



# SMALL WARS

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## JOURNAL

## The Exhausted Insurgency

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### The Exhausted Insurgency

Nate Roy

“The primary objective of any COIN operation is to foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government.”<sup>[i]</sup>

The purpose of this essay is to enter into an ongoing debate regarding the definition of an ended insurgency, and systematically attempt to construct an informed answer for COIN scholars and practitioners seeking to define the end-state of an insurgency. In 2010 the RAND Corporation published a comprehensive study titled, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*. The monograph details thirty insurgencies that occurred in every region of the world from 1978-2008. Using what RAND refers to as the, “Good” and “Bad” factors” in COIN approaches, a scorecard was created in order to determine the causal factors that determined the outcome of each case study. While the RAND monograph is cutting-edge research, it falls under an all-too familiar category of COIN studies that focus on how to end an insurgent conflict without addressing the days, months, and years that follow the actual fighting. I argue that the actual end of an insurgency occurs if the restored government is both legitimate and politically competent. If those criteria are met the population will support the government, ultimately draining the insurgency’s support base, and leaving it utterly exhausted. This report is not determined to highlight a particular theory or justify the aforementioned ideas as the only way to approach a post-conflict environment. Instead, it will offer some new ideas and key phrases, such as *exhausted insurgency*, to the vast, but always changing literature regarding COIN operations. In the first part of the essay I will provide the reader with a detailed overview of the ongoing debate about what constitutes a successfully ended insurgency. In the second section I will survey the literature regarding political legitimacy. The third section of the report will focus on the case study of Sierra Leone. From an analytical perspective, Sierra Leone offers a substantial amount of information. Since 2002 Sierra Leone finds itself in a state of stability, and upward trending economic mobility. This paper will attempt to address why this country finds itself in that position following a very disturbing conflict. The last section of the essay will discuss suggestions for further research on this extremely important topic.

### The Perfect Analogy

Counterinsurgent forces should address their insurgent enemies in a similar fashion to the medical world’s response against infectious diseases. Once a disease breaks out, the medical world is tasked with the challenge to create the best possible procedure to combat the life-threatening disease. At first, doctors try

to treat the disease with drugs, but that does not sufficiently quell the virulent malady. Researchers continue to search for a better solution, a solution that ultimately suppresses the disease. Excruciating hours of work, testing and re-testing, leads doctors to believe they finally created a vaccine in order to prevent the pestilence from spreading any further. After substantial trial runs it is proven that the vaccine is a remarkable success. The vaccine is quickly introduced into society, and slowly the infectious disease disappears until it is eliminated or removed from that particular region. The disease may linger, but the presence of a widely accepted vaccine eliminates any possibility for the disease to emerge as a serious threat in the inoculated society ever again.<sup>[ii]</sup> Understanding this analogy is a useful exercise when studying counterinsurgency (COIN). A hypothetical insurgency breaks out, very similarly to the disease, and gradually infects the population. At first, the threat appears localized, not dangerous, and not long lasting. However, the insurgent is smart, and attentive to the needs of the local population. The insurgent exploits these needs, and gradually increases his or her credibility and support among the population. The government recognizes that the threat is real, and understands that something must be done. The government confronts the insurgency, and a protracted struggle ensues. The conflict subsides, leaving the government or COIN force successfully ahead of the insurgent. There is a restored sense of stability throughout the region. However, the government does not address the popular grievances. Former insurgents, living among the population, begin to sow the seeds of discontent throughout their communities, and try to recharge the population. The anger reaches yet another boiling point and again an insurgency ensues. This time the insurgent wins.

What becomes evident through the use of this analogy is that the government successfully fought the insurgents throughout the initial conflict, but did not provide the vaccine necessary to eliminate the insurgency, or the infectious disease, completely. Without a vaccine the insurgency was not exhausted, or in other words, eliminated. The vaccine necessary in all counterinsurgent operations is the legitimate and competent authority of the government put into place or restored following the insurgents' demise. Stephen Biddle, et al. astutely notes that for COIN operations, "The odds of success are much higher...when the population supports the government."<sup>[iv]</sup> The population will not support an incompetent government. As a result, that government is rendered illegitimate. Thus, it can be inferred that illegitimate governments run the risk of creating new insurgencies or reigniting old ones. Legitimacy, illegitimacy, political competence, and political incompetence will be discussed in greater detail later in the manuscript.

## Literature Survey

The debate among scholars regarding the end of an insurgency is ongoing and quite large. Interestingly, many authors focus their attention on the step-by-step process or tactics that often achieve COIN success. In other words, their foci appear to be on what practices put the COIN force in the best situation to defeat their enemy, such as winning the hearts and minds of the population. However, the analogy mentioned above illustrates the necessity for COIN scholars, military personnel, lawmakers, and students to address the nature of a post-conflict environment, with a specific focus on the role of governance. Unless the post-conflict government addresses the local grievances and/or the root causes of the insurgency itself, the insurgency might reignite or new ones may emerge. Without a competent and legitimate government in the post-conflict environment, the threat of a renewed insurgency is very real, and thus, the term *ended* is of no value.

In 1964 David Galula published an extremely important book titled, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. The content of the book itself is often cited by many COIN scholars even today. John A. Nagl, a soldier-scholar, notes that, "Galula's primacy of place in the canon of irregular warfare is secured by his lucid instructions on how counterinsurgency forces can protect and hence gain support of the

populace, acquire information on the identity and location of insurgents, and thereby defeat the insurgency.”<sup>[v]</sup> Galula offers an interesting opinion regarding the end of an insurgency.

In his book Galula argues that a population-centric approach is paramount to achieving success in any COIN operation. According to Galula there are four laws to counterinsurgent warfare: **The support of the population is as necessary for the counterinsurgent as for the insurgent, Support is gained through an active minority, Support from the population is conditional, and Intensity of efforts and vastness of means are essential.**<sup>[vi]</sup> There are subsets and other criteria delineated by Galula, but these are the main ingredients that every COIN recipe must adhere to. Galula would argue that if these laws are followed, and more importantly, understood, then the COIN force puts itself in the best possible situation for a favorable outcome or victory. Victory for Galula means the complete destruction of an insurgent’s military capabilities and their political capacity.<sup>[vii]</sup> However, Galula also argues that this is not enough. In his eyes a true victory is only achieved when the military capabilities and the political capacity of the insurgents are destroyed and when, “the permanent isolation of the insurgent from the population [takes hold].”<sup>[viii]</sup> For Galula, this isolation is, “not enforced upon the population but maintained by and with the population.”<sup>[ix]</sup> He argues that employing and teaching local leaders to serve public political positions is vital to increase the gap between the insurgents and the population.<sup>[x]</sup> He even posits the idea that the consent of the governed is achieved only if the population selects the leaders, rather than the COIN force imposing its will onto them. This process, as Galula argues, sheds light on natural leaders who the COIN force should take clear notice of.<sup>[xi]</sup>

David Kilcullen is yet another highly recognized scholar of COIN. It is important to note that Kilcullen honors Galula in his work, but seeks to update him as many of his publications, books, articles etc. are much more recent. For Kilcullen, there are two fundamentals that every COIN force must adhere to when fighting an irregular war. The first pertains to the COIN forces’ ability to understand local environments. “The first [fundamental] is to understand in detail,” Kilcullen argues, “what drives the conflict in any given area or with any given population group.”<sup>[xii]</sup> The second fundamental addresses the issue of solidifying relationships with noncombatants through respect, or as he notes, “[t]he second [fundamental] is to act with respect for local people, putting well-being of noncombatant civilians ahead of any other consideration, even – in fact, especially – ahead of killing the enemy.”<sup>[xiii]</sup> Kilcullen proposes an intriguing answer regarding the definition of an ended insurgency, albeit modern ones. He argues that, “[t]oday’s insurgencies differ significantly – at the level of policy, strategy, operational art and tactical technique – from those of earlier eras.”<sup>[xiv]</sup> Like Galula, Kilcullen agrees that the support of the population is the battleground, per se, in a conflict driven by insurgencies. However, he does note that contemporary insurgencies isolated from the population may actually perpetuate the struggle.<sup>[xv]</sup> He believes this because, “cell-based organizations [sic], bomb-based tactics, global communications and improved lethality make it easier for marginalized [sic] insurgent movements to transform themselves into terrorist groups.”<sup>[xvi]</sup> In other words, Galula’s idea to isolate the insurgent from the population does not guarantee a victory for the COIN force. Kilcullen takes the isolation-idea one step further and argues that, “victory may need to be re-defined as the disarming and reintegration of insurgents into society, combined with popular support for permanent, institutionalized [sic] anti-terrorist measures that contain the risk of terrorist cells emerging from the former insurgent movement.”<sup>[xvii]</sup> For Kilcullen, unless a COIN force successfully disarms the insurgents and reintegrates them into society, a, “victory may not be final.”<sup>[xviii]</sup> Therefore, an insurgent group resorting to “terror” is as good as it may get for the COIN force.

The RAND Corporation, a group consisting of highly professional and well-educated individuals, entered into the debate after publishing some recent monographs about defining the end-state of insurgencies. The first relevant publication was written by Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki in 2010 titled, *How Insurgencies End*. The study focuses on both quantitative and qualitative analyses to explore the utility of

conventional COIN practices discussed by authors like David Galula. The study also embarks on a mission to unveil any new practices that may emerge over time and space. The overarching purpose of the monograph focuses on identifying the end-state indicators in various insurgencies.<sup>[xix]</sup> The authors note that identifying these indicators is important because, “[they] can help counterinsurgents recognize, or create, a *tipping point*.”<sup>[xx]</sup> They define the tipping point as, “the point at which events take a crucial turn toward the final outcome.”<sup>[xxi]</sup> Their research led them to believe that certain indicators such as desertions and defections are universal indicators of possible end-state environments to all insurgencies.<sup>[xxii]</sup>

Pertinent to this essay, however, are the authors’ definition of government loss, government win, mixed outcomes, and inconclusive or ongoing insurgencies. If the government was overthrown, if the insurgents achieved successful annexation of an independent region (if that was their intent), or obtained dramatic political success, than the government lost.<sup>[xxiii]</sup> They do not provide a clear definition for a government win, but some indicators of government victories are provided: rise in insurgent defections and desertions, more useful intelligence provided by population, and the destruction of internal and cross-border insurgent sanctuaries.<sup>[xxiv]</sup> Mixed outcomes are end-state scenarios in which the government maintained power, but made substantial concessions to the insurgents.<sup>[xxv]</sup> Lastly, the authors described an ongoing or inconclusive insurgency as insurgencies that ended with no clear winner, or the conflict did not conclude prior to the piece’s publication.<sup>[xxvi]</sup>

Furthermore, in 2010 RAND published another study titled, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*. The purpose of this monograph was to, “test the validity and range of applicability of 20 approaches to COIN against substantial historical evidence, [using] 30 insurgencies that began and were resolved between 1978 and 2008.”<sup>[xxvii]</sup> The study, which is based on the Delphi Method,<sup>[xxviii]</sup> tests both “classical” approaches such as, *Pacification*, and “contemporary” approaches such as, *Cultural Awareness*.<sup>[xxix]</sup> While the study does provide a brief narrative for each case, much of the monograph’s conclusions are derived out of quantitative, data-based research. The authors found that each COIN approach is unique and can be broken down further into factor subsets. For example, the approach, *Strategic Communication*, was broken down into factors such as, “Messages consistent (or at least progressive) over time.”<sup>[xxx]</sup> This factor was actually discarded from the final report, but it provides a clear example of the tedious research being performed for this particular study. Using a binary, 0-1, scale to calculate the absence (0) or presence (1) of these discrete factors for each case study, the researchers constructed a COIN scorecard to grade the COIN forces’ performance in each case. They found 15 equally weighted good COIN practices and 12 equally weighted bad COIN practices.<sup>[xxxi]</sup> For example, a good COIN practice includes, “The government realized at least two government legitimacy factors,”<sup>[xxxii]</sup> Moreover, a bad COIN practice appears as, “The COIN force used both collective punishment and escalating repression.”<sup>[xxxiii]</sup> The criteria used to define the nature of success or failure (or the end) of the insurgent conflict was similar to Connable and Libicki’s RAND report, *How Insurgencies End*, with one exception. *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency* defines a mixed outcome as either favoring the insurgents or favoring the COIN force. Again, focusing on the conflict itself, this particular RAND study marks the end of an insurgency as the government’s ability to maintain power and sovereignty over a region of conflict. Moreover, if the government was successful in doing so, and it did not make major concessions to the insurgents, then the COIN force won, but if it was not successful, then the COIN force lost. Making major concessions, while retaining authority signaled a mixed outcome favoring either the COIN force or the insurgents.

The examples provided above represent a small portion of a much larger debate. Due to time restrictions I am not able to produce a more thorough account, but further research should. The aforementioned remarks, however, illustrate the variations of opinion regarding the definition of an ended insurgency.

## The Exhausted Insurgency

By 2002 the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) had disarmed and demobilized more than 75,000 ex-fighters, including child soldiers of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).<sup>[xxxiv]</sup> A BBC International Development Correspondent reporting from Freetown wrote in 2012 that, “In the past five years there has been a wave of foreign investment and many infrastructure projects – including hundreds of miles of roads and improved electricity supply – are either completed or on the way. In 15 years I’ve never seen the place so busy.”<sup>[xxxv]</sup> Poverty and corruption are ongoing issues, but the current government is taking significant measures to meet those issues head-on. Progress is slow, but the internationally recognized government, headed by President Ernest Bai Koroma, is pushing the previously battered country of Sierra Leone onto new economic, industrial, and political paths. After more than a decade of brutal fighting, how is Sierra Leone pushing away such a tumultuous past? How has the RUF, a once significant fighting-force, been rendered to non-threatening or even non-existent status? The answer seems simple. The RUF became exhausted. David Kilcullen believes that exhaustion is, “an insurgent tactic that seeks to impose costs on the opponent government, overstress its support system, tire its troops, and impose costs in terms of lives, resources, and political capital, in order to convince that government that continuing the war is not worth the cost.”<sup>[xxxvi]</sup> Exhaustion, as described by Kilcullen, can also be a tactic employed by the COIN force or government in order to suppress and destroy their insurgent enemies. Moreover, exhaustion eliminates the possibility or threat of reigniting the once-defeated insurgency.

This particular essay asks whether or not certain social, political, or economic aspects ultimately play a role in ending an insurgency. The overarching purpose of this paper is to jump into the debate on this topic and forward my own informed views on the matter. I am not focusing on COIN tactics, rather I am examining when it is appropriate to constitute an insurgency as ended. Thus, I will focus my attention on the environment that ensues after the war is complete. In *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies* RAND analysts broke each case narrative into two to five chronological phases depending on the individual case.<sup>[xxxvii]</sup> They focused on each phase individually, but their case data stems from the decisive phase, or the phase in which the outcome is swayed in favor of either the insurgents or the COIN force.<sup>[xxxviii]</sup> The decisive phase, as RAND notes, was not always the same as the terminal phase, or the phase in which the insurgency is sufficiently quelled.<sup>[xxxix]</sup> The concept of exhausted insurgency only deals with the terminal phase, or as I see it, the phase in which the insurgent is actually terminated. Furthermore, I focus my attention on the cases that RAND deemed COIN wins, because examining a COIN loss is unnecessary for this particular study.

What factor (s) causes an insurgency to become virtually exhausted? Understanding this question is essential for anyone trying to understand the exhausted insurgency. Many scholars and analysts study insurgencies and prepare vast amounts of documentation, and information regarding the best way to combat them. What becomes evident; however, is that every scholar and every analyst, no matter how intricate or seemingly complex their research may be, presents findings based on common sense. A good COIN force often practices common sense when confronting their respective insurgent foes. Therefore, exhausted insurgency is simply another common sense concept. I argue that once the conflict, or violence ceases, and the COIN force or government prevails, the insurgency can only be terminated if and only if the post-conflict government is both competent and legitimate.<sup>[xl]</sup> Moreover, political competence and legitimacy steer the popular support away from the insurgents, thus exhausting the insurgents and eliminating the threat of reigniting the insurgency. Political competence is a relatively self-explanatory term. Political competence, for the purpose of this essay, means a government that understands the socioeconomic and political needs of its constituents.<sup>[xli]</sup> A politically competent government will initiate reform, employ legitimate uses of force to protect its constituents,<sup>[xlii]</sup> and will promote the well-being of

their constituents through actions such as promoting and protecting basic human rights, housing developments, food supplies, and employment opportunities. It is important to note that a politically competent government will also be prepared to implement substantial disarmament and reintegration measures as discussed by Kilcullen, because today's insurgents can obtain support rather easily from external sources. On the other hand, a politically incompetent government will not address the needs of their constituents, employ illegitimate uses of force, and neglect the well-being of their constituents. Legitimacy, on the other hand, is a bit more complex and requires a more detailed discussion. Anyone who has taken a political science course understands that legitimacy is the popular-support for a government. While this definition encompasses the basic tenets of legitimacy it does not underline the complexities and multiple dimensionalities of legitimacy itself. Due to time constraints I am unable to delve deeper into this particular discussion, but it is paramount for students of COIN to understand what legitimacy actually means. For the purpose of this discussion, I will focus on Max Weber and David Easton.

Max Weber argued that legitimacy equated to the "right to rule."<sup>[xliii]</sup> In other words, Weber believed that legitimate authority originated out of the belief that the governed individuals voluntarily submit themselves to those in power, because they believe in the system of power governing them.<sup>[xliv]</sup> He claimed that three types of authority exist in the world: *Charismatic*, *Traditional*, and *Rational-Legal*.<sup>[xlv]</sup> Charismatic authority derives its power from the leader's charisma, or the, "specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person."<sup>[xlvi]</sup> Traditional authority is, "based on custom of the past or habit," and the concept of rational-legal authority is, "based on the perception that a government's powers are derived from [fair] procedures, principles, and laws."<sup>[xlvii]</sup> Why is it important to understand these concepts? Governments are only legitimate if the governed respect the authority of the government system, thus COIN operations, especially foreign interveners, must not impose a particular government system onto individuals in a post-conflict environment. Nor can the COIN force assume that their values mirror the values of the population they are attempting to protect. If COIN forces do not heed this advice, than they run the risk of creating an illegitimate government that could crumble beneath the weight of new grievances, and a stronger insurgent campaign or even the birth of a new insurgency. As Biddle, et al. state, "There can be no effective military solution if the intended political goal is so badly misaligned with the country's underlying social and political framework."<sup>[xlviii]</sup> Thus, I recommend RAND and other COIN scholars to reconsider their value of democracy and democratization in COIN practices. RAND notes that, "Democracy is advocated as a way to increase the legitimacy of a government and resolve grievances short of violence."<sup>[xlix]</sup> How could legitimacy be increased in an area where democracy, or rational-legal power, is not considered by the population as a legitimate source of authority? RAND does acknowledge this challenge, but continues to support democracy as an approach for all COIN operations. Indeed, eight of the COIN wins in their study employed some form of democracy as an approach.<sup>[l]</sup> However, they point out that seven COIN losses did too.<sup>[li]</sup> The report notes the inconsistencies of democracy as a COIN approach, but quickly states that, "because all eight wins had at least one democracy factor, we cannot rule it out as a necessary but insufficient contributor to COIN success. Indeed, it is one of the several things that all COIN winners have going for them and appears to be one of victory's 'thousand fathers'." This statement is problematic, because it perpetuates the assumption that every society desires some form of democracy in their lives. Successful COIN approaches will address the environment with an open-mind, and a willingness to learn about the political system that is most popular, and refrain from imposing personal systems of governance onto people who do not want to believe in that system of governance.

David Easton took the discussion about legitimacy one step further. He argued that legitimacy is defined by, "citizens' attitudes, specifically "the conviction 'that it is right and proper...to obey the authorities and

to abide by the requirements of the regime’.”<sup>[iii]</sup> His greatest contribution, however, to the discussion on legitimacy is the idea that it is a concept broken down into two dimensions: diffuse support and specific support.<sup>[iii]</sup> Diffuse support describes an individual’s sponsorship for the political systems and the structure of government under which they live.<sup>[iv]</sup> For example, in the United States of America the majority of the nation recognizes the American government system as a legitimate subject of authority. Specific support defines legitimacy in terms of the actual performance of the authoritative figures.<sup>[v]</sup> In other words, Easton believes that if government officials do not exert authority in a competent manner, than they are deemed illegitimate by the population. The phrase “competent manner” is being utilized to summarize Easton’s idea. Easton’s first concept reinforces Weber’s notion of legitimacy, but his second concept is pertinent for external COIN forces and internal government officials. After an insurgency is sufficiently suppressed, the initial government leaders must be competent and address the needs of its people, as well as, the root causes of the insurgency itself. If these government officials fail to meet these issues, than they run the risk of alienating their constituents and destabilizing the entire environment once again. However, I argue that if the population responds favorably to the system of government, but dislikes some of the public officials, then they are more likely to respond by removing them from office, but not destabilizing the entire system. This becomes a problem when subsequent leaders continue the trend of poor governance, because an environment is created in which the population begins to distrust that system. Thus, I argue it is important for the initial government officials, as well as the multinational organizations and/or the COIN forces working alongside them to recognize the need for competency at an early stage. As Galula puts it, “The ultimate results of the counterinsurgent’s efforts in regard to the population depend on the effectiveness of the [person] who [has] just been elected.”<sup>[vi]</sup> Galula’s statement carries much weight. Competency at an early stage in the post-conflict environment is paramount if the insurgency is to be exhausted.

### Case Criteria

The case study of Sierra Leone illustrates many of the key ideas discussed in this manuscript regarding the exhausted insurgency. Choosing a case study for this particular discussion was relatively simple. First I chose a case from the RAND report, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies*, in which the COIN force was deemed a winner. Moreover, I decided not to examine the decisive phase of the case, because that did not serve the true purpose of this study. The second criterion for selecting the case study was the amount of information available about the war itself and the post-conflict period. I then looked for a case study that has experienced little-to-no violence since the insurgency concluded according to the RAND study. Lastly, and very importantly, I wanted to focus on a case study in which there was a reaffirmation, re-election, etc. of the government placed in power after the insurgency concluded. Without knowing the intricacies of each case it was impossible to deem any of the post-conflict governments as either legitimate or illegitimate at face-value. However, if the system of government continued to garner support through popular sponsorship through processes such as, elections, than I chose to focus on that case. Sierra Leone fits that description.

### Case Criteria Listed

1. Case from RAND study: *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies*
2. Adequate information about case
3. Little to no violence since insurgency ended
4. Reaffirmation of the post-conflict government

## Case Study – Sierra Leone

The conflict in Sierra Leone lasted from 1991-2002.<sup>[lvii]</sup> The Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the main insurgent group, “terrorized the population through looting, rape, mutilation, and murder.”<sup>[lviii]</sup> In fact, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission noted that, “This was a conflict waged against the civilian population. The combatant factions did not target conventional military targets. There were very few accounts of direct confrontation between the combatant factions. In consequence, civilians bore the brunt of the violations and abuses that marked the conflict.”<sup>[lix]</sup> According to the Commission, some of the abuses included amputation, forced cannibalism, abduction, forced labour, torture, rape, and killing.<sup>[lx]</sup> Another distinguishable feature of the conflict was the near 7,000 children soldiers that were abducted and brainwashed by the RUF.<sup>[lxi]</sup> The government of Sierra Leone was extremely fragile and suffered from corruption, and an overall inability to promote and protect the well-being of the population. In 1991 the RUF, led by former army corporal Foday Sankoh,<sup>[lxii]</sup> utilized these issues to mobilize an armed movement aimed at overthrowing the government of Joseph Saidu Momoh and the All People’s Congress.<sup>[lxiii]</sup> Many in the RUF trained in Libya, while others were guided by Liberia’s warlord Charles Taylor.<sup>[lxiv]</sup> RAND notes that, “By 1992 the insurgents controlled the diamond mines in the Kono District. Sales from so-called [blood diamonds] fuelled the insurgency. The RUF used the money gained through its illicit activities to purchase AK-47s, AK-74 rifles, G-3 rifles, FN FAL (light automatic) rifles, and self-loading rifles. [The RUF] were also supplied with machine guns, submachine guns, grenade launchers, mortars, and surface-to-air missiles.”<sup>[lxv]</sup>

President Joseph Momoh was overthrown by a military coup in 1992. Captain Valentine Strasser took over control of the COIN operations and created the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC).<sup>[lxvi]</sup> The NPRC hired a mercenary group from South Africa named Executive Outcomes (EO) to combat the insurgents.<sup>[lxvii]</sup> As RAND notes, “EO entered the country with 150 soldiers and more sophisticated weaponry than the COIN force had been using, including helicopter gunships...to effectively force the insurgents back into the countryside.”<sup>[lxviii]</sup> EO proved to be quite useful against the RUF. They gained control of many of the lost diamond mines, provided adequate protection for much of the population, and hired local militias or Kamajors to provide even greater protection for the population.<sup>[lix]</sup> Thanks to EO, security was brought back to reasonable levels, and so, the country held presidential and parliamentary elections in 1996.<sup>[lxx]</sup> Sierra Leoneans elected the Sierra Leonean People’s Party (SLPP) and Tejan Kabbah.<sup>[lxxi]</sup> Kabbah was able to negotiate the Abidjan Peace Accord with the RUF, which eventually broke the agreement and perpetuated the fighting.<sup>[lxxii]</sup> In fact, Kabbah was overthrown by another military coup, led by Johnny Paul Koroma and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC).<sup>[lxxiii]</sup> However, in 1998, the Economic Community of West African States’ Monitoring Observer Group (ECOMOG) successfully overthrew the AFRC, and restored power to Kabbah.<sup>[lxxiv]</sup> Once again, Kabbah sought peace with the RUF, and ultimately negotiated the Lome Peace Accord in 1999.<sup>[lxxv]</sup>

Following the capture of almost 500 United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) peacekeepers in 2000, The United Kingdom deployed 1,200 troops to Sierra Leone which helped the UN mission restore some semblance of order in the country.<sup>[lxxvi]</sup> COIN forces including, U.K. soldiers and a militarized sector of UNAMSIL, focused their efforts together on the RUF and launched a successful COIN campaign against the RUF fighters. It is estimated that 50,000 individuals lost their lives in the war.<sup>[lxxvii]</sup> START’s Global Terrorism Database reveals that RUF attacks came to a sudden halt in 2000, and they have not reappeared since.<sup>[lxxviii]</sup>

2002 is recognized as the year in which the conflict officially ended. Since then, the RUF has been virtually non-existent. The government of Sierra Leone is making tremendous strides at combating corruption and poverty. At its height, UNAMSIL employed nearly 17,000 troops in conjunction with a

sizeable civilian staff.<sup>[lxxix]</sup> While the \$700 million per year price tag<sup>[lxxx]</sup> seems like a lot of funding for one UN mission, the outcome is proving to be worth every penny. The UN Security Council ended UNAMSIL in 2005, but the work produced by that particular peacekeeping mission provided the Sierra Leonean government a foundation from which to build upon. Some of UNAMSIL's landmark achievements with the Sierra Leone government are discussed below:

- More than 75,000 combatants were disarmed and demobilized after the war. Nearly 55,000 of those former combatants received formal education after the war, and attended many skills training programs. 42,330 weapons and more than 1.2 million rounds of ammunition were destroyed after being collected from combatants. Over 12,000 combatants received funding to attend schools, colleges, and universities.<sup>[lxxxi]</sup>
- UNAMSIL successfully oversaw the 2002 presidential and parliamentary election that was deemed free and fair by the international community. The RUF Party (RUF) even ran, but garnered less than 2% of the total vote. The voter turnout included more than 1.9 million people, or 81% of those eligible to vote.<sup>[lxxxii]</sup>
- UNAMSIL founded the Special Court for Sierra Leone which in 2004 began war crimes trials against 13 indictees, including former RUF and government officials accused of committing acts of violence such as amputation of limbs.<sup>[lxxxiii]</sup>
- Lastly, UNAMSIL helped the government control the illicit trafficking of diamonds across their borders. In 2000, the Sierra Leonean government only made \$10 million dollars from diamond exports, and in 2004 that number soared \$160 million through, because the government established legal paths for diamonds to follow. This, along with other exports, helped the Sierra Leone economy grow by 6% in 2004.<sup>[lxxxiv]</sup>

It is quite possible that without UNAMSIL the government of Sierra Leone may have crumbled and floundered in the wake of such a miserable post-war scenario. The seeds of competence, sown by UNAMSIL peacekeepers throughout the government, are finally budding. While Sierra Leone still struggles with poverty, human rights issues, and some corruption in the government, many of its key leaders, including President Ernest Bai Koroma, appear in control of their own destiny. In 2007 President Koroma was elected in another internationally claimed free and fair election.<sup>[lxxxv]</sup> President Koroma appears keen on continuing the successes already achieved by the government, and creating new ones revolving around issues such as women's rights, anti-corruption laws, and poverty. He recently announced the establishment of the All Political Parties Women Association, and pledged to adopt a 30 per cent quota for women's employment in government and election institutions.<sup>[lxxxvi]</sup> President Koroma has also addressed, with relative success, the issue of diamond mining in Sierra Leone. In 2012, the BBC reported that, "An Israeli-owned company has started operating a big new stone-crushing plant at a modern diamond mine in the east of [Sierra Leone]."<sup>[lxxxvii]</sup> This is important, because it symbolizes foreign investment in mining, roads, and buildings, as well as an increase in jobs for Sierra Leoneans. As one author puts it, "There are no more "blood diamonds" in Sierra Leone."<sup>[lxxxviii]</sup>

Furthermore, the creation of democratic institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Commission and the National Human Rights Commission signify the government's shift towards protecting the well-being of all Sierra Leoneans.<sup>[lxxxix]</sup> In 2010, "the UN Security Council lifted the last remaining sanctions against Sierra Leone, saying the government had fully re-established control over its territory."<sup>[xc]</sup> The 2012 presidential elections were a fantastic step forward for Sierra Leone. President Koroma took 58.7% of the

vote and won quite comfortably.<sup>[xci]</sup> Again, the voter turnout reached over 80%.<sup>[xcii]</sup> However, the most extraordinary aspect of the election is that it was held without UN support. The Sierra Leonean people organized their own election and it was deemed by the international community as a free and fair election across the board.<sup>[xciii]</sup> Indeed, Sierra Leone has a substantial mountain to climb, but the high voter turnouts in each of the elections, and a commitment from government leaders, like President Koroma, to continue the climb indicates the willingness of the Sierra Leonean nation to break away completely from the past.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Sierra Leone offers an interesting case study when discussing the characteristics of an ended insurgency. Indeed, it is quite clear that UNAMSIL played a pivotal role in the foundation of a solidified Sierra Leone government. COIN forces should pay attention to Sierra Leone and understand the positive impact multinational organizations such as the UN can have in a post-war society and reconstruction period. Without UNAMSIL, the RUF would not have been exhausted at such an early stage, and for that, they should be praised. Beyond UNAMSIL, there are two indicators that I found to be matters of great importance regarding RUF's exhaustion in Sierra Leone. First, the RUF's last significant attack was in the year 2000. Second, the high voter turnout in all three of the free and fair democratic elections (including the Sierra Leonean organized one in 2012), in addition to the commitment of President Koroma's government to continue a shift towards political competency indicates that a) the population supports this political system, and b) government officials are willing to further develop their country on the socioeconomic and political levels. Policies such as Disarmament and Reintegration, and popular support for democratization, disengaged the RUF from the population and rendered them virtually non-existent. Thus, I argue that the majority of Sierra Leoneans support the political system, and respect the performance of certain public officials, like President Koroma. As a result, I argue that the government of Sierra Leone is a legitimate and competent authority, and the threat of an insurgency is nowhere in sight. Indeed, Sierra Leone is not a perfect picture. Some corruption, human rights abuses, youth unemployment, and poverty still burden the government and its constituency.

With more time I am planning to develop this case study in greater detail. With various time constraints I chose to focus on a few sources regarding Sierra Leone rather than a substantially larger number. In the very near future I will be delving much deeper into those other sources so that I really become an expert per se on the case itself. The within-case study proved useful for this essay, because it contained adequate and useful information. Future research regarding the end of an insurgency should include more case studies. More case studies allow the researcher to examine variation between them, and check for similarities and differences between them. Moreover, I think a larger literature survey is necessary for this particular debate. The debate is on-going and quite extensive. Understanding every nuance and different perspective within the debate itself is useful to enhance the discussion and justify the importance of this topic to many scholars of COIN. Lastly, the degree of certainty in my findings is relatively strong. After further deliberation it became evident that this particular case study was actually a "plausibility probe."<sup>[xciv]</sup> In other words, the case study of Sierra Leone illustrated the key factors of this manuscript's analysis, and so the exhausted insurgency concept is a plausible one and worth testing in the future. Stephen Van Evera, author of the book, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, believes plausibility probes are useful, because they allow researchers to, "find out the answer before doing [their] study."<sup>[xcv]</sup>

### **End Notes**

[i] Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington, D.C.: U.S.

Government Printing Office, December 2006), p. 1.21.

[ii] I want to thank one of my classmates, Anna Williams, for presenting this analogy in one of our class discussions. It is pertinent to this paper, and should be used in other works about insurgency and COIN operations as well.

[iii]

[iv] Stephen Biddle, Fotini Christia, and F. Alexander Thier, “Defining Success in Afghanistan: What Can the United States Accept?” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (July-August 2010), p. 53.

[v] John A. Nagl, “Foreword” in David Galula’s, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, C.T.: Praeger Security International, 1964), p. vii.

[vi] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, C.T.: Praeger Security International, 1964), pp. 52-55.

[vii] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 54.

[viii] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 54.

[ix] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 54.

[x] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, pp. 89-90.

[xi] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 90.

[xii] David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 3.

[xiii] Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, p. 4.

[xiv] David Kilcullen, “Counter-insurgency *Redux*,” *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Winter 2006-07), p. 111.

[xv] Kilcullen, “Counter-insurgency *Redux*,” p. 123.

[xvi] Kilcullen, “Counter-insurgency *Redux*,” p. 123.

[xvii] Kilcullen, “Counter-insurgency *Redux*,” p. 123.

[xviii] Kilcullen, “Counter-insurgency *Redux*,” p. 123.

[xix] Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki, “How Insurgencies End” (RAND Corporation, 2010), p. 2.

[xx] Connable, et al., “How Insurgencies End,” p. 2.

[xxi] Connable, et al., p. 2.

[xxii] Connable, et al., p. xiv.

[xxiii] Connable, et al., p. 14.

[xxiv] Connable, et al., p. 18.

[xxv] Connable, et al., p. 14.

[xxvi] Connable, et al., p. 20.

[xxvii] Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, “Qualitative Comparative Analysis of 30 Insurgencies, 1978-2008,” *Military Operations Research*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (2012), p. 19.

[xxviii] See RAND website: <http://www.rand.org/topics/delphi-method.html>

[xxix] Paul, et al., “Qualitative Comparative Analysis of 30 Insurgencies,” p. 22.

[xxx] Paul, et al., “Qualitative Comparative Analysis of 30 Insurgencies,” p. 23.

[xxxi] Christopher Paul, “Counterinsurgency Scorecard: Afghanistan in Early 2011 Relative to the Insurgencies of the Past 30 Years.” RAND Corporation, 2011, p. 1.

[xxxii] Paul, et al., “Qualitative Comparative Analysis of 30 Insurgencies,” p. 27.

[xxxiii] Paul, et al., “Qualitative Comparative Analysis of 30 Insurgencies,” p. 29.

[xxxiv] The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), *UNAMSIL: A Success Story in Peacekeeping*, 2005, (<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/Overview.pdf>), accessed April 21, 2013

[xxxv] BBC News, *Sierra Leone faces huge election test*, (2012), (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20350855>), accessed April 21, 2013.

[xxxvi] David Kilcullen, “The Accidental Guerilla,” in *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 32.

[xxxvii] Paul, et al., “Qualitative Comparative Analysis of 30 Insurgencies,” p. 25.

[xxxviii] Paul, et al., “Qualitative Comparative Analysis of 30 Insurgencies,” p. 25.

[xxxix] Paul, et al., “Qualitative Comparative Analysis of 30 Insurgencies,” p. 25.

[xl] A government that won the war is not always the same after the conflict finishes. A winning

government could remain the same following the end of the war, could be slightly altered, or even completely restructured (As in Sierra Leone).

[xli] This is my definition of political competence. I think it is also important to note that the *political needs* of the people signify the system of government desired by the governed. A politically incompetent government will impose its desired system, rather than, adhere to the demands of the people.

[xlii] A distinction between legitimate and illegitimate uses of force should be made. On pp. 42-44 in the RAND study, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*, the authors focus on legitimate force as a tactic in COIN operations, but their defining characteristics legitimate force stem beyond basic COIN tactics. Legitimate force: avoids collateral damage, not perceived by population as dangerous, and perception of security is enhanced. Illegitimate force is the opposite of these characteristics.

[xliii] Robert Egnell, “Winning ‘Hearts and Minds’? A Critical Analysis of Counter-Insurgency Operations in Afghanistan,” *Civil Wars*, Vol. 12, No. 3. (September 2010), p. 286.

[xliv] J.G. Merquior, *Rousseau and Weber: Two Studies in the theory of legitimacy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1980), p. 97.

[xlv] Merquior, *Rousseau and Weber*, p. 98.

[xlvi] Merquior, *Rousseau and Weber*, p. 98.

[xlvii] Egnell, “Winning ‘Hearts and Minds’?” p. 286.

[xlviii] Biddle, et al., “Defining Success in Afghanistan,” p. 59.

[xlix] Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill, “Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency.” RAND Corporation, 2010, p. 44. ([http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND\\_MG964.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG964.pdf)), accessed April 21, 2013.

[l] Paul, et al., “Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency.” p. 44. ([http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND\\_MG964.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG964.pdf)), accessed April 21, 2013. Also note that on page 44, RAND describes democracy factors as: The government is a functional democracy. The government is a partial or transitional democracy. Free and fair elections were held. The government respects human rights and allows a free press.

[li] Paul, et al., p. 44.

[lii] John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America: Political Support and Democracy in Eight Nations* (New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 9.

[liii] Booth, et al., *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America*, p. 9.

[liv] Booth, et al., *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America*, p. 9.

[lv] Booth, et al., *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America*, p. 9.

[lvi] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, p. 90.

[lvii] Christopher Paul, et al., “Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies” (RAND Corporation, 2010), p. 158.

[lviii] Paul, et al., “Victory Has a Thousand Fathers” p. 158.

[lix] Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “Nature of Conflict” in Chapter 4 Volume Three A of Commission Report (2005) (<http://www.sierraleonetr.com/index.php/view-the-final-report/table-of-contents>), accessed on April 21, 2013.

[lx] Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “Nature of Conflict,” ([http://www.sierraleonetr.com/index.php/view-report-text-vol-3a/item/volume-three-a-chapter-four?category\\_id=3](http://www.sierraleonetr.com/index.php/view-report-text-vol-3a/item/volume-three-a-chapter-four?category_id=3)), accessed April 21, 2013.

[lxi] The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, *UNAMSIL: Thousands of Ex-Fighters Disarmed and Reintegrated*, 2005 ([http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/factsheet1\\_DDR.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/factsheet1_DDR.pdf)), accessed April 21, 2013.

[lxii] Paul, et al., “Victory Has a Thousand Fathers” p. 158.

[lxiii] Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “Executive Summary” in Chapter one, Volume two A (2005) ([http://www.sierraleonetr.com/index.php/view-report-text-vol-2/item/volume-two-chapter-one?category\\_id=20](http://www.sierraleonetr.com/index.php/view-report-text-vol-2/item/volume-two-chapter-one?category_id=20)), accessed April 21, 2013.

[lxiv] Paul, et al., “Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies.” p. 158.

[lxv] Paul, et al., “Victory Has a Thousand Fathers.” p. 159.

[lxvi] Paul, et al., p. 159.

[lxvii] Paul, et al., p. 160.

[lxviii] Paul, et al., p. 160.

[lxix] Paul, et al., p. 160.

[lxx] Paul, et al., p. 160.

[lxxi] Paul, et al., p. 160.

[lxxii] Paul, et al., pp. 160-161.

[lxxiii] Paul, et al., p. 161.

[lxxiv] Paul, et al., p. 161.

[lxxv] Paul, et al., p. 161.

[lxxvi] Paul, et al., p. 161.

[lxxvii] BBC News, *Sierra Leone Elections 'Free and Fair'*, (2007), (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6943541.stm>), accessed April 28, 2013.

[lxxviii] Terrorism Database, *GTD SEARCH RUF*, (<http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?search=Revolutionary+United+Front&sa.x=0&sa.y=0>), accessed April 21, 2013.

[lxxix] Paul, et al., "Victory Has a Thousand Fathers." p. 163.

[lxxx] Paul, et al., p. 163.

[lxxxii] UNAMSIL, *Thousands of Ex-Fighters Disarmed and Reintegrated*, (2005), ([http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/factsheet1\\_DDR.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/factsheet1_DDR.pdf)), accessed April 21, 2013. (Encompasses all statistics described in paragraph).

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[lxxxiiii] UNAMSIL, *Respect for human rights and rule of law brings stability*, (2005), ([http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/factsheet3\\_HRRL.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/factsheet3_HRRL.pdf)), accessed April 21, 2013. (Encompasses all statistics described in paragraph).

[lxxxv] UNAMSIL, *Diamond Exports Set to Jump Start Economic Recovery*, (2005), ([http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/factsheet4\\_ERD.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/factsheet4_ERD.pdf)), accessed April 21, 2013. (Encompasses all statistics described in paragraph).

[lxxxvi] BBC News, *Sierra Leone Profile: Timeline*, (2012), (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094419>), accessed April 28, 2013.

[lxxxvii] United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), *All Political Parties Women Association Delegates Conference*, (2011), ([http://unipsil.unmissions.org/portals/unipsil/media/documents/APPWA\\_delgates\\_conference120611.pdf](http://unipsil.unmissions.org/portals/unipsil/media/documents/APPWA_delgates_conference120611.pdf)), accessed April 28, 2013.

[lxxxviii] BBC News, *Sierra Leone 'blood diamonds' not forever*, (2012), (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18109186>

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[xc] BBC News, *Sierra Leone Profile*, (2012), (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094194>), accessed April 28, 2013.

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[xciii] BBC News, *Sierra Leone: Ernest Bai Koroma wins presidential poll*, (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20472962>), accessed April 28, 2013.

[xciv] Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), p.105.

[xcv] Van Evera, *Guide to Methods*, p. 105.

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