



Cultural Distance and Counterinsurgency Outcome

Master's Programme in Politics and War

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Abstract

Analysing how counterinsurgency outcomes relate to cultural distance has never been a focus for conventional COIN literature. Despite this, cultural distance seems to be a neglected variable influencing outcomes. This thesis explores this large gap by examining how the cultural distance between insurgents and the counterinsurgents relate to outcome. Four concluded COIN campaigns are analysed, compared, and checked for causal congruence. The most crucial case is also subjected to analytical process tracing to verify the causal path and determine its plausibility. The findings are that increased cultural distance leads to COIN losses due to cultural misunderstandings and non-contextual solutions that instead of leading to a win paves the way to strategic loss.

Keywords: *COIN, Counterinsurgency, Culture, Cultural Distance, Outcome, Politics, Troop Ratio.*

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1 Introduction

Five years prior to writing this thesis, I stood with an Afghan National Army officer just below the hills in Almar district, Western Afghanistan. The previous night's firefights were silenced as dawn approached. With his weathered face, worn assault rifle and tired eyes he overlooked the cordon and search operation in the village of Qara Ghoyli. Earlier, a detonation had rolled across the hills, but missed the security forces it supposedly targeted. Our Swedish, Finnish, and Norwegian armoured vehicles bristling with weaponry and technology provided shadow in the scorching heat to its occupants who were recovering in the dirt next to the mine-resistant wheels. Within minutes two Apache attack helicopters glistened in the sun; swooping lower and lower until we could almost touch their wheels. The two gunships, with their immense capability of violence, speed, and target acquisition manoeuvred with calm anticipation; ruling the area and knowing it. As the epitome of military technology, the helicopters were in stark contrast to the grass-reinforced mud houses composing the village. The Afghan officer looked at me and asked in broken English what I thought of his country. I replied truthfully that I found it to be the most beautiful I had ever seen, but very different from Sweden. He showed me his hand, looked at me with sadness in his eyes and paraphrased a Persian saying: "We are like fingers on the hand. Alike, but very different."¹

The conventional reasoning on why the effort in Afghanistan was going poorly was a combination of many things, but as the Afghan officer rightly put his finger on, we were different. We think, act, and value things differently². Despite technological superiority, we as Westerners could not successfully speak to or manoeuvre amongst the civilian population. A Swede cannot be expected to understand life in Qara Ghoyli, just as a local resident cannot be expected to understand it in Sweden. We, the international counterinsurgents, had the technology and training, but local forces could both understand and be understood by the local population. In Afghanistan, we needed to acknowledge our shortcomings and realize that while we excelled at reconnaissance and combat, we severely lacked cultural understanding.³

In interstate warfare, equipment and force employment are analysed to predict outcomes. These modes of explanation serve poorly for COIN outcomes.⁴ Fighting is increasingly conducted amongst people which is a crucial component for intelligence-driven operations such as those generally undertaken in COIN. Thus, it seems rational to increasingly study non-material determinants of outcome.⁵ This thesis' contribution matters as it provides an original take on underlying assumptions of counterinsurgent ability. The subject

¹ For a discussion on my position, see p. 14.

² Stier, Jonas. *Kulturmöten*. Lund: Studentlitteratur AB, 2009, p. 32ff; Hofstede, Geert, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov. *Cultures and Organizations*. USA: McGraw-Hill, 2010, p. 337-340.

³ Gant, Jim. *One Tribe at a Time*. Los Angeles: Nine Sisters Imports, 2009.

⁴ Biddle, Stephen. *Military Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

⁵ Smith, Rupert. *The Utility of Force*. London: Penguin Books, 2006, p. 390

has within the armed forces been discussed on an individual level of analysis leading to an emphasis on having women on patrols. It is assumed that units have adequate cultural ability. When deployed, this becomes obvious to not be the case.⁶

Measuring the cultural distance on a national level can explain COIN outcomes as it indicates the counterinsurgents' contextuality. It has not been studied before so I conduct a plausibility probe as a qualitative exercise with illustrative cases and one deeper case study to show the causal mechanisms. I ask and answer the following question:

Does cultural distance between insurgent and counterinsurgent forces influence the outcome of a counterinsurgency campaign? If so, why?

I study cultural distance and not military culture, cohesion, or troop compositions. Through empirical studies I qualitatively show how this neglected and intuitive variable can be used to predict and contribute to successful outcomes in COIN. The dominant theories on COIN outcome relate to institutional learning, mechanization of forces, and force employment. I study instead cultural distance and its effects on outcomes through four cases; Chechnya, Vietnam, Northern Ireland, and Sierra Leone. These are subjected to a within-case analysis and a cross-case comparison with emphasis on Chechnya.

My findings indicate that COIN in culturally distant regions result in a COIN loss unless it is of a small magnitude, and limited scope due to ethnocentrism leading to misunderstandings and non-contextual solutions. The pursued argument goes as follows:

Cultural distance affects operations. Manifestations of misunderstandings and non-contextual actions found at a national, organizational, and individual level is caused by cultural distance and affect the outcome negatively. Hence, misunderstandings should be ubiquitous in COIN losses and sparse in COIN wins.

In the following sections I review the current state of literature on COIN outcomes, the operationalization of culture, and cultural distance. Following that, I present my theory of COIN outcomes and describe the methods to gauge its relevance. The theory is the result of an iterative process and is closely knit to the case analyses following the chapter on methods. The cases are presented and individually analysed, and for Chechnya there is also a cultural analysis, included for transparency, quantifying and operationalizing Chechen culture into the proposed theory. Lastly the findings are discussed and summarized as conclusions.

⁶ My own conclusion after many and long discussions with deployed and redeployed military personnel, of different nationalities, specializations, and positions.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Counterinsurgency

Most theories in COIN assume that hard work and strong commitment at all levels in the COIN effort leads to success. The implicit assumption is that any force, anywhere, can achieve a successful outcome. The variables gauged are related to the national commitment in the shape of troop ratios, troop distribution among the population, and intensity.⁷ Other work indicates that a COIN effort is doomed without local forces and that the COIN force is more effective if it has a higher portion of local forces. And having adequate forces does not account for explaining an outcome, meaning that outcome is dependent on more than troop numbers.⁸

These approaches do not account for the cultural variable. Another influential study into COIN outcomes relate to polity, stating that a democracy places itself in an insolvable trinity of problems when committing to COIN. This cannot account for cases where the polity is not a modern democracy. While the argument is sound, it does not fully explain cases where a democracy wins.⁹

An explanation for COIN outcome by a quantitative study looking at two hundred years' worth of civil wars explaining outcomes by the level of mechanization, degree of external support for insurgents, and whether the intervening force is labelled as an occupier also falls short. It discusses the need for engaging with the population and suggests investing in more infantry forces and their human capital through training language and area-specific skills. It has short-comings in its predictive capability as it does not account for the shifts and changes in the character of war for the two centuries of conflict it studies. These deficiencies are acknowledged, and the main argument is against mechanized forces for COIN.¹⁰

⁷ Galula, David. *Counterinsurgency Warfare*. Westport : Praeger Security International, 2006, p. 75-94, also see the foreword and p. x; Nagl, John A. *Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife*. Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 97ff; Dixon, Paul. "Hearts and Minds"? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq. *Journal of Strategic Studies*. 32:3, 2009, p. 353-381; Glenn, Russell W. *Rethinking Western Approaches to Counterinsurgency*. Oxon: Routledge, 2015, p. 231f; Simpson, Emile. *War From the Ground Up*. London : C. Hurst & Co., 2012, p. 150f; Gventer, Celeste Ward, David Martin Jones, and M.L.R. Smith. *The New Counter-Insurgency Era in Critical Perspective*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 17-26; Gompert, David C. and John Gordon IV. *War by Other Means*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2008, p. 369ff.

⁸ Goode, Steven M. "A Historical Basis for Force Requirements in Counterinsurgency." *Parameters*, 2009, Winter ed., p. 53; Thiel, Joshua. "COIN Manpower Ratios: Debunking the 1 to 10 Ratio and Surges." *Small Wars Journal*, 2011, January 15 ed., p. 9.

⁹ Merom, Gil. *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 230f; Glenn (2015), p. 248-253, these observations are highly supported in Hofstede et al (2010), p. 414f.

¹⁰ Lyall, Jason, and Isaiah Wilson III. "Rage against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars." *International Organization*, 2009, 63 ed., p. 67-106.

These results approach the problem from the other notional side. Whereas I focus on the people involved, the aforementioned focus on force employment. The latter seems to draw from Biddle's theory that military effect is produced in the interaction between manpower and equipment built on cases of the World Wars-calibre.¹¹ I propose instead that the effect in COIN stems from the interactions between manpower and culture. Hence, NATO would still struggle in Afghanistan despite deploying nothing but barely motorized infantry and its support due to cultural deficiencies.¹²

Studies relating to how military force conduct in COIN settings affect outcome cannot fully explain why outcomes for expeditionary COIN forces have such a bad track record.¹³ Anecdotal evidence suggests that the attitudes of the security forces and local population interact and create effect.¹⁴ What all these studies lack is an understanding of national cultures as a facilitator or hindrance for successful COIN. The body of literature has very little attention on how national cultures interact in conflict.¹⁵ Despite this, doctrines and COIN literature often stresses the exceptionalism of COIN and importance of cultural understanding to facilitate a dramatically increased success rate.¹⁶ With this in mind, it is puzzling that no study has unearthed which conditions and contexts those engaging in COIN should be drawn from. The closest is one of force composition for United Nations peace support missions, which concludes that a fractionalized force composition increases the safety of civilians. Explicitly it also states that research into cultural distance between security forces and locals is needed.¹⁷

I propose that the wealth of cases in COIN can be explained by looking at the neglected but intuitive variable of cultural distance, with force ratio and political meddling as controls. In doing so, it is without the

¹¹ Biddle (2004).

¹² Gant (2009).

¹³ Paul, Christopher, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill. *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2010, p. 145.

¹⁴ Rubinstein, Robert A. "Intervention and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Peace Operations." *Security Dialogue*, December 2005, p. 528-531; Rubinstein, Robert A. "In Practice: Cross-Cultural Considerations in Complex Peace Operations." *Negotiation Journal*, 2003, Jan ed., p. 41-46. In Somalia, the intervenors at one point saw their actions mainly as a humanitarian food-distributing mission whereas the local populace saw an attempt to convert Muslims to Christianity or attack the political leadership in Somalia. The intervenor's legitimacy, standing, and authority are all cultural constructs and context-dependent. These anecdotes are also very supported by those from my own inquiries and discussions.

¹⁵ Dandeker, Christopher, and James Gow. "Military Culture and Strategic Peacekeeping." *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 1999, 10 ed., p. 65ff, 73; Bove, Vincenzo, and Andrea Ruggeri. "Kinds of Blue: Diversity in UN Peacekeeping Missions and Civilian Protection." *British Journal of Political Science*, 2015, 46 ed., p. 681-700.

¹⁶ Gventer, Jones and Smith (2014), p. 22; U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 3-24 Counterinsurgency*. 2013, Ch. 1, 3; U.S. Army. *Field Manual 3-24.2 Tactics in Counterinsurgency*. Washington, 2009, Ch. 1, Appendix 1; González, Roberto J. "The US Army's Serial Plagiarists." *Counterpunch*. 2015-05-01; Ansorge, Josef Teboho. "Spirits of War: A Field Manual." *International Political Sociology*, 2010, 4 ed; Smith, M. L. R. "COIN and the Chameleon." In *The New Counter-Insurgency Era in Critical Perspective*, by Celeste Ward Gventer, David Martin Jones and M. L. R. Smith. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 32-53; Connable, Ben, and Martin C. Libicki. *How Insurgencies End*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2010, p. 153.

¹⁷ Bove and Ruggeri (2015).

assumption that highly trained and equipped militaries have good chances at winning a COIN campaign. I will in the next section introduce and define culture and relevant mechanisms.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Culture is “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others”. It is learned and set apart from human nature and individual traits.¹⁸ This is a consciously broad definition.

The operationalization on cultural distance used within this thesis emanates from the IBM Study, the first of its kind, incorporating 76 nations or regions. It was a series of value surveys among IBM employees, conducted 1967-73, thereby controlling for variables other than nationality. Most criticism is related to the existence of one or several dimensions and their feasibility.¹⁹ The results have been academically validated more than 400 times and can be used to compare national cultures, even though it was not its original purpose.²⁰ Each of its six dimension indexes ranges 0-100 and are constructs of relative comparison calculated from weighted mean scores. To compare; the total difference between Norway and Sweden is 67, out of a theoretically possible 600 points. For this paper, I use this work as it has high validity in other studies, and that argument is furthered as I do not rely on single dimensions but use it as a way of operationalizing cultural distance²¹ through national aggregates.²²

The U.S. military uses Hofstede's work to understand foreign cultures, also in operational planning. But the dimensions are there simplified as dichotomies. The dimensions are on a national unit of analysis but are used to explain individual behaviours and by that promote stereotypical and prejudiced conceptions of indigenous people. Studies of military operational culture does not explicitly ask the uncomfortable question on whether all militaries can successfully engage in all regions.²³ Inadequate cultural

¹⁸ Rubinstein (2003), p. 31, Hofstede et al (2010), p. 5-8.

¹⁹ Schmitz, Lena, and Wiebke Weber. “Are Hofstede's Dimensions Valid?” *Interculture Journal*, 2014, 13 ed., p. 12-18; Littrell, Romie F. “Cultural Value Dimension Theories: Hofstede -A Work in Progress.” *Insights*, 2012, 12 ed., p. 3-5.

²⁰ Hofstede, Geert. “Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context.” *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2011, 2:1. p. 7.

²¹ I am mostly using the functionalistic lens, even though I will also draw on the cognitivist aspect. Stier (2009), p. 27-36.

²² Hofstede et al (2010), p. 56. Each questionnaire answer is scored 0-5, and the mean is used. For different dimensions, different questions are weighed. See Hofstede, Geert H., Allen I. Kraut, and S. H. Simonetti. “The Development of a Core Attitude Survey Questionnaire for International Use.” In *Working Paper*, by European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management. Brussels, 1976; Hofstede, Geert official webpage. *Values Survey Module*. See Appendix A for a brief walkthrough on the dimensions.

²³ Salmoni, Barak A., and Paula Holmes-Eber. *Operational Culture for the Warfighter*. Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2008, p. 20ff.

understanding is a possible contributing cause of U.S. military and diplomatic failures for the past 150 years, and is due to the simplifications of culture noted above likely to continue doing so. Unless a state only intends to fight wars on its own soil, there must be abilities and infrastructure to understand and leverage foreign culture regardless of amount of kinetic action.²⁴ These things indicate a difficulty in grasping the implications of culture in military endeavours.

Those American units most successful in Afghanistan were those who reduced their footprint and coached the indigenous forces. They used the aid resources at their disposal to further the governance of local elders instead of raising support for the foreign troops. Furthermore, the most successful units also engaged with their Afghan counterparts and worked towards understanding them and their needs. When reduced troop numbers precluded meaningful operations by foreign troops they prioritized training and coaching indigenous forces.²⁵

When encountering a foreign culture, people tend to believe that the culture is homogenous instead of varied individually, spatially and temporally; the fallacy of detachable cultural descriptions. This simplification can lead to cemented dehumanizing stereotypes impervious to change, creating a spiral of dysfunctionality.²⁶ Whenever these feelings of inadequacies in cultural understanding arise, ethnocentrism²⁷ tends to increase.²⁸ Xenophobia is a universal human phenomenon, regardless of whether the feared is real or imaginary.²⁹ Someone committing to live within a different culture will experience an initial euphoria before the inevitable culture shock due to the unconsciously rooted values contrasting with the new environment.³⁰ Changing one's attitudes requires not only to redirect sentiments, but changing the perception of oneself. Hence, attitude adjustments are often perceived as an existential threat.³¹ In part, this explains the difficulties encountered when introducing radical societal changes, such as girl schools in Afghanistan.³²

²⁴ Castro, Robert T. "The Application of Cultural Military Education for 2025." In *Applications in Operational Culture: Perspectives From the Field*, by Paula Holmes-Eber, Patrice M. Scanlon and Andrea L. Hamlen. Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2009, p. 118-127.

²⁵ Luján, Fernando. "Beyond Groundhog Day." *Foreign Affairs*, 2012, p. 181-183; Gant (2009).

²⁶ Rubinstein (2005), p. 531f. This happened to the Canadians in Somalia; the image of Somali teenagers as 'looters' were deeply ingrained and stereotyped in the Canadian soldiers, making them interpret all other actions of Somali teenagers as a manifestation of 'looters', rendering them unable to dislodge their cemented views leading to the torture and murder of Shidane Abukar Arone in 1993.

²⁷ The belief that one's own culture is superior and also the inability to understand other cultures through *their* cultural framework.

²⁸ Stier (2009), p. 148.

²⁹ Stier (2009), p. 137ff; Sandole, Dennis J. D. "Virulent Ethnocentrism: A Major challenge for transformational conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the post-cold war era." *Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, 2002, 1 ed., p. 7-11.

³⁰ Hofstede et al (2010), p. 384-388.

³¹ Stier (2009), p. 131.

³² *What Tomorrow Brings*. Dir. Beth Murphy. USA: PBS. 2014.

A common response to the unknown and unexplainable is antipathy. It is not a rational thought but an emotional response. If this response is rationalized, xenophobia becomes a systematic hostile behaviour against what first triggered the emotional response. If this hostility recruits political and/or scientific arguments to its cause it cements itself and becomes resilient. This also paves way to, or is already an integral part of destructive ideologies such as *Apartheid*.³³ To mitigate this process, regular exposure, preferably individually, leads to less generation of negative impact from the intercultural context.³⁴

Successful enterprises in cross-cultural contexts require expert cultural skill, particularly in a military context. Development is unattainable by anyone but the local population.³⁵ It is crucial to understand that culture, as the software of the mind, shapes how we interpret and interact with the world around us, making it impervious to work through the existing mechanisms on-site. Each culture has its own more-or-less unique methods for conflict resolutions making it important to use culturally anchored and contextual methods to solve conflicts instead of doing it the way a culturally distant actor would. Western prescriptive theories are not universally applicable but actions should be undertaken through indigenous institutions.³⁶ As human beings we learn *how* to think and assign meaning to things; rationality correlates with nationality.³⁷

Language is one of the more overt manifestations of culture and definers of group belonging. Languages are catalysts for biculturality as they contain different reference frames for understanding the world. Culturally adequate translation takes this into account, making it "an undervalued art".³⁸

Furthermore, inter-cultural skills and understandings are critical for achieving the desired goals in peacekeeping missions. These skills cannot be expected to evolve during a deployment, as cultural understanding is not facilitated by operational stress. Cultural understanding "precludes the introduction of a strategy that is useless and unproductive."³⁹

³³ Stier (2009), p. 139ff; Johansson, Thomas, and Fredrik Miegel. *Kultursociologi*. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1996, p. 263-267.

³⁴ Hofstede et al (2010), p. 384–388.

³⁵ Ucko, David, and Robert Egnell. "Options for Avoiding Counterinsurgencies." *Parameters*, 2014, Spring ed., p. 19-21; Rubinstein (2005), p. 534-543; Hofstede et al (2010), p. 416-419.

³⁶ Azari, Jaz, Christopher Dandeker, and Neil Greenberg. "Cultural Stress: How Interactions With and Among Foreign Populations Affect Military Personnel." *Armed Forces & Society*, 2010, 36 ed., p. 585-603.

³⁷ Stier (2009), p. 32ff; Hofstede et al (2010), p. 337-340. Please note that there are sometimes bigger differences between urban and rural dwellers than between nationalities.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 389ff, 393f; Stier (2009), p. 48ff; Thornton, Rod. "Conclusion: The Way forward." In *Dimensions of Counter-insurgency*, by Tim Benbow and Rod Thornton. New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 212ff.

³⁹ Duffey, Tamara. "Cultural Issues in Contemporary Peacekeeping." *International Peacekeeping*, 2000, 7 ed., p. 144f, 163; Rekkedal, Nils Marius. *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency*. Vällingby: Elanders Gotab, 2006, p. 317.

2.2.1 A Theory of Cultural Distance and COIN Outcome

My proposed theory, drawn from everything previously mentioned as well as the cases examined below, explains the impact of cultural distance between the insurgent and counterinsurgent forces. Cultural distance is the main variable, with troop ratio and degree of political meddling as controlling variables to explain COIN wins with a high cultural distance.

The important finding is the mechanism and interconnectivity between the variables:

$$\text{Outcome} = \text{Cultural Distance} \times (\text{Troop Ratio} + \text{Political Meddling})$$

With case numerics inserted, the following results emerge:

	Cultural Distance	Troop Ratio⁴⁰	Political Meddling⁴¹	Outcome; Numeric
Chechnya	278±75	0.198	1	Loss; 330±90
Vietnam	203	0.035	1	Loss; 210
Northern Ireland	59	0.017	1	Win; 60
Sierra Leone	225	0.0002	0	Win; 0.045

Table 1: Case Numerics

2.3 Research Problem

The current understanding of COIN implicitly rests on the assumptions that actions determine outcome. The current state of research has not explored the national cultural aspects and proper methods for selecting contributors to COIN efforts but implicitly assumes that all can be successful. Intuitively that is incorrect, as there should be cultural determinants to COIN outcome⁴²:

Does cultural distance between insurgent and counterinsurgent forces influence the outcome of a counterinsurgency campaign? If so, why?

I will examine one hypothesis to answer the question and gauge the plausibility of this mechanism: Lower cultural distance increases the likelihood of successful COIN.

⁴⁰ Calculated from the cases as maximum number of own deployed security forces/indigenous population. Note that local security forces are not included in this calculation.

⁴¹ Here I categorize the variable as dichotomous. With further research it might as well be a ratio.

⁴² This stems from my own military experiences and long discussions with psyops specialists, officers, intelligence analysts, and soldiers deployed to foreign conflict zones.

2.4 Concepts

The concepts of insurgency and counterinsurgency are contested and arbitrary. For the sake of this thesis, I will use the following definition of insurgency: "An organized movement seeking to replace or undermine all or part of the sovereign authority exercised by one or more constituted governments through the protracted use of subversion and armed conflict."⁴³

Counterinsurgency is the combined efforts to combat insurgency. Do note that this conceptualization does not account for polity or legitimacy of government, and includes repressive means.

Cultural distance is in this thesis used as the amount of closeness of culture as operationalized and numerically measured in Hofstede's dimensions at the societal, or national level. Hofstede is a tool for cultural comparison, and not a critical part of this thesis. Using other large-n value survey studies should yield the same results.

3 Method

The study probes the plausibility of a theory of cultural distance and COIN success. In this thesis, I discover that there is a neglected causal mechanism deriving from cultural distance. I see, in the spirit of George and Bennett, cases as representing not only themselves but the whole universe of cases; a case is an "instance of a class of events."⁴⁴ I conduct a within-case analysis and cross-case comparison using causal interpretation. The growing consensus that this is the soundest method provides my thesis with sufficient backing to claim causal inference⁴⁵. For all cases I study causal congruence, and for the case of Chechnya I use analytical process tracing methods to establish the link between cultural distance and outcome. To establish causality, I see whether there are overt manifestations of ethnocentrism or xenophobia at societal/national, organizational, and individual level; by definition permeating the entire societal culture⁴⁶. All three levels are needed to control for individual traits and organizational cultures. Taken together, these things give my study the inferential leverage it needs to show my proposed theory's viability.⁴⁷

The dependent variable is the outcome for the counterinsurgents and the independent variable is cultural distance. Troop ratio, and political meddling are used as controls. Troop ratio is a ratio of 0-1 and political meddling is dichotomous. The latter is a risky variable, as COIN by definition is a political undertaking. I use it as a 1 if the intervenors overrule or attempt to overrule regional sovereignty. No consideration is due to

⁴³ Katagiri, Noriyuki. *Adapting to Win*. USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015, p. 1-8; Glenn (2015), p. 8.

⁴⁴ George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Harvard University, 2005, p. 17.

⁴⁵ George and Bennett (2005), p. 18f.

⁴⁶ Stier (2009), p. 34f.

⁴⁷ George and Bennett (2005), p. 178ff, 200-212, 235-262.

time constraints taken as to whether the local government or security forces are grossly incompetent, or the amount of local security forces.

3.1 Case Selection⁴⁸

Win	Loss
Northern Ireland 1969-98	Chechnya 1994-96
Sierra Leone 1991-2002	South Vietnam 1960-75

Table 2: Case Selection

The cases are chosen per available empirics on culture and outcome with two COIN wins and two COIN losses. All four cases are critical for the theory's validity. For Chechnya with its high cultural distance and troop ratio; if a relation cannot be found here it cannot be found anywhere. Vietnam shows that cultural distance and political meddling provides a defeat even though the troop ratio is not astronomical as in Chechnya. For Northern Ireland, the low cultural distance shows that a political meddling by itself does not constitute a COIN loss. And, Sierra Leone is critical as it has a high cultural distance but almost no troop ratio and no political meddling but still is a COIN win.

A win is when the counterinsurgent foils the insurgents' attempts at assuming sovereign control or reducing the existing government's ditto and is favoured by the outcome. A loss is the opposite where the insurgents achieve their goals partly or fully.⁴⁹

3.2 On Sources, Epistemology, and Ontology

As a consequence of the discrete resources of time and data available, I choose to use the data on *national* culture for the belligerents as opposed to trying to find and operationalize national *military* culture. Those responsible for a counterinsurgency are not just the armed forces but also the political leadership, departments, governmental- and non-governmental organizations. The national culture is thus for the

⁴⁸ Paul et al (2010), p. 5-10; Gompert and Gordon IV (2008), p. 373-396. For outcomes, see Paul et al (2010), p. 20, 26; Connable and Libicki (2010), p. 159-162; Nagl (2005), p. 173f; Edwards, Aaron. "North Ireland's "Troubles," 1969-98." In *A History of Counterinsurgency, Vol 2*, by Gregory Fremont-Barnes. Santa Monica: Praeger, 2015, p. 272.

⁴⁹ Victory and defeat are difficult and contested concepts within the realm of counterinsurgency. It is difficult, if not impossible, to decisively win for the state entity dependent on the war aims it sets up. Further, insurgencies do not *end* in a traditional sense, but splinter and fracture into smaller entities of which some irreconcilable individuals never fully stop struggling. The end or final victory over an insurgency is thus very difficult to measure. Connable and Libicki (2010), p. 154f.

scope of this work usable.⁵⁰ Cultural change is excruciatingly slow and change leading to differences is even slower. The comparably few years that differ for the most longitudinally distant case is too little to make a noticeable impact on the results.⁵¹

As culture is notoriously difficult to study in a systematic fashion, I choose to be parsimonious with own interpretations of culture and will draw upon previously quantified cultural measurements.⁵² I use data available on the four insurgencies and their responses to see if outcome is related to cultural distances between belligerents. To do so, the cultural dimensions of Hofstede are each compared and the differences, measured only in positive numbers, summed up. For Chechnya 1994-96, there are no available measurements and hence I apply Hofstede's work on literature concerning Chechen society in order to extrapolate cultural dimensions.

I use mostly peer-reviewed secondary sources to describe each case. Primary sources in the shape of newspapers and autobiographies are used to show the causal mechanisms between culture and outcome, and large parts of the analysis on Chechen culture is based on primary source ethnographic and anthropological literature. The Hofstedian work on cultures is a secondary source, though usually treated as a primary source, and is given time constraints used due to it having cultural measurements on the chosen cases.

It is impossible to purely objectively study cultures.⁵³ Hence, this study will undeniably be affected by my own presuppositions and those of the material referenced. As a consequence of my methodological choices I believe my results to lie close to the objective truth. I am hence positioning myself and this work to the positivistic side of academic epistemological and ontological discussion: Further attempts at academically answering my research question will yield the same general result and would by that strengthen the conclusions found herein.

3.3 Author's Position

I am an officer in the Swedish Armed Forces with a total of ten years in its Army. As seen in the introduction I have been deployed to Afghanistan. While serving there in multinational teams in a multinational setting in a culturally distant region I have first-hand gained insights into some of the realities of culturally distant COIN. It is no secret that Swedish servicemembers predominately train towards a conflict where the Russian Federation is an aggressor. I am though a Russophile officer, having an immense respect for contemporary

⁵⁰ Hofstede et al (2010), p. 10f, 47, 81, 87, 337-340, 368-371; Rubinstein (2005), p. 531.

⁵¹ Hofstede et al (2010), p. 453ff, 466-477.

⁵² Hofstede et al (2010), p. 49, Polletta, F., and M. Kai Ho. *Frames and Their Consequences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 3.

⁵³ Stier (2009), p. 25-39.

Russian operational design but a low tolerance for military incompetence, and none for war crimes. The last may be influential in my analysis on Chechnya, but I wish to stress that my bias is not against Russia per se, but its and its service members' conduct. An important military ethos is to adapt and overcome problems, meaning that no task is too difficult when ordered. Based on that, I should as an officer advocate the abilities of the forces. This work and its conclusions are contradictory to that as I argue that there are severe limitations of the Armed Forces when it comes to COIN deployments. Thus, my argument is strengthened rather than hampered by being an insider.

4 Cases

4.1 Chechnya 1994-96

Dimension ⁵⁴	Russia	Chechnya (Estimates) ⁵⁵	Difference
Power Distance	93	37±12,5	56±12,5
Individualism	39	37±12,5	2±12,5
Masculinity	36	62±12,5	26±12,5
Uncertainty Avoidance	95	12±12,5	83±12,5
Long-term Orientation	81	37±12,5	44±12,5
Indulgence vs. Restraint	20	87±12,5	67±12,5
Sum			278±75

Table 3: Russia's and Chechnya's cultural dimensions

4.1.1 Russian Loss

In 1994, Chechnya was a non-functioning republic, suffering from incompetent leadership, human rights-abuses and risked destabilizing the whole northern Caucasus. These were among the explicit reasons for the Russian intervention. There was severe lack of understanding for the Chechens and their ability to resist.⁵⁶ The officers' corps was itself in disarray and did not share a common understanding of their objectives and means to reach them, lending the operation to be conducted as each saw fit. Because of the war and how it was conducted, 577 officers are thought to have been disciplined, sacked, or in protest left the army. To further complicate things, the Russian troops were gathered *ad-hoc* and untrained, barely

⁵⁴ Hofstede et al (2010), p. 57, 96, 142, 192, 255, 284.

⁵⁵ See the chapter Chechen Cultural Analysis below for an explanation on the numbers and how I arrived at them.

⁵⁶ Karny (2000), p. 240-244; Rainow (2015), p. 336; Jaimoukha (2005), p. 28f, 93; Schultz and Dew (2006), p. 123; Russell (2007), p. 23f.

knowing each other⁵⁷. The initial response comprising of 23,700 troops⁵⁸, was quickly upped to 38,000 for the disastrous assault on Grozny on New Year's Eve in 1994⁵⁹. The invasion was meant to compel Dudayev into submission and end internal Chechen conflict. When the initial onslaught failed, Russia had exhausted all coercive options but assaulting and occupying the whole of Chechnya⁶⁰. Intuition and improvisation dominated the Russian decision-making process.⁶¹ Together with stereotypical views of Chechens, the outcome was not unexpected. Chechens were for most Russians either of two stereotypes: The evil, fierce, blood-thirsty warrior proficient in treachery who fights with no surrender, or the lazy and stupid coward selling out his friends at best opportunity.⁶² The solution? "A good Chechen, is a dead Chechen."⁶³ One would be hard-pressed to find more obvious manifestations of the fallacy of detachable cultural descriptions, xenophobia, ethnocentrism, and racism than the Chechen case. Russia thought it was going for an easy victory against a fractured society, but was gravely mistaken due to its own inabilities of cultural understanding.

Dudayev failed to unite Chechnya, but Russia provided its unification giving Dudayev ample reason to continue the fight, not the least since Russian President Boris Yeltsin defied his own promise to leave Chechnya alone.⁶⁴ As the war started and increased its momentum, the Chechen brand of Sufism also showed its militant side in the form of *ghazzavat*, holy war. Scores of men took the oath to fight until their deaths and the conflict started to take the form of one between Russia and Islam. This was, however, understood too late and the gross failures of the Russian Federation in its attempts to subjugate the region in 1994-1996 paved the way for Wahhabism and the Second Chechen War, starting in 1999. The increased political and religious fervour of the Chechen fighters increased Russian reliance on firepower culminating in the razing of Grozny a few months into the war.⁶⁵

In 1995, the Russian forces numbered 218,000 troops. The Chechen resistance was quickly defeated in all but the mountain regions.⁶⁶ The Russian forces, increasingly alarmed by the resistance that formed and cemented itself from Russian military engagements began to view all Chechens as fighters: Russian officers said that they would kill ten mujahedeen for each dead Russian. Instead, they killed civilians: "In the daytime

⁵⁷ Seely, Robert. *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800-2000*. Bodmin: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001, p. 224, 231f, 242-259, 268f, 272.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 225.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 241.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 237f.

⁶¹ Payin, Emil A., and Arkady A. Popov. "Chechnya." In *US and Russian Policymaking with Respect to the Use of Force*, by Jeremy R. Azrael and Emil A. Payin. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1996, p. 26-29.

⁶² Gallagher, James P. "Who's Afraid Of The Big, Bad, Chechens?" *Chicago Tribune*. 1996-01-23.

⁶³ Абдулаев, Еркебек. *Позывной "Кобра"*. Крылов, 2006.

⁶⁴ Safire, William. "Essay; Whom to Root for in Chechnya". *The New York Times*. 1994-12-19.

⁶⁵ Specter, Michael. "The World; Faith Reinforces Hate in the Caucasus." *The New York Times*. 1995-01-15..

⁶⁶ Rainow, Peter J. "Russian Counterinsurgency in Chechnya, 1994-96." In *A History of Counterinsurgency, Vol 2*, by Gregory Fremont-Barnes. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015, p. 343ff.

a man is a civilian, and in the night he will shoot you."⁶⁷ Troops started holding villages hostage for ransom of fighters or weapons, firing indiscriminately into them if failing to comply.⁶⁸ The Russians concluded that the Chechen resistance had miserable prospects in a continuation of the struggle, despite that Dudayev at this time had at least 45,000 supporters to his cause.⁶⁹ To set these numbers in perspective; the population in Chechnya was in 1990 around 1.1 million people.⁷⁰

Both sides committed atrocities, but the side predominately accused by non-aligned groups was the Russian. As a Groznyj resident said: "The Army troops who fought were extremely savage [...] they would kill for no reason at all."⁷¹ In 1996, upon entering an eerily silent village, a Russian battalion discovered crucified and castrated Russian soldiers with bullet holes in their chests. The battalion rounded up all men in the village and for the half a day it took, castrated them.⁷² There were few attempts to understand the opponents, if not to kill them.⁷³ As a young Russian soldier in 1996 said: "The Chechen people suspect us of fearing them so much we need to destroy them. And I think, basically, they are right."⁷⁴ His words eerily echo that of General Yermolov in the 19th century: "These people can never be pacified. [...] They can only be annihilated."⁷⁵

The hard-pressed Chechen resistance chose now to conduct raids in Russia proper. In January 1996, Russian President Boris Yeltsin called Chechen fighters holding civilians hostage in a hospital in the town of Kizlyar "mad dogs" that "must be shot".⁷⁶ This should be juxtaposed to the Chechen self-image as a wolf, the derogatory term of calling them dogs and that Chechens taking civilian hostages are even lesser beings.⁷⁷ Later, in March 1996, Chechen fighters assaulted Grozny causing political damage on Moscow's influence and prestige in Chechnya. The following summer, Chechen fighters managed to retake the major cities, including Grozny, in open fighting with terrible results for the Russian forces. After ten days of fighting a peace agreement, including withdrawal of Russian forces was signed. Through the agreement, the Chechen

⁶⁷ Ford, Peter. "Reports of Russian Abuses Mount in Chechnya War." *The Christian Science Monitor*. 1995-02-13.

⁶⁸ Seely (2001), p. 269-275.

⁶⁹ Rainow (2015), p. 337-343.

⁷⁰ Karny, Yoa'v. *Highlanders*. New York: Farrar, Straux & Giroux, 2000, p. 266f; Knoema. *Chechnya, Republic of – Resident population, annual average*; Human Rights Watch. *Russia's War in Chechnya: Victims Speak Out*. 1995 January.

⁷¹ Lieven, Anatol. *Chechnya*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, p. 50f.

⁷² Babchenko, Arkadij. *Krigets Färger*. Stockholm: Ersatz, 2007, p. 155f.

⁷³ Миронов, Вячеслав. *Я был на этой войне. Чечня 95*. 1999.

⁷⁴ Specter, Michael. "How the Chechen Guerrillas Shocked Their Russian Foes." *The New York Times*. 1996-08-18.

⁷⁵ Nordland, Rod. "These People Can Never be Pacified" *Newsweek*. 1995-01-15.

⁷⁶ Seely (2001), p. 282.

⁷⁷ Schultz, Richard H. & Dew, Andrea J. *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, p. 113f.

problem was to be resolved through negotiations on the framework of international law. Chechen independence was hence recognized and the war ended.⁷⁸

A particular artefact of stereotypical behaviour can be seen in the filtration centres established by Russian authorities where Chechen prisoners were tortured and often injured without hearings. There are also reports of abuse of local Chechens by Russian soldiers outside these centres. In one incident involving an invalid from the Second World War, the commander receiving the complaint replied: "Well, you don't have to live here, and if you don't want to leave, we will pack you into carriages and export you out."⁷⁹

Medecins Sans Frontier left, due to the situation in Chechnya, its non-alignment policy and openly accused Russian troops of razing villages, targeting civilians, and disregard for humanitarian law. The same claims are backed by reports from the Human Rights Watch, Russian service members, and journalists. There are numerous stories of beatings, tortures and summary executions. In contrast, there are very few examples of criminal investigations into Russian forces, indicating the aforementioned contempt for Chechens.⁸⁰

Russian General Ivan Babichev was during the march to Chechnya quoted as saying that the operation was unconstitutional and not something they wanted, promising not to fire on civilians. A week into the first assault on Grozny, he assumed command of the western army group and pushed with the assistance of heavy artillery support into the city.⁸¹ During the assault, the peak number of detonations, in Grozny was over 4,000 per hour as compared to Sarajevo's 3,500 per *day*.⁸²

⁷⁸ Rainow (2015), p. 343-346; Seely (2001), p. 274-289; Lieven (1998), p. 32.

⁷⁹ Lieven (1998), p. 121f, 131-135; Seely (2001), p. 285f; Human Rights Watch. *Three Months of War in Chechnya*. 1995 February. Note the reference to the Stalin-era deportations. According to more recent reports the filtration centres continued operation during the Second Chechen War and is a practice still being used today: Eleftheriou-Smith, Loulla-Mae. "More than 100 gay men 'sent to prison camps' in Chechnya" *The Independent*. 2017-04-11.

⁸⁰ Medecins Sans Frontieres. *Civilians Targeted – Humanitarian Law Flouted in Chechnya*. 1996.; Medecins Sans Frontieres. *War Crimes and Politics of Terror in Chechnya 1994-2004*. 2014 September; Reeves, Phil. "Russia is accused of genocide in Chechnya" *The Independent*. 1996-04-18; Human Rights Watch. *Chechnya: Report to the 1996 OSCE Review Conference*. 1996-11-01. D816; Human Rights Watch (1995 January); Human Rights Watch (1995 February); Seely (2001), p.253-258, Galeotti, Mark. *Russia's Wars in Chechnya 1994-2009*. New York: Osprey Publishing, 2014, p. 36ff; Bellamy, Christopher. "What Happened to the Glorious Red Army?" *The Independent*. 1995-05-02; Babchenko (2007); Seierstad, Åsne. *Ängeln i Groznyj*. Stockholm: Bonnier, 2008.; Politovskaya, Anna. *Tjetjenien - Sanningen om Kriget*. Stockholm: Ordfront, 2003.; Procházková, Petra. *Aluminiumdrottningen*. Litauen: Ersatz, 2006.; Lieven (1998), p. 13-146; Ford (1995-02-13); http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/commission/country52/1996_13.htm (Accessed 2017-04-14); Korzhov, Maxim. "From Chechen War, Stories of Brutality." *SFGate* 1995-02-08.

⁸¹ Seely (2001), p. 227 ,249; Bellamy (1995-05-02).

⁸² Russell, John. *Chechnya - Russia's "War on Terror"*. Oxon: Routledge, 2007, p. 71; Finch, Raymond C. III. *Why the Russian Military Failed in Chechnya*. Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, USA.

4.1.2 Outcome Analysis

The prevalence of the *vertikal*⁸³ in Russian society, and even more so in a strictly hierarchical organization such as the army makes it doubtful that xenophobia originated from the lower levels and worked itself upwards. The long history of confrontation, *caucasophobia*, the *vertikal* and military hierarchy all support the same conclusion: The ethnocentrism and hostility towards Caucasians in general, and Chechens in particular was not originating from a particular level of hierarchy. It found its source in a national culture and its inherent difference from that of the Chechens.⁸⁴

The above all show with little doubt that there was a dehumanization of Chechens by Russian forces. And it stemmed from Russian inability to understand them:

The foaming Terek⁸⁵ rushes on
His stony shores between,
And there the wicked Chechen creeps
And whets his dagger keen.⁸⁶

[The commanding officer of the 119th paratrooper-airborne regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel Vladimir] Glebov was simultaneously decorated with the Hero of Russia medal and declared a criminal by the Military Prosecutor's Office for "murdering civilians with special cruelty" during an unsanctioned antiguerrilla operation in several districts of Djohar [Grozny], the Chechen capital.⁸⁷

My findings show that there were overt manifestations of ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and racism at Russian societal/national level, organizational level, and individual level. They are also analytically connected to the cultural distance through previous research on the subject. Russian national strategy, using military force to compel Chechnya proved to be a non-contextual solution derived from flawed conceptions of Chechen responses. The unexpected Chechen unity against a Russian invasion led to the usage of devastating firepower, wrongly believing it to provide victory.⁸⁸ On the individual level, xenophobia and racism angered the Chechens who were targeted regardless of affiliation or not with fighters. The high number of troops contributed to the loss by hindering understanding of the conflict and the people caught in it through interactions. The political meddling in Chechnya also contributed to a loss

⁸³ Russian concept of exercising top-down stovepipe authority. Russell (2007), p. 17ff, 87.

⁸⁴ Russell (2007), p. 17.

⁸⁵ A river flowing through the Caucasus and Chechnya.

⁸⁶ 'Cossack Lullaby', 1840, by Mikhail Lermontov. Widespread Russian nursery rhyme. Russell (2007), p. x; Schultz and Dew (2006), p. 112.

⁸⁷ The Jamestown Foundation. "Accused Chechen War Criminal Becomes Tussian Media Hero." *Monitor*. Vol.7:28, 2001-02-09.

⁸⁸ The strategies of the sword and samovar. Lieven (1998), p. 129.

by forcing a non-contextual solution to the specific issues facing Chechnya. In all, the cultural distance and Russian unawareness of it made the Russian outcome in Chechnya into a loss.

4.1.3 Chechen Cultural Analysis⁸⁹

The Chechen society is patriarchal-patrimonial, based on familial structures and is organized in 150 to 170 patron-based clans, *teips*, co-existing with each other and organized into nine tribes. Normally, each *teip* is autonomous and the tribes rarely interact unless needed. The Chechens are interested in acquiring large power-bases and are thus traditionally welcoming to foreigners wanting to live in their regions. They have sometimes even been invited to become clan members or form their own clans.⁹⁰

Honour and self-less sacrifice are important concepts in the Chechen culture. A warrior believes himself to be worth ten of his enemies and prefers death to shaming his family, *teip*, or tribe⁹¹. The concept of freedom is central in the Chechen psyche. Freedom is connotated with 'well-being' and 'peace'; used in greetings, toasts, and good-byes.⁹² The individual's action is reflected upon its family and tribal context. At the same time, it is considered a good thing if one is acting to maximize both the familial honour and the individual gain. For most parts of life, Chechen men act as individuals instead of as a collective. Each Chechen holds a firm right in voicing opinions in council-meetings and within families all are treated equally but have distinct responsibilities.⁹³ The then-president⁹⁴ Dudayev in 1994 was confronted by one of his close employees who told him that she did not approve of his intentions of allowing one-third of all Chechens perish in the struggle for freedom. Even though she told him that she would tell the people about his freedom-for-blood scheme there were no hard feelings and they departed as friends.⁹⁵

The Chechens view themselves as mountain men, valuing self-governance and adhere to tribally motivated loyalty to their kin.⁹⁶ Between clans and tribes there are variations between norms, customary laws, traditions and, in some cases, language. The intra-Chechen divisions can be found along these differences and sometimes manifested in blood feuds and vendettas. The martial components of warriorhood, protectionism of the *teip* and blood feuds of the *adat* custom lie at the core of Chechen culture and have

⁸⁹ Stier (2009), p. 36-39.

⁹⁰ Russell (2007), p. 36; Jaimoukha, Amjad. *The Chechens*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005, p. 144; Schultz and Dew (2006), p. 105ff, 131.

⁹¹ Schultz and Dew (2006), p. 106-108.

⁹² Russell (2007), p. 18, 35; Jaimoukha (2005), p. 140, 144, 167.

⁹³ Jaimoukha (2005), p. 87-100.

⁹⁴ I choose to write about the Chechen president and nation as if they truly were a separate nation-state as that is how they viewed it themselves and how the conflict is portrayed even though the conflict technically still qualifies for an insurgency instead of interstate warfare.

⁹⁵ Karny (2000), p. 267ff.

⁹⁶ Russell (2007), p. 18, 23.

traditionally restricted the use of violence.⁹⁷ The Chechen sufists, which might be called zikrists after their *zikr* prayer ceremony, were prevalent in Chechnya at this time. The headmaster of Grozny's by 1994 thriving Islamic University explained this variant of Islam: "Our goal is to reconcile warring parties, not to incite them. Kunta Haji⁹⁸ is our spiritual leader, and he taught us to unite, not divide. From time to time we hear of new schools of Islamic opinion whose aim is disunity. We reject them."⁹⁹

The history between Russia and Chechnya is one of confrontation. The Chechens have since their first meetings with the Russian Empire in the eighteenth century had a fearsome reputation and as early as the 1780s Lt-Gen Potemkin, Russia's commander in the Caucasus, drew the conclusion that Chechen subjugation would only be possible through annihilation. The Soviet collectivization and nationalization during the early mid-20th century was starkly opposed by the Chechens, claiming it disrupted their long-functioning traditional land-distribution-system.¹⁰⁰ In 1944 close to 400,000 Chechens were deported to Kazakhstan and Siberia under guise that they had aided the Germans during the war, even though Chechens made up 20,000-40,000 of the Soviet manpower. It is estimated that at least one-third died in the train-cars or on the frozen steppes where they reached their destinations.¹⁰¹ Similar statements and actions of ethnocidal intents are frequent in the history of Russia and Chechnya, also counting the destruction of Grozny on New Year's Eve in 1994.¹⁰² Chechen fierceness against Russian forces has increased after each incursion.¹⁰³ The conflict is often portrayed in Russia as a clash of civilizations and in Chechnya as a resistance movement, sometimes using the Sufi term of *ghazzavat*, holy war, to bolster resistance.¹⁰⁴

The Chechen force, pitted against Russian forces was comprised of autonomous fighters from *teips* or villages. Often, these grouped together to a size of a few hundred fighters led by an independent commander dependent on tribal belonging. No central control and little coordination with other formations was the preferred mode of fighting.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷ Karny (2000), p. 228f; Schultz and Dew (2006), p. 109, 111-114.

⁹⁸ A shepherd who during his pilgrimage to Mecca in early 19th century had a Damascene encounter and upon his return to Chechnya founded the sufi Islamic variant of tolerance opposed to the stricter interpretations of Islam. Karny (2000), p. 205-273.

⁹⁹ Karny (2000), p. 255, what the principal is referring to is mainly Wahhabism.

¹⁰⁰ Jaimoukha (2005), p. 94.

¹⁰¹ Russell (2007), p. 18, 30, 33-39, 43-46; Karny (2000), p. 226f.

¹⁰² Russell (2007), p. 29ff, 39, 59-63; Karny (2000), p. 214-217.

¹⁰³ Schultz and Dew (2006), p. 137.

¹⁰⁴ Russell (2007), p. 26, 35; Schultz and Dew (2006), p. 137; Rainow (2015), p. 355f.

¹⁰⁵ Schultz and Dew (2006), p. 124, 138-141; Rainow (2015), p. 347.

As a by-product of the two last wars, women have taken up jobs previously held by men. This made some men to join the nationalist ranks to reassert their manhood. According to Jaimoukha, the basic social unit was in 2007 threatened and there were suggestions of a possible future change to matriarchy.¹⁰⁶

A few comments on Russian cultural dimensions are in order. Russia is, as indicated in table 3, characterized as a society where power is distributed top-down, in a *vertikal* of power. Certainty and control with formalized rules to minimize ambiguity is preferred over the philosophy of mission command.¹⁰⁷ Noteworthy is the *caucasophobia* in many aspects prevalent in Russian society. It is seen in a contempt for Caucasians in opinion polls, public discourse and framing after terror attacks. Even among the Russian intellectuals these xenophobic stereotypes are deeply embedded.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, thrift, national pride, servicing others, and an appeal to reason are seen in the scores, as well as sternness and a willingness to have a strong government.¹⁰⁹ The femininity score represents the importance of a good working relationship with the direct supervisor, working with people who cooperate well, living in a desirable area, and having employment security. The score also suggests that high wages, recognition, opportunity of advancement and having a challenging job are less important.¹¹⁰

Surveys used to extrapolate Hofstede's dimensions have not been conducted in Chechnya and thus lacks data. In the following paragraphs, I decode Chechen national culture. When estimating and comparing the values, I use a scale of four positions; 'low', 'fairly low', 'fairly high', and 'high' corresponding to the quartiles of the index. Each represented numerically by 12, 37, 62, 87, and an uncertainty degree of $\pm 12,5$ to account for the entire quartile range. Note that I am measuring the Chechen traditional tribal system and not the proclaimed Chechen government where there is a major difference between the two, such as in the meting out of justice. The following analysis is coarse but serves its intended purpose of showing the difference between Chechen and Russian culture in table 3. The difference emanating from this analysis is so large that it is difficult to invalidate its implications in the thesis despite the crudeness in its quantification.

4.1.3.1 Power Distance

As the Chechen psyche values freedom to such a high extent, the autonomy of tribes, *teips* and individuals, the ability to voice one's opinions on councils and opposition of one dominant ruler instead of autonomous tribes gives scores towards the low end. Important to note is the prevalence of autonomous fighting

¹⁰⁶ Jaimoukha (2005), p. 100.

¹⁰⁷ Hofstede et al (2010), p. 196-213. Note that uncertainty avoidance does not mean risk avoidance.

¹⁰⁸ Russell (2007), p. 16f; Karny (2000), p. 270-273.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 252-276, 294-297.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 135-185 .

formations, indicating how important freedom-of-action is considered to be¹¹¹. At the same time, according to only the key differences of the dimension there are factors prevalent in large power distance cultures, not the least in the form of patriarchal-patrimonial leadership, indicating that the culture has a fairly high power distance. But when considering the amount of stress autonomy and freedom holds in all viewed literature the total in my estimation is fairly low. Chechens seem to prefer being coordinated instead of led.¹¹²

4.1.3.2 Individualism

On the grounds that Chechens live by the *teip* system and values family, clan, and individual freedom; preferably making them all converge, it becomes difficult to at first classify the Chechen individualistic dimension. But upon further analysis, it seems to be lean stronger to the collectivistic side in this dimension. This is mostly due to: The importance of the *teip* membership and marriage-regulations. On the other hand, when it comes to politics and ideas, the key differences between collectivism and individualism is for the Chechen society favouring individualism. Thus, my estimation is fairly collectivistic.¹¹³

4.1.3.3 Masculinity

The Chechen society is from a Western perspective one of peculiarities. These apply also to the masculinity index. Assertiveness and martial components of Chechens in general and its males in particular is prevalent. But, so are also feminine values of equality, autonomy, tenderness and integration. It also seems quite clear that males to a larger extent have jobs compared to females even though it is slowly changing. When scoring

¹¹¹ It could, of course, be due to inability to lead larger formations, but it seems more plausible that it is connected to the values of clan autonomy and freedom. Note that Dudayev, the president of Chechnya was a former Soviet general. Karny (2000), p. 228; Seely (2001), p. 247.

¹¹² Hofstede et al (2010), p. 53-88, 413; Tyldum, Guri, and Pål Kolstø. "Value Consensus and Social Cohesion in Russia." In *Nation-Building and Common Values in Russia*, by Pål Kolstø and Helge Blakkisrud. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005, p. 38-42. Found key differences: High: *Parents teach children obedience, Respect for parents and older relatives is a basic and lifelong virtue, The ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat, or "good father", Privileges and status symbols are normal and popular, Might prevails over right: whoever holds the power is right and good, Power is based on tradition or family, charisma and the ability to use force.* Low: *Social relationships should be handled with care, Hierarchy in organizations means an inequality of roles, established for convenience, Decentralization is popular, Managers rely on their own experience and on subordinates, Pluralist governments based on the outcome of majority votes, There is more dialogue and less violence in domestic politics, participative theories of management: Christian New Testament, Marx,* (Salzman 2001), p. 60-63

¹¹³ Hofstede et al (2010), p. 89–134 Found key differences: Individualist: *The same standards are supposed to apply for everyone: universalism, Employees are "economic persons" who will pursue the employer's interest if it coincides with their self-interest, Everyone is expected to have a private opinion, Autonomy is the ideal.* Collectivist: *People are born into extended families or other in-groups that continue protecting them in exchange for loyalty, Children learn to think in terms of "we", Resources should be shared with relatives, Adult children live with parents, Trespasses lead to shame and loss of face for self and group, Hiring and promotion decisions take employee's in-group into account, In-group customers get better treatment (particularism), Relationship prevails over task.*

on clear key differences in Hofstede's coding, I reach the conclusion that for this dimension, the Chechen society is in Hofstede's conceptualizations fairly feminine.¹¹⁴

4.1.3.4 Uncertainty Avoidance

Coding uncertainty avoidance with Hofstede's tools is not very difficult. The result is a close call in favour of accepts uncertainty. Much is attributed to attitudes towards the key points of state, nationhood, general norm, and family values. The autonomous fighting formations referenced above are tangible manifestations of this; even when national security is at stake, uncertainty is accepted.¹¹⁵

4.1.3.5 Long-term Orientation

According to the discernible key differences the Chechen society is fairly short-term oriented. This is mainly due to the emphasis on tradition, family pragmatism, and national pride.¹¹⁶

4.1.3.6 Indulgence vs. Restraint

The main indicators of this dimension are related to subjective well-being. This is infeasible to estimate without a broadly distributed survey. The other key differences found for this dimension are difficult to

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 135-185 Found key differences: Masculine: *Men should be assertive, ambitious, and tough, The standard pattern is that the father earns, and the mother cares, Women's liberation means that women are admitted to positions so far occupied by men, Double standards: men are subjects, women objects, Competition in class; trying to excel, Competitive sports are part of the curriculum, Aggression by children is accepted, There is a lower share of working women in professional jobs, The political game is adversarial, with frequent misjudging, Few women are elected in political positions.* Feminine: *Both men and women can be tender and focus on relationships, Resolution of conflicts by compromise and negotiation, Preference of smaller organizations, People work in order to live, Permissive society, Immigrants should integrate, Tender religions.*

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 187-234 Found key differences: Avoids: *Citizens are negative toward politicians, civil servants, and the legal system.* Accepts: *Uncertainty is a normal feature of life, and each day is accepted as it comes, Comfortable in ambiguous situations and with unfamiliar risks, What is different is curious, Family life is relaxed, There should be no more rules than strictly necessary, Work hard only when needed, Time is a framework for orientation, Tolerance for ambiguity and chaos, Focus on decision process, Fast result in case of appeal to justice, Citizen protest is acceptable, Tolerance, even of extreme ideas, More ethnic tolerance, Positive or neutral toward foreigners, Defensive nationalism, One religion's truth should not be imposed on others, Human rights: nobody should be persecuted for his or her beliefs.*

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 235-276 Found key differences: Long-term: *Perseverance, sustained efforts toward slow results, Having a sense of shame, Living with in-laws is normal, Marriage is a pragmatic arrangement, Investment in lifelong personl networks, guanxi, Priority is given to common sense, Disagreement does not hurt,* Short-term: *Respect for traditions, Service to others is an important goal, Proud of my country, Tradition is important, Monumentalist (Minkov), Family pride, Slow or no economic growth of poor countries, Appeal of fundamentalisms, Appeal of folk wisdom and witchcraft.*

operationalize with the available data, and do subsequently not hold for a very qualitative and useful analysis. The results, however, point toward Chechen society being indulgent.¹¹⁷

4.2 South Vietnam 1960-75

Dimension	The United States	Vietnam	Difference
Power Distance	40	70	30
Individualism	91	20	71
Masculinity	62	40	22
Uncertainty Avoidance	46	30	16
Long-term Orientation	26	57	31
Indulgence vs. Restraint	68	35	33
Sum			203

Table 4: The USA and Vietnam's cultural dimensions

4.2.1 American Loss

The Republic of Vietnam -from here on I will use the term 'South Vietnam'- was home to an estimated 15.3 million people.¹¹⁸ The story starts in 1954 when North and South Vietnam were created. The United States immediately committed to providing military assistance¹¹⁹ to South Vietnam in order to establish and preserve a non-communist state in South Vietnam. Throughout the years, American support and influence increased in South Vietnamese politics. The Americans deployed advisory teams from the very start of South Vietnamese independence. In late 1959 to early 1960 there was an upsurge in Viet Cong¹²⁰ and North Vietnamese forces stepping up their attacks in South Vietnam to overthrow the South Vietnamese government. In conjunction with this, the American General in charge of the military advisory and assistance mission lifted the restriction on advisors to serve in battalions and regiments and allowed them to go on operations.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 277-298. Found key differences: Indulgent: *A perception of personal life control, Higher importance of leisure, Loose society, Maintaining order in the nation is not given high priority*, Restrained: *Unequal sharing of household tasks is no problem*.

¹¹⁸ Statistical Office of the United Nations. *Demographic Yearbook 1971*. New York: United Nations, 1972, p. 115 The number is an extrapolation of the year 1963.

¹¹⁹ MAAG – Military Assistance Advisory Group, would later become part of the MACV – Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

¹²⁰ The guerrilla forces seeking to overthrow the South Vietnamese government.

¹²¹ Marston, Daniel. "The Vietnam War: The Spectrum of Conflict, 1954-75." In *A History of Counterinsurgency, Vol 2*, by Gregory Fremont-Barnes. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015, p. 148-153.

In the early 1960's the U.S. Embassy and the military assistance mission had poor relations. The ambassador was replaced in conjunction with the newly elected president Kennedy's inauguration. A new method of working with the South Vietnamese government, persuasion instead of coercion, surfaced and was used for the two years of 1961-63. In the first four years of this decade, U.S. forces increased its workforce from 685 troops at the end of 1960 to more than 20,000. An important motif in the American dealings with South Vietnam was that the U.S. "could control both the course of the war and the conduct of its ally."¹²² Likely done because the Americans thought they were better equipped to conduct a counterinsurgency. The implementation of American policy in Vietnam was also decided and orchestrated by those on scene in South Vietnam. In 1962 the new Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) was set up, but it would take further two years until it had consolidated the functions it was supposed to have. The hierarchies and jurisdictions of rivaling commands, agencies, and personalities often impeded effective planning and execution.¹²³

In late 1963 the South Vietnamese president was with American acquiescence ousted by his generals and killed, much to the joy of the North Vietnamese leadership. The same month, John F. Kennedy was assassinated. In the following January, another military *coup d'état*, was bloodlessly executed. The American leadership gave support to the coup leaders and the new president, Lyndon Johnson, replaced the top U.S. General in South Vietnam with Lt-Gen Westmoreland. The North Vietnamese escalated their action and in 1964 the Gulf of Tonkin-attack on a U.S. destroyer resulted in the authorization of using military force in Southeast Asia. The next year, operation *Rolling Thunder*, with its indiscriminate bombings, was initiated.¹²⁴ Approval was given for committing 180,000 troops and the war escalated further as Viet Cong had gained an upper hand, and North Vietnamese regular formations started to battle South Vietnamese and American forces.¹²⁵ The American operation in Vietnam and its jumbled mess of command and control hinged on individual rather than bureaucratic stability. The ethnocentric view that the Americans knew better and were better had disastrous consequences in the war, not the least for the South Vietnamese government's authority and legitimacy. The soldiers were socialized to a point where Vietnamese inferiority made it irrelevant as to how Vietnamese prisoners were treated and "killing becomes insignificant".¹²⁶

In 1967 the U.S. numbered 437,000 troops, and the American population realized that the war was unlikely to end soon. In the meantime, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces prepared for a decisive victory throughout South Vietnam; the *Tet* offensives of 1968. The following engagements in and around major

¹²² Hennessy, Michael. *Strategy in Vietnam: The Marines and Revolutionary Warfare in I Corps, 1965-1972*. Westport: Praeger Publishing, 1997, p. 22.

¹²³ Marston (2015), p. 154-169; Nagl (2005), p. 49ff.

¹²⁴ Marston (2015), p. 168-173.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 175-185.

¹²⁶ Pippert, Wesley G. "Viet Cong Prisoners Tortured And Killed." *The Times*. 1970-12-03.

population centres offered the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese a splendid propaganda opportunity, even though the expected popular uprising never materialized and the offensive after one month proved to be tactical disasters rendering massive casualties. Using the body count metrics in use by U.S. forces, this was a tactical victory. By this time, the U.S. had a total presence of 530,000 troops. In total, three failed major offensives were launched against South Vietnamese and U.S. forces in 1968, strategically tipping the favour against them despite the body count metrics showing otherwise.¹²⁷

The official American understandings of the dangers of North Vietnamese control were greatly exaggerated, and likely prolonged the war longer than necessary. The killings of South Vietnamese people by the North that were supposed to occur in the event of a defeat were based on calculations with excruciatingly poor methodologies and biased understandings, leading to scores of unnecessary civilian killings by the logic of hurting the opponent¹²⁸. The gross misunderstandings of the cultural context made steady way to the demise of the American operations in Vietnam.¹²⁹

Following the 1968 *Tet* offensive, General Westmoreland who at that time was in charge requested another 200,000 troops. A senior defence official then wrote to the new Defence Secretary warning him that “[...] military victory in Vietnam appears possible only at the price of literally destroying SVN [...] tearing apart the social and political fabric of our own country [...]”.¹³⁰ The next year, the U.S. started its redeployment of troops out of Vietnam after the clear victory in repelling also this year’s *Tet* offensive. Because of the withdrawal, the mission gradually shifted to an advisory operation.¹³¹

By 1972 the U.S. forces were down to 158,000 and overall security in South Vietnam was relatively good. Incursions into Cambodia and Laos by joint U.S. and South Vietnamese operations had deprived the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese of the possibility to launch a full-scale invasion the next few years and the abilities of the indigenous forces were increasing. Later in 1972, North Vietnam launched a major offensive on four fronts resulting in yet another defeat and 100,000 dead on each side after six months of fighting. This time, U.S. involvement was limited to advisors and combat enablers, including air support. After the fighting ebbed out, U.S. and North Vietnamese officials met to discuss a cease-fire which eventually was signed and put into effect for 60 days in the first quarter of 1973. The time was used to stop all assistance from the U.S. and start its withdrawal. In July, all funding for the area stopped, rendering the South

¹²⁷ Marston (2015), p. 185–195.

¹²⁸ Schelling, Thomas C. *Arms and Influence*. USA: Yale University, 2008, p. 1-34.

¹²⁹ Barnett, Richard. “a bloodbath in South Vietnam?” *The New York Times*. 1972-10-15.

¹³⁰ Michaels, Jeffrey. “Our Own Worst Enemy.” In *The New Counter-Insurgency Era in Critical Perspective*, by Celeste Ward Gventer, David Martin Jones and M. L. R. Smith. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 73.

¹³¹ Marston (2015), p. 196–199; Nagl (2005), p. 171–174.

Vietnamese forces in desperate need of equipment and making corruption in the forces soar. By April 30, 1975, the government collapsed, and was defeated by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces.¹³²

4.2.2 Outcome Analysis

In Vietnam, the operation was for all practical reasons military with support of political means. The leadership of South Vietnam and American key personnel changed turbulently in the first years of the 1960's making a long-term coordinated effort difficult. What was even more crucial was the reliance on American understanding in Vietnamese matters. The Americans, being so culturally distant and unilingual, lacked by heritage the understanding required to achieve success in Vietnamese COIN and unduly became victims of ethnocentrism as the belief of own superiority in domestic Vietnamese concerns shows. The inability to critically gauge the unsound conclusions on ethnic cleansing in the event of defeat indicates that xenophobic sentiments were rationalized and cemented by that report.

The Americans, believing their methodologies for conducting the war as well as steering the South Vietnamese government, manifested rationally sanctioned ethnocentric, xenophobic, and racist actions at state leadership, organizational, and individual levels as seen above. These manifestations, analytically connected to the cultural distance, show that the U.S. was unaware of its cultural inadequacies and consequently lost.

¹³² Marston (2015), p. 199–207.

4.3 Northern Ireland 1969-98

Dimension	The United Kingdom	Ireland ¹³³	Difference
Power Distance	35	28	7
Individualism	89	70	19
Masculinity	66	68	2
Uncertainty Avoidance	35	35	0
Long-term Orientation	51	24	27
Indulgence vs. Restraint	69	65	4
Sum			59

Table 5: The UK and Ireland's cultural dimensions

4.3.1 British Win

The conflict itself is sometimes framed as one of independence and the division was possible to demarcate between Catholics and Protestants. As Northern Ireland is the only region of Ireland where Protestants are in majority, and the only region to stay with England when the south became independent, Protestants moved to institutionalize Catholic subjugation. By 1969 the Catholic areas and inhabitants were much worse off than the Protestant counterparts and 'the Troubles' started. Religious division was though "a badge or label rather than a cause" in the region that was home to 1.55 million people.¹³⁴

When the British Army deployed into Northern Ireland, it learned some harsh lessons. Between 1970 and 1973, lessons from the Malayan Emergency were used to counter the insurgency, with a series of setbacks as a result and those practices disbanded. By 1972, Belfast was the area of operations for at least 27,000 soldiers, and by the second half of the year those deployed had passed through pre-deployment training including cultural awareness. Despite being so culturally proximate, the British military acknowledged the differences and tried to account for them. This year was the apex of troop numbers as well as the year of the *Bloody Sunday* where British paratroopers opened fire upon and killed 13 catholic civilians during a demonstration. Note that the massacre happened early in the year, prior to the inclusion of cultural

¹³³ Note that for the work of Hofstede, the UK includes Northern Ireland. These numbers are hence likely erring on the high side and should in a specific study on Northern Ireland logically produce a lower cultural distance than used in this thesis.

¹³⁴ Glenn (2015), p. 80-84, 103 ; Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. *Historic Population Trends*.

training.¹³⁵ The local parliament, Stormont, was dissolved the same year by the British government, and direct rule from London established.¹³⁶

Prior to 1977 the military had the lead in operations, but from 1977 the operation was law-enforcement led, supported by the army whenever needed.¹³⁷ Institutional learning was high in the British security forces, making them adapt as they realized that their initial approaches did not work. The British efforts shifted gradually from a military operation to law-enforcement and diplomacy throughout the conflict.¹³⁸

As the campaign progressed, the IRA became pressed and increasing attention was given to non-violent means manifested in 1981 with the phrase "Armalite and ballot box"¹³⁹ at Sinn Feinn's annual conference. Many IRA profiles privately started to doubt the feasibility of armed struggle to unite Ireland. By the mid-1980's the IRA tried to escalate their armed struggle through a series of high-profile attacks over the coming years using portable rocket launchers, heavy machine-guns, command wire guided missiles, and a truck laden with a metric tonne of explosives driven through the perimeter of a security installation. The success of these attacks were the deaths of a handful of soldiers, IRA fighters and an acceleration towards strategic victory for the counterinsurgent forces.¹⁴⁰ The conflict ended with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, and an outcome most properly labelled a success for the COIN forces.¹⁴¹

4.3.2 Outcome Analysis

As the British after the early failures with Malayan methods of COIN gradually became more sensitive towards the conflict and its context, the insurgency was contained and eventually dissolved. The ability to create and sustain an operation that was culturally sensitive to the local population and insurgents was paramount in the success. One artefact of this is the casualty rates stating that more security force deaths outnumbered those of the insurgents.¹⁴² The belligerents were culturally proximate, shared language, and measures were taken to de-militarize the operation. The cultural proximity leading to an understanding on both sides majorly contributed to institutional learning, contextual solutions, and hence a COIN win.

¹³⁵ Edwards (2015), p. 256-263;

Kearney, Vincent. "Security Forces in the Troubles." *BBC*. 2013 February.

¹³⁶ Northern Ireland (Temporary Provisions) Act 1972. 1972 Chapter 22.

¹³⁷ Edwards (2015), p. 265f.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 267-272; Dixon (2009), p. 260-271; Glenn (2015), p. 88-105.

¹³⁹ Edwards (2015), p. 267. Armalite is an American small arms manufacturer. Armalite website: <https://armalite.com/> (Accessed 2017-03-23).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 267-271.

¹⁴¹ *The Northern Ireland Peace Agreement*. 1998-04-10.

¹⁴² Kelters, Seamus. "Violence in the Troubles." *BBC*. 2013 February.

4.4 Sierra Leone 1991-2002

Dimension	The United Kingdom	Sierra Leone	Difference
Power Distance	35	77	42
Individualism	89	20	69
Masculinity	66	46	20
Uncertainty Avoidance	35	54	19
Long-term Orientation	51	N/A*	N/A*
Indulgence vs. Restraint	69	N/A*	N/A*
Sum			150/225*

*Sierra Leone is not measured in the two last dimensions. If the mean difference of the previous dimensions is used, the total difference reaches 225. These numbers correspond well with the other three cases.

Table 6: The UK and Sierra Leone's cultural dimensions

4.4.1 British Win

Sierra Leone was after a century and a half of British colonial rule granted its independence from Britain in 1961. The origin of conflict can be seen through various lenses but two stand out; the crisis of a patrimonial system in decline unable to provide even the most basic necessities to its citizens and armed forces. And, the inherent profits in informalizing and controlling the diamond industry and subsequent revenue. The country was gradually bled of its resources and the governmental income plummeted during the years of 1964 to 1985. School children not only daily brought books but also desks to schools and patients were forced to pay for virtually everything done by the hospital staff. The country was among the poorest in the world, despite its wealth of natural resources.¹⁴³

In 1991, peace was discontinued as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), aided by Charles Taylor's Liberian rebel forces, engaged government forces deployed to secure the border to Liberia. During the open hostilities, the government was ousted several times over by different groups. Civilians were subjected to arbitrary and brutal killing, systematic rape, maiming, and looting by all sides. The diamond mines in Sierra Leone were controlled by RUF forces and used to fuel the conflict, leading to the term 'blood diamonds'.

In 1998, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intervened militarily on the government side leading to a fragile peace. When it broke, rebel forces advanced on Freetown, the Sierra Leonean capital, and managed to reach it when the United Kingdom in 2000 deployed 1,000 soldiers to evacuate British citizens. They secured Freetown and its surroundings along with its aligned forces and after doing so shifted to provide training and logistical assistance. The other intervening states gained confidence

¹⁴³ Kargbo, Michael S. *British Foreign Policy and the Conflict in Sierra Leone 1991-2001*. Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2006, p. 28-62.

from this operation and gradually regained military control over the countryside through both UN and ECOWAS forces, and by 2002 the conflict ended. For the duration of conflict, the population was just below 5 million people of whom at least 50,000 were killed and 2 million displaced.¹⁴⁴

4.4.2 Outcome Analysis

The British intervention made the other intervening nations bolster their resolve at a crucial time, when they contemplated leaving the country altogether. What more is that the British operation was small in both time and resources, and limited in scope. The cultural distance was high, but after securing crucial areas the British transitioned to an advisory mission to those culturally proximate to the actors in the Sierra Leonean conflict, leading to an overall success in Sierra Leone.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Statistics Sierra Leone. *2004 Population and Housing Census*. 2006-02-23; Encyclopedia Britannica. "Sierra Leone Civil War."; British Broadcasting Company. "Britain's role in Sierra Leone" *BBC*. 2000-09-10; Reuters. *FACTBOX-Sierra Leone's civil war*. 2007-08-02.

¹⁴⁵ British Broadcasting Company. "2000: British marines leave Sierra Leone." *BBC*. 2000-06-15.

5 Discussion

Imposing a culturally distant way of conducting operations, does little to reach real success in the area of operations. COIN solutions must originate from within the cultural understanding.¹⁴⁶ An approach that, quite to the contrary, for the counterinsurgents seems inappropriate can be a catalyst in achieving success. Cultural sensitivity and reciprocation can yield fast results while at the same time exposing the actor to potential disgrace by superiors, as the Swedish contingent commander in Bosnia 1991 experienced.¹⁴⁷

When deploying troops or diplomatic resources to foreign cultures, it is important to be aware of the proclivity to ethnocentric attitudes. When deployed to a war-torn country, the operational stress and the poor surroundings cements that view.¹⁴⁸ Receiving adequate cultural training is difficult, as it for any larger numbers of troops is relegated to learning about the culture rather than how to act in accordance with its unspoken rules. Cognition, emotional aspects, and discourse are hard to cover when scores need training under tangible time constraints.¹⁴⁹

Previous research into troop ratios show that it is context dependent. In my theory, culture and political meddling provides that context. The crucial understanding is the inter-variable interaction, and that interaction explains COIN outcomes through cultural distance.

The findings from illuminating COIN efforts through the cultural prism shows how the fallacy of detachable cultural descriptions and ethnocentrism disrupt an effort. The resulting misunderstandings and non-contextual solutions accelerate a strategic loss. A COIN response to a culturally distant region must be meticulously tailored and conducted in accordance with the host-nation's culture. Doing this for a Western democratic state is likely very difficult by virtue of moral high ground and intolerability of practices impeding humanitarian values. Domestic considerations strongly intervene in the conduct of operations, or as Gil Merom more eloquently puts it: "In spite of the efforts to tailor the strategy and force structure according to societal fundamentals [...] found themselves at the mercy of the contradictions between the requirements of the Vietnamese battlefield and the values of American society."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Hofstede et al (2010), p. 406f, 426-429; Glenn (2015), p. 249-253. Anecdotes concerning this is common among officers deployed to Afghanistan in Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams at all levels. A common phrase was that "the Afghans are just waiting for us to leave so they can do things the way they are used to and want."

¹⁴⁷ Henricsson, Ulf. *När Balkan Brann!* Stockholm : Svenskt Militärhistoriskt Bibliotek, 2013.

¹⁴⁸ Not uncommon among Swedish personnel deployed to Afghanistan.

¹⁴⁹ Stier (2009), p. 148-152; Hofstede et al (2010), p. 393.

¹⁵⁰ Merom (2009), p. 230-237.

6 Conclusions

Cultural distance affects COIN outcomes. Nations, and particularly armed forces, engaging in culturally distant regions will likely succumb to the fallacy of detachable cultural descriptions and ethnocentrism due to inherent human xenophobia, stereotyping and operational pressure. These views will then lead to misunderstandings and the application of non-contextual solutions alienating the parties involved, facilitating insurgent recruitment, and ultimately accelerate towards a strategic defeat. Simultaneously, the insurgent cause can be bolstered by culturally distant forces' presence by the perceived threat of an identity under attack.¹⁵¹ The only ways to circumvent this spiralling scenario is to deploy either few troops with a small scope, or only use culturally sensitive individuals and methods in any commitment to culturally distant regions.

The hypothesis that lower cultural distance increases the likelihood of successful COIN is confirmed, and my theory of cultural distance and COIN outcome is both plausible and relevant to explain COIN outcomes:

$$\text{Outcome} = \text{Cultural Distance} \times (\text{Troop Ratio} + \text{Political Meddling})$$

The critical understanding is that cultural distance affects outcome. Troop ratio and political meddling as controlling variables explain COIN wins in culturally distant regions.

For policy purposes regarding intervention, one should according to the previous reasoning consider the following. If not culturally close, use a strategy of minimum impact and do as much as possible through the host's institutions and leadership. Most, but all major, decisions should be left to the supported host nation in order to avoid its de-legitimization. Maintain good working relationships with nations close to potential insurgencies, in order to support and affect them to deploy in case of conflict. This would in essence make them proxies supported in any way deemed reasonable.

6.1 Further Research

Quantitatively gauging the limits of this theory would benefit the troop ratio and political meddling variables with a higher resolution. A COIN campaign with cultural proximity, little troops, and no political meddling constituting a loss will unduly result in a deviant case. The theoretical validity would increase with boundaries dependent on commitment to a COIN campaign.

¹⁵¹ Ringmar, Erik. *Identity, Interest and Action*. New York: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 2007, p. 13.

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Appendix A: Cultural Dimensions

Indicator	Definition
Power Distance (PDI)	"The extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally." ¹⁵²
Individualism (IDV)	"Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him- or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty." ¹⁵³
Masculinity Index (MAS)	"A society is called masculine when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life. A society is called feminine when emotional gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life." ¹⁵⁴
Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)	"[...] the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations." ¹⁵⁵
Long-term versus Short-term Orientation (LTO)	"[...] the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards-in particular, perseverance and thrift. Its opposite pole, short-term orientation, stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present-in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of "face", and fulfilling social obligations." ¹⁵⁶
Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR)	"Indulgence stands for a tendency to allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun. Its opposite pole, restraint, reflects a conviction that such gratification needs to be curbed and regulated by strict social norms." ¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Hofstede et al (2010), p. 61.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 92.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 139f. Please note that the label *masculinity* is due to this being the only dimension where gender had a significant impact on the survey answers.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 191.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 239.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 281.

