CHAPTER FIVE

Broader Findings

Chapter Four described and presented our tests of 24 concepts for COIN. This chapter describes and presents the results from other analyses. We begin by discussing the *patterns of relationships* between multiple factors and the outcomes of the cases and present three analyses. First, with so many of the concepts identified in the previous chapter receiving strong support, we try to preliminarily identify which patterns of factors occur most often in COIN wins. Our findings show that the balance of good versus bad COIN practices discriminates the wins from the losses in all 59 core cases, and we present a scorecard based on this finding. Second, we return to the concepts from the previous chapter and try to tease out which of supported concepts are most essential to success. Using a method called qualitative comparative analysis, we ask which of the 18 supported concepts for COIN from the last chapter are the most causally central. This analysis finds that every winning COIN force always implemented an approach that included four of these concepts and the COIN force never lost in cases in which at least one of three concepts were implemented. This allows us to prioritize several of the concepts as critical to success. Third, we make several additional observations about hypothesized patterns in the data, including some observations about the relative importance of the quality versus quantity of COIN forces and about the broader patterns of outcomes in the intermediate phases of the 59 core cases. The findings reveal that quality should be prioritized over quantity and that poor beginnings do not necessarily lead to poor outcomes.

The chapter then turns to analyses of different outcomes, turning away from an examination of factors and concepts correlated with who won or lost the case and instead focusing on other properties of the case: first, the duration of the case and, second, the durability of the outcome—that is, the length of the postconflict peace interval.

Scorecard: Balance of Good Versus Bad Practices

In addition to the factors (listed in Chapter Four) that we selected to represent each concept and evaluated for each phase of each case, we identified many other factors to evaluate for each phase of each case to test additional hypotheses and to use as control variables. All 289 factors recorded for each case are listed in Appendix E. Further discussion on the selection and refinement of these factors can be found in Appendix A, in the section "Factor Generation, Evaluation, and Scoring."

Preliminary exploratory analyses of the relationship of each factor with case outcomes, coupled with the analyses examining the factor stacks used to test the various concepts for COIN (presented in the previous chapter), revealed a trend: Most concepts and factors that common sense dictated would have a positive relationship to COIN victories did; most factors that common sense suggested would lead to poor COIN outcomes by and large did so. Looking carefully at the patterns of factors present and absent in each case revealed something very interesting: Every case won by the COIN force featured many factors that are part of demonstrably positive COIN practices or approaches and predominantly did not include detractive COIN factors; in instances in which the COIN force lost, this was never the case.

To confirm this preliminary observation, we gathered individual factors and factor stacks that had strong *a priori* grounding as good or bad COIN practices or that had strong bivariate relationships with case outcomes, either strong positive relationships or strong negative relationships. We then took these factors or factor stacks and compiled them into 15 good COIN practices and 11 bad COIN practices. In doing so, we repeated a process we had first followed in the original

Victory Has a Thousand Fathers research.[1] For details on how we produced the scorecard from the data on the 59 core cases and how it differs from the one produced for the original 30 cases, see the discussion in Appendix D.

The good COIN practices or factors are as follows:

- The COIN force realized at least two strategic communication factors (factor list revised).
- The COIN force reduced at least three tangible support factors.
- The government realized at least one government legitimacy factor (factor list revised).
- Government corruption was reduced/good governance increased since the onset of the conflict.
- The COIN force realized at least one intelligence factor.
- The COIN force was of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas (COIN force overmatch).
- Unity of effort/unity of command was maintained.
- The COIN force avoided excessive collateral damage, disproportionate use of force, or other illegitimate applications of force.
- The COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with the population in area of conflict.
- There were short-term investments, improvements in infrastructure or development, or property reform in area of conflict that was controlled or claimed by the COIN force.
- The majority of the population in the area of conflict supported/favored the COIN force.
- The COIN force established and then expanded secure areas.
- Government/COIN reconstruction or development sought or achieved improvements that were substantially above the historical baseline.
- The COIN force provided or ensured the provision of basic services in areas it controlled or claimed to control.
- Perception of security was created or maintained among populations in the area that the COIN force claimed to control.

[1] See Paul, Clarke, and Grill, 2010b.

The bad COIN practices or factors are as follows:

- The COIN force used both collective punishment and escalating repression.
- There was corrupt and arbitrary personalistic government rule.
- Host-nation elites had perverse incentives to continue conflict.
- An external professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of the insurgents.
- The host nation was economically dependent on external supporters.
- The fighting was primarily initiated by the insurgents.
- The COIN force failed to adapt to changes in adversary strategy, operations, or tactics.
- The COIN force engaged in more coercion/intimidation than the insurgents.
- The insurgent force was individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated.
- The COIN force or allies relied on looting for sustainment.
- The COIN force and government had different goals/levels of commitment.

Taking the balance of the sum of good factors minus the sum of bad factors for each case provided a striking result: For all 59 core cases, all of the cases in which the COIN force won have a positive balance of good versus bad practices, while for all cases in which the COIN force lost, the balance is negative. (See Table 5.1; the individual scores for each case can be found in Appendix G.) What is especially revealing is that the score for the highest-scoring loss is –1, while the score for the lowest-scoring win is 2. This is an empirical separation of three—a gap that exposes wins and losses as fundamentally differentiated by these criteria.

In the 59 core cases, every case in which the COIN force had more of the listed good factors/practices than bad factors/practices won. This list of 15 good and 11 bad factors is perfectly able to discriminate the 59 core cases into wins and losses, without any further information and without exception.

Table 5.1
Balance of Good COIN Practices Minus Bad COIN Practices and Case Outcomes for 59 Core Cases

Score	COIN Losses	COIN Wins
–11	1	0
–9	2	0
–8	2	0
–7	4	0
–6	3	0
–5	2	0
–4	4	0
–3	5	0
–2	4	0
–1	4	0
2	0	2
3	0	3
4	0	2
5	0	3
6	0	3
7	0	1
8	0	1
9	0	1
10	0	4
11	0	2
12	0	2
13	0	3
15	0	1

Every Insurgency May Be Unique, but Not at This Level of Analysis

This "without exception" is particularly important, given the regular admonition that "every insurgency is unique," and, thus, every COIN campaign must be unique.[2] This is even more remarkable given that many of the conventional explanations of the outcomes of these cases rely on a narrative of exceptionality—that is, they list one or more distinctive or exceptional aspects of the case's history that are critical to understanding the outcome. For example, the narrative of Turkey's 1999 triumph over the PKK indicates that victory largely hinged on the capture of the PKK's leader, Abdullah Öcalan, and willful errors he had made in not ensuring succession for the insurgent group. Narrative accounts might further mention Turkey's failure to address the legitimate grievances of the Kurdish population and how its heavy-handed and repressive tactics alienated the population in the area of conflict. What might be given less explanatory emphasis in the narrative is the host of good COIN practices that the Turks slowly added to their approach in the later phases of the conflict. Regardless of whether the Turks would have defeated the PKK in 1999 had they not captured Öcalan, they did defeat the PKK, and at that point in the conflict, they did have a substantially positive balance of good versus bad COIN practices. (The scorecard scores for Turkey were eight good factors minus two bad factors, for a total score of six.) After removing the class exceptions for the tide-of-history cases and the one case with an ambiguous outcome (see Chapter Three), no exceptions are required.

So, every insurgency may be unique, but not so much that it matters at this level of analysis.[3] Our data show that, regardless of distinctiveness in the narrative and without exception, COIN forces that suc-

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[2] Each of the following documents contains the quotation "every insurgency is unique": Felter, 2006; Nagl, 2005; Giampietri and Stone, 2004; Millen, 2005; Norton, 1997; Hoffman, 2007; Harrill, 2008; and Gray, 2007. Also see Appendix C.

[3] Where the distinctive features and characteristics of individual insurgencies most certainly *do* matter is in actual efforts to implement concepts and practices on the ground. Our findings do not suggest a "one-size-fits-all" approach to COIN at the execution level; rather, these findings suggest that there is a finite set of good practices that a COIN force should always aspire to realize, but how a COIN force actually does those things in any given operation will vary depending on the context.

cessfully implement preponderantly more good practices than bad win, and those that do not lose.

Where we allow that every insurgency *is* unique is in the details of the specific case, including the strategy and actions of the insurgents. These details are highly context-specific. They do not appear to cause variation in the factors that must be implemented to defeat an insurgency, but they do appear to affect how hard it is to do those things. If one reviews the lists of good and bad practices and factors, they are all phrased in such a way as to reflect accomplishment, not attempts. (When we brief these findings, we explain that, on this scorecard, there is no "A for effort.") How difficult it is to do each of these things, how much effort is required, will be (uniquely?) determined specifically by the context of a conflict.

Consider this extended example drawn from the Angola (UNITA) case. In first phase of the conflict (1975–1991), both the COIN force and the insurgents were backed by outside troops, as Cuban soldiers fought alongside their comrades from the MPLA and South African commandos worked alongside UNITA insurgents. MPLA COIN forces had just finished fighting in a 13-year war of independence to oust the Portuguese from the country, so its fighters resorted to all means available in the first phase of the subsequent civil war, with little attention to strategy or human consequences. Indeed, in Phase I, the COIN forces employed seven of the 11 "bad" practices listed on the COIN scorecard.

Toward the end of Phase I and the beginning of Phase II, external troops were (mostly) removed from the battlefield, although South Africa continued to provide low-level support to the insurgents. Recognizing the need for a change in strategy, the COIN force spent most of Phase II (1992–1997) gradually attenuating the insurgency through rounds of cease-fires, amnesties, elections, and reforms. The DDR processes that accompanied the Bicesse and Lusaka agreements deprived the insurgents of their top military leaders. Concurrently, the government used profits obtained through the sale of diamonds and oil to provide much-needed services to the population in an attempt to woo civilians and combatants alike. As a result of these efforts, by the end

of Phase II, the COIN force could boast an overall scorecard score of 7, a significant change from the –4 total of the first phase.

In Phase III (1998–2002), the Angolan government and COIN force continued their strategy of allowing UNITA fighters and the insurgency's mercurial leader, Jonas Savimbi, to keep making mistakes while gradually improving the quality and quantity of the state security forces. UNITA neglected popular support and politics, making it much easier for the government to make progress in this area when it chose to do so. It made particular headway when it organized a political party of insurgent defectors, known as UNITA-Renovada.

The government's strategy resulted in the implementation of numerous "good" COIN practices from the scorecard, bringing the overall score for the final phase to 10. During this phase, the COIN force's strategy led it to explicitly focus on a number of the scorecard practices, including establishing and expanding secure areas, reducing tangible support to the insurgents, realizing factors related to government legitimacy, and creating and maintaining the perception of security among populations in the areas under government control.

The improvements in the Angolan COIN force's scorecard scores were not inevitable and were not the result of a scorekeeping excerise or the application of a checklist. They resulted from the evolution of a sound strategy, effectively executed. It just so happens that the effective Angolan COIN strategy realized a positive balance of scorecard factors, as did every other winning COIN strategy since WWII. The COIN scorecard *is not* (nor is it intended to be) a substitute for strategy or for a nuanced understanding of the distinctive features of a given context and insurgency. It *is* a historically derived way to make a diagnostic assessment of whether or not a strategy and its implementation have produced a positive balance of factors that have led to success elsewhere.

Factors Not in the Scorecard

Perhaps of almost as much interest as the factors included in the scorecard are the factors that are *not* included in the scorecard. There is at least as much art as there is science in exactly which factors made the scorecard. Where many factors had a strong correlation with out-

come but were also strongly correlated with each other, only one was included: the one that either best represented that cluster of factors, or perhaps the one that was the most intuitive to measure. The fact remains, however, that a simple scorecard of 15 good factors and 11 bad factors is able to perfectly discriminate the 59 core comparative cases of insurgency from 1944 to 2010 into wins and losses without needing to make reference to any of the following factors:

- The COIN force had and used uncontested air dominance.
- The primary COIN force was an external actor at any point during the conflict.
- Terrain played a major role in the conflict.
- It was an Islamic insurgency.
- It was a communist insurgency
- Grievances leading to the initial insurgency were substantially resolved
- COIN force or insurgent actions precipitated (or constituted) ethnic or religious violence.

It is hypothesized in the broader discussions of COIN that each of these factors has a significant impact on insurgency outcomes. In fact, in the individual case narratives, several of these factors play prominent roles. However, none of them is so definitive that we could not discriminate the wins from the losses without it. None is essential to COIN success (as some of these factors, such as air power, have been posited to be), and none is a certain condemnation to COIN failure.

The full scorecard, with the individual factors that must be assessed to complete the scorecard (spelling out the five strategic communication factors to determine whether at least two are present, for example), appears in Appendix F. Again, while not meant as a checklist or recipe book for an insurgency (it is atheoretical and does not contain or imply a specific strategy), the scorecard should be a useful diagnostic tool to assess whether a given COIN strategy within a given context is on the right track and to help identify some issues that may not be sufficiently addressed by a given strategy, or shortcomings in implementation.

Which Supported COIN Concepts Are Most Essential? Qualitative Comparative Analysis

The evidentiary support offered to 17 of the 24 COIN concepts presented in Chapter Four is already a useful finding, but it does little to narrow down priorities. Which of the host of good COIN concepts is most critical, or most important? To answer this question, we employed sociologist Charles Ragin's qualitative comparative analysis (QCA).[4]

QCA is particularly well suited to this application because it is designed to assess configurations of case similarities and differences using simple, logical rules. These rules run parallel to those used by researchers who conduct small-n studies (e.g., case studies with single-digit numbers of cases), yet this method makes it possible to address a much larger number of cases.[5] Using computer algorithms first developed for the simplification of switching circuits, researchers are able to compare a large number of cases as configurations—many more than they could possibly "hold in their heads" using traditional case-oriented narrative comparative methods. As such, researchers are compelled to be explicit about outcomes of interest and proposed causal relations. Further, the output of the QCA process is the reduction of patterns of factors to the minimum set sufficient to explain all of the observed outcomes. These minimally sufficient patterns (called "prime implicants") tell us which of the identified COIN concepts are most essential to success in COIN. In other words, this is a more sophisticated way to do what the scorecard discussed earlier in this chapter

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[4] Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1987.

[5] This technique really shines in the "medium-n" methodological space. For small-n case studies (single digits), a researcher can make an effective comparison while holding all the relevant comparative detail in his or her head. For large-n studies, the full power of statistics and statistical inference becomes available. In the medium-n space (any number of cases greater than what one can compare holistically "in the head" and fewer the threshold for statistical inference), a technique—such as this one—that structures the data so as to point out anomalies and differences in patterns between the cases for further scrutiny is ideal. For a more complete discussion, see Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, and Terrance Savitsky, "Between Large-N and Small-N Analyses: Historical Comparison of Thirty Insurgency Case Studies," *Historical Methods*, forthcoming.

ended up doing: Identify a set of factors that will perfectly discriminate the cases into wins and losses, only do it using as few factors as possible. For a more detailed methodological discussion of QCA, see the section "Charles Ragin's Qualitative Comparative Analysis" in Appendix A.

The QCA conducted as part of the *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* analysis was inconclusive; in the original 30 cases, the eight COIN winners all had so many of the supported concepts that it was impossible to prioritize (hence the title of that study and the core finding, which remains valid, that "good COIN practices run in packs"). The current study does better, in part because there are more cases (59 core cases, of which 28 were wins), and in part because more of those cases are more marginal wins—that is, the COIN force managed to prevail with fewer good practices in place. These marginal wins help winnow out which of the concepts and practices are critical and which are just positively correlated with success. For further discussion of the value of these marginal cases, see Appendix B.

QCA revealed a single simple set of prime implicants, requiring just two concept factor stacks:

- tangible support reduction
- commitment and motivation.

Every case in which both factors were present was a COIN win, and every case in which one or both was absent was a COIN loss. In other words, these two factors constitute a scorecard score of 2; any case with a score of 2 is a win, and any case with a score of 1 or 0 is a loss.

Further iterations of QCA revealed six factor stacks that routinely contributed to other possible prime implicant sets. In the 59 core cases, every winning case implemented these four concepts, and no losing case had all four of them (so, together they are prime implicants, perfectly discriminating the cases by outcome):

- commitment and motivation
- tangible support reduction
- flexibility and adaptability

- at least two of the following: unity of effort, initiative, and intelligence.

A discussion and (fairly technical) presentation of this analysis is presented in Appendix B. *Briefly, this finding leads us to prioritize commitment and motivation, tangible support reduction, and flexibility and adaptability as critical or essential COIN concepts.* All successful COIN campaigns in the 59 core cases between 1944 and 2010 implemented all three of these concepts, and no losing COIN force in that span succeeded in doing all three. The QCA, the scorecard, and the narrative analyses suggest that a COIN force that wishes to succeed should implement other good practices, too, but future COIN forces should prioritize commitment, tangible support, and adaptability.

Additional Observations

Before turning to outcomes of interest other than which side won the conflict, there are a few additional observational odds and ends to report. Choosing where to draw the line with such additional observations is difficult; these data ended up being so rich, analytically (71 cases, broken into a total of 204 phases, and each scored on 289 factors, for a total of over 58,000 individual cells of data, in addition to the case narratives), that there are always additional observations to be drawn from them. Here, we have restricted ourselves to additional observations in three categories: observations that are relevant to questions about external actors on the insurgent side, those relevant to the COIN force mix (including quality versus quantity), and a few observations about results from the intermediate phases of cases rather than just the decisive phases. Each is discussed in turn.

External Actors on the Insurgent Side

The preliminary observations at the end of Chapter Three noted that COIN forces consisting of or supported by external actors do not lose insurgencies any more frequently than those without such support. This observation was confirmed by the COIN scorecard, discussed earlier

in this chapter, which showed that the COIN force's status as an external actor was one of the factors *not* needed to discriminate cases into wins and losses. What about cases in which the *insurgents* have external supporters? As one would surmise, such support is bad news from the perspective of the government. In the case of Kosovo, this bad news was delivered to the Serbs in the form of NATO sorties flown in support of the insurgents, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). While one can never say for certain, it is highly unlikely that the KLA would have been able to defeat the Serbs without such significant external support. Jeffrey Record reinforces this point more broadly, noting that "external assistance is no guarantee of insurgent success, but there are few if any examples of unassisted insurgent victories against determined and resourceful governments."[6]

Though not included in the scorecard because of high correlation with tangible support, continuing strong support to the insurgents from a strong external source is strongly correlated with COIN loss. In fact, every case in which a major external power supported the insurgents and was not balanced by a major external power supporting the COIN force ended up being an insurgent win and a COIN loss (this occurred seven times in the 59 core cases). The news gets even worse if the insurgents' external support includes troops. In 14 cases, external professional military forces fought on behalf of the insurgents in the decisive phase of the conflict; in 13 of those 14 cases, the COIN force lost, even if it too had external professional forces fighting on its side. In several cases around the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, including Georgia/Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh, Soviet military forces propelled the insurgents to victory by fighting against the incumbent governments. Clearly, part of reducing the tangible support to the insurgents is the imperative to find a way to curtail both external support and whatever support is being provided by indigenous populations.

Immediately after WWII, governments were more likely than insurgents to receive external support. This trend was reversed once

[6] Jeffrey Record, "External Assistance: Enabler of Insurgent Success," *Parameters*, Vol. 36, No. 3, Fall 2006b, p. 36.

the Cold War began in earnest, and then it switched again during the 1980s, and governments were once again more likely than insurgents to receive external support, especially as the Cold War came to an end.[7]

COIN Forces: Quality Versus Quantity and Force Mix

A frequent topic in the literature on COIN concerns the appropriate force mix for COIN forces, variously questioning the right balance between law-enforcement and military forces, between conventional forces and SOF, indigenous and foreign forces, and so on. Most of our data are not well suited to these types of questions, as the concept and scorecard factors are either about how something is done (for example, factor 39, "COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with the population in the area of conflict") or whether or not something is accomplished (for example, factor 43, "No parts of the area of conflict were no-go or otherwise denied to the COIN force") rather than about what part of the COIN force accomplished it, or even what COIN force elements were available. Some of the factors we collected, however, do speak to this issue.

For example, factor 155 scored whether or not the COIN force included significant numbers of police, paramilitary, militia, or other nonconventional personnel. This factor was present in 44 of the 59 core cases, with no correlation with outcome. The individual case narratives suggested that this was often because such forces were inadequately armed or trained. In the 23 cases in which such forces were present and that we evaluated as being effective (factor 155a), the COIN force won 69 percent of the time. Factor 162 asked whether COIN forces employed "counter-gangs," "scouts," or "ferret forces" against the insurgents. The presence of such forces was rare but impressively effective: In all seven of the cases in which they were present in the decisive phase, the COIN force won. In the case of South Africa, insurgent defectors known as *askaris* (Swahili for "fighters") were recruited and used in pseudo-operations against their erstwhile comrades, a model that had

[7] Seth G. Jones and Patrick B. Johnston, "The Future of Insurgency," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 2013, p. 9.

worked well with the Selous Scouts in neighboring Rhodesia.[8] To great effect, these pseudo-operations involved *askaris* leading unsuspecting African National Congress (ANC) insurgents back into South Africa, where they would be ambushed, abducted, or killed by the South African security forces. The *askaris* were able to provide the COIN force with extremely valuable intelligence on the current state of the insurgency, which was then used to plan further operations.

Another issue that comes up in the COIN literature concerns the quality versus quantity of COIN forces, especially in discussions about building the capacity of a partner nation that is facing an insurgency. This question is quite relevant in that, across all 71 cases, no COIN force that was unable to overmatch the insurgents and force them to fight as guerrillas by the decisive phase of the conflict won. Being able to force the insurgents to fight as guerrillas clearly requires both a certain quantity and a certain quality of COIN forces, and no distinction is made between the two in the factors we collected.

Detailed examination of the narratives reveals two paths to transitioning from not being able to force the insurgents to fight as guerrillas to being able to do so. The first is diminishing the insurgents' ability to field and sustain conventional forces, usually by convincing or coercing external supporters to constrain their support. The second is facing the insurgents with sufficient numbers of better-quality troops, either external actor troops or indigenous troops with armament, training, and/or motivation or morale that had improved from the baseline. Interrogating the narratives regarding quality versus quantity revealed that, in every case in which it mattered, COIN force quality appears to have been more important than quantity.[9] The oft-quoted aphorism

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[8] Kevin A. O'Brien, "Counter-Intelligence for Counter-Revolutionary Warfare: The South African Police Security Branch, 1979–1990," *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 16, No. 3, September 2001, pp. 37–41.

[9] There were nine cases that were COIN wins in which COIN forces were unable to force the insurgents to fight as guerrillas in an early phase but able to do so by the end:

- Oman: British forces got involved, dramatically increasing the quality of the COIN force.
- Oman (Dhofar Rebellion): The British got involved, improving quality, but indigenous forces increased in both size and quality.

that "quantity has a quality all its own" is true to the extent that too small a force will not be able to accomplish the mission. Quantity and quality must be balanced to some extent, but quantity is not a substitute for quality; the terminal phase of the Vietnam conflict is a clear testament to that.

Phase Outcomes

To accurately capture important changes during the course of the insurgencies studied here, we broke each case into between two and five phases. Details of this process are described in Appendix A in the section "Phased Data." While breaking the cases into phases was useful and beneficial to the overall analysis, analyzing individual phases is problematic and minimally useful for a number of reasons. Paramount among them: We are interested in case outcomes, not phase outcomes. Understanding how to win a phase pales in comparison to understanding how to win a case, especially—as occurred repeatedly—if the COIN force managed to win a phase on the way to losing a case.

Where relevant to specific concepts, results from the analysis of the intermediate phases are presented with the concepts in Chapter Four. Our analysis of the phased data revealed a further important finding: Patterns of phase outcomes en route to wins or losses reveal success or failure in early phases, but these wins and losses do not preclude losing or winning the case. In other words, poor begin-

- Jordan: The withdrawal of external support to insurgents reduced the COIN force's relative quality.
- Philippines (MNLF): Insurgent capabilities were reduced as a result of internal fractionalization.
- Angola (UNITA): COIN forces increased in quality due to the addition of external forces.
- Sri Lanka: Indigenous COIN forces increased in quality, especially with the receipt of updated Chinese equipment.
- El Salvador: Indigenous COIN forces improved dramatically in quality under U.S. tutelage.
- Sierra Leone: COIN force quality increased when the British and UNAMSIL became the primary COIN forces.
- Croatia: COIN force quality increased under the tutelage of U.S. advisers.

nings do not necessary lead to poor ends, and good starts do not always carry through to the end of the conflict.

With each of 71 cases having between two and five phases, there are a total of 204 phases in our data set. Each case has a single decisive phase—that is, 71 of the 204 phases were decisive phases. The remaining 133 phases are initial or intermediate phases and illustrate the dynamic relationship between the outcomes of intermediate phases and the ultimate case outcomes. (See Table 5.2.)

Table 5.2 reveals that in more than half of the intermediate phases (32 of 58) en route to COIN wins at the case level, the insurgents held the upper hand. Similarly, in just under half (37 of 75) of intermediate phases in cases in which the COIN force ultimately lost, the COIN force held the upper hand.

Of the 71 cases, 22 (nine COIN wins and 13 COIN losses) had phase outcomes that all matched the ultimate case outcome. In the other 49 cases, the side that ultimately lost the case had the upper hand in at least one phase. This is continued strong support for one of the key findings from *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers*: "Poor beginnings don't necessarily lead to poor ends."[10]

We now turn to discussions of different outcomes of interest, beginning with the analysis of factors related to the duration of insurgencies.

Table 5.2
Phase Outcome Versus Case Outcome for 133 Intermediate Phases

		Case Outcome: COIN Loss	Case Outcome: COIN Win
Phase outcome	Win	37	26
	Loss	38	32

[10] Paul, Clarke, and Grill, 2010b, p. xxiii.

Sequence

Related to the phase outcomes and the fact that historically poor beginnings have not necessitated poor ends are questions regarding the sequencing of positive developments. The COIN scorecard identifies a set of factors that are present by the end of successful counterinsurgencies, and the tests of concepts in Chapter Four show which concepts are correlated with success, but, given that good COIN practices run in packs, which concepts or factors, if any, must be implemented prior to the implementation of other concepts? In short, is there a requisite sequence of good COIN practices? Although our data were not structured to address this question (we scored factors as present or absent during a phase and do not report the factors' precise timing or sequence of addition), we can still speak to this issue in terms of whether important concepts were implemented in early phases, middle phases, or later phases in successful cases.

First, the 28 COIN wins do reveal that good practices accumulate over time. Given that all 28 wins had a scorecard score of at least 2 by the decisive phase, almost all 28 had scorecard scores that increased monotonically (that is, only went up) from the early phases through the conclusion. This was not the case for losing cases. Many of these cases saw a scorecard peak in an intermediate phase, which fell off dramatically toward the end of the case (Vietnam being the strongest example).

Further, we were able to identify several factors or concepts whose appearance was strongly correlated with wins, usually occurring in early phases of those winning cases:

- commitment and motivation (always present prior to the decisive phase in 26 of 28 wins)
- COIN force of sufficient strength to force the insurgents to fight as guerrillas (always present prior to the decisive phase in 22 of 28 wins)
- flexibility and adaptability (always present prior to the decisive phase in 18 of 28 wins)
- insurgents not superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated (present in 27 wins prior to the decisive phase in 17 cases).

The case narratives confirm that these factors are foundational for other positive factors: You cannot get down to the serious business of COIN until you can overmatch the insurgents conventionally, and to make any headway in COIN, the government and COIN force must be committed to defeating the insurgency. Note that several COIN forces that ultimately prevailed were *not* initially able to force the insurgents to fight as guerrillas. Fully nine cases were COIN wins in which the COIN force did not initially overmatch the insurgents: Oman (Imamate Uprising), Oman (Dhofar Rebellion), Jordan, Philippines (MNLF), Angola (UNITA), Sri Lanka, El Salvador, Sierra Leone, and Croatia. These countries achieved overmatch by one of two routes: diminishing the insurgents' ability to field conventional forces, usually by convincing or coercing external supporters to reduce support, or by facing the insurgents with higher-quality troops, usually an external actor's troops but sometimes indigenous troops with better armament, training, and morale than at the outset, as was the case with the Sri Lankan armed forces fighting against the LTTE.

From this sequential baseline, we observed several factors that were usually present in wins by the end of the case but were usually added to the COIN effort before the decisive phase. These intermediate sequential factors are

- intelligence (present in 21 wins, appearing before the decisive phase in ten of them)
- popular support (present in 16 wins, appearing before the decisive phase in 11 of them)
- government legitimacy (present in 17 wins, appearing before the decisive phase in 14 of them).

Again, the case narratives confirm that these factors are logical predecessors to many of the positive factors that subsequently figure into winning cases.

Finally, we identified several factors or concepts that, while common in wins, rarely occurred until the decisive phase of the case:

- implementing the beat-cop concept (occurred in 15 cases, but not consistently until the decisive phase of 11)

- having the initiative (occurred in 21 cases, but not until the decisive phase for 15 of them)
- strategic communication (occurred in 11 cases, but not consistently until the decisive phase for nine of them)
- perception of security created or maintained (occurred in 14 cases, but not until the decisive phase for ten of them).

These findings clearly suggest that some concepts or factors logically precede and are perhaps prerequisite for other concepts or factors (such as the ability to overmatch the insurgents and demonstrating a commitment to their defeat). The narratives further suggest that some concepts or factors are more difficult to achieve, and an entire campaign's worth of effort may not bear fruit until near the resolution of the conflict (such as strategic communication and being able to create a perception of security). This situation proved true in Sierra Leone, among other cases.

Duration of Insurgencies

How long do insurgencies last, and what factors or practices can help shorten such conflicts? One of the new factors added to this study was the duration of each phase of each case in months, which supports observations about the durations of insurgencies and analyses with a temporal component, such as survival analysis (methodological details are presented in Appendix A).

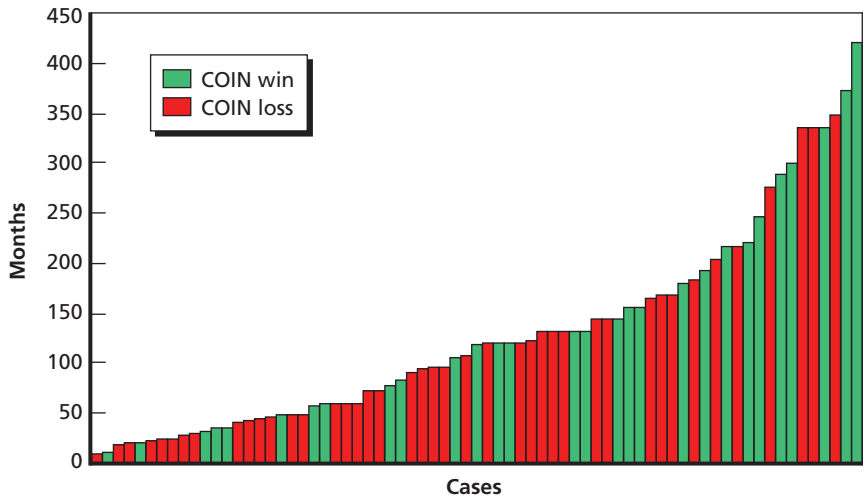
Durations of insurgencies vary widely. In the 71 cases examined here, the shortest insurgency was roughly nine months long (Bangladesh, 1971), while the longest took just over 35 years (Guatemala, 1960–1996). The average (mean) duration of the 71 cases was 128 months (10.6 years), while the median duration (influenced less by the few extremely long cases) was 118 months (9.8 years).[11]

[11] The mean duration of all cases was 128.4 months, pulled higher than the median by the few extremely long cases. The standard deviation for that mean is 99.3 months due to the extreme variation in case durations, which ranged from three months to 420 months (35 years).

COIN wins took (on average) slightly longer than losses.[12] The median duration of a COIN win was 132 months; the media duration of a COIN loss was 72 months.[13] Figure 5.1 shows each case and its duration in months, sorted shortest to longest.

Although wins took longer on average, it is clear from Figure 5.1 that outcome is not the principal determinant of length. The case narratives suggest that durations vary based on a host of factors, includ-

Figure 5.1
Durations of 71 Insurgencies



RAND *RR291/1-5.1*

[12] The mean duration of a COIN win was 152.2 months, with a standard deviation of 109.9 months; the mean duration of a COIN loss was 112 months, with a standard deviation of 89 months.

[13] If we were to include insurgencies still ongoing as of this writing, some much longer cases would be added to these calculations. These would include the ongoing insurgency in Burma, which dates back to 1948; the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas (FARC), or the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, which began its campaign in 1963; and the Naxalite insurgency in India, active since 1980. Such inclusions would increase the maximum case length (744 months in 2010, and still going), and the average (mean) would go up, pulled by the addition of extreme values. The median would likely change little, being less vulnerable to extreme values and further insulated by the addition of ongoing cases that have not been going on all that long—the insurgencies in Afghanistan and South Thailand, for example.

ing the intensity of the fighting, the extent of popular support for the insurgents, the participation of an external actor in support of one or both sides, efforts by the government to redress grievances, and the various COIN concepts employed. Rather than relying on anecdotes from individual cases, we sought to test the impact of the presence of various factors and practices on duration across the cases. We chose to do so using survival analysis.

Survival analysis (methodological details in Appendix A) is so named for its use in epidemiology, studying the impact of various treatments or baseline health conditions on survival times for grievously ill patients (how long the patient survived, hence, survival analysis). The technique can be generalized to any inquiry in which the dependent variable of interest is time to event. In our analysis, the event is not the death of a patient but the end of an insurgency. Survival analysis allows the comparison of the survival times (or, in our analysis, insurgency durations) of groups of patients (cases) with and without certain factors or sets of factors. Importantly, it allows for such comparisons even when the factors of interest change over time—for example, allowing us to consider how the adoption of a particular COIN practice several years into an insurgency can reduce the duration of the remainder of the case. These comparisons are presented as "hazard ratios" and describe the relative risk of experiencing the event (the end of an insurgency) while the factor is present against cases (or periods of cases) in which it is not. A hazard ratio equal to 1 indicates no difference in duration in the presence or absence of the factor. A hazard ratio above 1 indicates higher hazard of the event (in this case, a great probability of the insurgency ending sooner, which is a positive thing). If the hazard ratio is less than 1, that indicates a reduced hazard, or something likely to prolong the insurgency.

To identify factors and implemented concepts that have consistently affected the duration of insurgencies, we reviewed all factors and factor stacks, identifying those that could plausibly affect duration. We then conducted survival analyses of the impact of each of these factors individually over the 28 wins from the 59 core cases. (Details of the factor selection and the choice of subsample can be found in Appendix C, along with detailed results from the survival analyses.)

Survival analyses revealed four COIN concepts and three separate factors that, when present, were correlated with reduced insurgency durations in the 28 COIN wins.[14] The four concepts were

- tangible support reduction
- border control
- strategic communication
- beat cop.

The three additional factors were

- The COIN force was of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas.
- COIN or government actions did not contribute to substantial new grievances.
- Significant government reforms since onset of conflict.

These results highlight several factors and concepts that have already been strongly endorsed by other portions of the analysis as strong correlates for COIN success. Not only do these practices, when in place, improve the prospects for defeating the insurgency, but they are also correlated with hastening that defeat.

To complete our inquiries regarding duration, we also sought factors whose presence was correlated with prolonging insurgencies. The analysis revealed four that were statistically significant:

- Terrain allowed insurgents to avoid/overcome COIN force firepower or vehicle advantages.
- The government maintained weak policing capacity and infrastructural power.
- Government sponsorship or protection of unpopular economic and social arrangements or cultural institutions.
- Government repression and/or exclusion of significant societal groups from state power or resources.

[14] All seven were statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

None of these inclusions is particularly surprising, but our findings do suggest noteworthy cautions.

Scorecard and Duration

As noted earlier, the original *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* study also produced a scorecard with similar virtues. When we briefed the results from that study, a question that often came up was, "So, you've shown me the things I need to do in order to beat an insurgency, but *how long do I have to do them*?" The original study, lacking temporal data, had no answer beyond "as long as it takes," which was not particularly satisfying. One of the goals of this expanded effort was to find a better answer to that question.

So, how long does a COIN force have to maintain a positive scorecard score before the conflict ends? For the cases in which the COIN force won, the median conflict duration (as noted earlier) was 132 months (11 years). By the end of the conflicts, all COIN wins had a scorecard score of at least 2. The median time from the beginning of the first phase in a conflict in which the COIN force achieved a scorecard score of 2 or more until the end of that conflict was 69 months (5.75 years).[15] So, the answer to the question is, on average, just under six years. Figure 5.2 shows the durations of the winning cases, with the time each case spent with a score below 2 depicted in red and the time each spent with a score of 2 or higher depicted in green. The figure shows that there is considerable variation in how long each of these COIN forces maintained a good scorecard score before securing its victory.[16] Some went quite a while without a good scorecard score, then got a score above 2 fairly late and won soon after; others had strong positive scorecard scores for the duration of a relatively lengthy conflict.

In a briefing of preliminary study results, which included Figure 5.2, one attendee raised a question about the transition from

[15] Another way to phrase this to correctly interpret median duration is as follows: 50 percent of insurgencies were defeated within just under six years of the government/COIN force first achieving a scorecard score of 2 or better.

[16] This variation can be quantified: While the median was 69 months, the mean was 101 months, with a standard deviation of 95 months.

Figure 5.2
Duration of Winning Cases with Time with Good and Bad Scorecard Scores

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"red to green." Is there anything interesting to be learned from the ways in which individual successful COIN forces progressed from having more poor than good factors to having more good than bad? We examined the 20 winning cases with scorecard scores that went from negative to positive over the course of the case (the others all "ran the table," with a positive balance throughout) to answer that question. Each of the 20 cases roughly followed one of five paths to transition from negative scores to positive scores:

1. There was significant development or revamping of the COIN force, along with a significant change in strategy (happened in nine cases).
2. The COIN force had an experience-based progression from slightly less effective COIN practices to more effective COIN practices (four cases, most of which started with relatively high red scores [e.g., –1 or 0] and progressed to only relatively modest positive scores [2, 3, or 4]).

3. An external actor held off the insurgents (or just helped indigenous forces do so) while supporting improvements in indigenous COIN forces (four cases).
4. An external actor entered and took over the primary counterinsurgent role, doing so effectively (two cases).
5. Insurgent errors, coupled with the withdrawal of external support to the insurgents, allowed the COIN force to "back into" a better COIN scorecard score without really changing what it was doing (one case).

Taken together, these paths to transition suggest that COIN forces that struggle and have poor scorecard scores should seek to develop and improve their forces and should not be afraid to consider significant strategic changes if what they are doing is not working, even if they require the help of an external supporter. Although the fourth and fifth paths have happened historically and might happen again, they are not a deficient COIN force's best bet.

Peace Intervals and Win Durability

Another observation from the original *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* study was that some countries were repeatedly plagued by insurgencies. Questions were left open about these "serial" insurgencies. Ideally, a government facing an insurgency would seek ways to not only defeat that insurgency but to reduce the prospects for a similar insurgency in the future. The resilience or durability of an insurgency's outcome can be thought of in terms of the peace interval—the amount of time between the end of the first conflict and the start of the next (if there is a next). We approached this problem in two ways: first, with survival analysis and, second, with bivariate comparisons against holistically assessed win quality or win durability.

Of the 71 cases, 35 saw their peace interval ended by another internal conflict before the end of 2011. The average (mean) length of

these peace intervals was 7.33 years. The other 36 cases were still experiencing peace at the end of 2011.[17]

Preliminary analyses revealed that peace intervals following a COIN win tend to be longer than peace intervals following an insurgent win, and that different factors are correlated with length of the peace interval, depending on who won. Continuing the overall focus of this report on COIN practices, we sought to identify factors associated with extended peace intervals after COIN wins. We conducted two types of analyses: survival analyses and bivariate comparisons of holistic assessments of win durability with the COIN concepts. The key results are presented here, and more detailed results can be found in Appendix C.

Survival analysis revealed only three factors that had a statistically significant relationship with the length of peace intervals. Each had a hazard ratio indicating that peace intervals are between four and five times more likely to endure in the factor's presence than when it was absent. The three factors are as follows:

- There were significant government reforms during the conflict.
- There were significant ethical/professional/human rights–related military reforms during conflict.
- The conflict caused significant host-nation economic disruption.

The relationship between reform and durable peace is unsurprising, but it is slightly counterintuitive that economic disruption would be correlated with extending the peace interval. We believe that economic disruption can be viewed as being broadly representative of the intensity and extent of the conflict, as well as the cost of the conflict as experienced by the population in the country and as a proxy of sorts for general war-weariness. The implicit argument is that where a conflict has had a significant cost in lives and economic disruption, people will be more hesitant to rise up (or support such an uprising) again any time soon, thus increasing the peace interval.

[17] In survival analysis terms, these cases are "right-censored"—that is, they had not experienced the event by the time data collection ended. For a discussion of right-censoring in survival analysis, see the section "Survival Analysis" in Appendix A.

The survival analyses offered only a few strongly correlated factors, in part because of a lack of statistical power driven by uncertainty: Many of the peace intervals have not yet ended. To generate additional results about the durability of wins, we sought to return to simple bivariate analysis of various factors or factor stacks against a simple outcome. To do this, we needed a simple bivariate outcome. So, for each case won by the COIN force, the case analysts were asked to score the resulting victory as durable or fragile (details in Appendix C). We then compared the bivariate relationships between the 24 concepts tested in Chapter Three and our holistic win durability assessment. Table 5.3 presents the summary results. Note that many of the concepts that are strong predictors of COIN success do little to discriminate win durability, as they are present in all or almost all wins, durable and fragile alike. It is worth noting that most of the concepts associated with win durability are oriented toward the motive-focused

Table 5.3
Summary of Concepts Correlated with Win Durability

Concept	Factor/Factor Stack	Correlation with Win Durability
Development	at least two of four development factors	Strong correlation
Pacification	at least two of six pacification factors	Strong correlation
Legitimacy (use of force)	at least four of six legitimate use of force factors	Modest correlation
Reform	at least four of five reform factors	Strong correlation
Democracy	at least one of three democracy factors	Modest correlation
Strategic communication	at least three of five strategic communication factors	Strong correlation
Field Manual 3-24 (*Counterinsurgency*)	at least four of nine FM 3-24 factors	Strong correlation
Clear, hold, and build	all three of clear, hold, and build	Strong correlation
"Boots on the ground"	at least three of six "boots on the ground" factors	Modest correlation
Criticality of intelligence	at least one of two intelligence factors	Strong correlation

end of the spectrum, such as development, legitimacy, reform, democracy, and strategic communication. It should come as no surprise that efforts that succeeded in reducing the motivation for participating in or supporting an insurgency diminished the prospects for similar support for a subsequent insurgency. Detailed breakdowns of each concept's factor stack and its relationship to win durability are presented in Appendix C.