

Chapter Title: APPENDIX D Key Findings from Victory Has a Thousand Fathers in Light of New Data and Analyses

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Key Findings from *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* in Light of New Data and Analyses

As has been noted several times in this report, the data used in this analysis include all of the data from the original study, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*.¹ This study asked the same set of questions, as well as several new research questions, many of which came out of discussion and commentary following the original study. Because the data used and the questions investigated here wholly encompass and expand upon the cases and data used in the earlier study, this study supersedes the original. Still, it is worth considering the findings and results of the earlier study in light of the updated results from the current effort.

There is considerable concordance between the findings of the original study and this one. First, both this study and the original represent high-quality, rigorous research. Second, the 30 cases considered in the original study are also in the database for this study. In light of the fact that most of the analyses in this report are based on 59 core cases, the original 30 cases account for slightly more than half the database. Still, many of the cases are new, and the total number of cases is larger, and any quantitative analyst will tell you that more data is an improvement. Refinements come from the increased number of cases, the increased number of factors assessed for each case, and from having more “marginal” cases (cases closer to being won or lost). Including cases in which COIN forces employed just enough effective COIN concepts to prevail or not quite enough to prevail provided

¹ See Paul, Clarke, and Grill, 2010b.

more insight (and analytic traction) to discern which COIN practices are essential to success.

Revisiting the Key Findings of *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers*

Victory Has a Thousand Fathers offered seven key insights. This section revisits each and presents supporting commentary. Here is a summary list of the seven key findings:

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

We discuss each of these findings in turn.

Effective COIN Practices Tend to Run in Packs

The core result of the earlier analysis, and the inspiration for the *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* title, was the observation that those who have defeated insurgencies historically have done not just a few things right but have done a host of things right, and that those who seek to repeat those historical success would do well to plan to do the same. This result stands up quite well to the expanded data. Most analyses include 28 COIN wins instead of the modest eight COIN wins from

the earlier study. In those 20 new wins, most of the COIN forces did many things right and few things wrong.

The good news analytically is that not all of them did more things right than those in the original data set. A few of the COIN forces in the new data set did fewer of the things broadly correlated with COIN success and still won, allowing greater analytic traction when trying to discern which of those things is most important or truly critical. The QCA presented in Chapter Four relies on increased numbers and a few more marginal wins to identify priority factors. Effective COIN practices still run in packs, but the core of the pack is flexibility and adaptability, commitment and motivation, tangible support reduction, unity of effort, initiative, and intelligence.

The Balance of Effective Versus Detrimental COIN Practices Explains the Outcome of All 30 Cases Without Recourse to Narratives of Exceptionality

The original *Victory* scorecard does not discriminate the full set of 71 cases into wins and losses, but it does a pretty good job: Only two of the 33 cases receiving negative scores (the “loss” threshold) on the original scorecard were COIN wins, and only three of the 22 cases receiving scorecard scores of five or more (the “win” threshold) were COIN losses, so it misclassified only five of 55 cases (with the other 16 cases falling in the gap between the scorecard’s win and loss thresholds). When the 11 cases fought against the tide of history are removed, the original scorecard misclassifies only three of the cases, and one of those is Colombia (La Violencia), which this analysis concludes does not belong in the core 59 cases because of its nearly indeterminate and somewhat capricious outcome.

However, a slightly revised scorecard *does* perfectly discriminate all 59 core cases into wins and losses based solely on their scores, without exception. It would discriminate all 71 cases, but there are exceptions: Cases fought against the tide of history and La Violencia. The section “Updates to the Scorecard,” later in this appendix, details the changes made to the original scorecard based on the expanded data set.

Strategic Communication–Related Factors Are Among the Positive Practices in Which Successful COIN Forces Engage

The full data show that the further one goes back in history, the more likely COIN forces are to focus exclusively on eliminating the insurgent threat (iron fist). Such approaches are unlikely to include strategic communication, but some of them are successful anyway. However, where it has been applied, strategic communication remains strongly correlated with COIN success. All cases in which three or more of the strategic communication factors appear are COIN wins. The finding from the original study needs to be rephrased to capture this additional nuance. Not all successful COIN forces use strategic communication, but all COIN forces that used strategic communication as part of their overall strategy were successful.

Poor Beginnings Do Not Necessarily Lead to Poor Ends

The expanded data set reinforces this finding. Many of the new cases include COIN forces that struggled in early phases but ultimately prevailed. Of the 29 cases won by the government (in the set of all 71 cases), only seven had the upper hand throughout the conflict (that is, they were scored as winning or having the better of a mixed outcome in all phases). Further, one of the findings from the current study is the criticality of COIN forces being of sufficient strength to be able to force the insurgents to fight as guerrillas. While this factor was present in all 29 COIN wins, the factor was absent in many earlier phases, confirming that there is an opportunity to improve on a poor start.

Factors Drawn from FM 3-24 Are Among the Positive Practices in Which Successful COIN Forces Engage

Like strategic communication, FM 3-24 remains one of the COIN concepts strongly supported by these analyses. Also like strategic communication, FM 3-24 is not present in all wins, but all cases in which it is present (19 cases) were COIN force wins.

Repression Wins Phases but Usually Not Cases

The original study was particularly harsh on iron fist approaches, finding repression and collective punishment to be extremely poor COIN

practices—practices particularly common in cases in which a repressive government took the upper hand in an interim phase only to ultimately lose the case. The expanded data, going further back in history, was more kind to iron fist COIN. In 44 cases involving the iron fist strategy, fully 17 (38 percent) led to COIN wins. Repression and atrocities were usually part of these campaigns. While repression remains negatively correlated with success, the correlation is much smaller than that observed in the original study. While repression and the iron fist *can* win cases, they remain unambiguously poor choices relative to the host of alternative concepts available.

Insurgent Tangible Support Appears to Be a Critical Center of Gravity

One of the most interesting findings from *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* was that success in disrupting insurgent tangible support, by itself, perfectly discriminated the 30 original cases into wins and losses, and that tangible support was a better predictor of COIN success than popular support. While tangible support reduction no longer perfectly discriminates all of the cases, it remains a requirement for COIN success. Across all 71 cases, all COIN winners managed to reduce at least three of the ten tangible support factors, without exception. Tangible support remains one of the critical prime implicant factors identified using QCA.

Updates to the COIN Concepts

Victory Has a Thousand Fathers tested 20 “approaches” to COIN (referred to as COIN *concepts* in this study), 18 of which are common to the current study. This report tests 18 of the original 20, adds six, and modifies the factor stacks for ten of them. This section details the changes and omissions.

Eighteen of the 20 concepts tested in the original study are also tested here, but we omitted an entire subcategory of concepts, “insurgent approaches.” The original study included two insurgent concepts, “insurgent support strategies” and “continuation and contesta-

tion.” These were omitted from the present analyses for several reasons. The insurgent strategic concepts have always felt like apples among the oranges of COIN concepts; they are not alike. The focus of the broader research effort has always been on effective COIN practices and not on effective insurgent practices. The efforts and qualities of the insurgents have only ever been of interest to the extent that they affect or constrain the effectiveness of COIN practices. One of the more important, if more subtle, findings of the original study was that the strategies adopted by the insurgents do not cancel out or obviate any of the effective COIN concepts. Insurgent practices can make the job of the COIN force harder or easier, but they do not change the things the COIN force needs to do.² For the expanded effort, we scored an even wider range of insurgent behavior–related factors in case such factors would be necessary (see the list of all factors in Appendix E). Such factors were not necessary, at least not independent of COIN or government factors. We were able to meet all of our analytic objectives and answer all core research questions satisfactorily without ever making reference to factors related to the motivation or strategy of the insurgents. Some COIN-related factors are explicitly referential to qualities of the insurgency, such as the relative capability and motivation of government and insurgent troops, relative levels of collateral damage, which side took the initiative, and so on, but all of these relative factors fit within the broader realm of the insurgents’ choices, setting the bar for how difficult a desirable COIN force accomplishment was while not affecting the desirability of that accomplishment. While the question of which factors are correlated with insurgent success is an interesting one, it is not one of the questions addressed here. To avoid diminishing or distracting from the key insights of this research, we chose not to include insurgent strategies among the COIN concepts tested.

Ten of the 18 COIN concepts carried forward from the original study were modified in how they were measured here. These changes

² See the discussion in Chapter Four of *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency* (Paul, Clarke, and Grill, 2010b), under the heading “Every Insurgency May Be Unique, but Not at This Level of Analysis.”

were the results of efforts to better represent the concepts, through improved understanding of the concepts themselves, improved factors with which to represent the concepts, or both. All changes are detailed here.

Changes to the Development Factor Stack

We added two new factors to the development factor stack to incorporate specific qualities of the development efforts undertaken. These were as follows:

- Planned reconstruction/development improvements were substantially above the historical baseline.
- Reconstruction/development met at least two of these criteria: based on popular demand, initiated mainly at the village level, used local labor/created local jobs, aimed at self-empowerment of people, and was sustainable.

Changes to the Pacification Factor Stack

We added three new factors to the pacification stack from new factors added to the data set. We added the same two development-related factors as were added to the development stack (given that pacification is a hybrid that includes development), and we also added a third factor connecting classic pacification with the more modern expression of clear, hold, and build. The three added factors are as follows:

- Planned reconstruction/development improvements were substantially above the historical baseline.
- The COIN force undertook all three of clear, hold, and build.
- Reconstruction/development met at least two of these criteria: based on popular demand, initiated mainly at the village level, used local labor/created local jobs, aimed at self-empowerment of people, and was sustainable.

Changes to the Legitimacy of Government Factor Stack

In the current study, we reduced legitimacy of government back to its essential core, just two factors:

- Government leaders were selected in a manner considered just and fair by the majority of the population in the area of conflict.
- The majority of citizens viewed the government as legitimate in the area of conflict.

Changes to the Legitimacy of the Use of Force Factor Stack

To update legitimacy of the use of force from the original analysis, we removed one factor and added two others. To reflect the fact that external COIN forces are not necessarily viewed as an illegitimate use of force (and because we treated cases with external forces as a wholly separate subpopulation), we removed the following factor:

- The COIN force was *not* viewed as an occupying force in the area of conflict

To broaden the range of possibly illegitimate applications of force, we added the following:

- The COIN force did *not* employ indiscriminate force.
- *No* COIN practices were beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards.

Changes to the Amnesty/Rewards Factor Stack

We broadened the amnesty factor stack to include other aspects of post- or late-conflict DDR:

- The phase in question included significant DDR efforts beyond amnesty.

Changes to the Strategic Communication Factor Stack

In the present study, we refined strategic communication, removing two factors:

- The COIN force engaged in an earnest IO/PSYOP/strategic communication/messaging effort.
- The COIN force maintained unity of effort/unity of command.

Regarding the first, earnest IO/PSYOP/strategic communication effort, we removed it for two reasons. First, it ran slightly afoul of our general principles for factors; that is, it reflected effort (earnest effort) rather than accomplishment. Virtually all other factors concern what the COIN force was able to accomplish, not what it attempted. Second, ongoing thought on strategic communication suggests that it is the integration of actions and words that is critical, with the messaging component playing perhaps the smaller part.³ The five actors remaining in the stack better reflect this evolving thinking.

While unity of effort remains important to many proponents of strategic communication, several discussions of the original study revealed that many readers saw it as an odd fit, given the prominence of unity of effort as an independent traditional military virtue (with virtues well beyond improving strategic communication). For that reason, we have removed it from the strategic communication stack and analyzed it as its own concept, unity of effort (see Chapter Four).

Changes to the “Beat-Cop” Factor Stack

Based on the new factors and data in the current effort, we added four factors and combined two already in the stack into a single factor. Previously, “beat cop” had included the presence of militias but did not distinguish those militias working at cross-purposes as a single factor. This was replaced by the following:

- The COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas that it controlled or claimed to control *and* militias/local irregular forces did not work at cross-purposes with the COIN force or government.

Further, we added these four new factors as representative of the concept:

- COIN forces employed “counter-gangs,” “scouts,” or “ferret forces.”

³ See, for example, Christopher Paul, *Strategic Communication: Origins, Concepts, and Current Debates*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2011.

- The COIN force included significant numbers of largely effective police, paramilitary, militia, or other nonconventional personnel.
- The government employed significant numbers of locally recruited military/paramilitary/militia/police forces.
- COIN forces primarily deployed in a space-domination/passive-presence role.

Changes to the “Boots on the Ground” Factor Stack

To expand and refine the “boots on the ground” concept, we added two factors:

- The COIN force included significant numbers of largely effective police, paramilitary, militia, or other nonconventional personnel.
- COIN forces primarily deployed in a space-domination/passive-presence role.

Changes to the “Put a Local Face on It” Factor Stack

To attempt to refine this factor stack, we once again combined the militias present and the militias not working at cross-purposes factors into the following:

- The COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas that it controlled or claimed to control *and* these militias did not work at cross-purposes with COIN force or government.

We also added two factors that further reflect the degree of local versus external involvement:

- The COIN force included significant numbers of largely effective police, paramilitary, militia, or other nonconventional personnel who were locally recruited.
- Development was not predominantly provided by (or perceived as being provided by) an external actor.

Changes to the Cultural Awareness Factor Stack

To expand the cultural awareness factor stack, we added three more factors that reflect different possible ways to run afoul of this principle:

- The government did not sponsor or protect unpopular economic and social arrangements or cultural institutions.
- The government did not repress and/or exclude significant societal groups from state power or resources.
- Force protection actions by external COIN forces (if present) did not alienate the population.

Further note that the empirical cut points for some factor stacks changed from those identified in the original study based on patterns observed in the full data, even while the specific factors in the factor stack remained unchanged.

Updates to the Scorecard

The original COIN scorecard developed for *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* contained 15 good factors and 12 bad factors, the difference of which perfectly discriminated the 30 original cases into wins and losses. The original scorecard factors are presented in Table D.1.

Unfortunately, as discussed earlier in this appendix, the original scorecard was unable to perfectly discriminate all of the cases in the current study into wins and losses, so we sought to revise it so that it would. As described in Chapter Five, we followed a process similar to the one used to develop the original scorecard. We began by examining the bivariate relationships between each scorecard factor and the case outcomes for each of the 59 core cases. This allowed us to quickly identify individual factors that were no longer particularly strong discriminators, factors that we would seek to remove from the scorecard and replace as needed. Table D.2 lists the factors removed.

With the weak links removed from the scorecard, we sought additional candidates. As we had done to build the original scorecard, we identified factors that the literature led us to expect to be positively

Table D.1
COIN Scorecard from *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers*

15 Good COIN Practices	12 Bad COIN Practices
The COIN force realized at least two strategic communication factors.	The COIN force used both collective punishment and escalating repression.
The COIN force reduced at least three tangible support factors.	The primary COIN force was an external occupier.
The government realized at least two government legitimacy factors.	COIN force or government actions contributed to substantial new grievances claimed by the insurgents.
The government realized at least one democracy factor.	Militias worked at cross-purposes with the COIN force or government.
The COIN force realized at least one intelligence factor.	The COIN force resettled or removed civilian populations for population control.
The COIN force was of sufficient strength to force the insurgents to fight as guerrillas.	COIN force collateral damage was perceived by the population in the area of conflict as worse than the insurgents'.
The government/state was competent.	In the area of conflict, the COIN force was perceived as worse than the insurgents.
The COIN force avoided excessive collateral damage, disproportionate use of force, or other illegitimate application of force.	The COIN force failed to adapt to changes in adversary strategy, operations, or tactics.
The COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with the population in the area of conflict.	The COIN force engaged in more coercion or intimidation than the insurgents.
Short-term investments, improvements in infrastructure or development, or property reform occurred in the area of conflict controlled or claimed by the COIN force.	The insurgent force was individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated.
The majority of the population in the area of conflict supported or favored the COIN force.	The COIN force or its allies relied on looting for sustainment.
The COIN force established and then expanded secure areas.	The COIN force and government had different goals or levels of commitment.
The COIN force had and used uncontested air dominance.	
The COIN force provided or ensured the provision of basic services in areas that it controlled or claimed to control.	
The perception of security was created or maintained among the population in areas that the COIN force claimed to control.	

SOURCE: Paul, Clarke, and Grill, 2010b, p. xvii, Table S.1.

Table D.2**Factors Removed from the *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* COIN Scorecard (in red)**

15 Good COIN Practices	12 Bad COIN Practices
The COIN force realized at least two strategic communication factors.	The COIN force used both collective punishment and escalating repression.
The COIN force reduced at least three tangible support factors.	The primary COIN force was an external occupier.
The government realized at least two government legitimacy factors.	COIN force or government actions contributed to substantial new grievances claimed by the insurgents.
The government realized at least one democracy factor.	Militias worked at cross-purposes with the COIN force or government.
The COIN force realized at least one intelligence factor.	The COIN force resettled or removed civilian populations for population control.
The COIN force was of sufficient strength to force the insurgents to fight as guerrillas.	COIN force collateral damage was perceived by the population in the area of conflict as worse than the insurgents'.
The government/state was competent.	In the area of conflict, the COIN force was perceived as worse than the insurgents.
The COIN force avoided excessive collateral damage, disproportionate use of force, or other illegitimate application of force.	The COIN force failed to adapt to changes in adversary strategy, operations, or tactics.
The COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with the population in the area of conflict.	The COIN force engaged in more coercion or intimidation than the insurgents.
Short-term investments, improvements in infrastructure or development, or property reform occurred in the area of conflict controlled or claimed by the COIN force.	The insurgent force was individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated.
The majority of the population in the area of conflict supported or favored the COIN force.	The COIN force or its allies relied on looting for sustainment.
The COIN force established and then expanded secure areas.	The COIN force and government had different goals or levels of commitment.
The COIN force had and used uncontested air dominance.	
The COIN force provided or ensured the provision of basic services in areas that it controlled or claimed to control.	
The perception of security was created or maintained among the population in areas that the COIN force claimed to control.	

associated with COIN success and flagged them for consideration as “good practice” candidates. We then identified factors that the literature led us to expect to be negatively associated with COIN success and flagged those as possible additions to the list of bad practices. We added those with the strongest relationships to the list, using our expert discretion to eliminate factors that were largely redundant with factors already in the list. We also revised all COIN concept-related factor stacks to correspond with the factor stacks used in the current study (changed as described earlier in this appendix). This affected two of the scorecard factors, “COIN force realized at least two strategic communication factors” and “government realized at least one government legitimacy factor.” Table D.3 shows the new list of scorecard factors—15 good factors or practices and 11 bad, with the new or changed factors highlighted in green.

Table D.3
Revised COIN Scorecard (additions and changes in green)

15 Good COIN Practices	11 Bad COIN Practices
The COIN force realized at least two strategic communication factors (factor list revised).	The COIN force used both collective punishment and escalating repression.
The COIN force reduced at least three tangible support factors.	There was corrupt and arbitrary personalistic government rule.
The government realized at least one government legitimacy factors (factor list revised).	Host-nation elites had perverse incentives to continue the conflict.
Government corruption was reduced/good governance increased since the onset of the conflict.	An external professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of the insurgents.
The COIN force realized at least one intelligence factor.	The host nation was economically dependent on external supporters.
The COIN force was of sufficient strength to force the insurgents to fight as guerrillas.	Fighting was initiated primarily by the insurgents.
Unity of effort/unity of command was maintained.	The COIN force failed to adapt to changes in adversary strategy, operations, or tactics.
The COIN force avoided excessive collateral damage, disproportionate use of force, or other illegitimate application of force.	The COIN force engaged in more coercion or intimidation than the insurgents.
The COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with the population in the area of conflict.	The insurgent force was individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated.
Short-term investments, improvements in infrastructure or development, or property reform occurred in the area of conflict controlled or claimed by the COIN force.	The COIN force or its allies relied on looting for sustainment.
The majority of the population in the area of conflict supported or favored the COIN force.	The COIN force and government had different goals or levels of commitment.
The COIN force established and then expanded secure areas.	
Government/COIN reconstruction/development sought/achieved improvements that were substantially above the historical baseline.	
The COIN force provided or ensured the provision of basic services in areas that it controlled or claimed to control.	
The perception of security was created or maintained among the population in areas that the COIN force claimed to control.	

