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Target Them with What? Why States Choose Different COIN Strategies for Different Insurgent Organizations

Victor Asal[a], Daren Fisher[b], and Joe Young[c]

[a]Department of Political Science, State University of New York, University at Albany, New York, USA; [b]Department of Criminal Justice, Charleston, USA, The Citadel; [c]School of Public Affairs and School of International Service, American University, Washington, USA

ABSTRACT

Why do some governments negotiate with insurgent organizations while others use force? This study examines the factors that influence these strategic government approaches to insurgencies using an original data set of state actions toward 140 insurgent groups between 1998 and 2012. We develop a simple model to explain government policy choice and test on these original data. After accounting for ideological differences and insurgent organization alliances, our findings suggest that the size of the insurgent group, the extent of previous lethal violence, and previous government decisions all influence government selection of conciliatory, repressive, mixed, and non-response strategies. We conclude by discussing the implications for how governments make counterterrorism/counterinsurgency strategy.

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After the most devastating terrorist attacks in history, the President of the United States addressed the Congress and nation ten days later. In this fateful speech, President Bush declared war on Al-Qaeda and claimed that "Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen."[1] In this speech, President Bush established a global war that suggested no policy boundaries or defined time period. The subsequently-called Global War on Terror[2] would involve a nearly two-decade old and counting kinetic response to Al-Qaeda and affiliated groups by the U.S. and its allies. As Leib points out, often the stronger power in such a conflict will use "few carrots and a lot of sticks."[3]

By contrast, in a similar lengthy conflict, the Colombian government recently negotiated an end to the fight with the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*) insurgent group. While the government of Colombia had used violent tactics in the past to pacify and undermine the group,[4] it negotiated concessions, such as allowing the FARC to take part in elections and limited amnesty for former combatants.[5]

Why do some governments negotiate with their violent rivals[6] to authority while others use force? There are many reasons why the FARC and Al-Qaeda are different,

CONTACT Victor Asal vasal@albany.edu Department of Political Science, State University of New York, University at Albany, New York, USA.

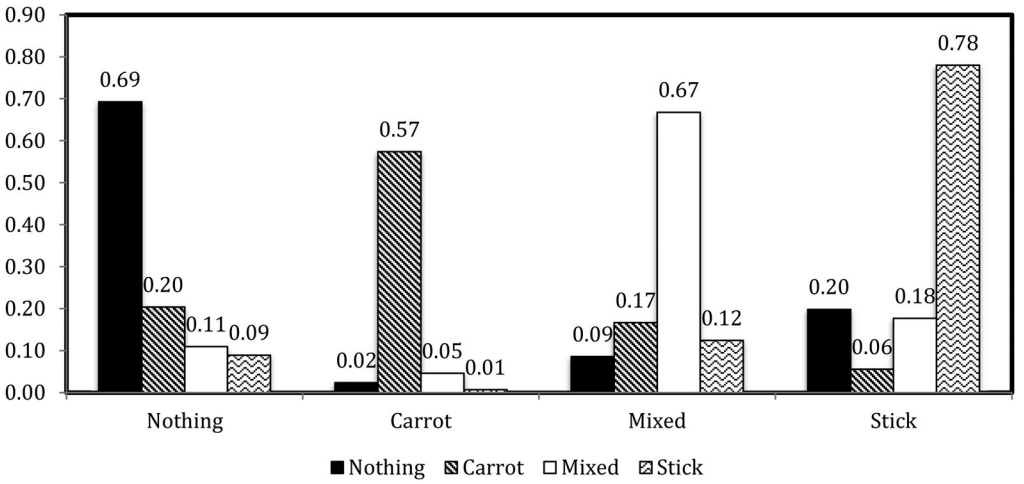

Figure 1. The probability of each government strategy given the previous strategy.

but both groups present a challenge to a state's authority. If all of these violent challenges are met with state violence, then there would be nothing to explain. As Figure 1 below shows, however, states use both force (what we call *sticks*) and negotiation (what we call *carrots*) with their violent challengers. Further, some governments respond through using both of these approaches concurrently and employ a mixed approach while others do not engage these insurgent organization using any overt responses. While there is growing research that looks at the impact of different state strategies directed at violent nonstate actors,[7] there is little research and almost no quantitative analysis that examines why states target certain organizations with different strategies.[8] In this paper, we seek to explain why we see variation in when states choose to use a carrot or stick approach to target insurgent organizations.

State Responses to Insurgent Groups

Insurgent organizations deliberately design their actions to elicit government responses.[9] Terrorist groups including al-Qaeda and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have succeeded in using violence to motivate strategic shifts and key concessions from governments.[10] Indeed, Pape has demonstrated that acts of suicide terrorism between 1980 and 2001 often successfully pressured governments into conceding territory and providing other political incentives.[11] By offering these symbolic carrots, governments are attempting to entice the cessation of violence by insurgent organizations through granting the concession that motivated the violence.[12] As noted in Pape's study, however, not all states acquiesce to the demands of insurgencies.[13] Turkey, for example, has responded by increasing repression over terrorist groups and their constituencies, offering the proverbial stick to demonstrate that insurgent violence is not an acceptable method to pursue political goals.[14]

States have used a wide array of strategies to respond to insurgent organizations and terrorist groups.[15] Ranging from peaceful negotiations to the targeted killing of terrorists,[16] there is growing global experience with which of these tactics yield

counterterrorism benefits and which have the potential to lead to a violent backlash and an escalation in violence.[17] As these counterinsurgency decisions are often made swiftly and without complete information on threats,[18] it is unclear which factors motivate governments to respond to some insurgent groups with the carrot and others with the stick. One series of arguments relates to insurgent control. Insurgent groups that attempt to govern or hold territory may be dealt with differently by states as they build legitimacy.[19] While much of this literature is helpful in understanding the causes and consequences of particular tactics, what is often overlooked is why certain tactics are employed by states over others and under what conditions.

Governments also experience a range of pressure to maintain their existing policy approach, even when there are substantive changes to the domain they are legislating. Governments and particularly criminal justice agencies experience pressures to maintain a stable and predictable environment so that their agents can perform efficiently.[20] Although major terrorist attacks can spur on rapid policy reactions outside of these periods, Argomaniz observes that policies surrounding terrorism are often incremental and limited by inertia.[21] Consequently, while states change their responses to insurgent organizations following major crises, without these events any changes in response to these groups are likely to be piecemeal.[22]

Through maintaining the *status quo*, states are also able to foster a public perception of organizational stability and control.[23] Changes to existing policy come with a number of risks for any bureaucracy. Firstly, by introducing a policy change the government is likely to be held accountable for any adverse outcomes.[24] In addition, even if previous policies have failed, they can only be changed if there are politically viable alternatives.[25] Consequently, whether through fear of being held accountable for negative consequences or due the lack of politically viable alternatives, governments may select to maintain their existing policies regardless of a dynamic insurgency threat.[26]

Informed by these previous observations, we first offer a simple model of why some groups attract different state policies than others. We focus on characteristics of the insurgent groups that tend to attract states to behave in certain ways toward them. We also engage some of the more recent scholarly work on insurgent organizational behavior. Then, we offer testable hypotheses. Next, we discuss data, research design, and tests. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the results, policy implications and suggestions for future research.

Model

To model why some groups attract certain actions from their adversaries, we begin with some simple assumptions. To create a simple model of insurgent actions, we start with an assumption that all insurgent groups wish to survive. This is a basic tenet for classic work in this area on state and government survival, such as Cheibub and Bueno de Mesquita et al.[27] Usually the unit of analysis in these studies is the leader.[28] We focus here on the insurgent organization. Our assumption is that insurgent groups have similar incentives that are orthogonal to individual leader traits. This of course could be interrogated in future work.[29]

For much of the literature on civil war from the 1990s and early 2000s,[30] insurgent group characteristics were largely ignored in favor of country-level structural variables. More recently, scholars have been taking insurgent group characteristics seriously[31] by examining how spoilers affect conflict and civilian targeting,[32] how multiple insurgent groups influence conflict dynamics and settlements,[33] how using the tactic of terrorism affects winning the conflict,[34] or whether the group is foreign or domestic affects the treatment of civilians in the territory they control.[35] In the newer articles, authors often assume that insurgent groups are trying to maximize material gains or political concessions.[36] Our thinking is consistent with these studies but we focus on survival and the ultimate policy goal of either becoming the entire state or a regional version.

As previously mentioned, earlier work on civil conflict did not code insurgent group organizational behavior. While some studies incorporated data that focused on terrorist organizational behavior, this was only for a limited temporal domain[37] or on limited number of factors.[38] Some of the interesting newer literature focused on behaviors within individual countries and were able to look at the micro-dynamics of country-insurgent violent and nonviolent interactions over time however.[39] Our approach is different by looking cross-nationally, but hopefully complementary.

We assume that insurgents in this context wish to become the state and will make choices to increase that probability.[40] Insurgents that choose (or are able) to hold territory show that they are able to broadcast traditional forms of power and are concerned with the population as opposed to those that primarily use terrorism by targeting civilians,[41] which by its nature harms some of the population. We expect that these contrasting approaches will lead to different government responses, particularly as territorial control can alter the strategic concerns posed by insurgencies.[42] A larger insurgent group will also likely see more conciliatory responses from the state as using kinetic actions against large groups could lead to the worst-case outcome (from the state's perspective)—loss of the state.[43] Governments preferred outcome, of course, is to do the lowest cost action to alleviate the threat.[44] Given that these costs rise with larger groups and groups that hold territory, we expect conciliatory actions against these types. To be clear, this simple model offers a stylized set of predictions that may fail in individual cases. We hope that, on average, this simple story can help explain some of the conflicting choices we routinely see in the data.[45]

In some foundational work in insurgency and counterinsurgency,[46] governments are assumed to have the choice between kinetic strategies or more population-centric ones or what is often called, *hearts and minds*.[47] Governments that wish to survive will use either more kinetic (what we call *stick*) or more conciliatory (what we call *carrot*) actions depending on which they believe will increase the likelihood of survival.[48] Following again from the basic assumption of staying in power, governments will continue actions that have been successful in the past. If states have negotiated in the past with an insurgent group, then they will be more likely to do so in the future. As Gurr argues,[49] past use of and success with coercive actions greatly increases the probability of their future use. The mechanism is both increased probability of future success but also the growth of the repressive apparatus of the state.[50] The growth of what Gurr calls the *garrison state* suggests that repressive policies may be the stickiest policies.[51]

Hypotheses

Based on our argument above, we expect:

Group Policy Attraction

H1: A insurgent group will be more likely to attract a mixed, stick, or carrot approach this year, if they attracted the approach last year.
H1a: Stick approaches are the most persistent. In others words, the probability of attracting a stick approach is highest the following year as compared to the other approaches.
Insurgent Group Characteristics
H2: Insurgents that hold territory are more likely to receive carrot responses from the state
H3: Large insurgent groups are more likely to receive carrot responses from the state

Alternative Arguments

It may be that the particular ideology of the group would explain our results better. Especially in the post-9/11 world, it may be that radical Islamic groups attract more kinetic responses from states than leftist or more ethno-nationalist groups. We control for this to ensure our results are robust to this alternative explanation. As previous work has shown,[52] a group's connections with other violent organizations may also explain why they are targeted with carrots or sticks. More connected groups like Al-Qaeda may be a larger and a more capable threat suggesting states may provide either more carrots or sticks but likely they will not ignore them. The behavioral threat posed by the group could also explain why states select them as a target. In short, deadly groups either through terrorism or insurgency may attract more kinetic responses. Finally, as others have claimed, democracies may behave differently in counterinsurgency than nondemocracies as they may be more politically constrained in using violence and less likely to spark mass internal violence[53] or they may be constrained by "… the mores of democratic societies."[54] While our model does not make a prediction about this, we control for this possibility.

Data

To explore why certain insurgent organizations are targeted with different types of COIN strategies we use the Big, Allied and Dangerous 2 (BAAD2) Insurgency dataset[55] which has yearly data from 1998 to 2012 on 140 insurgent organizations globally using organizations identified by the Uppsala Conflict Database Program Battle-Related Deaths Dataset.[56] The BAAD 2 Insurgency dataset is useful for this analysis because, in addition to having yearly data related to organizational size, structure, ideology and behavior, it codes the organization if they are identified by UCDP during this time period for the entire time period that they are extant during this period even if they are not breaking the 25 battle death criteria of UCDP. In addition, it provides an array of variables that we can use to test the question of why some organizations are targeted with carrot, stick or mixed COIN strategies. Groups in UCDP were excluded if they were generic (such as Syrian Insurgents) or another state or if there was insufficient data to code the organizations.[57] Groups were coded if they were active in 1998 or

before or if they became active at some point between 1998 and 2012. Coding for the groups was stopped in the year a group became peaceful or stopped existing or no information was able to be found about the group. There are 140 organizations in the dataset with three organizations in the data set for only one year and 57 organizations in the dataset for the entire 15 years.

Variables

We draw the variables we used for the analysis primarily from the BAAD 2 Insurgency data as well as from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD),[58] the Uppsala Conflict Database Program Battle-Related Deaths Dataset,[59] and the POLITY IV database.[60] The BAAD 2 Insurgency data codes organizations from 1998 to 2012 yearly based on if the organization appears in the Uppsala Conflict Database Program Battle-Related Deaths Dataset and was possible to code.[61] To analyze the question of why states apply certain COIN strategies to insurgent organizations, we use three variables from the BAAD2 Insurgency dataset that capture such strategies: *Carrot*, *Stick* and *Mixed*. All of these variables are coded as zero if not present and a one if present. The coding of the variables focused on the specific strategies applied to each organization in a specific year related to the "overall counterterrorism strategy that is taken against the organization, from both domestic and international sources (BAAD II Insurgency Codebook)." Conciliatory efforts like negotiations or concessions or ceasefires are coded as a *Carrot* Strategy. When states use repressive strategies against a group this is coded as a *Stick* Strategy. The government's strategy is coded as a *Mixed* Strategy if the government in question is using both *Carrot* and *Stick* strategies in the same year.

The variable *territory* is coded yearly in a binary fashion for organization based on if the organization is controlling a specific region of a whole city or larger area for more than a short period of time. For this analysis we take the *size* variable which is coded as an ordinal variable in the BAAD II Insurgency codebook and turn it into several binary variables. We use the BAAD II size variable to code separately if an organization has less than 100 members, if an organization has between 100 and 1000 and finally if a group has more than 1000 members. We should note that if size was unknown for a group, the default is to code the group as having less than 100 members. The *alliance* variable is a count of the number of dyadic alliances the organization has in that particular year with other insurgent organizations in the dataset. Some organizations in specific years had no alliances. In the majority of years, organizations were recorded as having no alliances (68.7% or 853 organizational years, see Table 1). One organization, Al-Qaeda, was allied with 15 other organizations for two years.

For the analysis, we are using three ideology variables from the BAAD II dataset: *ethnic*, *religious*, and *leftist*. Each of these variables are coded in a binary fashion and they are not mutually exclusive, and the ideology variables are coded yearly like all the other variables. A group is coded as having one of these ideologies if they express goals tied to the specific ideology or specifically claim to represent a population related to these ideologies like ethnicity.

We have three variables in the analysis that we draw from other databases besides the BAAD II insurgency dataset. The *number of battle deaths* an organization was involved

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std.	Min	Max
Carrot	1,242	0.043	0.204	0	1
Stick	1,242	0.457	0.498	0	1
Mixed	1,242	0.228	0.420	0	1
Territorial control	1,242	0.242	0.429	0	1
Group size < 100	1,242	0.375	0.484	0	1
Group size $100 < 1000$	1,242	0.488	0.500	0	1
Group size > 1000	1,242	0.110	0.313	0	1
Alliance count	1,242	0.807	1.574	0	15
Religious ideology	1,242	0.349	0.477	0	1
Ethnic ideology	1,242	0.551	0.498	0	1
Leftist ideology	1,242	0.217	0.413	0	1
Polity score	1,242	5.074	2.881	0.25	10
# of battle deaths	1,242	198.841	682.666	0	8413
GTD fatalities	1,242	32.206	135.861	0	2996

in each year was drawn from the Uppsala Conflict Database Program Battle-Related Deaths Dataset[62] while the *number of terrorist fatalities* as defined by the Global Terrorism Database is drawn from the GTD.[63] The GTD defines terrorism as an intentional attack which does not include state terrorism and is focused on trying to achieve a political or related goal with the goal of coercing an audience and not on the battlefield.[64] Finally, we use the Polity IV database to measure the level of democracy (*polity*) in the homebase of each insurgent organization.[65]

Analysis

As seen above in Table 1, the most frequently used government strategy was stick, which was used in 45.7% of organization years. Coupled with the 22.8% of strategies being mixed (including both carrot and stick methods), 68.5% of all strategies for responding to insurgent organizations were punitive at least some of the time. The least prominent strategy that governments employed was offering a carrot. This singular strategy was only used in 4.3% of organization years, and was five times more likely in this sample to be accompanied by at least some repressive force in a given year. In addition, 27.2% of insurgent organizations received no formal response from a government in a given year, demonstrating that no overt response by a government is not only a viable option, but one that was nearly used as frequently as more conciliatory responses.

Continuity and Change

Regardless of the response selected by a government, these strategies were relatively stable across the period observed by this study. For all four strategic options (nothing, carrot, mixed, and stick), the most likely strategy for the following year was to continue the existing strategy (see Figure 1). Across all strategies, the probability of continuing was 72.2%. As can be seen below in Figure 1, stick strategies were the most likely to be retained for consecutive years (78%), while carrot strategies were the least likely strategies to be employed toward an insurgent organization for consecutive years (57%).

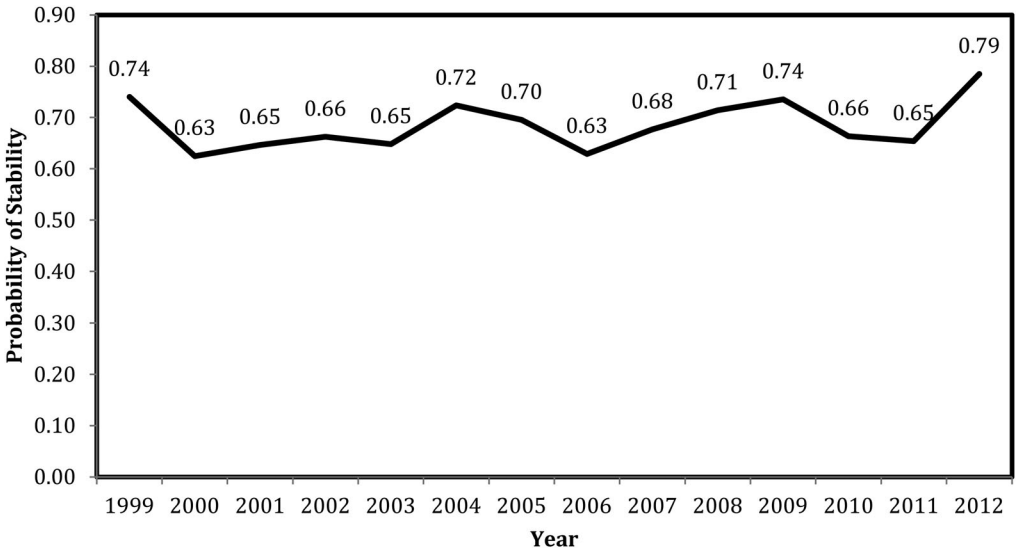

Figure 2. The probability of strategy stability between 1999 and 2012.

This suggests that punitive strategies were the most stable across time, while carrot strategies were the most likely to be abandoned in the following year.

Some patterns also emerged suggesting that when government strategies directed toward insurgent organizations did change, these changes were often incremental. For example, if a government employed a carrot strategy in a given year, the likelihood that they would use a strict stick approach was approximately 1%. Conversely, in only 6% of organization years did a government go from a strict stick strategy to a carrot strategy. The two most common transition were from nothing to carrot (20%) and from stick to nothing (20%).

Across the time period between 1998 and 2012, there were no discernable trends in the stability of government strategies toward insurgent organizations. Despite the overall null trend for the time period (see Figure 2), there were some notable peaks and trough in strategy stability. The lowest level of stability was observed in 2000 and 2006 when the probability of strategy continuation was 63%, and stability peaked in 2012 with a retention likelihood of 79%. The biggest shifts in policy retention occurred between 2011 and 2012 when strategy stability increased by 14%, and between 1999 and 2000 when approach consistency dropped by 11%. These findings suggest that the broad approaches to insurgent organizations did not change as much after 9/11 globally between 2001 and 2002, and that other years marked greater strategic departures within this period.

Turning to the proportion of strategies that were used each given year, Figure 3 below displays that stick strategies were the modal approach in every year between 1998 and 2012. Notably, prior to and including 2001 nothing strategies increased in their proportional use. However, following 2001, they declined markedly in lieu of stick strategies. As such while Figure 2 suggests that the level of stability was unremarkable between 2001 and 2002, there was a discernable shift for governments where stick strategies increased in prominence after being used less frequently in the previous three

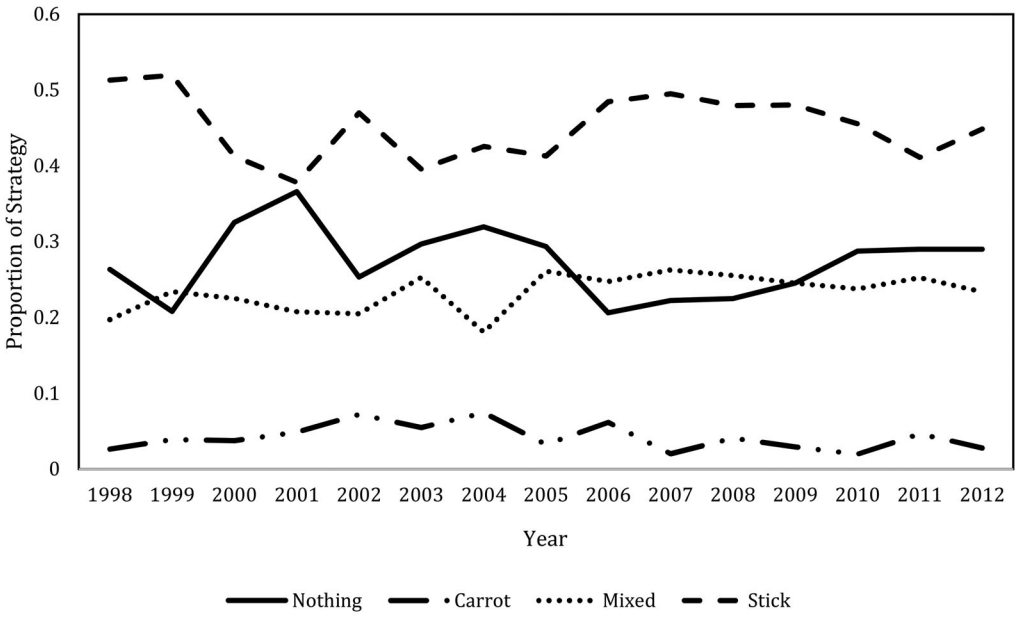

Figure 3. The proportion of each strategy between 1998 and 2012.

Table 2. Logistic regression predicting policy change in the following year.

Variable name	Variables	Odds ratio (standard error)	Z	p
Carrot	carrot	0.772 (0.338)	−0.590	0.556
Stick	stick	0.702 (0.132)^	−1.880	0.060
Mixed	mixed	1.008 (0.202)	0.040	0.969
Territorial Control	terrcntrl	1.185 (0.23)	0.870	0.382
<100	SizeLess100	0.709 (0.227)	−1.070	0.283
<1000	SizeLess1000	0.714 (0.238)	−1.010	0.313
>1000	SizeGreater1000	0.898 (0.327)	−0.300	0.768
Alliance count	a_degree	0.859 (0.054)*	−2.440	0.015
Religious ideology	reli	1.052 (0.19)	0.280	0.780
Ethnic ideology	ethn	0.953 (0.173)	−0.270	0.791
Leftist ideology	left	0.677 (0.151)^	−1.750	0.080
# of battle deaths	ucdpbd	0.986 (0.03)	−0.470	0.638
GTD fatalities	fatalities	1.000 (0.001)*	2.330	0.020
Polity score	fh_ipolity2	0.999 (0.001)*	−2.210	0.027
Constant		1.13 (0.391)	0.391	0.723

Two-tailed *P*-values (^ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$).

years. A similar pattern emerged between 2005 and 2006, and across the time period, the stick and no response strategies had a divergent usage pattern. Despite these trends, Figure 3 also displays relative stability in the other two strategies aimed at insurgent organizations.

Before turning to the primary analysis, this study examined which factors of insurgent organizations were likely to increase the likelihood of policy change. As can be seen below in Table 2, net of the other observed factors, states were 8.28% less likely to change their strategy in the following year if their strategy was stick compared to no strategy. This is further evidence in favor of policy inertia and an additional indication that states are less inclined to change their approach to an organization after using a

Table 3. Multinomial logistic regression when the base outcome is "No Response".

Variable name	Variables	Carrot^{t+1}	Mixed^{t+1}	Stick^{t+1}
Carrot	carrot	22.18%***	26.00%*	−9.42%
Stick	stick	−2.66%	−4.17%***	−32.26%***
Mixed	mixed	0.17%***	49.94%***	−20.01%***
Territorial Control	terrcntrl	1.48%^	0.56%	1.38%
<100	SizeLess100	98.08%***	−31.7%	−52.41%
<1000	SizeLess1000	92.72%***	−28.57%	−53.56%
>1000	SizeGreater1000	99.46%***	−26.96%	−57.18%
Alliance count	a_degree	1.82%	−8.14%**	20.42%**
Religious ideology	reli	0.34%	−8.47%	8.34%
Ethnic ideology	ethn	0.54%**	3.16%**	12.54%***
Leftist ideology	left	0.61%	2.82%**	−10.26%**
# of battle deaths	ucdpbd	3.46%	48.56%	−44.91%
GTD fatalities	fatalities	−1.67%*	−24.38%**	25.08%**
Polity score	fh_ipolity2	−3.42%*	2.41%	5.16%

Two-tailed change in probability estimates from 0 to 1 for binary variables and for minimum to maximum for continuous variables (^ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$).

purely repressive approach. Groups with a higher number of allies also received more stable responses across years. Indeed, groups with the greatest degree of alliances were 33.2% less likely to see a policy change compared to the most isolated groups. The number of battle deaths, however, was positively related to a state's strategy change in the following year, increasing the likelihood of a strategy shift by 0.01% per battle death.

Organizational Factors That Influence Government Strategy

This study employed multinomial logistic regression to examine which factors influence a government's specific response to an insurgent organization. As discussed above, this study hypothesized that net of other factors; the previous strategy would be a key determinant of the strategy employed in the following year. In addition, this study hypothesized that governments would be more likely to use carrot strategies if the insurgent organization held territory or if they were large in membership. All findings presented below are presented using two tailed p-values and the coefficients are presented as changes in probability to assist in their easy interpretation. In addition, the influence of each of each factor on each of the possible outcomes (nothing, carrot, stick, and mixed) are discussed separately.

Beginning with using no response strategies as the base category, Table 3 provides further evidence of policy stability with all responses being more likely to be retained than doing nothing in the following year after controlling for other attributes of insurgent organizations. Adding increased nuance to the previous findings, Table 1 shows that governments that had previously used a mixed strategy were 32.26% less likely to use a strict stick approach than to do nothing. In line with predictions from Hypothesis 2, this analysis provided evidence that governments were more likely to use a carrot approach to an insurgent organization if it had territorial control. Hypothesis 3 was also supported with all three group size designations in the model being statistically significant to predict a government's use of a carrot strategy compared to using a no response strategy.

Table 4. Multinomial logistic regression when the base outcome is "Carrot".

Variable name	Variables	Nothing^{t+1}	Mixed^{t+1}	Stick^{t+1}
Carrot	carrot	−9.42%***	26.00%***	−38.76%***
Stick	stick	−32.26%	−4.17%*	39.09%***
Mixed	mixed	−20.01%***	49.94%*	−30.10%
Territorial Control	terrcntrl	−3.42%^	0.56%	1.38%
<100	SizeLess100	−13.97%***	−31.70%***	−52.41%***
<1000	SizeLess1000	−10.60%***	−28.57%***	−53.56%***
>1000	SizeGreater1000	−15.32%***	−26.96%***	−57.18%***
Alliance count	a_degree	−20.42%	−8.14%	30.38%
Religious ideology	reli	−0.21%	−8.47%	8.34%
Ethnic ideology	ethn	−12.54%**	3.16%	8.84%
Leftist ideology	left	−10.26%	2.82%	8.05%
# of battle deaths	ucdpbd	−7.11%	48.56%	−44.91%
GTD fatalities	fatalities	−25.08%*	−24.07%	51.14%
Polity score	fh_ipolity2	−4.42%*	2.41%**	5.16%**

Two-tailed change in probability estimates from 0 to 1 for binary variables and for minimum to maximum for continuous variables (^ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$).

Beyond these specific hypotheses, Table 3 also demonstrates that insurgent organizations with an ethnic ideology were more likely to get any other response than nothing, and that Leftist organizations were more likely to get a mixed response but were less likely to receive a purely punitive government response (rather than nothing). Organization that committed a high number of fatalities were also less likely to be responded to with carrot and mixed than no government response, however governments were 25.08% more likely to use a punitive stick compared to a no response strategy for these groups.

When the base category was changed to being a carrot or conciliatory strategy a number of similar patterns in the data persisted. Consistent with Table 3 above, Table 4 also reveals that previous strategies positively predict future government strategies with previous mixed strategies increasing the likelihood of a mixed strategy in the following year by 49.94% and stick strategies increasing the likelihood of a government continuing to use a stick strategy by 39.09%. Providing increased evidence in line with hypothesis 2, Table 4 also demonstrates that larger insurgent organizations are less likely to get every response compared to carrot. Beyond these consistencies, Table 4 also reveals a positive relationship with polity score for both mixed strategies and punitive responses being more likely to be used by a government compared to carrot approaches.

Echoing the above results, Tables 5 and 6 suggest that regardless of the base category that each government strategy is likely to be repeated against an insurgent organization regardless of other factors. These tables also reiterate that carrot strategies are most likely to be used by governments toward insurgent organizations that have a large number of members. Finally, Tables 5 and 6 reveal that both mixed and stick responses are more likely to be used by government than a no response strategy if the group has a high alliance count, is ethnic or leftist in ideology, or if they have killed a lot of people in the previous year.

Discussion

The findings from this study supported the hypothesis that counterinsurgency policies carry inertia. Regardless of whether analyzed as a change in approach of any kind, or

Table 5. Multinomial logistic regression when the base outcome is "Mixed".

Variable name	Variables	Nothing^{t+1}	Carrot^{t+1}	Stick^{t+1}
Carrot	Carrot	−9.42%*	22.18%***	−38.76%*
Stick	Stick	−32.26%***	−2.66%*	39.09%**
Mixed	mixed	−20.01%***	−0.02%*	−30.10%***
Territorial Control	terrcntrl	−3.42%	1.48%	1.38%
<100	SizeLess1000	−13.97%	98.08%***	−52.41%
<1000	SizeLess10000	−10.59%	92.72%***	−53.56%
>1000	SizeGreater10000	−15.32%	99.46%***	−57.18%
Alliance count	a_degree	−20.42%**	−1.82%	30.38%
Religious ideology	reli	−0.21%	0.34%	8.34%
Ethnic ideology	ethn	−12.54%**	0.54%	8.84%
Leftist ideology	left	−10.26%**	−0.61%	8.05%
# of battle deaths	ucdpbd	−7.11%	3.46%	−44.91%
GTD fatalities	fatalities	−25.08%*	−1.67%	51.14%
Polity score	fh_ipolity2	−4.42%	−3.15%**	5.16%

Two-tailed change in probability estimates from 0 to 1 for binary variables and for minimum to maximum for continuous variables (^ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$).

Table 6. Multinomial logistic regression when the base outcome is "Stick".

Variable name	Variables	Nothing^{t+1}	Carrot^{t+1}	Mixed^{t+1}
Carrot	carrot	−9.42%	22.18%***	26.00%*
Stick	stick	−32.26%***	−2.66%***	−4.17%**
Mixed	mixed	−20.01%***	−0.02%	49.94%***
Territorial Control	terrcntrl	−3.42%	1.48%	0.56%
<100	SizeLess100	−13.97%	98.08%***	−31.70%
<1000	SizeLess1000	−10.59%	92.72%***	−28.57%
>1000	SizeGreater1000	−15.32%	99.46%***	−26.96%
Alliance count	a_degree	−20.42%**	−1.82%	−8.14%
Religious ideology	reli	0.21%	0.34%	−8.47%
Ethnic ideology	ethn	−12.54%***	0.54%	3.16%
Leftist ideology	left	−10.26%**	−0.61%	2.82%
# of battle deaths	ucdpbd	−7.11%	3.46%	48.56%
GTD fatalities	fatalities	−25.08%**	−1.67%	−24.07%
Polity score	fh_ipolity2	−4.42%	−3.15%**	2.41%

Two-tailed change in probability estimates from 0 to 1 for binary variables and for minimum to maximum for continuous variables (^ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$).

looking at the stability of carrot, stick, or mixed strategies, this study found consistent evidence that once a state establishes a strategy against an insurgent group it is unlikely to change. In line with the assertions of Argomaniz,[66] this study also found evidence that the number of deaths caused by this group increased the likelihood of policy change providing support of the idea that crises lead to policy change acceleration. As the number of alliances held by the insurgent organization led to a decrease in the probability of a policy change, these findings taken together suggest that political viability also plays a key role in state decision making around the globe in line with Walsh's observations.[67]

The primary analysis conducted also supported additional factors identified by our model are important in selecting the specific strategy that a state uses to respond to an insurgent group. In addition to providing additional evidence to the inertia hypothesis, the multinomial logit models showed that groups with a larger number of members were more likely to have carrot methods directed toward them. These findings suggest a more complex relationship between relative political power and state response strategy as groups with more alliances were 38.2% more likely to receive a stick reaction than a

non-response. As such, when the group itself is larger in their own right or if they control territory states are likely to offer concessions, but if the group derives their notoriety through their connections then a state is more likely to use punitive methods.

States were more likely to use stick tactics against organizations that are responsible for terrorism fatalities. This suggests that while terrorism fatalities are unlikely to result in policy changes across years, they are more likely to receive repressive responses and are less likely to be ignored. Similarly, groups with an identifiable ethnic or leftist ideology are also less likely to receive no overt response. The finding that certain ideologies make states less likely to apply particular strategies and one that we believe needs further exploration ideally with more disaggregated data on the specific ideologies.

Conclusion

With more conciliatory interactions between state and insurgent groups in the lengthy Colombia conflict, there seems to be a glimmer of hope regarding ending the conflict spiral. By contrast, it is hard to imagine a similar strategy for the United States in its unending war on terror. With that said, our analysis provides consistent support for hypothesis one that the power of inertia when it comes to state policies toward insurgent organizations is very strong. From a theoretical perspective this makes a great deal of sense, but it does highlight the fact that states often stay stuck with one strategy which may be unproductive. The potential unproductiveness of this approach is highlighted by our finding related to hypothesis 1a that the approach that is most likely to persist is the Stick approach, an approach that is very likely to commit the organization to ongoing violence as long as it able to do so, given the violence and repression the state is inflicting upon it.

We also find strong support for our hypotheses related to the insurgent organization's characteristics. Organizations that are strong and capable are more likely to push states to try the carrot approach given the power of the organization. Specifically, we find support for hypothesis two that insurgent organizations that hold territory – a clear sign of organizational capability and strength – are more likely to be treated with a carrot approach. The same is true for hypothesis three that organizations that are larger are more likely to be treated with a carrot approach as well. This makes sense given our theoretical argument about how power makes states look for other solutions beyond a stick approach. This finding jibes with the utility of a carrot approach given that organizations that are targeted with stick are more likely to turn to killing civilians as shown in Asal, Rethemeyer and Schoon.[68] While we did not conjecture about the possible impact of alliances in our theoretical argument it is important to note again that organizations with a high alliance count are more likely to be targeted with a mixed and stick strategy. The same is true (unsurprisingly) if the organization has killed a lot of people in the previous year. We should note again that ideologies do seem to matter and organizations that are ethnic or leftist in are more likely to be targeted with a mixed and stick strategy. In sum, our basic model received consistent support across the hypotheses lending validity to this simple abstraction about insurgent group-state interactions. A more complicated version that offered new empirically supported hypotheses might be useful for making predictions about certain regions or contexts.

It is important to underline that our analysis does have key limitations. First, our temporal scope is only fifteen years. Given the length of many civil conflicts, it is possible that a longer period might impact how states react to different organizations in terms of the strategies they adopt. Our analysis also does not look at specific states but rather if any state adopts particular strategies, which is also a limitation. In addition, it is possible that if the analysis included not just insurgent organizations but also terrorist organizations we would be able to tease out the potential varying impact of how states respond to organizations that only attacks civilians versus those that are only engaged on the battle field as well as those that do both.

While we believe our analysis makes an important contribution to the study of insurgency and counter insurgency, as we note in the paragraph above that there is still much to be done. We hope in the future to be able to extend this research by finding data that breaks up the application of different COIN policies by specific states that would allow us to be able to look at the state level factors that impact each state's decision each year about applying such policies as it relates to the nature and behavior of the organization more explicitly. In addition we would like to extend our analysis so that we can examine if there are key differences between how states treat insurgent organizations as we do in this paper to how they treat terrorist organizations – as well as if there is a key difference in how they treat organizations that are both insurgent and terrorist organizations.

Notes

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2. *Ibid*., Remarks at the Leon H. Sullivan Summit Dinner. Available online at: https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-leon-h-sullivan-summit-dinner.
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6. By violent rivals, we mean violent non-state actors. Both conceptually and operationally, we are interested in groups that use organized political violence against the state to challenge policy and/or authority. This includes what most scholars call insurgents. Terrorist organizations are similar in this context, but there are important challenges with conceptualizing them, and there is some debate over whether using this term is useful. We consider terrorist organizations as insurgents that specialize in a particular form of contention but like their violent counterparts receive a mixture of responses from state adversaries. See Phillips, Brian J. "What is a terrorist group? Conceptual issues and empirical implications." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 2 (2015): 225–42; Young,

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11. Pape, Robert A. "The strategic logic of suicide terrorism." *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003): 343–61.
12. Additionally, concessions may be an attempt to split moderates from extremists in a larger movement.
13. In one example, Leites and Wolf outlined a punishment strategy for the US to win the war in Vietnam; Leites, Nathan, and Charles Wolf Jr. *Rebellion and authority: An analytic essay on insurgent conflicts*. No. RAND-R-462-ARPA. (Santa Monica Ca, United States: RAND Corporation, 1970); Pape, "American Political Science Review."
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ORCID

Victor Asal http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7614-4869
Daren Fisher http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7901-4856
Joe Young http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5727-0026