

## *Counterinsurgency approaches will lose effectiveness over time.*

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### General Description of the Literature:

There are two ways to interpret this hypothesis. The first interpretation is that counterinsurgency approaches lose effectiveness as time evolves, while the second is that counterinsurgency is period-dependent. On this first interpretation, much of the recent literature suggests that small wars are similar across space and time (Long 2006). Kalyvas and Balcells (2010) claim that insurgencies declined following the end of the Cold War as the change in power in the international system changed the incentives for the use of different technologies of VEO activity. Kalyvas and Balcells (2010) test this hypothesis and find support using time-series cross-sectional data. The second interpretation is that counterinsurgency loses effectiveness over time in the same conflict or for the same organization. This is the more likely interpretation of the hypothesis as COIN often asks a large military bureaucracy to adapt to conflicts (Nagl 2005). Military theorists and policy experts mainly contribute to this literature (e.g. Killcullen 2010). No quantitative tests of this hypothesis could be found, although Long (2006), Paul et al. (2010) and Nagl (2005) provide case evidence to support their respective claims. Thus, studies suggest general support for this claim. Research from sociology, business, and management also deal with organizational adaptation, suggesting that certain types of organizations are better at adapting to change than others (Zammuto 1988).

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### Detailed Analyses

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**Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence:** Nagl (2005) and Paul et al. (2010) are the only empirical works on how COIN approaches lose efficacy over time in the same organization or in the same conflict. Nagl (2005) examines two cases—one where the counterinsurgent succeeds (British in Malaya) and one where the insurgents succeed (Viet Cong vs. the US). The contrasting cases are suggestive, but far from definitive, evidence in support of this claim. In contrast, Paul et al. (2010), using a qualitative comparison of multiple cases, offer some lessons for successful COIN and test the notion of flexibility and adaptability, which most closely represents this particular claim. Examining 30 cases, the authors find that flexibility and adaptability were present for all eight of the cases where COIN success is identified, and only six of the 22 failures. The authors hence concluded that this factor contributes to success.

**Empirical Support Score: 6**

**Applicability to Influencing VEOs:** Nagl (2005) examines two countries and two time periods (democracies facing insurgencies in the post-World War II era). Paul et al. (2010) examine 30 cases ranging in time from 1978 to 2006, and including anti-US, anti-Soviet, domestic conflicts in Latin America, Asia, and other regions of the world.

**Applicability Score:** Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs

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**171:** *Ineffective learning by counterinsurgency forces will lead to more VEO activity and success.*



**Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence:** See above

**Empirical Support Score:** 6

**Applicability to Influencing VEOs:** See above

**Applicability Score:** Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs

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