SEPARATIST INSURGENCY:
WHY SOME INSURGENTS SUCCEED AT SECESSION

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Nearly a century ago, T.E. Lawrence remarked: “To make war upon rebellion is messy and slow, like eating soup with a knife”.1 His commentary drives at a fundamental truth of statecraft and warfare that has baffled and frustrated leaders, planners, and soldiers alike for much of written history: insurgency is complicated. In the modern era, the massive interstate wars that once characterized the relationships between powers have largely given way to smaller scale internal conflicts. While “smaller scale” makes the aforementioned conflicts seem inconsequential, and true as it may be that they do not involve tank divisions or carpet bombing, they tend to be quite long and just as nasty. Furthermore, in light of recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, America and other influential powers alike will be forced to adapt to better combat the instability internal conflicts can breed. The lessons learned in wars like Vietnam, in short, are becoming increasingly relevant. A great body of literature concerns itself with the difficulty that states seem to face when forced into combat on an asymmetric battlefield. Indeed, extremely robust forces fielded by states with abundant capabilities have often found themselves mired in protracted conflict and bloodied by significantly “weaker” opponents. Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson note that since WWII, states have won in less than forty percent of cases of irregular wars: not too impressive a record.2 All things considered, a plurality of studies paints a fairly grim picture for prospective counterinsurgents.

A number of experts treat insurgency as a monolithic and homogeneous concept. While accounting for local particularities and the intricacies of counterinsurgency, they

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2 Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson, “Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars” *International Organization*, 63:1 (January 2009), 69
fail to differentiate between the many types insurgent violence. While, as the overwhelming body of literature suggests, insurgent strategy have proven tremendously successful against intervening foreign powers, in cases of separatist insurgency, the opposite is true. If one momentarily ponders the number of regions that have seceded in cases of asymmetric conflict and gone on to become viable states, it becomes readily apparent that a successful secessionist insurgency is indeed a rarity. Intrigued by this trend, I have constructed a dataset of separatist insurgencies that encompasses all cases of non-colonial separatist conflict since World War II – which reveals what may be prevalent trend. I will delve into the specifics of this dataset in following chapters.

Having identified this potential trend, this thesis will, in addition to assessing its validity, zoom in one step further and address the question: why do separatist insurgents succeed in the rare cases that they achieve victory? In exploring the many factors that relate to this question, I endeavor to fill a significant gap in counterinsurgency literature. The topic remains quite relevant: from a conflict resolution standpoint, secessionist conflict and civil war are particularly lethal and occur with increasing frequency. As it pertains to insurgent and counterinsurgency strategy, exploring this question will provide insight into cases in which states have failed to adequately respond to asymmetric threats. Additionally, recent events have indicated that secessionist conflict has a particular propensity to evolve in character as it progresses – frequently in an extremist direction. This is of particular concern to Western leaders, as several recent cases\(^3\) featured the cropping up of Islamist elements following the onset of hostilities. On a more general

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\(^3\) France’s 2013 intervention in Mali is a relevant example.
level, this work also relates to the international system’s attitude towards secession and the fragmentation of states.

The work will progress as follows: first, I will clarify the terminology in my research question (insurgency, separatist insurgency etc.), after which present the dataset, and its coding. Subsequently, I will address theories in insurgency, counterinsurgency, and separatist conflict. After deriving hypotheses that explain potential outcomes of separatist violence, I will present the research methodology and my case study. Due to the many facets of this topic that will be explored, main sections will be presented in bold, while subsections will be italicized. Ultimately, I find that when it comes to external support for separatist insurgents, more is not necessarily better. Additionally, there are several key reasons why separatists may lose other than states simply wanting to hold on to their territory. Lastly, I identify a curious question about the efficacy of terrorism that warrants further research.

### Research Terminology

For the purposes of this thesis it is vital to come to an understanding of some of the terminology that I will frequently be using. The first of these terms is “separatist.” By this, I am referring to groups seeking to win independence or increased autonomy for a particular region – often a region inhabited by a distinct ethnicity, but not always. It is important to note that in this study, I am excluding wars of colonial independence. While it can be argued that in many cases that colonies are perceived as very much a part of the states in question,⁴ there are different dynamics at play in colonial war – different

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⁴ Algeria in particular was perceived to be a part of France – a feeling that was made stronger by a humiliating defeat in Indochina.
insurgent goals, and a much higher rate of insurgent victory (I will elaborate upon this in
the upcoming literature review). I am also excluding another breed of insurgency: wars
for central control. In this subset of insurgent conflict, insurgent groups oppose and
attempt to overthrow a government in order to seize control of an entire nation. Many
communist insurgencies fall into this subset, among them the cases of China and Cuba in
particular. Separatist groups, in contrast, occupy themselves with a specific territory
rather than seizing power over the central government.

A number of brief notes on some of the lexicon I will be using forthwith: I will
frequently abbreviate counterinsurgency as COIN – which is the convention among
experts. Furthermore, in this thesis, “guerilla,” 5 “insurgent,” “rebel,” and “militant” will
all be used interchangeably. With further regard to terminology, “incumbent” will refer
to a government with recognized authority over the region – in other words the
counterinsurgent. For example, in the case of The Troubles in Northern Ireland, the
United Kingdom was the incumbent power. Lastly “metropolis” refers to what might be
described as the “home front.” In cases of secession, technically the region in question is
“home,” however, I am referring to the localities physically removed from the scope of
the insurgency: the decision-makers and their supporters. Continuing the prior example,
a bombing against London would be considered an attack against the metropolis – and if
protests against the COIN campaign resulted, that would also be a dynamic within the
metropolis. For the purposes of this thesis, the nascent and non-violent phases of
insurgent warfare not considered – that is to say the focus is strictly on the violent
portions. By extension, this thesis does not extend in scope beyond the immediate

5 The term itself literally means “little war” in Spanish. Max Boot, Invisible Armies (New York: Liveright
Publishing Corporation, 2013), xxii
outcome of violent insurgency: if insurgents succeed in forcing peace talks or a referendum, for instance, only events up to the onset of these talks will be analyzed.

Insurgencies, at least through the majority of their lifespans, are characterized by a disproportion in capabilities in that their counterinsurgent opponents are inherently more capable. This results in asymmetric conflicts that lack the pitched battles typical of interstate war. Insurgents frequently resort to guerilla warfare and terrorism as a means of compensating for the aforementioned imbalance in capabilities. The question, however, remains of whether and where a boundary can be drawn between secessionist insurgency and civil war. This issue frequently crops up in the naming of this sort of conflict. Take, for instance, the Second Sudanese Civil War as an example of this nomenclature issue: a conflict that was clearly secessionist in nature and featured a significant discrepancy in capabilities between the two involved parties. At the same time, the American Civil War was also secessionist in nature – and yet, there is without doubt a difference between these two cases. Following from above, separatist insurgency is arguably a subset of civil war. However, David Galula, arguably the preeminent counterinsurgency theorist of the 20th century, takes an opposing standpoint in noting that what is unique about secessionist insurgency is its protracted nature and its onset: “…civil war suddenly splits a nation into two or more groups…”.

That is to say, as opposed to civil wars, insurgencies take time to develop, and do not feature evenly matched armies marching against one another.

Defining Insurgency

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6 *ibid.*, 5
The above conditions and stipulations established, we arrive at a question that is as complex as it is critical: what is insurgency? Galula, defines insurgency as “the pursuit of the policy of a party, inside a country, by every means”.\textsuperscript{7} He further notes that insurgency is a “protracted struggle conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order”.\textsuperscript{8} To clarify, the “existing order” as it pertains to this work is the control of a central authority over a given territory. With further regard to the initial capability gap, Galula notes a “disproportion of strength between the opponents at the outset, and [a] difference in essence between their assets and their liabilities”.\textsuperscript{9} This disproportion plays a fundamental role in the strategy utilized by insurgent and counterinsurgent alike. This is the primary explanatory factor in the selection of guerilla strategies: insurgents (are forced to) resort to asymmetry and terrorism as a means of maximizing the impact of their technically and numerically inferior forces.

Galula’s definition has several strengths and weaknesses. Among the strengths of this framework are its emphasis on the protracted nature\textsuperscript{10} of the conflicts in which it is embodied, and the \textit{methodical} nature of the struggle. This has special ramifications with regards to the use of terrorism – a topic to be explored later in the work. Galula fails, however, to address the \textit{who} of insurgency: he does not identify who, exactly, can be considered an insurgent, nor does he address issues such as public support for insurgents. Does a civilian who fails to cooperate with security forces count as part of an insurgency?

\textsuperscript{8} \textit{ibid.}, 4
\textsuperscript{9} \textit{ibid.}, 6
\textsuperscript{10} It drives at the fact that cases in which insurgents defeat incumbents in direct, conventional, combat are rare in number.
What about actors who support insurgents both with their minds and their wallets? These questions undermine the validity of the definition, at the very least for the purposes of this study.

Roger Trinquier, a contemporary and compatriot of Galula’s, offers an outlook with a number of differences in his work “Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency”.\(^{11}\) He describes “modern warfare”\(^{12}\) as “an interlocking system of actions – political, economic, psychological, military – that aims at the overthrow of the established authority in a country and its replacement by another regime”.\(^{13}\) Trinquier’s approach is significantly more systemic and inclusive than Galula’s: it specifically enumerates what constitutes the aforementioned “pursuit of a policy … by every means.” His inclusion of psychology and economics is particularly apt in that it accounts for many of the dynamics at play in the metropolis.

Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf Jr. elaborate on Trinquier’s outlook in their work “Rebellion and Authority”.\(^{14}\) They take what they label as a systemic approach to rebellion (their word for insurgency), noting: “our view emphasize[s] factors within the insurgent organization which influence its capabilities and growth. It … [places] somewhat greater emphasis on the supply (production) side or R’s\(^{15}\) growth, and the bearing of supply considerations on the prevention or defeat of R”.\(^{16}\) This approach is fairly economic in nature, but like what Trinquier suggests, it drives at the fundamental

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\(^{12}\) His term for the numerous irregular conflicts in which France has participated following WWII.

\(^{13}\) Trinquier, 5

\(^{14}\) Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, Jr., *Rebellion and Authority* (Chicago: Markam Publishing Company, 1970)

\(^{15}\) They abbreviate “rebellion” as R throughout the work

\(^{16}\) Leites and Wolf, 28
notion that it is impossible to describe insurgency without evaluating the environment in which it exists and the support structures upon which it depends. This is helpful, particularly as it pertains to this thesis, as I intend to devote a fair amount of time to the topic of external support for insurgencies. Leites and Wolf, however, fail to provide an adequate definition of the word they are trying to explain – instead leaving us with a vague concept that does not do justice to their approach: “open, organized, and often armed resistance”. Essentially, while failing to formulate a definition, they offer us the notion that there is quite a bit more to insurgency than merely the insurgents.

Jumping forward in time to modern interpretations of insurgency, Gordon H. McCormick et al. offer a similar definition taking into account the political dynamics of insurgency in addition to its military aspects: “a struggle for power (over a political space) between a state … and one or more organized, popularly based internal challengers”. They make a critical distinction in that they account for the possibility of multiple insurgent groups competing both amongst each other and with the government for control. This often times exerts tremendous influence on the dynamics of the insurgency, as infighting and defection are often seen insurgencies, and are often a harbinger of defeat.

David Kilcullen, one of the preeminent COIN scholars of the twenty-first century, cites the U.S. military field manual on the topic:

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17 ibid., 2
19 Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki. How Insurgencies End (RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2010), 18
“an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict … [in other words] an organized, protracted, politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority, while increasing insurgent control”.

This definition, while clearly drawing on prior theory, makes an important note regarding the relationship between insurgents and counterinsurgents, and the military aims of the former. This is to say that an insurgent need not destroy or overthrow his opponent – as is the case with separatist insurgent groups that do not have their eyes on taking control of the governments they oppose. Kilcullen’s note is demonstrated by America’s experience in Vietnam: one in which a series of tremendous victories on the battlefield failed to translate into political consensus on the home front. This definition begins to drive at the outcomes of insurgency with terminology such as “weaken,” – and as such, this will form the basis for the next section of this thesis.

Having more or less summarized the existing concepts, I will now attempt to synthesize definition of insurgency of my own that will be used for the remainder of this paper – one that aims to account for the various nuances offered above:

“an armed, and protracted struggle in which one or more groups aim to overthrow or weaken the authority of a government in order to increase their own and the political, economic, and psychological system in which the aforementioned actors compete.”

20 David Kilcullen, Counterinsurgency (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1
21 The Tet Offensive resulted in the near destruction of the Viet Cong as a fighting force, preventing it from playing a noteworthy role in combat for the duration of the war.
These descriptions, helpful as they are, need further tuning in order to describe separatist insurgencies. Again, separatists have no interest in overthrowing a central government. Offering a potential lead, Jason Sorens notes that “secessionists … must secure control over a certain territory in order to establish a new governance unit for themselves”.\textsuperscript{22} While not a definition, this commentary drives at the fundamental importance of territorial control for insurgent groups – that they must carve out a state.\textsuperscript{23} This being the case, we can say that a separatist insurgency is one that, relating to the aforementioned dynamics, seeks the establishment of territorial control over a certain region with the aim of increasing autonomy (which may include full independence).

**The Separatist Insurgency Dataset**

Returning to the fundamental question posed in this thesis, it is necessary to prove that secessionist insurgents do, in fact, almost universally fail to achieve victory. The accompanying dataset I have created identifies a total of fifty-four domestic secessionist insurgencies since World War II. I selected this date cutoff because there occurs a marked change in insurgency results following it: namely (and for complicated reasons\textsuperscript{24}), incumbents have tended to lose significantly more often since then. It is additionally worth noting this number is by not to be interpreted as exhaustive, due in part to the fact that is the product of a compilation of data from four datasets: *Correlates of War Intra-State 4.0*,\textsuperscript{25} Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson’s *Rage Against the Machines*

\textsuperscript{23} Widely described as a unit with a monopoly on the use of force within its territory.  
\textsuperscript{24} Lyall and Wilson correlate failure with increasing mechanization of armed forces.  
\textsuperscript{25} Correlates of War Intrastate War Data (v4.0). Retrieved from: http://www.correlatesofwar.org/
dataset, and the Polity IV dataset on regime characteristics. This proved somewhat problematic due to the fact that each of the three conflict datasets has a built in threshold for violence that inherently eliminates some insurgencies: for example, ETA and other Bosque separatist movements fail to appear in Correlates of War because they simply did not incur enough casualties to be included. The dataset is mostly built upon correlates of war, as it is the most exhaustive index, in addition to the fact that it comes coded for territorial intrastate conflicts. Having drawn up a rough list based on Correlates, I then turned to the Armed Conflict Dataset, as it has a much lower threshold for inclusion, which makes it a finer tool for including insurgencies. Lyall’s dataset served as a final check, a sort of quality control. In any case, the key finding from the dataset is that failure among secessionist insurgents occurs regardless of the violence parameters: no matter how small the conflict, they tend to lose.

The layout of the dataset is fairly straightforward. As will be elaborated upon later, each insurgency is coded 0, 1, or 2, with 0 being an incumbent victory, 1 being a draw or evolution of the conflict, and a 2 being an insurgent victory. PolityIncStart measures the regime type of the incumbent at the onset of insurgent violence. Lower numbers correspond with more autocratic regimes, while higher numbers correspond

(cont’d)

Fig. 1: Separatist Conflicts Dataset

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ConfName</th>
<th>Incumbent</th>
<th>Insurgent</th>
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<th>EndDate</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>PolityIncStart</th>
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<td>1951</td>
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<td>1950</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Karens/Communists</td>
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<td>South Ossetia Independence</td>
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N  54
TOTAL0  25 TOTALDEM  26
TOTAL1  25 TOTALAUT  23
TOTAL2  4 STRONGDEM  15
PCT0 46% STRONGAUT  21
PCT1 46% PCT2 7%
with democratic ones. StrongDem and StrongAut are measures of the number of established democracies and autocracies, meaning incumbents that scored higher than a 7 or lower than a -7. -88 and -77 correspond to states in transition, either between regimes or newly independent. The main feature worth noting is the number next to PCT2: 7%. This confirms that there exists a trend of insurgent defeat in separatist conflict.

According to the data gathered, insurgents were only victorious a total of four times – a seven percent success rate\textsuperscript{29} – confirming the claim that separatist groups rarely win. This outcome is arguably unsurprising given the massive gap in capabilities between insurgent and incumbent that must be surmounted. Furthermore, three of the insurgent victories involved direct foreign intervention on their behalf.

It should be noted that in most if not all of the conflicts in the dataset, there is a strong ethnic element at play. It is frequently the case that separatist insurgents identify themselves as belonging to a distinct group from other nationalities present with the nation, for political or religious reasons. This thesis is unconcerned with questions of the underlying causes of identity formation as it pertains to civil war – this concerns a distinct literature that is of little use to the study of COIN strategy. That said, I do not contest that these that these elements play a role in separatist movements, and are most certainly a tool frequently utilized by insurgents. I take ethnicity at face value: there exist certain groups in distinct regions that on occasion seek independence.

A problem inherent to the dataset is accounting for the duration of separatist insurgencies. While it is easy to account for when they start, the endgame is much harder to measure accurately. An example of this can be seen Second Chechen War and

\textsuperscript{29} McCormick et. al., 324
subsequent insurgency (which will form part of my later case study). Even once the “combat” phase drew to a close in 2009, terrorist attacks have continued in spite of the war being “over.” This is, without doubt, a tricky question to answer. The datasets would consider the ending to be the point at which the death toll drops below the minimum threshold. Whatever the case, it is often the case that even following the technical cessation of hostilities, hardliners continue the struggle. However, as noted above, patterns of separatist insurgent defeat hold true regardless of the intensity of the conflict; they are merely easier to observe in larger and more violent conflicts.

Robert Pape, writing about suicide terrorism, offers analysis that is applicable to is helpful in conceptualizing duration. He argues that terrorism (in his case suicide bombings), “…occur in clusters as part of a larger campaign by an organized group to achieve a specific political goal”. Pape’s language is descriptive of the behavior of insurgents both separatists and otherwise: namely, that they use violent campaigns as a means of achieving political ends: in this case, independence of a particular region or concessions from the incumbent. This thesis then centers on the campaign phase of insurgency. While a counterargument can be made that approaching the bargaining table can be considered part of the “campaign” as it entails the active pursuit of concessions, I am focusing in particular on the violent portions of insurgent conflict. That is to say, as long as there is a shooting conflict taking place, the conflict is accounted for. As soon as the shooting stops (either because of a ceasefire or the beginning of talks), the insurgency

31 My emphasis, as I will be using this term henceforth.
32 Pape, 21
can be considered “over,” at least temporarily. While this means of measuring duration is not perfect, it is by far the most effective way.

*Insurgency Outcomes and Defining Victory*

The use of words such as “victory” brings up an important question regarding the coding of outcomes: what is victory? It is vital to clarify for research purposes the possible outcomes of insurgent campaigns. I include three potential military endgames in the dataset, as demonstrated in figure one. I am by no means suggesting that there are only three possibilities – this is a simplification made for the sake of coding. It perhaps more helpful to think of outcomes on a gradient spectrum, as visible in figure two:

**Fig. 1: A Potential Operationalization of COIN Outcomes**

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<td>INCUMBENT VICTORY</td>
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<td>DRAW</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>INSURGENT VICTORY</td>
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**Fig. 2: The Counterinsurgency Outcome Spectrum**

The key point made in the above figure is that there are few clean-cut outcomes in which an insurgent or incumbent achieves total victory, or they reach a complete stalemate. Instead, there is a muddy assortment of possibilities that make the coding of outcomes a formidable task indeed.
I will begin with the incumbent victory segment of the spectrum. This outcome is arguably the most straightforward: the insurgency is destroyed and rendered incapable of continuing military operations. Connable and Libicki offer a definition and note an important trend: “in theory, the government wins by destroying the insurgent cadre, the insurgent political structure, or both. However, in practice, governments can and have crushed insurgent forces or movements only to see them reappear year or decades later”. Correct as they may be, and though resurgent insurgencies often involve the same players, I classify them as separate violent campaigns in the dataset, thus circumnavigating this issue. This is to say that as it pertains to determining battlefield outcomes, later violence due to common underlying causes is not considered.

To further clarify, in an incumbent victory, the counterinsurgent not only retains control over the insurgent territory but also succeeds in destroying the insurgent’s ability to continue the insurgency for a period of time. This final condition is critical, as an incumbent victory does not guarantee an end to the underlying issues that spawned the insurgency in the first place, nor does it preclude future flare-ups of violence: indeed, many insurgencies represented in the dataset have multiple phases over multiple years.

McCormick et al. break down victory as an outcome even further. They describe insurgency, which they label a battle over a political space, as a sort of game in which two players compete for control and dominance. Additionally, they identify a fundamental delineation between political and military victories. They also observe that most insurgencies are resolved militarily, even if their ends are ostensibly political, arguing that most “settlements” are “… nominal … and [reflect] one side’s clear

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33 Connable and Libicki, 17
dominance over the other”.34 That is to say, most “peaceful” conclusions reflect a distinct military advantage of one side on the ground.

As it pertains to victory, McCormick et al. differentiate between strong wins and weak wins.35 Returning to their description of insurgency as a game, they note: “a player that is not only able to push his opponent across his breakpoint but also establishes effective control over the political space … can be said to achieve a strong win”.36 They further note that in this case “[the] opponent … is not only out of the game, he has no opportunity to come back”.37 In contrast, a weak win is characterized by a condition in which “[the enemy] no longer poses an organized threat, but he may still have a political foothold that he can use to reorganize himself to make a comeback at a later time”.38 These conditions are applicable to insurgent and incumbent alike – however, the parameters of this thesis more or less exclude strong wins by insurgents as they are fighting for local control as opposed to hoping to replace the existing regime.

In cases of insurgent victory in the separatist context, the incumbent is effectively and definitively forced out of insurgent territory and is rendered incapable of retaking the territory for a significant period of time. It is interesting to note that no cases of insurgent victory have led to the creation of recognized and self-sufficient states. The causes and ramifications of this tendency will be explored further throughout the work.

A draw is a purposefully vague and expansive classification that avoids what would be nothing short of a coding nightmare. Included in this category are a number of

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34 McCormick et al., 323
35 McCormick et al., 326
36 ibid., 326
37 ibid., 326
38 ibid., 326
outcomes that will be subsequently identified. First among them are limited incumbent concessions. In this outcome, the counterinsurgent maintains control of the disputed territory but offers incentives to end violent campaigns such as increased autonomy or representation. This however, falls under the category of political responses: it aims to address the underlying grievances of the insurgent and does not necessarily entail military measures. Additional draw outcomes in the dataset include escalation/evolution and ongoing conflicts. Cases of escalation and evolution are characterized by the spiraling of the conflict into interstate war, or direct foreign intervention. The cases of the Bangladesh Liberation War (a war between insurgents and Pakistan that India ultimately entered) and the Secession of Abhkazia from Georgia (Russia intervened and continues to maintain forces there) fit into this category. The last outcome in this category is a genuine stalemate – in which neither side can destroy the other and is unable to achieve victory, either strong or weak. This, however, is a rare outcome.

However, the question remains: is a tie really a tie? I take the position in this thesis that a tie goes to the insurgent. While forcing limited concessions is by no means a crushing victory, the fact of the matter is that the state is in some way displaced in offering incentives to end violence. It can be argued in this case that authority and autonomy are zero-sum in nature and that by forcing concessions, an insurgent is intrinsically reducing the authority of the incumbent. All of this is not to mention that states begin insurgent conflict with a tremendous advantage in capabilities. Flowing from the aforementioned analysis, we can say that this thesis covers the universe of insurgent victories. If the spectrum of potential outcomes were to be coded numerically, with zero being an incumbent strong win and ten being an insurgent strong win
(theoretically impossible given the scope of this work), only outcomes corresponding to a five or greater are of particular interest. However, performance across several conflicts will also be tracked, as will be explained in section on case selection.

**Literature Review Overview**

In this section, I will set out an organizational framework for the upcoming literature review. This thesis identifies three primary groupings of independent variables. These groupings can be classified as insurgent-centric, incumbent-centric, and system-centric. Insurgent-centric variables relate to the internal dynamics of insurgency: who is the separatist insurgent and how is he fighting? This section will cover theories of secessionist goals, the structure of armed groups, overall insurgent strategy, the use of terrorism, and the important question of external support. Incumbent-centric variables, in contrast, relate to the performance of the counterinsurgent. Many of the theories in this section tie into the question of democracy versus autocracy. Does either regime type confer an advantage in terms of counterinsurgency? For this section of the literature review, I will also outline the strategies available to the counterinsurgent and evaluate their respective advantages and disadvantages. The third grouping is somewhat of a mixed breed; a collection of variables that fall outside of the control of either the insurgent or incumbent: the international system, namely the impact of geography. I separate these variables as questions of norms, for instance, do not cleanly fit into either aforementioned category. For clarity, I will call this class system-centric variables.

It is important to note that these aforementioned independent variables do not exist in a vacuum – it is simply not the case that one grouping is predominant in relation
to the others. To the contrary, they coexist in an extraordinarily complicated set of political and military conditions. Indeed, many diagrams attempting to explain insurgency are comically convoluted. It is important to keep in mind that COIN studies are by nature a highly applied discipline. While some argument may arise over the application of specific strategies within a given category, the performance of insurgent and incumbent is very much a function of their interaction. All of this said, however, organizing theories into these groupings makes analysis quite a bit more straightforward.

**Insurgent-Centric Explanations of Outcome**

The following section will be devoted to explanations concerning the actions and behavior of separatist insurgents and how they impact insurgency endgame. It should be noted that much of the forthcoming theory is about insurgents and guerillas as a whole. I argue that while insurgents and separatist insurgents have notable differences in their goals, the means by which they achieve them are similar if not identical. That is to say that while much of the following theory is not specifically about separatists, it applies to them. To begin, I will present a summary of the seminal works on insurgency. While they may not directly concern separatism, it is important to have an understanding of them. Many of the great writers were practitioners of the art themselves, leading communists whose personal experience gave them tremendous insight. Indeed, it was not until the onset of the Vietnam War that that western authors began paying serious attention to guerilla warfare theory. Perhaps the most well-known of these writers is Robert Taber, who captures the essence insurgent strategy in brilliant analogy:

“the guerilla fights the war of the flea, and his military enemy suffers the dog’s disadvantages: too much to defend; too small, ubiquitous, and agile an enemy to come to grips with. If the war continues long enough … the dog succumbs to exhaustion and anemia without ever having found anything on which to close his jaws or rake with his claws”.\textsuperscript{40}

However, it was Mao Zedong who laid the foundation for almost all later studies in two of his works from the late 1930s: On Guerilla Warfare and On Protracted War. Both were ostensibly directed at defeating the Japanese armies that were occupying large swathes of China at the time, but the theories put forth would ultimately be put to tremendously effective use in Mao’s later defeat of the Kuomintang. Central in his work is the concept of fluidity and mobile war. He comments: “Chinese troops must conduct their warfare with a high degree of mobility on extensive battlefields, making swift advances and withdrawals, swift concentrations and dispersals”.\textsuperscript{41} His commentary indicates that he recognized that the counterinsurgent enjoys no conventional front, and must, in theory, be in all places at all times if he is to defeat an insurgency.

In essence, he cautions against the engagement of conventional forces in a conventional manner – to play to guerilla strengths and engage Japanese forces where they are most unable to respond effectively. Manpower is an important consideration as well – he correctly identifies the concept that counterinsurgents must utilize a tremendous number of forces to protect their rear: “because Japanese military power is inadequate… the primary functions of guerillas are … to conduct a war on exterior lines, that is, the

\textsuperscript{40} Robert Taber, \textit{War of the Flea} (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc, 2002), 20
rear of the enemy, to establish bases, and, last, to extend the war areas.”

Mao’s assessment, perceptive as it is, to a large extent falls into a pitfall common to much analysis written by insurgents: it is overly contextual to their own war. However, Mao also does leave us some more general analysis on what he views as a preferable progression of an insurgency. In arguably the most lasting of his contributions in this field, he identifies three stages of protracted war. The first stage “covers the period of the enemy’s strategic offensive and our strategic defensive”. The second, “the period of the enemy’s strategic consolidation and our preparation for the counteroffensive”. Lastly, the third stage, is characterized by “strategic counteroffensive and the enemy’s strategic retreat”. To clarify further, the first stage is largely a planning phase, the second stage contains most of the guerilla operations, and the third includes a transition to conventional warfare. Taber’s viewpoint coincides with Mao as it pertains to evolution to conventional combat: “the rebel strategy will be to avoid a military decision until an equalization of forces has been achieved”.

Che Guevara takes a different standpoint than Mao in his book “Guerilla Warfare,” arguing that the first stage is not of particular importance. To the contrary, he envisions the possibility of an insurgency in which rebels “[strike] a fortunate blow and [their] fame grows. A few peasants … and young idealists of other classes join the nucleus; it acquires greater audacity…” In contrast to Mao, Guevara argues that the

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43 On Protracted War, 137
44 ibid., 137
45 ibid., 17
46 Taber, 27
47 Che Guevara, Guerilla Warfare (New York: NR Press, 1961), 74
first step can, in essence, be activated by the second. That is to say the support can be generated by insurgent actions themselves without an initial buildup. This explanation is perhaps more plausible in the case of separatist violence. Taber offers support for this viewpoint with his explanation of insurgency: “the outbreak of the insurgency is the first step – it is a body blow that in itself inflicts severe damage on the prestige of the regime”.48 Returning to Guevara, he also makes a start in the direction of addressing urban combat – but his analysis suffers several drawbacks. By his account, suburban guerillas can never “spring up of [their] own accord,” and that guerilla bands in this setting “ought not to number more than four of five men”.49 Interestingly, the first half of his statement is flimsy empirically while the second half is actually quite accurate.50

Where Guevara only begins to talk about insurgency in the urban setting, Carlos Marighella finishes the job. His work, “Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla,”51 breaks radically with the theoretical strategy of insurgent groups, namely in that the cities are not a terminus for the insurgency, but a theater on which the counterinsurgent may be engaged simultaneously with operations in rural zones. He notes “[the urban guerilla’s] aim is to aid the rural guerillas and to help in the creation of a totally new … political structure”.52 The notion of a simultaneous front is unique to Marighella in terms of the literature. He also takes the unusual step of identifying weaknesses for insurgencies other than the initial gap in capabilities, noting in particular the dangers of an urban setting with substantially more people than in the country: “the major danger that we run

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48 Taber, 21
49 Guevara, 37
50 As demonstrated by the case of the Provisional Irish Republican Army
51 Carlos Marighella, Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marighella-carlos/1969/06/minimanual-urban-guerrilla/ch01.htm
52 ibid., 2
into is infiltration into our organization by a spy or informer”.53 This is arguably a more political angle, taking into account the role of people not strictly fighting for the insurgents or in the military forces of the counterinsurgent, which makes his analysis particularly useful.

**Secessionist Insurgent Goals**

It can be said that separatist insurgents must raise the cost of control over a region to such a level that the incumbent loses the political will to maintain the local status quo. “Status quo” can mean direct political control, rule with no concessions to local leaders, or the maintenance of the region’s status as part of the nation. In addition, they must go beyond ordinary insurgents and actually hold the territory that they seek independence for. The reasons that separatists so often fail to achieve full secession therefore become evident: first, states have significantly greater political will to hold on to breakaway regions than colonies and as such, are willing to expend significantly more money and manpower in these conflicts. Second, the necessity of establishing territorial control undermines the benefits of guerilla strategy. On a fundamental level, insurgents seeking to create a state cannot afford to be “nowhere.” While this does not mean that separatist insurgents need to fight conventionally, it does mean that they need to have a more visible structure than other kinds of insurgent groups – and also means that they are at a tremendous disadvantage to states given initial gaps in capabilities. This leads us to a first hypothesis that may explain why separatists lose so often:

53 *ibid.*, 28
Hypothesis 1: The necessity of holding territory and state building puts separatist insurgents at a disadvantage because it undermines guerrilla warfare capabilities.

In order to thrive, insurgent groups must gain (or force) the support of the local population. As is argued by the scholars above, most insurgencies begin as small bands that undergo what can be best described as a snowball effect to evolve into regional movements, at least in the cases of this thesis. The across-the-board consensus among scholars seems be that the application of violence is necessary to achieve this end. That is to say, merely suggesting in propaganda that secession is beneficial is insufficient. One use of violence aims as forcing incumbents to respond with repressive measures. Marighella writes:

“the government has no alternative except to intensify its repression. The police networks, house searches, the arrest of suspects and innocent persons, and the closing off of streets make life in the city unbearable … the people refuse to collaborate with the government, and the general sentiment is that this government is unjust.”

The insurgent, in essence, forces the incumbent to undermine his own support, alienating the “hearts and minds” necessary to maintain control. Such crackdowns, Marighella argues, force the populace into the arms of the insurgency. Eqbal Ahmad tersely summarizes the importance of winning hearts and minds in the counter insurgency setting: “popular support for the guerrilla is predicated upon the moral alienation of the

54 ibid., 30
masses from the existing government".\textsuperscript{55} What better a way for insurgents to achieve this end than to goad the government into doing it for them?

Taber offers a similar account, and a slight modification that is more effective at taking the role of the “non-participating population” into account: “It will also be part of the [the insurgent’s] design … to bring about an intensification of the political repression that already exists, so deepening popular opposition to the regime…”\textsuperscript{56} However, the question remains, what can be considered opposition? By Mao’s account, only a peasant who takes arms and actively wages war. However, Taber argues that there exist “sympathizers and fellow travelers, those not really of the underground, operating for the most part within the law, but sustaining the efforts of the activists”.\textsuperscript{57} This reinforces the concept of insurgency as a popularly based movement. Furthermore, it contradicts the notion that only “insurgents” are part of the insurgency. It can be argued that when, for example, a citizen knows of the presence of subversive elements in a region but decides against reporting it because of sympathetic feelings, they are in effect aiding the insurgent. All this is to say that insurgents need not foment revolt among an entire population to garner its sympathy. Based on the above, we can derive a hypothesis that applies to insurgent groups, separatist and otherwise:

\textit{Hypothesis 2: Brutal repression of civilians by the incumbent is conducive to insurgent victory.}

A contrasting application of insurgent violence is against \textit{civilians} in the conflict zone with the aim of forcing cooperation. In effect, insurgents raise the cost of

\textsuperscript{55} Cited in Stathis N. Kalyvas, \textit{The Logic of Violence in Civil War} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 94
\textsuperscript{56} Taber, 19
\textsuperscript{57} ibid., 23
cooperation with the government: people begin to fear association and proximity with incumbent forces. It can be argued that Eqbal’s analysis warrants a slight tweak: that insurgents need not morally alienate a population from its government, but merely alienate the population, be it with coercive means or otherwise. Hugo Slim, in his study of violence against civilians, notes that “collective punishment is usually … a means rather than an end in itself. It is used instrumentally as a way to achieve wider goals … it sets out deliberately … discourage, deter, and disempower [people]”. 58 Marighella touches on this theme in his treatment of executions, noting “those who go to the police of their own free will to make denunciations and accusations … must be executed when they are caught”. 59 The underlying logic is that the government’s ability to combat the insurgency will be diminished by civilian fear of insurgent retaliation if they cooperate. This being the case, we arrive at another hypothesis that again is applicable to all insurgents.

**Hypothesis 3: Insurgent violence against local civilians is conducive to insurgent victory.**

Thus far, we have covered two violent means by which insurgents can win or compel support: attacks that intentionally invite harsh responses, and attacks that threaten civilians and deter aiding the government. This second strategy can be better described as terrorism. There exist two conflicting positions with regards to the value of insurgent terrorism: one, that terrorism as an ultimately beneficial strategy, and the other, that view it as ultimately harmful. In this study I appropriate Bruce Hoffman’s definition of terrorism, “the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence of the threat

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59 Marighella, 22
of violence in the pursuit of political change”. I concede that the definition of terrorism is quite a contentious matter, and there exist a plethora of explanations and nuances. However, for simplicity’s sake, I will be using this definition.

Guevara is ambivalent: while noting the value of target assassinations against leaders he notes that terrorism “… is generally ineffective and indiscriminate in its results, since it often makes victims of innocent people and destroys a large number of lives that would be valuable to the revolution”. He further warns that “the killing of persons of small importance is never advisable, since it brings on an increase of reprisals, including deaths”. He makes the fundamental point that in seeking to alienate civilians from their government, insurgents must take great caution not to cross the line and turn the population they must win over against them.

Marighella, on the other hand, is unabashed in his defense of terrorism ending his section on the topic with the declaration: “terrorism is a weapon the revolutionary can never relinquish”. His commentary, however, disappoints is fairly lacking in terms of concrete analysis short of noting that it is “capable of effecting irreparable loss against the enemy”. Neither Guevara nor Marighella, however, address fear; give credence to the psychological impact of terror. Fortunately, Taber delves into the psychology of insurgency, identifying an insurgent goal of creating a “climate of collapse,” in which “…the protracted and futile campaign in the field contributes to the process of social and

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60 Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 40
61 Guevara, 26.
62 *ibid*.
63 Marighella, 24
64 *ibid*.
65 Note Trinquier’s definition of insurgency on page 3.
political dissolution". While this definition takes psychology into account, it is in need for some edits if it is to be applicable to separatist conflict: as has been mentioned several times, the incumbent does not collapse if it is defeated in these cases. Perhaps a better description would be “climate of defeat” in which perceptions that the conflict is “unwinnable” are disseminated and take root among the military and populace of the insurgent. In both cases of local and home front terrorism, attacks satisfy the fundamental goal of terrorists to alienate civilians from their government – spreading, in addition to the fear of future attacks, perceptions that the government is powerless to prevent attacks. From a holistic standpoint, terrorism is a particularly effective strategy for creating a “climate of defeat.” This while be examined further in the upcoming section on the impact of regime type on counterinsurgency performance. Based on the arguments presented above, there are two potential hypotheses: that the use of terror does work, and that it does not. However, since both of the cases I have selected featured terrorism, I choose the former:

*Hypothesis 4: The use of terrorism by insurgents against the metropolis of the incumbent is conducive to victory.*

Based on the above analysis, the goals of separatist insurgents can be summed concisely as follows:

1. Gain the support, sympathy, and or compliance of civilians in the conflict zone.
2. Establish territorial control over the conflict zone and build competing state structures.
3. Create a psychological “atmosphere of defeat” for the incumbent and raise the costs of territorial control to an unacceptable level.

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66 Taber, 21
Organization and Structure Insurgent Groups

Strategy aside, there remains an important variable in the outcome of separatist violence: the manner in which insurgent groups organize themselves. Different structures offer a variety of advantages and drawbacks that have a tremendous bearing on the way campaigns progress. Ben Connable and Martin Libicki identify two primary arrangements: hierarchical and networked.\(^{67}\) The former is categorized by “relatively clear, vertical chains of command,” whereas in contrast, “networked insurgencies adhere to a flat organizational structure with vague leadership roles for peripheral subgroups.”\(^{68}\)

The advantages of a hierarchical chain of command are embodied in a more effective command and control mechanism. In simple terms, it is much easier to direct a campaign with a clear delineation of leadership – indeed, this is the way most if not all military forces are organized. However, this arrangement has a significant drawback: if it is abundantly clear to the insurgent hierarchy who is in charge, there is a good chance that the incumbent knows as well. Connable and Libicki add: “hierarches are somewhat vulnerable to decapitation strikes … insurgencies led by highly charismatic leaders are most susceptible to decapitation”.\(^{69}\) The pitfalls of rigid hierarchy will be of particular note in the case study on the First Chechen War.

Networked insurgencies are, theoretically, less susceptible to attacks against their leaders. However, they suffer from coordination difficulties arising from their inherently decentralized structures Connable and Libicki cite the commentary of Regis Debray, a theoretist/insurgent who noted “the lack of a single command puts the revolutionary forces

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\(^{67}\) Connable and Libicki, 77

\(^{68}\) ibid.

\(^{69}\) ibid, 82
in a situation of an artillery gunner who has not been told which direction to fire”.\textsuperscript{70}

However, the aforementioned scholars do note that most networked insurgencies have some form of cadre structure – and furthermore, “do not afford watertight security for insurgency leadership”.\textsuperscript{71}

How do each of these structures fare outcomes-wise? While the use of networked strategy might appeal to Information Age biases, Connable and Libicki’s finding defies explanations: namely, that hierarchical insurgencies enjoy a higher incidence of victory than their counterparts. As it pertains to separatist insurgencies, insurgent groups may be forced into more hierarchical structures as they seek to more or less create a state – a process that requires a certain degree of hierarchy. The aforementioned offers present logic that is fairly straightforward to utilize as a hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 5: Hierarchical organizational structures are more conducive to victory than networked ones.*

**External Support for Insurgents**

Insurgents separatist and otherwise face the stark reality of an enormous gap in capabilities with incumbents. However, help from outside may help lessen this gap at the very least. There are a number of key questions that this section seeks to answer. First off, what is external support? Who offers it, and why.

External support can be defined as assistance from outside of the country in which the insurgency takes place. “Assistance” is a purposefully vague word, as it takes many


\textsuperscript{71} Connable and Libicki, 82
forms. Galula identifies five principal types of support: moral, political, technical, financial, and military. He characterizes moral support as assistance that is “expressed by the weight of public opinion and through various communications media ... propaganda is the chief instrument...” In essence, this support entails the public affirmation of insurgent activities. However, it is, as far as assistance goes, not particularly decisive. A failing insurgency that suddenly receives good publicity in foreign media is unlikely to reverse its fortunes as a result. Political support represents a step up, according to Galula, entailing “pressure applied directly on the counterinsurgent, or indirectly via diplomatic action in the international forum”. However, short of sweeping international action, a rarity on the world stage, such support is unlikely to force the incumbent to adjust its strategy, so much as prove a slight hindrance. It happens that the counterinsurgents in both case studies remain permanent members of the Security Council, reducing the likelihood (or possibility) of international action.

The third form identified by Galula is technical support, “in the form of advice to the insurgent for the organization of his movement and the conduct of his … military operations”. While such support can be covert, it is nevertheless a step up from the prior steps in that it is approaching concrete assistance to insurgent groups. Still, there exist other more significant ways of aiding insurgency.

Galula’s next form is financial support, which represents a major step up from the prior form in that it is concrete; it is physical. Financial support is of tremendous
importance to insurgencies, who lack the massive means of production of their incumbent opponents. For them, money can be used to further their goals, be them winning the support of civilian populations and the acquisition of weapons and ammunition not ordinarily available to them. As with the above, it can be covert or overt. The last form is military support which comes in two varieties: direct intervention and equipment. The latter form tends to be prevalent, as it precludes military action by the supporting group. It can be argued, additionally, that direct military intervention inherently ends the insurgency: once conventional forces take up the fight, it merely evolves into a war. This, however, is a fairly desirable outcome for the insurgent – it makes their work quite a bit less complicated. Galula makes an important point regarding the timing of support – he notes that “military support short of direct intervention … cannot be absorbed in significant amount by the insurgent until his forces have reached a certain level of development”. In simple terms, a guided missile system is of little use to the rudimentary guerilla operating in the thick of the jungle.

Daniel Byman et al. identify one additional and indeed critical form of support: safe haven. This form of support is critical, as it drastically simplifies the difficult task for insurgents of establishing bases out of which they can operate. Idean Salehyan notes in notes in his work “Rebels Without Borders” that transnational sanctuaries “raise the bargaining power of opposition groups by making it more difficult for the government to win a decisive victory and by giving rebels time to mobilize forces in relative safety”.

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77 Insurgents frequently depend on firepower captured from the incumbent.
78 ibid.
79 Galula, 40
80 Daniel Byman et al., Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), 105
81 Idean Salehyan, Rebels Without Borders (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 47
He further makes an important distinction between voluntary safe-haven and cases in which weak states simply cannot do anything about insurgents seeking haven in their territory:

“weak neighbors provide strategic opportunities for [transnational rebels] because although the host government may not welcome the TNR, it faces a high opportunity costs for trying to deal with what is perceived as another state’s problem. These host states will be reluctant to redirect significant resources away from more pressing domestic concerns, including monitoring and suppressing local dissent”. 82

In analyzing sources of external support for insurgents, Byman et al. identify four principal actors: states, diaspora communities, refugee groups, and NSAs. 83 For the purposes of this, thesis however, refugee groups will not be analyzed. On one level, they did not play a major role in case I that will be presented subsequently. Secondly, they are not endowed with a tremendous wealth of resources to contribute to insurgencies that is available to states and, occasionally, NSAs. By their logic, states offer the most decisive support as they are the best endowed – and furthermore, of the external supporters I am examining, are the only one that can offer safe haven. Regardless, Byman et al. offer us a discrete hypothesis that is applicable to both separatist and non-separatist insurgents

Hypothesis 6: More external support is conducive to insurgent victory.

While the actions of insurgents are critical in determining the outcome of separatist violence, they only form half of the equation. Indeed, even a campaign led by the most adept insurgent leader will achieve absolutely nothing when faced down by an

82 Salehyan, 45
83 Byman et al. 105
equally adept security force. All this is to stay that in order to gain anything close to a full picture of the insurgency system, one must also analyze the actions of the counterinsurgent. The following section will concern itself with explanations of insurgency outcomes that concern the actions and qualities of the counterinsurgent involved.

**Incumbent-Centric Explanations of Outcome**

This section is dedicated to exploring possible explanations for separatist insurgent victory that pertain to the incumbent. Like in the previous section, I will begin by laying out some of the seminal theories on counterinsurgency, which are important to understand before moving forward. It is important to note that this section is almost entirely applicable to non-separatist insurgencies: the fundamental strategies that incumbents use will be similar regardless. David Galula begins “Counterinsurgency Warfare” with a comment that “in a fight between a fly and a lion, the fly cannot deliver a knockout blow and the lion cannot fly … there are two distinct warfares – the revolutionary’s, and, shall we say, the counterrevolutionary’s”.  

While the concept of guerilla war has existed for centuries, the term itself did not come into being until Napoleon’s disastrous Peninsular Campaign, in which irregulars plagued the invading French armies for years. It was not until the 1960s that Galula’s work on COIN strategy was published. The following section will consist of a brief overview of Galula and Trinquier’s observations about counterinsurgency warfare. Once this background theory has been laid out (understanding this theory is vital as modern COIN strategy is built

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84 Galula, xi
upon it), I will then proceed to analyze several of the factors pertinent to the counterinsurgent that influence the outcome of insurgencies. It must be noted that this section will go beyond the how – it will additionally focus on the who. This is to say, I intend to examine not only what options are available to the counterinsurgent in stemming insurgent violence, but also how the inherent qualities of the insurgent influence outcome. Fortunately, many of the factors to be analyzed neatly fit into distinct schools of thought, which is quite beneficial organizationally.

Galula divides COIN operations into two primary types: cold-war operations and hot-war operations.\(^8\) This classification is fairly simple: the latter operations begin once insurgents have begun shooting. This being the case, cold-war operations fall outside of the scope of this thesis. Galula lays out a number of what he calls four laws of counterinsurgency. The first law states: the support of the population is as necessary for the counterinsurgent as for the insurgent.\(^9\) This drives at the centrality of hearts and minds in the context of separatist violence:

“the population … becomes the objective for the counterinsurgent as it was for his enemy. Its tacit support, its submission to law and order, its consensus – taken for granted in normal times – have been undermined by the insurgent’s activity”\(^\)\(^10\)

The reinforcement of the notion of hearts and minds is clear. However, Galula goes a step further in his second law: “support is gained through an active minority”.\(^\)\(^11\) He offers rather brilliant clarification, noting that “in any situation, whatever the cause, there will

\(^8\) ibid., 63-70
\(^9\) ibid., 75
\(^10\) ibid.
\(^11\) ibid.
be an active minority for the cause, a neutral majority, and an active minority against the cause”.

To Galula, victory will be achieved by relying on the support of the active minority to win over the inactive majority to the counterinsurgent side. His tone places politics on a pedestal; an argument that fundamental, while a military is capable of destroying insurgents, it is alone incapable of destroying an insurgency. However, the question remains of how a counterinsurgent is to go about winning the support of the inactive majority, thus bringing us to Galula’s third law: “support for the population is conditional”. The underlying theory of this law is that government supporters are suppressed and threatened by insurgents (see prior chapter on insurgent violence against civilians) and must therefore be assured that the threat to them has been eliminated. However, this alone is insufficient, as in order for the inactive majority to rally around the pro-government minority, they too must be assured of the counterinsurgent’s ability to effectively contain the insurgency. Indeed, as Galula notes, “when a man’s life is at stake, it takes more than propaganda to budge him”.

The fourth law is perhaps the most concrete prescription offered by Galula: “intensity of efforts and vastness of means are essential”. Unfortunately, this nomenclature fails to do justice to what he actually proceeds to say: which is that due to the immense resource requirements of COIN operations, it is in the interest of the

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89 ibid.
90 ibid.
91 ibid., 78
92 ibid., 79
counterinsurgent to proceed sequentially across a territory in place of trying to bring the entire region back into the fold in one fell but diluted swoop.93

Trinquier’s “Modern Warfare” contrasts with Galula’s analysis in a number of ways. He focuses quite a bit more heavily on the actual application of COIN strategies, whereas Galula is to an extent more theoretical. Trinquier has one key point in particular: that fortified bases in the country but isolated from the population are not useful in combatting an insurgency. He notes

“the only usefulness of the outposts is the obligation they create for us. To maintain them forces us to open and keep up roads, to protect supply convoys during the course of long hauls, and in general to carry on military activity in which we would not indulge if it were not for the outposts.”

This more or less sums up the underlying general theory put forth by Galula – which is, as stated before, the cornerstone of all subsequent COIN theory.

However, before proceeding, we must also cover the goals of the counterinsurgent. Taber notes that “the counterinsurgent’s task must be to destroy the revolution by destroying its promise – that means by proving, militarily, that it cannot and will not succeed”.94 Galula’s argument is of a similar vein:

“a victory is [the destruction … of the insurgent’s forces and his political organization] plus the permanent isolation of the insurgent from the population, isolation not enforced upon the population but maintained by maintained by and with the population”.95

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93 ibid.
94 Taber, 12
95 Galula, 77
This is, as expected, the polar opposite of what the insurgent seeks to do – isolate the insurgent and create an environment of stability. In the case of separatists, this means bolstering the strength of regional government – and preventing insurgents from setting up parallel institutions.

Regime Type and Insurgency Outcome

A key dispute in the field of counterinsurgency centers around whether the characteristics of a state impact the likelihood of and performance in an insurgency. While technically, the question is how regime type impacts outcome, if a regime type can be associated with the avoidance or prevention insurgencies in advance, it has an advantage. In other words, the most effective COIN campaign is one that does not have to be fought. Toward this end, I coupled the separatist insurgency dataset that I created with the Polity IV dataset, which tracks regime type over time. By assessing regime type at the onset of violence, it may be possible to glean anecdotal evidence regarding the impact of regime type. I concede that this method is not entirely statistical.

In the dataset, insurgencies occurred 23 times in autocracies and 26 times in democracies – most likely not a significant correlation. However, the story is somewhat different when measuring strong democracies versus strong autocracies. Strong democracies\(^{96}\) fought separatist insurgents a total of 15 times, whereas strong autocracies fought 21 separatist conflicts. This may indicate a weak correlation, but without hard statistics I refrain from drawing a definitive conclusion. However, the drop-off in the rate of occurrence of separatist insurgencies between the two aforementioned categories is

\(^{96}\) By “strong,” I mean long-lasting and stable governments, correlating with a polity score higher than a 7 or lower than -7 in the Polity IV dataset.
significant. Namely, it demonstrates that established and firmly rooted regimes (be they autocratic or democratic) fight fewer insurgencies than regimes in the center of the polity spectrum, known as anocracies. It can be argued anocracy is a direct result of (or at least coincides with) weak state capacity – as strong regimes require more resources and economic stability to function. Unfortunately, process tracing is not an effective methodology for the tracking performance across a number of cases – so it is difficult to prove a hypothesis based on the data presented. However, anecdotal evidence will be presented in the case of Chechnya. We now move to the important question of performance in insurgency: how does regime type impact the outcome of separatist insurgencies?

We begin with the reasons why democracies may make weaker counterinsurgents. Andrew Mack, in his seminal piece “Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars” 97, examines the reasons why seemingly powerful states fail to defeat opponents with significantly less capabilities. The crux of his argument is that insurgents defeat the metropolis of the incumbent, not its military forces. The reason this is possible is that COIN operations do not take place within a context in which the state’s survival is at risk. In simpler terms, there is significantly less at stake. As her articulates “in the metropolis, a war with no visible payoff against an opponent who poses no direct threat will come under increasing criticism as battle casualties rise and economic costs escalate”. 98 By extension of this logic, a democracy is inherently more prone to the aforementioned dynamics – as citizens can take their frustration with the management of a war to the ballot box. The very

98 This complicates the terrorism question from last chapter: if the insurgents are a threat to the metropolis, does this make it more likely to support a war, or does it foment further resistance? ibid., 185
qualities of an open society make this more likely – civilians see pictures of flag-draped coffins in the newspapers, they read reports of economic sluggishness, and they grow dissatisfied. In a similar vein, it can be argued that democracies are significantly more sensitive to casualties than their authoritarian counterparts. Mack notes that in authoritarian states, “in addition to the government proscribing opposition, it may be withholding information. The brutalities inflicted on civilians may go unreported, the costs of the war … concealed, and the number of troops killed minimized”.99 This is not to say that domestic pressures have no impact on decision making in totalitarian states – they do – but without doubt, it is significantly greater in democratic states.

Taber is of a similar opinion noting that “constitutional democracies … are particularly exposed to the subversion … the multiparty political systems of most such countries are sources of political and social dissension that can be exploited”.100 Relating to the role that media impacts democratic performance in COIN operations, he notes “government[s] are not concerned about the loss of a few thousand policemen … but [are] terrified of the attendant publicity”.101 The lack of publicity typical of an authoritarian society, in effects, makes this point moot. With further regard to constitutions, Galula makes the point that civil liberties can often prove a hindrance.

Arguments in favor of democratic performance in COIN roles tend to fall focus on one of two themes: legitimacy and restraint. To elaborate, the inherent legitimacy of democracy makes a violent redress of grievances less likely, and if it comes to that,

99 ibid., 189
100 Taber, 18
101 ibid., 26
democracies are less prone to brutality, which alienates Galula’s inactive majority. It happens that Che Guevara delivers a strong argument on the topic:

“when a government has come into power through some form of popular vote … and maintains at least an appearance of constitutional legality, the guerilla outbreak cannot be promoted, since the possibilities of peaceful struggle have not yet been exhausted”.

For separatist groups, peaceful agitation brings with it a significantly lesser cost than engaging in protracted war. If they can win autonomy, for instance, without firing a shot, it is in their interest to do so.

As it pertains to the issue of restraint, Max Abrahms argues in his piece “Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists” that human rights norms inherent to democracy prevent (or at least discourage) brutal repression that profits insurgents. While the article is ostensibly about terrorists, the arguments are applicable both content wise, and on the grounds that the insurgents in the upcoming case studies employed terrorist strategies. He notes: “civil liberties restrict … countries from adopting repressive countermeasures that weaken the support of moderates”. He goes further, however, noting in addition to preserving the support of the target population (the “hearts and minds”), the respect of civil liberties also “prevents democratic governments from losing the support of their own publics”. This point, however, is questionable as authoritarian governments arguably operate without a need for broad public approval. Whatever the case, we can synthesize a hypothesis from the above. Since there are

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102 Guevara, 16
104 ibid., 242
105 ibid., 241
strong arguments in both directions, I am choosing to explore democracy as a detriment to COIN operations.

*Hypothesis 7: Democracies are inherently inferior at combating separatist insurgency.*

**COIN Strategy and Outcome**

Having explored the *who* of counterinsurgency, it is now possible to explore the *how*. Indeed, regime typology only goes so far: Jason Lyall, in his evaluation of the aforementioned question, concludes “democracies do struggle to defeat insurgents – but not because they are democracies”.¹⁰⁶ To begin, it is critical to understand what options are available to the counterinsurgent. In “How the Weak Win Wars,” Ivan Arreguin-Toft takes an opposing stance to Mack, arguing that more than regime type, poorly adjusted strategy explains the defeat of capable incumbents at the hands of insurgents.¹⁰⁷ Namely, he hypothesizes that there exists a total of two strategies for strong and weak actors, respectively:

**Fig. 3: Irgun-Toft’s Model**¹⁰⁸

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<table>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strong Actor: Direct Attack</strong></td>
<td>Use of the military to capture or eliminate an adversary’s armed forces … [to] destroy the adversary’s capacity to resist.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strong Actor: Barbarism</strong></td>
<td>Use of “systematic violation of the laws of war” to “destroy an adversary’s will and capacity to fight.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak Actor: Direct Defense</strong></td>
<td>“Use of armed forces to thwart [direct attack]…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak Actor: Guerilla Warfare</strong></td>
<td>“Evasion of direct confrontation … to destroy will of attacker.”</td>
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¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 100-103
Irgun-Toft hypothesizes that if the aforementioned actors pursue same-approach strategies”\(^{109}\) (direct attack vs. direct defense, for instance) will result in victory for the strong actor. This model, while a good start, has several drawbacks. On one level, as Galula notes, destroying insurgent capabilities is a necessary component of COIN operations. That is to say, “direct attack” will happen no matter the case. Second, Irgun-Toft operates under the assumption that direct attack and barbarism are mutually exclusive, which will be demonstrated to be categorically false in my Chechen case study. Thirdly, he posits that direct defense will prove victorious over barbarism because it is time consuming, and may strengthen the resolve of those being attacked.\(^{110}\) All things considered, Irgun-Toft’s model is not particularly well suited to separatist insurgency.

As it pertains to the incumbent, given that direct attack is a given, we can posit that one additional strategy is barbarism. The question remains, does it work? While the prevailing logic is without doubt that brutal repression is ineffective as a COIN strategy because it ultimately raises support for the insurgent. However, Jason Lyall finds in “Does Indiscriminate Violence Incite Insurgent Attacks?” that in certain cases, “barbarism” does work.\(^{111}\) He cites the example of the Russian practice of indiscriminate shelling in Chechnya with the goal of “restrict[ing] insurgent mobility by raising the costs of passage across terrain … [creating] the possibility of being caught in a sudden strike”.\(^{112}\) This practice, with brutal ramifications with civilians, evidently correlates with

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\(^{109}\) *ibid.*, 110  
\(^{110}\) *ibid.*, 108  
\(^{112}\) *ibid.*, 343
a reduction in violence in the targeted area. Generally, the goal of repression is to raise the costs of participation in or cooperation with the insurgency so high that civilians are deterred. Lyall cogently sums up theory on the topic in the following way: “state violence reveals that the insurgency cannot credibly protect the population nor respond in kind, feeding the perception that the insurgency is both likely to lose and is endangering locals without tangible benefits”. This line of thought will be tested in hypothesis one.

On the other end of the spectrum is what I will refer to as law enforcement centric COIN strategy. The basic premise of this strategy is to minimize the involvement of conventional military forces as much as possible, to treat insurgents as criminals rather than enemy combatants, to rely on local policing as a means of restoring security. Taber notes a commentary by Roger Hilsman, former US Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, that “in a very real sense, the F.B.I. has had more experience in dealing with [insurgency] than the armed services”. Trinquier notes that an ideal COIN operations is “essentially [a] broad police [operation] and will be performed by the regular police forces if these are adequate and capable”. From the aforementioned arguments, we can derive another hypothesis:

Hypothesis 8: Local and law enforcement centric COIN strategy is more conducive to insurgent defeat than military-centric strategy.

The question remains, however, assuming the hypothesis is correct, is why it works. Lyall and Wilson provide a potential answer, concluding that the diminished frequency of incumbent victories in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century is directly correlated to the degree of

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113 ibid., 349
114 Lyall, Indiscriminate Violence, 338
115 Taber, 8
116 Trinquier, 37
mechanization of military forces.\textsuperscript{117} Their finding is predicated upon the notion that increased mechanization (helicopters, tanks etc.) reduces the level of interaction between incumbent and the target population, effectively depriving the counterinsurgent of critical intelligence.\textsuperscript{118} Their main point is that more boots-on-the-ground correlates with the winning over of hearts and minds. As it pertains to law enforcement, Lyall and Wilson’s logic would suggest the because of the integration of police with the locales in which they work, they are better suited to combat insurgency. This is not to say, of course, that military forces should never be used – but rather, their role should be relegated to only military roles.

There is, however, a drawback to this strategy: having troops (military or police) dismount and interact with civilians exposes them to greater danger. Lorenzo Zambernardi posits that there exists a so-called “impossible” in counterinsurgency.\textsuperscript{119} He posits that there exist three options in the COIN context of which the incumbent may pick two: the destruction of insurgent forces, the differentiation between combatants and non-combatants, and force protection.\textsuperscript{120}

**System-Centric Variables**

Even accounting for the actions of insurgent and incumbent alike, there are still a number variables that remain largely out of their control. First among these are norms and rigors of the international system. To clarify, states’ conduct in the capacity of a counterinsurgent is bound by the constraints of the international community. A COIN

\textsuperscript{117} Lyall and Wilson, 91  
\textsuperscript{118} ibid., 96  
\textsuperscript{120} ibid., 22
campaign deemed overly brutal by the international community can draw criticism, lead to reductions in aid to the incumbent, and greatly complicate his efforts. Similarly, the actions of an insurgent group can make all the difference, educating perceptions of them worldwide (including among potential supporters). A freedom fighter and a terrorist, after all, carry radically differing connotations.

For this thesis, the case studies I have selected largely preclude a completely thorough examination of the impact of international pressures as both are permanent members of the UN Security Council which confers them a certain degree of immunity. This is not to discount the fact that international pressures can influence incumbent behavior, but merely to suggest that they apply more to incumbents dependent on external support. However the incumbents I have selected are perfectly vulnerable to embarrassment on the international stage, and as will be demonstrated, made several blunders that proved quite tarnishing to their reputations. However, as I will subsequently demonstrate, insurgent groups are also beholden to norms to a certain extent.

In 2005, Ayman Al-Zawahiri publically criticized Musab al-Zarqawi for the beheading of prisoners on the grounds that it made for abysmal public relations. In 1998, the Real Irish Republican Army declared a ceasefire after widespread outrage over the Omagh Bombing, the single deadliest attack of the Troubles. Both of these examples demonstrate that insurgents are sensitive to international norms that education

122 A more radical offshoot of the Provisional IRA following the beginning of peace talks in the mid-nineties.
perceptions of insurgent legitimacy. They want to be viewed positively, and to do this, may alter their behavior to remain within the bounds of what is considered “acceptable.” If they deviate, they may find themselves isolated, unpopular, and lacking the potential for victory. We can therefore put forward a final hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 9: Changes in international norms during the insurgency impact the outcome of separatist insurgencies.*

**Research Methodology**

I endeavor to explore the validity of the hypotheses derived in the previous section by means of qualitative case study analysis. As is evident, the dependent variable I have identified is separatist insurgency outcome. Before explaining my case selection, however, I will briefly lay out my hypotheses and assess how they will be evaluated. In simpler terms, I will discuss what we are looking for in the upcoming case study.

Hypothesis one suggests that separatist insurgents struggle because their need to hold territory and build a state weakens their ability to be effective guerillas. This hypothesis will be proven valid if the case study shows that insurgents fail to run the territory over which they hold control, which in turns hampers their independence campaign. On the contrary, this hypothesis will be proven false if insurgents are able to command the loyalty of locals residing within the “state” without controlling territory.

Hypothesis two suggests that brutal repression of civilians by the incumbent is beneficial to the insurgent. This hypothesis will be proven valid if repressive strategy is shown to lead civilians to join or support the insurgents. If will be falsified if the opposite occurs – the civilians desist their support of insurgents.
Hypothesis three suggests that insurgent violence against local civilians is beneficial to the insurgency. This hypothesis will be proven if violence against locals leads to decreased cooperation with the incumbent among locals. It will be proven invalid if the locals instead flock to the incumbent for protection.

Hypothesis four suggests that the use of terrorism by insurgents against the incumbent’s metropolis correlates is conducive to victorious outcomes. This hypothesis will be proven true if insurgents are able to force concessions or help their cause with terrorist acts. It will be proven false if terrorism fails to sway the incumbent.

Hypothesis five relates to organizational structure and suggests that hierarchical organizations make for better insurgents than networked ones. This hypothesis will be proven valid if we see hierarchical organizations as more effective at winning concessions or independence from the incumbent. It will be proven false if networked insurgencies can be shown to be similarly effective.

Hypothesis six suggests that more external support is conducive to insurgent victory. It will be proven valid if insurgents receiving a greater quantity of foreign support (that is to say, who is providing it does not matter) are more able to win concessions. It will be proven invalid if increased external support does not help or harms the insurgent cause.

Hypothesis seven suggests that democracies make inferior counterinsurgents. This hypothesis will be proven true if institutions typical to democracy are seen to hamper COIN efforts and lead to concessions to insurgents. It will be falsified if democratic structures are shown to have no effect or a palliative one.
Hypothesis eight tells us that local and law enforcement-centric COIN strategy correlates with insurgent defeat to a greater extent than strategy that places a great emphasis on use of conventional military forces. This hypothesis will be evaluated by observing the course of events prior to and following the implementation of the former strategy – if levels of violence drop it will be proven true, whereas if they do not, it will be proven false.

Hypothesis nine states that changes in international norms may impact the outcomes of separatist insurgencies. This hypothesis will be proven true if incumbent and insurgent alike are shown to be sensitive to, react to, benefit from, or be harmed by changes in international attitudes. It will be proven false if international norms cannot be shown to have a significant impact on the course of conflict.

Fig. 3: Hypothesis Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HYPOTHESIS</th>
<th>CONFIRMED IF</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The necessity of holding territory and state building puts separatist</td>
<td>Insurgents struggle at managing territory they control.</td>
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<td>insurgents at a disadvantage because it undermines guerilla warfare</td>
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<td>capabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brutal repression of civilians by the incumbent is conducive to</td>
<td>Insurgent groups are able to force concessions with terrorist attacks.</td>
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<td>insurgent victory.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Insurgent violence against local civilians is conducive to insurgent</td>
<td>Cooperation with government decreases in light of attacks against collaborators.</td>
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<td>victory.</td>
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<td>The use of terrorism by insurgents against the metropolis of the incumbent</td>
<td>Insurgent use of terrorism against the incumbent metropolis can be shown to lead to incumbent concessions.</td>
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<td>is conducive to victory.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hierarchical organizational structures are more conducive to victory</td>
<td>Hierarchical insurgencies are better able to force concessions than networked insurgencies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>than networked ones.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More external support is conducive to insurgent victory.</td>
<td>Insurgencies that receive more assistance are able to force greater concessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracies are inherently inferior at combatting separatist insurgency.</td>
<td>Democratic institutions are seen to be hampering incumbent COIN efforts, metropolis pressures leading to concessions.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Local and law enforcement centric COIN strategy is more conducive to insurgent defeat than military-centric strategy.

Reductions in violence following the implementation of local and law enforcement policies by the incumbent.

Changes in international norms during the insurgency impact the outcome of separatist insurgencies.

Insurgents and incumbents react to and or capitalize on evolving world norms, either in strategy or rhetoric.

**Case Selection**

Analysis of my hypotheses will be based upon the case of Chechnya and its attempt to break away from Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Chechen Conflict, while technically one case, includes three distinct episodes: two wars and an interwar period. The first war of interest because Chechen rebels were able to defeat a military force that had, in theory, achieved parity with the United States not long before. Indeed, the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria existed as a quasi-state for a number of years following the first conflict. This being the case, by examining the Second Chechen War, in which the Russian Federation achieved a weak win, it is possible to track the evolution of the insurgency.

I will take the standpoint that while Russian strategy improved slightly the second time around, it did not derivate by a tremendous degree. This suggests that changes in the insurgency are largely responsible for the difference in outcome, and therefore will be useful in testing the hypotheses of the Insurgent-Centric “school.” Additionally, the second Chechen War featured pervasive Islamic extremism and an influx of foreign fighters, two developments that are quite relevant in today’s world. Given that I am utilizing process tracing in analyzing this insurgent movement, it is imperative to give

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124 Chechnya I, as it is named in the dataset, can be considered a weak insurgent win.
some mention to the interwar period. It is arguable that the two wars are really subcases within the case of Chechnya. However, in the interest of clarity, the period I am covering spans from 1991, the year Chechnya declared its independence, until 2009, when Russia announced that COIN operations had come to an end.

As it pertains to research design, this case is appropriate for a number of reasons. First, all of the hypothesis presented are testable in the case. The Chechen Conflict, for example, featured a fairly democratic incumbent (at least during the First Chechen War), brutal repression, and terrorism. Second, due to the length and varied stages of the insurgency, this case selection does not suffer from the narrowness that might ordinarily be associated with a single case study. Furthermore, having one incumbent and one insurgent helps serve as a control for other potential independent variables not explored in the research. Lastly, as mentioned above, the Chechen Conflict featured an insurgent victory, an insurgent defeat, and a rare example of a separatist government that had undisputed control over the republic for a period of at least three years.
Case Study: Chechnya

In 1994, the newly formed Russian Federation was dealt a stinging defeat as it tried to bring Chechnya, a breakaway republic on the periphery of the country, back into the fold. To call the operation a defeat is no overstatement: entire tank battalions were wiped out as they repeatedly tried to enter Grozny, the capital city. Some five or six years later, war broke out again, this time featuring a prolonged COIN campaign that endured continues, albeit on a relatively small scale, to this day, featuring infamous events including the Beslan\(^\text{126}\) and Dubrovka\(^\text{127}\) Hostage Crises. However, following a security forces were ultimately able to establish a semblance of order in the region and ensure the structural security of the Russian Federation. This raises the question, what changed between the two wars that explains the difference in outcome? In answering this

\footnote{Unfortunately, the best map available of the Caucasus was published in the wake of the Boston Bombings of 2013. The highlighting of Kyrgyzstan is irrelevant to the case study. Image credit Laris Karklis, Washington Post: http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/04/19/questions-about-chechnya-and-dagestan-you-were-too-embarrassed-to-ask/}


question, it will be possible to examine why the insurgents were able to pull off such a resounding victory during the first war, and why they were not during the second. However, as it regards Chechnya, the seeds of conflict were sewn almost two hundred years prior.

Surrender, Caucasus! A Primer on Chechen History and Culture

In the epilogue of his iconic poem “Prisoner of the Caucasus,” Alexander Pushkin implores the local residents to bow down to Russian authority and give up their frustrating struggle against the imperial military.128 Tolstoy’s tragic story, Hadji Murad, describes events that took place thirty years afterward.129 To understand Russia’s experience during and performance in the modern Chechen Wars, it is critical familiarize oneself with the context in which they took place: the region and its long and bloody history. The following section will be dedicated to constructing a history of Chechnya with a brief foray into some of the more important cultural features of the region.

Historical perception of the Caucasus are roughly analogous to the way Americans view the Wild West. While the former was pulled into Russia’s sphere of influence slightly earlier than the latter was drawn into America’s, the similarities between the regions are plentiful: untamed lands teeming with violent and exotic tribesmen, beautiful women, and unique topographical features including Mount Elbrus, the tallest peak in Europe. It can be said that the freedom and “noble savagery” of the region and its natives attracted Russia’s literary and romantic interest. However, the Russian Empire’s interest was also rooted in its strategic interests: the Caucasus

128 Alexander Pushkin, Kavkazskii Plennik: http://rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/02poems/01poems/0785.htm
Mountains sat at the intersection of three regional powers of the day: Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and Persia. To control the range would mean gaining a vital strategic foothold and advantage over the other powers.

Having explored the strategic importance of and romantic pull of the region, we will now address a more complicated matter: who lives there. The Chechens are one of many distinct ethnic groups in the region such as the Dagestanis, Circassians, Ingush, Avars, Ossetians, to name a few – largely a result of foreboding mountainous terrain. Chechens are predominantly Sufi and mostly adhere to the Naqshbandi or Qadiri tariqat, meaning path or order. In the broader context of Islam, this branch is fairly permissive: adherents are allowed to partake in tobacco and alcohol, and, generally, are not as observant as other sects. This fact will be of critical importance, especially as it concerns the influx of foreign fighters in the lead up to the Second Chechen War.

Chechen tribal structure centers around the teip, which is more or less a clan that shares a common point of origin and ancestry. Teips generally come in two sorts: mountain and lowland, the latter of which are characterized by more intermingling with the surrounding ethnic groups, otherwise known as “adulterated”. Tribal loyalties run quite deep, and the blood feud remained until recently a prominent cultural institution.

Russian interaction with Chechens began in the late 18th century, as the empire’s borders expanded ever further southeast. On the forefront of this advance were the Cossacks, a sort of soldier-pioneer social class that would settle regions prior to their

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130 Not to mention, significant deposits of oil would later be found there as well.
131 I italicize here as the Caucasus are one of the most diverse places in the world in terms of language and culture.
133 Stasys Knezys and Romanas Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 10
134 ibid., 11
gravitation into the empire.\textsuperscript{135} As the empire encroached, resistance among the locals strengthened. In 1785, the Chechen Sheik Mansur declared \textit{gazavat}, more or less the local version of jihad. After tremendous initial success against the imperial army, he was ultimately captured and imprisoned not far from St. Petersburg.\textsuperscript{136} In response to the seemingly intractable violence, in the early 1800s, General Yermolov was dispatched to forcibly pacify the region: he did with alarming brutality, founding what would become the city of Grozny in the process.

The next prominent Caucasian to rise against Russian rule was Imam Shamil, who vexed Russian forces for nearly thirty years, evading capture between Dagestan and Chechnya. His guerilla campaign won him notice as far away as England\textsuperscript{137}. Inspirational as he was, however, he met the same fate as his predecessor, being captured and settling within Russia. Following Shamil’s defeat, Chechnya remained calm (at least by Caucasian standards) until the collapse of the Russian Empire and an abortive attempt at independence in the early 1920s. After integration into the soviet system, Chechnya suffered a catastrophe in 1944 when Stalin decided to deport the entire Chechen nationality to Central Asia for fear they might side with the invading Nazi armies. Estimates suggest that up to a third of Chechens died during the deportation.\textsuperscript{138} During Khrushchev’s implementation of destalinization, the Chechens were allowed to return, and those that were still alive did so en masse. We thereby arrive at the collapse of Soviet Union and the subsequent onset of the modern Chechen Wars.

\textsuperscript{135} Smith, 37
\textsuperscript{136} ibid., 38
\textsuperscript{137} Smith, 50
\textsuperscript{138} Mairbek Vatachagaev, “Remembering the 1944 Deportation: Chechnya’s Holocaust”, \textit{North Caucasus Analysis, Jamestown Foundation}: http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=3467
The First Chechen War

On October 29th, 1992, Dzhokar Dudayev was swept into power in Chechnya on a wave of nationalist sentiment – and within a week, Chechnya’s newly-formed parliament moved to declare independence. Russia was rather unenthralled with the move, and President Yeltsin immediately declared a state of emergency in the Republic. Yeltsin, hoping to resist the separatist tide before it developed further, deployed 600 interior ministry troops (the rough equivalent of America’s national guard, with perhaps a more police-centered role domestically), who were embarrassingly confined by Chechen gunmen to the airport at which they arrived. In the subsequent months, Chechen insurgents were able to force the remaining Russian military forces out of the republic – they were largely allowed to leave peacefully in exchange for their weapons. This excludes numerous cases in which Russians simply sold their weapons to Chechens in exchange for money or alcohol – a practice that would continue even when said weapons were being used to kill them. Remarked a young Chechen engineer: “everything's lost its value to them. They're cynical … they give things away. One soldier walked up, tossed a pistol on my table, took a bottle of vodka and walked away”.

Following the failure to remove Dudayev, Russian efforts were at first relegated to more indirect means of managing the situation: namely, aiding pro-Russian elements with the Republic, and establishing a notoriously porous quarantine that proved highly ineffective at cutting off the breakaway republic. The assistance given anti-Dudayev

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139 Anatol Lieven, Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 63
140 Knezys and Sedlickas, 19
141 Lieven, 63
142 ibid., 64
forces within Chechnya was embodied by an attempted attack on Grozny in November, 1994, that was resolutely repulsed by Dudayev’s security forces. Russia provided a great deal of material support, but little by way of training or actual manpower. If anything, the attack only succeeded in bolstering support for the embattled leadership of the Republic, as Chechens rallied around their leader. It became clear that direct intervention would be necessary if Russia was to retake control of the Republic. Russia took its chance in late 1994, pushing into Grozny on New Year’s Day, 1995. As armored columns rolled into Grozny, they were systematically decimated by a well-planned defense. Chechen insurgents refrained from engaging Russian armor head-on, instead allowing armored vehicles to roll into crowded streets and engaging them at close range. A favorite tactic was to attack the lead and rear vehicles of a column, thus trapping the remaining forces in between them. The most infamous story from the combat in Grozny was that of the 131st Maikop Motor Rifle Brigade, which was effectively destroyed as a combat unit: many survivors were captured and Timothy Thomas notes that “in one column alone, 102 out of 120 armored personnel carriers and 20 out of 26 tanks were destroyed by Chechen antitank fire”. Superior Russian manpower eventually led to the temporary capture of the city, but the war continued, particularly in the hard-to-reach mountainous southern regions.

The Chechen insurgents continued to wage a guerilla campaign in the countryside and mountains, during which Russian forces committed a number of atrocities including

144 ibid., 47
145 ibid., 49-50
146 Knezys and Sedlickas, 90
147 Olga Oliker, Russia’s Chechen Wars 1994-2000, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), 16
effectively wiping the village of Shamashk from the map\footnote{Knezys and Sedlickas, 143}. Federal forces, however, continued to advance, gaining control of an increasingly large territory. In spite of the tide against them, Chechen forces were given a reprieve when Shamil Basayev, a prominent Chechen commander, led a group of fanatical militants into Russia, capturing upwards of a thousand hostages at a hospital in Budyonovsk. The highly televised act forced Russia to approach the negotiating table with Dudayev, and ultimately agree to a short-term ceasefire.\footnote{ibid., 158} The time won by this daring raid gave the insurgents time to prepare for a sweeping counterattack in March of 1996 that led to the recapture of Grozny from Russian forces.\footnote{Oliker, 29} Subsequently, Russia suspended military action, agreed to a long term ceasefire with the Chechen Republic and further negotiations in 2001, and ultimately withdrew all of its remaining military forces from the breakaway republic.

In addition to winning a number of notable military engagements, the Chechens also emerged victorious in the media war. This is readily attributable to the fact that truly free press had existed in Russia for only just under half a decade – the Russian government was arguably not incompetent so much as inexperienced. Olga Oliker notes:

“[Russian forces] made little effort to restrict the movement of journalists in the area … so …. Russian and foreign newspapers … had open access to the battlefield. Russian officials failed to counter … stories of a bedraggled army losing a war. The Russian public saw the pictures on television … and its support … disappeared entirely as casualties mounted”.\footnote{ibid., 34}
Stasys Knezys and Romanas Sedlickas offer a similar viewpoint: “… the sizeable majority of … news agencies … understood the war not to be good in itself of for Russia”.153 In simple terms, the first Chechen War was a conflict in which the insurgents achieved victory both on the battlefield and in Russia’s metropolis. However, the price of quasi-independence was steep: there were no longer Russian military forces in the Republic, but Grozny, and indeed many other cities, were in ruins.

The First Chechen War represented the sum of a number of miscalculations and mistakes. First was a fundamental misjudgment by Chechen separatists of the newly formed Russian Federation’s core territorial interests. While many pieces of the Soviet Union had removed themselves from Moscow’s orbit leading up to and during the collapse, Chechnya was a constituent republic of Russia itself. The Russian Federation, made up of a number of ethnic republics, risked literally unravelling if one ethnic republic was allowed to secede, and therefore valued the preservation of its structural integrity significantly more than the Chechen leadership might have expected. On the Russian side, the operation was an abject disaster, and demonstrated the extent to which its state capacity had fallen following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Most of the soldiers entering Grozny were poorly trained young conscripts, reporting to different ministries out of contact with one another, with poorly maintained equipment, poor knowledge of the territory, and broadcasting on open channels.154 This, coupled with the fact that much of the Chechen leadership had a close familiarity with Russian strategy and tactics155 doomed the mission to failure.

153 Knezys and Sedlickas, 188
154 Oliker, 14-18
Radicalization in the Interwar Period

The first Chechen war was, by nature, nationalist. While the Chechens fighting were most certainly Muslim, they armed themselves out of a desire for independence more than anything else. The following excerpt from the Chechen Constitution lends a fair deal of credence to this notion: “The Chechen Republic is a sovereign and independent democratic law-based state, founded as a result of the self-determination of the Chechen people”. The only real “terrorist” act of the war was the Budyonovsk Raid, and that was a single act of desperation rather than a part of a concerted campaign. In 1995, the idea of suicide bombers targeting the Moscow Metro would have seemed unthinkable, and yet, within the decade, this would be the case. Rhetoric about bandits gave way to talk of a war against terrorists. We arrive at the critical question: what happened between the wars that explains the differences in the nature of each conflict, and indeed, their outcomes?

To set the stage for interwar radicalization, during the tribulations of the First Chechen War, Islam became a vital political tool – as it was a common language that transcended teip, tariqat, and other tribal divisions. The valiant actions of Basayev’s band, whom he referred to as mujahidin, in both Grozny and Budyonovsk, inspired young men to join the fight. Furthermore, Dudayev “promoted [this fanatic militant force] … as an elite force within the Chechen armed forces … together with use of Islamist rhetoric about ghazavat”. Dmitri Trenin and Aleksei Malashenko note: “the paradox is that the

156 James Hughes, Chechnya: From Nationalism to Jihad (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 65
157 In Russian, boyeviki, in contrast to terrorist.
158 Hughes, 98
159 ibid., 99
use of Islamic slogans by Chechen separatists in the Jihad of 1994-1996 that won them victory … gave impulse to the growth of radicalism in the North Caucasus.” In this fashion, indigenous Wahhabi elements began to crop up in the fledgling Republic during and as a result of the war.

However, exogenous elements also played a critical role in the spread of Wahhabism, an association that would ultimately prove highly detrimental to the separatist cause. Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty note that Jordanian-Chechens, most notably Shaykh Fahti (a Salafist with combat experience) in Afghanistan, who ultimately invited the prominent militant Ibn Al-Khattab to the region. Khattab in turn attracted the financial backing and support of islamist donors for military hardware, training camps, Wahhabi institutions (increasingly after the formation of Al-Qaeda), and a handful of foreign fighters who, through their association with Basayev, took on a propaganda role that far outstripped the actual number of boots on the ground.

Following the cease fire that marked the end of the First Chechen War, the Republic of Ichkeria was left in chaos and complete disorder. On one level, there existed a state of abject poverty due to the destruction caused by the conflict. Furthermore, Dudayev was assassinated by Russian forces just prior to the war’s end, stripping the separatist movement of the one truly unifying figure it had. Organized crime ran rampant, and a small number of warlords held sway as opposed to a central

160 Dmitrii Trenin, Aleksei Malashenko, Vremya Yuga: Rossiya v Chechnye, Chechnya v Rossii (Moscow, Carnegie Moscow Center: 2002), 89
162 ibid., 418
163 Tom de Waal, “‘Dual Attack’ Killed President,” BBC News, April 14th, 1999
164 Chechnya became famous for its rate of kidnapping – Hughes counts some 506 cases. Hughes, 96
government. Yandarbiev, an advocate for the establishment of Sharia courts, ran a caretaker government for a year following Dudayev’s demise, and was then succeeded by Aslan Mashakadov, the military commander behind many of the successes in the first war. The new leader soon found himself in a serious quandary, depending on extremist elements for financial and military support, but also needing to curb their influence in order to restore order in the country. A collection of radical warlords remained firmly outside of central control, forcing Mashkadov to appoint Basayev as prime minister in an effort to bring them into the fold. Basayev, however, was similarly unable to control the radical faction, and instead funneled resources into preparations for continued war with Russia. Realizing that he could no longer resist the influence of the radicals, Mashkadov declared shari’a rule in 1999, representing a capitulation the islamist faction.

This act had two major ramifications: handing the radicals a tremendous degree of impunity in their actions, and alienating a large sector of the Chechen population. With regard to the former, jihadist groups envisioned the establishment of an emirate that encompassed the North Caucasus, with the neighboring ethnic republic of Dagestan as the first step toward accomplishing this end. That is to say that for these extremist elements, the independence of Chechnya was not an end in and of itself, but merely a means to a broader goal of regional dominance. As for the result of the implementation of shari’a law, it had two key results. Firstly, “the sight on Russian television of public executions in Chechnya … created a hysterical reaction against the “Islamic threat in the

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165 Moore and Tumelty, 418
166 ibid., 102
167 ibid., 103
168 ibid., 105
In essence, Chechen radicals were gearing for war, and now Russia realized a need to eliminate the growing threat on its southern border. Second, Sufi leaders, most prominently Akhmed Kadyrov, the Mufti of Chechnya, who was strongly pro-separatist during the first war, were driven into the arms of Russia, fearing the cultural threats posed by the growing Wahhabi influence. Indeed, many of the policies supported by the extremist groups “directly contradicted the strong traditions that regulate Chechen society”. Thus, prior to the onset of the Second Chechen War, there were three main groups in the Republic: Mashkadov’s forces, the extremists (who swore allegiance to one cause but a variety of leaders, and pro-Russian elements. A fragmented insurgency based in a devastated and lawless region faced the specter of continued conflict with Russia.

Chechnya Redux

In October of 1999, forces loyal to Basayev and Khattab launched a surprise incursion Dagestan, occupying several villages on the border with Chechnya. In addition to mobilizing locals against them, they also made it increasingly difficult for Moscow not to react. The invasion of Dagestan, coupled with a string of bombings against apartment buildings that killed several hundred Russians, thereby handed Russia a

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169 ibid., 104
170 Father of the current president of the pro-Kremlin Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov
171 Moore and Tumelty, 419
172 Julie Wilhelmsen, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamisation of the Chechen Separatist Movement,” Europe-Asia Studies, 51:1 (2005), 31
173 A reaction they did not expect; instead, they had anticipated a revolution against Russia.
causus belli and precipitated the Second Chechen War.\textsuperscript{175} Going into the second round, Russia had a greatly heightened core interest in pacifying Chechnya due to the material risk that terrorist acts posed. That is to say that there was a much more concrete and relatable cause for which Russia was fighting during the Second Chechen War, a factor that the Kremlin capitalized on to great effect. The newly-elected president Putin was able to accrue extraordinarily high approval ratings for his coercive approach\textsuperscript{176} (to be elaborated upon in the following paragraph), and remains famous for telling Russia on national television that “we’re going to waste [the terrorists] in the shithouse”.\textsuperscript{177}

Strategically speaking, the Second Chechen war was characterized by significantly more brutality (on both sides) than the first one. The harsh lessons of Grozny evolved into an engrained aversion to urban combat that often meant that Russians would bombard a town rather than fighting to capture it. As it pertained to retaking Grozny, Russian forces embarked a “long siege of the city accompanied by bombing and heavy artillery,”\textsuperscript{178} and early in the war launched a ballistic missile strike on the city, sparking an international outcry.\textsuperscript{179} This strategy ties into a greater emphasis on force protection – by Zambernardi’s standards, a selection of force protection and destruction at the insurgent forces at the expense of differentiation between combatants and civilians. This was further evident in Russian use of “disturbing fire” (bombardment of large swaths of territory at random intervals) with the goal of [restricting] insurgent

\textsuperscript{176} Hughes, 109
\textsuperscript{178} Oliker, 41
mobility by raising the costs of passage across terrain."\(^{180}\) This, of course, also made life rather difficult for the civilians living under the trajectory of this fire. The above excludes roughly a third of shelling incidents directly attributable to inebriated soldiers.\(^{181}\)

Grozny was retaken by the beginning of 2000, with many of the remaining towns and cities falling under Russian control soon after. Chechen forces, disunited and battered,\(^{182}\) were unable to offer much by way of coordinated resistance in most cases, instead retreating into remote areas and operating as guerilla bands. Thus, the conflict became characterized by counterinsurgency operations in contrast to the more conventional nature of the first war. These COIN operations were characterized by heavy involvement by pro-Russian militias, who became notorious for their brutality, including frequent disappearances of the relatives of insurgents.\(^{183}\) Lyall, however, finds that these forces were particularly effective at identifying and eliminating insurgents on sweep operations, in which incumbent forces would clear villages.\(^{184}\) He notes a quote from Akhmed Kadyrov in a work by Anna Politkovskaya\(^{185}\): “to find a bandit, I would quietly gather information and appear at his door at two or three at night, shake his hand, and say hello. After such a visit, this bandit would disappear”.\(^{186}\) These forces were more effective due to their familiarity with the lay of the land, the target population, and

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180 Lyall, Indiscriminate Violence, 343
181 ibid., 345
182 It is important to remember that even in the first war, Chechen forces were distinctly losing until Basayev’s raid into Russia won them a reprieve.
185 Who was later murdered, ostensibly for her criticism of Russia’s conduct during the war.
186 Lyall, Coethnics, 1
their inherent legitimacy as locals. The use of these bands tied into a broader policy of Chechenization, by which Russian would transfer authority to locals in exchange for loyalty to Moscow.\footnote{“Assessing Russian chechenization,” International Relations and Security Network Special Issue, 2008: kms2.isn.ethz.ch/.../ISN_Special_Issues_Sept.2008.pdf} This strategy, a textbook application of strategy advocated by Galula, allowed Russia to draw down its forces and ultimately withdraw in 2009 – leaving the Republic in a relatively stable condition. This, coupled with a massive influx of reconstruction funding from Moscow, stabilized the local pro-Kremlin regime.\footnote{A search for images of Grozny from 2000 and 2013, respectively, reveals the extent of reconstruction. See also C.J Chivers, “Under Iron Hand of Russia’s Proxy, a Chechen Revival,” New York Times, September 30, 2007: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/30/world/europe/30grozny.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0}

The dynamics at play on the homefront also differed significantly from the first war. On one level, Russia’s handling of publicity was significantly improved, reflecting increased familiarity and effectiveness in dealing with the press. In addition to “[implementing] a system of accreditation escorts,” reports featured “commanders and soldiers [telling] what was largely a positive story of their success against a “terrorist” enemy”.\footnote{Oliker, 63} Furthermore, “Russians appeared willing, even eager, to accept the “counter-terrorist operation” as retribution for the bombings”.\footnote{ibid., 64} Television stations featured patriotic depictions of soldiers at war\footnote{“The Storm Gate” (Грозовые ворота) is an example of this.} and intimidation of members of the press reporting critically on events in the North Caucasus was widespread.\footnote{See Freedom House’s report on press freedom in Russia, 2012: http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2012/russia}

For the Chechen insurgents, associations with foreign fighters proved highly detrimental, especially after September 11\textsuperscript{th}. Russia capitalized on the tenuous links between Khattab and Osama Bin Laden to great effect, effectively silencing international
criticism of its handling of the campaign now that it was an ally in the War on Terror. Among others, Russia stressed a connection between Khattab and Al Qaeda, given his training in Khost, Afghanistan, and that Chechen fighters were in Afghanistan fighting against American forces.\textsuperscript{193} It seems that the insurgents were aware of this image problem: Hughes notes that separatist leader Movladi Udugov referred to purported connections with Al-Qaeda as a “pack of lies”.\textsuperscript{194} The strategy of suicide bombings and high profile terrorist attacks proved a further blight on the image of the insurgents, particularly the Beslan Hostage Crisis that lead to the deaths of numerous children.\textsuperscript{195} Further than killing and maiming numerous Russians, the adoption of terrorism did little by way of forcing conciliatory steps by the Kremlin – it in fact ruled them out. Mark Kramer notes that “after the seizure of the Dubrovka Theater, Russian authorities branded Mashkadov a terrorist and cut off all remaining contracts with him”.\textsuperscript{196}

It can be argued that Russia won the Second Chechen War in its defeat during the First. By devastating the Chechen Republic, it effectively made the formation of a viable state an impossibility – destroying the promise of rebellion, as Taber would describe. The devastation also drove the process of interwar radicalization, which, as noted, directly contributed to the ultimate fragmentation of the insurgency. While Russia’s COIN strategy was improved (Chechenization ultimately proved effective an effective strategy\textsuperscript{197}), I attribute the most significant change to the change in ideology among the

\textsuperscript{193} Moore and Tumelty, 420
\textsuperscript{194} Hughes, 101, see also :http://kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2004/11/20/3306.shtml
\textsuperscript{197} It happens that many COIN strategies ending in “ization” have proven effective – in Northern Ireland, Ulsterization led to a significant drop-off in violence in the 1970s.
Chechen insurgents. The Chechen Wars demonstrate the peril of foreign fighters – while they can be inspire the local population, their goals may be asynchronous with the local insurgents. This is demonstrated in particular by the invasion of Dagestan which was aimed at establishing a caliphate in the North Caucasus rather than the advancement of the separatist cause. Given that Chechnya had ostensibly won a reprieve until 2001 in the terms of treaty that ended the first war, the attack was highly counterproductive. Furthermore, the foreign fighters and radicals had little regard for local Islamic customs – ultimately leading to the defection of Kadyrov, which, as noted, proved decisive. Timing also proved unfortunate for the separatists – September 11th was nothing short of a PR disaster, as international norms shifted strongly against terrorism. While Russia was not particularly beholden to international pressures, the flexibility bestowed by being an ally in the War on Terror most certainly did not encumber COIN operations.

**Conclusion**

To draw this thesis to a close, I will begin by assessing the validity of the hypotheses presented in the literature review. I will then turn to the research question itself, after which I will make a number of concluding remarks. The first hypothesis regards the difficulties that separatist insurgents faced in holding territory – as it undermines guerilla strategy. The case of Chechnya demonstrates that the qualities of the insurgents that made them lethal on the battlefield made them terribly ineffective at governing once they had achieved victory. This is demonstrated in the flexibility insurgent forces had operating as bands instead of formal divisions – and indeed, Basayev’s raid on Budyonovsk shows just how effective they can be. However, the
disparate groups became an impediment to state growth as they would not disarm following the cessation of hostilities. Chechnya, arguably, was never a true state as it lacked a monopoly on force – demonstrated by a small militant group invading Russia on its own accord.

The second hypothesis concerned the efficacy of brutal repression of civilians by the incumbent. The case of Chechnya somewhat darkly demonstrates that brutality can be effective – provided enough of it is used. That is to say, repressive measures are unproductive until a certain level of violence is used. It can also be noted that having local loyalists “do the brutality” is less likely to alienate the inhabitants of the conflict zone and force them into the arms of insurgents.

The third hypothesis concerned insurgent violence against local civilians as a boon to insurgent causes. The case study casts this hypothesis in doubt, as actions against Sufi culture and leadership forced a significant percentage of Chechens who had been rebels during the first war to defect leading up to and during the second. However, this repression had little to do with Russia – that is to say, it was not loyalty to Russia that lead to the punishment so much as local culture. The result may have been different had Chechens been punished for collaborating with Russia. In short, collaboration was the result of insurgent repression, not the cause.

The fourth hypothesis related to the use of terrorism by insurgents against the incumbent metropolis. This hypothesis raises a number of interesting questions, as terrorism proved highly effective during the first war, and almost completely ineffective during the second. It is not entirely clear what explains such a stark difference in the results of this strategy. One possible explanation is that there existed more of an
atmosphere of defeat leading up to the Budyonovsk Raid – an event that took Russia by surprise and demonstrated Russia’s lack of capacity to defend its own territory, let alone secure Chechnya. With regards to the Second Chechen War, there are two potential explanations. First, the COIN campaign was going well, so terrorism was perceived as a sign of insurgent desperation rather than dominance. Second, perhaps Russians were more accustomed to terror, reducing its shock value. These are just suppositions – this is a question that very clearly warrants further inquest.

The fifth hypothesis regarded insurgent structure and the question of hierarchy versus networking. As is demonstrated in the case study, this hypothesis is partially valid. Networked insurgent groups proved effective in battle, and their small size has conferred upon them a great deal of longevity, as demonstrated by the fact that there is still ongoing violence. However, the First Chechen War featured a much more hierarchically structured separatist movement, one that achieved a remarkable victory. However, as demonstrated by the death of Dudayev, hierarchies are vulnerable to assassination.

The sixth hypothesis suggested that more external support is conducive to insurgent victory. Examples from the Chechen Conflict patently disprove this hypothesis. Chechnya had very little external support during the First Chechen War and proved capable of inflicting tremendous damage. The increase of external support during the Second Chechen War grievously harmed Chechnya’s cause in the eyes of the international community – and led to the fragmentation of the separatist movement, demonstrating significant downsides to the use of foreign fighters. Ironically, the arms sales and bartering between Russians and Chechens during the first war demonstrates the
importance of state support – support that does not come with the baggage of working with violent NSAs.

The seventh hypothesis concerned regime type as a predictor of insurgency outcome – and expected democracies to perform worse in COIN roles. Material from the case study is inconclusive. Some features of democracy proved detrimental to Russia’s campaign (free press with unfettered access to conflict zones), but on the same token, Russia bungled the public relations side of the conflict, and more importantly, was a rather weak state at the time. The chaos demonstrated in the management of the war may be more readily explainable by state capacity than regime type. Regarding the Second War, the implementation of more autocratic measures did seem to have a palliative effect – but curiously, gas prices skyrocketed just as the war began, massively increasing Russia’s state capacity by means of economic growth.

The eighth hypothesis centers around local and law enforcement centric COIN strategy – suggesting that an emphasis on the aforementioned qualities is beneficial to incumbents. The case study appears to confirm this hypothesis – Chechnization proved an effective policy, not to mention that it extricated beleaguered Russian troops from harm’s way. There are clearly cases when military force is necessary (winning back the territory), but the experience from Chechnya shows that policing is best left to police, and that locals make much better counterinsurgents than outside forces.

The ninth hypothesis concerns the impact of international norms on the outcome of insurgencies. This hypothesis is confirmed by the case study. September 11th and the subsequent shift in public opinion against terrorism worldwide proved highly detrimental to the Chechen cause, tenuous as Khattab’s link’s with Al-Qaeda were. Russia was able
to operate more freely (and brutally) once it was elevated to an “ally” in the War on Terror, which impacted its eventual recapture and continuing reintegration of the republic.

The question remains, why do separatist insurgents win? The most probable explanation, and an explanation that is sure to dash the hopes of prospective secessionists, is that weak state capacity more than anything else is the most likely predictor of outcomes. Building a state is difficult, especially when an incumbent has a strong core interest in maintaining territorial integrity. Unless the state is paralyzed by internal chaos, as Russia was in 1994, chances are that it will be able to maintain control, or at the very least grind the insurgency down due to advantages in manpower and capabilities. Short of finding a powerful neighbor to sponsor them, separatist groups may be more poised to win concessions rather than total independence through conflict.

Whether violent or peaceful pursuit of questions remains a further question. The more important lingering question, however, remains the curious nature of terrorism as a tool in the insurgents’ arsenal.

*Fig. 4: Reevaluation of Hypotheses*¹⁹⁸

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HYPOTHESIS</th>
<th>VALIDITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The necessity of holding territory and state building puts separatist insurgents at a disadvantage because it undermines guerilla warfare capabilities.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brutal repression of civilians by the incumbent is conducive to insurgent victory.</td>
<td>Confirmed – but the incumbent must be sufficiently brutal in order for this strategy to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurgent violence against local civilians is conducive to insurgent victory.</td>
<td>Contradicted by evidence from case study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁹⁸ Credit to Nicholas Sher for the idea for this table. See: http://tripod.brynmawr.edu/find/Record/.b3564254
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The use of terrorism by insurgents against the metropolis of the incumbent is conducive to victory.</td>
<td>Inconclusive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical organizational structures are more conducive to victory than networked ones.</td>
<td>Partially Confirmed – networks provide several key advantages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More external support is conducive to insurgent victory.</td>
<td>Contradicted by evidence from case study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracies are inherently inferior at combatting separatist insurgency.</td>
<td>Inconclusive – dataset and case study demonstrates that state capacity is a more valid predictor. Some quantitative evidence that strong democracies are less prone to insurgency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local and law enforcement centric COIN strategy is more conducive to insurgent defeat than military-centric strategy.</td>
<td>Confirmed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in international norms during the insurgency impact the outcome of separatist insurgencies.</td>
<td>Confirmed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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