

The “Hearts and Minds” Fallacy

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Violence, Coercion, and Success in
Counterinsurgency Warfare

Debates over how governments can defeat insurgencies ebb and flow with international events. Such debates tend to arise when the United States runs into problems in its efforts to support a counterinsurgent government. Often the United States approaches the problem of an armed, organized, internal nonstate political challenge to a government as a zero-sum game. In this competition, the state and nonstate actors compete for popular support and cooperation. The U.S. prescription for success is twofold: to provide support for liberalizing, democratizing reforms designed to reduce popular grievances and gain popular support while weakening the insurgency, and to target insurgents with military force without harming civilians. I identify this prescription as the “good governance approach” for its focus on building a liberal, reformist central government to quell insurgency. Others have referred to it as the “population-centric approach,” the “comprehensive approach,” or the “hearts-and-minds approach.”¹

In this article, I reconsider the effectiveness of the good governance approach in light of the extreme difficulty that liberal great powers have experienced in applying it in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. Since the al-Qaida attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States has been trying to help smaller

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1. See, for example, Bernard Finel, “A Substitute for Victory: Adopting a New Counterinsurgency Strategy in Afghanistan,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 8, 2010, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66189/bernard-finel/a-substitute-for-victory>; and Andrew Exum, “Alternatives to Population-Centric Counterinsurgency,” *Abu Muqawama* blog, October 1, 2009, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/blog/alternatives-to-population-centric-coin-in-afghanistan>. On the term “hearts and minds,” see Paul Dixon, “Hearts and Minds? British Counterinsurgency from Malaya to Iraq,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2009), pp. 353–381, doi:10.1080/01402390902928172.

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states defeat insurgents as part of the war on terror. The first two U.S. military deployments after hijacked planes slammed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a Pennsylvania field were to the Democratic Republic of Georgia and the Philippines, where the governments were fighting Muslim insurgencies.² The longest, most expensive efforts have been in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the United States and its partner forces are still fighting multiple insurgent groups while the U.S. attempts to shape a more liberal political order.³

I argue, in contrast to the good governance approach, that counterinsurgency success is the result of a violent state-building process in which elites engage in a contest for power, popular interests matter little to the outcome, and the government benefits from the use of force against civilians. My theory of counterinsurgency success, which I call the “coercion theory,” differs in two important ways from the conventional wisdom on good governance. First, it identifies armed and unarmed elites as the key actors in counterinsurgency, rather than the populace, and it underscores the counterinsurgents’ need to accommodate the few rather than provide reforms for all. Second, it identifies the government’s use of force against insurgents and civilians as an important factor in counterinsurgency success, as opposed to limiting the use of force to avoid civilian harm. My analysis finds that counterinsurgency success requires neither good governance reforms that redistribute power and wealth among all citizens nor popular support for the state. Rather, defeating an insurgency has three requirements. The first is the government’s relatively low-cost accommodation of its elite domestic rivals—that is, political actors such as warlords, regional or cultural leaders, and traditional rulers—to gain fighting power and information about the insurgency. The second requirement is the application of brute force to control civilians and thus reduce the flow of resources to the insurgency. The third requirement is the application of coercive force to break the insurgency’s will and capability to fight on.

These findings show that, as the first step in establishing relative political stability, counterinsurgency has high moral and human costs.⁴ In addition,

2. More recently, Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge has produced several Islamic State leaders. See Tamar Svanidze, “Georgia’s Intelligence Service Arrests Pankisi Resident for Suspected Terror Sympathies,” *Georgia Today*, July 30, 2016, <http://georgiatoday.ge/news/4349/Georgia%E2%80%99s-Intelligence-Service-Arrests-Pankisi-Resident-for-Suspected-Terror-Sympathies>. In the southern Philippines, the Abu Sayyaf group and others remain active. See “Duterte Pleads with Philippine Rebels to Rebuff Islamic State Advances,” Reuters, January 27, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-security-idUSKBN15B0XO>.

3. Alex Horton, “Report: Nearly \$5 Trillion and Counting Spent on Iraq and Afghanistan Wars,” *Stars and Stripes*, September 12, 2016, <https://www.stripes.com/news/report-nearly-5-trillion-and-counting-spent-on-iraq-and-afghanistan-wars-1.428664#.WR70o8m1uu4>.

4. Herman Joseph S. Kraft defines political stability as constitutionalism, legitimacy, effectiveness,

these findings pose an important corrective to U.S. policy choices regarding intervention to support a counterinsurgent partner. My argument suggests that U.S. efforts to reduce violence in these internal conflicts by introducing political reforms are unlikely to succeed, and that such efforts will continue to raise human, moral, and financial costs for the United States as well as for its partner states.

In the next section, I lay out existing explanations for counterinsurgency success, including the good governance approach and force-based or guerrilla-based approaches. I then identify their limitations and derive a rigorous theory of good governance counterinsurgency success from the existing literature.⁵ I next present the coercion theory of counterinsurgency success, explain my qualitative research design, and compare the two theories' explanatory power by examining the well-known case of the Malayan Emergency and, more briefly, the cases of Dhofar, Oman, and El Salvador. In doing so, I identify overlooked or underplayed evidence of limited or nonexistent reforms, government violence against civilians, the government's accommodation of rival elites, and the lack of popular support for the government. I close with a discussion of the policy implications of my findings.

What Causes Counterinsurgency Success?

Many explanations for why governments are able to retain power against an insurgency assume that both political and military efforts are required. Those who study the question disagree, however, over how much political change is necessary and whether a government's use of force against civilians hurts or helps its efforts to defeat armed nonstate actors fighting to change the distribution of power or wealth within the state; or overturn the status quo; or divide the state into two or more states. There are two opposing views in the counterinsurgency literature on the role of the populace. One view is that the government and the insurgency compete for the allegiance of the populace by providing it with political, economic, and social benefits—what I referred to earlier as the good governance approach. The other view holds that the government succeeds simply or primarily by using military force against the in-

relative impermeability, and durability. See Kraft, "The Philippines: The Weak State and the Global War on Terror," *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol. 18, Nos. 1–2 (2003), pp. 133–152.

5. I examine the predictive power of theories, not strategies. A strategy is designed for a specific place and time with specific actors, resources, and interests. A theory is an attempt to explain a pattern of behavior. See Alexander L. George, *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2003), pp. 117–118.

surgency. In this section, I describe these two views in more detail and assess their utility in explaining the causes of counterinsurgency success.⁶

THE GOOD GOVERNANCE APPROACH TO COUNTERINSURGENCY SUCCESS

The good governance approach to counterinsurgency success is based on the belief that the government must provide political, economic, and social reforms that meet the needs of the population; reduce the number and kinds of grievances fueling the insurgency, in an effort to obtain information about the insurgency from civilians; and use force against the insurgency with great care to avoid civilian harm. I call this the good governance approach to underscore its causal logic vis-à-vis the populace. “Good governance” typically means economic growth, political representation, and efficient administration. According to the U.S. National Security Strategy of 2002, it states that practice good governance, “governments must fight corruption, respect basic human rights, embrace the rule of law, invest in health care and education, follow responsible economic policies, and enable entrepreneurship.”⁷

In this view, good governance is necessary to defeat insurgencies because it is bad governance that causes them in the first place. Greater representative government and more public goods will build broad popular support for the state, attract civilian cooperation against the insurgency, and marginal-

6. Scholarly explanations for counterinsurgency success include regime type and the will to prevail. Both are contested. On regime type, see Jason Lyall, “Do Democracies Make Inferior Counterinsurgents? Reassessing Democracy’s Impact on War Outcomes and Duration,” *International Organization*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (Winter 2010), pp. 167–192, doi:10.1017/S0020818309990208; and Anna Getmansky, “You Can’t Win If You Don’t Fight: The Role of Regime Type in Counterinsurgency Outbreaks and Outcomes,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (August 2013), pp. 709–724, doi:10.1177/0022002712449326. On the will to win, see Ivan Arreguín-Toft, “How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict,” *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Summer 2001), pp. 93–128, doi:10.1162/016228801753212868; and Andrew Mack, “Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars,” *World Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (January 1975), pp. 175–200, doi:10.2307/2009880. Neither Arreguín-Toft nor Mack addresses counterinsurgency success generally. For an overview of recent empirical investigations into counterinsurgency, see Eli Berman and Aila M. Matanock, “The Empiricists’ Insurgency,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 18 (2015), pp. 443–464, doi:10.1146/annurev-polisci-082312-124553. This literature asks interesting questions and applies more rigor to answering them than have many earlier studies of counterinsurgency. Yet it rarely asks what causes success. It most often examines a tactic, such as an incentive provided by a counterinsurgent to civilians in a small geographic area or the effects of counterinsurgents harming civilians. There is little consideration of politics—such as possible roles of nationalism or of popular support—or of external validity. Much of this research is driven by the wealth of data available from occupying forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. Authors rarely recognize, however, that these cases are outliers, because they involved the long-term presence of tens of thousands of foreign troops, raising further questions about external validity.

7. Ved P. Nanda, “The ‘Good Governance’ Concept Revisited,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, January 2006, pp. 269–283, doi:10.1177/0002716205282847; and U.S. National Security Council, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: White House, 2002), <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf>.

ize the insurgents.⁸ In a list of requirements to defeat an insurgency, leading counterinsurgents had as their first item to “identify and redress the political, economic, military, and other issues fueling the insurgency.”⁹ More recently, Ian Beckett argues that counterinsurgency success requires government reforms to address popular grievances.¹⁰

The 2006 *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* exemplifies the good governance approach, drawing on sixty years of Western practitioner accounts of successful counterinsurgency campaigns.¹¹ “Soldiers and Marines are expected to be nation builders as well as warriors,” Gen. David Petraeus and Gen. James Amos write. “They must be prepared to help reestablish institutions and basic services. They must be able to facilitate establishing local governance and the rule of law.”¹² Gen. Peter Chiarelli explains the logic based on his experience in Iraq: “A gun on every street corner, although visually appealing, provides only a short-term solution and does not equate to long-term security grounded in a democratic process.”¹³ Adopting reforms as a weapon against the insurgency, counterinsurgents become responsible for the people’s well-being.¹⁴ Successful counterinsurgency is “armed social work.”¹⁵

The good governance approach includes direct military targeting of insurgents, but governments must prevent harm to civilians because harm will only increase support for the insurgency.¹⁶ This emphasis on discriminate force is more prominent in contemporary work than in the post–World War II literature, but as David Galula writes, “every military move has to be weighed with regard to its political effects, and vice versa.” “Only attack insurgents when they get in the way,” advises the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*. General

8. See, for example, Julian Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Operations: Techniques of Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Walker, 1967), p. 177; Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), pp. 50–55, 72; and U.S. Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 51.

9. Stephen T. Hosmer and Sibylle O. Crane, *Counterinsurgency: A Symposium, April 16–20, 1962* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1962), p. iv.

10. Ian F.W. Beckett, *Insurgency in Iraq: An Historical Perspective* (Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2005).

11. U.S. Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*.

12. *Ibid.*, p. xlvi

13. Peter W. Chiarelli and Patrick R. Michaelis, “Winning the Peace: The Requirement for Full-Spectrum Operations,” *Military Review*, July/August 2005, pp. 4–17, at p. 4.

14. U.S. Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, p. 295.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 299.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Petraeus told troops in Afghanistan, "If we kill civilians or damage their property . . . we will create more enemies than our operations eliminate."¹⁷

Given the struggles of the United States and its partners in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, however, as well as counterinsurgency successes that do not look much like results of the good governance approach (e.g., in Chechnya, Turkey, and the Philippines), to what degree has this prescription for counterinsurgency success actually achieved its objectives?

LIMITS TO THE GOOD GOVERNANCE APPROACH

The internal logic of the good governance approach is solid, but the supporting research suffers from two main problems. First, it lacks theoretical rigor. Second, it is based on unexamined assumptions. The lack of rigor hinders consideration of which types of government behavior are more likely to contribute to success in which types of cases. Unexamined assumptions distort analysis by drawing attention away from potentially important elements.

To date, there has been little research providing a rigorous theory of the good governance approach, including specification of the conditions under which the approach holds. Research that supports the governance approach generally does not delineate the domain in which best practices operate to best effect.¹⁸ Further, researchers rarely engage in systematic comparisons of cases, and they pay little attention to external validity—in one case, an author generalized his findings on defeating insurgency based on his experience as a counterinsurgent military officer in two unusual campaigns.¹⁹ Others generalize based on the experiences of a small number of intervening great powers—for example, in a relatively rare type of case in which a great power faces an insurgency demanding national liberation.²⁰ Recent data-driven quantitative re-

17. Here, "contemporary" refers to counterinsurgency work dealing with the U.S. loss in Vietnam and with the U.S. struggles in Afghanistan and Iraq, in particular; "post-World War II" refers to work on Western counterinsurgency responses to the anticolonial wars that followed the end of World War II. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (1964; repr. New York: Praeger, 2006), pp. 5, 66; U.S. Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, p. 300; David Petraeus, "COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance," *Washington Post*, August 1, 2010, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/hp/ssi/wpc/afghanguidance.pdf; and John Nagl, "Unprepared: Review—*The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War*, by Brian Linn McAllister," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 153, No. 2 (April 2008), pp. 82–89, doi:10.1080/03071840802103355.

18. See, for example, John T. Fishel and Max G. Manwaring, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006); U.S. Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*; Kalev I. Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, May/June 2005, pp. 8–12; and David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

19. See, for example, Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*.

20. See, for example, Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*; Galula, *Counterinsurgency War-*

search asks specific questions about the costs of the government's use of force and ways to gain popular support, but rarely asks what causes counterinsurgency success.²¹

Moreover, much of the research that supports the good governance approach makes potentially unwarranted assumptions about the campaigns themselves. An example is the widespread assumption that counterinsurgent governments deliver what they promise, thereby having positive effects on the populace and negative effects on the insurgency.²² A related assumption involves the role of reforms, including that the government has the capability and will to institute them; that the populace desires them; and that the majority has no political preferences and will side with the stronger side.²³ Another problematic assumption is that foreign interveners have the ability to decisively shape events.²⁴ None of these assumptions is warranted by empirical research.²⁵

Exacerbating the problems discussed above is that many supporters of the good governance approach have confined their examinations to the secondary literature on successful counterinsurgency campaigns. Although this literature presents normatively appealing narratives, it downplays less palatable counterinsurgent choices.²⁶ Some research considers the government, the insurgency, and the populace as unitary actors, occasionally also conflating the counterinsurgent government and the intervening power backing it.²⁷ Assuming away domestic politics within the state experiencing the insurgency confounds analysis, because insurgency is a domestic political problem.

The argument that good governance causes counterinsurgency success also rests on the assumption that success requires popular support, and thus that

fare; John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (2002; repr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); and Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

21. See Berman and Matanock, "The Empiricists' Insurgency."

22. Karl Hack notes this problem in "The Malayan Emergency as Counterinsurgency Paradigm," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (June 2009), pp. 383–414, doi:10.1080/01402390902928180.

23. See, for example, Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, pp. 8–9, 53. For challenges to this view, see D. Michael Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988); and Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

24. See, for example, Fishel and Manwaring, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*; and Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*.

25. Scholars noting these problems include Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms*; and Douglas J. Macdonald, *Adventures in Chaos: American Intervention for Reform in the Third World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

26. See, for example, Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency"; and Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2010).

27. See, for example, Fishel and Manwaring, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited*.

the populace is the center of gravity, "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends."²⁸ It is not empirically obvious, however, that popular support is necessary for success; the second Russian conflict in Chechnya and the Turkish war on the Kurdistan Workers' Party from 1984 to 1999 are two campaigns suggesting that it may not be so. In each case, the government experienced success without implementing reforms or limiting the use of force. Similarly, insurgencies that rely on financing from the sale of natural resources such as gems or timber need little popular support to succeed.²⁹ Distribution of public goods may not be relevant if the fundamental issue is the redistribution of power.³⁰ Indeed, public goods may increase the flow of resources to the insurgency.³¹

These problems also appear in the leading alternative approach to counterinsurgency success, which advocates targeting the insurgency directly with military force and downplays questions about political efforts that may be necessary for success.

FORCE-BASED APPROACHES TO COUNTERINSURGENCY SUCCESS

There are two schools of thought in the post-World War II literature on counterinsurgency success that emphasize the use of military force targeting insurgents. One is the so-called guerrilla-centric or enemy-centric approach. The other is the cost-benefit approach. A lack of rigor and unquestioned assumptions about the role of force and of politics in counterinsurgent success limits the usefulness of both approaches.³²

28. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 596.

29. Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

30. See, for example, Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms*.

31. See, for example, Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf Jr., *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (Chicago: Markham, 1970); Charles Wolf Jr., "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: New Myths and Old Realities" (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1965), <http://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P3132-1/>; and Ken Dilanian, "U.S. Risks Wasting Billions More in Afghanistan Aid, Report Says," *Los Angeles Times*, June 17, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jun/17/world/la-fg-afghan-aid-20110617>.

32. Scholars arguing that brutality is the primary means of defeating insurgents include Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and David French, *The British Way in Counterinsurgency, 1945-1967* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Alexander B. Downes argues that under certain narrow conditions, indiscriminate violence can defeat an insurgency. See Downes, "Draining the Sea By Filling the Graves: Investigating the Effectiveness of Indiscriminate Violence as a Counterinsurgency Strategy," *Civil Wars*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (December 2007), pp. 420-444, doi:10.1080/13698240701699631. Andrew J. Birtle argues that the use of force has been more determinative than reforms. See Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1942-1976* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2006). Gil Merom argues that democracies fail at counterinsurgency because domestic politics forestall effective uses of force. See Merom, *How Democ-*

The guerrilla-centric or enemy-centric approach to counterinsurgency success prescribes defeating an insurgency militarily. Cold War-era French army officer Roger Trinquier, for example, argues that force is the foundation of counterinsurgency success.³³ Historian Edward Luttwak notes the successful application of terrible force, including collective punishment and reprisal killings, in past successful counterinsurgencies.³⁴ Retired U.S. Army officer Ralph Peters argues that “insurgencies overwhelmingly have been put down thoroughly by killing insurgents.”³⁵

In the 1960s, RAND researchers Charles Wolf and Nathan Leites developed the cost-benefit approach to counterinsurgency.³⁶ In place of trying to gain the allegiance of the populace through a time-consuming, expensive process of offering reforms, they prescribed punishing civilians who do not cooperate and providing benefits to those who do. This carrot-and-stick approach should prevent insurgents from obtaining resources such as food, shelter, and civilian recruits, while military force should prevent insurgent violence.

Neither approach discussed above presents testable theories, identifies the conditions under which its prescription is likely to succeed, or provides a systematic analysis of relevant cases. Each assumes that the government’s use of violence will repress all of the insurgents’ political goals and that the use of force will reduce rather than increase the level of popular protest.³⁷

The Good Governance versus Coercive Theory of Success

In this section, I derive hypotheses on the good governance theory and the coercive theory of counterinsurgency to assess their explanatory power.³⁸

racies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

33. Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (London: Pall Mall, 1964), for example pp. 28, 48, 59, 63, 73–74, 84–86, 105.

34. Edward N. Luttwak, “Dead End: Counterinsurgency Warfare as Military Malpractice,” *Harper’s Magazine*, February 2007, pp. 33–42.

35. Ralph Peters, “Progress and Peril: New Counterinsurgency Manual Cheats on the History Exam,” *Armed Forces Journal*, February 2007, <http://armedforcesjournal.com/progress-and-peril/>; and Ralph Peters, “Getting Counterinsurgency Right,” *New York Post*, December 21, 2006.

36. Wolf, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency”; and Wolf and Leites, *Rebellion and Authority*.

37. Daniel Ellsberg and Richard Shultz note that this assumption may be particularly dangerous if individuals are more likely to respond to force with force rather than with submission. See Ellsberg, “Revolutionary Judo: Working Notes on Vietnam No. 10” (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation), 1970; and Shultz, “Coercive Force and Military Strategy: Deterrence Logic and the Cost-Benefit Theory of Counterinsurgency Warfare,” *Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (December 1979), pp. 444–466, doi:10.1177/106591297903200408.

38. See Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 26, on inferring a theory.

GOOD GOVERNANCE THEORY

In the good governance theory of counterinsurgency success, the independent variable is good governance and the dependent variable is insurgent defeat. I define success according to the *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide* as the “marginalization of the insurgents to the point at which they are destroyed, co-opted, or reduced to irrelevance in numbers and capability.”³⁹

The theory includes two intervening variables: the discriminate use of force against the insurgency and the implementation of reforms. I operationalize the military variable as the systematic avoidance of harm to civilian lives and property, even at military cost, as the Geneva Conventions require.⁴⁰ I operationalize the political variable as systematic reforms benefiting the entire population, including elites. Systematic reforms are costly to elites because they take wealth and power from those who rule and distribute them to those who do not. The cause of success is the government’s gain in popular support and the resulting flow of information on the insurgency, and the insurgency’s corresponding loss of support and information, as well as its military defeat.

A series of predictions flow from the good governance theory. First, if the targeting of insurgents is highly discriminate, sparing civilian damage even at military cost, popular support for the government should rise. Second, if the government introduces reforms benefiting all, its popular support should increase, and the insurgency should be significantly weakened.

If, however, the insurgency is substantially weakened or defeated through the use of force before improvements in governance are made, or before there is a shift in public support to the state, or if there is no shift in popular support to the state, or if no or only highly limited reforms are implemented by the government, then the governance theory cannot explain counterinsurgent success. In the next section, I lay out the coercion theory of counterinsurgency success, compare it to the governance theory, and identify scope conditions for both theories.

COERCIVE COUNTERINSURGENCY

In the coercion theory of counterinsurgency success, the independent variable is coercion. There are two intervening variables, one military and one politi-

39. U.S. Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009), p. 4.

40. The Geneva Conventions require armed actors in war not to attack civilians, not to use or threaten violence to spread terror, and to protect civilians from the effects of military operations, including by reducing the effects of operations that could affect civilians. See Geneva Conventions of 1949, Article 4, August 12, 1949, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/WebART/375-590007?OpenDocument>; and Geneva Conventions of 1949, Protocol 2, June 8, 1977, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/475?OpenDocument> (not ratified by the United States).

cal. I operationalize the first variable as a military campaign to destroy the insurgency's capability and will to continue fighting. The campaign has two facets, direct and indirect. The direct military effort is an attrition campaign against the insurgency (this is also assumed to take place in the good governance theory).⁴¹ The indirect military effort uses brute force to block the flow of resources from civilians to insurgents.⁴² I operationalize the second variable as accommodation—that is, the use of threats and rewards to gain the cooperation of political and military leaders outside the government in exchange for intelligence on the insurgency and the provision of military capabilities to the government.⁴³ The process involves the use of coercion to break the insurgency as a fighting force and organization based on the use of the threat, display, or application of force to coerce changes.⁴⁴

The government gains the cooperation of elites by making accommodations. "Accommodations" denote benefits to some, but not all, political actors.⁴⁵ The benefits may include direct payments; the granting of impunity for criminal activity or violence; access to material resources such as timber or revenue-producing checkpoints; and access to nonmaterial resources, such as the granting of an official position (which may also prove lucrative in material terms) to a rival elite (see table 1).

The government uses accommodations to co-opt elites because these accommodations are far less costly to government elites than are good governance

41. Reducing an actor's capability to fight also reduces his or her will. See Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

42. On identifying a new role for a variable, see Andrew Bennett, "Process Tracing and Causal Inference," in Henry E. Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), p. 209. Western human rights norms should lead representatives of a great power intervener to play down the role of force in the great power's success. That they do not do so in contemporaneous documents indicates that force played a useful role.

43. Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 34; Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*; Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003); Fotini Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Kimberly Marten, *Warlords: Strong-arm Brokers in Weak States* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012); Goran Peic, "Civilian Defense Forces, State Capacity, and Government Victory in Counterinsurgency Wars," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (2014), pp. 162–184, doi:10.1080/1057610X.2014.862904; Steffan W. Schmidt et al., *Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); T. David Mason, *Caught in the Crossfire: Revolution, Repression, and the Rational Peasant* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004); and Paul Staniland, "States, Insurgents, and Wartime Political Orders," *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (June 2012), pp. 243–264, doi:10.1017/S1537592712000655.

44. Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966).

45. Glenn Herald Snyder and Paul Diesing define accommodation as demands, offers, and concessions. See Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 195.

Table 1. Examples of Political Change

Costly Changes Benefiting All	Less Costly Changes Benefiting a Few
Government Reforms for All	Government Accommodation of Selected Elites
Redistribute land to peasants Liberalize political system Protect human/civil rights Build democratic institutions	Trade impunity for information Make side payments to rival elites Deliver basic foodstuffs/medical care on irregular basis to some communities/individuals

reforms.⁴⁶ In contrast, reforms change the distribution of power and wealth within the state. They represent major, permanent adjustments in the structures or policies governing the distribution and exercise of power within the state, and they affect everyone within it. Reforms include political liberalization (i.e., creation of institutions assuring free-and-fair elections, freedom of political expression, protection of civil and human rights, and redistribution of property or income).⁴⁷

The government needs the cooperation of rival elites because relatively few individuals have the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully target an insurgency militarily and politically. Civilians may have tactical information on, for example, where they last saw insurgents or who is related to whom. They are less likely to have politically significant information on, for example, the interests of leading insurgents and on rifts or factions within the insurgency. Elites include defectors; sources within the insurgency; and social, intellectual, and business leaders. They also may share nonstate military resources, such as militias, with the government.

The coercion theory analyzes counterinsurgency as primarily a domestic political process of violent state-building. Historically, the process has been convulsive. Political order arises from elite efforts to reduce violent political rivalry. Elites seek the minimum winning coalition necessary to retain power, and they rule to protect their own interests, not those of the populace.⁴⁸

46. Thomas Carothers, “The ‘Sequencing’ Fallacy,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (January 2007), pp. 12–27.

47. Roland Paris, *At War’s End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 60.

48. Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990–1992* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast, “Violence and the Rise of Open-Access Orders,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (January 2009), pp. 55–68, doi:10.1353/jod.0.0060; David A. Lake, “Anarchy, Hierarchy, and the Variety of International Relations,” *International Organization*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Winter 1996), pp. 1–33, doi:10.1017/S002081830000165X; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., “Political Institutions, Political Survival, and Policy Success,” in Bueno de Mesquita and Hilton L. Root, eds., *Governing for Prosperity* (New Ha-

Table 2. Examples of Contrasting Military Treatment of Civilians

Avoid Civilian Damage, Even at Military Cost	Forcefully Control Civilians
Cancel/delay military operations	Force civilians into controlled areas
Avoid use of area weapons	Target communities militarily
Put military forces at risk to avoid civilian damage	Limit civilian access to resources

In line with the existing literature, the coercion theory recognizes that counterinsurgency success is about political interests, as war always is.⁴⁹ The coercion theory contrasts with the good governance approach to counterinsurgency success in three important ways, however. First, it identifies the significance of conferring accommodations on elites rather than proposing and implementing reforms to gain popular support. Second, it identifies the critical role of military control of civilians, rather than their protection from harm (see table 2). Third, the coercion theory is explanatory, whereas the good governance approach is prescriptive or programmatic.⁵⁰

Two predictions flow from the coercion theory.⁵¹ First, if the government accommodates rival elites, then its intelligence and military capabilities should increase. Second, if it uses its increased capabilities to more effectively target insurgents and their resource flows, including controlling the populace, then the insurgency should be significantly weakened.

The coercion theory cannot explain success if any of the following three conditions applies: first, the government does not control the populace; second, the government implements reforms benefiting all, gaining support among the population while reducing support for the insurgency, before using its strengthened capabilities against civilians and the insurgency to defeat insurgent forces; and third, the government systematically avoids harm to civilians,

ven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 59–84; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., “Political Institutions, Policy Choice, and the Survival of Leaders,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (October 2002), pp. 559–590, doi:10.1017/S0007123402000236; Ronald Wintrobe, “The Tinpot and the Totalitarian: An Economic Theory of Dictatorship,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 81, No. 3 (September 1990), pp. 849–972, doi:10.2307/1962769; Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown, 2012); Elizabeth N. Saunders, “War and the Inner Circle: Democratic Elites and the Politics of Using Force,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (October 2015), pp. 466–501, doi:10.1080/09636412.2015.1070618; William Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1962); and Stathis N. Kalyvas, “The New U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual as Political Science and as Political Praxis,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (June 2008), pp. 347–360, doi:10.1017/S1537592708081176.

49. Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 87.

50. Charles Tilly, “Mechanisms in Political Processes,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 4 (2001), pp. 21–41, doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.4.1.21.

51. Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, pp. 35, 65.

Figure 1. Rival Predictions of Good Governance and Coercion Theories, Case Outcomes

	Protect civilians from harm, even at military cost	Control civilians by force	Reforms benefiting all	Accommodations benefiting selected elites	Outcome
Good governance theory	higher	lower	higher	lower	success
Coercion theory	lower	higher	lower	higher	success
Malaya	lower	higher	lower	higher	success
Dhofar	low to moderate	higher	lower	higher	success
El Salvador	lower	higher	lower	lower	negotiated success

even at military cost.⁵² Figure 1 presents a comparison of the predictions of the two theories and the case outcomes. In the next section, I describe the research design I used to gauge the relative explanatory power of these two theories.

Research Design

In this article, I inquire into the conditions under which a counterinsurgent client government backed by a liberal great power patron succeeds in retaining power against an insurgency.⁵³ The universe of cases consists of internal conflicts from 1945 to 2017 in which a liberal Western great power successfully intervened to support a client state facing an insurgency, and in which no sig-

52. Bennett, “Process Tracing and Causal Inference.” See also Nina Tannenwald, “Process Tracing and Security Studies,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (April/June 2015), pp. 219–217, doi:10.1080/09636412.2015.1036614.

53. I use the lens of patron-client relations rather than the more frequently applied principal-agent problem for two reasons. First, the principal-agent problem makes the great power the major actor, when in fact the counterinsurgent government is the principal, whose decisions are critical to the campaign and who faces higher potential costs. Second, the principal-agent problem focuses on the agent’s lack of information relative to the principal. In the relationship between a counterinsurgent state and its great power backer, the counterinsurgent state has more information than its backer.

nificant recurrence of violence followed within five years. I do not distinguish between irregular and conventional conflict, because many insurgents and counterinsurgents engage in both. I focus on the post–World War II period because norms on governmental treatment of noncombatants have changed since 1945 with the adoption of the Geneva Conventions, and because the state’s treatment of civilians plays an important role in counterinsurgency—either because they must be sheltered from harm, according to the good governance theory, or because they must be tightly controlled by force, according to the coercion theory.

The domain for this analysis consists of five campaigns in which the government succeeded in preventing an insurgent takeover. Proponents of the good governance approach claim these as exemplary for their relatively high level of reforms and relatively low level of intentional use of force against civilians.⁵⁴ These are also cases in which the liberal great power patron insisted that reforms were necessary to defeat the insurgency and pressed its client hard to attain them despite resistance.⁵⁵ Thus, these campaigns constitute cases that the good governance theory should be able to explain and my coercion theory should fail to explain.

I analyze the campaigns to ask what the government did and when and where it did it. I do not rely on what the government said it would do.⁵⁶ Asking what governments actually did in their successful campaigns identifies choices overlooked or downplayed in most work on counterinsurgency. Public support, meanwhile, is difficult to assess and more so in wartime. I evaluate popular support by examining the level of participation in government initiatives intended to show or gain support.⁵⁷

The case I discuss most fully here is the 1946–60 Malayan Emergency, in which Britain defended its colony from the Malaya National Liberation Army (MNLA), a group composed of communist and nationalist insurgents. I focus

54. On case selection according to intrinsic importance, see Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, p. 77. This criterion resembles what Aaron Rapport calls a countervailing condition: a variable whose presence or specific value decreases the probability that the outcome posited by the theory being tested will be evident. In this study, the low level of reforms and high level of force used against civilians in Malaya make it unlikely, according to the governance theory, that the counterinsurgency campaign would succeed—and yet it did. See Rapport, “Hard Thinking about Hard and Easy Cases in Security Studies,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (2015), pp. 431–465, doi:10.1080/09636412.2015.1070615. See also George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, pp. 121–122.

55. See, for example, Andrew Mumford, *The Counter-Insurgency Myth: The British Experience of Irregular Warfare* (London: Routledge, 2012).

56. George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, p. 86.

57. William A. Barnes, “Incomplete Democracy in Central America: Polarization and Voter Turnout in Nicaragua and El Salvador,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Fall 1998), pp. 63–101, doi:10.1111/j.1548-2456.1998.tb00063.x.

on Malaya because the Emergency is widely believed to be an example of the right way to do counterinsurgency.⁵⁸ I also consider more briefly the 1965–75 British-backed campaign in Dhofar, Oman, and the 1979–92 U.S.-supported campaign in El Salvador. To do so, I examined memoirs, oral histories, and contemporaneous documents in U.S. and British archives. I also reviewed the secondary literature and interviewed participants.

Neither the good governance theory nor the coercion theory explains all cases of counterinsurgency success, for two reasons. First, the scope of both theories includes only cases in which insurgents rely primarily on the populace for resources.⁵⁹ Second, the analysis includes no cases of ethnic conflict, which some scholars argue differ in important ways from other types of internal conflict.⁶⁰

To be sure, one might argue that both theories sacrifice fidelity to reality for reasons of elegance. The goal of theory building, however, is to identify causal patterns in phenomenon across time and space, not to fully explain any single event, act, or choice. Thus, by definition, theory is parsimonious. In addition, the declining focus in political science on creating and refining theories increases the value of work taking on this task.⁶¹

Some critics might say that these theories are not mutually exclusive because governments employ a mixture of strategies when fighting an insurgency. This criticism is unfounded, because I do not claim that governments must choose one theory or the other. Rather, I argue that the good governance theory errs in its identification of the causes of counterinsurgency success.

58. The lead author of the U.S. Army's 2006 counterinsurgency manual, Conrad C. Crane, states that the authors found positive examples in Malaya, El Salvador, the Philippines-Huks campaign of 1946–55, and the 1964–2016 conflict in Colombia, along with the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program in Vietnam. Crane, email to author, September 29, 2010. See also Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*; David W. Barno, "Fighting the 'Other War': Counterinsurgency Strategy in Afghanistan, 2003–2005," *Military Review*, September/October 2007, pp. 32–44; Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian, eds., *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Thomas R. Mockaitis, "Resolving Insurgencies" (Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2011); and Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), p. 232.

59. See, for example, Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*.

60. Chaim Kaufmann, "Intervention in Ethnic and Ideological Civil Wars: Why One Can Be Done and the Other Can't," *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Autumn 1996), pp. 62–103, doi:10.1080/09636419608429300; Chaim Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Spring 1996), pp. 136–175, doi:10.1162/isec.20.4.136, and Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 8 (August 2008), pp. 1043–1068, doi:10.1177/0010414008317949.

61. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Leaving Theory Behind: Why Simplistic Hypothesis Testing Is Bad for International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (2013), pp. 427–457, doi:10.1177/1354066113494320; and Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, pp. 7–8, 15–16, 17–21.

I also do not consider whether a counterinsurgent tries to implement either theory as a strategy. What matters for analyzing the relative predictive value of the two theories is whether the process ending with counterinsurgent success unfolds with the predicted values on the intervening variables. In the next section, I examine how the two theories' predictions fare in the case of the Malayan Emergency, with occasional references to the Dhofar and El Salvador cases.

Malaya

The British colonial administration in Malaya conducted a successful counterinsurgency campaign from 1946 to 1960 against the MNLA, which was fighting for an independent communist state. The Malayan Emergency, declared in 1948, lasted longer than the insurgency, which the security forces defeated as an organization and as a fighting force within the first few years of the campaign. Government success was likely, given the small number of insurgents; their lack of external support; the small, marginalized popular base they coerced into providing support; and British advantages, including relative military power, geography (the Malay Peninsula is relatively easy to cut off from smuggling efforts); and British familiarity with the region and peoples dating to the eighteenth century. At the same time, however, the government in London and British officials and military officers in Malaya did not consider success a given.

The insurgency began in 1946 with a terrorism campaign launched by the MNLA against Malayan economic targets. At its height, the group consisted of 5,000–10,000 lightly armed guerrillas and a political organization based in the ethnic Chinese community.⁶² The insurgents drew most of their support from tin miners and rubber tappers living in squalid camps on the jungle's fringes. The MNLA used extortion and coercion to dominate the isolated camp dwellers.⁶³

The group's goals limited its ability to grow. Its predominantly ethnic Chinese members sought support based not on a shared ethnicity, but on the narrowly appealing message of communism disseminated to poor communities and the more broadly appealing message of independence from Britain.⁶⁴

62. Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare* (Dulles, Va.: Brassey's, 2002), p. 139; and Robert W. Komer, "The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of a Successful Counterinsurgency Effort" (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1972), p. 7.

63. Komer, "The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect," pp. 7–8.

64. Director of Operations, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1954, January 10, 1955, DEFE 11/105, National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom (TNA); and Gurney to

Residents of poor communities beyond the jungle squatters showed little interest in politics. Independence appealed to Malaya's elites, while communism did not. The ethnic Chinese community, meanwhile, was fragmented by national origin, views on the 1949 Chinese Revolution, and the kind of work in which its members engaged.⁶⁵ Malaya's population of approximately 4.55 million was 49 percent ethnic Malay, 38 percent ethnic Chinese, and 12 percent ethnic Indian, with a sprinkling of other ethnicities.⁶⁶ There was relatively little anti-British feeling after the Allies' victory at the end of World War II drove out the Japanese occupiers.⁶⁷

Ethnic Malay elites included the traditional rulers of the peninsula's constitutive states and English-speaking Malay administrators who feared losing traditional Malay dominance after Malaya gained independence from Britain.⁶⁸ As the possibility of independence drew closer, ethnic Chinese and ethnic Indian elites grew anxious about protecting their business interests within the new state. In contrast, British authorities found that independence mattered little to the masses. The ethnic Malay population lived mostly in rural, self-supporting communities and was less prosperous than either the ethnic Chinese or ethnic Indians. Ethnic Indians, like the Malays, feared that the establishment of a liberal democracy in Malaya (the British goal) would mean ethnic Chinese domination, because the ethnic Chinese constituted the second-largest ethnic population in Malaya and were its most prosperous residents.

The conventional wisdom regarding the Malayan Emergency is that after its initial failure to defeat the insurgency through the indiscriminate use of force, the British military turned to seeking popular support; initiated reforms, including the granting of independence; obtained information about the insurgency; and defeated it while avoiding intentional harm to civilians. During the first two years of the campaign, according to this view, the British relied on massive sweeps that only alienated the populace.⁶⁹ With the appointment of Lt. Gen. Sir Harold Briggs as director of operations in 1950, the campaign turned political. Briggs's strategy included the creation of "New Villages," designed to protect civilians from insurgents; delivery of basic goods to needy

Creech Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Federation of Malaya Despatch No. 3 from King's House, Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, January 12, 1950, A. Creech Jones Official Papers IV Asia, folder 2, box 57, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 332, Weston Library, Bodleian Library, Oxford University (Bodleian).

65. Karl Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia: Britain, Malaya, and Singapore 1941–68* (Richmond, U.K.: Curzon, 2001), p. 129.

66. John Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency: From Palestine to Northern Ireland* (London: Palgrave, 2002), p. 37.

67. Julian Padgett, *Counter-Insurgency Operations: Techniques of Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Walker, 1976), p. 75.

68. Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*, p. 57.

69. Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency*, pp. 47–48.

civilians; co-optation of the insurgents' message concerning Malayan independence; and unity of effort among all government actors.⁷⁰

Recent revisionist work underlines the forceful character of the British campaign, however, including violence against civilians. The first years of the campaign involved the state's use of terrorist tactics to intimidate ethnic Chinese and others into supporting the government. From 1948 to 1949, the government engaged in mass arrests, the destruction of property, forced population movements, and the use of lethal force, with military assessments finding these measures effective.⁷¹ A British reassessment in 1950 led to a focus on more discriminate uses of force and an increase in population and resources controls. In this second phase, British tactics included continued forced resettlement and collective punishment. This time, however, the punishment was more likely to be applied to communities actually supporting insurgents. The final phase of the campaign included the conferral of social benefits on some members of the populace and more targeted offensive action against the insurgents.⁷²

In Dhofar, British officers led the fight against the communist-nationalist insurgents in Oman's southernmost, poorest, and most isolated region. Analysts often present this campaign as a model of counterinsurgency success.⁷³ In El Salvador, U.S. forces trained and advised Salvadoran forces and policymakers in their battle against a nationalist-Marxist-Socialist-Social Democratic insurgency. It, too, is often presented as a model campaign.⁷⁴ El Salvador dif-

70. Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Operations*, p. 59; Komer, "The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect," pp. 54–56; and Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency*, p. 54.

71. Huw Bennett, "'A Very Salutory Effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2009), pp. 415–444, doi:10.1080/01402390902928248.

72. Karl Hack, "'Iron Claws on Malaya': The Historiography of the Malayan Emergency," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (March 1999), pp. 99–125, doi:10.1017/S0022463400008043; and Bennett, "'A Very Salutory Effect.'"

73. See, for example, Thomas R. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency in the Post-Imperial Era* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1995); Michael Dewar, *Brush Fire Wars: Minor Campaigns of the British Army since 1945* (London: Robert Hale, 1984); John Pimlott, "The British Army: The Dhofar Campaign, 1970–1975," in Ian F.W. Beckett and Pimlott, eds., *Armed Forces and Modern Counterinsurgency* (New York: St. Martin's, 1985), pp. 16–45; Geraint Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised: The Counterinsurgency War in Dhofar, Oman, 1965–1975," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (April 2009), pp. 271–305, doi:10.1080/01402390902743357; Walter C. Ladwig III, "Supporting Allies in Counterinsurgency: Britain and the Dhofar Rebellion," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (March 2008), pp. 62–88, doi:10.1080/09592310801905793; Calvin H. Allen Jr. and W. Lynn Rigsbee II, *Oman under Qaboos: From Coup to Constitution, 1970–1996* (2000; repr. London: Frank Cass, 2001); and James Worrell, *Statebuilding and Counterinsurgency in Oman: Political, Military, and Diplomatic Relations at the End of Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

74. On El Salvador as a model, see, for example, Crane, email to author; Steven Metz, "Learning from Iraq: Counterinsurgency in American Strategy" (Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, January 2007); Paul, Clarke, and Grill, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers*; and An-

fers from the other cases discussed here in that the government remained in control of the state despite not defeating the insurgency. The war ended with a peace agreement.

In all three cases, as I discuss in the next section, the government survived the insurgent challenge. In Malaya, the campaign included offensive operations against the insurgents and systematic violence against civilians; the government undertook no reforms; it attracted no popular support; but it did gain elite cooperation—thus lending support to the coercion theory rather than the good governance theory. In Dhofar, the military forcefully controlled the civilian population, though not to the extent seen in Malaya, cutting off the flow of resources to insurgents. Successive sultans refused to initiate reforms, but the military accommodated rival elites to gain information on the insurgents and enhance its military power. In all three cases, the government failed to gain popular support. In El Salvador, the military cleared entire rural areas without cutting links between the insurgents and the people; the government failed to make reforms; and it did not win over rival elites. The differences in the El Salvador case compared with the Malaya and Dhofar cases confirm the role of elite cooperation with the counterinsurgency and the military’s forceful control of civilians as identified in the coercion theory.

A QUICK MILITARY DEFEAT OF THE MALAYAN INSURGENCY

The British use of force in Malaya, including indiscriminate aerial bombing and the use of area weapons, as well as the forceful control of civilians and the resources they and the insurgents needed to live, led to the 1949 defeat of the threat posed by the MNLA.⁷⁵

As of 1948, two years into the insurgency, the government’s use of violence had forced the insurgents to break up into smaller bands. The insurgency’s communications capabilities and ability to coordinate action were crippled; it was short of money; and its number of attacks had declined, as had insurgent morale.⁷⁶ Captured documents reveal the consequences of the government’s

gel Rabasa et al., *Money in the Bank: Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2007).

75. On the aim of killing bandits (insurgents) and the role of the Royal Air Force (RAF) as artillery, see Advanced Air Headquarters, Malaya, RAF Operations in Malaya during 1950, February 9, 1951, AIR 23/8443, TNA. On the threat being eliminated by 1948, see Commissioner-General Southeast Asia to Secretary of State for the Colonies, inward telegram, April 20, 1949, DEFE 11/32, TNA.

76. On the poor quality of insurgent communications, see Gurney to Secretary of State for the Colonies, inward telegram, September 18, 1948, DEFE 11/32, TNA. On the improbability of a coordinated national insurgent offensive, see Memorandum by the United Kingdom Government, Meeting of Prime Ministers, October 8, 1948, DEFE 11/32, TNA. On insurgent difficulties, see Paper on the Security Situation in the Federation of Malaya, April 5, 1949, DEFE 11/32, TNA. On

actions as of March 1949, particularly its forceful resettlement of civilians into guarded communities.⁷⁷ A surrendered insurgent reported in September and October 1949 that enthusiasm for the communists was waning and that insurgents in his area of Selangor state had been short of ammunition for ten months.⁷⁸ MNLA leader Chin Peng dated the peak and beginning of the decline of the insurgency to 1949–50, largely as a result of its losing contact with civilians forced to live under military control.⁷⁹ British authorities, too, recognized the effectiveness of the military's resettlement of civilians in reducing the MNLA's ability to survive.⁸⁰

By 1951, the government's use of force had shattered the insurgency as both an organization and a fighting force.⁸¹ With their leaders' order in October to withdraw to the jungle in response to the government's tight control of the population and resources, insurgents could no longer mass force, communicate, or plan.⁸² Their ability to launch attacks had declined so dramatically that the military changed its offensive focus from civilian resettlement and resource controls to pursuit of the remaining rebel fighters hiding deep in the jungle.⁸³

population and food controls hurting insurgents, see Gurney to Secretary of State for the Colonies, inward telegram, March 12, 1949, DEFE 11/32, TNA. On insurgent concern about damage done to the organization by population controls, see Gurney to Secretary of State for the Colonies, inward telegram, January 22, 1949, DEFE 11/32, TNA. On immediate improvement in safety in areas where resettlement was completed, see Director of Operations to British Defence Coordinating Committee, Appreciation of the Military and Political Situation in Malaya as of October 25, 1959, dated November 1, 1950, FO 371/84492, TNA.

77. Gurney to Secretary of State for the Colonies, inward telegram, March 12, 1949.

78. Statement by Surrendered Insurgent S.T.S. on September 23, 1949, Statements to the Criminal Investigation Department by Communist bandits (insurgents) during the Malaya [*sic*] Emergency, B.P. Walker-Taylor Collection, one volume, MSS. Ind. Ocn. s. 257, Bodleian; and Second Statement by Surrendered Insurgent Liew Thian Choy on September 25, 1949, Statements to the Criminal Investigation Department by Communist bandits (insurgents) during the Malaya [*sic*] Emergency, B.P. Walker-Taylor Collection, one volume, MSS. Ind. Ocn. s. 257, Bodleian.

79. Chin Peng, *Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party*, C.C. Chin and Karl Hack, eds. (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), p. 144.

80. On record-high insurgent casualties and resettlement damaging insurgents, see Briggs, Director of Operations, Malaya, Progress Report on Situation in Malaya, April 26, 1951, FCO 141/15533, TNA. On stopping the rise in insurgent incidents by 1950 and the insurgency fighting to survive, see Director of Operations, Progress Report on the Emergency in Malaya, October 15, 1951, DEFE 11/46, TNA. On insurgents complaining of resettlement hurting them, see Director of Operations, Progress Report on Situation in Malaya, February 15, 1951, FCO 141/15533, TNA. On insurgent shortages of money, food, ammunition, and medical supplies, and on the difficulty of communicating, see Memorandum by the United Kingdom Government, Meeting of Prime Ministers, October 8, 1948.

81. High Commissioner and Director of Operations, Combined Appreciation of the Emergency Situation, June 4, 1951, DEFE 11/45 TNA; and Director of Operations, Progress Report on the Emergency in Malaya.

82. Chin, *Dialogues with Chin Peng*, pp. 144–147.

83. From General Headquarters Far East Land Forces (FARELF) to War Office, Reed, Situation Report (Sitrep), received September 20, 1954, DEFE 11/142, TNA; and Memo on Additional Parachute Troops, July 23, 1954, AIR 23/8556, TNA.

The number of terrorist-inspired incidents fell from a monthly average of 507 in 1951 to 89 in 1954.⁸⁴ In 1951, two-thirds of insurgent attacks were concentrated in just two states, Johore and Perak.⁸⁵ As one government official noted in 1953, in some areas of Perak, insurgents "survive only in small groups of dispirited men and women."⁸⁶ Demoralized insurgents were on the run, making ambushes of security forces rare by 1952.⁸⁷ In 1952, 7,000 man-hours of patrolling were required to see one insurgent.⁸⁸ Military analysts attributed the dramatic fall in military contact with insurgents (from 939 contacts in 1951 to 350 in 1955) "to the elimination rates of terrorists (killed, captured, surrendered, and died of natural causes) being higher than recruitment rates."⁸⁹ As security forces moved deeper into the jungle, the number of insurgents killed or captured in government ambushes rose dramatically each month, from about 30 in May 1952 to approximately 400 in May 1953.⁹⁰

The increase in the number of insurgents surrendering to the government was an indication of their weakening will to continue fighting. In June 1951, the number surged about 180 percent over the three previous months, with insurgent casualties rising 42 percent.⁹¹ In 1954, reasons given for surrender included food shortages, pressure from the security forces, and a loss of faith in the possibility of victory.⁹² There were about 2,100 insurgents in 1957, with 9,581 killed, captured, or surrendered since June 1948.⁹³ "Every aspect of the Emergency is dwindling," British authorities reported in 1957. The insurgents' "primary aim for the past four years has been to evade contact."⁹⁴

In Dhofar, after six years of barely holding on against the insurgency, the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) ramped up offensive operations in 1971. The military moved up from the coastal area—the only part of Dhofar still held by the sultan—into the insurgent-held mountains. The SAF took territory and cleared

84. Director of Operations, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1954.

85. Director of Operations, Progress Report on the Emergency in Malaya, October 15, 1951.

86. Menteri Besar (first minister), Perak state, Monthly Political Intelligence Report for Period Ending November 20, 1953, FCO 141/7377, TNA.

87. Secretary of Chiefs of Staff Committee, Report on Visit of Dr. Cockburn's Party to Malaya, December 10, 1952, DEFE 11/49, TNA.

88. *Ibid.*

89. Operational Research Section (Malaya), Technical Note No. 4/55, Some Statistics of the Emergency in Malaya from January 1954 to June 1955, dated August 22, 1955, WO 291/1757, TNA.

90. Operational Research Section (Malaya), Memorandum No. 6/53, Statistical Survey of Activities by Security Forces in Malaya from May 1952 to April 1953, WO 291/1731, TNA.

91. High Commissioner and Director of Operations, Combined Appreciation of the Emergency Situation.

92. Director of Operations, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1954, dated January 10, 1955, DEFE 11/105, TNA.

93. Lt. Gen. R.H. Bower, Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957, dated September 12, 1957, WO 106/5990, TNA.

94. *Ibid.*

the more populated Eastern Area of Dhofar, and then did the same in the Central Area. It used indiscriminate air strikes and artillery to find and attack insurgents.⁹⁵ The SAF destroyed the remnants of the Dhofar Liberation Front in the sparsely populated Western Area, despite the insurgency's base being located across the border in Yemen.⁹⁶

From 1979 to 1983, the Salvador government neutralized the threat of revolution, employing a variety of terror tactics. It then used its augmented firepower to break down the insurgency from a fighting force strong enough to threaten the government's survival to an organization that held significant territory but was too weak to take over the state.⁹⁷ The El Salvador Armed Forces (ESAF) relied on the Batallónes de Infantería de Reacción Inmediata (Immediate Reaction Infantry Battalions, or BIRIs) to target insurgents and civilians in the countryside.⁹⁸ The BIRIs could not hold territory, but they were able to degrade the insurgency's military capabilities with search-and-destroy missions over the course of the war. The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) moved from smashing conventional ESAF units in the field in 1983 to seeing its main-force units shattered by U.S.-supplied airpower and ground attacks in 1984. The FMLN returned to political organizing and economic terrorism. Military victory was impossible as long as the state retained U.S. backing.

FORCEFUL CONTROL OF CIVILIANS

In Malaya, the British use of force targeting the insurgency, in conjunction with authoritative control of the populace and the country's resources, broke the insurgency's capacity and will to fight. In response to insurgent efforts to coerce material and nonmaterial support from isolated squatter settlements and other communities, the British took steps to "protect" the population. These steps took the form of controlling civilian behavior by force, however, rather than

95. John Graham, *Ponder Anew: Reflections on the Twentieth Century* (Staplehurst, U.K.: Spellmont, 1999), p. 347, available in the John Graham Collection, Oman Archive (OA), Middle East Center, St. Antony's College, Oxford; Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), Activity Report, January 22, 1971, FCO 8/1667, TNA; SAF, Sitrep, March 23, 1971, FCO 8/1667, TNA; SAF, Sitrep, April 4, 1971, FCO 8/1667, TNA; SAF, Sitrep, April 13, 1971, FCO 8/1667, TNA; SAF, Sitrep, April 20, 1971, FCO 8/1667, TNA; SAF, Sitrep, April 27, 1971, FCO 8/1667, TNA; SAF, Sitrep, May 4, 1971, FCO 8/1667, TNA; SAF, Sitrep, May 11, 1971, FCO 8/1667, TNA; SAF, Sitrep, May 25, 1971, FCO 8/1667, TNA; John Graham, Commander Dhofar for August–September 1972, Directive, dated August 5, 1972, folder 3, box 2, Graham Collection, OA; and Commander SAF (CSAF) Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins, Record of Audience [with Sultan Qaboos], February 10, 1975, dated February 16, 1975, DEFE 24/1869, TNA.

96. Perkins, Record of Audience [with Sultan Qaboos].

97. William Stanley, *The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), p. 3.

98. Karl, "Imposing Consent?"; Stanley, *The Protection Racket State*, pp. 229–230; and author interview with Max G. Manwaring, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, March 11, 2010.

protecting willing civilians from insurgent harm. The control and resettlement campaign began in the late 1940s, but the new communities were given their familiar name of "New Villages" only in 1950. Between 1950 and 1960, more than 500,000 people, including about 25 percent of the ethnic Chinese population, were forcefully resettled into heavily guarded communities, where their behavior was closely monitored.⁹⁹ "In spite of the sullenly hostile population, we are making very good military progress by screwing down the people in the strongest and sternest manner," the director of operations reported in 1956.¹⁰⁰

Every relocation of a community relied on overwhelming force and the element of surprise. The army descended on villages at dawn and rounded up everyone. The villages were burned, the animals slaughtered or driven off, and the inhabitants moved into fortified camps. There, they were subject to twice-daily body searches and other strict controls.¹⁰¹ In other areas, civilians could not transport food, money, or clothes; rice (a dietary staple) was rationed and could only be sold cooked, because it spoils quickly in hot weather.¹⁰² In addition, British authorities deported 31,249 residents between 1948 and 1955.¹⁰³ Other harsh measures included detention without trial, seizure of food, and destruction of premises used by insurgents and supporters.¹⁰⁴ Those resettled included ethnic Malays held in 139 communities encircled by barbed wire.¹⁰⁵

In targeting the populace militarily, the SAF turned Dhofar's coastal capital, Salalah, into a prison camp surrounded by barbed wire fences, with all inhabitants and pack animals searched to prevent the transfer of money and supplies to insurgents.¹⁰⁶ It tightly controlled the villages on the coastal plain.¹⁰⁷ The military moved uncooperative civilians to Salalah, confiscating cattle and over-chlorinating wells to make the water undrinkable.¹⁰⁸ On the plain,

99. Dixon, "'Hearts and Minds'?"; Gurney to Secretary of State for the Colonies, April 27, 1959, FO 371/84490, TNA.

100. Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia*, p. 128.

101. Charles Townsend, *Britain's Civil Wars: Counterinsurgency in the Twentieth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p. 162; and Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency*, pp. 50–51.

102. Padgett, *Counter-Insurgency Operations*, p. 60.

103. See, for example, Briggs, Progress Report on the Situation in Malaya; and Karl Hack, "Detention, Deportation, and Resettlement: British Counterinsurgency and Malaya's Ethnic Chinese 1948–1960," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (2015), pp. 611–640, doi:10.1080/03086534.2015.1083218.

104. Secretary of State for the Colonies, Memorandum, April 29, 1950, DEFE 11/35, TNA.

105. Komer, "The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect," p. 56; and Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency*, p. 51.

106. Corran Purdon, *List the Bugle: Reminiscences of an Irish Soldier* (Antrim, Northern Ireland, U.K.: Greystone, 1993), p. 269.

107. Purdon to Thwaites, September 22, 1969, folder 3, box 1, Peter Thwaites Collection, Liddell Hart Center for Military Archives, King's College London.

108. Ian Gordon, major in the Muscat Regiment, SAF, email to author, November 27, 2009.

the movement of foodstuffs was banned.¹⁰⁹ Food controls were also imposed in the mountains, home to many insurgents.¹¹⁰ SAF commander Brig. John Graham ordered forces to punish Dhofaris who helped the rebels.¹¹¹ The SAF burned crops to deny resources to the insurgency.¹¹² Depending on the commander at the time, the SAF took greater or lesser care to avoid harm to civilians.¹¹³ Long, fortified barriers in the mountains also controlled civilian movements. Interdiction efforts culminated in completion of the mined Hornbeam Line, stretching thirty-five miles from the coast across the mountains. By the end of the war, walls and clearing operations had cut off the insurgents in the West from 85 to 90 percent of civilians and their resources.¹¹⁴

In El Salvador, the government systematically targeted civilians throughout the war because it perceived them as an existential threat. The military attacked them using bombing and shelling; indiscriminate capture; torture; systematic destruction of homes and crops; and forced relocation to cities and camps, where the inhabitants were easier to control.¹¹⁵ It treated civilians in insurgent-dominated areas like combatants.¹¹⁶ Officers talked about making an example of suspected insurgent supporters with reference to *La Limpieza* (the cleansing).¹¹⁷ Cleansing operations spread fear,¹¹⁸ separating civilians from the insurgents because residents afraid to return to their homes could not provide support to the insurgents.¹¹⁹ Military sweeps depopulated entire areas. By December 1983, an estimated 400,000 people had been internally displaced; another 200,000 had fled to Mexico and elsewhere in Central America (includ-

109. CSAF Brig. John Graham, CSAF's Assessment of the Military Situation in Dhofar as of February 14, 1972, dated February 17, 1972, DEFE 25/293, TNA.

110. Directive for Commander Dhofar for 1972, Update, March 3, 1972, folder 3, box 2, Graham Collection, OA.

111. *Ibid.*

112. David C. Arkless, *The Secret War: Dhofar 1971/1972* (London: William Kimber, 1988), p. 81.

113. *Ibid.*, p. 173; Anti-guerrilla Operations in Dhofar Training Guide, folder 2, box 2, Graham Collection, OA; and Operational Instructions for Move to Central Area, January 1975, folder 2/3, box 2, Edward Ashley Collection, OA.

114. Review of the Military Situation in Oman, November 26, 1973, DEFE 25/312, TNA; CSAF Maj. Gen. Tim Creasey Talking Points, Review of the Military Situation, December 10, 1973 to January 23, 1974, dated December 19, 1973, DEFE 25/312, TNA; Col. W.J. Reed, Notes on Visit to Oman January 20–24, 1974, dated January 30, 1974, DEFE 25/31, TNA; Ken Perkins, *A Fortunate Soldier* (London: Brassey's, 1988), p. 126; and Chiefs of Staff Committee, Defence Operational Planning Staff, Progress of Operations in Dhofar, February 17, 1975, DEFE 24/1869, TNA.

115. Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 32.

116. Francisco Pedrozo, U.S. military adviser in El Salvador during the war, email to author, April 18, 2010.

117. Mark Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote* (New York: Vintage, 1993), pp. 44, 52.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

119. Leigh Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre: Anthropology and Human Rights* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), pp. 151–152.

ing to refugee camps across the border in Honduras); and an estimated half a million had entered the United States.¹²⁰

In all three cases, as I discuss in the next section, government efforts to control civilian populations did not include reforms for all. In two of the cases (Malaya and Dhofar), efforts did include accommodations for a few.

ELITE COOPERATION, NOT REFORM

The British government had eliminated the insurgents’ “very real threat to the security and economic recovery of Malaya” by 1949. Its success occurred before it provided accommodations to resettled civilians. Defeat also came well before the major political change the British government instituted in Malaya, the granting of independence in 1957.¹²¹ The British promise and implementation of plans for independence were not, however, intended to quell the insurgency. British planning for an independent Malaysia began in 1942, not in response to the Emergency.¹²² The British government planned to transform its colony into a liberal democracy with a multi-ethnic military.¹²³ Its goals included creation of a Malaysian identity for all inhabitants.¹²⁴ Ultimately, however, the British had to put aside their plans for liberal reforms and instead accommodate elite interests.

Britain’s first effort at creating a liberal post-World War II polity in a Malaya that was intended to graduate to self-governance was its formation of the Malayan Union in 1946. The Union gave all residents equal rights. Ethnic elites in the colony, however, feared that a liberal democracy based on individual rather than ethnic rights would redistribute their power to ethnic groups other than theirs. Malay elites, for example, feared losing status and power to the ethnic Chinese and ethnic Indians, who made up about half the population. Consequently, they resisted British reformist plans to grant expanded citizenship and voting rights to non-Malays. Malaya elites also objected to further reductions in the role of Malaya’s traditional rulers, the sultans.¹²⁵ Some Malays

120. Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, “From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador—Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador” (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, March 15, 1993), pp. 26–27, <https://www.usip.org/publications/1992/07/truth-commission-el-salvador>.

121. Bower, Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957.

122. Simon C. Smith, *British Relations with the Malay Rulers from Decentralization to Malayan Independence 1930–1957* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 43.

123. *Ibid.*, pp. 42–43; Karl Von Vorys, *Democracy without Consensus: Communalism and Political Stability in Malaysia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 64–70; and Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia*, p. 112.

124. Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia*, pp. 112–113.

125. GHQ Far East Land Forces, British Defence Coordination Committee Far East, to Ministry of Defence London, for Chiefs of Staff, Top Secret Telegram Regarding Progress Report October 15, 1951 (Briggs Report), dated November 15, 1951, DEFE 11/46, TNA.

told British colonial officials that “it would be preferable to continue under a ‘colonial’ regime rather than to grant the Chinese the claim for [citizenship].”¹²⁶ Ethnic Chinese elites, meanwhile, fearing increased Malay domination, asked the British if they could change their minds about supporting independence.¹²⁷

Under elite pressure, Britain replaced the Union with the Federation of Malaya in 1948. The Federation protected the special rights of the Malay sultans (granted by the British in the colonial period), assured ethnic Malay domination of the new state of Malaysia, and limited the electoral role of other ethnic groups in the Federation and in Malaysia.¹²⁸ Ethnic Chinese elites were given leadership positions and the promise of future power once ethnic Chinese residents had been given increased citizenship rights.¹²⁹ In exchange, the British received the sultans’ agreement to establish a strong, centralized state designed to promote economic development and effective government administration.¹³⁰ In creating the Federation, Britain abandoned its reformist plans and accepted Malay elites’ demands to maintain traditional hierarchies and communal relationships.¹³¹

Meanwhile, British colonial authorities began systematically delivering accommodations to selected civilian communities only in 1952, after having neutered the insurgent threat in 1949.¹³² The distribution of these accommodations was based on civilian cooperation with the authorities, such as sharing information on the insurgency. The goods and services the British provided were not public goods shared by all. High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney wrote in 1950 that the government was not implementing reforms to meet popular needs: “We are doing little to improve the lot of [*sic*] mass of the population beyond increasing taxation.”¹³³ In the 1951–52 period, residents of the New

126. Office of the Mentri Besar, Trengganu state, Monthly Political Intelligence Report for the Period Ending May 20th, 1956, dated May 22, 1956, FCO 141/7379, TNA.

127. R.P. Bingham, Political Intelligence Report, Settlement of Penang, March 21 to April 20, 1956, FCO 141/7529, TNA; and Resident Commissioner, Settlement of Penang, Political Intelligence Report, February 21 to March 20, 1956, FCO 141/7529, TNA.

128. Von Vorys, *Democracy without Consensus*, pp. 77, 79–82.

129. Secretary for Chinese Affairs, Political Report for April 1956, dated May 2, 1956, FCO 141/7378, TNA.

130. Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict during and after the Japanese Occupation, 1941–1946*, 2nd ed. (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983), p. 293.

131. Von Vorys, *Democracy without Consensus*, p. 73.

132. Lee Kam Hing, “A Neglected Story: Christian Missionaries, Chinese New Villagers, and Communists in the Battle for the ‘Hearts and Minds’ in Malaya, 1948–1960,” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 6 (November 2013), pp. 1977–2006, doi:10.1017/S0026749X12000741.

133. Gurney to Secretary of State for the Colonies, inward telegram, April 27, 1950, DEFE 11/35, TNA.

Villages “enjoyed only rudimentary facilities to compensate for the trauma of being uprooted” from their homes and forced into the camps.¹³⁴ Aid such as clothing, building materials, and cash advances was provided by charities and the Malayan Chinese Association because of the government’s failure to do so.¹³⁵ The British Red Cross began giving New Village residents social-welfare assistance in 1952.¹³⁶

In Dhofar, the British consistently pushed the sultan to make systematic reforms. During the war, however, none were implemented.¹³⁷ The provision of goods that did take place during the conflict, such as well-digging, occurred primarily on the more secure coastal plain and the highland behind the guerrilla-held mountains, so it could not have directly driven the insurgency’s defeat.¹³⁸ Sultan Qaboos refused to let Dhofaris participate in the provincial government he had appointed.¹³⁹ The British wondered in 1972 if there was any point in continuing military aid to Oman in the absence of reforms.¹⁴⁰ They were near despair about the lack of reforms in 1974, when the insurgency had already lost two-thirds of its strength.¹⁴¹ A month after Qaboos declared the insurgency defeated, the government showed no grasp of the importance of meeting popular needs.¹⁴² The most important accommodation in the conflict was Qaboos’s amnesty for insurgents, which enabled formation of the *firqats* (militias). The *firqats*’ personal relationships, language, and particu-

134. Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia*, p. 126.

135. R.P. Bingham, Political Intelligence Report, Settlement of Penang, November 21 to December 20, 1955, FCO 141/7529, TNA. On the Association’s efforts, see Southeast Asia Department Agrarian Policy in Malaya, FO 371/101271, TNA; and Fight against Communist Terrorism in Malaya, June 1951, FO 371/101271, TNA.

136. Victor Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free?* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1954), p. 81.

137. Abdel Razzak Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman, 1965–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 6, 194–229.

138. Tony Jeapes, *SAS: Operation Oman* (London, William Kimber, 1980), pp. 162–164, 209, 228; and John Akehurst, *We Won a War: The Campaign in Oman, 1965–1975* (Salisbury, U.K.: Michael Russell, 1982), pp. 78–79. On long-term development efforts, see, for example, Jeapes, interview with author, May 15, 2009, Warminster, Wiltshire, United Kingdom; CSAF Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins, Report to Chiefs of Staff, December 28, 1975, DEFE 11/899, TNA; Chief of Defence Staff, Notes on a Visit to Oman, January 19 to January 22, 1976, dated January 30, 1976, DEFE 25/371, TNA; and Creasey, Talking Points, Review of the Military Situation, December 10, 1973 to January 23, 1974.

139. Record of Meeting on Dhofar, British Residency, Bahrain, August 7, 1971, FCO 8/1667, TNA.

140. Richard Lloyd Jones, British Military Involvement in Oman, November 6, 1972, DEFE 24/1831, TNA; and A.J. Cragg, Draft Paper for the Secretary of State, Defence Assistance to the Sultanate of Oman, November 17, 1972, DEFE 25/294, TNA.

141. CSAF Maj. Gen. Tim Creasey, Review of the Situation, December 1973–May 1974, dated June 9, 1974, DEFE 24/57, TNA.

142. Chief of Defence Staff, Notes on a Visit to Oman, January 19 to January 22, 1976; and Chiefs of Staff Committee, Defence Operational Planning Staff, Progress Report on Oman, draft, January 26, 1976, DEFE 25/371, TNA.

lar fighting skills enabled the SAF to target the insurgency directly and to more easily control and gain information from civilians.¹⁴³

In El Salvador, the United States pressed for reforms it considered crucial to defeat the insurgency.¹⁴⁴ Government elites resisted reforms as inimical to their interests.¹⁴⁵ The highest-profile reforms demanded—free-and-fair elections and land reform—were not fully implemented, because they would have stripped state elites of power and wealth. The so-called reforms that the government did implement merely reinstated the limited political openness that had existed prior to the state terrorism of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Elections were neither free nor fair.¹⁴⁶ They did, however, eventually help reopen political space closed since the crackdown at the beginning of the war. The state slowly permitted re-creation of popular and civic groups, including peasant organizations, trade unions, women's groups, and neighborhood associations, though it also continued to violently target such organizations.¹⁴⁷ In a state where 1 percent of the population owned more than 70 percent of the land and more than 40 percent of the rural populace comprised landless sharecroppers or estate laborers, U.S. policymakers considered land distribution key to defeating the FMLN.¹⁴⁸ Under U.S. pressure, the junta announced a land reform plan in March 1980. The plan was ambitious, but elite intransigence severely limited its execution.¹⁴⁹ Oligarchs remained the owners of many

143. Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins (CSAF 1975–1977), interview with author, May 20, 2009, Great Bedwyn, Marlborough, Wiltshire, United Kingdom; and Jeapes, *SAS*, p. 78.

144. William M. LeoGrande, "A Splendid Little War: Drawing the Line in El Salvador," *International Security*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Summer 1981), pp. 27–52, doi:10.2307/2538528.

145. T. David Mason and Dale A. Krane, "The Political Economy of Death Squads: Toward a Theory of the Impact of State-Sanctioned Terror," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (June 1989), pp. 175–198, doi:10.2307/2600536; Susan Burgerman, "First Do No Harm: U.S. Foreign Policy and Respect for Human Rights in El Salvador and Guatemala, 1980–1996," in Debra Liang-Fenton, ed., *Implementing U.S. Human Rights Policy: Agendas, Policies, and Practices* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2004), p. 293; Mark Peceny and William D. Stanley, "Counterinsurgency in El Salvador," *Politics & Society*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (2010), pp. 67–94, doi:10.1177/0032329209357884; and Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, "Understanding Failed Revolution in El Salvador: A Comparative Analysis of Regime Types and Social Structures," *Politics & Society*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (1989), pp. 511–537, doi:10.1177/003232928901700404.

146. Karl, "Imposing Consent?"; Cynthia McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America: El Salvador's FMLN and Peru's Shining Path* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1998), pp. 120–128; and Enrique Baloyra, "Elections, Civil War, and Transition in El Salvador, 1982–1994: A Preliminary Evaluation," in Mitchell A. Seligson and John A. Booth, eds., *Elections and Democracy in Central America, Revisited* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 59.

147. Philip J. Williams and Knut Walter, *Militarization and Demilitarization in El Salvador's Transition to Democracy* (Pittsburg, Pa.: University of Pittsburg, 1997), p. 121.

148. Benjamin C. Schwarz, "American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building" (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1991), p. 44.

149. Alberto Vargas, "El Salvador Country Brief: Property Rights and Land Markets" (Madison: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin–Madison, March 2003); Peter Shiras, "The False

large estates. A 1992 analysis found that land reform affected 20 percent of El Salvador's land area and 10 percent of the population, leaving 54 percent of the workforce landless, land poor, or unemployed.¹⁵⁰

I have not identified instances in which the Salvadoran government attempted to provide accommodations to selected nonstate political or military elites. It is possible that in a revolutionary context, such as the Salvadoran civil war, opportunities for accommodation are unlikely.¹⁵¹

Not only were there no reforms in any of these cases, as predicted by the coercion theory, but in all three, the government succeeded without gaining popular support, as I show in the next section.

NO INCREASE IN POPULAR SUPPORT

Britain never gained the broad popular support among all ethnic communities that it believed necessary for success against the Malayan insurgency.¹⁵² Statements ruing this fact, and the lack of civilian provision of information on the insurgency that was supposed to follow rising popular support, appear in contemporaneous documents throughout the Emergency.¹⁵³

Elites focused on ensuring that arrangements for independence suited their needs. The sultans lacked Britain's concern about the communist-nationalist

Promise—and Real Violence—of Land Reform in El Salvador," in Marvin E. Gettleman et al., eds., *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War* (New York: Grove, 1981), pp. 163–167; Williams and Walter, *Militarization and Demilitarization in El Salvador's Transition to Democracy*, p. 106; Schwarz, "American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador," pp. 47–48; and Col. Lyman C. Duryea, U.S. Department of Defence and U.S. Army attaché in El Salvador, November 1983–October 1985, Project 86-9 El Salvador, interviewed by Lt. Col. Emil R. Bedard, U.S. Marine Corps, and Lt. Col. L.R. Vasquez, U.S. Army, March 4, 1986, for the AWC/MHI 1986 El Salvador Oral History Project, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Army Heritage Education Center (AHEC), Carlisle, Pennsylvania, pp. 66–67.

150. William C. Thiesenhusen, "Trends in Land Tenure Issues in Latin America: Experiences and Recommendations for Development Cooperation" (Eschborn, Germany: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, 1996), cited in Vargas, "El Salvador Country Brief" p. 10; McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America*, p. 175; Leonel Gomez, "El Salvador's Land Reform: A Real Promise, but a Final Failure," in Gettleman et al., *El Salvador*, pp. 178–181; and Schwarz, "American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador," p. 48.

151. Jeff Cole, military adviser in El Salvador during the war, email to author, April 4, 2010.

152. Note by the Secretary, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Situation in Malaya, May 1949, DEFE 11/33, TNA; Paper on the Security Situation in the Federation of Malaya; Memorandum on Visit to Singapore of the United States Joint Defence Survey Mission (Melby Mission): Initial, Information Discussions with the Mission on August 8–9, 1950, DEFE 11/38, TNA; and Commissioner General, South East Asia, Telegram to Secretary of State for the Colonies, November 24, 1950, FO 371/84492, TNA.

153. See, for example, Director of Operations, Progress Report on the Emergency in Malaya; Secretary, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Report on Visit of Dr. Cockburn's Party to Malaya; Haji Mohamed Sheriff, Mentri Besar, Kedah state, Kedah Monthly Political Intelligence Report No. 11/53, October 21 to November 20, 1953, DEFE 11/46, TNO; South East Asia Department of Colonial Office, Malaya Monthly Emergency and Political Report, September 15 to October 15, 1954, DEFE 11/142, TNA; and FARELF to War Office, Sitrep No. 338, received October 18, 1954, DEFE 11/142, TNA.

threat and remained uninterested in the Emergency.¹⁵⁴ Ethnic Chinese residents displayed a similar indifference to British efforts to encourage Malayan nationalism.¹⁵⁵ The lack of popular interest in the campaign against the MNLA and politics more broadly frustrated the British authorities. "The public has, as usual, done its best to disprove Aristotle's dictum that man is by nature a political animal," a British official declared in 1954.¹⁵⁶

New Village inhabitants generally did not consider themselves the fortunate recipients of government reforms. A review of the Villages in 1954 found large variation in levels of poverty and squalor. One was "bad in all respects. Should be moved, preferably to Christmas Island for hydrogen bomb tests," the reviewing British official wrote.¹⁵⁷ A doctor described one resettled community in the following terms: "Four hundred beings, including children, huddled there. . . . I shall never forget their pale and puffy faces: beriberi, or the ulcers on their legs. Their skin was the hue of the swamp. They stank. There was no clean water."¹⁵⁸ In George Town, the capital of Penang state, ethnic Chinese considered the New Villages "small and remote concentration camps, devoid of any attraction whatsoever."¹⁵⁹ In 1955, "New Villagers around Ipoh [the state capital of Perak] still appear to be uncooperative, indifferent, or actively hostile."¹⁶⁰ In 1957, British authorities found there was still considerable discontent, rather than popular support for the government, in the New Villages.¹⁶¹

Similarly, in Oman the government did not gain the popular support the British wanted. The populace hailed Qaboos when he replaced his father, Sa'id, but his popularity quickly faded. In June 1971, Dhofaris were disillu-

154. Secretary, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Report on Visit of Dr. Cockburn's Party to Malaya; and High Commissioner for the Federation of Malaya to Secretary of State for the Colonies, Monthly Intelligence Report for November 1956, FCO 141/7306, TNA.

155. Director of Operations, Progress Report on the Emergency in Malaya.

156. Bingham, Resident Commissioner, Settlement of Penang, Political Intelligence Report for the Settlement of Penang from April 21 to May 20, 1954, dated May 31, 1954, FCO 141/7529, TNA.

157. C.H.F. Blake, Notes on New Villages in Batang Padang District [1954], Papers of C.H.F. Blake, GB 0162 MSS. Ind. Ocn. s. 276, Bodleian.

158. Karl Hack, "Everyone Lived in Fear: Malaya and the British Way of Counterinsurgency," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 23, Nos. 4-5 (2012), pp. 671-699, at pp. 685-686, doi:10.1080/09592318.2012.709764.

159. D. Gray, Ag. Resident Commissioner, Penang, Political Intelligence Report for February 21, 1955-March 20, 1955, dated March 31, 1955, FCO 141/7529, TNA.

160. Mentri Besar, Perak state, Monthly Political Intelligence Report for Period Ending March 20, 1955, FCO 141/7377, TNA.

161. Raja Haji Ahmad, Mentri Besar, Perlis state, Monthly Political Intelligence Report for the Month Ending January 20, 1956, dated February 2, 1956, FCO 141/7339, TNA; Mentri Besar, Selangor state, Political Intelligence Report for Selangor, November 21, 1956 to December 20, 1956, FCO 141/7528, TNA; Mentri Besar, Negu Sembilan state, Monthly Political Intelligence Report for the Month of March, 1956, FCO 141/7319, TNA; and Bower, Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957.

sioned with Qaboos and gloomy about their future.¹⁶² By November 1971, all of Oman considered the government inefficient and corrupt.¹⁶³ At the end of the war, Dhofari dissatisfaction was still rising over the government's lack of action and bad administration.¹⁶⁴

In El Salvador, the United States considered voting a sign of popular support for the government. Balloting fell over the course of the war, however, despite inflated turnout totals.¹⁶⁵ Turnout slid from 65 percent of eligible voters in the 1984 presidential election to 48 percent in the 1985 midterms.¹⁶⁶ Turnout in the 1988 midterms was estimated at 48 percent and dropped to an estimated 40 percent in the 1989 presidential balloting. The turnout in the 1991 midterms was estimated at 44 percent. The decline in participation reflected suspicion and unrest, as well as the lack of a level playing field. In 1990, only 19 percent of Salvadorans were confident that there would not be electoral fraud; 41 percent thought there would be; and 40 percent were not sure.¹⁶⁷ Popular support for a negotiated peace, as opposed to a government military victory, rose. In 1983, 51 percent of the electorate supported talks to end the war, whereas 10 percent wanted a military victory over the insurgency.¹⁶⁸ A June 1989 poll found that 76 percent of Salvadorans favored negotiations.¹⁶⁹

SUMMARY

The Malayan Emergency little resembled a campaign implementing the good governance theory of counterinsurgency. The government's indiscriminate use of force against civilians played a major role in British success, as the coercion theory predicts. Military targeting had left the insurgents unable to mount coordinated attacks by 1949, several years before the accommodation of civilians held in prison camps, also as the coercion theory predicts. The British did not undertake liberalizing reforms and did not gain public support. Yet they won, as the coercion theory predicts. These findings in the case most widely known as a model counterinsurgency success suggest that the good gover-

162. Consul General D.G. Crawford to Wright, Bahrain, April 18, 1971, FCO 8/1667, TNA; and Sir Geoffrey Arthur, Political Resident, Bahrain, to Muscat, June 11, 1971, FCO 8/1667, TNA.

163. Graham diary, November 14, 1971, folder 1, box 4, Graham Collection, OA.

164. Chief of Defence Staff, Notes on a Visit to Oman, January 19 to January 22, 1976; and Chiefs of Staff Committee, Defence Operational Planning Staff, Progress Report on Oman, draft.

165. Karl, "Imposing Consent?" p. 34.

166. *Ibid.*

167. McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America*, p. 112.

168. Karl, "Imposing Consent?" p. 27, citing Segundo Montes, "Condicionamientos Socio-Políticos del Proceso Electoral" [Socio-political conditioning in the electoral process], *Estudios Centroamericanos*, April/May 1983, pp. 187–196, at p. 188.

169. Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace* (1982; repr. Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1995), p. 215.

nance theory has limited explanatory power. In contrast, the coercion theory of counterinsurgency success has significant explanatory power.

Findings in the Dhofar and El Salvador cases offer further support for the coercion theory. In Dhofar, the military defeated the insurgency on the battlefield, forcefully controlled civilians to cut the flow of resources to insurgents, and accommodated rival elites. The sultan implemented no reforms and gained no popular support. The El Salvador campaign also shows the absence of reforms and the indiscriminate use of force against civilians. In El Salvador, as in Malaya and Dhofar, the government's primary tool in achieving success was military force. The differences in El Salvador emphasize the importance of the coercion theory's predictions regarding the treatment of elites and civilians: the Salvadoran government did not accommodate rival elites; it did not cut ties between civilians and insurgents; and it did not attain military victory.

Conclusion

I have argued that my theory of coercion offers a more robust explanation for successful counterinsurgencies than does the good governance theory. According to the coercion theory, counterinsurgent governments must use force to control civilians, and thus cut the flow of resources to insurgents, as well as provide accommodations to rival elites to obtain information and enhance their military power. The coercion theory better explains counterinsurgency success in cases that proponents of the good governance approach present as model campaigns—cases that should present strong evidence of the effectiveness of good governance in defeating insurgencies. If the predictions of the good governance approach are accurate, the government should limit its use of force in countering the insurgents; it should propose and implement reforms to reduce popular grievances; and popular support for the government should rise. The empirical evidence demonstrates that none of these factors is present in these three cases considered by supporters of the good governance theory as models of counterinsurgency success: Malaya; Dhofar, Oman; and El Salvador. The evidence did, however, yield strong support for the coercive theory.

In the Malaya case, the government used considerable force against civilians; it did not implement reforms; and it did not gain popular support for its counterinsurgent campaign. A brief review of the Dhofar and El Salvador cases yields similar findings. The El Salvador case, in particular, underscores the importance of the use of force against civilians and accommodation of elite actors because the government used brute force against civilians and still succeeded, yet did not accommodate rivals and did not defeat the FMLN.

Moving beyond theory to consider the implementation of a counterinsurgency campaign by a specific government facing a specific insurgency, the governance theory confronts several difficulties. First, governments that can make reforms do so, leaving only the most challenging cases of full-blown insurgency. Second, governments willing to make reforms may not have the ability to execute them, even with patron support. Third, violence hardens actors' positions and changes their calculations. It can exacerbate actors' sense of playing a zero-sum game and make resolving the conflict harder.¹⁷⁰ Fourth, violence exacerbates the difficulties associated with establishing democracy in a non-democratic state, and democratization efforts may even intensify violence.¹⁷¹ Fifth, there is an inherent tension between the strategic goals of the governance approach and the strategic necessities of defeating an insurgency. The government's need to accommodate warlords or other elites to gain information and fighting power and to control the populace undercuts the good governance goal of empowering and serving the populace.¹⁷²

These findings raise important questions for policymakers, including questions about moral hazard. Liberal great powers may try to do good by fostering reforms in states confronting an insurgency and fail at high human and moral cost. Alternatively, they may achieve their goal of long-term political stability through elite domestic political accommodation, also at some moral cost. Support for an illiberal client means direct or indirect support for its illiberal, even brutal, policies. These difficulties suggest the need for policymakers to assess the value of keeping client elites in power compared to the costs of trying to preserve their rule against an insurgent threat. Acceding to corruption and warlord rule or supporting it to gain political stability is normatively unpalatable. There is also a moral argument, however, for ending or reducing the suffering engendered by civil war and for supporting postwar humanitarian, infrastructure, economic, and political construction whatever the regime type. Western policymakers should consider just how high the moral and human costs of a successful counterinsurgency campaign are likely to reach before choosing the path of intervention.

170. Robert J. Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 6.

171. Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and War," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 3 (May/June 1995), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/1995-05-01/democratization-and-war>; and Paris, *At War's End*.

172. Maj. Niel Smith and Col. Sean MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," *Military Review*, March/April 2008, pp. 41–52; and Rod Nordland, "Some Police Recruits Impose 'Islamic Tax' on Afghans," *New York Times*, June 12, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/13/world/asia/13police.html?scp=1&sq=afghanistan%20%22afghan%20local%20police%22&st=cse>.