section D Part II, p. 18), but now most disagree. See Tang et. al 1985, p. 142; Clarke 1988, p. 327; Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 232; Duong 2008, p. 121-129.

<sup>611</sup> “Briefing Towards the Strategic Offensive,” NARA RG 472 A1 462, Box 47

<sup>612</sup> NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 36, *Command History 1971*, vol. 1, p. III-25.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid., p. III-42.

<sup>614</sup> NARA RG 472, A1 887, Box 276 “Debriefing Report by Lieutenant General A. S. Collins Jr.,” January 7, 1971 pp. 5-6

Communists... If one can smash this core effort, all else becomes manageable (though difficult).<sup>615</sup> Later as a corps commander in 1970, Ewell argued, “the key ingredient for successful operations in III Corps was sheer power.”<sup>616</sup> Unsurprisingly, under Ewell’s command, 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division earned the dubious reputation of being the most brutal American unit of the war.<sup>617</sup>

Quantitative data also questions whether the United States ever minimized or became more selective in its use of firepower. Many historians cite Ewell’s 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division’s Operation SPEEDY EXPRESS, conducted between December 1968 and June 1969 which reported almost 11,000 killed but only 751 weapons recovered, as evidence of the military’s blunt uses of force.<sup>618</sup> While SPEEDY EXPRESS was more the exception rather than rule, the overall trends in enemy killed versus weapons captured—depicted in figure 1—are revealing. According to MACV’s own statistics, in absolute terms, the United States adopted a kinetic approach until the end, killing tens of thousands in the ground war alone. Moreover, while the ratio of enemy killed to weapons recovered improved throughout the war, even at the end, the United States still killed twice as many people as it found weapons. Importantly, these statistics do not capture the results of the even less discriminate strategic bombing campaign (which ramped up later in the war) or unreported civilian deaths, but do include weapons captured from a variety of means (not just those found on dead enemy combatants).

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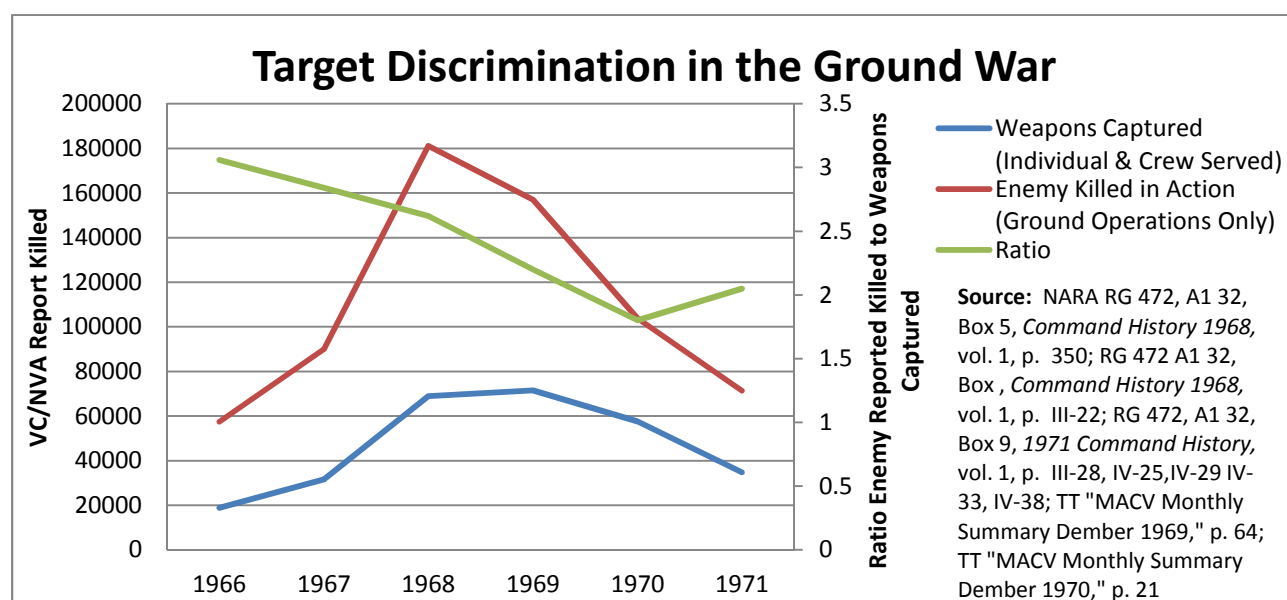
<sup>615</sup> NARA RG 472 A1 887 Box 278, “Impressions of a Division Commander in Vietnam,” September 17, 1969, p. 19

<sup>616</sup> NARA RG 472 A1 887 Box 278, “Impressions of a Field Force Commander in Vietnam,” April 15, 1970, p. 4

<sup>617</sup> Turse 2013, p. 209

<sup>618</sup> Elliott 2007, p. 346; Also see Krepinevich 1986; Turse 2013

Figure 1:



Even the Phoenix Program was not nearly as selective as often portrayed. Modeled on French tactics in Algeria and overseen by the Central Intelligence Agency, the program aimed at neutralizing the VC infrastructure.<sup>619</sup> And the program worked: according to Colby, it captured 28,978 Communist leaders, killed 20,587 and caused another 17,717 to surrender.<sup>620</sup> CORDS reports cited numerous captured documents and interrogation reports confirming that Phoenix decimated the VC infrastructure.<sup>621</sup> Postwar VC memoirs also admit that the program was “dangerously effective:” “In Hau Nghia Province, for example, not far from our old base area, the Front infrastructure was virtually eliminated.”<sup>622</sup> That said, the program was anything but “hearts and minds:” while Colby denied allegations of abuse, later academic studies disagree.<sup>623</sup> For example, one study found that while the Phoenix program was relatively accurate at identifying VC (with about half of those targeted being guilty), it was comparatively inaccurate at capturing

<sup>619</sup> Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 219, 249

<sup>620</sup> Ibid., p. 331

<sup>621</sup> See NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 28, “Phung Hoang End-of-Year Report for 1970,” pp. 43-47

<sup>622</sup> Tang et. al 1985, p. 201

<sup>623</sup> Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 250

and killing VC (with even optimistic models estimating the ratio of guilty to innocent at 1 to 4.7).<sup>624</sup> And so, while Phoenix was militarily effective, its record at sparing the civilian population is decidedly more ambiguous.

Finally, there is third explanation the United States' later success during the Vietnam War—effective resource denial. Resource denial rested on the fact that while individual soldiers traveled light, collectively the VC and NVA required substantial logistical support. By 1966, American intelligence estimated that the NVA and VC had between 100,000 to 260,000 troops in Vietnam.<sup>625</sup> The North Vietnam official military history places the numbers even higher—at 270,000 fulltime soldiers in the South by 1967.<sup>626</sup> Fulltime armies consume a lot of resources. MACV's estimated that the average VC and NVA soldiers needed between 1.5-2 pounds of food per day, so an army of 270,000 would need at least 200 tons of food per day, let alone spare parts, ammunition, gasoline and other necessities.<sup>627</sup> Indeed, some estimates suggest that the NVA and VC needed as much of 380 tons of supplies per day—creating an exploitable vulnerability.<sup>628</sup>

Resource denial strategies evolved from early Vietnam War policies. The United States tried bombing, anti-infiltration booby-traps and even barriers to stop the flow of supplies into South Vietnam.<sup>629</sup> Additionally, American operations frequently captured thousands of tons of

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<sup>624</sup> Kalyvas and Kocher 2007, pp. 201-202

<sup>625</sup> For the low end, estimate see: PP, IV.C.6.(b), p. 1. A 1965 report estimated 100,000 irregular and 37,000 regular troops (PP, IV.C.5, p. 51). State Department estimates claim that 260,000 forces by the end of 1966. DoS 1969, Section A, Part V, p. 1

<sup>626</sup> There, however, are discrepancies in the account. 270,000 full time soldiers by 1967 takes a conservative estimate. See MHIV 2002, pp. 174, 182, 191, 211

<sup>627</sup> For MACV food consumption estimates, see Sorely 2004, p. 92, 414

<sup>628</sup> Pape 1996, p. 74

<sup>629</sup> For fielding of booby traps, PP, IV.C.6.(a), p. 66. For the creation of the “McNamara line,” an anti-infiltration barrier, see PP, IV.C.6.(a), p. 83; Krepinevich 1986, p. 184; McNamara and VanDerMark 1996, p. 246; Duong 2008, p. 108.

food (specifically, rice) supplies, as well weapon stores.<sup>630</sup> And MACV also attempted—if halfheartedly—to control the population, as well.<sup>631</sup> In 1967, of the approximately 262 maneuver battalions in country, there were 29 American battalions, 21 Free World Forces battalions and 53 South Vietnamese battalions assigned to pacification, security and rural development missions (and this figure does not count 41 battalions to other security missions, much less the police and other local security forces).<sup>632</sup> In fact, Westmoreland’s plans called for 75% of the South Vietnamese army and 25% of American forces to be dedicated to rural development.<sup>633</sup>

As the war progressed, the emphasis on resource denial increased. In the air, the American bombing campaign intensified—not to change North Vietnamese popular opinion, but to prevent the flow of resources into South Vietnam. On the sea, after initial reluctance, the United States mined the Haiphong harbor—the main seaport and one of the major gateways for foreign supplies into North Vietnam—in 1972.<sup>634</sup> On the ground, the United States also tried to control the population. Towards the end of his tenure at MACV commander, on January 4, 1968, Westmoreland wrote, “The success of the communist insurgency is dependent on control of the people... In order to thwart the communist’s (sic) design, it is necessary to eliminate the ‘fish’ from the ‘water,’ or to dry up the ‘water’ so that ‘fish’ cannot survive.”<sup>635</sup> Ultimately, he concluded that more expedient option was “draining off the ‘water’ and recapturing it another

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<sup>630</sup> For example, during 1967, 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade confiscated 1,300 tons of rice during Operation DEANE; 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division captured 1,700 of rice in Operation TUCSON; and combined forces captured 850 tons in Operation JUNCTION CITY (MacGarrigle 1998, p. 110, 115, 141). In 1969, American and South Vietnamese confiscated 1,855 tons of ammunition and 5,325 tons of rice. (Sorely 2004, p. 352) For earlier 1969 figures and General Creighton Abrams reaction, see Sorely 2004, pp. 152, 170, 304.

<sup>631</sup> DoS 1969, Section A Part V, p. 11

<sup>632</sup> PP, IV.C.6.(b), pp. 206-207

<sup>633</sup> PP, IV.C.6.(a), p. 98

<sup>634</sup> McMaster 1997, pp. 309-310, 314; Duong 2008, pp. 105, 165-167.

<sup>635</sup> Elliott 2007, pp. 335-336

location and allowing the ‘fish’ to strangle.”<sup>636</sup> And Westmoreland was not alone: many—including prominent political scientist Samuel Huntington—argued that forced urbanization could aid the counterinsurgency effort, at least in the short-run.<sup>637</sup>

Westmoreland's successor, General Creighton Abrams put this theory into practice. Through the CORDS program, he emphasized controlling the population while rooting out the VC cadres. Paramilitary units—“popular forces” and “regional forces”—designed to control the local population rose sharply under his tenure (see figure 2). Abrams also allowed for very kinetic, if brutal operations that depopulated the countryside. According to one study, the percentage of South Vietnamese living in the rural areas declined from 80% in 1961 to 70% in 1971.<sup>638</sup> Others estimated that the degree of forced urbanization was even higher—with up to 40% of Vietnamese eventually living in cities of 20,000.<sup>639</sup> Similarly, estimates of Saigon’s population rose steadily between 1963 and 1973 by over 30% (see figure 3). Forced urbanization wreaked havoc on the VC’s communication and organizational infrastructure. In the words of one VC, it “forcibly separated the people from the revolution,” since “if they (the people) stayed in the liberated areas they wouldn’t be able to earn a living so they had to flee into the Strategic Hamlets.”<sup>640</sup>

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<sup>636</sup> Ibid., p. 336

<sup>637</sup> Huntington 1968

<sup>638</sup> Elliott 2007, p. 372

<sup>639</sup> Huntington 1968, p. 648

<sup>640</sup> Elliott 2007, p. 278, 345

Figure 2:

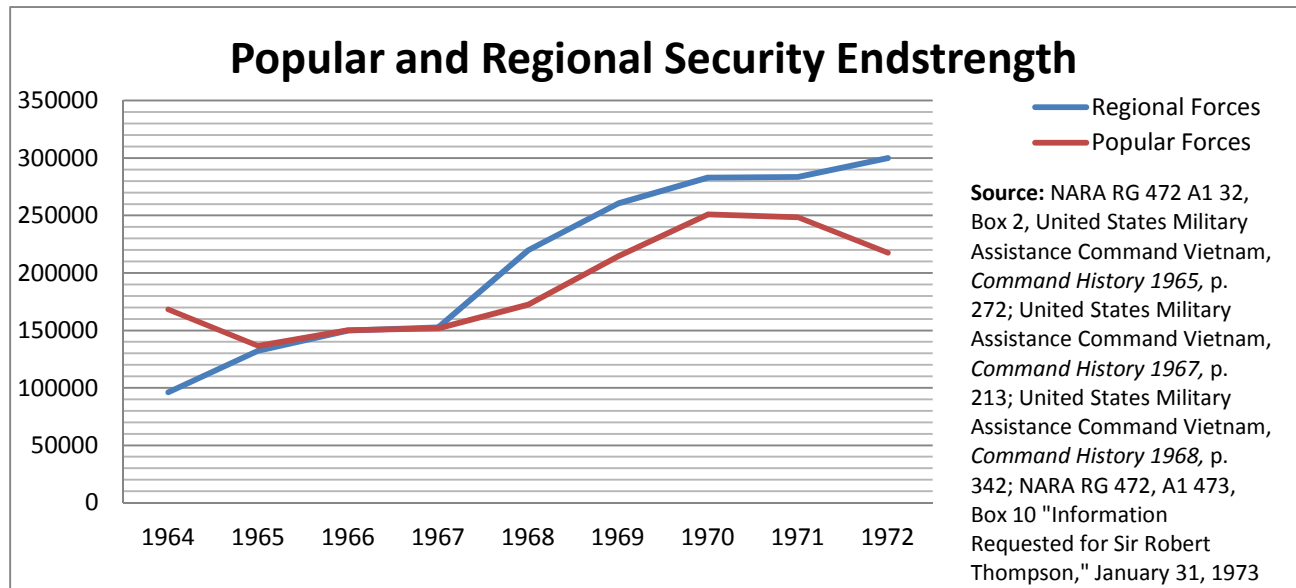
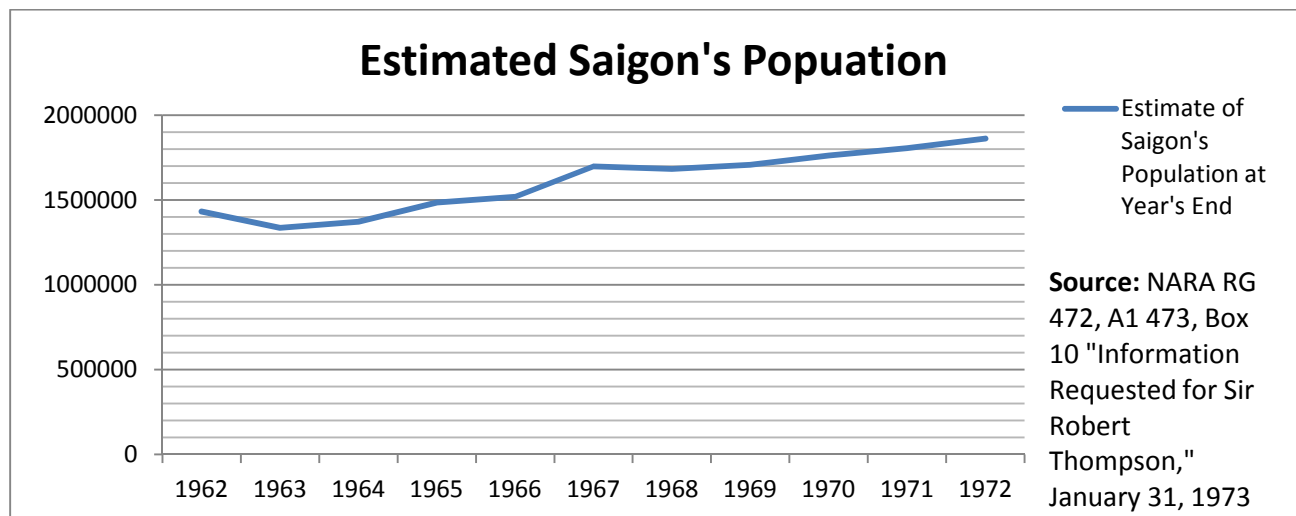


Figure 3:



Resource denial proved successful. Despite McNamara, Colby and others' doubts, the United States successfully curtailed the flow of supplies along the VC and NVA's main supply



line—the Ho Chi Minh trail.<sup>641</sup> While MACV struggled to measure the bombing's impact, intelligence officials believed B-52 sorties significantly reduced the flow of supplies, especially after 1968.<sup>642</sup> According to internal MACV briefings, bombing stopped 50% of the supplies and destroyed 50% of the NVA trucks used to transport the materials into South Vietnam in 1969, and of the estimated 67,000 tons of supplies that entered Laos in 1971, only 9,000 made it into Cambodia or South Vietnam.<sup>643</sup> Intelligence estimates of NVA infiltration also plummeted dramatically as bombing increased (see figure 4). Moreover, Communist and South Vietnamese sources credit airpower with halting the NVA's 1972 offensive and cite its withdrawal of as being decisive in South Vietnam's collapse in 1975.<sup>644</sup> As one former VC member assessed, "In contrast to France, the United States had the capacity to maintain immense military pressure against the strategic targets and supply routes as well as to provide effective close combat support even if most of its ground forces were withdrawn."<sup>645</sup>

Figure 4:

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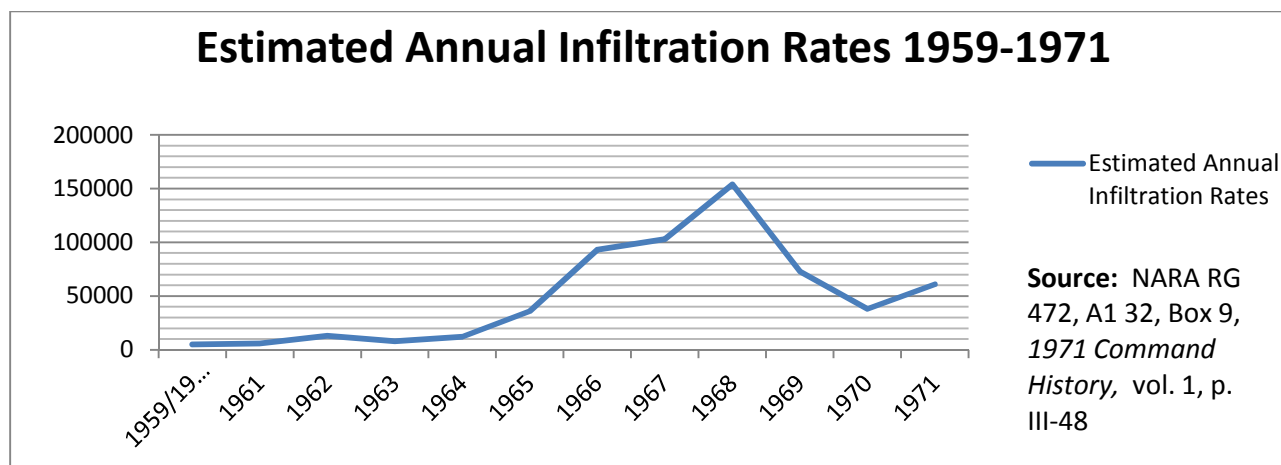
<sup>641</sup> For American policymakers' doubts about restricting the flow of resources, see McNamara and VanDeMark 1996, pp. 203, 244-245; Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 178; Krepinevich 1986, p. 149. In 1968 North Vietnam still viewed the Ho Chi Minh Trail as vulnerable. Nguyen 2012, p. 200-201.

<sup>642</sup> Sorley 2004, p. 73. In a 1968 briefing, General Abrams remarked "There's a big unknown—what's been accomplished by air and artillery, especially B-52s." Ibid., p. 38

<sup>643</sup> Ibid., pp. 357, 637. Of note, aerial bombing only destroyed an estimated 27,800 tons of material, so the statistics may be somewhat less glowing. Ibid., p. 630

<sup>644</sup> Guan 2004, p. 96, 100; Elliott 2007, p. 390; Duong 2008, p. 164

<sup>645</sup> Tang et. al 1985, p. 146. For a North Vietnamese perspective on American bombing's impact on the North Vietnamese economy, see Nguyen 2012, pp. 76-77, 241-242



Food denial proved even more successful, since the insurgency's food mostly came from South Vietnam.<sup>646</sup> As the NVA official history states, "Supplies for fulltime forces were provided primarily by contributions from people in the area where the unit was stationed."<sup>647</sup> Guerillas bought the food from the populace,<sup>648</sup> collected it from the fields,<sup>649</sup> or captured it on the battlefield.<sup>650</sup> Above all, VC and NVA forces would "tax" food supplies from in South Vietnam's villages. As war continued, the tax system grew increasingly sophisticated,<sup>651</sup> and by 1969 to 1970, the tax rates rose to 30 to 40% in places to support the expanded VC and NVA troop presence.<sup>652</sup> And so, while some food came from the North, as Abrams remarked in a 1971

<sup>646</sup> President Lyndon Johnson, then Deputy later National Advisor Walt Rostow, Army Chief of Staff Harold Johnson and the Central Intelligence Agency stated this assessment. See: Krepinevich 1986, p. 60, 187; McNamara and VanDeMark 1996, p. 152; McMaster 1997, p. 148

<sup>647</sup> MHIV 2002, p. 67, 82

<sup>648</sup> Ibid., p. 138

<sup>649</sup> Ibid., p. 46

<sup>650</sup> Dung 1977, p. 76; Guan 2004, p. 52

<sup>651</sup> See, for example, NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 16 "Viet Cong Tax System," 29 May 1971 and for more localized reports, NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 10, "I CTZ, Quang Ngai Province, Son Tinh District," January 5, 1969, p. 2

<sup>652</sup> NARA RG 472, A1 462 "Long Dien Village," January 9, 1969; Sorley 2004, p. 501

briefing, "There's evidence that they haven't been able to support [the forces in the south] with food from North Vietnam anyway."<sup>653</sup>

Especially post-1968, food shortages impacted the VC and NVA's operations. American officials routinely reported that VC and NVA forces faced food shortages.<sup>654</sup> VC and NVA sources confirm these assessments. One VC shadow government minister commented that because of American bombing between 1968 and 1970, "food was a continual preoccupation; the lack of protein especially drove us to frenzied efforts at farming or hunting whenever it was feasible."<sup>655</sup> Likewise, the NVA official history recounts how the 1969 bombing forced NVA troops to scrounge for immature rice to "save our troops from starvation" and that "in Military Region 5 our troops lived by slogan "food production is the same as fighting the enemy."<sup>656</sup> Each unit devoted 10-15% of its strength to food production."<sup>657</sup> Similarly, a 1972 report claimed, "The Soviets are "flooding" North Vietnam with equipment, but our stomachs are empty."<sup>658</sup> In 1972 and 1975, one of VC and NVA's first priorities as they captured areas of South Vietnam was addressing food shortages.<sup>659</sup>

Ironically, resource denial likely would have been more effective, if it were not for American attempts to win "hearts and minds." Unlike the British in Kenya and Malaya, Colby objected to early Army attempts to wall off population centers as too heavy handed.<sup>660</sup> As a result, even at the heights of pacification, the VC and NVA still acquired food from South Vietnamese sources. According to North Vietnamese accounts, "the local population where our soldiers were operating cleverly deceived the enemy, putting aside small amounts of rice and salt every day

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<sup>653</sup> Sorley 2004, p. 667

<sup>654</sup> See Walt 1970, p. 142; MacGarrigle 1998, p. 84; Sorley 2004, p. 610

<sup>655</sup> Tang et. al 1985, 158

<sup>656</sup> MHIV 2002, p. 250

<sup>657</sup> MHIV 2002, p. 250. Also, see *ibid.*, 245

<sup>658</sup> Sorley 2004, p. 757

<sup>659</sup> "VC/NVA Governments in "Liberated" Areas" 24 August 1972; 22 September 1972. RG 472, A1 462. Dung 1977, p. 233

<sup>660</sup> Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 185

for troops.”<sup>661</sup> Another VC memoir recounts that after 1970, VC and NVA supply officials routinely bought food and luxury items from the population.<sup>662</sup> As Vann commented in a classified July 1970 MACV briefing, “Even government officials will concede that the commercial interests will sell rice to the VC when the price is right.”<sup>663</sup>

Other times, American attempts to improve the lot of the South Vietnamese people directly undermined its own resource denial efforts. The United States—through the Rockefeller Rice Research Institute—increased rice production in South Vietnam from five to six million tons within a year its introduction in 1969.<sup>664</sup> While morally admirable, this made food more plentiful (and hence, easier for the NVA and VC to confiscate and cheaper for them to buy), and contrasts with British policy in Malaya and Kenya of repressing agricultural production, until after the insurgency’s defeat.

In sum, the Vietnam War teaches two important lessons about lethal strategy. First, despite hundreds of thousands of troops and massive amounts of firepower, the United States never made punishment or attrition work. By contrast, resource denial and population control—though not less kinetic—proved more effective. Second and more subtly, the Vietnam War demonstrates the tension between “hearts and minds” and resource denial. If United States had not tried to win “hearts and minds” and applied more draconian tactics—unrestricted bombing, mined Haiphong harbor, and instituting stricter population controls—earlier on, then the VC and NVA’s ability to sustain a large troop presence in South Vietnam likely would have decreased dramatically.

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<sup>661</sup> MHIV 2002, p. 249

<sup>662</sup> Tang et. al 1985, p. 159-160

<sup>663</sup> Sorley 2004, p. 453

<sup>664</sup> Colby and McCargar 1989, pp. 220, 266. For the discussion of this strategy, see Sorley 2004, p. 303

## **The Failure of Indirect Rule & American Nonlethal Policy:**

Perhaps, the “hearts and minds” central claim is that the United States largely ignored economic, political and social reforms early on in, but once it embraced these tools through CORDS, it “won over” the South Vietnamese population and made headway against the insurgency. This reading of events, however, has four problems. First, earlier quality of life improvements in South Vietnam had little impact on the insurgency. Second, the United States actually embraced the softer side of counterinsurgency long before the security situation turned around. Third, while CORDS was economically successful, its political reform efforts were lackluster at best. Finally, “hearts and minds” in Vietnam never operated the theory supposed, checked flow of supplies to the insurgency or prevented the VC and NVA from overrunning the country. Instead, the lethal side overshadowed the nonlethal aspects of the counterinsurgency effort, and what little success the United States did have in this effort, came from the same combination of cooption and divide and conquer tactics that the British used in Malaya and Kenya.

First off, CORDS was not the first attempt to improve the lives of the South Vietnamese peasantry: indeed, long before the American intervention, South Vietnam embarked on a relatively successful similar campaign. Economically, South Vietnam started better off than its Northern counterpart and only continued to develop throughout the war. In 1960, South Vietnam had a per capita GNP of \$110 (compared to \$70 for the North).<sup>665</sup> Food production increased by 20% from 1956 to 1960 (compared with a 10% decrease over the same period in the North) and up by over 30% by 1963—surpassing pre-World War II levels by over a million

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<sup>665</sup> DoS 1965, p. 26

tons.<sup>666</sup> Sugar production increased six-fold from 1955 to 1962, while textile production increased from 14.8 million yards in 1956 to 38.5 million yards in 1960.<sup>667</sup>

South Vietnam shared this newfound wealth. Under the Diem regime, South Vietnam redistributed a million acres to 124,000 tenant farmers and limited rent for tenant farmers to no more than 25% of their crop (rather than 50% tax pre-1954).<sup>668</sup> In fact in 1959, “Ambassador [to Vietnam Elbridge] Durbrow told a U.S. Senate subcommittee that the South Vietnamese government was carrying out “the largest land reform program in Asia.”<sup>669</sup> And RAND interview data suggests peasant life improved considerably between 1954 and 1960. For example, one peasant commented, “During the 1954 to 1959 period the life of the poor and miserable class in My Loi village had really improved. They represented about 20 percent of villagers. They had money for food and savings—not like during the Viet Minh times or now [1971].”<sup>670</sup> Other metrics also improved: between 1954 and 1962, primary and secondary school enrollment tripled, while higher education enrollment increased six-fold.<sup>671</sup> Ultimately, these efforts raise a fundamental question: if these early efforts improved the South Vietnamese peasantry’s lives but also failed to check the growth of the insurgency, why would the later CORDS-reforms efforts have translated in security gains?

Second, despite all postwar accusations of America’s neglect of counterinsurgency’s softer side, many senior policymakers—from Johnson and McNamara on down—actually emphasized winning “hearts and minds” from the beginning.<sup>672</sup> In a March 1, 1966 note, McNamara wrote to then Secretary of the Army Stephen Ailes, “I want it clearly understood that there is an unlimited

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<sup>666</sup> Ibid.; also see Army 1962, pp. 342, 351

<sup>667</sup> Army 1962, p. 389

<sup>668</sup> Ibid., p. 357-359

<sup>669</sup> Spector 1983, pp. 308-309

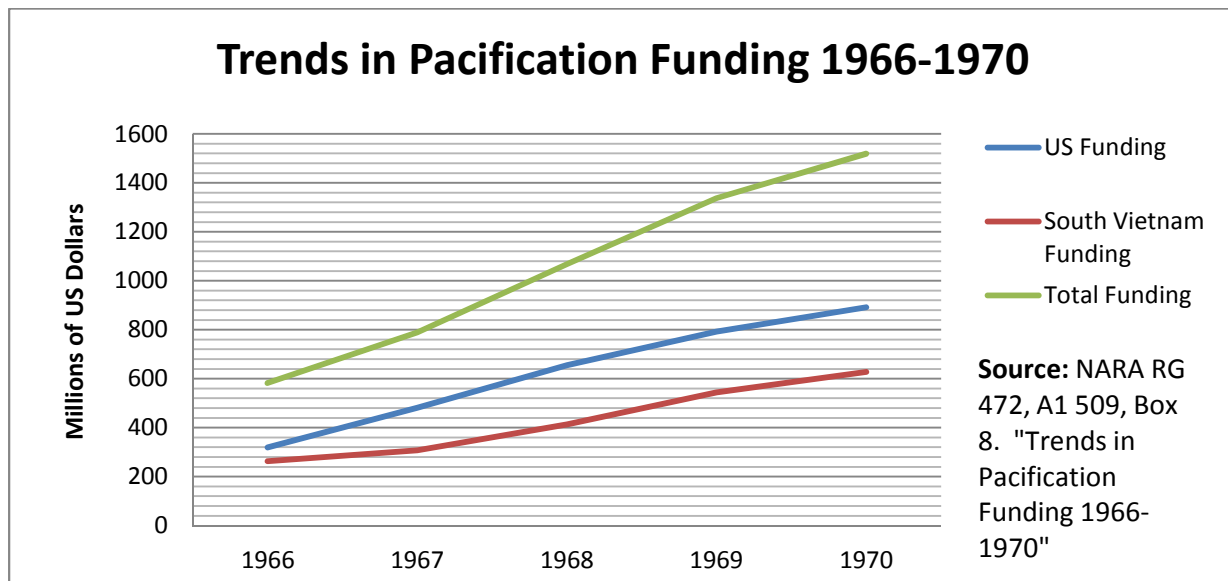
<sup>670</sup> Elliott 2007, p. 88. Admittedly, land reforms also dislocated some peasants. Ibid., p. 96

<sup>671</sup> Army 1962, p. 113

<sup>672</sup> See, for example, Walt 1970, p. 39; McNamara and VanDeMark 1996, p. 110; McMaster 1997, p. 168; Carland 2000, p. 337. For the French defeat in Vietnam as a failure of a “hearts and minds” strategy, see Spector 1983, p. 212

appropriation available for the financing of aid to Vietnam. Under no circumstances is lack of money to stand in the way of aid to that nation.”<sup>673</sup> And McNamara lived up to his promise: from 1966 onwards, funding for pacification steadily increased (see figure 5).

Figure 5:



Moreover, despite Westmoreland's conventional outlook, MACV developed an active civic action program early on. In a June 1966 directive, MACV gave 200,000 piasters per month per division and 100,000 piasters for independent brigade to fund civic action projects in order to “minimize the adverse economic, political and psychological impact on the civilian population and to increase the acceptance by the population of GVN (Government of Vietnam) control.”<sup>674</sup> In 1966 alone, according to MACV's classified official history, American forces distributed more than 12,860 tons of food, clothing, and medical items supplied by Catholic relief charities, built

<sup>673</sup> Carland 2000, p. 16

<sup>674</sup> RG 472, A1 32, Box 3 United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, *Command History*, 1966, p. 580

close to 1,000 school rooms and treated 9,975,591 people through medical civic action programs (up from an estimated 6 million in 1965).<sup>675</sup>

This emphasis on “hearts and minds” also trickled down to conventional units at least on ad-hoc basis. For example, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division’s Operation HAPPY VALLEY (October-November 1965) featured soldiers giving out large quantities of clothing and food, a performance by the division band and longer term civic action projects.<sup>676</sup> A few months later, in March 1966, the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division distributed 250,000 posters, safe conduct passes and leaflets in Operation ROLLING STONE.<sup>677</sup> Not to be out done, the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division boasted giving food and clothing to 56,000 people, free medical care 54,000 people, and parties for 4,000 people between January and October 1966.<sup>678</sup> Other units followed suit. Operation JUNCTION CITY (1967) featured 102 hours of aerial loudspeaker appeals, 9,768,000 propaganda leaflets, 60,000 free medical exams and delivery of 300,000 pounds of clothing and food.<sup>679</sup> Likewise, the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division’s Operation FAMOUS FRIEND (1967) combined its security sweeps with large-scale provision of medical treatment and school construction.<sup>680</sup> In other words, contrary to the “hearts and minds” reading, CORDS’ later promotion of economic development and political reforms was more a shift in magnitude, than a clear break in policy.

Third, while CORDS may have created a South Vietnam where, as Colby claims, “in every region, in all these villages, everywhere the air was alive with bustling energy aimed at producing wealth,” its political reforms were less successful.<sup>681</sup> While the “1968 Accelerated Pacification program” called for local elections and South Vietnamese officials proudly

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<sup>675</sup> RG 472, A1 32, Box 3 United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, *Command History*, 1966, pp. 579-580, 585

<sup>676</sup> Carland 2000, p. 98. Also see an earlier 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division Operation, Carland 2000, p. 81

<sup>677</sup> Ibid. 181

<sup>678</sup> Ibid. , p. 351

<sup>679</sup> MacGarrigle 1998, p. 142

<sup>680</sup> Ibid., pp. 166-167

<sup>681</sup> Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 44; Also see Army 1962, p. 153



proclaimed that there were elected village councils in 2,041 of 2,130 villages under their control by December 1969, whether these elections were free and fair, much less had any real impact on the insurgency remains debatable.<sup>682</sup> Moreover, on a national level, President Nguyen Van Thieu received almost the same suspiciously high percentage of vote (80%) in 1972, as previous national politicians and a series of national decrees in 1972 eventually removed 2,096 elected Hamlet chiefs.<sup>683</sup> Even Colby hints at democratization's mixed track record: "I also found the questions about the vagaries of the Vietnamese voting process perhaps different in a degree but not in kind from the situation in such American communities as Boston, Chicago, and substantial areas of the South."<sup>684</sup> John Paul Vann put it more bluntly, "We talk about free elections—it's poppycock."<sup>685</sup>

Fourth and most importantly, "hearts and minds" in Vietnam never functioned as the theory proposes. First, there is an open question of whether the United States won "hearts and minds" in Vietnam. As mentioned previously and discussed in the appendix, CORDS-run opinion surveys suggest it did, but anecdotal accounts are less sure. In a classified debrief on January 7, 1971, Lieutenant General Collins confided, "I am always left with the vague, uneasy feeling that the people don't care who wins. They just want to be left alone."<sup>686</sup> Second, supposing the United States won "hearts and minds" for a moment, it did so despite its large-scale, relatively indiscriminate use of firepower, contradicting modern notions of how to win "hearts and minds." Finally, winning "hearts and minds" never fully delivered its promised rewards. The South Vietnamese still sold food to the VC and NVA until the end. The number of "returnees"—or VC defectors—actually fell sharply from 1969 onwards, so that number at height

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<sup>682</sup> RG 472, A1 509, Box 5, "Major General Hon's Speech to the Councilmen," September 11, 1970, p. 5

<sup>683</sup> Colby and McCargar 1989, pp. 112, 317; Tang et. al, p. 39; NARA RG 472, A1 473, Box 10 "Information Requested for Sir Robert Thompson," January 31, 1973

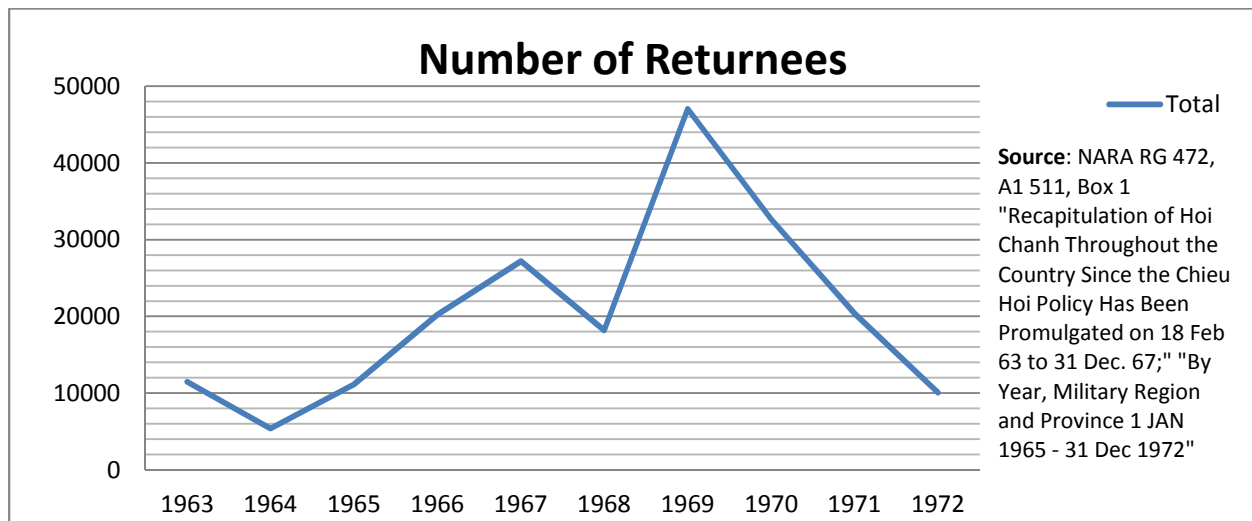
<sup>684</sup> Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 107

<sup>685</sup> "Debrief of John Paul Vann," NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 4

<sup>686</sup> NARA RG 472, A1 887, Box 276 "Debriefing Report by Lieutenant General A. S. Collins Jr.," January 7, 1971, p. 24

of pacification in 1971 was about equal to the number in 1966 (see figure 6). Conversely, the Communists supposed unpopularity never prevented them from overrunning and then controlling South Vietnam in 1975.

Figure 6:



Instead, the key failing of the United States in Vietnam was its inability to develop large-scale nonlethal means of population control. Partly because the United States was concerned about winning “hearts and minds,” the war quickly became Americanized—not just on a military level, but on a civilian side as well. Early in 1963, the United States gave at least tacit approval to a military coups d’états that toppled South Vietnam’s first president, Ngo Dinh Diem for many good “hearts and minds” reasons: he oppressed his Buddhist political opponents, dragged his feet on political reforms and allegedly alienated the people.<sup>687</sup> And yet, by common agreement,

<sup>687</sup> For the backing of the coups, see Colby and McCargar 1989, pp. 148-158; McMaster 1997, pp. 38-41. For Diems’ religious intolerance as justification for the coups, see DoS 1969, Part A, Section III, p. 1; PP, IV.B.4, p. 16-18; Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 132-133. For his failure to adopt economic reforms, see DoS 1969, Part D, Section I, p. 2; DoS 1969, Part D Section II, p. 6. For Diem’s alienation of the people, see Spector 1983, p. 378; Nhut and Arevian 2009, p. 22

the Diem coup proved to be one of the war's critical mistakes.<sup>688</sup> Later on, often for the best of intentions, United States often bypassed local leaders.<sup>689</sup> As one Senate report points out, the United States deployed roughly double the troops but about five times the number of civilians as the French did.<sup>690</sup> As a result, United States lost any legitimate local leadership to co-opt and with it, the ability to control the population except by military coercion.

To its credit, especially in the second half of the war, the United States eventually tried some of same tactics as the British employed in Malaya and Kenya, albeit on a limited scale. As the British did in Malaya, the United States turned ethnic antipathy between the highland-living Montagnards and lowland ethnic Vietnamese into support for the American war effort.<sup>691</sup> As the British did with pseudo-gangs in Kenya, the United States established the Kit Carson Scouts comprised former VC insurgents to help locate, identify and exploit Communist forces.<sup>692</sup> Both programs proved quite successful: many Montagnards fought with the United States until the end, while even the conventionally-minded Ewell described the Kit Carson Scouts "completely loyal" and "a tremendous asset."<sup>693</sup> And yet, both programs remained relatively small. By many estimates, the Montagnards amounted to only 800,000 people or 5% of the Vietnam's population.<sup>694</sup> And even in October 1969, there were only 2,102 Kit Carson Scouts employed in the program, despite the 47,023 former Communists who "returned" to the South Vietnamese

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<sup>688</sup> Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 169; McNamara and VanDeMark 1996, p. 52; Elliott 2007, p. 194, 207; Nhut and Arevian 2009, p. 69

<sup>689</sup> Duong 2008, p. 112

<sup>690</sup> The French had 5,000-7,000 administrators and 272,000 soldiers in Vietnam. By contrast, the United States sent 30,000 civilians and 500,000 troops. Senate Republican Policy Committee 1967, p. 47

<sup>691</sup> TT Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam, "NVA Philosophy and Policies Toward Ethnic Minority Groups, (FIRST UPDATE)," April 5, 1969, p. 14

<sup>692</sup> NARA RG 472 A1 509 Box 2, Headquarters United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, "Directive 525-6 Combat Operations: Kit Carson Scout Program," September 23, 1968

<sup>693</sup> The Montagnards offered to fight on after 1975. See TT "Memorandum of Conversation: Montagnard Attitude During National Crisis," April 4, 1975. NARA RG 472, A1 887, Box 278, "Impressions of a Division Commander in Vietnam," September 17, 1969, p. 10

<sup>694</sup> TT Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam, "NVA Philosophy and Policies Toward Ethnic Minority Groups, (FIRST UPDATE)," April 5, 1969, p. 14

side that year.<sup>695</sup> In the absence of effective cooption and divide and rule, the United States mostly relied most on force to starve the insurgency, and the results were imperfect and fleeting, with Vietnam collapsing once American firepower was withdrawn.

### **Diem & the Marines:**

Prior to CORDS and the wholesale adoption of pacification post 1968, the early Vietnam War's tactical diversity provides an opportunity to study different strategies' effectiveness. Two early programs—the Diem Regime's Strategic Hamlet program and the Marine Corps' work in I Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ)—stand out. The two programs have very different legacies. The “backbone” of Diem's counterinsurgency strategy was a Malaya-style plan to forcibly consolidate outlying peasant hamlets into new villages called Agrovilles where they could be controlled.<sup>696</sup> Ultimately, “hearts and minds” proponents claim, forced resettlement alienated “a great many country people,” and therefore, was abandoned.<sup>697</sup> By contrast, the Marine Corps is often extolled for doing counterinsurgency “right.” The *Counterinsurgency Manual* lauds that the Marine's “Combined Action Program” or CAP, where Marine squads worked with local forces to provide security, as “a model for counterinsurgency.”<sup>698</sup> Firsthand narratives of the Marines' actions—most notably, Bing West's *The Village*—appear on the military's recommended

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<sup>695</sup> NARA RG 472, A1 511, Box 1, “By Year, Military Region, and Province 1 JAN 1965-31 DEC 1972,” January 5, 1973; NARA RG 472 A1 509, Box 2, “Program Grown during the Month of October 1969,” November 14, 1969; NARA RG 472, A1 511, Box 1, “By Year, Military Region, and Province 1 JAN 1965-31 DEC 1972,” January 5, 1973.

<sup>696</sup> PP, IV.B.2., p. 21; Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 35

<sup>697</sup> Tang et. al, 1985, p. 47. For similar opinions, see Osborne 1965, p. 22; PP, Part IV, Section B.2, pp. v, 2; Krepinevich 1986, p. 216; Nhut and Arevian 2009, p. 39. To be fair, the idea was still debated in 1964 in some circles. Osborne 1965, p. 7

<sup>698</sup> FM 3-24, p. 5-25

reading lists.<sup>699</sup> Despite these varying historical legacies, however, both Diem's Strategic Hamlets and the Marine's CAPs worked for a similar reason—effective population control.

Perhaps, the most insightful commentary on Diem's strategic hamlet program comes from the NVA and VC themselves. The VC and NVA feared that strategic hamlets “would totally control each person, controlling each individual's food and property inside a neighborhood or hamlet surrounded by a network of fences, barriers, and watchtowers manned by police and armed forces.”<sup>700</sup> Like the Malayan Communists, VC and NVA officials realized that these tactics—albeit unpopular—would starve the nascent insurgency and restrict their ability operate. And in fact, the North Vietnamese official history admits that as a result of the strategic hamlet program, “our soldiers endured many hardships because our food production was unreliable and our warehouses, crops and food stocks were being attacked and destroyed. Rightist and negativistic tendencies began to appear among our soldiers.”<sup>701</sup>

Strategic hamlets produced tangible results. As the program expanded from about 2500 in 1962 to just over 6,000 hamlets by mid-March 1963, acts of “terrorism” dropped from just over 1,000 incidents per month in April 1962 to roughly 650 in March 1963; “attacks” fell from just under 600 incidents in February 1962 to below 200 in February 1963; acts of “sabotage” and “propaganda” declined as well.<sup>702</sup> Similarly, battalion and company size VC attacks declined dramatically and weapons lost to VC fell from an average of 62 per week in 1961 to 12 in 1962 to 6 in 1963.<sup>703</sup> Finally, perhaps because of effective food denial, VC defections increased from an average of 100 per month during March 1962 to a peak of just below 400 per month in March

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<sup>699</sup> Ibid., Annotated Bibliography-2

<sup>700</sup> MHIV 2002, p. 109

<sup>701</sup> Ibid., p. 112. Admittedly, other North Vietnamese sources are more tepid about the strategic hamlet program's success. See Nguyen 2012, p. 61

<sup>702</sup> See: PP, IV.B.2, p. 31-32. See “Table 2: Strategic Hamlet Growth in Vietnam. “Table 3: Vietcong Initiated Incidents Broken Down in Categories (Attacks, Terrorism, Sabotage, Propaganda)”

<sup>703</sup> PP, IV.C.1, p. 10

1963.<sup>704</sup> Indeed, McNamara, Colby and South Vietnamese officials praised the strategic hamlet program's success (albeit to varying degrees).<sup>705</sup> One MACV assessment even proclaimed that "...barring greatly increased resupply and reinforcement of the Viet Cong by infiltration, the military phase of the war can be virtually won in 1963."<sup>706</sup>

The strategic hamlet program's results are more impressive considering how many factors were stacked against it. The South Vietnamese official in charge—Albert Pham Ngoc Thao—was a VC agent, and other senior officials were either hostile or apathetic to the program.<sup>707</sup> Perhaps, in part due to this hostility, the program was never fully instituted: only 23 Agrovilles and 28.49% of the proposed strategic hamlets were ever created, controlling roughly a third of the total population.<sup>708</sup> Moreover, beginning in May 1959, the North Vietnamese stood up Group 559 to ferry supplies to the south along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, further undermining the program's stranglehold on the insurgency.<sup>709</sup> And unlike later on, these early efforts could not rely on massive aerial bombardment to check the flow of foreign supplies.

Moreover, while peasant outrage over resettlement factored into the political decision to abandon the program, the proximate cause for the strategic hamlet programs' failure was not its unpopularity, but a lack of firepower. Indeed, the *Pentagon Papers* remark, "the greatest single difficulty of a pacification program was in the problem of security in the hamlets."<sup>710</sup> Of the 197,858 personnel assigned to strategic hamlet security, only 60,496 were trained and only 19,879 were armed.<sup>711</sup> As Colby himself notes, these forces were spread too thin to effectively

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<sup>704</sup> PP, IV.B.2, p. 33, "Table 4: Vietcong Defections"

<sup>705</sup> PP, IV.B.4, p. 4; Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 102; Duong 2008, p. 44

<sup>706</sup> PP, IV.B.4, p. 11

<sup>707</sup> Tang et. al 1985, pp. 47-49; Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 167

<sup>708</sup> Osborne 1965, pp. 23-24; PP, IV.B.2, p. 28. Exact statistics vary by source. See Boun Enao Project, 1962, Duong 2008, p. 72

<sup>709</sup> Nguyen 2012, p. 45

<sup>710</sup> PP, IV.C.1, p. 14

<sup>711</sup> Osborne 1965, p. 38

defend against VC infiltrators.<sup>712</sup> Since VC prioritized attacking strategic hamlets to secure their supply lines, the results were predictable: the VC claim to have destroyed 3,000 strategic hamlets by the end of 1964.<sup>713</sup> Ironically, the strategic hamlet program's fatal flaw may not have been going far enough: given the weapons and trained personnel shortages, the program may have needed to consolidate the population into fewer, better defended areas to be effective, even if this sparked more popular resentment.

By contrast, despite their better image, the Marines' success lay not in its embrace of a "hearts and minds" approach either. If the Army adhered to the "Army Concept," then the Marine Corps had their own operational predilections: one classified memorandum concludes that Vietnam confirms "the validity of amphibious warfare doctrine," and boasts that by the end of 1967, "Marines have made 43 major landings," resulting 4,225 enemy killed.<sup>714</sup> Like the Army, the Marines were also aggressive about killing suspected VC and NVA, reporting ever higher body counts.<sup>715</sup> And the Marines were only moderately more selective about using firepower. To his credit, General Lewis Walt, who commanded Third Marine Amphibious Force, limited the use of indiscriminate firepower: "It was mandatory that we do not fire into populated areas unless we received fire from them."<sup>716</sup> That said, the statistics questions the extent to which his guidance was actually followed: in 1966, 88.6% of the Marine's artillery missions denied the VC/NVA terrain (rather than directly supported ground forces), falling to 73% in 1967 (compared with 91.2% and 85% respectively for the Army).<sup>717</sup> While the 12% difference between Army and Marine units may seem substantial, the overwhelming majority of the Marines' artillery fire was unobserved and risked civilian casualties.

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<sup>712</sup> Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 70

<sup>713</sup> MHIV 2002, p. 121, 134

<sup>714</sup> "Memorandum for Admiral Hyland," p. 2. NARA RG 127, A10009, Box 158

<sup>715</sup> "Operations of the U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam March 1967," pp. 5-6. NARA RG 472 A1 Box 13

<sup>716</sup> Walt 1970, p. 28

<sup>717</sup> Turse 2013, p. 91. Also see *ibid*, p. 55

Instead, the Marines' success came from resource denial. The Marines controlled the flow of food to the insurgency. In 1965, Lieutenant General Victor Krulak, commander of Fleet Marine Pacific, outlined his theory of war: "The real war is among the people and not among these mountains... If we destroy the guerilla among the people, we will automatically deny the larger [enemy] units the food and the intelligence and the taxes, and the other support they need."<sup>718</sup> This vision translated into action. In a March 1967 memorandum, as the war in I CTZ heated up, the Marines responded by "denying them (the VC) access to the population and food resources."<sup>719</sup> For example, Marines in Hoa Vang District developed the "golden fleece" plan to guard the villages' rice in central granaries and allow people to withdraw it based on credits, all to deny the VC food supplies.<sup>720</sup> These efforts paid off. In a 1970 briefing, Abrams noted that in the Marines' area, unlike the rest of the country, "a lot of their food is imported. We've captured rice down in Military Region 1 that came from China."<sup>721</sup>

The Marines also were better at co-option. For example, the Marines pioneered the Kit Carson Scouts. While I CTZ had fewer absolute numbers of defectors, the Marines enlisted more former VC in the Scouts than the other three CTZs combined (142 compared to 105).<sup>722</sup> The program produced success: for example, between November 1, 1966 to September 20, 1967, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division' scouts captured 103 and killed 44 VC/NVA soldiers, identified 190 mines and booby traps, and found 9 weapons and supplies caches—all the more impressive considering their relatively few numbers.<sup>723</sup>

CAP operated on a similar model. Rather than standing up local militias or using American troops, CAP employed a hybrid approach—where Marines worked through local leadership to

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<sup>718</sup> Ibid., p. 109

<sup>719</sup> PP, IV.C.6.(b), p. 70

<sup>720</sup> Walt 1970, p. 51-54

<sup>721</sup> Sorley 2004, p. 483

<sup>722</sup> "Chieu Hoi Program," pp. 1-2. NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 13

<sup>723</sup> Ibid., p. 2-3. For an anecdotal account of the Kit Carson program's success, see Walt 1970, pp. 44-47



train and direct Popular Force militias.<sup>724</sup> This model produced results. For example, between August to December 1966, 39,840 deserted from Popular Force throughout South Vietnam; by contrast, none of Popular Forces paired with Marine squads deserted during the same time period.<sup>725</sup> Similarly during 1966, CAP had a kill ratio (enemy to friendly casualties) of 14 to 1, while unpaired Popular Forces had only a 3 to 1 ratio for the year.<sup>726</sup> Likewise, villages with CAP programs saw higher increases in rural development than those without such programs.<sup>727</sup>

Importantly, CAP was not about social engineering and only indirectly about “hearts and minds.” Firsthand accounts of CAP, like West’s *The Village*, are not stories of economic development, political reform or social change. Indeed, West records how Rural Development cadres’ months of propaganda and economic development left behind only two lasting memorials—an “Anti-Communist Vegetable Garden” which in reality “presided over a bunch of weeds” and a “rickety bamboo fence” which the VC promptly tore down.<sup>728</sup> For their part, the Marines did not try to alter the politics, economics or social life in the village, apart from their daily interactions with the population. And while the village still fondly remembers the Marines decades later, this is more due to the Marines’ hard fought engagements with their PFs at their side, rather than any explicit “hearts and minds” strategy.<sup>729</sup>

The Marine’s use of cooption and food denial kept the VC and NVA presence in check. By the end of first quarter of 1970, when III Marine Amphibious Force handed over control to the Army’s XXIV Corps, I CTZ had approximately 19,025 identified VC (excluding NVA units)

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<sup>724</sup> “The Marine Combined Action Program Vietnam,” p. 1-2. NARA RG 127, A10009, Box 146. Also see: “Operations of U.S. Marine Forces in Vietnam, March 1967.” NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 13

<sup>725</sup> Ibid., p. 14

<sup>726</sup> Ibid. p. 15

<sup>727</sup> “The Marine Combined Action Program Vietnam,” p. 10. NARA RG 127, A10009, Box 146

<sup>728</sup> West 2003, pp. 247-248.

<sup>729</sup> See “The Village 2002: The Kindergarten Marines.” Ibid., pp. 349-359. For a similar—if abbreviated—version of the events in Binh Nghia, see Walt 1970, pp. 107-109

located in the area—far fewer than the 34,133 in IV CTZ.<sup>730</sup> This statistic is all the more impressive considering I CTZ's proximity to North Vietnam. In fact, I CTZ was widely considered “the most violent area in Vietnam.”<sup>731</sup> After Marines turned over control to the Army, I CTZ routinely posted some the highest NVA/VC body counts and again ranked amongst the most violent areas in Vietnam as measured in VC/NVA initiated incidents.<sup>732</sup>

Ultimately, despite different legacies, Diem's Strategic Hamlets and the Marine Corps worked for similar reasons—population control. While both efforts included economic and political “carrots,” neither strategy relied on winning “hearts and minds” but rather on control. In Diem's case, control was primarily physical—including force resettlement. In the Marine's case, control was more in the form of co-option. Both, however, aimed at starving the insurgency out of the jungle; both employed nasty tactics to achieve this end; and both worked.

### **Paved With Good Intentions**

Ultimately, the Vietnam War—if nothing else than for its sheer scale—is unique in counterinsurgency history, but it teaches a familiar lesson: population control—not “hearts and minds”—win counterinsurgencies. In his controversial 1968 *Foreign Affairs* article, Samuel Huntington concluded:

It is often said that the war in Viet Nam is a “political” war, and that consequently winning the war requires the Government to appeal to “the hearts and minds of the people” by promoting rural development, land reform, education, official honesty and other specific and usually material benefit. In fact, there is little evidence to suggest that the appeal of

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<sup>730</sup> II CTZ had approximately 13,054 VC and III CTZ had 87,782 according to the report, although the latter figure is probably typographical error (given that the totals do not add up). See “Measurements of Progress in Southeast Asia,” p. 41 NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 66

<sup>731</sup> West 2003, p. 75

<sup>732</sup> NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 3, 6*Command History 1971*, vol. 1, pp. IV-25, 29, 33, 38, III-26, III-27.

the Viet Cong derives from material poverty or that it can be countered by material benefits.<sup>733</sup>

Ultimately, as Huntington predicted, successful counterinsurgency hinged on control, not popularity, and so tactics—like forced resettlement under Diem or Abram’s large scale application of firepower forcing urbanization—proved militarily effective, if morally ambiguous. Similarly, in his epic history of the Mekong Delta, David Elliott concluded, “the greatest problems for the revolution were not being created by clever pacification tactics or “revolutionary” development cadres, but by the bombing, shelling, and military operations that made it nearly impossible to stay in the hamlets being fought over.”<sup>734</sup>

Population control in Vietnam was never going to be easy. As depicted in table 3, by its own admission, the NVA benefited from “*enormous international support and assistance*” (emphasis in the original) during the war and South Vietnam’s geography made it ideal for foreign infiltration.<sup>735</sup> South Vietnam’s more homogenous society and less entrenched local leadership structure meant that co-option and divide and rule proved harder than in Kenya and Malaya. Still, to the extent the United States—and the South Vietnamese government—employed population control, it worked. Unfortunately, the United States often pursued conventional and “heart and minds” strategies which were not only ineffective, but at times even counterproductive.

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<sup>733</sup> Huntington 1968, p. 644

<sup>734</sup> Elliott 2007, p. 285. For similar assessments, Elliott 2007, p. 249, 297, 357

<sup>735</sup> Ibid., p. 436

Table 3:

Hypotheses:	Result:	Evidence:
H1A Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a minority group.	TRUE	The insurgency was not isolated to a minority group and the effectiveness of the American effort suffered as a result.
H1B Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a distinct group.	TRUE	The insurgency was not isolated to a distinct group and the effectiveness of the American effort suffered as result.
H1C Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, when employed against rural insurgencies	TRUE	The rural nature of the insurgency left the VC and NVA vulnerable to food denial and starvation. As the war progressed, the United States increasingly exploited this vulnerability.
H2 Cooption strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, when targeted against the insurgents themselves.	TRUE	As demonstrated in the Kit Carson scouts, cooption of guerillas proved particularly effective.
H3 Divide and rule strategies will be more successful when the insurgency comes from a minority group.	TRUE	To the extent divide and rule was employed, divide and rule proved particularly successful Montagnards, the rural ethnic minority in Vietnam.

Perhaps, Vietnam's deeper lesson may be the tension between the "good" and the "effective" in counterinsurgency. The Diem regime backed off of forced resettlement partially because the peasants did not like it; but by backing off and spreading its forces too thin, it lost control. The United States avoided walling off population centers and increased rice production in Vietnam to help the population, but in doing so, it undermined its food denial strategy. Most importantly, the United States toppled the Diem regime because it rightly viewed him as increasingly unpopular, autocratic and contrary to "good government," but by doing so, it destroyed indirect rule and any ability to control the population, short of military coercion. Again and again, good intentions led the United States to make poor strategic decisions. In the end, while the United States won the counterinsurgency for a time, it eventually lost the war and also failed in its humanitarian objectives as well.

## Chapter 7: Sisyphus & the Surge

### Winning Versus Controlling “Hearts and Minds” in Iraq

“Do you want to kill me?’ the American soldier asked.

“Yes,” replied the Iraqi, who had been a member of 1920 Brigade, an insurgent group that broke with Al Qaeda in 2007. ‘But not today.’”<sup>736</sup>

There is a popular narrative about how the United States stabilized Iraq during the 2007 “Surge.”<sup>737</sup> In a simplified form, the account reads something like this. For decades, to paraphrase one general officer, the Army did not think much about counterinsurgency, and so when it confronted one in Iraq, it was caught flat-footed.<sup>738</sup> After several years of blundering, General David Petraeus assembled a team of experts, wrote the *Counterinsurgency Manual* (henceforth, simply referred to as the *Manual*) and taught the United States how to win these wars. Drawing its lessons from Malaya, Vietnam and other campaigns, the *Manual*, arguably, was the modern intellectual heir to the “hearts and minds” approach. It preached that counterinsurgency’s core objective was “effective governance by a legitimate government.”<sup>739</sup> Though the *Manual*’s approach is complex, multi-faceted and at times, contradictory, it emphasized many of same elements that previous “hearts and minds” theorists claimed were essential to these campaigns—minimizing the use of force, undertaking large-scale public works projects and implementing political reforms. And so, when Petraeus became the commander of Multi-National Forces Iraq and violence declined dramatically, the “hearts and minds” approach seemingly had been vindicated.

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<sup>736</sup> Ricks 2009, p. 207

<sup>737</sup> For example of this narrative, see Robinson 2008; Davidson 2010, 173-185; Bowden 2010; Boot 2013. Similarly, Ricks 2009 gives a similar reading, albeit with a more skeptical eye towards the results and the future of Iraq.

<sup>738</sup> Remarks by General Raymond Odierno. Kaplan 2013, p. 115; Ricks 2009, p. 109

<sup>739</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-21

This narrative, however, faces two key empirical problems. First, more academic accounts question whether “hearts and minds” tactics produced the Surge’s outcomes. In perhaps the most rigorous analysis to date, Stephen Biddle, Jeffery Friedman and Jacob Shapiro found that the Surge still did not validate the *Manual’s* “relative emphasis on security, governance, and economic development.”<sup>740</sup> Second, “hearts and minds” cannot explain why Iraq’s successes so often proved ephemeral: after all, once the counterinsurgent “won” the population’s loyalty, the insurgency should end once and for all. And yet, as President George W. Bush remarks in his memoirs, time and again, “when we reduced troops..., violence returned.”<sup>741</sup> Similarly, Petraeus presciently subtitled his article on “How We Won Iraq” with “why all the hard-won gains of the surge are in grave danger of being lost today” and concludes with a dire warning, “Iraq today looks tragically similar to the Iraq of 2006, complete with increasing numbers of horrific, indiscriminate attacks by Iraq’s al Qaeda affiliate and its network of extremists.”<sup>742</sup>

Over the next five sections, I argue that “hearts and minds” did not “win” Iraq—if only for a time, but as in the previous cases, success came from population-control. First, I introduce the conflict and outline my hypotheses’ observable implications for the Iraq War. I then show how “hearts and minds” theory reflected the best elements of the early Iraq War, by politically and economically enfranchising the population at large, while minimizing their grievances. Third, I examine how during the Surge, the Coalition co-opted and controlled Sunni insurgents through a mixture of bribes and a classic “divide and rule” strategy. Fourth, I argue that rather than minimizing the use of force the Surge included a substantial kinetic component and the extensive use of walls. Finally, I reexamine the comparison often used to validate the “hearts and minds” approach—namely Petraeus’ Ninewa versus General Ray Odierno’s Salah ad Din, and show how this example instead reinforces the population control model. Ultimately, the

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<sup>740</sup> Biddle et al 2012, p. 38

<sup>741</sup> Bush 2010, p. 365

<sup>742</sup> Petraeus 2013

Surge's success against the Sunni nationalist insurgency demonstrates that population control tactics can dramatically reduce violence, but like the Greek myth of Sisyphus—doomed to forever push a boulder up a hill only to watch it roll back down again, the nature of this success all too often proves fleeting.

### **Iraq Counterinsurgency & Two Theories of Victory:**

Despite the end of “major combat operations” in April 2003, the Iraq insurgency was only just beginning. Violent incidents more than tripled by 2004 and only continued to climb.<sup>743</sup> This rise in violence extracted a toll in blood. In May 2003, American forces suffered 54 soldiers wounded-in-action; a year later, this number spiked almost twenty-fold to 1,014.<sup>744</sup> Iraqi civilian fatalities also increased exponentially from 7,300 in 2003 to 34,500 by 2006 and some place the true death toll even higher.<sup>745</sup> While politicians and military leaders initially blamed the violence on criminal gangs and revenge killings, they eventually recognized Iraq for what it was—multiple full blown insurgencies, all layered on a growing sectarian civil war.<sup>746</sup> By February 10, 2005, then counselor of the Department of State Phil Zelikow concluded in a highly classified memorandum, “At this point Iraq remains a failed state shadowed by constant violence and undergoing revolutionary political change.”<sup>747</sup>

All this makes the turnaround during the Surge more impressive. “Significant incidents”—acts of violence—fell from approximately 1600 a week in June 2007 to 600 a week by December 2007.<sup>748</sup> In February 2007, 44 car bombs in Baghdad killed 253 and wounded 654;

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<sup>743</sup> “Number of Attacks,” CENTCOM 2008

<sup>744</sup> Feith 2008, p. 497

<sup>745</sup> O’Hanlon and Livingston 2011, p. 3

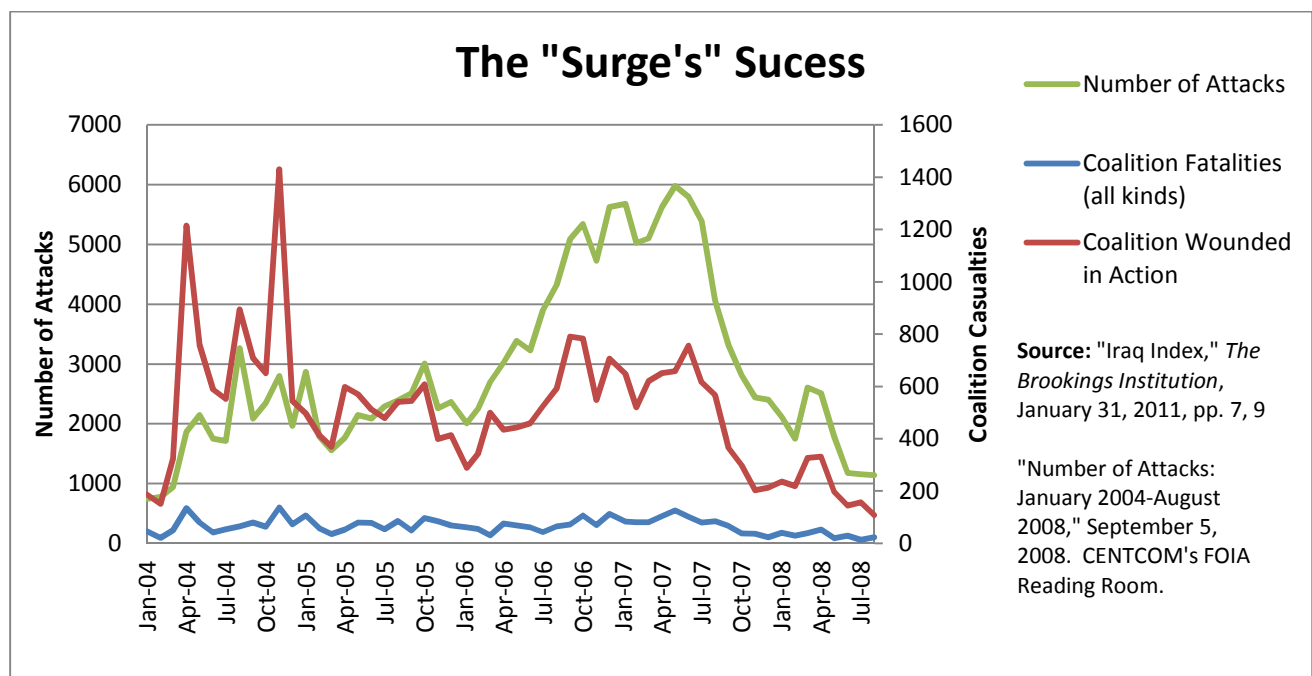
<sup>746</sup> For this evolution, see Woodward 2006, p. 266; Hammes 2006, p. 173-174; Gordon and Trainor 2006, p. 489; Rumsfeld 2011, p. 522; Casey 2012, p. 24; Mansoor 2008, p. 55; Zakheim 2011, p. 202; Franks and McConnell 2004, p. 520

<sup>747</sup> Woodward 2006, p. 388

<sup>748</sup> Ricks 2009, p. 249

in December 2007, only five such bombs exploded in Baghdad, killing a dozen and wounding 40.<sup>749</sup> In February 2007, civilian convoys stood roughly a one-in-five shot of being blown up by a roadside bomb; by December it was a 1 in 33 shot and by April 2008, it was 1 in 100 odds.<sup>750</sup> Ethno-sectarian deaths fell by over 75% during the Surge, and total civilians deaths fell by 70% in Baghdad and 45% across the rest of the country.<sup>751</sup> Indeed, by one estimate, the Surge saved between 12,000 to 16,000 Iraqi civilian lives in its first eighteen months.<sup>752</sup> American military casualties also dropped off precipitously from 120 dead in May 2007 (and 131 for the entire Coalition) to 25 Coalition lives lost in December 2007.<sup>753</sup> By any measure, the Surge was a stunning reversal of fortunes (chart 1).

Chart 1:



<sup>749</sup> Ibid.

<sup>750</sup> Ibid., p. 240

<sup>751</sup> Numbers vary by source. Robinson gives 75% decrease in civilian deaths; Bush estimates 80% and Kagan gives 90%. Civilian casualty statistics are from Bush's memoirs. Robinson 2008, p. 323; Kagan 2009, p. 196; Bush 2010, p. 385

<sup>752</sup> Kilcullen 2009, pp. 268-269

<sup>753</sup> Ricks 2009, p. 179; Broadwell and Loebe 2012, p. 238; Kaplan 2013, p. 267; Icasualties.org 2013.



In its aftermath, analysts gave a host of reasons for the Surge's success—from a new commander, General David Petraeus<sup>754</sup> to a shift away from mechanized movement for walking patrols.<sup>755</sup> These explanations mostly fall under two broad schools of thought. The first—espoused by John Nagl, David Kilcullen, Janine Davidson and others—claims that the Surge worked largely the way the *Manual* predicted, by winning over the Iraqi population.<sup>756</sup> To accomplish this task, counterinsurgents first provide security while simultaneously minimizing popular ill-will—often by applying a minimal amount of force in a precise fashion, through small unit operations and in accordance with the rule of law.<sup>757</sup> More importantly, the *Manual* argues that nonlethal means provide the crux of any counterinsurgency effort. Four of the six “lines of operation”—or the elements of any successful counterinsurgency—focus on promoting “good” governance, providing essential services (water, sewage, electricity and other life staples), developing the economy and then explaining this through “information operations” or public diplomacy.<sup>758</sup> The idea is to convince the population—the majority of whom are assumed to be passive or neutral—to support government, either out of gratitude or because they now have a “stake” in the new order.<sup>759</sup> Once the counterinsurgent establishes “effective governance by a legitimate government” and the “hearts and minds” of the population won, the insurgency will be cut off from its lifeblood and eventually wither and die.<sup>760</sup> And according to the *Manual's* supporters, some variant of this logical train occurred in Iraq. As David Kilcullen sums up, “In 2007, we successfully turned Iraq back from the brink of total disaster by applying a strategy of

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<sup>754</sup> Broadwell and Loeb 2012; Bowden 2010; Bergen 2012

<sup>755</sup> Lyall and Wilson 2009

<sup>756</sup> Robinson 2008; Ricks 2009; Fick and Nagl 2009; Davidson 2010, 173-185

<sup>757</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-27, 5-12.

<sup>758</sup> Ibid., p. 5-3. The other two lines of operation are developing host nation security forces and combat/civil security operations.

<sup>759</sup> FM 3-24, pp. 1-20, p. 5-3

<sup>760</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-21

protecting the population, co-opting and winning over the reconcilables, expanding the “center” of Iraqi politics, marginalizing the extremes, and eliminating irreconcilables.”<sup>761</sup>

By contrast, there is a second, darker telling of the Surge—namely, population control. Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey Friedman and Jacob Shapiro hint at this argument. They advocate for a “synergistic approach” to the Surge, including “a new pattern of smaller, dispersed bases, dismounted patrolling, and direct provision of U.S. security for threatened Iraqi civilians,” increasing troop numbers and the Sunni Arab “Awakening.”<sup>762</sup> While their argument does perfectly align to the theory outlined in Chapter 3, all three variables focus on security—not any of the nonlethal tools espoused by the *Manual*. Indeed, they reject the logic of “hearts and minds” as applied to Surge.<sup>763</sup> Even the Awakening, they argue, was not an example of winning “hearts and minds” of the Sunnis per say, but stemmed more from the Sunnis’ “fear of losing a war of sectarian conquest to their Shiite rivals” and Americans forces now being able to respond to when Sunni militias came under attack.<sup>764</sup> While their analysis still leaves questions unanswered (perhaps, most notably, why violence returned to Iraq post-Surge) and remains an Iraq specific story (not a more generalizable model), Biddle, Friedman and Shapiro suggest that the Surge’s success should can—at best—only validate the kinetic portion of *Manual’s* approach.

The full-fledged theory of population control from Chapter 3 specifies three principle methods—physical mechanisms, cooption and “divide and rule”—that should have caused the Surge’s success and predicts when each of them should prove most effective. Instead of minimizing force, success should involve the ample firepower, detentions and above all walls to control Iraqi population. These efforts should prove particularly effective when the Iraqi

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<sup>761</sup> Kilcullen 2009, pp. 184-185

<sup>762</sup> Biddle, Friedman and Shapiro 2012, pp. 7-8

<sup>763</sup> Ibid., p. 38

<sup>764</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-22, 35; For the critique and the authors’ response, Lindsay and Long 2013 and Biddle, Friedman and Shapiro 2013, p. 193

insurgency's support base could be isolated to distinct minority groups (hypotheses 1a and 1b). Rather than encouraging economic development and improving the lives of Iraqis at large, success should come from co-opting key power brokers in Iraqi society, particularly the insurgents themselves (hypothesis 2). Finally, in contrast to the *Manual's* support for "effective governance by a legitimate government," population control argues for "divide and rule"—exploiting sectarian fears to reinforce their subservience. In Iraq's case in particular, this tactic should be particularly effective against Sunni insurgents, given that they are part of a minority in Iraq (hypotheses 3).

Ultimately, the two models have very different observable implications when it comes to the Iraq War. As depicted in table 1, for the "hearts and minds" approach, success should come from large-scale economic reconstruction, free and fair elections, and the building of legitimate institutions. Force should resemble big city beat-cops' tactics—with violence used as a scalpel, rather than a bludgeon and in accordance with the rule of law. Done correctly, the model should seamlessly transition to a permanent peace. By contrast, the population control model argues success comes from bribery and the exploitation of sectarian fears. If "hearts and minds" theory advocates a beat-cop-like approach, population control argues for a prison guard mentality—with walls, widespread arrests, and the ample force to control the population. "Success," in other words, is defined not by "effective governance by a legitimate government," but rather by stability and the absence of violence.<sup>765</sup> Most importantly, success is often temporary: divide and rule presumes the continued presence of a powerful third party and the physical control is premised on the security forces' heavy hand. And arguably, it is this latter model that proved "successful"—at least by its definition—in Iraq.

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<sup>765</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-21

Table 1:

	"Hearts & Minds"	Population Control
Lethal Mechanism	"Legal" Arrests Avoidance of Mass Punishment	Mass Arrests Walling Off Population Centers
Nonlethal Mechanism	Building "Legitimate" Institutions Economic Development Promoting Liberal Democracy	Co-opting Existing Power Structures Bribes Divide & Rule
Effects	Lasting Peace Affinity towards the Counterinsurgent	Temporary Truce Counterinsurgent becomes the "Lesser Evil"

### Early Iraq: "Hearts and Minds" Tried & Failed

As much as the *Manual* is billed as a "new" strategy, it drew its prescriptions from past campaigns, including the early Iraq War.<sup>766</sup> Consequently, many "hearts and minds" principles can be found in pre-Surge Iraq. Even the hapless first commander of the Coalition's counterinsurgency effort, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez claims he developed a "hearts and minds approach" to "isolate hard-core insurgents from the general population, provide economic hope, and involve as many Iraqis as possible in the process."<sup>767</sup> While implementation varied widely, at its best, early Iraq looked a lot like "hearts and minds" theory, coupling a targeted lethal force with the mass provision of public goods on the assumption that enfranchising the population while minimizing their grievances would defeat the insurgency. As a result, Coalition Forces boasted a litany of accomplishments early on—widespread participation in elections, a slowly improving economy, an expanding and increasingly proficient Iraqi security forces, and after mid-2005, a more restrained use of force. Noticeably absent this list, however, was any sign that the United States was actually defeating Iraq's insurgency.

<sup>766</sup> For the debate about how "new" the *Counterinsurgency Manual* was, see Gentile 2008, 2010 and Nagl 2010

<sup>767</sup> Sanchez and Phillips 2008, pp. 232, 234

Early on, the Coalition largely embraced the *Manual's* key objective—building a “legitimate government.” From the start, then National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice argued for building a “democracy in the Arab heartland” as “an affirmation of the United States’ principles.”<sup>768</sup> The move was ideological, but also strategic. As Vice President Dick Cheney recounted, “As the Iraqis took control of their own country, we believed the terrorists and insurgents would have difficulty continuing to fight.”<sup>769</sup> After a fitful start in 2003 and 2004, Iraqi democracy made tremendous strides. On January 30, 2005, despite a Sunni boycott, over 8 million or 58% of eligible Iraqis voted in relatively clean elections for a parliament that included 31% women—double the percentage in the United States Congress at the time.<sup>770</sup> The constitutional referendum held in October 2005 and the National Assembly elections held in December 2005 boasted increased voter turnout (over 9.8 and 12 million voters respectively), more Sunni participation, and less violence.<sup>771</sup> Even in insurgent hotspots like Baghdad, Diyala, Salah ad Din and Anbar turnout topped 70%.<sup>772</sup>

As “hearts and minds” theory emphasizes, the Coalition mostly restored essential services—basic life necessities—to the Iraqi population. During the planning stages for the war, Bush instructed, “We need to make the most of these humanitarian aid efforts in our public diplomacy. I want to build surge capability. I want loaded ships ready to provide food and relief supplies so we can go in very promptly.”<sup>773</sup> And within months, the United States restored water provision to the 80% level and reopened all the schools and clinics, and most of the banks.<sup>774</sup> Bush also emphasized medical care, and in short order, Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) head

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<sup>768</sup> Rice 2011, p. 187

<sup>769</sup> Cheney and Cheney 2011, p. 433

<sup>770</sup> Casey 2012, p. 50; West 2008, p. 70; Bremer and McConnell 2006, p. 397

<sup>771</sup> DOD 2006a, p. 7. Precise numbers vary by source. Also see Casey 2012, p. 74; Woodward 2006, pp. 434

<sup>772</sup> DOD 2006b, p. 8

<sup>773</sup> Woodward 2006, p. 107. For its military reverberations, see Franks and McConnell 2004, pp. 393, 420

<sup>774</sup> Bremer and McConnell 2006, p. 187; Woodward 2006, p. 220

Ambassador Paul Bremer approved a 3200% increase in health care—including 800% increase doctors' salaries and 22 million doses of immunizations to children.<sup>775</sup>

Similarly, the United States attempted to revitalize the Iraqi economy. After two wars and more than a decade of sanctions, Ambassador John Negroponte assessed, “Every key sector—from health to education to transportation to water, electricity, and oil—is run down and dilapidated.”<sup>776</sup> And yet, by October 2003, the United States restored oil production to 80% of its prewar levels—at 2 million barrels a day.<sup>777</sup> Similarly, the United States invested \$4 billion into increasing Iraq's electricity production, although insurgent attacks and poor infrastructure retarded progress on these efforts.<sup>778</sup> It also airlifted \$12 billion in cash in to help Iraq pay its government employees and start reconstruction projects, among other purposes.<sup>779</sup> And in January 2004, the United States also spearheaded the transition to the new Iraqi Dinar, stabilizing the currency.<sup>780</sup>

While the United States never returned the Iraqi economy to pre-sanctions levels, it still made noticeable process. Even CPA's most vocal critic in the administration, “[Secretary of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld conceded that the economic area was in pretty good shape.”<sup>781</sup> More importantly, according to State Department Office of Research polling, a majority of Iraqis—including those in violent areas like Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Tikrit—believed that “the economic situation in Iraq is better than the situation before the war” at least until March 2005.<sup>782</sup> Similarly, a July-August 2005 Zogby poll showed that over 70% of Iraq's business leaders—including over 60% of those in Baghdad and Kirkuk—remained bullish about Iraq's economic

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<sup>775</sup> Bush 2010, p. 249; Bremer and McConnell 2006, p. 69

<sup>776</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 131

<sup>777</sup> Rice 2011, p. 268; Robinson 2008, p. 91

<sup>778</sup> Robinson 2008, p. 92

<sup>779</sup> Zakheim 2011, p. 196

<sup>780</sup> Mansoor 2008, p. 138

<sup>781</sup> Bremer and McConnell 2006, p. 183

<sup>782</sup> DOD 2006b, p. 22. By March 2006, this was no longer the case. Additionally, responses varied if the question was phrased in terms of household finances. DOD 2006c, p. 18

prospects.<sup>783</sup> Finally, while estimates vary widely, unemployment dropped between 2003 and 2006, even as violence skyrocketed and despite the fact that Central Intelligence Agency assessed that unemployment in Iraq had risen continuously since 1988.<sup>784</sup>

After dissolving Saddam's security apparatus, the Coalition also rebuilt the Iraqi Security Forces, just as the *Manual* prescribes. Bremer increased take-home pay by 65% (so that a private was paid roughly same as captain under the old regime) and rehired lower level former regime soldiers in early 2004.<sup>785</sup> Later, Casey devoted much of his two and a half years in command of Multi-National Forces Iraq to rebuilding the security forces from 90,000 (in June 2004) to 325,000 (in January 2007).<sup>786</sup> This was often a painful process: the police were dramatically understrength and infiltrated by sectarian militias; the senior leadership often proved inept; the army's desertion rates were high and its performance mixed.<sup>787</sup> Still, from 2004 on, Iraqi security forces steadily grew and the quality of the force—though harder to measure—improved as well (see chart 2).

Chart 2:

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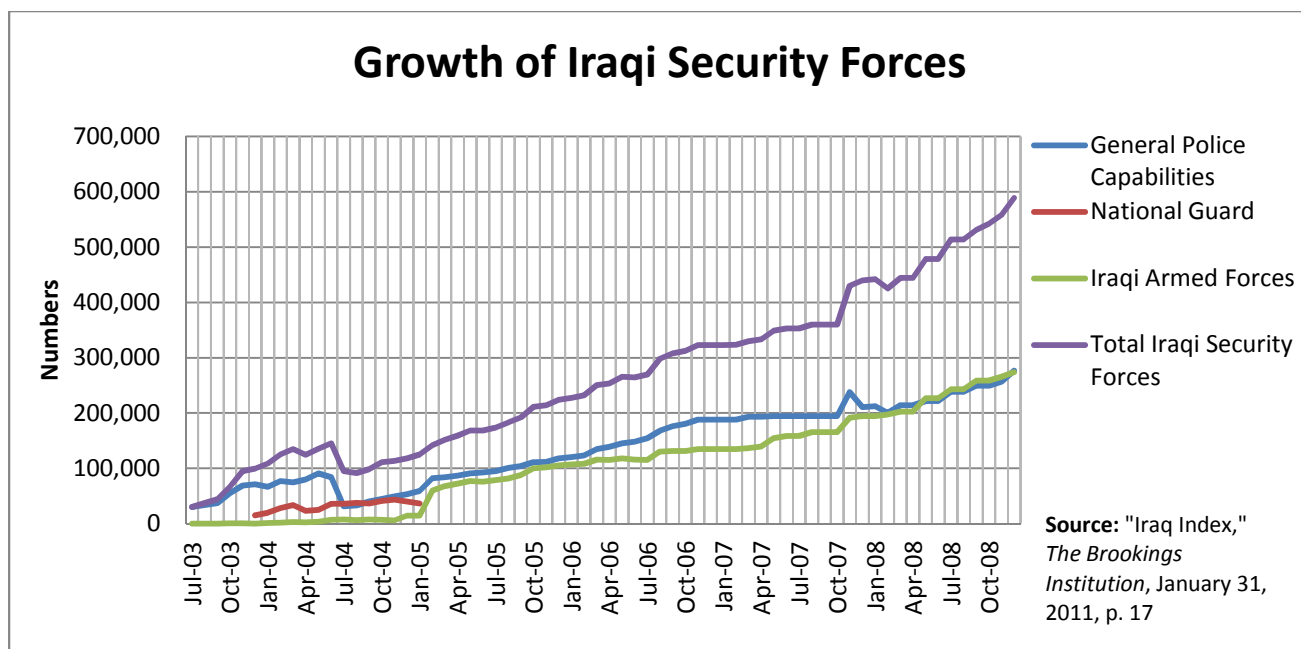
<sup>783</sup> DOD 2006a, p. 18

<sup>784</sup> CIA 2004. RAND estimated that unemployment fell from 28.1% in 2003 to 17.6% in 2006; and in 2006, the most violent place—Baghdad—also had one of the lowest unemployment rates, 15.7% or two percent below the national average. Olikar et. al 2007, p. 54. Other estimates of the nationwide unemployment rate are considerably higher, but show the same trajectory from 50%-60% in May 2003 to 25-40% by November 2005. O'Hanlon and Campell 2008, p. 40

<sup>785</sup> Woodward 2006, p. 288; Bremer and McConnell 2006, p. 273; Mansoor 2008, p. 192

<sup>786</sup> Casey 2012, pp. 189-190

<sup>787</sup> Bremer and McConnell 2006, p. 128; Cheney and Cheney 2011, p. 433; Feith 2008, p. 481; Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 102; Mansoor 2008, p. 285; Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 68; Moyar 2009, p. 250



Finally, the Coalition's approach to lethal force proved uneven.<sup>788</sup> During the 2003 and 2004, some divisions—like the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Salah ad Din and Diyala, and 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in Anbar—applied a heavy hand, while others proved more measured. By 2005, however, the Coalition restrained its use of force, as demonstrated by the number of fatal “escalation of force incidents”—cases where Coalition forces shot at Iraqis for running from checkpoints or coming too close to convoys. According to United States Central Command data, after haphazardly tracking these incidents in 2004, the Coalition monitored and reduced the frequency of these incidents by mid-2005 (chart 3). Simultaneously, the Coalition more closely regulated other areas for potential abuse, from interrogation policy to private security contractors' use of force.<sup>789</sup> As Colin Kahl found in his extensive 2007 study of civilian casualties in Iraq, “the U.S. military has done a better job of respecting noncombatant immunity in Iraq than commonly thought. Moreover, compliance has improved over time as the military

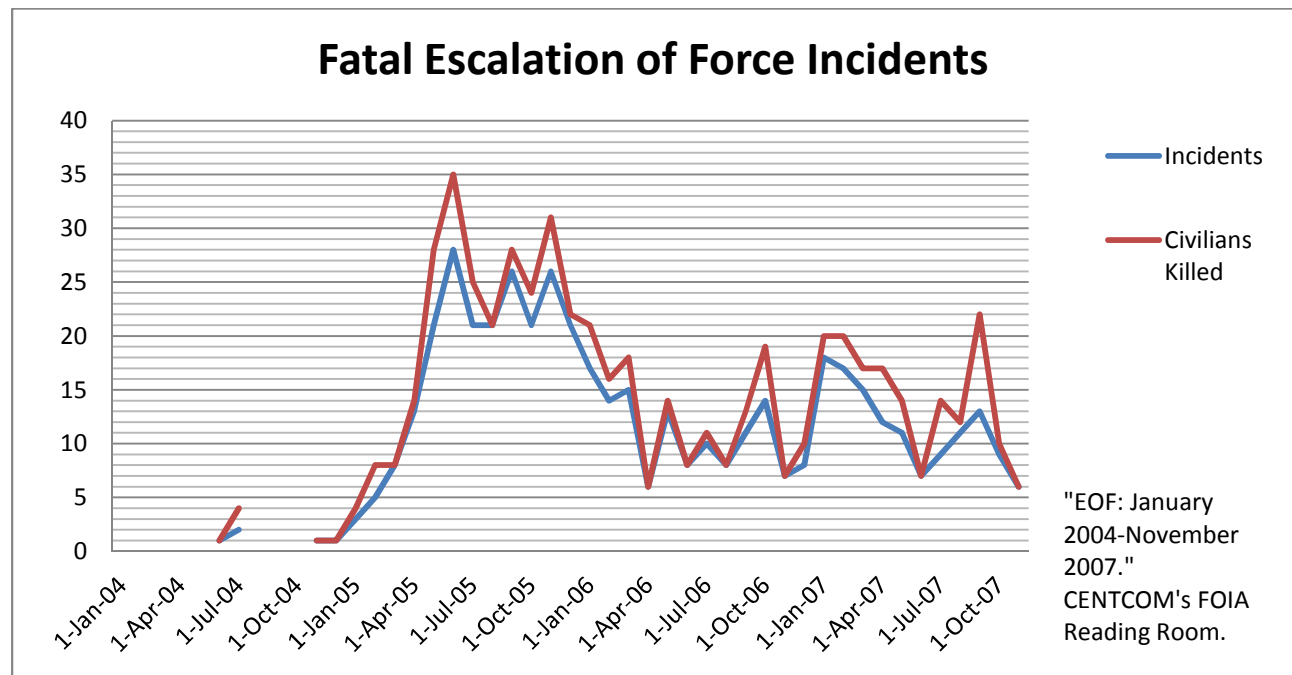
<sup>788</sup> Kahl 2007b; Mansoor 2008, p. 161; West 2008, p. 153

<sup>789</sup> See “MNF-I Policy 05-2: Interrogation Policy,” “MNF-I FRAGO 05-231: Reporting and Investigating Incidents Involving Contractors Firing Weapons.”



has adjusted its behavior in response to real and perceived violations of the norm.”<sup>790</sup> In sum, as Iraq War progressed, the Coalition increasingly adhered to “hearts and mind” theory’s minimal force prescriptions.

Chart 3:



Coalition Forces also gathered human intelligence like “hearts and minds” theory emphasizes. Early on, Sanchez instructed, “I want American soldiers on the ground talking to people” and stressed the importance of “harvest[ing] human intelligence.”<sup>791</sup> For the most part, the troops obeyed. Colonel Peter Mansoor, who commanded 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Armor Division in Baghdad from 2003 to 2004, reported that he received a plethora of local tips (in fact, he estimates they generated 95% of his brigade’s intelligence).<sup>792</sup> Likewise, despite deteriorating conditions in the Mosul area in 2005, the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team (Stryker), 25<sup>th</sup>

<sup>790</sup> Kahl 2007b, p. 8

<sup>791</sup> Ricks 2006, pp. 192, 223

<sup>792</sup> Mansoor 2008, pp. 51, 347

Infantry Division reported that local tips increased ten-fold from 40 to 400 a month.<sup>793</sup> And the Central Command commander, General John Abizaid reported to National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice in February 2004 that the “person on the street is cooperating” and providing good information.<sup>794</sup>

Arguably, the area where early Coalition policy differed most significantly from the *Manual's* prescriptions was when it came to any measure that resembled population control. While the *Manual's* primary emphasis winning “hearts and minds” through nonlethal means, there are paragraphs where the *Manual* suggests the utility of darker methods—such as curfews, checkpoints and travel bans.<sup>795</sup> With a few exceptions, this element was often missing in early Iraq War Coalition strategy. Until the beginning of 2007, American forces lived in “super bases,” like the sprawling Victory Base Complex in Baghdad, forcing them to commute to the war, limiting their ability to control the population and ceding this crucial task to Iraqi Security forces.<sup>796</sup>

Ultimately, all the positive metrics of the early Iraq War, however, could not mask the fact that without effective population control, the United States was still losing the war. While analysis often focused on the uneven application of counterinsurgency doctrine, even when Coalition Forces did what the “hearts and minds” theory demanded, it still did not yield results.<sup>797</sup> Elections—including those with substantial Sunni participation—failed to defeat the insurgency. Similarly, providing “the basic elements of civilized life” never proved effective either, as vast sums of economic aid spent did little to curb the violence.<sup>798</sup> Even the Iraqi Security Forces’ increasing size and proficiency failed to improve the security: “paradoxically, as the number of

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<sup>793</sup> Russell 2011, p. 147

<sup>794</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 49

<sup>795</sup> FM 3-24, p. 5-21

<sup>796</sup> Kaplan 2013, pp. 256-257

<sup>797</sup> Casey 2012, p. 73. Also, see Russell 2011, p. 5; Biddle, Friedman and Shapiro 2012, pp. 190-191.

<sup>798</sup> Kaplan 2013, p. 185. Marine Major General Douglas Stone, who ran detention operations, found that insurgents were motivated by the desire for small luxury items—not basic life necessities. Ricks 2009, p. 195

Iraqi soldiers and police grew, so did the violence in the streets of the capital.”<sup>799</sup> And so, with the Surge, the Coalition not only standardized strategy, but tried a new approach—one based less on “hearts and minds” and more on population control.

### **From “Hearts and Minds” to “Divide and Rule:”**

Ultimately, the Coalition’s Achilles heel was its inability to control the disparate elements of Iraqi society, particularly former Ba’athist Sunni Arabs. Perhaps, the most controversial operational decision of the Iraq War was dissolving the Iraqi Army and instituting a draconian de-Ba’athification policy. CPA Order Numbers 1 and 2 functionally fired all “Senior (Baath) Party Members,” as defined as “any person holding the rank under the former regime of Colonel or above, or its equivalent.”<sup>800</sup> For many in the CPA and in Washington, the Ba’ath Party was akin to the Nazi Party, and so de-Ba’athification should mirror to de-Nazification.<sup>801</sup> After all, Bremer argued, the United States had not liberated Iraq, only to turn it over to another dictator.<sup>802</sup> In Bremer’s defense, however, if counterinsurgency is about creating a “legitimate” government, then uprooting past tyranny and starting afresh makes sense.

Almost to a man, however, every senior leader objected to this plan or regretted it in hindsight. The CIA station chief argued, “By nightfall, you’ll have driven 30,000 to 50,000 Baathist underground and in six months, you’ll regret this.”<sup>803</sup> Sanchez, two of his most prominent division commanders then Major Generals David Petraeus and Ray Odierno, and

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<sup>799</sup> Ricks 2009, p. 56

<sup>800</sup> See Gordon and Trainor 2006, p. 587; Ricks 2006, p. 162

<sup>801</sup> Feith 2008, p. 430; Sanchez and Phillips 2008, p. 186; Moyer 2009, p. 217

<sup>802</sup> Bremer and McConnell 2006, p. 54

<sup>803</sup> Ricks 2006, p. 159; Gordon and Trainor 2006, p. 479; Woodward 2006, p. 194. For Tenet’s own beliefs, see Tenet and Harlow 2007, p. 428

more junior officers all predicted the policy would result in disaster.<sup>804</sup> Bremer's immediate predecessor Jay Garner called it a tragic mistake.<sup>805</sup> Back in Washington, Rumsfeld and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith had misgivings about the policy too, although the latter later reversed himself.<sup>806</sup> Even Bush and secular Shiite Iraqi politician Ayad Allawi regretted the way de-Ba'athification was done.<sup>807</sup>

Dissolving the former regime apparatus posed two problems. First, it slowed the reconstruction effort. Garner intended to use some 200,000-300,000 former regime members to rebuild the country, but instead, the United States had to start from scratch, since bureaucratic squabbling curtailed the prewar training of Iraqi ex-patriots.<sup>808</sup> More importantly, the move lost control over the Sunni nationalists. Because of rampant rank inflation, only an estimated that one or two percent of the former regime's senior leaders were actually committed Ba'athists and yet all were affected by the order.<sup>809</sup> While Bremer later attempted to pay them off, this move "created a situation in which the soldiers were unsupervised, had no stake in the new order, and were free to create mischief, or worse."<sup>810</sup> As a result, even when the Coalition rebuilt Iraqi institutions, the Sunni insurgency persisted.

The need to regain control of these Sunni nationalists introduces, perhaps, the most important element of Iraq's turnaround, the so-called "Awakening" or "Sons of Iraq" movement (also termed Concerned Local Citizens). Starting in Anbar in 2006 and then spreading to other parts of Iraq, the movement featured mostly Sunni joining with the Coalition to fight al Qaeda—

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<sup>804</sup> Sanchez and Phillips 2008, p. 184; Mansoor 2008, p. 27; Ricks 2006, p. 191; Gordon and Trainor 2006, p. 491; Broadwell and Loebe 2012, p. 191; Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 26

<sup>805</sup> Mansoor 2008, p. 28; Zakheim 2011, p. 189

<sup>806</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2006, pp. 162, 482; Rumsfeld 2011, p. 515-516

<sup>807</sup> Bush 2010, p. 259; Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 106

<sup>808</sup> Sanchez and Phillips 2008, p. 172; Feith 2008, pp. 252, 382-385; Cheney and Cheney 2011, p. 387; Casey 2012, p. 39.

<sup>809</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2006, pp. 160, 485; Rice 2011, p. 194. Bremer even realized this at the time and tried to mitigate the backlash by granting case by case exceptions. Bremer and McConnell 2006, pp. 40, 42, 45.

<sup>810</sup> For the original policy see Bremer and McConnell 2006, p. 58. For its counterproductive effects, see Gordon and Trainor 2006, p. 484; West 2008, p. 19

often to great effect. In the Ameriya section of Baghdad, once the Black Knights Sons of Iraq Group formed, improvised explosive device (IED) attacks declined from 35 in May to 2 in August 2007, while civilian murders declined from 26 to 0.6 per month on average by December 2007.<sup>811</sup> In Arab Jabour, as the Sons of Iraq stood up, attacks dropped from 90 a month in June 2007 to an average of less than 10 monthly during first six months of 2008.<sup>812</sup> Just southwest of Baghdad in the Mamudiyah-Yusafiyah corridor, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain's area used Zobai tribal fighters as "shock companies" to clear al Qaeda infested villages.<sup>813</sup> In all, American forces signed 779 contracts with Sons of Iraq groups across Iraq—paying as much as \$30 million in exchange for their assistance fighting the insurgency.<sup>814</sup>

The Sons of Iraq movement typically is billed as the power of engaging Iraq's tribal leaders. After all, 85% of Iraqis claim tribal affiliation and so by funneling resources through the tribal leaders and cementing their patronage networks, agreements had more force.<sup>815</sup> As counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen wrote, "Coalition commanders could never actually *be* sheikhs, but some gained an advantage by action in ways Iraqis recognized as being in the tradition of 'good sheikhly behavior.'"<sup>816</sup>

Tribal engagement and patronage only offers a partial explanation for the Sons of Iraq movement. First, it cannot explain the timing. Coalition Forces tried to engage the tribes at various points throughout the war.<sup>817</sup> Indeed, the title of one prominent book on the Iraq War comes from a 2004 quote from an Iraqi battalion commander during the battle of Fallujah, "You

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<sup>811</sup> Robinson 2008, pp. 242-243

<sup>812</sup> Andrade 2010, p. 239

<sup>813</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 382

<sup>814</sup> Mansoor 2013, pp. 141-142

<sup>815</sup> Kilcullen 2009, pp. 154, 166

<sup>816</sup> Emphasis in the original. Ibid., p. 169

<sup>817</sup> For example, see Sanchez and Phillips 2008, p. 294; Robinson 2008, p. 272; Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 346-347

Americans are the strongest tribe.”<sup>818</sup> Second, while the Awakening in Anbar was largely tribal, this was less true of other Sons of Iraq groups elsewhere in Iraq. Third and perhaps, most importantly, casting the Awakening as a tribal phenomenon misses its other defining characteristic: many Sons of Iraq were former Sunni insurgents. In fact, then Major General Rick Lynch who commanded Multi-National Division Central during the Surge, estimated “eighty percent of concerned local citizens used to be enemy.”<sup>819</sup>

Underlying this shift in allegiances was a classic divide and rule strategy, where Coalition Forces turned Sunni Arab fears of al Qaeda persecution and a Shiite dominated Iraq into a marriage of convenience. Part of the story is that al Qaeda overplayed its hand particularly in Anbar, imposing strict Sharia law and killing tribesman.<sup>820</sup> Indeed, one of the proximate causes for the Awakening was al Qaeda’s assassination of a Sunni sheikh for endorsing a police recruitment drive.<sup>821</sup> As one detainee stated, “We have concluded that you do not threaten our faith or our way of life. Al Qaeda does.”<sup>822</sup> In other words, the defection of Sunni nationalist insurgents was not because they loved Americans, but because they hated al Qaeda.

The Awakening, however, was more than al Qaeda’s overreach. According to Anbar province’s senior intelligence officer, one of al Qaeda’s principal draws was “protection against a possible ethnic cleansing campaign by the central government” and with that option gone, the Sunnis needed a new ally.<sup>823</sup> In Ramadi, the Awakening’s birthplace, the residents regarded the local Iraqi Army units—primarily composed of Shiites from southern Iraq—“as agents of the Sadr militia or Badr Corps, with a covert agenda to kill off Sunni tribes and enable a Shi’ite

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<sup>818</sup> West 2008, p. 60

<sup>819</sup> Andrade 2010, p. 237. Similarly, the Department of Defense also estimated that 80% of all Sons of Iraq groups were Sunnis and “many are from former insurgent and other illegally armed groups.” DOD 2007, p. 17

<sup>820</sup> Ibid., pp. 250-252

<sup>821</sup> West 2008, p. 174

<sup>822</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 263

<sup>823</sup> Ricks 2009, Annex A, p. 332

takeover of Anbar.”<sup>824</sup> Outside of the mostly homogenous Anbar province, fear of Shi’ite domination arguably was even more acute. In Baghdad, for example, one American officer remarked grimly of the Ameriya Sons of Iraq group, “If we pull out of here, their chances of survival are limited.”<sup>825</sup> In the Ghazaliyah area of Baghdad, Sheikh Hamid Muthanna Obeidi summed up, “My tribe is between two jaws, JAM (the Shiite militia, Jayash al Mahdi) and al Qaeda. My friend Abu Iad went back to his house taken by Shiites and was killed. Let us arm ourselves and work with you (the Coalition).”<sup>826</sup> And similar stories played out with other Sons of Iraq groups.<sup>827</sup>

This two-sided squeeze gave the Coalition a unique opportunity to regain control of the Sunni nationalists, which it lost with de-Ba’athification. Siding with Coalition Forces provided short-term security, but also improved the Sunni’s long-term chances of survival in any future sectarian conflict, especially as the calls for an American withdrawal grew louder and the Bush presidency entered its second and final term. As one American military intelligence official remarked, thanks to the Sons of Iraq program, “The Anbar tribes will be capable of keeping a Shiite dominated army out of Anbar.”<sup>828</sup>

Without these sectarian fears, cooption’s effectiveness proved more limited, as highlighted by the simultaneous outreach effort to Shiite militias. As with the Sunnis, the United States tried a mixture of threats and promises, and talked—albeit indirectly through Iraqi politicians—with their Iranian backers to secure their cooperation.<sup>829</sup> To an extent, this outreach worked: JAM’s leader Muqtada al Sadr left for an extended stay in Iran, and on January 14, 2007, ordered his

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<sup>824</sup> Smith and McFarland 2008, p. 47

<sup>825</sup> Robinson 2008, p. 2008

<sup>826</sup> West 2008, p. 256

<sup>827</sup> Robinson 2008, p. 252. Similarly, the Tal Afar’s turnaround in 2005 was preceded by a delegation of Shiite sheiks traveling to Baghdad to discuss future operations with the Interior Ministry—a move “that very much scared the Sunnis.” Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 166

<sup>828</sup> Ricks 2009, p. 206

<sup>829</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 313, 327-328; Rice 2011, pp. 513, 544.

militia to stop wearing uniforms or carrying weapons.<sup>830</sup> And yet, the Shiite militias were never wholly checked and in fact, fractured over supporting Sadr's ceasefire.<sup>831</sup> And so, while overall violence fell dramatically, Shiite attacks—certain forms of indirect fire and explosively formed projectiles—did not taper off to the same degree.<sup>832</sup> Indeed, by August 2007, Multi National Division Central, who previously largely battled Sunni insurgents, estimated that 46% of all attacks in their area came from Shiite groups.<sup>833</sup>

The reason for this comparative failure stems from the logic of divide and rule. These strategies work best when groups fear each other more than they hate the counterinsurgent. Unlike Sunni groups, the Shiites were not locked in the same desperate struggle for their existence: the demographics of a new Iraq were in their favor; the government was dominated by Shiites (albeit led by an increasingly aggressive Prime Minister Nuri al Maliki); and above all, they had a powerful foreign backer in the form of Iran willing to guarantee their existence. Under these circumstances, co-option and divide and rule proved less effective.

Ultimately, while often billed as the triumph of “hearts and minds,” the Surge's success was actually the product of cooption and divide and rule. After first believing that democracy would win the war, the United States now focused on stability and with this shift in goals, came a shift in tactics. The United States reinforced traditional tribal affiliations, funneled resources through established patronage networks and offered Sunni nationalists—pinned between increasingly brutal al Qaeda elements and ever more powerful Shiite factions—a Faustian bargain—a chance at survival for a cessation of hostiles.<sup>834</sup> On some level, the Surge rejected the *Manual's* core principle—that counterinsurgencies are about fostering a “legitimate” government. Many of

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<sup>830</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 327; Kagan 2009, p. 40

<sup>831</sup> Kagan 2009, p. 184; Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 443

<sup>832</sup> Kagan 2009, p. 55. Explosively Formed Projectile IEDs actually increased by 40% from the spring to summer of 2007, before declining between July and August from 99 to 75 attacks. Schogol 2007.

<sup>833</sup> Andrade 2010, p. 200

<sup>834</sup> Lindsay and Long 2013, p. 187



Surge's key policies—most notably, the cooption and arming of former Sunni insurgents—came over the objections of the Iraq's elected leader Prime Minister Nuri al Maliki.<sup>835</sup> As one observer quipped, "The U.S. Army wasn't assisting the government of Iraq to create a safe environment; it was creating that environment despite the government."<sup>836</sup>

### **From Minimal Force to the Concrete Surge:**

Iraq's turnaround also came with a shift in lethal strategy, but not to the one outlined in the *Manual*. Contrary to the *Manual's* prescriptions, the Surge was not simply about finding an ideal troop to population ratio.<sup>837</sup> Contrary to some academic claims, its success primarily did not come from having troops drive less and walk more, in order to collect more human intelligence.<sup>838</sup> Above all, the Surge did not minimize the use of force, stop large-scale arrests or abandon large-scale operations, in order to stop alienating the population and feeding the insurgency.<sup>839</sup> Rather, the Surge's success came from successful population control.

To begin with its namesake—the additional five brigades sent Iraq in 2007, the Surge's success was not the result of achieving an ideal counterinsurgent to population ratio.<sup>840</sup> Even at the height of the Surge, the United States only had about 170,300 troops in Iraq or about twenty thousand more than in the initial invasion force.<sup>841</sup> Moreover, according to the Congressional Research Service, the number of troops committed to Operation Iraqi Freedom and the number of "boots on the ground" in Iraq peaked in September and November 2007 respectively—roughly the violence began to decline in June (chart 4). In June and July 2007, the United

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<sup>835</sup> For example of this tension, see Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 441; West 2008, p. 278

<sup>836</sup> West 2008, p. 294

<sup>837</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-13

<sup>838</sup> Lyall and Wilson 2009

<sup>839</sup> For examples of this reading, see ICG 2004, p. 15; Kilcullen 2009, p. 163; Rumsfeld 2011, p. 696

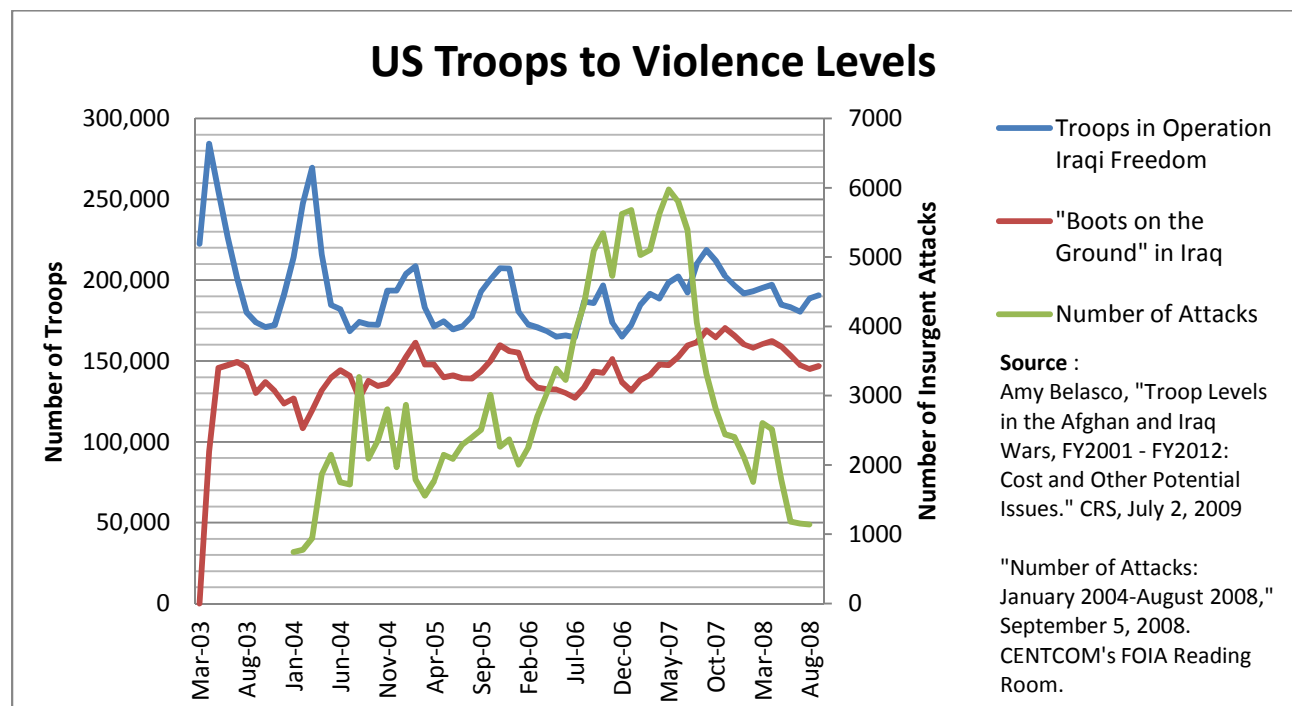
<sup>840</sup> For the debate over force ratios, see Quinlivan 1995/1996 and Friedman 2011

<sup>841</sup> Belasco 2009, p. 66

States had between 152,500 and 159,600 “boots on the ground” in Iraq—about same as during the Iraqi elections in January 2005.<sup>842</sup> In fact, as proponents of this explanation admit, “the surge entailed only a marginal increase in troop density.”<sup>843</sup>

While the Coalition also relied on Iraqi Security Forces and private security contractors, the numbers alone cannot explain why additional Americans proved so critical or why the far more significant increase of 235,000 additional Iraqi Security Forces personnel from July 2004 to January 2007 failed to check the insurgency.<sup>844</sup> If anything, the data should reflect a gradual decline in violence as Iraqi Security Forces expanded and grew more proficient, not the steep drop-off that occurred during the Surge. At best, troop levels was a secondary, contributing factor to the Surge’s success.

Chart 4:



<sup>842</sup> Ibid., pp. 65-66. During January and February 2005, the United States had between 152,300 and 161,200 “boots on the ground” in Iraq.

<sup>843</sup> Biddle et. al 2012, p. 23

<sup>844</sup> Iraqi Security forces numbered the approximately 325,000 and private security contractors numbered 25-30,000 in January 2007. Casey 2012, p. 189; Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 438

The Surge was also not about leaving the tanks and armored personnel carriers at home. Ironically, with the notable exception of Petraeus himself, Iraq's heroes often came from the "heavy" (i.e. those units with tanks and armored personnel carriers) conventional Army—Peter Chiarelli's 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division's fight for Baghdad in 2004; H. R. McMaster's 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment's turn-around of Tal Afar in 2005 or perhaps, most importantly, Sean McFarland's 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division's engineering of the Anbar Awakening in 2006.<sup>845</sup> These units used their tanks and armored vehicles to their advantage. Indeed, multiple accounts—from RAND Corporation reports to Petraeus' own executive officer Peter Mansoor, himself a former heavy brigade commander—concluded that mechanization proved integral to their success.<sup>846</sup> Mechanization provided additional firepower and survivability, especially against roadside bombs. Eventually, even "light" units (those without tanks) moved in heavy Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, reducing Coalition casualties during this period.<sup>847</sup>

More importantly, the relationship between increasing the American interaction with the population and better intelligence remains ambiguous. While the Coalition's intelligence picture improved during the war, it was often for more technical reasons. Imagery intelligence increased—as even small combat outposts were equipped with tower and dirigible-mounted cameras and the numbers of unmanned aerial vehicles proliferated.<sup>848</sup> Signals and cyber intelligence also advanced dramatically over the course of the war, eventually becoming "the

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<sup>845</sup> Rumsfeld refers to McMaster and McFarland as some of the most "enterprising colonels" in the conflict (Rumsfeld 2011, p. 700), while journalist Tom Ricks deems Chiarelli as "one of the most successful commanders." (Ricks 2009, p. 6).

<sup>846</sup> See Mansoor 2008, p. 175; Johnson et. al 2011, p. 18; Silverman 2011, p. 145

<sup>847</sup> Lamb and Scudder 2012; Mansoor 2013, p. 210

<sup>848</sup> Mansoor 2013, pp. xxi, 71

undisclosed key to the success of the surge.”<sup>849</sup> Signals intelligence foiled an assassination plot on Bremer, prevented election violence, successfully targeted al Qaeda in Iraq chief Abu Musab al Zarqawi and other notable accomplishments.<sup>850</sup> Intelligence collection also benefited from advances in biometric intelligence, building a massive database—with more than 1.5 million identity markers—to “identify, control, and secure the population.”<sup>851</sup> Biometric intelligence could unmask hitherto faceless insurgents, linking them to their weapon of choice—the IED.

To the extent human intelligence improved, it is as much a story of professionalization, as it is volume. For all the focus on troops “living among the population” during the Surge, its effect on the intelligence collection effort was more limited than often presumed. “In practice, the extensive fortifications that the threat of car bombs necessitated—concrete blast walls, bulletproof glass, sniper screens, and mazes of sand-filled Hesco walls—meant that an outpost was rarely very accessible to local residents.”<sup>852</sup> Perhaps, a more important improvement was in *quality* rather the *quantity* of human intelligence. Early efforts were hamstrung by a surplus of rumor (rather than genuine) human intelligence.<sup>853</sup> Trained intelligence operators were either underemployed or searching for weapons of mass destruction.<sup>854</sup> Slowly, the Central Intelligence Agency worked more closely with American military forces and trained the new Iraqi National Intelligence Service; detainee interrogations became increasingly integrated into targeting efforts; and perhaps, most importantly, former Sunni insurgents employed with the Sons of Iraq informed on their former comrades.<sup>855</sup>

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<sup>849</sup> Ricks 2009, p. 192; McChrystal 2013, p. 154

<sup>850</sup> Bremer and McConnell 2006, p. 180; Andrade 2010, p. 92; Rumsfeld 2011, p. 694; Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 183

<sup>851</sup> Robinson 2008, p. 325. Also see *ibid.*, p. 133; Mansoor 2013, p. 76

<sup>852</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 338

<sup>853</sup> Mansoor 2008, pp. 47-48

<sup>854</sup> The Army’s initial 69 tactical human intelligence teams generated only a quarter of the expected daily number of reports in 2003. Rick 2006, p. 193. For the CIA’s focus on the search for weapons of mass destruction, see Bremer and McConnell 2006, p. 107; Sanchez and Phillips 2008, p. 216; Tenet and Harlow 2007, p. 406

<sup>855</sup> Tenet and Harlow 2007, p. 432; McChrystal 2013, p. 118, 199

Finally, the Surge only partially adhered to the *Manual's* small unit, minimal force vision. While small-unit operations increased, particularly in more urban areas like Baghdad, it also featured four Corps level operations, including PHANTOM THUNDER in June 2007 which was the “first coordinated, offensive campaign against the insurgency” of the war.<sup>856</sup> Lower echelon units also conducted large-scale operations. For example, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division—as part of Multinational Division Central—conducted 12 division level operations between 2007 and 2008.<sup>857</sup> And from January 15 to May 2007, there were 235 battalion operations, many to enable the Surge’s key strategic goal—stabilizing Baghdad.<sup>858</sup>

These operations employed lots of firepower, as “commanders in 2007 sought to achieve their goals through a more expansive use of firepower and maneuver.”<sup>859</sup> Air sorties increased six-fold, from 229 during 2006 to 1,447 during 2007.<sup>860</sup> Likewise, the secretive, highly kinetic Joint Special Operations Command ramped up operations during the Surge: from 30-50 raids a week in Spring 2006 to a peak of 87 missions per week in August 2007, killing 59 and detaining over 200 insurgents.<sup>861</sup> In total, American forces killed more than 7,400 insurgents in 2007, about a 50% increase over the previous year.<sup>862</sup> If one of the early Iraq War’s problems was—as a veteran American diplomat stated in 2004—that “we’re simply not killing enough bad guys,” part of the Surge’s success was correcting this shortfall.<sup>863</sup>

Similarly, the United States also increased arrests to all-time highs. In fact, the number of Iraq prisoners held in American custody doubled from December 2006 to December 2007 from

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<sup>856</sup> Kagan 2009, pp. 114, 201. Also see *ibid.*, pp. 104, 135; Robinson 2007, p. 179

<sup>857</sup> Andrade 2010, p. 384

<sup>858</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101; Casey 2012, p. 149

<sup>859</sup> Kagan 2009, p. 144

<sup>860</sup> Shactman 2010

<sup>861</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2012, pp. 205, 419

<sup>862</sup> Mansoor 2013, p. 268

<sup>863</sup> Bremer and McConnell 2006, p. 221

13,000 to over 26,000—an all time for Coalition Forces (chart 5).<sup>864</sup> The number of “security” detainees in Iraqi custody also increased—to over 60,000 in August 2007.<sup>865</sup> Some of these detainees eventually were tried in Iraqi courts, but most were held under the law of armed conflict, which simply meant “that a detainee represents an imperative threat to the security and stability of Iraq.”<sup>866</sup> While some of these detainees were guilty, many were not: in fact, some estimate that only four percent were “hard-core” insurgents.<sup>867</sup> With Iraq in chaos, however, stability trumped the rule of law.

Chart 5:



Perhaps, Iraq’s most successful strategy was also the most controversial—walling off neighborhoods. While walls strangled trade and consequently, drew at least the public ire of Iraq politicians, they featured prominently in most of the Coalition’s major victories, beginning with H.R. McMaster’s eight foot dirt berm around Tal Afar in 2005 and culminating during the

<sup>864</sup> O’Hanlon and Livingston 2011, p. 12

<sup>865</sup> Pincus 2007

<sup>866</sup> Ibid.

<sup>867</sup> Ricks 2009, p. 195

Surge in the Baghdad Security Plan.<sup>868</sup> In west Baghdad alone, American forces installed 42 kilometers of concrete barriers alone, often producing immediate effects.<sup>869</sup> When the 2-12 Cavalry Battalion walled off the Ghazaliyah neighborhood, the sectarian murder rate dropped in half within weeks.<sup>870</sup> Similarly, in what was popularly derided as “Israeli tactics,” Coalition Forces built a three-mile long, 12 foot high, concrete wall in Adhamiya, dropping the murder rate by 61% from April to the end of 2007.<sup>871</sup> In Sadr City and Ameriya, concrete barriers enabled later successful highly kinetic offensives against insurgent strongholds.<sup>872</sup>

This strategy succeeded in places like Baghdad partially because of the earlier ethnic cleansing. By the time of the Surge, an estimated 2 million Iraqis had left the country and another 2.2 million were internally displaced.<sup>873</sup> In 2005, Baghdad contained about 40% Shia, 20% Sunni and 40% mixed neighborhoods; by 2007, many of the mixed neighborhoods were gone, down to 20% by some estimates.<sup>874</sup> While ethnic cleansing cannot explain the Surge’s sudden, dramatic reductions in violence, it can explain why walls proved so effective: often emplaced along sectarian fault lines, they physically separated the warring factions. In fact, many of the places where walls worked best at constraining violence—like Ghazaliyah—were also the hardest hit by depopulation and religious self-segregation.<sup>875</sup>

Ethnic self-segregation is also why the Surge’s American force presence mattered. Walls work only so far as they are patrolled and within the context of an increasingly bitter sectarian conflict, this job could not simply be left to Iraqi security forces. While overall American force

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<sup>868</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 166; West 2008, p. 85; Kagan 2009, p. 36; Mansoor 2008, p. 74

<sup>869</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 340

<sup>870</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339

<sup>871</sup> Ricks 2009, p. 173; Kagan 2009, p. 99. Some estimates are even higher—from 10 murders a week to 2 a week. Robinson 2008, p. 189

<sup>872</sup> Robinson 2008, p. 230-231; Johnson et. al 2011, p. 5-13; Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 494; Mansoor 2013, p. 245

<sup>873</sup> Robinson 2008, p. 268

<sup>874</sup> West 2008, pp. 237, 330. For a map of the population transfers in Baghdad, see Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 215

<sup>875</sup> For Ghazaliyah’s depopulation, see Mansoor 2008, p. xix; Robinson 2008, p. 88; Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 335

levels may not have changed dramatically, their disposition did change significantly, as forces pushed out of massive forward operating bases into smaller joint security stations and combat outposts. In Baghdad alone, there were seventy seven stations were ultimately constructed.<sup>876</sup> This dispersion—along with the walls—allowed American forces to separate the warring factions and enabled effective population control.

At its core, the Surge’s lethal dimension bore little resemblance to “hearts and minds” theory’s prescriptions. The Coalition never curtailed the use of firepower, mass arrests or large-scale operations, and often relied on sophisticated technical intelligence and carefully developed sources, not just tips from good Samaritans. Above all, lethal operations aimed at controlling the population—with 12 foot tall concrete barriers—not winning their affection. In fact, the Surge itself was extraordinarily unpopular with Iraqis at the time. According a BBC, ABC and Japan’s NHK commissioned poll in August 2007, 70% of Iraqis thought the Surge made security worse and undermined the conditions for political dialogue; 67% believed the Surge harmed economic development and reconstruction; and 47% demanded an immediate American withdrawal.<sup>877</sup> And yet despite this seeming failure of “hearts and minds,” violence still fell dramatically.

### **Salah ad Din Versus Ninewa Provinces**

One common justification for the *Manual*’s approach compares then Major General Ray Odierno’s 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division to then Major General David Petraeus’ 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division.<sup>878</sup> Both fought in Iraq from 2003 to early 2004—with the 101<sup>st</sup> in Northern Iraq and the 4<sup>th</sup>, just to

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<sup>876</sup> Kaplan 2013, p. 256

<sup>877</sup> 2,000 person poll drawn from across Iraq with a standard error of 2.5%. BBC 2007, Question 21, 22.

<sup>878</sup> Ricks 2005, p. 228-234; Lyall and Wilson 2009; Davidson 2010, p. 184-185. Military accounts—including McChrystal and Mansoor—also use this comparison, although they argue that reality was more nuanced. McChrystal 2013, 104-105; Mansoor 2013, p. 105



its south in the northern part of the Sunni Triangle.<sup>879</sup> Whereas Petraeus' 101<sup>st</sup> adopted a velvet glove approach to his region which “largely pacified the area,” Odierno's 4<sup>th</sup> “used ham-fisted approaches that may have appeared to pacify its area in the short term, but in the process alienated large part of the population.”<sup>880</sup> On closer scrutiny, however, even this best case scenario still does not validate “hearts and minds” theory, but rather that of population control.

To be accurate, the comparison must examine individual provinces, not division areas of operation. The 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division's area included Dahuk, Arbil and As Sulaymaniyah—the three provinces of the semiautonomous Kurdish Regional Government (KRG)—which remained almost entirely peaceful throughout the entire war, leaving only Ninewa as a major theater of conflict.<sup>881</sup> By contrast, the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division had, in Sanchez's estimation, “the toughest neighborhood in the country.”<sup>882</sup> Its area of operation included Diyala and Salah ad Din Provinces, home to many regime loyalists and later to al Qaeda, as well as Tamim Province—also known as Kirkuk—the oil rich province fiercely disputed by Kurds and Arabs.<sup>883</sup> A better comparison then looks at individual provinces—particularly Salah ad Din and Ninewa, both insurgent hotspots. In fact, Saddam Hussein was captured in Salah ad Din, while his sons Uday and Qusay were killed in Ninewa.

Even so, Salah ad Din versus Ninewa still presents a best case scenario for the “hearts and minds” model. While Ninewa is about a third larger geographically and has twice Salah ad Din's population, the 101<sup>st</sup> could concentrate all of its approximately 17,000 troops on this single province, while the 4<sup>th</sup> spread its forces across three volatile provinces.<sup>884</sup> Moreover, Ninewa's population mostly resides in Mosul and has a considerably larger, friendly Kurdish and Christian

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<sup>879</sup> Lyall and Wilson 2009, p. 95-96

<sup>880</sup> Broadwell and Loebe 2012, p. 190; Ricks 2005, p. 232

<sup>881</sup> Gonzales et. al 2007, p. 20

<sup>882</sup> Sanchez and Phillips 2008, p. 206

<sup>883</sup> Cavallaro, Linsely and Levine 2003, p. 22

<sup>884</sup> Gonazles et. al 2007, p. 24; IAU 2011a; IAUb

minorities, negating some of the disadvantages posed by its larger population and size, especially during the initial stages of war prior to most of sectarian violence.<sup>885</sup> By contrast, General Stanley McChrystal, commander of the independent special operations task force in Iraq at the time, described Salah ad Din as “a Sunni stronghold” and home to high-level former regime Iraqi officers, ready to cause trouble.<sup>886</sup> Most importantly, the 101<sup>st</sup> had the division commander best-suited to conduct a counterinsurgency effort in the Army at the time: Petraeus, after all, wrote his dissertation at Princeton University on the subject, while Odierno—by his own admission—did not think much about counterinsurgency prior to Iraq.<sup>887</sup>

Unsurprisingly, given that Petraeus would later oversee the writing of the *Manual*, the 101<sup>st</sup> largely followed its precepts. Believing that its “*ultimate success depends on local leaders*” (emphasis in the original), the division improved Mosul’s city government and held local elections for town council.<sup>888</sup> With the slogan “money is ammunition” emblazoned on the wall of the Division’s operations center, it did all it could “to repair the damage done by military operations and looting, to rebuild infrastructure, and restore basic services as quickly as possible.”<sup>889</sup> By the end of its tenure, it disbursed \$31 million under Command Emergency Relief Program, funding 5,000 projects and becoming the largest employer in the region.<sup>890</sup> The division stood up a 3,500 local police force.<sup>891</sup> Finally, while the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division’s ratio of offensive operations to enemy attacks was only slightly less than the overall Coalition average at the time, the division “preferred targeted operations rather sweeps,” and carefully weighed the second-order effects of each operation.<sup>892</sup>

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<sup>885</sup> IAU 2011a; IAUB

<sup>886</sup> McChrystal 2013, p. 105

<sup>887</sup> Kaplan 2013, p. 115; Ricks 2009, p. 109

<sup>888</sup> Petraeus 2006, p. 52; Gordon and Trainor 2006, p. 453; Rumsfeld 2011, p. 673

<sup>889</sup> Petraeus 2006, p. 47; West 2008, p. 12

<sup>890</sup> Gonzales et. al 2007, pp. 25, 104

<sup>891</sup> Ibid., p. 29

<sup>892</sup> Petraeus 2006, p. 48-49; Gonzales et. al 2007, p. 117

By contrast, the 4<sup>th</sup> took a more kinetic approach. As one of its senior officers stated, “The only thing these sand niggers understand is force and I’m about to introduce them to it.”<sup>893</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> practiced this approach in Salah ad Din. For example, Lieutenant Colonel Nathan Sassaman, who commanded 1-8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion near Samarra and later was formally reprimanded for his troops’ brutality, once responded to a single insurgent mortar round with 28 155 millimeter artillery shells, 42 mortar rounds, and 500 and 2,000 pound bombs.<sup>894</sup> His troops detained sheikhs if their tribes supported the insurgency, threw rocks at Iraqis who threw rocks at them, and took curfew violators out into the countryside and made them walk home.<sup>895</sup> In fairness, the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division also worked the nonlethal end too. Odierno resisted Bremer’s de-Ba’athification policy that would have fired 1,000 school teachers in Salah ad Din province and purged its police force, while Sassaman poured \$7 million into Samarra’s reconstruction.<sup>896</sup> Still, overall, the two division’s approaches paint a stark contrast.

Surprisingly, these divisions’ measures of effectiveness did not vary nearly as much as their strategies. In the short run, the 101<sup>st</sup> lost more soldiers than 4<sup>th</sup> did during its tour—84 to 34.<sup>897</sup> Contrary to those who decry the use of mechanization in counterinsurgency, this is likely due to the 4<sup>th</sup>’s heavy vehicles being more survivable than 101<sup>st</sup>’s helicopters and HMWVVs, as well as to the 101<sup>st</sup> participation in major combat phase of operations.<sup>898</sup> Moreover, violence in the 101<sup>st</sup>’s area of operation mirrored the overall trends in Iraq, although to the 101<sup>st</sup>’s credit, it lost fewer government officials and civilians.<sup>899</sup> More interestingly, the 101<sup>st</sup>’s found IED and weapons cache to enemy attack ratio was marginally *less* than the overall Coalition average,

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<sup>893</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2006, p. 447. Also see, Ricks 2006, pp. 232-234, 312

<sup>894</sup> Filkins 2005

<sup>895</sup> Ibid.

<sup>896</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2006, p. 491; Filkins 2005

<sup>897</sup> Lyall and Wilson 2009, p. 101

<sup>898</sup> Gonzales et. al 2007, p. 116

<sup>899</sup> Ibid., pp. 110, 112, 115

questioning whether development and political reforms actually produced better intelligence.<sup>900</sup>

Conversely, National Security Council member Frank Miller who visited the 4<sup>th</sup> in 2004, reported that “they were getting better intelligence from Iraqis, lots of walk-ins with good information.”<sup>901</sup>

Attack trends in Ninewa versus Salah ad Din—from when the data begins in January 2004 through the Surge to August 2008—raises three more questions (chart 6). First, when the 101<sup>st</sup> rotated home in January 2004, Ninewa was just as violent as Salah ad Din province and significantly more violent than the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division’s two other provinces. Second, the disparity between the two provinces actually *increased* after the 101<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions’ tenures—from Salah ad Din having 9 more attacks per month than Ninewa in January 2004 to over 150 more attacks in October 2006. Third, for all the talk of “hearts and minds” approaches providing long-term solutions, the 101<sup>st</sup> never stabilized Ninewa. In fact, only 11 months after the 101<sup>st</sup>’s departure, the Coalition commander in Ninewa then Brigadier General Carter Ham told his aviation battalion commander, “I’m within a couple hours of calling General Casey to let him know I’ve lost command of Mosul.”<sup>902</sup> And a October 2005 Department of State Office of Research poll found that over 80% in both Mosul (Ninewa) and Tikrit (Salah ad Din) regarded the “perpetrators of the recent violence against Multinational Forces” as “patriots” and “freedom fighters.”<sup>903</sup> In other words, insofar as violence levels indicate, the 101<sup>st</sup>’s approach did not outperform the 4<sup>th</sup>’s strategy.

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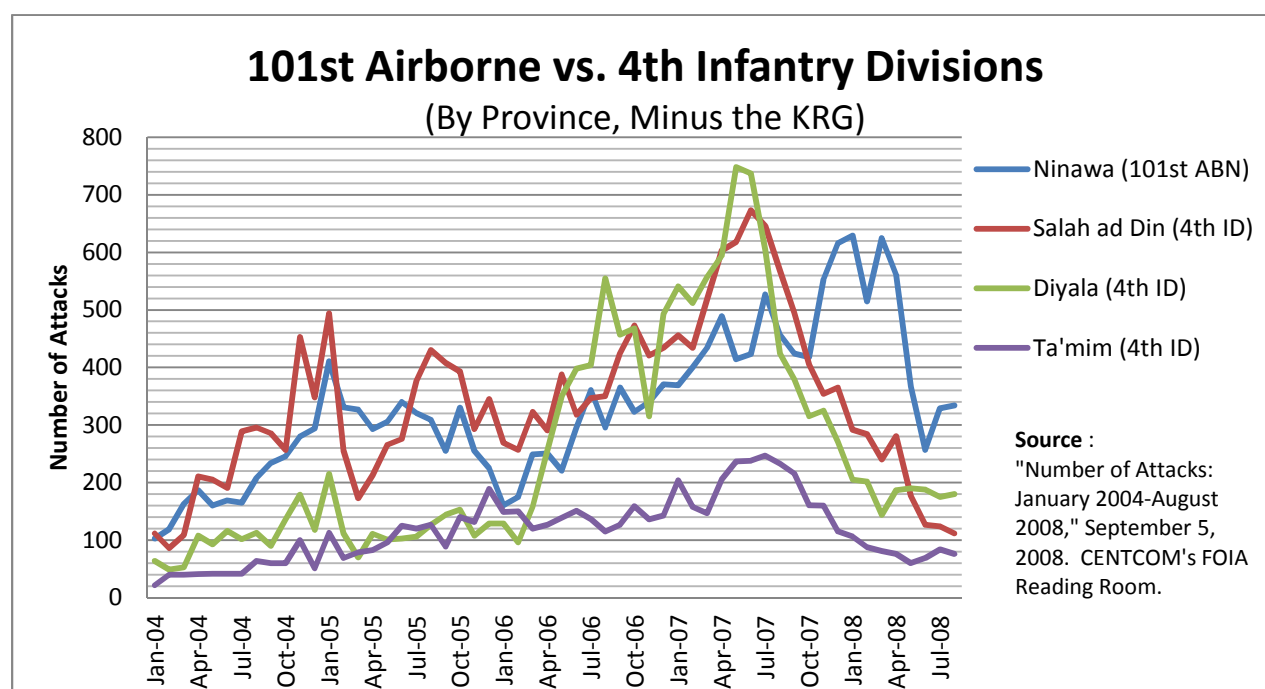
<sup>900</sup> Ibid., p. 122

<sup>901</sup> Woodward 2006, p. 291

<sup>902</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 124

<sup>903</sup> DOD 2006a, p. 32

Chart 6:



Importantly, as chart 6 also indicates, the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's approach also failed to produce lasting victory for two reasons. First, brutality is not synonymous with control. While some of 4<sup>th</sup>'s tactics—such as walling off neighborhoods—effectively controlled the population, others were simply vindictive and barbaric. Failing to distinguish between the two proved to be Sassaman's downfall, when his soldiers threw two curfew violators off a bridge into the Tigris River.<sup>904</sup> Second, to be effective, population control measures need to be sustained: for example, walls only work only insofar as their access points controlled, but if not, their efficacy decreases rapidly.

During the Surge, security improved dramatically but not for the reasons the "hearts and minds" theory suggests. According to United Nations' figures, even as late as February 2011, 39.9% of the Salah ad Din's population and 23% of Ninewa's population lived below the Iraq's

<sup>904</sup> Filkins 2005

national poverty line, both more than Iraq's national average.<sup>905</sup> Politically, both local governments remained dysfunctional. Despite the chronic poverty, both provincial governments could not spend their budgets: in 2007, Salah ad Din spent only 34% and Ninewa spent only 26% of its allocated funds for the year and by July 2008, long after the security situation stabilized, Salah ad Din spent only 11% and Ninewa spent none.<sup>906</sup> In other words, these provinces did not turnaround because their populations' economic situations dramatically improved or because they now had "legitimate" governments to provide for their needs.

Rather, security improved in Ninewa and Salah ad Din thanks to population control. The Department of Defense's quarterly report to Congress attributes Salah ad Din's turnaround to the province's Sons of Iraq groups.<sup>907</sup> Tribally organized, comprised of former insurgents and eventually numbering over 9,000 strong, they helped fight al Qaeda and find one of the larger insurgent caches of the war—with 41,000 pounds of explosives.<sup>908</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division commander who was responsible for Salah ad Din, Colonel Walter Piatt stated, "We would not have been able to have the security gains that we have, in Salah ad Din province, had it not been for the Sons of Iraq."<sup>909</sup> The groups were motivated in part by the fear of an increasingly abusive Al Qaeda and part by the lure cash bonuses paid for found IEDs.<sup>910</sup> Moreover, ever since Al Qaeda's bombing of the Shiite al-Askariya Shrine in Samarra in February 2006, Sunnis in the province increasingly feared Shiite death squads and a Shiite dominated government bent on revenge.<sup>911</sup> Sons of Iraq offered the Sunnis a means for protection and in exchange, provided the Coalition with what 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's earlier tactics only partially did—population control.

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<sup>905</sup> IAU 2011a; IAUB

<sup>906</sup> O'Hanlon and Campbell 2009, p. 43

<sup>907</sup> DOD 2007, p. 19, 23

<sup>908</sup> Ibid.; "DoD News Briefing with Col. Piatt from Iraq" 2009

<sup>909</sup> "DoD News Briefing with Col. Piatt from Iraq" 2009

<sup>910</sup> Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 406

<sup>911</sup> IRIN 2007

Ninewa's turnaround proved more complicated. Unlike Salah ad Din, Mosul lacked a clear tribal network to co-opt: as one Army intelligence officer remarked, "You go into an area, and it's difficult to find the local leader who will step up and say, 'I'm the ... sheik of this neighborhood.'" <sup>912</sup> Moreover, wanting to avoid angering the friendly Kurdish population, American forces limited the number of Sons of Iraq to only 1,200—far fewer than Salah ad Din for a comparatively larger population. <sup>913</sup> Instead, beginning in 2008, the United States opted for physical control—walls, combat outposts and a major clearing effort by Iraqi security forces. <sup>914</sup>

Importantly, Salah ad Din and Ninewa's newfound stability represented more of a temporary truce rather than a permanent change of heart. Without the Sons of Iraq, Ninewa depended on continued large-scale offensive operations to keep the insurgency in check. <sup>915</sup> As one former regime soldier stated, "We don't hate the Americans anymore; our anger is for the government." <sup>916</sup> Salah ad Din's turnaround proved only marginally more stable. As the United States withdrew and the Sons of Iraq movement began to disband, one Awakening leader in Salah at Din warned, "Either get us a job or Iraq will go back to the way it used to be." <sup>917</sup> Another said, "At this point, Awakening members have two options: Stay with the government, which would be a threat to their lives, or help Al Qaeda by being a double agent." <sup>918</sup> And so, while ideally population control would enable longer term reconciliation, at least for Salah ad Din and Ninewa, this seems not to be the case and as Coalition troops departed, violence returned to these areas. <sup>919</sup>

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<sup>912</sup> Levinson 2008

<sup>913</sup> Gilmore 2008; Parker 2008; Kukis 2008

<sup>914</sup> DOD 2008, pp. 28-29; Roggio 2008

<sup>915</sup> See DOD 2010, pp. 35-36

<sup>916</sup> Cocks 2008

<sup>917</sup> Wilbanks and Karsh 2010, p. 67

<sup>918</sup> Williams and Adnan 2010

<sup>919</sup> Petraeus 2013. Also see Cordesman and Khazi 2013; Damon 2013; Economist 2013

## **Sisyphus & the Surge:**

In his memoirs, Vice President Dick Cheney predicted that “...one of the most significant accomplishments of George Bush’s presidency [will be] the liberation of Iraq and the establishment of a true democracy in the Arab world.”<sup>920</sup> History has yet to render its final verdict, but today, the outlook is not good. Once American forces withdrew, Iraq’s sectarian conflict reignited and a mere two years later, Al Qaeda once again occupied Ramadi and Fallujah. And so, Iraq’s short-lived success, ultimately, came not from winning “hearts and minds,” but from controlling them. In some cases, population control was literal and physical—using of walls and widespread arrests. Elsewhere, control was more indirect and subtle—co-opting local Sunni elite with patronage and leveraging their fears of al Qaeda and the Shiite militias, but not fundamentally changing their views. To paraphrase one former Sunni nationalist insurgent, he still wanted to kill Americans—just not today.<sup>921</sup>

In retrospect, the Surge shows the power of population control especially under certain circumstances. In particular, as depicted in table 2, it highlights the effectiveness of cooption when utilized in a tribal society and targeted against the insurgent groups (hypothesis 2). The Surge also shows the effectiveness of both physical and “divide and rule” means of control against distinct, minority groups. As Sunni and Shiite fault lines became drawn, walls proved increasingly effective at curbing violence—particularly in Baghdad (hypothesis 1b), while the Sunni nationalists’ fears of the Shiite majority drove them to broker a truce with Coalition forces (hypothesis 3). This confluence of conditions enabled highly effective population-control and produced the stunning drop in violence.

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<sup>920</sup> Cheney and Cheney 2011, p. 481

<sup>921</sup> See Ricks 2009, p. 207



Table 2:

Hypotheses:	Result:	Evidence:
H1A Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a minority group.	N/A	While many Iraqi insurgents were from the minority Sunni population, this mattered less to the counterinsurgency effort, since the Coalition did not forcibly resettle populations.
H1B Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a distinct group.	TRUE	Particularly, as previously heterogeneous neighborhoods separated into Sunni and Shia enclaves, walls became increasingly effective at controlling violence.
H1c Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, when employed against rural insurgencies	N/A	Iraq was largely an urban insurgency.
H2 Cooption strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, when targeted against the insurgents themselves.	TRUE	As demonstrated in the Sons of Iraq or the Awakening, cooption of former Sunni nationalist insurgents proved particularly effective.
H3 Divide and rule strategies will be more successful when the insurgency comes from a minority group.	TRUE	Sunni fears of the Shia majority helped produce a marriage of convenience between Sunni nationalists and Coalition forces.

At the same time, however, the Surge also highlights a key limitation of population control—namely the Sisyphean nature of success. After all, physical control only works insofar as those arrested stay imprisoned and the walls and checkpoints remain intact; co-option presumes that those who are bought remain bought; and “divide and rule” strategies rely on a powerful third-party preserving the equilibrium between the warring factions. Ultimately, keeping Sisyphus’ boulder atop its proverbial hill remains one of the key challenges for counterinsurgency going forward and an issue I take up in the concluding chapter, “That Nauseating Phrase I Think I Invented.”

## Chapter 8: “That Nauseating Phrase I Think I Invented”<sup>922</sup>

Despite being one of the most recognizable strategic concepts of the modern era, surprisingly few practitioners want to claim “winning heart and minds” as their own. Indeed, even the proponents of “hearts and minds” strategies seem to hate the term. Despite its association with classical counterinsurgency theorists like French Lieutenant Colonel David Galula, Fred Kaplan notes, “Hearts and minds” “implied a gentler approach than Galula prescribed (or, as a commander in Algeria, practiced).”<sup>923</sup> Similarly, Gerald Templer—the British hero of Malaya who popularized “hearts and minds” in modern times—referred to it as that “nauseating phrase” he thought he invented in post war-interviews.<sup>924</sup> Interestingly, Templer’s intellectual heir Robert Thompson advocates winning popular support, but never mentions the phrase explicitly in his hugely influential *Defeating Communist Insurgencies*.<sup>925</sup> And in his memoirs, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support Director William Colby called “hearts and minds” an “absurd phrase” and disavowed ever using it.<sup>926</sup> More recently, General David Petraeus, reflecting on Iraq strategy, redefined the concept: “The point of “winning hearts and minds” is not to make the people love us or thank us but rather to ensure they *have a stake* (emphasis in the original) in the progress of the new Iraq.”<sup>927</sup>

And yet, “hearts and minds” still remains the cornerstone of modern, liberal-democratic counterinsurgency thought and practices. As chapter 2 and 3 have demonstrated, the two-fold logic of “hearts and minds”—gratitude and enfranchisement—lie at the core of the *Counterinsurgency Manual*. Multiple senior policy makers—from former of Secretary of State

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<sup>922</sup> Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer in an interview with the *Straits Times*, Watts 1968

<sup>923</sup> Kaplan 2013, p. 19

<sup>924</sup> Watts 1968, p. 10

<sup>925</sup> Thompson 1966. In fairness, Thompson recommends that the counterinsurgent comes “into closest contact with the people on the subject dearest to their hearts.” Thompson 1966, p. 75

<sup>926</sup> Colby and McCargar 1989, p. 215

<sup>927</sup> Kaplan 2013, p. 142

Condoleezza Rice to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta—claim that “ultimately, insurgencies have to be defeated politically” and only “through development, through education, through trade” can the United States defeat extremists.<sup>928</sup> And even some of America’s toughest soldiers like General Stanley McChrystal preach that “the Taliban cannot militarily defeat us-but we can defeat ourselves,” by over utilizing firepower.<sup>929</sup> Noted scholars have argued that “hearts and minds” approaches won all the cases discussed here, except perhaps the Mau Mau Rebellion. Even Templer, Thompson, Colby and Petraeus—while they may dislike the label—still ascribe to the basic formula of minimal force, economic development and political reforms.

Unfortunately, as this work has shown, military victory rests not on winning “hearts and minds” but controlling them and so, American counterinsurgency doctrine must shift to a population control based conception of victory. This shift has profound implications both for future policy and academic research, and over the next five sections, I attempt to tease them out. First, I summarize the findings of this dissertation. Second, I highlight three sets of lessons going forward—about love and strategy, control and brutality, and finally, counterinsurgency and nation building. Third, I turn these abstract lessons into concrete recommendations for next iteration of the *Counterinsurgency Manual*. Fourth, I outline directions for future counterinsurgency research. Finally, I conclude by suggesting the proper role for “hearts and minds” in a post-Iraq and Afghanistan world.

### **In Counterinsurgency, Population Control is King:**

This dissertation’s central finding is relatively straightforward: population control is the key to military victory in counterinsurgency. While winning “hearts and minds” is certainly laudable, it is not a prerequisite for success. As Fred Kaplan sums up, “The successful COIN campaigns of

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<sup>928</sup> Wright 2005; Panetta 2012

<sup>929</sup> Tactical Directive 2009

lore were also wars of stunning brutality: in Malaya, four hundred thousand civilians forcibly relocated and thousands of insurgents starved to death; in the Philippines, sixteen thousand guerrillas were killed in battle, and two hundred thousand civilians killed by disease and starvation spreading through the relocation centers (formally called “concentration camps”); in Algeria, the routine use of torture in “pacification” campaigns.”<sup>930</sup> And yet, the Philippines, Malaya, Kenya and so many other cases are still considered victories.

Moreover, even when counterinsurgents attempted to win “hearts and minds,” these efforts proved only marginally effective. Early political reform and economic development projects in Vietnam never stopped the growth of the communist insurgency. As shown in the appendix, insofar as polling is any indicator, the United States never won the Iraqis’ affection and seems to have lost the Afghans’ support over the course of the war—despite active, years-long, multi-billion-dollar efforts to “win hearts and minds.” Moreover, American success at winning “hearts and minds” was usually small and came as an effect of winning on the battlefield, rather than the cause of it. Popularity in the polls was not required for successful intelligence gathering or for maintaining supply lines. Above all, such shifts in popular opinion often proved ephemeral: as violence returned, support for the government evaporated as well.

Instead, victory comes from successful population control. Rather than wooing the population, counterinsurgents must often use coercion, if they hope to cut the insurgency off from its lifeblood. Counterinsurgents typically rely on three primary mechanisms: physical control (walls, force resettlement and often food and resource denial), co-option (or bribes) and “divide and rule” (the exploitation of local antipathies to cement the counterinsurgent’s hold over the population). As depicted in table 1, a combination of force, bribery and the exploitation of sectarian fear won Malaya, Kenya, Vietnam and Iraq, not political reforms, economic aid, propaganda or any other overt attempt to “win hearts and minds.”

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<sup>930</sup> Kaplan 2013, p. 364

Table 1:

Means of Control:	Malayan Emergency:	Kenyan Emergency:	Vietnam War:	Iraq War:
Physical Control	Walls; forced resettlement; food denial	Walls; forced resettlement; food denial	Indirect forced settlement (through force urbanization)	Walls; indirect forced resettlement (sectarian ethnic cleansing)
Cooption	Malayan Elite; Insurgents (eg. Hor Lung)	Pseudo Gangs	Kit Carson Scouts	Sons of Iraq
Divide & Rule	Chinese vs. Malays	Whites vs. Kikuyu; Kikuyu vs. Masai; Landed vs. Landless Kikuyu	Montagnards vs. Vietnamese	Sunnis vs. Shiites

As outlined in chapter 3, logically speaking, the three methods of control, however, should not work equally well in every circumstance. Some work best against certain types of insurgencies (e.g. rural insurgencies), with specific population dynamics (e.g. when the insurgency draws its support from minority groups) and in particular societal structures (e.g. tribal societies) that enhance the counterinsurgent's hold over the population. And as summarized in table 2, these hypotheses were mostly borne out by the case studies.

Table 2:

Hypotheses:	Malayan Emergency:	Kenyan Emergency:	Vietnam War:	Iraq War:
H1A Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a minority group.	TRUE	MIXED	TRUE	N/A
H1B Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, if the insurgency primarily draws its support from a distinct group.	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
H1C Physical control strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, when employed against rural insurgencies.	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	N/A
H2 Cooption strategies will be more successful at militarily defeating the insurgency, when targeted against the insurgents themselves.	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
H3 Divide and rule strategies will be more successful when the insurgency comes from a minority group.	TRUE	MIXED	TRUE	TRUE

There is an open question whether “hearts and minds” strategies and “population control” strategies represent an either-or choice or can work hand-in-hand. Population control sometimes has been simultaneously combined with “hearts and minds” tactics (as in Malaya) and at other times employed independently (best demonstrated in Kenya). Sometimes, a desire to win “hearts and minds” has undermined “population control” (most directly, in Vietnam). Sometimes, “hearts and minds” may have made “population control” measures more politically palatable (possibly, in Iraq). “But in the end,” as Peter Mansoor concluded, “control of the population is far more important than winning its hearts and minds, for effective control of the people isolates the insurgents from their support base.”<sup>931</sup> As a result, counterinsurgents must keep several lessons in mind going forward.

### **Love is Not a Strategy:**

The first key take away is a very old one: love is not a strategy. Indeed, Niccolò Machiavelli reached this same conclusion almost 500 years ago when he advised princes on how to rule their domains. He based his argument on practicality, rather than morality. “Returning to the question of being loved or feared, that since men love at their convenience and fear at the convenience of the prince, a wise Prince should found himself on what is his, not what is someone else’s.”<sup>932</sup> While most princes want to be loved (and if anything, this is even more true of modern, democratic counterinsurgents), Machiavelli recognized that love is a tricky business, especially when applied to city-states, much less to modern countries. As the United States learned in Vietnam and Iraq, pleasing enough of the population to stop unrest proved almost impossible and going forward, this task will likely only become more difficult.

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<sup>931</sup> Mansoor 2013, pp. 38-39

<sup>932</sup> Machiavelli 1998, p. 68

First, future counterinsurgents may be unwilling or unable to pay for successful “hearts and minds” strategies. As David French concludes about post-war British counterinsurgency, “Governments did sometimes try to buy support, to ‘court’ rather than coerce the population by instituting development programmes to improve their health and welfare. But shortages of money, expert personnel, and a refusal to be bought meant their efforts usually had little impact.”<sup>933</sup> While future democratic counterinsurgents likely will be better off than economically ravaged post-war Britain, many western democracies today face mounting deficits, aging populations (with it, expanding entitlement obligations) and increasing unwillingness to spend on reconstruction efforts abroad.<sup>934</sup>

Second, future counterinsurgents likely will face inflated expectations, further complicating any attempt to win “hearts and minds.” Wealthy counterinsurgents already wrestle with this issue today. The *Counterinsurgency Manual* already warns of the “man on the moon syndrome” in modern counterinsurgency (if the United States can land a man on the moon, why should it not be able to quickly and effectively restore basic services).<sup>935</sup> Especially, with the proliferation of the internet and the ease of gathering information, local populations increasingly will demand ever quicker responses and even more services from future counterinsurgents. And so, while in previous eras local populations may have been content with new wells, in the future, they may only be pleased if the counterinsurgent builds full-fledged sanitation systems—at very least raising the price tag, if not questioning the overall feasibility, of “hearts and minds” strategies.

Third, and most importantly, future counterinsurgents may not have the patience to execute the wholesale societal transformations demanded by a *Counterinsurgency Manual* style “hearts and minds” approach. Of all the modern counterinsurgencies, Afghanistan, perhaps, represents the best case scenario for political willpower. After all, the war started with a vivid, large-scale

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<sup>933</sup> French 2011, p. 248

<sup>934</sup> For analysis of Europe in particular, see Cohen and Scheinmann 2014

<sup>935</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-25

attack on the American homeland; it was fought with a relatively few troops, all of whom were professional soldiers not draftees; and at least by historical standards, the United States suffered only modest casualties. And yet, despite these favorable conditions, American patience still wore thin before it could win over enough of the Afghan population to end the insurgency or create an effective, legitimate Afghan government. On June 11, 2009, as he began his tenure at the helm of the counterinsurgency effort in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal predicted, “In one year, we’d better demonstrate progress—something that we said was going to happen, happened—or political support, left and right, will evaporate. This campaign may not end for a decade, but it will be decided within a year.”<sup>936</sup> In fact, support evaporated only somewhat slower than McChrystal foresaw: by the end of 2013, CNN proclaimed that Afghanistan had become the most unpopular war in American history.<sup>937</sup> Regardless of validity of CNN’s claim, the overarching point—that the American public’s patience is shorter than the time needed to execute a “hearts and minds” strategy—likely will remain true, at least so long as withdrawal remains option.<sup>938</sup>

Practical or not, however, the United States—and western democratic counterinsurgents more generally—still cling to the concept of winning “hearts and minds.” Perhaps, the best evidence of this desire comes from the persistence of the term itself. Despite the widespread unease with “hearts and minds” among counterinsurgency practitioners, the phrase still colors not only the media coverage of Iraq and Afghanistan, but also smaller non-American conflicts as well—like the one in Mali.<sup>939</sup> Clearly, the appeal of “hearts and minds” runs deeper than a purely analytical calculus about strategic efficacy should dictate, perhaps because it fits with the

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<sup>936</sup> McChrystal 2013, p. 291

<sup>937</sup> CNN 2013

<sup>938</sup> In fact, McChrystal asks this very question. “Indeed, as the first operations of 2010 began, we asked what psychic effect among Afghans we could produce through material gains. Would Afghanistan feel the addition of troops and the benefits of security they brought? Would such turns be large enough, and happen fast enough?” McChrystal 2013, p. 376

<sup>939</sup> For example, NPR 2011, Shafi 2012, Bamat 2013



romanticized narratives that often surround these campaigns. Indeed, many American counterinsurgencies started with at least lip-service paid to benevolent or humanitarian objectives—restoring order in Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the first half the 20<sup>th</sup> century, countering communism in Vietnam and the Philippines in the second half, or spreading liberal democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan in 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>940</sup> Consequently, it seems only natural to expect local populations to embrace these efforts and that their “hearts and minds,” in turn, should win these wars.

Moreover, “hearts and minds” still colors operations. While few believe that counterinsurgencies can be won without military force, multiple authorities—from Mao Zedong to British Director of Operations in Malaya Robert Lockhart to French Counterinsurgency Strategist David Galula to General Stanley McChrystal—characterize these wars as between 75% and 95% political in nature, with only the remaining 5% to 25% a military struggle.<sup>941</sup> As a result, when “population control” and “hearts and minds” work to cross purposes, many privilege the latter over the former and allow concerns over collateral damage, corruption or local national sovereignty to trump the full-fledged implementation of “population control.” This choice makes sense if “hearts and minds” indeed is the lynchpin to victory, but unfortunately, however, it is not. Success in Malaya, Kenya, Vietnam and Iraq required at least as kinetic an approach, as a political one.

Well over a century ago, at the outset of the American counterinsurgency effort in Philippines, Rudyard Kipling warned the United States, “Have done with childish days—the lightly proffered laurel, the easy ungrudged praise.”<sup>942</sup> Future counterinsurgents should heed

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<sup>940</sup> Perhaps, President George W. Bush’s early speeches provide some of clearest examples of this expectation to be loved. In November 2003 speech to the National Endowment for Democracy, he cast the Iraq and Afghanistan as the opening gambit of a “global democratic revolution,” reflecting the “hopes of millions in the region” and vast majority of Iraqis and Afghans.

<sup>941</sup> French 2011, p. 174, Kaplan 2013, p. 327, Mansoor 2013, p. 38

<sup>942</sup> Kipling 1989, p. 323

Kipling's warning. No matter how benevolent the counterinsurgents' motives are, local populations rarely embrace the counterinsurgent and even if they do, this will not win these wars in the end. Moreover, if present trends continue, western democratic counterinsurgents will face less time, fewer resources and higher expectations, and ultimately, will be less able to successfully execute "hearts and minds" strategies in the future. The desire to be loved is not only a recipe for ineffectiveness, but can be profoundly counterproductive. Ironically, for all the talk of "hearts and minds," victory requires counterinsurgents to do the opposite and incur the antipathy of the population at least for a while.

### **Control is Not Synonymous with Brutality:**

While counterinsurgents do not need to be loved in order to be militarily successful, repression does not necessarily guarantee victory either. To the contrary, Machiavelli recognized that violence also has its downsides and cautioned that a prince should "contrive to avoid hatred."<sup>943</sup> And though not discussed in any depth here, counterinsurgency history is also littered with cases where brutality failed to produce victory either. For example, while American "hearts and minds" strategies produced mixed results in Afghanistan, more kinetic strategies worked no better. Indeed, the Soviets carpet-bombed villages, sowed landmines across farmland, and "drove almost forty percent of the Afghan population into refugee status," and "yet even this vicious campaign did not defeat the Afghans."<sup>944</sup> The latter example underscores a fundamental point: successful counterinsurgency is about control and while population control is often brutal, not all brutality produces population control.

Effective population control is never pretty task. All counterinsurgencies require substantial amounts of force. Contrary to the *Counterinsurgency Manual's* statement that "sometimes, the

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<sup>943</sup> Machiavelli 1998, p. 68

<sup>944</sup> Hammes 2006, p. 159

more force is used, the less effective it is,” victory in none of the four cases analyzed here came from the counterinsurgent restricting its use of force.<sup>945</sup> Particularly with the Iraq Surge and to a degree in post-1968 Vietnam, the counterinsurgent increased its reliance on firepower to great effect. Even the reinterpretation of this claim—to say that the more precise the use of force is, the more effective it is—is only partially true. While only targeting combatants is a clearly ethical, blunt uses of forces did not impede counterinsurgency success in either Kenya or Vietnam, nor did restrictions on the use of force in Iraq circa-2005 produce measurably better counterinsurgency results.

More problematically, population control—by definition—requires collective punishment. In all four cases studies, success came from population transfers and walling off of population centers. At very least, this often meant uprooting entire families—some who were directly involved in the insurgency but many who were not. In Malaya and Kenya, the British deliberately reduced civilian food supplies in order to starve the insurgency into submission. In Vietnam, the United States avoided this tactic, but arguably, its effectiveness suffered as a result. In Iraq, while the Coalition did not resettle populations, bitter sectarian fighting achieved the same result with equally horrific consequences. Even the nonlethal side requires other seedy behavior—bribing sordid but nonetheless influential individuals and exploiting local animosities. Perhaps, Richard Nixon advisor, Charles “Chuck” Colson best captured not only the objective but also crassness of the work when he argued for a Vietnam policy of “grab ‘em by the balls, and the hearts and minds will follow.”<sup>946</sup>

Population control, however, is not sadism. As highlighted in a spate of recent scholarship, almost all modern counterinsurgencies included multiple, high-profile atrocity incidents.<sup>947</sup> From the My Lai massacre to the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses to the ever expanding list of incidents

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<sup>945</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-27

<sup>946</sup> Elliott 2007, p. 255

<sup>947</sup> For example, Anderson 2005, Elkins 2005; Turse 2013

from the Mau Mau Rebellion, wanton acts of cruelty are not only morally abhorrent, but often are strategically counterproductive. While the “hearts and minds” school’s claim that minimizing force produces victory is false, the underlying logic—that violence begets violence particularly in the media age—is sound. On a positive end, modern technology, particularly advances in signals, imagery and other technical forms of intelligence, further undermines one of the traditional strategic justifications for brutality in counterinsurgency—namely, intelligence gathering.<sup>948</sup> Thus, rather than simply minimizing their use of force, counterinsurgents must distinguish between the forms of brutality that are necessary evils and those which are simply evil.

This work provides only the rough contours of the distinction between brutality and control. First, it distinguishes between strategy and senseless violence. In all four counterinsurgencies discussed in depth here, success resulted from a deliberate, coordinated effort to control the population—not one-off atrocities, nor from attempts to “teach the population a lesson.” Second, this work argues that degree of control—rather than sheer amount of the force used—is the key to counterinsurgency victory. Indeed, 20<sup>th</sup> century counterinsurgencies were just as and sometimes more violent as those of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but significantly less successful, reinforcing the fact that the amount of blood shed does not necessarily translate into the degree of control achieved.<sup>949</sup> Finally, this work suggests a refinement to Machiavelli’s warning: namely, rather than avoiding hatred (which may be impossible), the counterinsurgent strive to be the least hated option. Running throughout the cases was some element of divide and rule—where the counterinsurgent turned local factions’ hatred and fear of each other into a means of control. For this strategy to work, however, the counterinsurgent does not need to be loved per se, but it needs to be less odious than the alternative.

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<sup>948</sup> For example, see Trinquier 2006, p. 19

<sup>949</sup> Observation based on updating the Lyall 2010 dataset of counterinsurgencies with casualty data from Philips and Axelrod 2005. Dataset available upon request.

## Counterinsurgency is Not Nation-Building:

A third key lesson is that while the terms are often conflated today, as first differentiated in chapter 1, counterinsurgency is not the same as nation-building. The former revolves around denying a non-state actor's ability to pose an armed threat to a constituted government; the latter involves, as the *Counterinsurgency Manual* defines, "effective governance by a legitimate government."<sup>950</sup> And while successful nation-building likely requires successful counterinsurgency as a prerequisite, as highlighted by multiple, colonial and authoritarian campaigns, the converse is not true. This distinction has a series of implications for future counterinsurgents.

On a basic level, the counterinsurgency and nation-building have different objectives and therefore, require different tools. In particular, as demonstrated in all four case studies, nation-building tools—like economic aid, political development and social reforms—make for only marginally effective counterinsurgency tools. This does not necessarily mean that they can be ignored in future campaigns. There may be normative reasons for undertaking these efforts. Nation-building may have a strategic rationale as well: a strong Germany and Japan, for example, proved vital bulwarks against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. And in some cases, couching counterinsurgency within this more benevolent framework may make population control efforts more palatable for the local population, the counterinsurgent's domestic population and the international community-at-large.<sup>951</sup> That said, these efforts matter little to defeating the insurgency in any military sense.

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<sup>950</sup> FM 3-24

<sup>951</sup> Douglas Porch, for example, argues, "'Hearts and minds' became both a public relations exercise and a 'tactic in a box' to market imperialism as social control as effortless and low-risk." Porch 2013, p. 78

This clear-eyed appreciation of what different tools can accomplish, in turn, should force a reassessment of the sequencing counterinsurgency campaigns. One of the subtler counterinsurgency debates revolves around the timing of tactics: namely, should lethal and nonlethal strategies be employed as part of a “clear, hold, build” approach (on the assumption that military victory must pave the way for softer methods) or else employed simultaneously (on the assumption that these efforts are mutually reinforcing)?<sup>952</sup> From the evidence presented here, the former approach is the preferred option. Particularly in Malaya and Iraq, political and economic reforms were most successful after the counterinsurgency fight had been won. Ultimately, as one of the *Counterinsurgency Manual's* authors, Conrad Crane, quipped, “Even if security is the only 20 percent of the equation, it is the first 20 percent.”<sup>953</sup> Similarly, Petraeus assessed in the run up to the Surge, “If we don’t get a grip on the violence, then it doesn’t matter who is in charge,” either way “we would lose.”<sup>954</sup>

The distinction between nation-building and counterinsurgency may pose a more fundamental conundrum for counterinsurgents-turned-nation-builders: what if successful counterinsurgency demands tactics that directly undercut successful nation-building? Physical forms of control—especially when coupled with resource denial—can wreak havoc on economies. For example, food denial works best when the counterinsurgent deliberately represses agricultural production in order to limit the insurgents’ access to food and willingness of the population to part with their own supplies. Even when food denial is not employed, walls—in general—curtail trade and stunt economic growth. While walls and food denial were

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<sup>952</sup> The *Counterinsurgency Manual* waffles between these two theories. After advocating for a clear-hold-build approach by using the analogy of medical patient (FM 3-24, p. 5-2), the *Manual* claims then economic and political reforms should be done along with combat operations as “success in one LLO (line of operation—namely, combat operations, developing host nation security forces, promoting good governance, economic development, an restoring essential services) reinforces success in the others.” (Ibid., p. 5-3)

<sup>953</sup> Mansoor 2013, p. 38

<sup>954</sup> Ibid., p. 69

the lynchpins of the counterinsurgency victories in Malaya, Kenya and Vietnam, these same means directly undermine efforts to create vibrant economies.

Arguably, the tension between counterinsurgency and nation-building is more acute on the nonlethal end. Most directly, there is the question of the utility of corruption. Anti-corruption campaigns existed—with varying degrees of emphasis and success—in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, on the assumption that clean institutions will make for higher functioning states. From a counterinsurgency standpoint, however, corruption can be useful—provided it targets the “right” people. As highlighted Kenya’s Pseudo Gangs, Vietnam’s Kit Carson Scouts or the Sons of Iraq, bribing former insurgents—with money, power or prestige—can prove a very effective tactic. This, however, also means dealing with odious actors, rewarding “bad” behavior and sometimes, as with drug-lords in Afghanistan, turning a blind-eye to criminal behavior.

More sinisterly, the nation-building versus counterinsurgency distinction raises the question of whether local animosity can be useful. In all four cases to varying degrees, part of the counterinsurgents’ success at population control came from pitting factions off of each other. Sometimes these cleavages ran along ethnic lines (Malay versus Chinese; Montagnards versus Vietnamese; Masai versus Kikuyu); sometimes they were religious (Sunni versus Shiite); and sometimes they were socioeconomic (landed versus landless Kikuyu and urban versus rural South Vietnamese). While the fear generated from these local rivalries can cement a third-party counterinsurgent’s hold over the population, this same divide-and-rule approach can undermine an independent state’s long-term stability. Douglas Porch argues, “A network unsupported by a viable *politique des races* — that is a reliable minority who allies with the occupier as a strategy of survival... — simply a yawning invitation to overthrow.”<sup>955</sup> Indeed, soon after the British left Malaya, it broke apart into ethnic Malay dominated Malaysia and ethnic Chinese dominated Singapore, and soon after the United States left Iraq, sectarian violence increased dramatically.

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<sup>955</sup> Porch 2013, p. 55

Finally and perhaps, most importantly, the distinction between nation-building and counterinsurgency goes to the heart of what it means to “win.” This work has shown that successful counterinsurgency—the ability for a government to end an armed threat to its rule—is possible. In fact, plenty of counterinsurgents—both in 19<sup>th</sup> century and today—have “won” these wars, at least in a military sense. The track record on “nation-building” is decidedly more ambiguous. Arguably, few counterinsurgents-turned-nation-builders fully achieved the *Counterinsurgency Manual*’s objective “effective governance by a legitimate government.”<sup>956</sup> This certainly never happened in South Vietnam, and the extent to which the United States and Britain achieved this in Iraq, Malaya, Kenya or Afghanistan remains debatable.

### **Envisioning the *Counterinsurgency Manual* 2.0:**

The challenge, of course, is how to turn these abstract lessons into concrete changes in American counterinsurgency practices and doctrine. The *Counterinsurgency Manual* was the first attempt in a generation to provide soldiers and Marines a practical handbook for how to fight these wars—a vital and time urgent task since the United States was then decisively engaged in counterinsurgencies in both Iraq and Afghanistan. As mentioned in Chapter 3, while the *Manual* is complex, multifaceted and at times contradictory, for the most part, its approach reflected a “hearts and minds” version of how counterinsurgencies are won. Unfortunately, this is not the way counterinsurgents win these wars. And so, while the *Manual*’s authors deserve recognition for developing a cogent plan in the face of what promised to be the greatest American military defeat since the Vietnam War, the *Manual* needs to be rewritten. Here are five concrete changes for its next iteration.

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<sup>956</sup> FM 3-24



1. *Divide the Counterinsurgency Manual in two.* In its present form, the *Counterinsurgency Manual* combines two very different objectives—defeating an insurgency (counterinsurgency, literally speaking) and rebuilding a government post-conflict (nation-building). The United States Army and Marine Corps may—and very likely will—be tasked with performing both operations simultaneously in the future, but they are different missions and should be separated for intellectual clarity. After all, doctrinal manuals aim to break down the complex into discrete tasks. Arguably, in present form, the *Manual* strives to do too much. After all, if parachuting an ambulance and firing an assault rifle each deserve their own manuals, then certainly tasks as large and complex as counterinsurgency and nation-building do as well.<sup>957</sup>
2. *Redefine the objective of counterinsurgency.* Bifurcating the *Counterinsurgency Manual* has follow on ramifications—beginning with the objective of counterinsurgency. Currently, the *Counterinsurgency Manual* defines “The primary objective of any COIN (counterinsurgency) operation is to foster the development of effective governance by a legitimate government.”<sup>958</sup> While this may be true of nation-building, it is not true of counterinsurgency. The objective instead should read something along the lines of “the objective of any counterinsurgency operation is to establish control over the population in order to prevent them from providing material aid and support to the insurgency.”
3. *Shift the approach to lethal force.* The *Counterinsurgency Manual* frames its discussion of lethal force with following paradoxes: “sometimes, the more force is used, the less effective

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<sup>957</sup> See FM 4-20.166 and FM 3-22.9. Of note, both manuals are contemporaries of the *Counterinsurgency Manual* (with a 2006 publication date for the former and 2011 for the latter). Data from the “Doctrine and Training Publications” 2014.

<sup>958</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-21

it is” and “some of the best weapons for counterinsurgency do not shoot.”<sup>959</sup> Originally, both statements were even more definitive until Petraeus personally modified them.<sup>960</sup>

Unfortunately, even with the caveats, these statements are misleading. In fact, Petraeus himself—when he commanded the Coalition in both Iraq and Afghanistan—employed more force than his immediate predecessors, often to great effect. While Petraeus understood the distinction between what the *Manual* says and what these wars demand, other commanders may not. Indeed, General Stanley McChrystal arguably took the *Manual*’s warning about minimizing force at face value when as commander of forces in Afghanistan, he imposed significant restrictions on the use of firepower (a decision Petraeus later reversed shortly after he assumed command a year later).<sup>961</sup> If McChrystal, a talented commander and longtime subordinate of Petraeus, can misinterpret the *Manual*’s prescriptions, then it underscores the need to rewrite the doctrine.

4. *Explicitly state that large-scale political reforms and economic development are high cost, slow reward ventures with little relevance to the tactical fight.* Senior policy makers, ranging from former Vice President Richard Cheney and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to former Clinton Chief of Staff John Podesta and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, have publically stated that political elections, education, and economic reforms are the key to victory in counterinsurgency.<sup>962</sup> And this belief also extends to some academics as well. For example, in a 2009 editorial commenting on the Obama administration’s Afghanistan strategy, Columbia University economist Jeffery Sachs commented, “Young unemployed

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<sup>959</sup> Ibid., p. 1-27

<sup>960</sup> Kaplan 2013, p. 218. Even after Petraeus’ caveats, some stuck to the original formulation. For example, John Nagl, one of the authors of the *Counterinsurgency Manual*, argued that the counterinsurgents should “use minimum, not maximum force.” Fick and Nagl 2009

<sup>961</sup> McChrystal argued, “We must avoid the trap of winning tactical victories—but suffering strategic defeats—by causing civilian casualties or excessive damage and thus alienating the people.” Tactical Directive 2009. For Petraeus’ “clarification” of this guidance, see CNN 2010

<sup>962</sup> Wright 2005; Cheney and Cheney 2011, p. 433; Panetta 2012; Podesta and Wadhams 2013

men often join militant factions out of the need to earn a meager income to eat and feed their families. In these circumstances, the fight against poverty should be dominant in the fight against terror and instability.”<sup>963</sup> As this work has shown, however, these efforts are extraordinarily expensive, have little immediate impact on stopping insurgencies and generally produce results after only violence has subsided. As a result, future discussions of political and economic reforms in counterinsurgency at very least needs to come with a disclaimer, if not be relegated to a sister nation-building manual altogether.

5. *Add a chapter about how to dance with the devil.* Perhaps, above all, an updated *Counterinsurgency Manual* must wrestle with the hard questions about population control’s three principle mechanisms. For example, when should bribes be allowed and under what terms should warlords with their private armies be embraced for the sake of cooption?<sup>964</sup> Are there circumstances—if the troops are not available or if the insurgency’s support base remains concentrated within a segment of the population—when forced resettlement should be allowed? Perhaps, most ominously, when should a need for control allow for the exploitation of sectarian fears as part of a divide and rule strategies? As previously discussed, population control’s three methods do not work equally well everywhere, and there are reasons—apart from effectiveness—why a counterinsurgent should shy away from employing them. That said, while not all the methods used in the past may be appropriate for the counterinsurgents of tomorrow, those charged with crafting future strategy at least need to ask these questions.

## Directions for Future Research

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<sup>963</sup> Sachs 2009

<sup>964</sup> For the warning against private militias, see FM 3-24, p. 3-20

Despite all the scholarly attention recently given to subject, the study of counterinsurgency is far from over. In particular, the modern study of counterinsurgency strategy often conflates three separate questions: what strategies “work,” what strategies are “ethically permissible,” and what strategies are “politically feasible” at home and abroad. While it would be convenient if the answer to one is the answer to all three, there is no a priori reason why this should be the case. By design then, this work focused only on the first one—what strategies “work.” This choice was not only necessary for space limitations, but also for intellectual clarity. As RAND political scientists Nathaniel Leites and Charles Wolf noted in their classic Vietnam-era analysis of insurgency, “While the cool analysis of coercion is morally repugnant, failure to analyze it should be even more odious, because such neglect magnifies the power of those who do analyze it. Like nuclear war, this is another case where it is necessary to think the unthinkable.”<sup>965</sup> Before drawing policy conclusions, however, the two other questions—about morality and politics—demand equally rigorous analysis.

To begin, the fact that population control is both inherently nasty and the lynchpin of victory poses a serious ethical dilemma. By definition, population control involves ample force and more troublingly, the embrace of collective punishment. And while all wars require killing, collective punishment—like forced resettlement and resource denial—run contrary to Aquinas-style just war theory’s precept of minimizing harm to civilians.<sup>966</sup> There, however, still needs to be a code to differentiate between brutality and control, especially given the ease which these campaigns can descend into barbarity.<sup>967</sup> Drawing an ethical line that allows for both victory

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<sup>965</sup> Leites and Wolf 1970, p. 156

<sup>966</sup> For some of the recent attempts to wrestle with this issue, see Walzer 2002, Crawford 2003, and Kahl 2007

<sup>967</sup> See Porch 2013, p. 339

and morality—or whether such a line is even possible—remains an area for further exploration.<sup>968</sup>

Similarly, population control also raises questions of domestic political feasibility. As described in chapter 1, counterinsurgencies function similar to Robert Putnam's two-level game and are fought on two-fronts simultaneously—militarily on the battlefield and politically on the home-front. While this work only examined the operational half of the equation, in actuality, victory requires that the counterinsurgent win on both levels. Behind the victories in Malaya and Kenya was a British public which was—at least at the start of these conflicts—supportive, but also profoundly unaware. In 1951, the Colonial Office's Central Office of Information found that almost 75% of Britons “thought Britain would be worse off with colonies,” but only 40% could name what one of them were.<sup>969</sup> Only gradually over a period of years did Britons become more attuned to these wars. Modern communications—where anyone can capture an event and spread it almost instantaneously around the world—prevents such blissful ignorance. As a result, counterinsurgency's two levels are increasingly intertwined: what a counterinsurgent does on a battlefield impacts its standing—at least in liberal democracies—at home.

The interaction between the domestic political and the operational levels of counterinsurgency needs to be better understood. Currently, the drivers of public opinion is a matter of debate—with some pointing to counterinsurgent causalities, chances of success and morality all as possible key variables.<sup>970</sup> In order to answer the question of the domestic feasibility of population control in the global media age, however, future research must not only

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<sup>968</sup> Even relatively targeted uses of force—such as commando raids or unmanned aerial vehicle strikes—still provoke extended debates about morality. For example, see Urban 1993, p. 241

<sup>969</sup> French 2011, p. 222

<sup>970</sup> For example of this debate, see Mueller 2005, Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler 2005/2006, Gelpi and Mueller 2006

answer to what factors influence public opinion, but also the extent to which counterinsurgents can proactively shape opinion in order to give themselves more operational flexibility abroad.<sup>971</sup>

To further complicate matters, counterinsurgents today must not only please their own domestic public but several others, adding an international dimension to counterinsurgency. In Vietnam, Iraq and particularly, in Afghanistan, third-party counterinsurgents today are not single unified entities, but large international coalitions. Maintaining local alliances—with their uneven militaries and fractious domestic politics—have always been the source of frustration in counterinsurgency.<sup>972</sup> Adding additional third-party actors to the mix can pose new political challenges, especially if the international allies have different conceptions about what tactics should be acceptable.

Finally, as alluded to earlier, this dissertation leaves open, perhaps, the most vexing issue of all: after victory, what comes next? This work focused on what makes for successful counterinsurgency, not successful nation-building, but the latter is actually a far more complicated. Most third-party counterinsurgency “victories” are colonial campaigns, where the counterinsurgent came with the intention of conquest. Cases where the counterinsurgent intended to leave once the war was “won” are recent innovations and it is not clear that the United States, or anyone else for that matter, has developed a winning formula. Ultimately, thinking through the aftermath of victory—what is feasible and how to successfully manage withdrawal post-conflict—remains one of the great unanswered questions.

### **“That Nauseating Phrase I Think I Invented:”**

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<sup>971</sup> During the Algeria counterinsurgency, for example, “French information operations were geared primarily at convincing their home audience in the Fourth and Fifth Republics were both professional and humane.” (Porch 2013, p. 324)

<sup>972</sup> See Byman 2006

With the Iraq War done and the Afghanistan War winding down, the United States and its allies will now have time to rethink their approach to the counterinsurgency, but to do so, they first need to understand the lessons of history. As David French concludes, “much of contemporary British counterinsurgency doctrine is based upon historical arguments that are at best ill-informed, and at worst the opposite of what actually happened.”<sup>973</sup> And unsurprisingly, this “‘stretched Malaya doctrine’ did not work,” when applied to the wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>974</sup> Arguably, the same is true of American counterinsurgency doctrine today. This work aimed at correcting this misinterpretation of history and debunking its central claim that victory, as Gerald Templer argued, lies in the “hearts and minds” of the people.

“Hearts and minds” reflects the way we would *like* these be fought, not the way these wars *are* fought, much less how they are won. The term suggests that counterinsurgencies can be “good” wars, won by pursuing noble goals—establishing clean, responsive governments, growing economies and higher standards of living. Unfortunately, the truth about victory in counterinsurgency is far darker: these lofty tactics matter little to the military outcomes of these campaigns and sometimes, are even counterproductive. As a result, the phrase “heart and minds” is not only misleading, but worse, avoids confronting the underlying moral dilemma in these conflicts.

At some level, even Templer realized that the form of counterinsurgency he practiced was very different than what he preached. While he continued to believe in the power of the softer tactics, Templer eventually labeled his famous dictum as that “nauseating phrase.” He was also wrong about another part of his statement. He did not invent the term “hearts and minds.” Indeed, another British general used the term almost two centuries before him. In 1776, General Sir Henry Clinton argued that the British needed “to gain the hearts and subdue the

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<sup>973</sup> French 2011. p. 27

<sup>974</sup> Ibid., p. 255

minds of America.”<sup>975</sup> While Clinton ultimately proved less successful than Templer, arguably, his formulation is the more apt one. It implies a mixture of bribes and coercion. It is less about love and more about control. Above all, it avoids the pretense of pleasantness, captures the moral ambiguities inherent to this form of war and prompts the unsettling but quintessential question for liberal democratic counterinsurgents in the modern age: what if victory and morality do not go hand-in-hand?

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<sup>975</sup> Boot 2013, p. 70



## Appendix: Neither Necessary, Nor A Sufficient Condition

### “Hearts and Minds,” Polls & Counterinsurgent Victory<sup>976</sup>

Imagine two countries racked by protracted insurgencies. In Country A, the population trusts their military: 83% of rural and 98% of urban respondents characterize their army's performance in the most recent offensive as “good.” They also trust their American backers: 69% of rural and 65% of urban respondents believe that the current American military policy is “wise.” Above all, perhaps, 88% of rural and 90% of urban respondents believes the insurgents will fail to achieve their objectives.<sup>977</sup> By contrast, in Country B, while about two thirds of the respondents have some confidence in the police and army, 52% have little or no confidence in their local leaders. This trust deficit, however, pales with the contempt they feel for Americans: only 29% of the respondents believe the American forces doing a good job; 79% have little or no confidence in American forces; and 42% even believe that attacking American troops is “acceptable.”<sup>978</sup> Now, where is a counterinsurgency effort more likely to be successful? “Hearts and minds” theory would predict country A. After all, in country A, the counterinsurgents—both local and foreign—seemingly have won over the population. In reality, however, country A reflects data from South Vietnam in October 1972, a few years before its collapse; by contrast, country B reflects Iraqi sentiments in March 2008, well into the dramatic turnaround of the Iraq Surge.

This comparison reflects a broader point: for all the talk of “hearts and minds” being the key to counterinsurgency, local public opinion is rarely studied and when it is, it often yields

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<sup>976</sup> A version of this chapter has been published in *Journal of Strategic Studies*. See Raphael S. Cohen, “Just How Important Are “Hearts & Minds” Anyway? Counterinsurgency Goes to the Polls,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, forthcoming.

<sup>977</sup> NARA RG 472, A1 462, “PAAS: Pacification Attitude Analysis System,” October 1972, p. 0586/1, 0586/6, and 0586/18

<sup>978</sup> ABC et al. 2008, Q14, Q19, Q26, pp. 10, 12, 15

surprising conclusions. In this appendix, I examine the relationship between local public opinion and victory in the Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq wars in eight sections. First, I briefly review the recent work on public opinion and counterinsurgency and outline my hypotheses. Second, I turn to the biases in wartime polling and argue that despite its problems, it still proves insightful. In the third section, I introduce the data used here. Fourth, I show how far fewer people are “up for grabs,” often amounting on a national level to a third of the population or less. Fifth, I examine how positive attitude shifts usually follow rather than precede military victory. Sixth, I explore “hearts and minds”’ modest impact on the counterinsurgent’s ability to collect intelligence and to deny the insurgency supplies. Seventh, I demonstrate how popular attitudes are a poor predictor of success. Finally, I conclude by outlining the implications of these findings. Ultimately, for all the talk of “hearts and minds” being the key to victory, insofar as polling data gives any insight, counterinsurgents have lost “hearts and hearts” while winning on the battlefield, and won “hearts and minds” while losing these wars in the end.

### **Public Opinion, Wars & Counterinsurgencies:**

While the academic debate over the drivers of domestic support for wars is well-developed, only recently have scholars turned this this question around and examined how local public opinion affects the counterinsurgent’s chances of success.<sup>979</sup> To be sure, ever since British High Commissioner to Malaya Gerald Templer remarked that victory in the Malayan Emergency lies in “the hearts and minds of the people,” there is a presumption that local public opinion drives victory.<sup>980</sup> And yet, historically, few counterinsurgents bothered to comprehensively

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<sup>979</sup> For the study of public opinion and war, see Mueller 2005; Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler 2005/2006; Gelpi 2006; Mueller 2006; Voeten and Brewer 2006. One of the areas where there has been significant work on local public opinion and insurgency has been in Afghanistan and Pakistan region, see Shapiro and Fair 2009/2010, Blair et. al 2013, Beath, Christia and Enikolopov 2012; Lyall, Blair and Imai 2013

<sup>980</sup> Clutterbuck 1966, p. 3

measure popular attitudes. Even in Malaya, British forces rarely comprehensively measured their efforts' impact on the attitudes of the insurgency's primary supporters—the ethnic Chinese population.

In the absence of evidence, common wisdom proposes that in any conflict, small factions support the guerillas and the government respectively, but the vast majority are fence sitters—uncommitted to either side. Indeed, the U.S. Army's *Counterinsurgency Manual* proclaims:

In almost every case, counterinsurgents face a populace containing an active minority supporting the government and an equally small militant faction opposing it. Success requires the government to be accepted as legitimate by most of that uncommitted middle, which includes the passive supporters of both sides.<sup>981</sup>

In fact, the *Manual* even includes a diagram of a notional population (see figure 1). Winning then requires persuading this uncommitted middle to support the government.<sup>982</sup> If they do, the population will stop supplying the insurgency with material and intelligence support or better yet, actively help hunt down the insurgents.

Figure 1:<sup>983</sup>

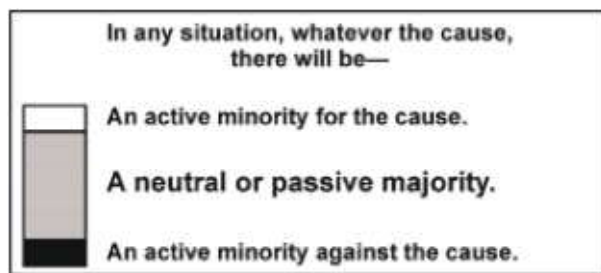


Figure 1-2. Support for an insurgency

As the *Manual* continues, the counterinsurgents need a landslide victory in the battle for public opinion. “Because of the ease of sowing disorder, it is usually not enough for

<sup>981</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-20

<sup>982</sup> Ibid.

<sup>983</sup> Ibid, p. 1-20

counterinsurgents to get 51 percent of popular support; a solid majority is often essential.”<sup>984</sup>

Since the *Manual's* theory of victory relies on starving the insurgency of supplies, the counterinsurgent must deprive the insurgency of as many sources for logistical support as possible. As the *Manual* states, “undermining an insurgency’s popular support is the most effective way to reduce insurgent support capabilities,” which it defines as the insurgency’s logistical, financial and intelligence resources.<sup>985</sup> The tighter this proverbial blockade is, the quicker and more thoroughly it will be able to bring the insurgency to its knees.

Is this theory empirically true? There are at least three reasons to doubt this model of public opinion. First, there is the question of who comprises the uncommitted middle. If the uncommitted middle consists of anyone who is not actively fighting, then the model is true of almost any war—not just counterinsurgencies—once one discounts the young, the old, the infirmed and other noncombatants. For example, despite World War II’s global span, mass mobilization and industrial-era warfare, only a fraction of the world’s estimated 2.3 billion people served as uniformed combatants.<sup>986</sup> If, on the other hand, the “uncommitted middle” consists of persuadable individuals, then it may be smaller than the *Manual* surmises. Judging from political elections these countries, the “uncommitted middle” may only be a much narrower portion of the population. For example, the December 2005, and 2010 Iraqi elections failed to give any single party a clear majority.<sup>987</sup> Even in the January 2005 Iraqi election, no party won a clear majority—despite a Sunni boycott.<sup>988</sup> Similarly, in Afghanistan’s 2009 elections, President Hamid Karzai only won just under half of the vote (49.7%), even with alleged voter

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<sup>984</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-20

<sup>985</sup> FM 3-24, p. 3-16

<sup>986</sup> “World Population.”

<sup>987</sup> The December 2005 elections gave the United Iraqi Alliance (Shi’a) 128 seats, the Kurdish Coalition (Kurd) 53 seats, the Iraqi Accordance Front (Sunni) 44 seats, the Iraqi National List (secular) 25 seats, the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue (Sunni) 11 seats and a handful of seats to smaller parties. (DOD 2006a, p. 9). The 2010 elections were arguably even more divisive with near parity between the Sunni-led Iraqiyya list, and the Shi’a-dominated State of Law (SoL) Alliance, getting near equal representation. (DOD 2010b, p. 1).

<sup>988</sup> CNN 2005

fraud.<sup>989</sup> In essence, “hearts and minds” theory demands that counterinsurgents do what most politicians in these same countries cannot—win overwhelming support.

Second, public opinion may not be very malleable. Violence—and its corresponding emotional toll—should entrench people’s views of the combatants. Moreover, changing one’s loyalties may very well be a question of life or death.<sup>990</sup> As a result, the counterinsurgent’s ability to sway opinion through economic aid or political reforms may be limited. After all, few people will shift their loyalties for a new well or a freshly renovated school, if doing so, could cost them their lives.<sup>991</sup> Moreover, if economic and political inducements cannot trump threats, counterinsurgent may only be able to win “hearts and minds,” only after defeating the insurgency.

Third, shifting this uncommitted middle may not lead to strategic victory. As the *Counterinsurgency Manual* itself admits, insurgencies do not require the support of the majority—or even a large minority—of the population. Of course, the insurgency requires a share of the population to provide it with combatants and supplies, but the exact percentage can vary dramatically. For example, insurgencies with robust foreign supply lines, wealthier supporters or more of an ability to “live off the land” may be able to thrive with relatively few supporters. And in some cases, the insurgency can simply coerce the population into providing the resources it needs.

On the other side of the equation, counterinsurgents also require a support base and the passivity of the rest, but they may not need the majority’s goodwill either. Perhaps, the most commonly cited strategic reason for the uncommitted middle is for intelligence gathering, but in

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<sup>989</sup> Tavernise, Landler and Cooper 2009

<sup>990</sup> Similarly, Kalyvas and Kocher 2007 argue that in many civil wars it may be safer for individuals to be associated with either side, rather than as noncombatants.

<sup>991</sup> For more on this argument, see Kalyvas 1999

practice, its importance may be more limited.<sup>992</sup> First, counterinsurgents also can use technical means to gather intelligence, such as imagery or signals intercepts. Second, informants provide intelligence for a variety of reasons—rewards, personal vendettas, ego, blackmail and so on—that have little or nothing to do with their attitudes toward the counterinsurgent. Third, since intelligence is as much about quality as it is quantity, counterinsurgents may do just as well with a select few but accurate informants, than a wide pool of mediocre ones. In sum, while a large pool of good Samaritans willing to volunteer information is certainly a plus, overall public opinion may matter less to the intelligence effort, than often presumed.

This analysis then leads to four basic hypotheses about the relationship between popular support and counterinsurgency.

H<sub>1</sub> The “uncommitted middle” in counterinsurgencies is relatively small.

H<sub>2</sub> The counterinsurgent’s ability to win “hearts and minds” is often limited, and comes only after defeating the insurgency.

H<sub>3</sub> Public support has only a limited impact on the counterinsurgent’s ability to collect intelligence and the insurgent’s ability to fund itself.

H<sub>4</sub> The degree of public support for the counterinsurgent is a poor predictor of victory.

All four claims can be tested by examining local public opinions polls, but before doing so, there needs to be a discussion the limitations of this data.

### **Biases in Polling:**

All polls only approximate reality. Polls assume that a small sample, drawn at random, can estimate the attitudes of the overall population. The methodology behind polling, while

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<sup>992</sup> For the logic of winning the population’s goodwill as a means of increasing the flow of human intelligence, see, “Middle Stage: ‘Inpatient-Care—Recovery,” FM 3-24, p. 5-2. For importance of human intelligence to counterinsurgency, see Alywin-Foster 2005, Petraeus 2006 and Kilcullen 2006-2007

scientific, is far from perfect. How questions are phrased, how polls are conducted, and how samples are drawn can all impact a poll's results. As a result, polls have margins of error, an explicit statement by the pollster of the range where they expect reality will differ from their results. While these differences are often sold as being insignificant, even sophisticated surveys in polling-friendly environments can yield false predictions.<sup>993</sup>

Polling in conflict zones compounds these challenges. Respondents and pollsters may place personal safety over accuracy. After all, why should respondents admit to supporting the insurgency, when doing so can lead to incarceration, if not worse? Why should pollsters collect data in places where they can be mistaken as government agents? Less nefariously but perhaps no less importantly, counterinsurgencies—like those discussed here—can occur in places with uneven development, conservative social mores, and multiple *lingua franca*. If only practical reasons, pollsters may only collect the “easily” available data: only from the wealthy (and so more likely to have phones for interviews), only from men (who are often more accessible than women in conservative societies), and only from so those who speak the majority language.

Despite these faults, polls still contain useful information. First, as shall be explained in the subsequent section, the polling data used here comes from large, sophisticated surveys capturing wide swaths of society. Most were conducted in person—mitigating some of the socio-economic biases of phone and internet polling. Additionally, most of the Iraq and Afghanistan data comes from well-respected independent media and nongovernmental organizations, who should be less tainted with explicit government associations.

Second, even biased data can still be insightful. While individual data points may be misleading, trend lines—gained from asking the same questions over the years—can still prove

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<sup>993</sup> Gallup, for example, famously incorrectly predicted the results of popular vote during the 2012 American election cycle. Gallup Editors 2012

useful, provided the biases remain roughly consistent over time. Moreover, these biases should lead to *overestimating* support for the government and *underestimating* support for the insurgents. To the extent the respondents have reasons to lie, it would be to tell the pollsters what they think they want to hear and since pollsters are most likely to be painted as government agents, this would inflate government support. In other words, polls should show that the government won “hearts and minds,” when in fact it has not, and so, if they do not yield these results, it should increase one’s confidence in the results.

Finally, on a subjective level, many of the responses seem surprisingly open and frank, particularly in the Iraq and Afghanistan surveys. In Iraq, 57% of respondents in a ABC News, the BBC and NHK poll admitted that they approved of attacks on Coalition Forces in August 2007.<sup>994</sup> Similarly in an October 2005 Department of State Office of Research poll, more than 80% of the residents of Mosul, Tikrit and Baquba, as well as more than 50% of the residents of Kirkuk and Baghdad, described the perpetrators of violence against Multinational Forces as “patriots” and “freedom fighters.”<sup>995</sup> A similar poll in Afghanistan—conducted on behalf of ABC News, the BBC, ARD, and the *Washington Post*—found that 17% of the respondents supported foreign fighters, 11% supported the Taliban, and 27% felt that attacks against American and International Security Assistance Forces could be “justified.”<sup>996</sup> Admittedly, Vietnam polling appears less forthright. Even here, however, a 1968 poll found that approximately a quarter of all respondents felt that the United States was either a “not so dependable” or simply “not a dependable ally.”<sup>997</sup> Time and again, respondents did not simply say what the counterinsurgent

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<sup>994</sup> ABC et. al 2008, Q26, p. 15

<sup>995</sup> DOD 2006a, p. 32

<sup>996</sup> ABC et. al 2010, Q25c, Q25d, Q33 pp. 31, 33

<sup>997</sup> Exact percentages ranged from 20-25% depending on location, with the respondents in the Highlands expressing more skepticism about American support. “Summary of Post Tet Attitudes of General Public in Saigon and Six Provincial and Six Provincial Capital Cities as Expressed in Sample Surveys Conducted Between March and June 1968,” Table XLIX. NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 9.



wanted to hear. And so, while it is important not to read too much into individual numbers, the broad brush strokes can provide rare windows into popular sentiments.

### **The Data:**

The Vietnam War saw one of the first attempts by a counterinsurgent to systematically capture local attitudes. Initially, the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO)—an interagency venture between the military, the United States Information Agency and the State Department—collected polling data.<sup>998</sup> Later, in April 1969, the Pacification Studies Group of the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) program developed the Pacification Attitude Analysis System or PAAS. The concept was to recruit 100 plus three man teams to collect data from all over South Vietnam—both rural and urban, in all four military Corps Tactical Zones.<sup>999</sup> By 1970, teams interviewed an average of 2,500 people a month—mainly between the ages of 18 and 55, primarily but not exclusively farmers and deliberately excluding military and government employees—from over 160 hamlets.<sup>1000</sup> PAAS continued to expand: by 1971, about 3500 rural and 2000 urban subjects were interviewed monthly, with ever more extensive questionnaires analyzed by early forays into computer processing.<sup>1001</sup> Ultimately, PAAS tried to measure the critical element in CORDS' theory of victory—whether the United States was winning “hearts and minds.”

The administrators of the PAAS struggled with conducting public opinion research in Vietnam. An early, internally circulated 1968 JUSPAO survey contains a lengthy nine page

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<sup>998</sup> For example of the polls, see *ibid.* Also RG 472, A1 474, Box 5. “Summary of Attitudes of Saigon General and Elite Publics as Expressed in a Sample Survey Conducted During the Last Week of May and First Week of June 1968.”

<sup>999</sup> “Pacification Attitude Analysis System Preliminary Survey #1,” p. 1 NARA RG 472, A 462, Box 2

<sup>1000</sup> “Additional Question from the Fulbright Committee,” March 14, 1970. NARA RG 472, A462, Box 2

<sup>1001</sup> “Year End Summary (PAAS) — 1971,” p. 1. January 4, 1972. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 42; “Pacification Attitude Analysis System (PAAS),” May 1, 1971. See pages B-3 through B-5. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 30

appendix about how to ensure the data's validity in a wartime environment. To hone their accuracy, JUSPAO consulted the Opinion Research Corporation (who previously conducted public opinion research in Vietnam for the Columbia Broadcasting System).<sup>1002</sup> While JUSPAO expected a pro-South Vietnam tilt, they believed their results did not whitewash South Vietnam's flaws. After all, 70% of respondents said that they were worse off than a year earlier; 55% of residents of Hue criticized the South Vietnam relief effort; and 52% of the residents in Vinh Long said the American forces shared the blame for the recent destruction.<sup>1003</sup> Likewise, in later surveys, substantial numbers of respondents stated other potentially controversial views, like criticizing the South Vietnamese government for corruption.<sup>1004</sup>

Perhaps, the most problematic aspect of the PAAS data was the relatively high percentage of the "don't know" responses, which sometimes accounted for two-thirds of all answers. Indeed, this troubled JUSPAO from the very start.<sup>1005</sup> At the time, JUSPAO argued these null responses corresponded to the question's level of abstraction—with fewer for those asking for personal knowledge and the most for questions asking respondents to predict South Vietnam's future or evaluate the role of the United States at large.<sup>1006</sup> In other words, JUSPAO believed the null responses reflected a genuine lack of knowledge rather than intimidation, but even if true, it reflects a lack of confidence in the counterinsurgent and the future. And so, if all polls should be taken with a grain of salt, then in Vietnam's case, it should be more like a lump. Still, PAAS laid the intellectual groundwork for later, arguably more objective public opinion surveys.

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<sup>1002</sup> "Summary of Post Tet Attitudes of General Public in Saigon and Six Provincial and Six Provincial Capital Cities as Expressed in Sample Surveys Conducted Between March and June 1968," August 23, 1968, p. 3. NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 9.

<sup>1003</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6

<sup>1004</sup> For example, May and November 1971 surveys of urban South Vietnamese found that 22% and 18% of respondents listed "crime and corruption" as their one of their top three major concerns. "Year End Summary (PAAS) — 1971," p. 3 January 4, 1972. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 42.

<sup>1005</sup> "Summary of Post Tet Attitudes of General Public in Saigon and Six Provincial and Six Provincial Capital Cities as Expressed in Sample Surveys Conducted Between March and June 1968," August 23, 1968, p. 7-9. NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 9.

<sup>1006</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Operation Enduring Freedom brought a renewed interest in polling. With a rural population where almost half are illiterate, Afghanistan is not an easy place to collect public opinion data.<sup>1007</sup> Still, at least two organizations consistently collected Afghan opinion data, asking the same questions over several years and publically releasing their data. First, a conglomeration of ABC News, the BBC, ARD and *The Washington Post* sponsored six polls by the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research and Langer Research Associates between October 2005 and November 2010. The 2010 survey interviewed in person 1,691 Afghans from across the country, roughly equally split on gender lines, in both Dari and Pashto and drawing on a range of ethnic backgrounds (though Pashtuns and Tajiks each comprised about a third of the sample).<sup>1008</sup> Second, the Asia Foundation, also working through Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research, sponsored annual polls since 2004. The 2012 Asia Foundation survey was somewhat larger and more extensive than the ABC News et. al one—interviewing 6,290 Afghans in person across 34 provinces in Afghanistan, but like the former set of surveys, they also aimed at a roughly representative linguistic, ethnic, urban-rural and gender split.<sup>1009</sup>

The Iraq War took polling to new heights. From the start, a variety of government and independent media outlets collected data. Perhaps, the most insightful polling comes from a joint effort between D3 Systems of Vienna, Virginia and KA Research Ltd of Istanbul, Turkey.<sup>1010</sup> Unlike the official governmental polls, which the Iraqi public may have viewed with suspicion, the D3 Systems and KA Research polls were conducted on behalf of respected media outlets including ABC News, the BBC, and NHK. The polls captured a large cross section of Iraqi society—consisting of in person interviews of 2,228 Iraqis ages 18 and older, from across all

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<sup>1007</sup> ABC et. al 2010, p. 3.

<sup>1008</sup> Ibid., p. 53-56

<sup>1009</sup> Hopkins 2012, pp. 179-183

<sup>1010</sup> Of note, D3 Systems also has ties to the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research, helping to standardize the methodology across the two cases. ABC et al. 2010, p. 19

102 districts in Iraq, in both Kurdish and Arabic, with an estimated sampling error of 2.5% at a 95% confidence interval.<sup>1011</sup> Like any polls, they are not perfect: they are not as frequent as one may have liked, some questions were asked only intermittently, and so on. That said, together—the PAAS data from Vietnam and the surveys from both Afghanistan and Iraq—provide some insight into the battle for popular opinion and a basis to test the aforementioned hypotheses.

### **The Uncommitted Middle Third**

Perhaps, the most basic question to ask about “hearts and minds” theory is just how large is the “uncommitted middle” or how many people are actually open to persuasion? According to the *Counterinsurgency Manual*, the vast majority should fall into this category.<sup>1012</sup> If, however, the population’s preferences for the combatants more closely resemble these countries’ political elections, a far smaller segment would actually be “up for grabs.” Polling data provides only a partial answer: it shows how many respondents change their opinion over time, not those who theoretically *could* change their mind (and do not) or who do change their mind but will not admit it. Still, insofar as the data allows, the “committed middle” is on a national level often amounts to a third of the population or less.

#### *Quality of Life:*

Perhaps, one of the most benign and consequently, best gages of the “uncommitted middle” is also the most indirect, where respondents simply characterize their quality of life and yet even here, relatively few respondents shifted their opinion over time. In Vietnam, when PAAS asked respondents to rate how the security situation compared to last month, answers shifted by less than 40% in monthly polls taken from 1969 to 1972, hovering from 32% to 62% saying “better,”

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<sup>1011</sup> See ABC et. al 2008, 2009

<sup>1012</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-20

and from 32% to 70% saying it was the same over the course of the surveys.<sup>1013</sup> In Afghanistan, in the ABC News et. al polling, when respondents were asked about the conditions in their neighborhood or village, answers varied by 21% in the six polls conducted between 2005 and 2010.<sup>1014</sup> Similarly, in the Asia Foundation polls, when respondents were asked about their prosperity today compared with under the Taliban, answers varied by only 15% from 2006 to 2012.<sup>1015</sup> Finally, when ABC News et. al asked Iraqis to rate how their life was going in a series of six polls conducted between 2004 and 2009, answers varied by 32%.<sup>1016</sup>

#### *Local Counterinsurgents:*

Asking the respondents to rate local security forces is a more delicate question. According to the PAAS data, confidence in the South Vietnamese military increased dramatically, lending credence to the idea that the overwhelming majority of the population is, indeed, “uncommitted.” In December 1969, a mere 20.2% rated the South Vietnamese Army as “very effective” or “effective.”<sup>1017</sup> By December 1970, this number rose to 46%,<sup>1018</sup> and a mere two years later, 82% of rural and 93% respondents reported that the South Vietnamese military were very effective.<sup>1019</sup> Just as importantly, perhaps, the number of null responses also dropped sharply—

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<sup>1013</sup> Of note, both the 70% and 32% are outliers, excluding these data points, the number of respondents who assessed security as the “same” as last month ranged only from 41% to 64%. “Data from: “Pacification Attitude Analysis System Preliminary Survey #1,” question 16. NARA RG 472, A 462, Box 2; “Pacification Attitude Analysis System Preliminary Survey 3,” p. 3. December 1969. NARA RG 462, Box 7; “Pacification Attitude Analysis System,” December 1970. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 19; “Public Attitude Analysis System,” February 1971. NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 83; “Pacification Attitude Analysis System,” December 1971. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 42

<sup>1014</sup> Answers varied from 83% saying life was “very” or “somewhat” good in 2005 to 62% in 2009. ABC News et al. 2010, p. 21

<sup>1015</sup> Answers varied from 54% saying “more prosperous” recorded in 2006 and 2009, and a low of 39% in 2008. Hopkins et. al. 2012, Q13, table 5.2, p. 65

<sup>1016</sup> The recorded high was 71% saying their lives were “good” or “very good” in 2005 and the low was 39% in 2007. ABC News et al 2009, Q1, p. 1

<sup>1017</sup> “Pacification Attitude Analysis System Preliminary Survey 3,” Q21, p. 5. December 1969. NARA RG 462, Box 7.

<sup>1018</sup> “Pacification Attitude Analysis System,” December 1970. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 19

<sup>1019</sup> “Airgram for Nov. PAAS,” Q5, p. 3. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 40

from 68.9% in December 1969<sup>1020</sup> to 39% in December 1970<sup>1021</sup> to a mere 7% for rural and 3% for urban responses in November 1972.<sup>1022</sup>

That said, three caveats are in order. First, since the PAAS data was collected by the government this may have biased the data in favor of the South Vietnamese military, especially as American forces withdrew and the South Vietnamese military increasingly became the country's primary institution. Second, this increase may reflect the growing presence of the South Vietnamese military near population centers: even in 1969, areas which had a South Vietnamese troop presence consistently scored higher.<sup>1023</sup> Third, confidence in the rest of the South Vietnamese government did not show the same improvements. In December 1969, only 17.3% and 31% of respondents rated the Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF) respectively as "very effective" or "effective" respectively.<sup>1024</sup> By November 1972, these numbers had grown to 66% rural and 69% urban for the RFs, and 67% of both rural and urban respondents for the PFs.<sup>1025</sup> Confidence in the National Police also rose modestly from 12% saying they were "effective" or "very effective" in October 1969 to 35% of rural and 59% of urban respondents by November 1972.<sup>1026</sup> Similarly, the percentage of respondents who characterized the National Government as possessing "high quality and ability" increased from 44% in January 1970 to 69% in December 1970.<sup>1027</sup>

In Afghanistan, often less than 15% of the public nationally shifted their support for the government. When the Asia Foundation asked Afghans about their confidence in various

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<sup>1020</sup> "Pacification Attitude Analysis System Preliminary Survey 3," Q21, p. 5. December 1969. NARA RG 462, Box 7.

<sup>1021</sup> "Pacification Attitude Analysis System," December 1970. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 19

<sup>1022</sup> "Airgram for Nov. PAAS," Q5, p. 3. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 40

<sup>1023</sup> "Pacification Attitude Analysis System Preliminary Survey 3," Q21, p. 5. December 1969. NARA RG 462, Box 7

<sup>1024</sup> "Pacification Attitude Analysis System Preliminary Survey 3," Q17, 19 p. 4. December 1969. NARA RG 462, Box 7.

<sup>1025</sup> "Airgram for Nov. PAAS," pp. 7-8. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 40

<sup>1026</sup> "Pacification Attitude Analysis System Preliminary Survey #1," Q27, p. 6. NARA G 472, A 462, Box 2; "Airgram for Nov. PAAS," p. 9. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 40. The gap between urban and rural residents in these numbers likely is partially due to the fact that the National Police tended to be concentrated in urban centers, rather than the countryside.

<sup>1027</sup> "Pacification Attitude Analysis System," December 1970. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 19

institutions, those expressing “a great deal” and “a fair” amount of confidence in Afghan National Army varied between 87% and 95% over the span of seven surveys from 2006 to 2012, while confidence in the National Police ranged from 79% to 86% during the same timeframe.<sup>1028</sup> Likewise, when ABC News et. al asked Afghan’s confidence in the local police’s ability to provide “security and stability” in five polls between 2006 and 2010, responses also changed by only 12%.<sup>1029</sup> Similarly, in the Asia Foundation’s polls, beliefs about how the “national government was carrying out its responsibilities” varied 13% in the six times this question was asked between 2007 and 2012.<sup>1030</sup> And ABC News et al’s polling showed that confidence in the central government and in the provincial government shifted by 7% and 10% respectively over the same five surveys.<sup>1031</sup> Indeed, the only major exception was when ABC News et. al. asked Afghans to rate the quality of their “present government” where the answers varied by 22% over six surveys from 2005 to 2010.<sup>1032</sup>

Finally, support for the Iraqi security forces and government also remained relatively consistent. Once the Iraqi Army was reconstituted, those Iraqis expressing “a great deal” and “quite a lot” of confidence in the Iraqi Army varied from 12% from 2005 until 2009.<sup>1033</sup> Similarly, confidence in the police hovered in a 10% range in six polls between 2004 and 2009.<sup>1034</sup> By

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<sup>1028</sup> Hopkins et. al 2012, Table 7.1 (Q42 a & b), p. 81

<sup>1029</sup> From a high of 79% in 2006 to a low of 67% in 2007. ABC News et. al 2010, Q40c, p. 38

<sup>1030</sup> From a high of 80% saying a “very good” or “good” job in 2007 to a low of 67% in 2008. Hopkins et. al 2012, Figure 7.1 (Q45), p. 85

<sup>1031</sup> ABC News et. al 2010, Q40a and B, pp. 37-38

<sup>1032</sup> From a high of 80% saying “good” or “excellent” in 2005 to only 58% saying the same in 2010. Ibid., Q7A, p. 24

<sup>1033</sup> ABC News et. al 2009, Q16, p. 12. Answers ranged between a low of 61% in February 2007 and a high of 73% in February 2009. Of note, the 2003 and 2004 responses were 38% and 56% respectively. These numbers are not included in the average because the Iraqi Army was dissolved in 2003 and was barely in existence in 2004—with only 50,000 strong in July 2004. Casey 2012, p. 189

<sup>1034</sup> Answers ranged between a low of 64% in February 2007 and a high of 74% in February 2009. ABC News et. al 2009, Q16, p. 12. Of note, the 2003 number was 46%, but was excluded because immediately after the invasion, the Iraqi police fell into disarray and needed to be reconstituted.

contrast, Iraqis felt less warmly towards their political leadership, but percentages also remained roughly constant—varying by only 11% in seven polls conducted between 2003 and 2009.<sup>1035</sup>

#### *Foreign Counterinsurgents:*

In some respects, attitudes towards foreign counterinsurgents—in this case the United States and its allies—can be more sensitive, since these polls were either done by (in the case of PAAS) or likely to be associated with (for the western media polls from Iraq and Afghanistan) the United States government. Surprisingly, however, foreign counterinsurgents polled poorly—especially as these conflicts dragged on. When PAAS asked how effective American forces were, responses changed by 20% in four polls conducted between October 1969 and February 1971—with only between 19% and 39% saying effective, and the vast majority refusing to answer.<sup>1036</sup> In ABC News et. al's Afghanistan polling, favorable views of the United States, confidence in the American ability to provide security and positive ratings of American work in the country shifted more significantly—by 40% or less over six polls from 2005 and 2010, but all in a negative direction.<sup>1037</sup> And in contrast to anecdotal accounts, polling suggests that Iraqi attitudes toward the United States were consistently negative.<sup>1038</sup> Only 18% to 37% of the Iraq public thought the Coalition was doing a “good” or “very good” job in five polls from 2005 to 2009.<sup>1039</sup> Similarly, between 15% and 26% of the Iraqi public had “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in “US occupation forces” in seven polls from 2003 to 2009.<sup>1040</sup> Finally, support

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<sup>1035</sup> Responses hovered between 51% and 40% expressing “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in their local leaders. ABC News et. al 2009, Q16, p. 12.

<sup>1036</sup> Data from: “Pacification Attitude Analysis System Preliminary Survey #1,” question 25. RG 472, A 462, Box 2; “Pacification Attitude Analysis System Preliminary Survey 3,” question 23. December 1969. NARA RG 462, Box 7; “Pacification Attitude Analysis System,” December 1970. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 19; “Public Attitude Analysis System,” February 1971. NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 83

<sup>1037</sup> ABC News et. al 2010, p. 1. Of note, in Asia Foundation Polling from 2004, American favorability started off considerably lower—at 65% (rather than 83% in ABC News et. al poll) of the Afghan public, in which case the decline may be closer to the more typical 30% benchmark. See O’Hanlon and Albuquerque 2005, p. 13

<sup>1038</sup> Early estimates of popular support range from soldiers range from 50% to 90%. Ricks 2006, p. 177. Anecdotal accounts also suggest that popular support dropped off precipitously by 2004. See for example, ICG 2004, p. 3

<sup>1039</sup> ABC News et. al 2010, q21, p. 15

<sup>1040</sup> Ibid., q16, p. 12



for the Coalition's invasion also stayed consistent—with only 12% variation—in six surveys from 2004 to 2009.<sup>1041</sup> From the polls at least, foreign counterinsurgents' ability to positively shape national opinion appears relatively limited.

*Insurgents:*

Finally, probably the most sensitive question is directly asking support for the insurgency. After all, if pollsters are likely to be mistaken for government agents, then responding in the affirmative carries serious risk. As such, this is probably the poorest gage of the size of the uncommitted middle. Still, in both Iraq and Afghanistan, these questions were asked, with little variation over the course of the conflicts.

In Afghanistan, polls that directly measured support for the insurgents produced almost no variation. In the ABC News et. al polling, when asked to assess the support for the Taliban in their area, responses varied by only 6% in five surveys between 2006 and 2010.<sup>1042</sup> Similarly those respondents with a favorable view of the Taliban only varied by 5% in six surveys conducted between 2005 and 2010.<sup>1043</sup> Likewise, confidence in the Taliban's ability to provide security remained roughly constant as well varying only 5% over the course of five surveys.<sup>1044</sup> Afghan support for foreign jihadis also did not change much. The ABC News et. al polling showed a consistent 5% or 6% of respondents had a "very" or "somewhat" favorable view of Osama Bin Laden (except for the November 2007 polls which showed 9%, but even that was still within the margin of error).<sup>1045</sup> Similarly, Afghans' confidence in foreign jihadis' ability to provide security varied by six points in the four times the question was asked between 2007 and

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<sup>1041</sup> Answers ranged from 37% to 49% saying "somewhat" or "absolutely" right. Ibid., q8, p. 5

<sup>1042</sup> With a high of 12% recorded saying "very" or "somewhat" strong and a low of 6%. ABC News et. al 2010, q41e, p. 40

<sup>1043</sup> Between a low of 8% in 2005 and 13% in 2007. Ibid., Q49e, p. 44. Of note, a 2004 Asia Foundation survey found a similar 13%. O'Hanlon and Albuquerque 2005, p. 13

<sup>1044</sup> Between 6% in 2006 and 11% in 2009. ABC News et. al 2010, Q40e, p. 38

<sup>1045</sup> Ibid., Q49a, p. 44

2010.<sup>1046</sup> Likewise, support for foreign jihadis only rose by six points between 2006 and 2010.<sup>1047</sup>

Unlike Afghanistan, the ABC News et. al Iraq polls did not ask directly about support for the insurgents, but different organizations did ask whether insurgent attacks on Coalition forces could be justified, a tacit measure for pro-insurgent sympathies. As depicted in table 1, results varied only by 21% over eight surveys from 2003 to 2008. Interestingly, a similar question asked in Afghanistan produced almost identical variation of 22% over six surveys spanning 2005 to 2010.<sup>1048</sup>

Table 1:

Iraq: Are Attacks on US and Coalition Forces Justified?								
	Aug-03	May-04	Jan-05	Aug-05	Jan-06	Feb-07	Aug-07	Mar-08
Yes (Sometimes or Always):	36	47	53	45	47	51	57	42
SOURCE:	(a) Gallup	(b) CPA	(c ) Abu Dahbi/ Zogby International	(d) British MOD	(e) World Public Opinion.Org	(f) D3 Systems & KA Research Ltd.	(g) D3 Systems & KA Research Ltd.	(h) D3 Systems & KA Research Ltd.

#### Sources:

(a) Question: "Are there circumstances in which attacks against US Troops Can be Justified?," Gallup Poll conducted from August 8 to September 4, 2003 from *Iraq Index: Tracking Variables Relevant to Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq*, November 19, 2003

(b) Question: Do you agree with "The violent attacks are an effort to liberate Iraq from the United States and Coalition Forces?" Coalition Provisional Authority, 14-23 May, 2004, *Iraq Index: Tracking Variables Relevant to Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq*, April 18, 2005

(c) Question: "Do you believe that the ongoing insurgent attacks are a legitimate form of resistance?" Poll of Sunnis Only Abu Dhabi/Zogby International Poll, *Iraq Index: Tracking Variables Relevant to Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq*, April 18, 2005

(d) Question: "Iraqis who believe attacks against British and American troops are justified?" British Ministry of Defence Poll, August 2005. *Iraq Index: Tracking Variables Relevant to Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq*, October 30, 2006

(e) Question: "Do you approve or disapprove (strongly or somewhat) of attacks on US-led forces?" World Public Opinion.Org, January 31, 2006. *Iraq Index: Tracking Variables Relevant to Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq*, October 30, 2006

(f) Question: "Are attacks on Coalition Forces acceptable or not acceptable?" D3 Systems and KA Research Ltd., conducted for ABC, BBC, ARD, and NHK. Conducted in March 2008

(g) Question: "Are attacks on Coalition Forces acceptable or not acceptable?" D3 Systems and KA Research Ltd., conducted for ABC, BBC, ARD, and NHK. Conducted in March 2008

(h) Question: "Are attacks on Coalition Forces acceptable or not acceptable?" D3 Systems and KA Research Ltd., conducted for ABC, BBC, ARD, and NHK. Conducted in March 2008

<sup>1046</sup> Between 12% and 18%. Ibid., Q40g, p. 38

<sup>1047</sup> From 11% to 17%. ABC News et. al 2010, Q25c, p. 31

<sup>1048</sup> From 8% to 30% supportive. Ibid., Q33, p. 33

### *The Uncommitted Middle Third:*

In sum, across multiple conflicts, over a variety of questions, spanning periods of years, national public opinion often only 30% or fewer of the responses shifted over time, implying that “uncommitted middle” may be smaller than the *Manual* suggests. This contrasts with the simultaneous fairly dramatic shifts in strategy. In Vietnam, CORDS stood up its pacification program. Both Iraq and Afghanistan experienced American troop surges, changes in senior military commanders and precipitous shifts in violence during the polling period. Perhaps, this confirms more detailed studies of Afghanistan that emphasized how public opinion is shaped by strong intergroup biases, not easily overcome by the foreign counterinsurgent,<sup>1049</sup> and how inadequate tools like economic development are at gaining popular support in violence prone areas.<sup>1050</sup> And if the uncommitted middle is smaller and less malleable, then the counterinsurgent may not be able to persuade enough of the population to deny the insurgency’s access to resources.

The “hearts and minds” retort here is that all politics is local, as are all counterinsurgencies, so national polling is of limited importance. As the December 2012 Department of Defense report to Congress noted, 57% of Afghanistan’s population lived in areas with only 9% of the incidents, and 3% of the population lived in area with almost half of the incidents.<sup>1051</sup> In fact, in Regional Command Southwest, “Nahr-e Saraj, home to less than 0.5 percent of the Afghan population and the most violent district in Afghanistan, generated 11 percent of nationwide

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<sup>1049</sup> Lyall, Blair and Imai 2013 found that the Afghan population responded differently to Taliban versus ISAF attacks on civilians, thanks to strong “intergroup biases” that cannot easily be swayed or overcome.

<sup>1050</sup> See Beath, Christia and Enikolopov 2012

<sup>1051</sup> DOD 2012, p. 20

[Enemy Initiated Attacks] and 12 percent of direct fire attacks this year alone.”<sup>1052</sup> And so, small shifts in public opinion may produce a disproportionate effect, if they are concentrated in key areas. And yet, as we shall see, this may not be the case.

### **An Effect, Not A Cause:**

The next question is “hearts and minds” more of a cause or an effect? Traditional “hearts and minds” theory argues the former: victory can only be achieved once the population’s “hearts and minds” are won and the insurgency consequently is cut off from its lifeblood. Alternatively, “hearts and minds” may be the byproduct of victory, since the population’s gratitude comes from being spared the horrors of war or more cynically, from realizing it has no other choice. And insofar as Vietnam and Iraq polling data shows, the latter is the operative logic: “hearts and minds” are an effect, not a cause of victory.

As alluded to before, the United States and South Vietnam made progress in “winning hearts and minds,” but only after other metrics improved.<sup>1053</sup> In urban survey results conducted in the spring of 1968, 50% of Saigon residents and between 47% and 76% of six other major cities spread throughout South Vietnam residents reported feeling less secure than before the Tet offensive.<sup>1054</sup> After Tet, as reflected in chart 1, South Vietnamese increasingly saw the security situation as improving beginning in 1969, before attitudes stabilized in 1971. Importantly, as a CORDS briefing noted, perceptions of security improved only *after* incidents declined—indicating that military success may have won “hearts and minds,” rather than vice

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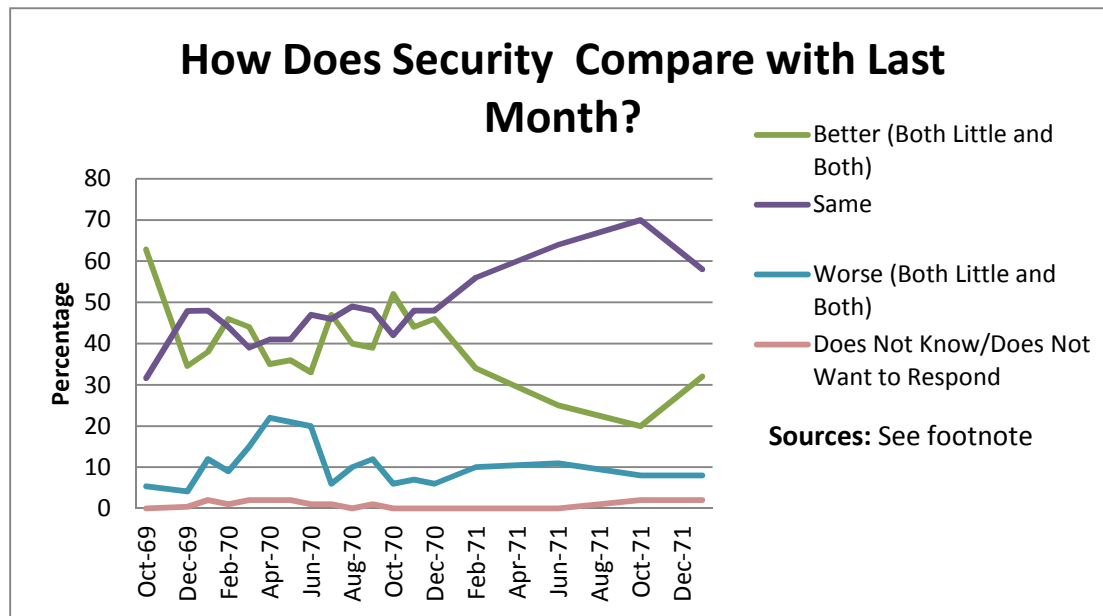
<sup>1052</sup> Ibid., p. 25

<sup>1053</sup> This raises the question of use of force’s relationship with popular opinion. Of the recent American counterinsurgencies, Vietnam was by far the most brutal and if American forces still won “hearts and minds” nonetheless, this further questions how counterinsurgents actually win “hearts and minds.”

<sup>1054</sup> “Summary of Post Tet Attitudes of General Public in Saigon and Six Provincial and Six Provincial Capital Cities as Expressed in Sample Surveys Conducted Between March and June 1968,” Table XXIV. NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 9. The six cites were Vinh Long and Sadec in IV Corps, Dalat and Quinhon in II Corps and Hue and Danag in I Corps.

versa.<sup>1055</sup> Similarly, respondents were more pessimistic than the Hamlet Evaluation System ratings depicted (particularly for A, B and C level rating)—indicating that either the latter ratings were inflated or that public opinion lagged behind other measurements of security (reaffirming that winning “hearts and minds” comes through winning on the battlefield).<sup>1056</sup>

Chart 1.<sup>1057</sup>



Iraq provides clearer evidence of which comes first, thanks to the dramatic turnaround of the Surge. During the Iraq Surge of 2007, violence dropped precipitously, from a peak of over 1600 security incidents in June 2007 to well under 400 by that point the following year (see chart 2). Importantly, as depicted in Chart 3, in the ABC News et. al polling, confidence in the Iraqi Army, police and local government remained largely unchanged during the Surge, with only the Iraqi

<sup>1055</sup> “Pacification Attitude Analysis System,” December 1970. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 19

<sup>1056</sup> WIEU/PAAS Briefing,” December 1970. NARA RG 462 A1 462, Box 15.

<sup>1057</sup> Data from: “Pacification Attitude Analysis System Preliminary Survey #1,” question 16. NARA RG 472, A 462, Box 2; “Pacification Attitude Analysis System Preliminary Survey 3,” p. 3. December 1969. NARA RG 462, Box 7; “Pacification Attitude Analysis System,” December 1970. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 19; “Public Attitude Analysis System,” February 1971. NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 83; “Pacification Attitude Analysis System,” December 1971. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 42

Army posting some modest gains, but only in February 2009—well after the Surge’s effects were felt. Iraqi perceptions of Americans are even more striking. To the extent the United States and its allies won “hearts and minds,” they did so not with General David Petraeus’ assumption of command in February 2007, nor with the shift in strategy, nor even with the turning point in violence in June 2007. In fact, Iraqi perceptions of American forces declined at least through August 2007. Only in the March 2008 polls, well after the security situation improved, did Iraqis become marginally more sympathetic to the United States (see charts 4 and table 1). In other “hearts and minds” seems to be of an effect, rather a cause of counterinsurgency success.

Chart 2:<sup>1058</sup>

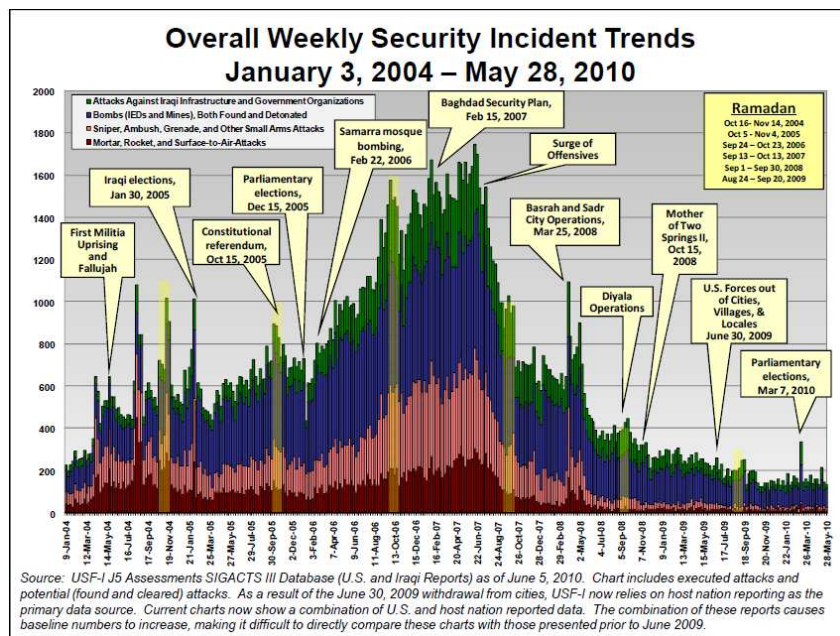


Chart 3:

<sup>1058</sup> DOD 2010b, p. 27

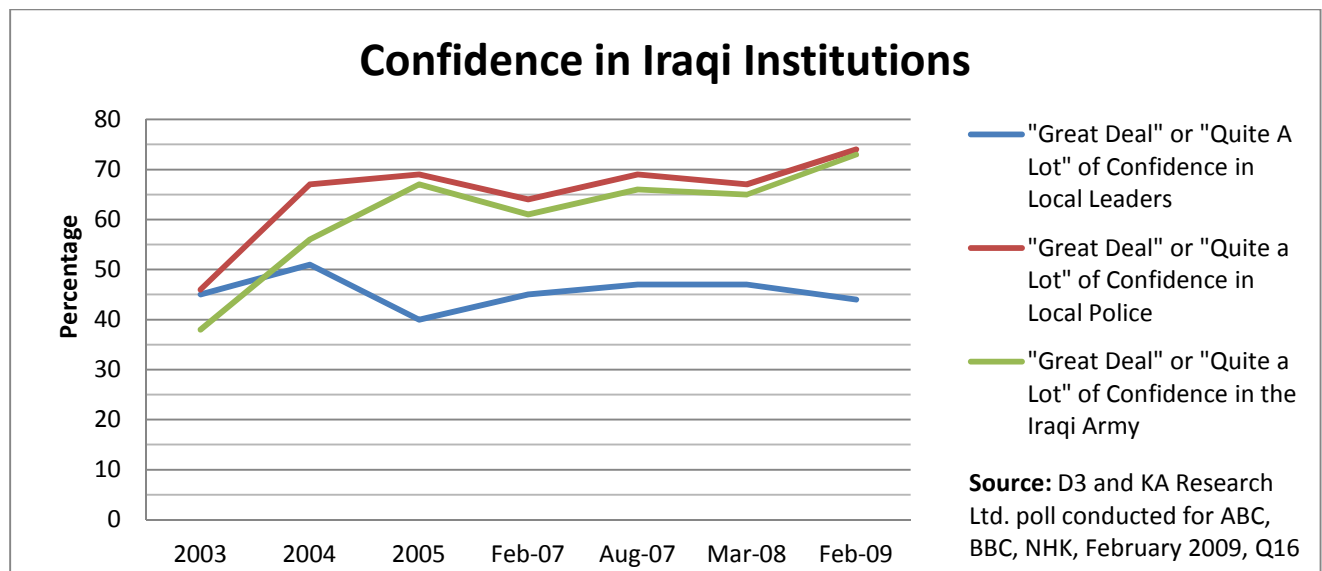
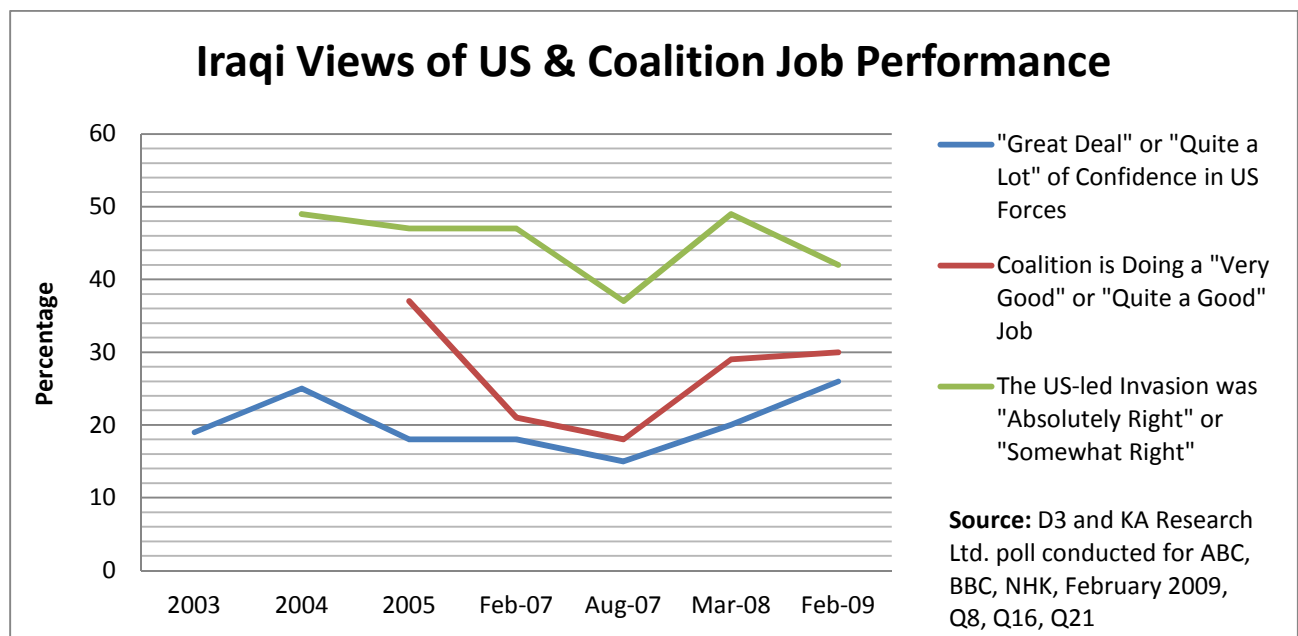


Chart 4:



More localized public opinion surveys paint a similar, if more nuanced story. The Department of State and later, Multi-National Corps Iraq (MNCI) captured public perceptions of security throughout Iraq and then reported these results, usually on the provincial level as part of the Department of Defense's "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" from July 2005 on

through July 2010. While these polls were done at the American government's behest (and so have more potential for bias), the general trends are still revealing.

Perhaps, the clearest story comes from where Iraq's turnaround began—Anbar province. Although the Sunni “Awakening” began the summer before, fewer than 20% of respondents reported feeling “safe and secure” in April 2007, despite the fact violence in the province already declined by almost 60% from its peak at over 1300 attacks in October 2006.<sup>1059</sup> In fact, Anbar did not cross the 50% threshold until the October 2007 poll—once attacks declined to 110 incidents per month, over 90% from its peak.<sup>1060</sup> After that point, however, between 60% and 80% of Sunnis believed that their neighborhoods were secure.<sup>1061</sup> This did not immediately translate into support for the Iraqi government. As late as April 2008, fewer than 20% of Anbaris thought that the Iraqi government was effective at maintaining security, much less performing other functions.<sup>1062</sup> Only by the October 2008 survey did a majority of Anbaris trust the Iraqi government to provide security. Ultimately, Anbar shows an important progression: first the insurgency is defeated, then the population feels secure and then only then, do counterinsurgents ever win “hearts and minds.”<sup>1063</sup>

Elsewhere, perceptions of the Iraqi government's ability to provide security ability changed less dramatically.<sup>1064</sup> In Diyala province, confidence grew but at a slower pace—from less than 10% polls conducted before July 2007 to between 30-50% in polls done through 2009 to eventually over 60% in March 2010, after violence declined in the province. In Salah ad Din

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<sup>1059</sup> “Number of Attacks” CENTCOM's FOIA Reading Room; DoD 2007b, p. 26

<sup>1060</sup> By then, over 70% of Anbar's residents reported feeling that their neighborhood was secure. DOD 2007d, p. 24

<sup>1061</sup> See DOD 2007d, p. 24; DOD 2008a, p. 27; DOD 2008b, p. 30; DOD 2008c, p. 29

<sup>1062</sup> DOD 2008b, p. 31

<sup>1063</sup> DOD 2008d, p. 27

<sup>1064</sup> One key point of caution on the data is warranted. The 2010 polls, particularly those in Baghdad, Salah ad Din, and Diyala, were sharply higher than previous ones. Since the data cuts off afterwards, it is impossible to tell whether this was a momentary spike in optimism—perhaps tied to Iraqi parliamentary elections in March or the impending American end of combat operations in August—or a lasting trend. Excluding the 2010 polls, there is little or no progress in these areas.



province, confidence remained at less than 10% of asked in polls through April 2009, before rising to less than 40% in polls in the January and March 2010 surveys. Similarly, in Baghdad and Kirkuk, polling yielded more erratic results but generally increased by roughly 20% during the conflict—with less than half of the population believing in the Iraqi government’s ability to provide security through 2009 to just more than half during the two polls conducted in 2010.<sup>1065</sup> Importantly, in all the cases, confidence in the government’s ability to provide security improved long after the residents reported feeling secure and well after violence declined in actuality—once again confirming that “hearts and minds” comes after the insurgency’s military defeat.

### **A Weak Mechanism:**

One of key justifications for the importance of “hearts and minds” revolves around intelligence and logistics. Theoretically, as the counterinsurgent wins “hearts and minds,” it increases its capacity to collect human intelligence and conversely, decreases the insurgents’ ability to acquire logistical support. As previously discussed, however, there are reasons to doubt this logic. While accurately measuring all three variables—popular support, counterinsurgent intelligence flow and insurgent logistical support—proves difficult, at least in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, winning “hearts and minds” was a far weaker mechanism than commonly believed.

In Iraq, the connection between human intelligence and public attitudes remains nebulous. As previous discussed, the Iraqi public was never favorably disposed to the Coalition in absolute terms, but as discussed in Chapter 7, multiple units reported relative ease in collecting human

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<sup>1065</sup> Trends for all the provinces are drawn from the quarterly “Measuring Stability in Iraq” reports—DOD 2006d, p. 26; DOD 2007b, p. 27; DOD 2007c, p. 25; DOD 2008b, p. 31; DOD 2008c, p. 30; DOD 2008d, p. 27; DOD 2009a, p. 29; DOD 2009b, p. 32; DOD 2009c, p. 32; DOD 2009d, p. 33; DOD 2010a, p. 38; DOD 2010b, p. 38. Of note, the August 2006 through the July 2007 reports and the January and March 2010 surveys asked the respondents about the ability of the Government of Iraq to protect their families. By contrast, those reports in the intervening years asked whether the Government of Iraq was effective at maintaining security.

intelligence, albeit of varying quality.<sup>1066</sup> More concretely, the Coalition and Iraqi government set up regional and national tip lines and from March 2005 through July 2007, the number of “actionable tips” were reported to Congress as part of the Department of Defense’s “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq” quarterly reports, providing a baseline of the population’s willingness to provide intelligence. In fact, on March 9, 2006, Multinational Forces Iraq spokesperson, then Major General Rick Lynch described the hotline’s tips as “98 percent are actionable,” yielding tangible results: in this case, 41 bomb makers captured and over 1,500 caches found.<sup>1067</sup> And other Coalition members also lauded this intelligence.<sup>1068</sup> Overall, the tip lines proved a remarkable success: total tips increased from 483 per month in March 2005 to 3,342 by August 2005 to 4,578 by March 2006 to over the 15,000 by November 2006 to a peak of almost 25,000 by May 2007.<sup>1069</sup>

The problem is, of course, that simultaneous to this surge in intelligence, support for the Coalition and to a lesser extent for the local government plummeted, while support for Iraqi Security Forces remained roughly constant (again, see charts 3-4 and table 1). Seemingly then, these informants were motivated by reasons other than goodwill towards the Coalition or else were not representative of overall Iraqi attitudes. Even more interestingly, tips received actually declined significantly in June and July 2007 to approximately 17,000, after which point the Defense Department stopped reporting these numbers in their quarterly reports.<sup>1070</sup> In other words, before the Coalition’s popularity rebounded sometime after the August 2007 poll, the

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<sup>1066</sup> For example, see account of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Armor Division from 2003 to 2004 (Mansoor 2008, pp. 51, 347). For 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade (Stryker), 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, Russell 2011, p. 147. For 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, see Woodward 2006, p. 291. For the overall Coalition, see Gordon and Trainor 2012, p. 49

<sup>1067</sup> Quigley 2006

<sup>1068</sup> Sergeant Major Jerry Craig estimated in 2005, for example, that 82% of the tips received on the hotline were actionable and insurgency related, and another 7% were related to criminal activity. Smith 2005

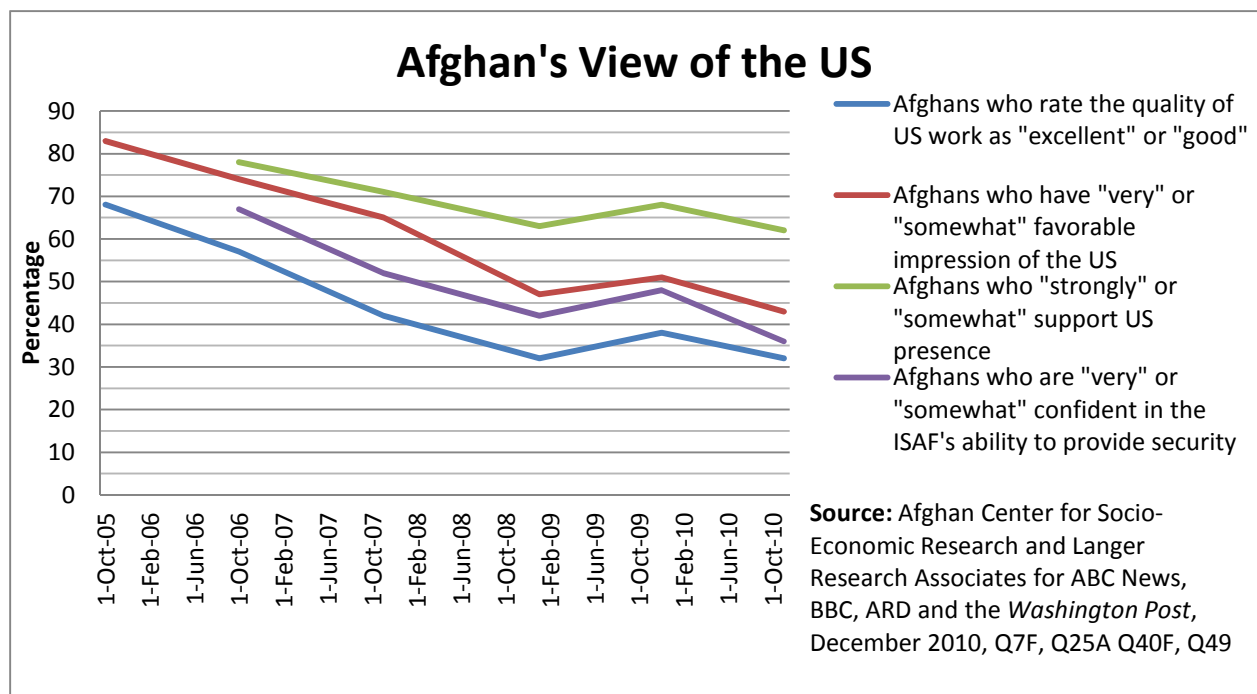
<sup>1069</sup> DOD 2006b, p. 45; DOD 2007c, p. 21

<sup>1070</sup> DOD 2007c, p. 21

number of tips actually dropped off. While the Defense Department attributed this trend to more tips given Coalition and Iraqi patrols in person, it does not provide data for this assertion.<sup>1071</sup>

Afghanistan also provides insight into the connection between intelligence gathering and the counterinsurgent's popularity—albeit indirectly. As mentioned before and depicted in chart 5 from 2005 to 2010, popular support for the Coalition plummeted. That said, according to a Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) report drawing on the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization's (JIEDDO) data, the number of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) “turned in” to the Coalition, perhaps the ultimate form of human intelligence, rose during this timeframe (see chart 6). While “turned in IEDs” remained a relatively small number in both absolute and relative terms (peaking at 40 out of the 1087 in April 2010), this should not be too surprising, given the risks involved.<sup>1072</sup>

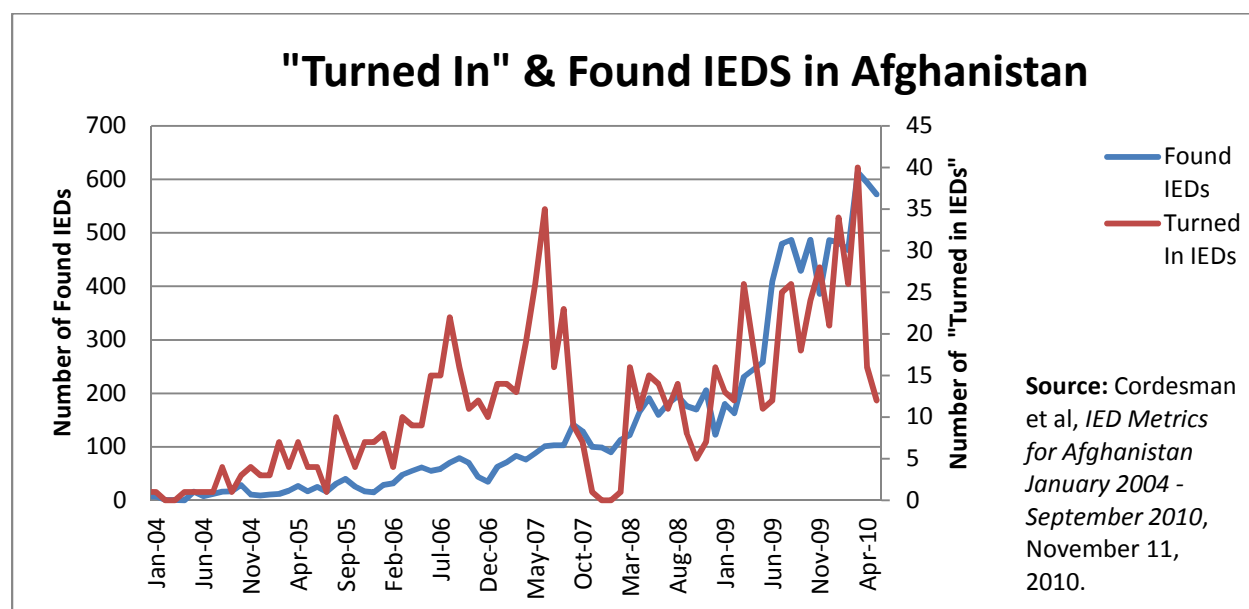
Chart 5:



<sup>1071</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1072</sup> Cordesman et. al 2010, pp. 2-3

Chart 6:



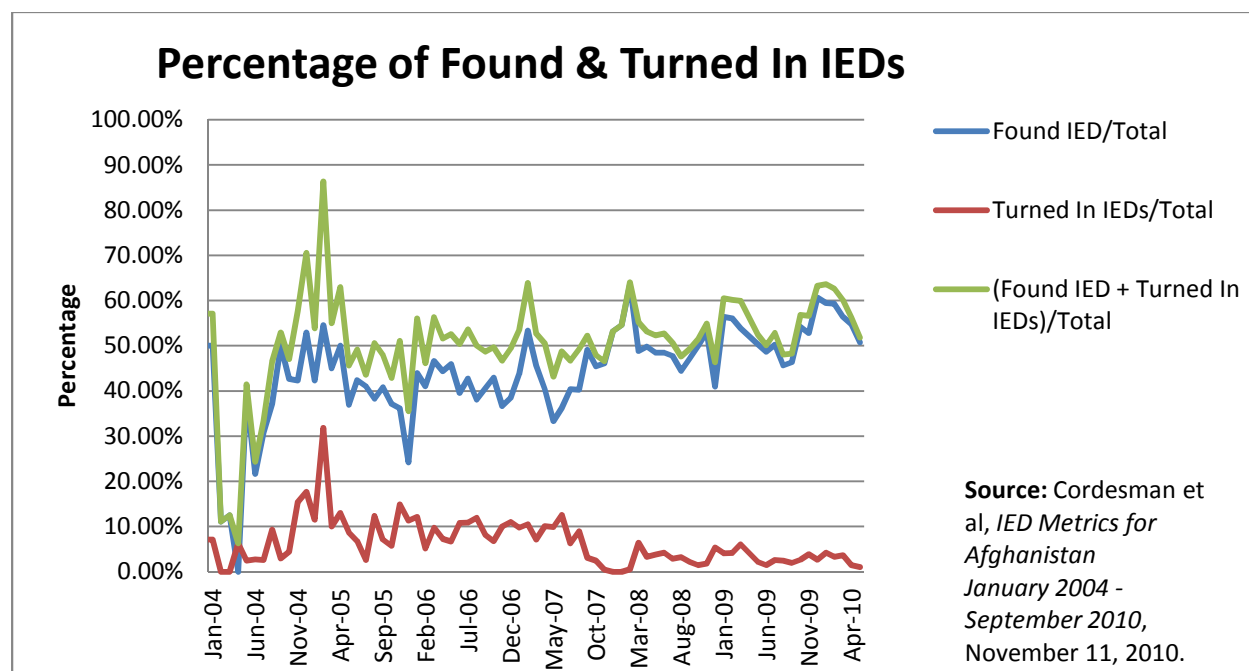
A more interesting metric comes from looking at found IEDs in Afghanistan in general. The CSIS report prompted an angry response by two Marine company commanders who served the volatile Helmand province in Southern Afghanistan between October 2009 and May 2010. They argued that CSIS and JIEDDO undercounted human intelligence's role in finding IEDs and claimed that "approximately 85% of our company's IED finds were due directly to local national tips, if not local nationals digging the IEDs out of the ground for us."<sup>1073</sup> Especially because the Afghan insurgency was highly localized and the Marines' area was one of the most violent, this possible underreporting cannot be dismissed lightly.<sup>1074</sup> If these company commanders' experiences are representative, then found IEDs provide another indirect measure of the human intelligence. Surprisingly, however, after significant variation during 2004 and early 2005 (mainly thanks to relatively few IED attacks in Afghanistan at the time, less than 50 a month), the rate of found and turned in IEDs stabilized around 50% of the total attacks (see chart 7). If

<sup>1073</sup> Cuomo and Gorman 2010, p. 1

<sup>1074</sup> In 2011 alone, Regional Commands South and Southwest that included Helmand province accounted for approximately 54% of the violence in the country. DOD 2011, pp. 61-62, 76

the Coalition's capacity to detect IEDs functions as proxy for its ability to human intelligence, then it remained roughly constant over this period.

Chart 7:



This consistency, however, contrasts with the national polling (which shows a decline in support for the Coalition), but also with more localized data. Polls from the southwestern Afghanistan, where the Marines were located, showed modest progress in battle for “hearts and minds.” For example, the United Nations Development Program’s—also contracting through the Afghan Centre for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research—*2011 Police Perception* survey reported increasing confidence in the Afghan National Police from 2010 to 2011 (from 55% to 65%) and support for international forces from 2009 to 2011 (from 33% to 37% to 52%) in the this region.<sup>1075</sup> Similarly, the Asia Foundation found that those residents who had “no sympathy” for “the reasons armed opposition used violence during the past year” grew from

<sup>1075</sup> UNDP 11, pp. 11, 38

38% in 2009 to 45% in 2010 to 61% in 2011.<sup>1076</sup> Likewise, those respondents saying the national government was doing a “good or very good job” increased from 59% in 2009 to 72% in 2011.<sup>1077</sup> Similar questions about the provincial and municipal governments also posted increases over the same time period, rising from 62% to 70% for the former and 55% to 69% for the latter.<sup>1078</sup> If this polling is accurate, this success at “hearts and minds” should translate into an increase in human intelligence, but its impact—as measured by found IEDs—seemed to be marginal.

Finally, the Vietnam War—which of the three conflicts analyzed here has the most developed record of the insurgent’s side of the war—questions whether the counterinsurgent’s popularity impacts the insurgency’s ability to sustain itself, as much as “hearts and minds” theory suggests. As detailed in Chapter 6, in Vietnam, the Viet Cong (VC) guerillas and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) required substantial logistical support—up to 380 tons of supplies per day.<sup>1079</sup> Much of these supplies—particularly food—came from South Vietnamese sources.<sup>1080</sup> As the North Vietnamese Army official history states, “Supplies for fulltime forces were provided primarily by contributions from people in the area where the unit was stationed.”<sup>1081</sup> Guerillas bought the food from the populace,<sup>1082</sup> collected it from the fields themselves,<sup>1083</sup> captured the stores on the battlefield,<sup>1084</sup> or taxed it from the population.<sup>1085</sup>

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<sup>1076</sup> Hopkins 2012, p. 59

<sup>1077</sup> Ibid., p. 85

<sup>1078</sup> Ibid., pp. 93, 95

<sup>1079</sup> Pape 1996, p. 74

<sup>1080</sup> This was also the opinion of many key players. President Lyndon Johnson, then Deputy later National Advisor Walt Rostow, Army Chief of Staff Harold Johnson and the Central Intelligence Agency. See: Krepinevich 1986, pp. 60, 187; McNamara and VanDeMark 1996, p. 152; McMaster 1997, p. 148

<sup>1081</sup> MHIV 2002, p. 67, 82

<sup>1082</sup> Ibid., p. 138

<sup>1083</sup> Ibid., p. 46

<sup>1084</sup> Dung 1977, p. 76; Guan 2004, p. 52

<sup>1085</sup> See, for example, “Viet Cong Tax System,” 29 May 1971 NARA RG 472, A1 474, Box 16 and for more localized reports, “I CTZ, Quang Ngai Province, Son Tinh District,” January 5, 1969. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 10, p. 2

Seemingly then, the American and South Vietnamese force's rising popularity in the PAAS data did not impede the insurgency's ability to sustain itself.

In sum, winning "hearts and minds" is less effective at enabling intelligence gathering or denying the insurgents a supply base than often believed. While co-opting a select few well-placed sources can be critical, Iraq and Afghanistan polling data suggests that winning the "hearts and minds" of the population as whole has less of an impact on the intelligence effort. Conversely, if the PAAS data is accurate, the Vietnam War suggests that insurgents can still buy, steal or coerce significant amount of resources from the local population—even if the counterinsurgent "won" their support.

### **A Poor Predictor of Success:**

Finally, the polling data raises perhaps the most fundamental question of all—just how important are "hearts and minds" to the ultimate success of a counterinsurgency. The PAAS data paints a picture of a public that was increasingly bullish about its future. In the October 1969, only 13.7% believed that South Vietnam would defeat the Viet Cong (VC) and 2.5% thought North Vietnam would withdraw, causing the VC to collapse.<sup>1086</sup> By January 1970, 24.8% predicted the military defeat of the VC and 11.4% expected the withdrawal of North Vietnamese support.<sup>1087</sup> As the conflict progressed, most South Vietnamese remained optimistic, despite the fact that more than three-quarters believed that the Communist forces were gaining strength.<sup>1088</sup> 60% of the respondents in May and 70% in June 1972 believed that the 1972 Communist offensive only increased support for the South Vietnamese

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<sup>1086</sup> "Pacification Attitude Analysis System Preliminary Survey #1," Q50, p. 11. RG 472, A 462, Box 2.

<sup>1087</sup> "Additional Question from the Fulbright Committee," Q2e, p. 2. March 14, 1970. NARA RG 472, A462, Box 2

<sup>1088</sup> "Pacification Attitude Analysis System," October 1972, p. 0586/4. NARA RG 472, A1 462

government.<sup>1089</sup> And in October 1972, as the Communist launched another mass offensive and the United States continued its withdrawal, 88% of rural and 99% of urban South Vietnamese thought that the Communists would be unable to hold the ground they conquered.<sup>1090</sup> Moreover, more than two-thirds stated that the American withdrawal was “wise” and would make South Vietnam stronger.<sup>1091</sup> History, of course, turned out differently.

In Iraq, despite the Surge’s success, on an absolute level, the United States never won “hearts and minds” in Iraq. Even in February 2009, only 30% of respondents thought the United States and its allies were doing a “good” or a “very good” job,<sup>1092</sup> and only 26% of respondents had either a “great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the “US occupation forces.”<sup>1093</sup> Even State Department and MNCI’s own polling conducted from January 2008 to March 2009 found that only about one in four Iraqis expressed confidence in the Coalition to protect them.<sup>1094</sup> And as late as March 2008, the last time ABC News et. al asked the question, 42% of respondents felt that attacking American forces could be justified (see table 1) and the February 2009 ABC News et. al poll recorded that 62% of Iraqis regarded Munyadar al Zaidi—the Iraqi journalist made famous for tossing his shoes at President George W. Bush—as a national hero.<sup>1095</sup> And so, while Bush recalls how Prime Minister Nuri al Maliki “gave an emotional toast about how the shoe thrower did not represent his people, and how grateful his nation was to America,” the polling data indicates otherwise.<sup>1096</sup>

And popularity was also no guarantee of Iraq’s long term success either. While Iraqi Security forces polled highly throughout the conflict, this did not prevent Iraq from backsliding

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<sup>1089</sup> “Highlights of the Rural 1972 PAAS Survey,” July 3, 1972, p. 3. NARA RG 472, A1 462, Box 42

<sup>1090</sup> Ibid. p. 0586/3

<sup>1091</sup> Ibid. p. 0586/18, 0586/20

<sup>1092</sup> ABC News et. al 2009, Q21, p. 15

<sup>1093</sup> Ibid., Q16, p. 12

<sup>1094</sup> For examples of these findings, DOD 2008a, p. 27; DOD 2008b, p. 31; DOD 2008c, p. 30; DOD 2008d, p. 28; DOD 2009a, p. 30; DOD 2009b, p. 32; DOD 2009c, p. 33.

<sup>1095</sup> ABC News et. al 2009, Q30, p. 19

<sup>1096</sup> Bush 2010, p. 392



once American forces were withdrawn. Moreover, the provinces that showed some of the most growth in confidence in Iraq's ability to provide in security—Anbar, Diyala and Kirkuk—became the insurgency's flashpoints once American forces withdrew.<sup>1097</sup>

Finally, whether Afghanistan will be a success has yet to be seen. What is true, however, is that the United States, its allies and Afghan institutions mostly enjoyed—in absolute terms—the support of most of the population for most of the war, and yet the conflict ranges on. Moreover, even in areas where on a local level the United States made progress in terms of “hearts and minds,” like in Helmand and more broadly southern Afghanistan, security progress proved ephemeral. As detailed in the regular reports to Congress, as the American forces withdrew, the violence returned to these areas.<sup>1098</sup> And in the most recent July 2013 report to Congress, these areas of “strong insurgent influence” and “some of the most violent in Afghanistan”—prompting the question of just how much success in the polls translates into victory in the end.<sup>1099</sup>

### **Neither Necessary, Nor Sufficient Condition:**

Soldiers are not politicians. While some have tremendous personal charisma, diplomatic ability and political intuition, soldiers are neither recruited nor conditioned for these skills. And so, it is a naïve to think that they can accomplish what even the most skilled politicians cannot—winning over the vast “uncommitted middle.”<sup>1100</sup> After all, when a national-level politician wins an election by even 10% of the popular vote, it is often termed a landslide victory and a tremendous political feat. No national-level modern democratic politician wins almost all of the eligible voters in clean elections, so why should soldiers be able to do more?

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<sup>1097</sup> See Cordesman and Khazi 2013; Damon 2013; Economist 2013;

<sup>1098</sup> See DOD 2012a, pp. 111, 118-119; DOD 2012b, pp. 23-25

<sup>1099</sup> DOD 2013, pp. 20-21

<sup>1100</sup> FM 3-24, p. 1-20

Thankfully, counterinsurgencies are not won this way. The polling data presented here reveals four key insights. First, it shows that in these cases, often only a third or less of the population often shifted their answers to most of these questions (hypothesis 1). Second, the counterinsurgent's ability to win over public opinion is often limited and as in Vietnam and Iraq, comes only after winning on the battlefield (hypothesis 2). In other words, "hearts and minds" are an effect, rather than the cause of military victory in counterinsurgency. Third, popular support matters less to the counterinsurgent's intelligence collection efforts and the insurgent's supply abilities than often thought (hypothesis 3). Finally, but most importantly, "hearts and minds" may not be the key to victory in the end (hypothesis 4). Indeed, from the polling data, Vietnam should have proved a gleaming success; Afghanistan should be teetering along at a steady state; violence in Iraq should not have plummeted during the Surge. In other words, at least insofar as polling shows, winning "hearts and minds" is neither a necessary nor a sufficient precondition to victory on the battlefield.

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