



# NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

THE ARTS  
CHILD POLICY  
CIVIL JUSTICE  
EDUCATION  
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT  
HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
NATIONAL SECURITY  
POPULATION AND AGING  
PUBLIC SAFETY  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE  
TERRORISM AND  
HOMELAND SECURITY  
TRANSPORTATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE

This PDF document was made available from [www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org) as a public service of the RAND Corporation.

[Jump down to document](#) ▼

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis.

## Support RAND

[Purchase this document](#)

[Browse Books & Publications](#)

[Make a charitable contribution](#)

## For More Information

Visit RAND at [www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org)

Explore the [RAND National Defense](#)

[Research Institute](#)

View [document details](#)

## Limited Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law as indicated in a notice appearing later in this work. This electronic representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for non-commercial use only. Unauthorized posting of RAND PDFs to a non-RAND Web site is prohibited. RAND PDFs are protected under copyright law. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents for commercial use. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please see [RAND Permissions](#).

This product is part of the RAND Corporation monograph series. RAND monographs present major research findings that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors. All RAND monographs undergo rigorous peer review to ensure high standards for research quality and objectivity.

# Victory Has a Thousand Fathers

**Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies**

**Christopher Paul • Colin P. Clarke • Beth Grill**

Prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited



NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The research described in this report was prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). The research was conducted in the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by OSD, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community under Contract W74V8H-06-C-0002.

**Library of Congress Control Number: 2010930815**

ISBN: 978-0-8330-4967-4

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.

**RAND**® is a registered trademark.

*Cover photo: A U.S. marine stands in a doorway after searching one of the houses of Saddam Hussein's family in Owja, Iraq, April 15, 2003. The village, which is just outside Tikrit, was the former leader's birthplace. AP Photo/Kevin Frayer.*

© Copyright 2010 RAND Corporation

Permission is given to duplicate this document for personal use only, as long as it is unaltered and complete. Copies may not be duplicated for commercial purposes. Unauthorized posting of RAND documents to a non-RAND website is prohibited. RAND documents are protected under copyright law. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please visit the RAND permissions page (<http://www.rand.org/publications/permissions.html>).

Published 2010 by the RAND Corporation

1776 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138

1200 South Hayes Street, Arlington, VA 22202-5050

4570 Fifth Avenue, Suite 600, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-2665

RAND URL: <http://www.rand.org>

To order RAND documents or to obtain additional information, contact

Distribution Services: Telephone: (310) 451-7002;

Fax: (310) 451-6915; Email: [order@rand.org](mailto:order@rand.org)

## Summary

---

Thirty cases of insurgency form the empirical foundation for this research. This monograph provides more detail on the cases analyzed in the accompanying volume, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*.<sup>1</sup> As a prelude to the case histories, we briefly elaborate on how the cases were selected, how the data were collected, and how each case was divided into phases to better illustrate the progress and context of each case and the subsequent effect on the case outcome.

### Case Selection and Data Collection

The 30 insurgency cases were drawn from a larger list of historical insurgencies developed as part of a previous RAND COIN study.<sup>2</sup> That initial list included 89 cases and purports to be an exhaustive list of insurgencies from 1934 to 2008. All cases met the following criteria:

---

<sup>1</sup> Paul, Clarke, and Grill, 2010.

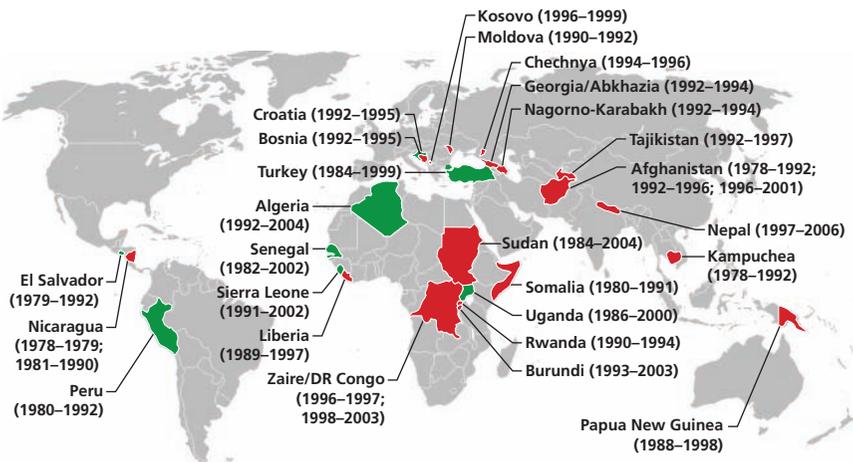
<sup>2</sup> Martin C. Libicki, “Eighty-Nine Insurgencies: Outcomes and Endings,” in David C. Gompert, John Gordon IV, Adam Grissom, David R. Frelinger, Seth G. Jones, Martin C. Libicki, Edward O’Connell, Brooke Stearns Lawson, and Robert E. Hunter, *War by Other Means—Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency: RAND Counterinsurgency Study—Final Report*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-595/2-OSD, 2008. The initial case list was drawn from James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1, February 2003.

- They involved fighting between states and nonstates seeking to take control of a government or region or that used violence to change government policies.
- The conflict killed at least 1,000 people over its course, with a yearly average of at least 100.
- At least 100 people were killed on both sides (including civilians attacked by rebels).
- They were not coups, countercoups, or insurrections.

From that list, we selected the 30 most recently begun, completed cases for our study. Selection of these 30 cases also corresponds to a 30-year chronological span: All insurgencies began and were resolved between 1978 and 2008. These 30 cases span 26 countries and much of the globe (see Figure S.1).

Data for the case studies come from secondary sources. The analyst assigned to each case thoroughly reviewed the available English-language history and secondary analysis of the conflict for that case.

**Figure S.1**  
**Map of COIN Case Dates, Countries, and Outcomes**



NOTE: Green shading indicates that the COIN force prevailed (or had the better of a mixed outcome), while red shading indicates that the outcome favored the insurgents (thus, a COIN loss).

Documentation proved voluminous for some cases (particularly those in Central and South America but also cases in which Russian or Soviet forces were involved); it was much more sparse for other cases (particularly those in Africa). In all cases, available information was sufficient to meet our data needs for the quantitative analyses. The references at the end of this volume demonstrate the range and depth of the available literature.

## **Phased Data**

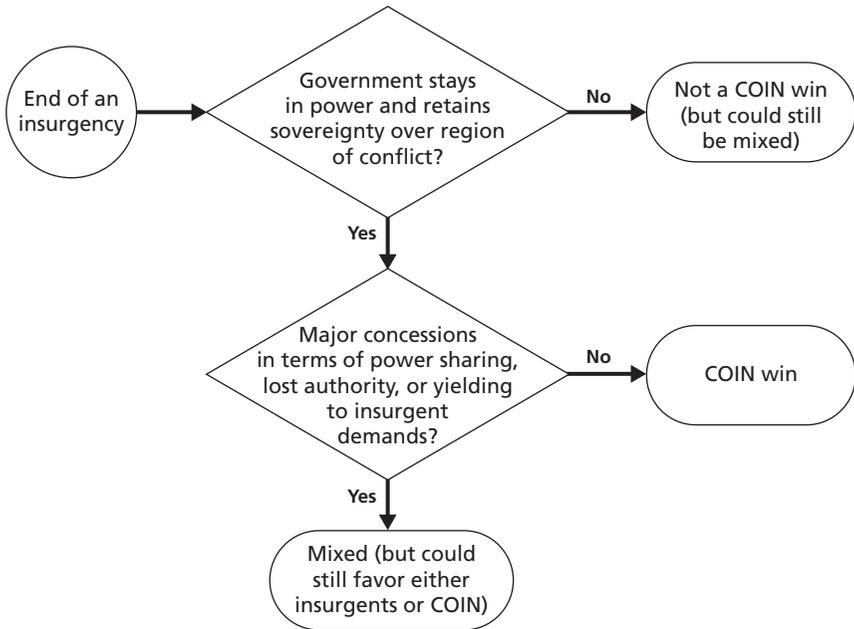
Because the approach and behavior of the COIN force, the actions of insurgents, and other important conditions can change during the course of an insurgency, we broke all of the cases into two to five phases. The phases are not of uniform duration. A new phase was declared when the case analyst recognized a significant shift in the COIN approach, in the approach of the insurgents, or in the exogenous conditions of the case. Phases were *not* intended to capture microchanges or tiny cycles of adaptation and counteradaptation between the insurgents and the COIN force; rather, these were macro-level and sea-change phases.

## **Assessing Case Outcomes**

Since our analysis in the accompanying volume focuses on correlates of success in COIN, one of the most important elements of our case studies is the identification of the outcome of the cases (i.e., whether COIN forces actually succeeded). Many of these cases have complicated outcomes in which neither side realized all of its stated objectives and it is not exactly clear who won. While we report mixed outcomes in the case narratives, we also identify each case as either a COIN win or a COIN loss.

To adjudicate unclear case outcomes, we followed the logic illustrated in Figure S.2. First, for each case, we asked whether the government against which the insurgency arose had stayed in power through

**Figure S.2**  
**Logic for Assignment of Case Outcomes**



RAND MG964/1-S.2

the end of the conflict and whether it retained sovereignty over the region of conflict. If insurgents either deposed (or otherwise led to the fall of) the government or won de facto control of a separatist region, then the COIN force did *not* win. If the government remained in power and the country remained intact, then we further considered whether the government had been forced to (or chose to) make major concessions to the insurgents, such as power sharing or loss of territory or other sovereign control, or was otherwise forced to yield to insurgent demands. If the government stayed in power, the country remained intact, and no major concessions were granted to the insurgents, then the COIN force unambiguously won. If, however, major concessions were made, then the outcome was mixed. In all cases, what constituted a “major” concession and who (the COIN force or the insurgents) had the better of a mixed outcome was decided at the discretion of the individual case analyst and was based on the distinct narrative of that case.

Applying this logic to the 30 selected cases results in eight cases that are COIN wins and 22 cases that are COIN losses. Table S.1 lists the insurgencies, the dates they spanned, and their outcomes.

**Table S.1**  
**Countries, Insurgents, and Date Spans of the 30 Case-Study Insurgencies**

<b>Country (Insurgency)</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Nicaragua (Somoza)	1978–1979	COIN loss
Afghanistan (anti-Soviet)	1978–1992	COIN loss
Kampuchea	1978–1992	COIN loss
El Salvador	1979–1992	<b>COIN win</b>
Somalia	1980–1991	COIN loss
Peru	1980–1992	<b>COIN win</b>
Nicaragua (Contras)	1981–1990	COIN loss
Senegal	1982–2002	<b>COIN win</b>
Turkey (PKK)	1984–1999	<b>COIN win</b>
Sudan (SPLA)	1984–2004	COIN loss
Uganda (ADF)	1986–2000	<b>COIN win</b>
Papua New Guinea	1988–1998	COIN loss
Liberia	1989–1997	COIN loss
Rwanda	1990–1994	COIN loss
Moldova	1990–1992	COIN loss
Sierra Leone	1991–2002	<b>COIN win</b>
Algeria (GIA)	1992–2004	<b>COIN win</b>
Croatia	1992–1995	<b>COIN win</b>
Afghanistan (post-Soviet)	1992–1996	COIN loss
Tajikistan	1992–1997	COIN loss
Georgia/Abkhazia	1992–1994	COIN loss
Nagorno-Karabakh	1992–1994	COIN loss
Bosnia	1992–1995	COIN loss
Burundi	1993–2003	COIN loss
Chechnya I	1994–1996	COIN loss
Afghanistan (Taliban)	1996–2001	COIN loss
Zaire (anti-Mobutu)	1996–1997	COIN loss

**Table S.1—Continued**

Country (Insurgency)	Years	Outcome
Kosovo	1996–1999	COIN loss
Nepal	1997–2006	COIN loss
DR Congo (anti-Kabila)	1998–2003	COIN loss

NOTE: “COIN loss” includes the outcomes “insurgent win” and “mixed, favoring insurgents” (nine of 22 case losses were mixed outcomes favoring the insurgents). “COIN win” includes “COIN win” and “mixed, favoring COIN force.” “Mixed, favoring COIN force” occurs only once in the eight COIN wins.

## Structure of the Case Narratives

The narratives in this volume are structured as follows:

- a short summary of the case
- a summary of each phase of the case, including key factors for that phase
- a discussion of the conventional explanations for the outcomes of the case, as offered in existing secondary analysis
- a list of distinct features of the case.

Beyond this, we offer no separate analysis of the individual cases; our overall analyses, presented in the accompanying volume, are of aggregate-level data across all of the cases together. In fact, one of our most striking findings is that we do not need to discuss any of the distinct features or unique narrative peculiarities of the individual cases to wholly explain the outcomes: The patterns of presence or absence of factors common to all of the cases are sufficient to explain all of the outcomes.<sup>3</sup> In fact, our analysis supports the idea that it can be a mistake to learn too many “lessons” from a single case, as the peculiarities and distinctions of a single case may obfuscate otherwise critical and enduring relationships between COIN practices and outcomes.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter Four in Paul, Clarke, and Grill, 2010.