

Jacqueline L. Hazelton. “The ‘Hearts and Minds’ Fallacy: Violence, Coercion, and Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare.” *International Security* 42.1 (2017): 80-113. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00283.

Review by **David H. Ucko**, College of International Security Affairs, National Defense University, and **Jason E. Fritz**, American University

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Over the past decade, the dominant view of counterinsurgency in academic and policy circles has fluctuated. In particular, the debate has touched upon the importance of winning the civilian population’s allegiance and the role of violence in protecting, or suppressing it. The broad consensus suggests the need to “win” the population, mostly through popular empowerment and by shielding it from violence, all the while preventing it from supporting the insurgency. Still, some saw the focus on securing the population, and the associated slogan of “winning hearts and minds,” as implying a dubious and misleading promise of counterinsurgency as a “kinder, gentler war.”¹ Critics were quick to pounce, yet tended to eschew the necessary context or confuse their own at times reductive interpretations of counterinsurgency for its ‘conventional wisdom.’² The fact that doctrine and scholarship, to say nothing of counterinsurgency on the

¹ Michael A. Cohen, “The Myth of a Kinder, Gentler War,” World Policy Institute, 22 June 2010, <http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/myth-kinder-gentler-war>.

² For the criticism of counterinsurgency, see Gian P. Gentile, *Wrong Turn: America’s Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency* (New York: The New Press, 2013); Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For the errors and miscues therein, see David H. Ucko, “Critics Gone Wild: Counterinsurgency as the Root of All Evil,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25:1 (January 2014): 161-179.

ground, evince a more complex picture has not deterred the continued use of strawmen to launch powerful yet poorly targeted attacks.

This backdrop informs Jacqueline Hazelton's article in the most recent issue of *International Security*, which tilts at the 'conventional wisdom' of modern counterinsurgency, or what she terms its "good governance" theory (80). This approach to counterinsurgency is associated in the article with the hearts-and-minds concept and asks governments to suppress discriminately the insurgents all the while enacting "liberalizing, democratizing reforms designed to reduce popular grievances and gain popular support" (80). Integral to the theory, as it is presented, is that counterinsurgents protect civilians from harm, even to the detriment of military operations, because counterinsurgency is a contest of legitimacy; hence the need to shower benefits on the civilian population.

To challenge the good governance theory, Hazelton's advances a 'coercive theory' that sees no danger, and in fact a key benefit, in violently controlling civilians as long as select elites are made to benefit from the counterinsurgent's activities. Success, she notes, "is the result of a violent state-building process in which elites engage in a contest for power, popular interests matter little to the outcome, and the government benefits from the use of force against civilians" (81). Drawing on the case of Malaya, as well as Dhofar and El Salvador, Hazelton's article argues that this coercive theory better explains success in counterinsurgency than good governance.

We believe that while the work is described as "explanatory" (92), it nonetheless posits a false choice: that policymakers either accept savagery or do not engage in counterinsurgency at all. This finding is both ethically troubling and empirically unsubstantiated.

Key Insights

While we disagree with Hazelton's approach, the article advances a number of insights. First, it problematizes "popular support" as a war-winner. Though much of the discussion on hearts and minds distorts what the counterinsurgency doctrine and literature argue, Hazelton is correct that counterinsurgency is won not by the most liked, but by the side exercising the most effective control.³ Legitimacy can facilitate such control, but is rather useless without it.

Hazelton also correctly identifies the idealistic assumptions of the good governance approach (85-87). Linear renditions of counterinsurgency theory overstate the government's desire to enact reforms, its ability to target them, its capability to carry through on this intent, and the relationship between such actions, popular

³ The one reference to hearts and minds in the 2006 edition of FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, framed it pragmatically as the process of "persuading people that their best interests are served by COIN [counterinsurgency] success... that the force can protect them and that resisting it is pointless." See U.S. Department of the Army and United States Marine Corps, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3- 33.5. Counterinsurgency* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army, 2006), A-5. Although recognizing the importance of "the support of the people," Christopher Kolenda is but one author and practitioner who refutes counterinsurgency as "a popularity contest": "it is the cold-blooded application of our resources and capabilities to generate behavioral outcomes." Christopher D. Kolenda, *The Counterinsurgency Challenge: A Parable of Leadership and Decision Making in Modern Conflict* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2012), 76. See also David H. Ucko and Robert Egnell, *Counterinsurgency in Crisis: Britain and the Challenges of Modern Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 30-31.

support, and strategic victory. She also acknowledges common deficiencies in counterinsurgency research, including the dominance of secondary sources, the reification of ‘insurgents,’ ‘people,’ and ‘government’ as monolithic actors, and the tendency to allow a comforting liberal script to cloud analysis.

Hazelton’s coercive theory also has merit. Numerous case studies, particularly from authoritarian settings, underline the point that coercion of the civilian populace can be effective in defeating insurgency.⁴ Even in democratic contexts, large-scale violence against civilians has not stood in the way of strategic success.⁵ Though much has already been written on the topic, there is value in again acknowledging this dark side of counterinsurgency.

A Problematic Dichotomy

Though the article raises important points, it has many more weaknesses. Most fundamentally, the entire argumentation rests on an unconvincing dichotomy between Hazelton’s “good governance” and “coercive” theories. Hazelton claims that her coercive theory explains counterinsurgency successes better than the good governance understanding, but does not acknowledge that the core precepts of the coercive theory are already accounted for in conventional counterinsurgency thinking, writing, and practice.

Rather than being antithetical to counterinsurgency theory, the exhortation to “control” the civilian population is a repeated point of emphasis in the relevant literature,⁶ though it notes that control is more readily achieved when it is consensual rather than forced.⁷ Still, popular engagement in counterinsurgency is not about charity work: it is about separating the insurgents from the population, not only to win the contest

⁴ See for example Monica Duffy Toft and Yuri M Zhukov, “Denial and Punishment in the North Caucasus: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Coercive Counter-Insurgency,” *Journal of Peace Research* 49:6 (November 2012): 785-800; Daniel Byman, “‘Death Solves All Problems’: The Authoritarian Model of Counterinsurgency,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39:1 (January 2016): 62-93; David H. Ucko, “‘The People Are Revolting’: An Anatomy of Authoritarian Counterinsurgency,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39:1 (January 2016): 29-61.

⁵ See Caroline Elkins, *Britain’s Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya*, Pimlico 720 (London: Pimlico, 2005); Huw Bennett, “‘A Very Salutory Effect’: The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32:3 (June 2009): 415-444. See also the use of overwhelming force by the United States in the Philippines.

⁶ David Galula, a godfather of sorts for modern doctrine, recommended that counterinsurgents “establish contact with the population, control its movements in order to cut off its links with the guerrillas.” See David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, PSI Classics of the Counterinsurgency Era (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2006), 56. Wikipedia, never the best source but a good reflection of conventional wisdom, tellingly lists “population control” as the first of many counterinsurgency “tactics.” See “Counter-Insurgency,” Wikipedia, accessed 19 September 2017, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Counter-insurgency&oldid=801216608>.

⁷ FM 3-24 (2006) noted, for example, that “Legitimacy provides willing acceptance of authority and thus requires fewer resources to enforce its authority than illegitimacy.” See U.S. Department of the Army and United States Marine Corps, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5. Counterinsurgency*, 1-9.

of legitimacy but also to ensure that the insurgency does not benefit from unobstructed access to a population either willing or coerced to support it.⁸

Similarly, the coercive theory's stress on elite bargains threatens conventional counterinsurgency theory only if the latter is reduced to absurdity. Hazelton claims that traditional counterinsurgency theory, or the "good governance" approach, insists on "reforms for *all*," or reforms "benefiting the *entire population*" (81, 89—our emphasis). It is in this context easy to suggest that the "coercive theory," seeking only to accommodate "elites" (90), has greater practical value.

Yet counterinsurgency theory never demanded *universal* benefits as a precondition for success. Instead, it envisages popular *and* elite engagement as separate processes that may run in parallel. The point is to mobilize networks in favor of the government and against the insurgency, all the while specific conflict-affected populations are co-opted through effective clear-hold-build so as to shield them from the insurgent's reach.⁹ Because the two processes are distinct and often simultaneous, it is not clear why they are presented as mutually exclusive in the text.

As to the claim that elite bargains are, universally, more successful than popular mobilization, this argument denies the multitude of ways in which counterinsurgency campaigns have been won—and lost. Indeed, there is an entire literature on the sustainability of peace through elite bargains, little of which features in Hazelton's bibliography.¹⁰ As it turns out, elite bargains can be effective,¹¹ but much depends on the objective (short-term stability or longer-term peace),¹² the nature of "the enemy" (broad-based or unrepresentative),¹³ and the

⁸ See Grégor Mathias, *Galula in Algeria: Counterinsurgency Practice versus Theory* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011), 24. See also "Introduction," in Simon Robbins, *Dirty Wars: A Century of Counterinsurgency* (Brimscombe Port Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2016).

⁹ U.S. Department of the Army and United States Marine Corps, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3- 33.5. Counterinsurgency*, 7-12, 9-5. See also David H. Ucko, "Beyond Clear-Hold-Build: Rethinking Local-Level Counterinsurgency after Afghanistan," *Contemporary Security Policy* 34:3 (December 2013): 526-551.

¹⁰ See specifically the scholarship of Stefan Lindemann, for example, *Exclusionary Elite Bargains and Civil War Onset: The Case of Uganda*, Working Papers Series 76 (London: Crisis States Research Centre, 2010), <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/120530/WP76.2.pdf>; "Inclusive Elite Bargains and the Dilemma of Unproductive Peace: A Zambian Case Study," *Third World Quarterly* 32:10 (November 2011): 1843-1869.

¹¹ John Higley and Michael Burton, "Elite Settlements and the Taming of Politics," *Government and Opposition* 33:1 (January 1998): 98-115.

¹² Stina Torjesen and S. Neil MacFarlane, "R before D: The Case of Post Conflict Reintegration in Tajikistan," *Conflict, Security & Development* 7:2 (June 2007): 311-332.

¹³ Kieran Mitton, "Where Is the War? Explaining Peace in Sierra Leone," *International Peacekeeping* 20:3 (June 2013): 321-337.

terms involved.¹⁴ In many cases, as seen within scholarship on civil wars, a peace between elites that fails to account for popular grievances often sows the seeds for renewed conflict.¹⁵

Questions of context also undermine Hazelton's emphasis on coercing the population. The assertion that "the government benefits from the use of force against civilians" (81) advances a morally fraught policy on the basis of a sweeping generalization. The violence against civilians is intended to stem their support of the insurgency, yet as Hazelton herself notes in a separate section of her article, one that does not inform her argument, not all insurgencies depend on civilians for their sustenance. Much depends on the type of insurgency, be it a Maoist form of people's war, a criminal enterprise funded through illicit activity, a vanguard-driven focoist struggle, or a foreign-sponsored effort with little need for what the local people provide.

Second, the proposition that the only way to control the population is to subject it to force—the "application of brute force" even (81)—flies in the face of several cases where counterinsurgency measures have succeeded all the while efforts were made to minimize civilian casualties: in Colombia against the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), during the "Surge" in Iraq, in Northern Ireland, or Malaya, the very case of Hazelton's study. In many instances, the population is "controlled" through mobilization, such as with the establishment of *Soldados de mi Pueblo* self-defense units, of local Security Councils, and of Councils of Governance in the rural, formerly FARC-controlled areas of Colombia.¹⁶

Third, Hazelton's theory fails to distinguish between types of violence used against civilians. Most typologies separate discriminate and indiscriminate violence, and are germane.¹⁷ Forcibly relocating villages (as in Malaya) is violence against civilians, but it differs drastically from massacring the inhabitants of those villages. So, too, are there differences between seeking to minimize civilian casualties and completely subordinating the human toll of combat operations to military objectives. All of these constitute 'violence against civilians,' but its nature and type matter both legally and morally.

¹⁴ Lindemann, *Exclusionary Elite Bargains and Civil War Onset*.

¹⁵ See Naazneen H. Barma, "Peace-Building and the Predatory Political Economy of Insecurity: Evidence from Cambodia, East Timor and Afghanistan," *Conflict, Security & Development* 12:3 (July 2012): 273-298; Douglass Cecil North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Zoë Marriage, "Flip-Flop Rebel, Dollar Soldier: Demobilisation in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *Conflict, Security & Development* 7:2 (June 2007): 281-309; Christine J. Wade, *Captured Peace: Elites and Peacebuilding in El Salvador* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2016); Toby Dodge, "The Politics of Iraq: The Exclusive Elite Bargain and the Rise of a New Authoritarianism," in *Iraq: From War to a New Authoritarianism*, ed. Toby Dodge, vol. 52, Adelphi 434-435 (London: Routledge, 2013), 147-80.

¹⁶ See Thomas A. Marks, "Colombian Military Support for 'Democratic Security,'" *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 17:2 (June 2006): 197-220.

¹⁷ See Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and T. David Mason and Dale A. Krane, "The Political Economy of Death Squads: Toward a Theory of the Impact of State-Sanctioned Terror," *International Studies Quarterly* 33:2 (1989): 175-198.

In the end, this article creates two broad theoretical brushes and sets them in competition with one another in a way that is useful neither for analysis nor action. Many of the sources cited, and many more beyond that, acknowledge—indeed emphasize—the simple reality that counterinsurgency must be *tailored* to address whatever fuels and supports the insurgency. And yet, Hazelton states up front that “defeating an insurgency has *three* requirements” (81—our emphasis), and the text thus falls victim to the very rigidity that it seeks to counter, replacing one conventional wisdom for another.

Case Selection and Methods

Hazelton’s case selection and methods raise further questions about the article’s findings. Her claims about “success in counterinsurgency warfare” (80) are made on the basis of three campaigns—Malaya, El Salvador, and Dhofar—only one of which is examined in any detail. Contemporary counterinsurgency is thus explored through the prism of a 60-year-old colonial effort (Malaya), a campaign prosecuted by an autocratic regime (Dhofar), and a third case (El Salvador) that was more of a civil war, ending in negotiations, than a counterinsurgency campaign. Whereas Malaya is incontestably a major inspiration for contemporary theory, Dhofar is a bit-player in the field, tellingly grouped by one author among “the unknown wars.”¹⁸ Further, no source or authority that we are aware of has characterized El Salvador as “exemplary” for its “relatively high level of reforms and relatively low level of intentional use of force against civilians” (94), which undermines its inclusion in the experiment.

The case selection process is unusually opaque: the domain of cases is ostensibly derived from the population of all civil wars since 1945, in which a Western liberal power intervenes, ends the conflict to the benefit of the incumbent, and a peace lasts for at least five years (93-94). We are told that only five campaigns qualify, but only three of them are discussed: the other two are not identified. Without knowing these two other campaigns, concerns of selection bias cannot be assuaged. Regardless, “intervention” is never defined, even though the relevant, and extensive, literature identifies multiple types (e.g., military, economic, diplomatic) and subtypes (e.g., troops, equipment, or air support as subtypes of military intervention).¹⁹ When uncertainty on this point is coupled with non-varying measures of violence, useful analysis becomes nearly impossible.

Hazelton’s methodological usage of the cases is also not specified, but seems to involve within-case analysis: she does not compare cases with variance on dependent and independent variables. However, within-case analysis requires considerable rigor to make causal claims, which we do not find in this article. Similarly, whereas the article appears to apply process tracing, we find no analysis in the examination of the cases that

¹⁸ See chapter 5 in John Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency*, 2nd edition (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

¹⁹ See Patrick M. Regan, “Third Party Interventions into Intra-State Conflicts: Identifying the Conditions of Successful Intervention Attempts,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40:1 (1996): 336-359; Patrick M. Regan, “Choosing to Intervene: Outside Interventions into Internal Conflicts as a Policy Choice,” *Journal of Politics* 60:3 (1998): 754-779; Patrick M. Regan, *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers: Outside Interventions and Intrastate Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); and Michael G. Findley and Josiah F. Marineau, “Lootable Resources and Third-Party Intervention into Civil Wars,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 32:5 (2014): 465-486.

resembles this method.²⁰ Process tracing is used to tie an independent variable to a dependent variable through a causal mechanism by exploring and telling the story of that causal process. In testing theory, process tracing involves defining predictor(s), outcome(s), and how the predictors become outcomes. The case study should then describe in detail this process.

The article does not evince such an effort; variables are noted as present or not—and again, the substantial scope for within-variable variance is never acknowledged. As the case selection was made on the basis of the dependent variable, we know that the counterinsurgent was successful. Without a causal explanation, either in theory or the data, the findings of the paper are, at best, conditional correlates of success in some undefined subset of counterinsurgency. These are not the foundations for the stark and undifferentiating claims that typify the article.

Case Treatment

Convincing analysis might have mitigated the methodological issues, but, here again, much is left to be desired. To validate her coercive theory, Hazelton advances a thesis on the Malayan Emergency that builds on three claims: 1) that the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) was defeated by 1949 through the indiscriminate use of force; 2) that no reforms were undertaken to win popular support; and 3) that success came instead through elite accommodation. All three claims are problematic, even wrong.

When the MNLA was defeated matters to the analysis, because if it lost in 1949, after one year of conventional and frequently indiscriminate British operations, the counterinsurgency efforts that followed can rightly be dismissed as irrelevant. This is the line taken, but the evidence is lacking. Contrary to the claim of MNLA's demise in 1949, yearly emergency incidents increased from 1,000-1,200 in 1948-1949 to almost 5,000 in 1950 and 6,000 in 1952.²¹ Using Hazelton's own figures, MNLA launched 507 terrorist attacks and engaged security forces 939 times *per month* in 1951. Even by 1954-55, it mustered 89 terrorist attacks and 30 military contacts per month—hardly signs of a “shattered” group (100-101).

Following extensive research, there is a loose consensus on the tide having turned by 1951 or 1952, largely as a result of the Briggs Plan, a strategy that wrest control of the MNLA's ethnic-Chinese support base from the insurgents, and its later optimization under Gen. Gerald Templer.²² Hazelton's counterclaim of 1949 being the turning-point therefore seems questionable. Though several primary sources are used to make this claim,

²⁰ Such as in Alexander R. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005); Andrew Bennet, “Process Tracing and Causal Inference” in Henry E. Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2010): 207-220; and Andrew Bennet and Jeffrey T. Checkel (eds.), *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

²¹ Karl Hack, “The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32:3 (June 2009): 672.

²² See Hack, “The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm”; David H. Ucko, “The Malayan Emergency: The Legacy and Relevance of a Counter-Insurgency Success Story,” *Defence Studies* 10:1-2 (March 2010): 13-39; Simon Smith, “General Templer and Counter-Insurgency in Malaya: Hearts and Minds, Intelligence, and Propaganda,” *Intelligence and National Security* 16:3 (September 2001): 60-78.

it would appear as if the British authorities cited—drawn mostly from the early years of the Emergency—either mistook or underestimated the full nature of the threat.²³ Some of the sources used also end up undermining Hazelton’s case, such as the cited assessment of Lt. Gen. R.H. Bower that the insurgents only began avoiding contact with the military by 1953, four years after Hazelton has them “neutered” (101-106).

This analysis proves that force alone did not break the insurgency: that is a mistaken lesson.²⁴ Widespread violence by the British Army did prevent MNLA from establishing itself in the jungle and form a regular army, but it was unable to deprive it of ready recruits and supplies and therefore also of defeating it. This achievement, the literature is quite clear, was the direct result of the Briggs Plan, formulated mid-1950 and implemented in the years that followed.

As to Hazelton’s second claim, that the use of force against civilians in Malaya was systematic and indiscriminate, it is true that the first year or two of the campaign saw mass deportations, abuses of power, and a limited number of massacres. Yet under the Briggs Plan, the emphasis shifted from collective punishment of the Chinese squatter population to a form of population control and security, whereby they were gradually isolated from the MNLA and incorporated into the emerging Malayan state. The article suggests that mass deportation occurred throughout the Emergency (103), when Karl Hack—in the source listed in the relevant footnote—shows unequivocally that they “tapered off rapidly after 1952, the year when citizenship was extended to include at least half Malaya’s Chinese.”²⁵

Hazelton also suggests the British military used “overwhelming force” to relocate Chinese squatters to heavily fortified camps, where they were “screw[ed] down... in the strongest and sternest manner” (103). Missed in this narrative is the evolution of the New Villages from rudimentary encampments into politically engaged, albeit guarded communities, wherein Chinese villagers could own land, work, vote in local elections, and move relatively freely. Forced relocation is a form of violence, but greater nuance is required to capture its effect over the course of the campaign. For example, whereas Hazelton cites a director of operations who late in the campaign spoke of the British military “screwing down” a “sullenly hostile population,” closer scrutiny of the original source, Hack’s article, reveals the statement to have referred only to “one area” that remained problematic amid a broader trend of “improvements,” with “a few resettlements developing into thriving communities.”²⁶ Indeed, as the campaign went on, the New Villages came to represent a first step in regulating the Chinese community as citizens of Malaya, all while they also helped to control the insurgency.

This leads to the most questionable claim, that in countering the MNLA insurgency “the government undertook no reforms” (99). Hazelton’s argument is that because the insurgency was defeated before

²³ Indeed, this tendency is explored in detail in Philip Deery, “The Terminology of Terrorism: Malaya, 1948–52,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34:2 (June 2003), 231-247.

²⁴ Even David French, whose work on Malaya emphasizes the campaign’s coercive dimensions, acknowledges the need for and importance of political consolidation in achieving success. See David French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945-1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 192-194.

²⁵ Karl Hack, “Detention, Deportation and Resettlement: British Counterinsurgency and Malaya’s Rural Chinese, 1948–60,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43:4 (August 2015): 627.

²⁶ Hack, “The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm,” 406.

“accommodation to resettled civilians” and before “the granting of independence in 1957,” reform was irrelevant to the outcome. This argument denies the effects of granting title to land to a Chinese squatter population that previously had been barred such rights. It also denies the effects of British leaders communicating clearly, from 1952 onward, that they were working toward a “united Malayan nation [and] a common form of citizenship for all who regard the Federation or any part of it as their home.”²⁷ It denies the effects of Britain’s creation of communal and intercommunal groupings, from 1949 onward, and their elaboration, in September 1952, of new citizenship rights that would, for the first time since the aborted Malayan Union of 1946, include the Chinese squatter population within the nation of Malaya.²⁸

Hazelton’s claim that “Britain never gained the broad popular support among all ethnic communities,” overlooks the effects of the municipal and federal elections held in 1951 and 1952 and the sweeping of both by a multi-ethnic Alliance Party that would win broad-based support and go on to run independent Malaya. In the end, support for the British government did not matter as much as its replacement by a British-friendly democratic government around which all ethnicities might rally. These advances were crucial in invalidating MNLA’s anti-imperialistic agenda and its exploitation of ethnic grievance—and they all strongly contradict the notion of there having been no reform or of “the government” attracting “no popular support” (99).

It is true, as Hazelton notes, that the political solution in Malaya lay in the elite bargain that Britain helped secure between itself, Malay politicians, Malay rulers, and the Chinese leadership. However, that elite bargain should not eclipse other measures—not least the New Villages, the elections, and the citizenships rights—which over time secured popular buy-in and enabled a gradual and propitious transition of power. Similarly, it is too simplistic to paint the relationship between security forces and the Chinese community as statically oppressive throughout the campaign. As Hack and others have argued, it is important to “avoid artificial levels of contrast between ‘winning hearts and minds’ and coercion... Counter-insurgency in Malaya blended these..., but with the balance between them shifting.”²⁹

The short treatments of Dhofar and El Salvador are also contestable. On Dhofar, Hazelton arrays an impressive number of sources to suggest that reforms were not implemented (107), yet other analyses of the case detail the efforts of Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said, who, having ended the erratic and absolutist rule of his father, lifted restrictions on domestic and international movement, released dissidents, and implemented development plans for the “provision of schools, clinics, housing, and communications.”³⁰ Hazelton’s article does not address whether these efforts helped resolve the conflict, and it also does not consider the impact, in

²⁷ For original version, see Leon Comber, *Templer and the Road to Malayan Independence: The Man and His Time* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2015), 54-55.

²⁸ See Joseph M. Fernando, “Elite Intercommunal Bargaining and Conflict Resolution: The Role of the Communities Liaison Committee in Malaya, 1949-51,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 43:2 (June 2012): 280-301; Pek Koon Heng, *Chinese Politics in Malaysia: A History of the Malaysian Chinese* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988).

²⁹ Karl Hack, “Everyone Lived in Fear: Malaya and the British Way of Counter-Insurgency,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 23:4-5 (October 2012): 690.

³⁰ Ian F. W. Beckett, “The British Counterinsurgency Campaign in Dhofar 1965-1975,” in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008), 179-180.

this case, of the insurgents' significant own-goals—specifically their assault on traditional religious and tribal mores and their reliance on a single line of communication. The case, rather than be treated on its own merits, is made to fit within the preconceived theory.

Similarly, Hazelton explains that the El Salvador government was unable to prevail against the *Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front* (FMLN) insurgency because, although it indiscriminately attacked civilians and resisted reforms, much in accordance with the coercive theory, it did not break the link between population and insurgents and also failed to accommodate elites (99). This interpretation fails to account for the reforms that did take place, starting with the 1984 election—a major signal of political change in this hitherto autocratic nation—and the constitution drafted the previous year, and leading to the compromises of the two-year peace talks, from 1990 to 1992. Whereas the effects of these compromises may not have affected the population writ large, they reconciled two elites through the type of accommodative bargain that Hazelton claims did not take place: “the Salvadoran government,” she writes, “did not accommodate rival elites” (112).³¹

Conclusion

This article's fundamental problem is the creation of the good governance strawman as part of a false dichotomy of counterinsurgency theory. Both in doctrine and in academia, even in practice, counterinsurgency depends on the appropriate admixture of governance *and* coercion. As such, with these two approaches so intertwined, it would be difficult for a scholar to isolate either one in a single war in order to show its dominance over the other. In one passage mid-way through the article, Hazelton acknowledges the flaws in the dichotomy. She notes that “Neither the good governance theory nor the coercion theory explains all cases of counterinsurgency success” and that there is no claim “that governments must choose one theory or the other” (95). These qualifications do not inform the article's analysis or findings, however. Instead, conclusions are made on the basis of three cases whose selection is opaque and treatment questionable.

To Hazelton's credit, much of the counterinsurgency debate has been self-referential, without considering the broader related literatures, and she is hardly alone in examining the problem through a narrow lens. The counterinsurgency debate tends to look for one model through which to win. This is impossible. While Hazelton's article does attack the easiest targets within counterinsurgency scholarship, it effectively replaces one flawed model with another.

There are also profound ethical ramifications in suggesting that the application of force against civilians is integral to counterinsurgent success. Hazelton's article proposes a questionable tradeoff between supporting oppressive violence against civilians versus the human costs saved by quashing insurgencies quickly. As the article does not show that coercion works, or that it works quickly, this is not necessarily the decision that a policymaker must make. There are many shades of gray between the two poles that Hazelton's article offers and we urge the scholarly and practitioner communities to reinvestigate its findings rigorously before incorporating them into policy or doctrine.

³¹ See Wade, *Captured Peace*; David H. Ucko, “Counterinsurgency in El Salvador: The Lessons and Limits of the Indirect Approach,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24:4 (October 2013): 669-695.

David H. Ucko is the director of the Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program and an associate professor at the College of International Security Affairs, National Defense University. He is also an adjunct professor at the Johns Hopkins University. His writing focuses on political violence, war-to-peace transitions, and counterinsurgency. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the NDU, the US Department of Defense, or the United States government.

Jason E. Fritz is a doctoral student in the Department of Justice, Law and Criminology at American University's School of Public Affairs, where his research focuses on the intersection of political violence and policing. Prior to his studies, he was a consultant and researcher on an array of national security and foreign policy issues and a U.S. Army armor officer with multiple tours in Iraq.

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