

Source Research Design & Analysis for Our  
“Feature” Article on the Counterinsurgency War in  
Afghanistan Appearing in *Foreign Policy* Online on  
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Andrew J. Enterline  
Associate Professor  
Univ. of North Texas  
Dept. of Political Science  
ajenter@unt.edu

Joseph C. Magagnoli  
Doctoral Student  
Univ. of North Texas  
Dept. of Political Science  
jcm331@gmail.com

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## Note to Readers

This document contains the source research design, lengthier analysis, and references that serve as the basis for our “Feature” article on the counterinsurgency war in Afghanistan appearing on *Foreign Policy* online ([foreignpolicy.com](http://foreignpolicy.com)) and its affiliated *AfPak Channel* ([foreignpolicy.com/afpak](http://foreignpolicy.com/afpak)) on August 27, 2009. A full-length report, from which the contents herein are excerpted, is in process and will be released in October 2009. If you have questions, or simply wish to communicate with the authors, please do so via our email addresses ([ajenter@unt.edu](mailto:ajenter@unt.edu) and [jcm331@gmail.com](mailto:jcm331@gmail.com)). We welcome your reactions to our research, so that we might improve it in subsequent drafts.

# Research Design

## Foreign Powers & Insurgencies

The United States and its NATO allies cultivated a democratic regime in postwar Afghanistan, and of this writing (August 27, 2009) are presently engaged in defending this regime against Taliban and Al-Quaeda insurgents. We reason that the American-led military effort in contemporary Afghanistan reflects a specific, but generalizable class of insurgencies in which *a foreign power seeks to establish and defend the central authority in a political unit against an insurgency*. This general class of events manifests itself in the historical record in two forms: (1) insurgencies within sovereign states; and (2) insurgencies within colonial territories. We discuss each manifestation in turn.

In terms of insurgencies occurring within sovereign states, foreign powers seek to (a) defend a regime installed by the foreign power against an insurgency, or (b) is invited by a central government to assist in the central government's quest to defeat an insurgency. In terms of insurgencies within colonial territories, a foreign power, often referred to as a metropole, seeks to establish and maintain its centralized administration and in doing so is confronted by an anti-colonial insurgency. Thus, in general we remain uninterested in insurgencies that occur within a sovereign state and are in turn fought by a central government without the significant involvement by a foreign power (e.g., the Peruvian counterinsurgency against the Shining Path group during the 1980s and 90s.)

The American-led fight against anti-government insurgents in Afghanistan reflects an important quality with respect to the foreign power's mode of intervention: *Foreign powers commit significant military forces in the fight against the insurgents and engage in combat operations*. While it is sometimes difficult to differentiate intervention by foreign powers that are advisory from those in which the military forces of the foreign

power are overtly engaged in fighting the insurgents (an issue that we take up at greater length below), we are not interested in cases of foreign power intervention that are either purely diplomatic or financial in nature, as we are most interested in matching the general character of the American-led intervention in contemporary Afghanistan.

One final issue concerns the identification of insurgencies. In general insurgencies reflect the presence of conflict-capable groups that are willing, or do, employ forces against a central authority. Therefore, insurgencies are qualitatively different from instances of “uprisings,” “rebellions,” and “mass unrest.” That said, as with our identification of insurgencies fought by foreign powers and the distinction between overt military versus advisory intervention, we employ an inclusive coding procedure when toeing the sometimes nebulous line separating insurgencies from other classes of intra-state conflict, due to the fact that uprisings and rebellions can evolve into insurgencies. Indeed, it is arguably the case that the strategy that foreign powers employ against uprisings and rebellions can serve as a selection mechanism that in turn conditions the set of insurgencies that are subsequently observable in the historical record. As such, a focus solely on insurgencies that achieved “maturity” might mask the role of strategy in moderating conflict before the insurgency phase. We plan to investigate this process of insurgency formation at a later date, but herein we seek to include those cases of uprising, for example, that are near-insurgencies.

Guided by these two criteria of insurgencies fought by foreign powers and overt military intervention, we identified a sample of 66 insurgencies fought by foreign powers during the twentieth-century. These cases are reported in Table 1. The sample of cases are evenly distributed across the century, with 33, or 50%, of the sample commencing pre-1946, and the remainder thereafter.

**Table 1:** Twentieth-century Insurgencies Fought by Foreign Powers (N= 66).

Case	Start	End	Foreign Power	Strategy Change?	Change Year	To HaM?	Insurgents Defeated?
Second Boer War	1899	1902	Britain	Yes	1900	No	Yes
Philippine American War	1899	1902	United States	Yes	1901	No	Yes
Moro Rebellion	1903	1913	United States	Yes	1906	Yes	Yes
Herero and Namaqua Wars	1904	1908	Germany	Yes	1904	No	Yes
Maji Maji Rebellion	1905	1907	Germany	No		No	Yes
Sokehs Rebellion	1910	1911	Germany	No		No	Yes
Rif War	1910	1934	Spain	No		No	Yes
Cacos Insurgency	1915	1934	United States	Yes	1916	Yes	Yes
Basmachi Revolt	1916	1931	Russia	Yes	1920	Yes	Yes
The Irish War of Independence	1916	1923	Britain	Yes	1921	Yes	No
Kaocen Revolt	1916	1917	France/Britain	No		No	Yes
Greater Poland Uprising	1918	1919	Germany	No		No	No
The Euphrates Revolt	1919	1920	Britain	No		No	Yes
Turkish War of Independence	1919	1923	Greece	No		No	No
Klaipeda Revolt	1923	1923	France	No		No	No
Syrian Revolution	1925	1927	France	Yes	1925	Yes	Yes
Rif War	1925	1934	France	No		No	Yes
PKI anti-Dutch Revolt	1926	1926	Dutch	No		No	Yes
Occupation of Nicaragua	1927	1933	United States	No		No	No
Second ItaloAbyssinian War	1935	1940	Italy	Yes	1936	Yes	Yes
Arab Revolt	1936	1939	Britain	Yes	1938	No	Yes
Chechnya Insurgency	1940	1944	Russia	No		No	Yes
Yugoslav People's Liberation War	1941	1944	Germany	No		No	No
Yugoslav People's Liberation War	1941	1943	Italy	No		No	No

Table 1 continued on next page.

Table 1 —continued from previous page.

Case	Start	End	Foreign Power	Strategy Change?	Change Year	To HaM?	Insurgents Defeated?
Warsaw Uprising	1944	1944	Germany	Yes	1944	No	No
Slovak National Uprising	1944	1945	Germany	Yes	1944	No	Yes
The Forest Brothers Rebellion	1944	1953	Soviet Union	Yes	1944	No	Yes
Ukraine	1945	1956	Soviet Union	Yes	1949	No	Yes
Indonesian National Revolution	1945	1949	Denmark	No		No	No
Prague Uprising	1945	1945	Germany	No		No	Yes
Hukbalahap Rebellion	1946	1954	United States	Yes	1950	Yes	Yes
French Indochina War	1946	1954	France	Yes	1950	No	No
Greek Civil War	1946	1949	Britain/USA	1947	Yes	Yes	Yes
Malagasy Uprising	1947	1948	France	Yes	1948	Yes	Yes
Malayan Emergency	1948	1960	Britain	Yes	1950	Yes	Yes
Kenyan Emergency	1952	1960	Britain	Yes	1953	Yes	Yes
Algerian War of Independence	1954	1962	France	Yes	1959	No	Yes
Cyprus	1955	1960	Britain	Yes	1955	No	No
French Cameroon	1955	1970	France	No		No	Yes
Hungarian Revolution	1956	1956	Soviet Union	Yes	1956	No	Yes
Tibet	1956	1972	China	No		No	Yes
Ifni War	1957	1958	Spain/France	No		No	Yes
Vietnam War	1959	1975	United States	Yes	1968	Yes	No
Eritrean War of Independence	1961	1991	Ethiopia	Yes	1978	No	No
Guinea-Bissau War of Independence	1962	1974	Portugal	Yes	1968	Yes	Yes
Dhofar Rebellion	1962	1976	Britain	Yes	1970	Yes	Yes
North Yemen Civil War	1962	1970	Egypt	Yes	1962	No	No
Aden Emergency	1963	1976	Britain	No		No	No
Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation	1963	1967	Britain	Yes	1964	No	Yes
Mozambican Civil War	1964	1975	Portugal	Yes	1970	Yes	No

Table 1 continued on next page.

Table 1 —continued from previous page.

Case	Start	End	Foreign Power	Strategy Change?	Change Year	To HaM?	Insurgents Defeated?
Laos	1964	1973	United States	Yes	1969	No	No
Namibian War of Independence	1966	1990	South Africa	Yes	1976	Yes	No
Northern Ireland	1968	1998	Britain	Yes	1974	Yes	Yes
Chadian Civil War	1969	1978	France	No		No	Yes
Cambodian Civil War	1970	1975	United States	No		No	No
East Timor	1975	1999	Indonesia	Yes	1982	Yes	Yes
Angolan Civil War	1975	1990	Cuba	No		No	Yes
Cambodia	1978	1990	Vietnam	No		No	No
Soviet-Afghan War	1979	1989	Soviet Union	Yes	1983	No	No
Nicaraguan Resistance	1979	1989	Cuba/Soviet Union	No		No	No
El Salvadoran Civil War	1981	1992	United States	No		No	No
Sri Lankan Civil War	1987	1990	India	No		No	No
Tajikistan	1992	1997	Russia	No		No	No
First Chechen War	1994	1996	Russia	No		No	No
Second Chechen War	1999	2009	Russia	Yes	2004	Yes	Yes
Somalia	2006	2009	Ethiopia	Yes	2007	Yes	No

*Note:* “Start” and “End” correspond to the years of a foreign power’s intervention. “HaM” is Hearts and Minds.

Unsurprisingly, the major power states serve as the primary foreign powers fighting insurgencies in the our sample. Specifically, 52, or 79%, of the cases in our sample reflect involvement by the major power states Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Soviet Union/Russia. The full distribution of cases and foreign powers is reported in Table 2.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 2:** Foreign Power Involvement Against Insurgencies (Frequency Distribution).

Foreign Power	Frequency
Britain	12
United States	9
Britain/USA	1
Germany	8
France	8
Russia	5
Soviet Union	4
Portugal	2
Italy	2
Ethiopia	2
China	1
Cuba	1
Cuba/Soviet Union	1
Denmark	1
Dutch	1
Egypt	1
France/Britain	1
India	1
Vietnam	1
Indonesia	1
South Africa	1
Spain	1
Spain/France	1
Greece	1

<sup>1</sup>In four cases we consider intervention by more than one foreign power as a single case, due to the fact the foreign powers fought an insurgency in a coordinated fashion.

## Military Success

The primary phenomena that we wish to examine historically as a basis for assessing the likelihood of contemporary policy outcomes is foreign powers' success in counterinsurgency (COIN). Measuring counterinsurgency success is a thorny issue for three primary reasons. First, COIN conflicts can generate indecisive endings, even if the counterinsurgent foreign power wins militarily. As such, success is often measured indirectly, such as a foreign power's ability to maintain central authority in the political unit.

Second, the success of a foreign power is often entwined with a foreign power's overarching political goals related to an intervention. For example, in the contemporary case of Afghanistan, the American-led coalition seeks to defeat the insurgents, but with the broader goal of building a democratic central government in Afghanistan.

Last, political goals may change, and this dynamism might be related to a foreign power's military success against the insurgents—e.g., a difficult fight against insurgents might prompt a reassessment of a foreign power's political goals, which in turn shapes the criteria for evaluating success. Furthermore, a military victory achieved might be accomplished at high cost, and in turn prompt a foreign power to accept political defeat, which is what one might argue occurred during the French involvement in the Algerian war of Independence. In Afghanistan, the allied states might trade away a preference for democracy in favor of stability in Afghanistan.

Here, we set aside the broader political goals and related success of foreign powers' interventions abroad, focusing instead solely on foreign powers' achievement of *military success* against insurgents. This decision is reasonable, we argue, because much of the contemporary discussion concerning Afghanistan focuses on whether the insurgents can be defeated. Relying on various histories and monographs, we determined whether a

foreign power achieved military success against insurgent forces in the our sample of 66 cases, and our coding decisions regarding outcome are reported in Table 1.

In the full sample of 66 cases, 40 cases, or 60%, manifest military victory by a foreign power. Furthermore, if we employ the conventional breakpoint of WWII, we find 24 cases, or 72%, of counterinsurgent military success in the pre-1946 period, while only 16 cases, or 48%, of counterinsurgent military success in the post-WWII subsample. Given this breakdown, the historical odds of success by foreign powers against insurgents witnessed a marked decline after WWII. The trend of decreasing success in counterinsurgency is consistent with the trend noted by Arreguin-Toft (2001) and Lyall and Wilson (2009).

## Strategy Changes

The core claim embedded in the Obama Administration's recent reevaluation of strategy in Afghanistan is that a strategy change can reverse a "good war gone bad" (NYT, Aug. 12, 2007). Here, we focus our attention on coding two dimensions of strategy change. First, we rely on monographs and histories to code whether a foreign power significantly altered its military strategy during the course of fighting an insurgency.

In terms of coding military strategy for counterinsurgencies, two points need to be clarified. First, military strategy can be thought of as the aggregation of three elements: (1) goals; (2) resources; and (3) means. For the purposes of this paper we are concerned with the fundamental means, or approach, that the military takes to accomplish their stated objective.

As noted, according to classical counterinsurgency, there are two approaches, population- or enemy-centered. Strategic shifts can occur from within these approaches or between them. For example, during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Soviets evolved their counterinsurgency from an enemy-centric strategy to a population-centric strat-

egy, one that reflected a shift from an initial focus on defeating the Mujahadeen in decisive military battle, to one of eliminating the insurgent base of support, principally through bombing and mining of the countryside (Grau and Gress, 2002).

Alternatively, strategy shifts can occur from within both enemy- and population-centric approaches. For example, within the enemy-centric approach a strategic evolution from defensive or static strategies to more offensive and aggressive strategies can take place. This is exemplified in the Algerian War of Independence, during which the French commander, Raoul Salan, employed a strategy of territorial defence. Salan's approach was an inherently passive strategy, one which required the deployment of a large number of troops to guard territory via the Marice Line. Salan's replacement, Maurice Challe, shifted the focus from territorial defense by utilizing the military force in a more offensive-oriented strategy, increasing offensive operations and taking the fight to the insurgents.

This example represents a strategy shift; however, the strategy remains enemy-centric, and as such reflects a within-category change. These shifts are typically indicated by conflict and military history monographs as distinct phases of the conflict where one approach to achieving the desired outcome is emphasized in a particular phase of the conflict. Furthermore, these strategic shifts may also correspond with shifts in the military leaders, making identification of the transition points possible.

Our codings for strategy change in our sample of 66 cases are reported in Table 1. The sample distribution indicates that 37 cases, or 56%, reflect instances in which a foreign power changes its military strategy. When we consider the pre- and post-WWII sub-samples, there is a roughly equal distribution of cases in the sample, with 17 cases, or 51%, reflecting strategy change in the pre-1946 period, and 20 cases, or 61%, reflecting strategy change in the post-1945 period.

Second, embedded in the appointment of Gen. McChrystal is an assumption that a COIN strategy that is not anchored to an enemy-based strategy will prove more successful. Indeed, as noted above, Gen. McChrystal's reference to the Afghanistan conflict as "retail politics" harkens to the to a strategy of "Hearts and Minds" (hereafter, HaM), a COIN technique pioneered by the British during the Malaysian Emergency and one often associated with the American War in Vietnam.

While HaM is generally a population-centric approach to counterinsurgency, there is considerable variance in the actual logic behind this approach. For example, Stubbs (2004) considers HaM as a tool to gain the favor of the people, not simply their indifference. Stubbs's (2004) perspective on HaM is a strategy central to which is gaining the emotional favor of the population. Mockaitis (2008) contends that HaM is a strategic evaluation of the conflict, and one that seeks to address the fundamental cause of the conflict. Mockaitis argues that the root causes of conflict generally stem from material necessity, and providing resources, such as housing, electricity, etc., can insulate support for the insurgents. Furthermore, Rigden (2008) argues that HaM should not be interpreted as a "soft approach," but argues that HaM incorporates forceful action to change the perspective of the populace. Similarly, Strachan (2007, 8) argues HaM is "about giving them [the population] the firm smack of government." The United States Army counterinsurgency manual (Nagl, Petraeus, Amos and Sewall, 2006) considers HaM as a way to build networks within the population, yet emphasizes the strategic rationality of the population for supporting the counterinsurgent.

While HaM is considered broadly to be a population-centered approach it encompasses a range of perspectives. HaM is popularly conceptualized as being based on allegiance and devoid of the use of force. However, this conception does not take into account the true nature of COIN warfare which entails the use of force. Therefore, HaM

is relatively less forceful than enemy-centric approaches, yet emphasizes the support of the population in conjunction with force employment.

Due to the fact that HaM is central to the McChrystal-led shift in the American strategy in contemporary Afghanistan, we also evaluate the sub-sample of 37 cases in which a strategy change occurred, coding whether the foreign power changed its strategy in favor of one reflective of HaM principles or an alternative, non-HaM, strategy.<sup>2</sup> Cases of strategy change in the direction of HaM are deemed to be present when the counterinsurgency is actively using policies that seek collaboration with the population. Specifically, for our purposes there must be a new and explicit emphasis by the foreign power on civil-action/support in the COIN. Frequently, this civil action takes the form of population resettlement, as was evident in British involvement in Malayan Emergency and American involvement in the Vietnam War.<sup>3</sup>

Generally HaM seeks to gain support among the populace. However, actions such as population resettlement that we consider a HaM approach, do involve what Markel (2006) correctly points to as a level of repression. However, it is important to note that this repression is starkly different, in scale and principle, from repressive actions against the population, such as those carried out by the Soviet counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. The Soviet means to population control was not directed at gaining popular support among the population, but rather to instill a sufficient degree of fear so that the Afghan population would not support the insurgents. Conversely, HaM

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<sup>2</sup>To many, HaM is considered to be of a tactical rather than strategic, nature; that is, HaM is simply a part of the greater COIN approach. However, for our purposes HaM, represents a *strategic* evaluation in that a counterinsurgent using HaM based principles considers a conflict to reflect a competition for the allegiance of the population, not simply an application military force.

<sup>3</sup>While some cases are clear in terms of their strategic characterization, others are not. Consider the Ethiopian counterinsurgency in Somalia that began 2006. The Ethiopians began the counterinsurgency with direct combat troops on the ground. However, the Ethiopians transitioned to having local Somali units acting as the direct action force. The Ethiopians transitioned out of direct operations to increase support for their own local proxies. Therefore, while not a direct application of HaM, we still consider this as a HaM strategy.

is aimed at gaining popular support, however it is not to be confused with a “soft approach”, as Rigden (2008) correctly posits. HaM requires some degree of repression.

Population control measures, such as direct repression of the population (e.g., systematic, violent retaliation), and scorched earth policies and mass deportation, such as those utilized by the British in the second Boer War, the Ethiopians during the Eritrian war of independence, and the Soviets in Lithuania during the Forest Brothers rebellion, are not considered HaM. Herein, HaM is coded for policies that sought to achieve the support of the population through security and development rather than those that sought control through violence, intimidation or fear against the population.

For example in the early phase of the the Mau–Mau Rebellion, the British used violent repression against civilians and population resettlement. These policies are not considered HaM, because of the violent repression against civilians. However, when George Erskine took over command of the COIN in the Mau–Mau Rebellion, he designated special reserves to protect the villagers as well as favored a more selective use of military force. The policies used in latter parts of the Mau–mau rebellion were coded as consistent with HaM because they sought to protect the population, as well as restrain the use of force. A similar case is the Hukbalahap rebellion in the Philippines. Early in the conflict, when the government sought to crush the the insurgents militarily, there was no civil aspect to the conflict. Later, with the ascendancy of Ramon Magsaysay, the COIN developed more civil-aspects, such as land redistribution to farmers, and deployment of civil–affairs units which lived among the population. The COIN under Magsaysay marked a clear switch to HaM principles, a type of change that is reflected in our coding procedure. Furthermore, our coding reflects *switches in strategy to HaM by a foreign power*. Our coding procedure resulted in a sub-sample of 20 cases, or 30%, in which foreign powers switched their COIN strategy toward one marked by HaM.

## **Duration**

One of the crucial aspects regarding both the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is the length of time it will take to resolve the conflict. To address this issue we code both the start and end of the conflicts as well as the year in which a strategy change occurred.

The start and end dates of the conflicts are based on yearly data, and reflect generally accepted start and ending years for the conflicts. Table 1 displays the counterinsurgencies with their corresponding start and end years. The mean duration of the the fights against insurgencies is 8 years, with the mean duration of cases terminating during the pre-1946 period being 5.2 years, and cases that terminated in the post-1945 period averaging 10.7 years.

We further coded the year in which the first strategy change was made. The strategy change year denotes the year in which a transition was made to a distinct phase of the conflict marked by a different and new strategic emphasis. These codings are based largely on monographs and incorporate both shifts to HaM and non-HaM type strategies. The mean duration from the start of the conflict to the strategy change is 3.4 years. The mean duration from the strategy change to the end of the conflict is 6 years. For the post 1946 period the mean duration to a strategy change is 4.7 years, while the duration after the change to the end of the conflict is 7.25 years.

## **Analysis**

### **Overall Rates of Success**

Table 3 displays the distribution of counterinsurgency (COIN) success by foreign powers during the twentieth century (1899–2009, excluding the contemporary cases Iraq

and Afghanistan), as well as during two sub-periods, pre- and post-1946. In the sample covering the full twentieth century, the distribution of cases indicates a rate of success (i.e., military victory against insurgents) of approximately 60% (40/66), a ratio significantly better than chance. However, when subdividing the sample with a breakpoint following the end of WWII, important differences in rates of success experienced by foreign powers emerge.

Specifically, during the pre-1946 period, foreign powers experience success in 72% (24/33) of the cases, but in the sample corresponding to the post-1946 period the rate of success against insurgents declines to 48% (16/33). While this latter pattern would appear to reflect important consequences for United States policy in contemporary Afghanistan, this simple analysis does not incorporate the dynamic nature of COIN strategies employed by foreign powers, which we consider next.

**Table 3:** Foreign Power COIN Success (1899–2009, Pre- & Post-1946).

Period	Foreign Power		
	Victory	Defeat	Total
Overall	40	26	66
Pre-1946	24	9	33
Post-1946	16	17	33

## Strategy Changes Counterinsurgency Success

To obtain a more nuanced version of the actual patterns in COIN success, it is necessary to incorporate into our analysis shifts in COIN strategy by foreign powers. Table 4 displays foreign power COIN success for the pre- and post-1946 sub-samples, which we consider in turn. During the twentieth century, foreign powers that implement changes in counterinsurgency strategies are rewarded with success 70% (26/37) of the time,

an outcome that is a marked improvement over a success rate of 48% (14/29) when strategy change are absent.

Turning the sub-samples, the pre-1946 sample of foreign power COIN success indicates a relatively high rate of success (88%, or 15/17) in cases in which a foreign power changes COIN strategy while fighting insurgents, a rate of success that moderates significantly to 56% in cases in which foreign powers do not change their COIN strategies. Thus, in the pre-1946 sample, a strategy adaptation by a foreign power is rewarded with significantly greater rates of success.

Considering the post-1946 period, a similar pattern, though of lower overall magnitude, is evident. Specifically, in the sub-sample of post-1946 cases in which foreign powers change COIN strategies, the success rate is 55% (11/20), whereas in cases in which COIN strategy change is absent, the rate of success reduces to 38% (5/13). Thus, while COIN strategy changes by foreign powers are uniformly rewarded with greater rates of success, this rate plummets from 88% in the pre-1946 to 55% in the post-1946 period.

**Table 4:** Foreign Power COIN Success with Strategy Changes (Pre- & Post-1946).

Period	Foreign Power			Total
	Strategy Change	Victory	Defeat	
Pre-1946	Yes	15	2	17
	No	9	7	16
Post-1946	Yes	11	9	20
	No	5	8	13

While accounting for general changes in COIN strategy by foreign powers illuminates nuances in the pattern of COIN outcomes, it remains an imprecise measurement of dynamic COIN strategies. The strategy change recently undertaken by the United

States in Afghanistan is of a specific nature, that of movement from a force-based strategy to one of “Hearts and Minds” (HaM.) In the following section, we examine the rates of success in COIN, given changes in strategy toward HaM.

## **Strategy Change to HaM & Success**

Table 5 reports the rates of success for foreign powers given a shift to a COIN strategy of HaM, an adaptation in strategy similar to the change underway in contemporary Afghanistan, for the full and post-1946 sub-samples. Specifically, in terms of the full sample, switches by foreign powers to a strategy of HaM results in a 75% rate of success, while changes to non-HaM strategies reflect a 64% rate of success. Turning to the sub-sample reflecting post-1946 insurgencies, the frequencies reported in Table 5 reflect patterns of rates of success similar to the full sample, with changes in strategy HaM resulting in a rate of success of 66% (8/12) of the time. Perhaps more striking is the fact that foreign powers that switched to a strategy other than hearts and minds defeat the insurgents only 37% (3/8) of the time. As such, the analysis indicates some positive news for American policymakers regarding attempts to salvage success in Afghanistan. Specifically, a change to HaM results in a greater rate of success against insurgents in the post-1946 period relative to either changes to non-HaM strategies or no change in strategy.

## **Duration Following Strategy Switch**

A final question, one central to the contemporary policy debate in Afghanistan, concerns the length of time after a strategy switch to the end of the conflict. Table 6 displays the mean durations (in years) for the insurgencies in which foreign powers switched strategies, as well as the duration from the point at which a switch in COIN

**Table 5:** Foreign Power COIN Success with Strategy Change to Hearts & Minds (HaM).

	Foreign Power			
	Strategy Change	To HaM	Victory	Defeat
Overall	Yes	Yes	15	5
		No	11	6
Post-1946	No	–	14	15
	Yes	Yes	8	4
		No	3	5
	No	–	5	8

strategy occurs to the end of the insurgency. The pattern revealed in Table 6 suggests that in cases in which a strategy change is made to HaM, the mean conflict duration after the switch is *almost eight years for the full sample and almost nine in the post-1946 sub-sample*. Conversely, foreign powers that switched to a non-HaM strategy experience substantially shorter durations. While this pattern is not encouraging for a quick resolution to the conflict in Afghanistan, it is not entirely surprising given the nature of a HaM COIN strategy, a method that requires time, as foreign powers employ multiple strategies for winning the allegiance of local populations, dissuading future insurgents, demonstrating the benefits of supporting the foreign power-supported central government.

**Table 6:** Foreign Power COIN Duration to Cessation Given a Change to a Strategy of HaM.

Period	Foreign Power Switch to HaM	Mean Duration to Cessation	Mean Duration to Cessation After Switch
Overall	Yes	11.7	7.65
	No	6.4	4.17
Post-1946	Yes	13.75	8.58
	No	9.1	5.25

## The Window of Opportunity

The above results suggest that it is advantageous, albeit time consuming, for foreign powers to switch to a strategy of HaM. However, critical questions pertaining to the current conflict in Afghanistan remain: Is there a length of time, a “window of opportunity,” in a counterinsurgency conflict after which strategy changes are ineffective? In short is there a window of opportunity for strategy shifts? Has the American-led coalition missed this window of opportunity with the appointment of Gen. McChrystal?

Table 7 reports the breakdown of durations from the start of a counterinsurgency conflict to the year of the first strategy change. Our analysis demonstrates that for those counterinsurgents that switched strategies to something other than HaM, the mean duration to the change while being victorious in the end is 1.36 years. In contrast, counterinsurgents that switched to a strategy other than HaM and went on to lose the conflict, reflect a mean duration of 5 years until they switched strategies. The pattern is similar for the maximum durations for each category. For those counterinsurgents that switched strategies to something other than HaM the maximum duration before switching while still ending in a counterinsurgent victory is 5 years.

The pattern for those counterinsurgents who switched to HaM is similar, such that those foreign powers that went on to defeat the insurgents tended to switch strategies earlier in a conflict. Specifically, the mean duration from the start of the conflict to the strategy shift to HaM while defeating the insurgents is 3.33 years. Conversely those foreign powers that went on to lose to insurgents switched strategies later, the mean duration from the start of the conflict to the switch being 6.2 years. In our data sample, the maximum duration to a strategy shift to one of HaM that results in the military defeat of the insurgents is 8 years.

Our analysis indicates that there is a window of opportunity for strategy shifts that result in victory. While the exact window of opportunity is conditional on each specific conflict, those counterinsurgents that go on to defeat the insurgents generally switch strategies earlier in the conflict than those that go on to lose. The shift in strategy in contemporary Afghanistan is occurring approximately 8 years after the conflict began (2002–2009). The current Afghan COIN switch exceeds the mean duration to switch for those cases that ultimately reflect military victory; however, the duration in Afghanistan does not exceed the maximum duration for those that still went on to defeat the insurgents. Clearly, the strategy switch in Afghanistan is occurring relatively late when considering the historical context. However, in past conflicts such as the Dhofar rebellion (Oman), the British switched to HaM based strategies 8 years into the conflict and were still able to defeat the insurgents.

**Table 7:** Hearts and Minds, Outcomes, and Duration to Strategy Shift.

Switch to HaM	Insurgents Defeated	Mean Duration to Switch (Years)	Max Duration to Switch (Years)
No	No	5.00	17
	Yes	1.36	5
Yes	No	6.20	10
	Yes	3.33	8

## Author Biographies

**Andrew J. Enterline** is an Associate Professor of Political Science, specializing in international relations, at the University of North Texas. His research interests include studies of democratization and interstate conflict, as well as third party involvement in civil wars.

**Joseph Magagnoli** is a Doctoral Student in international relations in the Department of Political Science at the University of North Texas. His research interests include civil wars, military strategy, and methodology.

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