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"In the Wider View": The Geostrategic Determinants of Counterinsurgency Strategy and Adaptation, Evidence from the Arab and Jewish Rebellions in the Palestine Mandate

Joshua R. Goodman

ABSTRACT

Expeditionary counterinsurgents often have trouble adapting to meet insurgent challenges, resulting in the adoption and retention of ineffective strategies. Whereas explanations often focus on military preferences and cultures, this paper argues civilian policymakers ultimately select counterinsurgency strategy from the recommendations of their advisors, and these strategies will reflect policymakers' preferences. The goals and instruments of a counterinsurgency campaign are significantly shaped and constrained by policymakers' foreign policy objectives and the geostrategic pressures they perceive. Strategy changes when geostrategic shifts render existing strategies liabilities for new foreign policy objectives; otherwise, existing strategies, consistent with existing goals, are likely to persist. A most similar comparison of British responses to two insurgencies in the Palestine Mandate, the Arab Rebellion (1936–39), demonstrating successful strategic adaptation, and the Jewish Rebellion (1945–47), demonstrating the failure to change ineffective strategy, reveal the role played by geostrategic pressures stemming from the onset and aftermath of World War II.

Over the course of the Palestine Mandate, the British faced two serious insurgencies: the Arab Rebellion (1936–39) and the Jewish Rebellion (1945–47). In both cases, initial British responses proved ineffective, and the British faced defeat after a year of counterinsurgency operations. Despite recognition in both cases that existing strategies were failing to achieve campaign objectives, the British were able to adapt only in the Arab Rebellion, adopting a new strategy that allowed them to suppress the insurgency. In the Jewish Rebellion, the British retained their ineffective strategy until mounting costs led them to abandon the Mandate.

It has often been observed that expeditionary counterinsurgents have trouble adapting to meet insurgent challenges, resulting in the adoption

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and retention of strategies that fail to advance campaign objectives. This is not unique to Palestine; these struggles characterized many campaigns, including US efforts in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan; French efforts in Algeria; and British efforts in Ireland, Aden, and even at the outset of successful campaigns in Kenya and Malaya. The puzzle is not that counterinsurgents do not recognize their strategies are ineffective; rather, they often do but fail to change them anyway. This paper poses three questions about strategic change: Why do counterinsurgents retain strategies they recognize to be ineffective? When will counterinsurgents discard ineffective strategies in favor of new ones? Finally, what determines which new strategy will be adopted?

This paper advances three arguments about the determinants of counterinsurgency strategy and the conditions that promote strategic change. First, civilian policymakers, rather than their military agents, select counterinsurgency objectives and strategies. The second argument flows from the first: policymakers shape counterinsurgency through their consideration of the impact of the campaign on their wider policy agenda. While the effectiveness of strategy is judged by its on-the-ground performance, the outcomes of a counterinsurgency campaign and the means adopted to achieve them have the potential to affect a policymaker's political and strategic goals beyond the battlefield. These considerations shape policymakers' preferences for particular counterinsurgency strategies.

This is not a completely novel claim; several studies have embraced the political approach, recognizing that counterinsurgency conforms to policymaker preferences. However, these studies have focused on domestic political considerations, especially electoral pressures.[1] The present study begins with the premise of policymaker (civilian) primacy but identifies a different set of pressures that shape how counterinsurgents fight, the goals they fight for, and the conditions that promote strategic change: those stemming from international politics and foreign policy. This leads to the third argument: an expeditionary counterinsurgency campaign is but one part of a state's wider foreign policy agenda, and it will conform to policymakers' overarching foreign policy objectives and the ways they perceive geostrategic pressures. Consequently, the persistence of existing geostrategic conditions often leads to the persistence of counterinsurgency strategy; even if it is recognized to be ineffective on the battlefield, strategy may be deemed optimal from this wider point of view. When changes in the international political landscape dictate new foreign policy objectives that are

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[1]Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics* 27, no. 2 (January 1975): 175–200; Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Jonathan D. Caverley, "The Myth of Military Myopia: Democracy, Small Wars, and Vietnam," *International Security* 34, no. 3 (Winter 2009/10): 119–57.

incompatible with current strategies, policymakers' preferences will shift, and strategic change becomes likely. New strategies will reflect new foreign policy goals.

This is not to dismiss domestic politics. Domestic pressures constitute one source of constraint on counterinsurgency, but they often cannot fully explain the shape of a campaign. Foreign policy provides a complementary explanation. For example, mounting public opposition explains some developments within America's Vietnam strategy as well as the change in American strategy in Iraq following the 2006 midterm elections.[2] At the same time, the US decision to continue fighting a losing battle in Vietnam cannot be understood apart from the broader commitment to combat communism in Asia.[3] Nor can President George W. Bush's rejection of the Iraq Study Group's recommendations be divorced from the "Global War on Terror." The following study does not reject domestic pressures but rather brackets them for the time being.

The outcome under investigation is strategic change: the decision by policymakers to replace existing strategies. This includes the selection of new campaign objectives or the selection of a different approach to achieve those objectives. While the focus on strategic change is not sufficient to explain counterinsurgency outcomes, victory or failure, the ability of counterinsurgents to discard ineffective strategies certainly constitutes a necessary condition for success, rendering its explanation indispensable to a broader explanation for counterinsurgent performance. In conclusion, the question of effective adaptation, or the adoption of strategies that promote campaign success, will be considered in light of the case studies.

Evidence in support of this argument comes from a most similar comparison of two anticolonial insurgencies in the British Mandate for Palestine: the Palestinian Rebellion, demonstrating a case of successful strategic change, and the Jewish Rebellion, demonstrating a case of failed strategic change and the persistence of ineffective strategy. Drawing on documents gathered from governmental, military, and private paper archives, the case studies analyze the process of strategic planning across each campaign, revealing that both outcomes were responses to the ways British counterinsurgency objectives and strategy were anticipated to affect core foreign policy concerns.

In both cases, initial strategies combined an unpopular political objective that fueled insurgent resolve with a military strategy that was ill-suited to conflict dynamics. During the Arab Rebellion, the rise of the Axis Powers

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[2]Caverley, "The Myth of Military Myopia."

[3]John McNaughton, "Action for South Vietnam," 10 March 1965; National Security Council History: "Deployment of Major US Forces to Vietnam, July 1965," box 40, folder 5, tab 106, doc. 46a, Johnson Presidential Library, University of Texas–Austin. The undersecretary of defense identifies concern over the Cold War implications of US action as constituting 90 percent of US interest in Vietnam.

and the imminent threat of war generated by the Sudeten (Munich) Crisis forced the British to abandon military restraint to accelerate pacification and concede to insurgent demands to reinforce key regional alliances with the Arab states. The British government's refusal to replace an ineffective strategy during the Jewish Rebellion was due to strong US pressure for military restraint toward the Jewish community combined with nascent Cold War concerns about Britain's relationship with the Arab States, which prevented concessions to satisfy Jewish political demands.

The article proceeds by presenting a theory of the role of geostrategic pressures on counterinsurgency strategy. Next, I present a brief background on the Palestine Mandate to introduce the cases and discuss the comparative and within-case design. The third and fourth sections present the case studies of the Arab and Jewish Rebellions. In conclusion, I consider the implications of the cases for theories of counterinsurgent performance.

Foreign Policy and Counterinsurgency Strategy

Strategy, Explanations for Counterinsurgent Behavior, and Scope Conditions

British military theorist Basil Liddell Hart defined strategy as "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy."[4] Unlike doctrine, a ubiquitous focus for scholars of military innovation, strategy is concerned with how the means will combine to achieve a specific policy outcome in a particular context.[5] Although the goal in counterinsurgency is often conceptualized as "victory" in the military sense, it is impossible to speak of strategy without referencing the political goal: suppressing an armed challenge while imposing or upholding a certain political order. Additionally, counterinsurgency is not limited to military instruments but often includes economic and political measures. Counterinsurgency strategy can thus be defined as a plan of campaign that selects and coordinates any and all means to achieve a political and military outcome, answering the question, "How will the instruments selected be employed to attain the desired ends?"[6]

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[4]B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Praeger, 1967), 335.

[5]Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986); Stephen Peter Rosen, "New Ways of War: Understanding Military Innovation," *International Security* 13, no. 1 (Summer 1988): 134–68; Deborah D. Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002); Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). The US Army counterinsurgency manual, *FM 3-24* (Washington, DC: Headquarters of the Army, December 2006), foreword, recognizes the particularity of each conflict requires unique approaches, establishing the limits of doctrine.

[6]David Jablonsky, "Why Is Strategy Difficult?" in *The US Army War College Guide to National Security Issues, Volume 1: Theory of War and Strategy*, 4th ed., ed. J. Boone Bartholomees Jr. (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 2010), 3.

Strategic change, the dependent variable, is defined as a change in either the objectives of a counterinsurgency campaign (military, political, or both) or in the ways the selected instruments will achieve those objectives. This is distinct from a change in instruments or tactics. To employ new tactics, or to escalate the use of existing instruments, to achieve the same end through the same strategic means, implies the persistence of strategy; the answer to the previous question, "How will instruments attain desired ends?" has not changed.

The puzzle of counterinsurgent performance has motivated a wide literature examining why counterinsurgents fight with ineffective strategies. Explanations generally fall into one of two categories: organizational and political. Perhaps the most ubiquitous explanation lies in the culture of military organizations: organizational preferences for conventional warfare lead to the adoption of inappropriate counterinsurgency strategies, and organizational inflexibility inhibits innovation and learning.[7]

However, the assumption that military preferences determine strategy conflicts with normative and prescriptive approaches to strategic theory and civil-military relations in advanced democracies, which are predicated on civilian control.[8] Due to the centrality of the political objective, the selection of strategy is an act of policy, and it "must necessarily be the responsibility of the government, not of the military leaders it employs as its agents in the executive control of operations."[9] Similarly, powerful normative and empirical critiques have been leveled at the bureaucratic politics paradigm for overstating the decision-making authority of bureaucracies, showing the problem is not limited to civil-military relations, but it relates to a general question of bureaucratic authority.[10] Empirically, a growing historical literature identifies the central role of policymakers in strategic planning, including studies of the Boer War, Ireland, Malaya, and

[7]Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracies at War: U.S. Performance in the Vietnam Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986); Robert M. Cassidy, "Why Great Powers Fight Small Wars Badly," *Military Review* 82, no. 5 (September–October 2002): 41–53; Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*; Colin F. Jackson, "Defeat in Victory: Organizational Learning Dysfunction in Counterinsurgency" (PhD diss., MIT, 2008); Austin Long, "First War Syndrome: Military Culture, Professionalization, and Counterinsurgency Doctrine" (PhD diss., MIT, 2010); Austin Long, *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016); cf. Paul Staniland, "Counter-insurgency and Violence Management," in *The New Counter-Insurgency Era in Critical Perspective*, ed. Celeste Ward Gventer, David Martin Jones, and M. L. R. Smith (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 145.
[8]Liddell Hart, *Strategy*; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957); Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York: Free Press, 1960); David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 1964); Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
[9]Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 333.
[10]Steven D. Krasner, "Are Bureaucracies Important? (or Allison Wonderland)," *Foreign Policy* 7 (Summer 1972): 159–79; Robert J. Art, "Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique," *Policy Sciences* 4, no. 4 (December 1973): 467–90; David A. Welch, "The Organizational Process and Bureaucratic Politics Paradigms: Retrospect and Prospect," *International Security* 17, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 112–46.

Vietnam.[11] The criticism leveled at Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld by a group of retired generals in 2006 for his mismanagement of the Iraq War shows these observations are equally applicable today.[12] This is consistent with Jonathan D. Caverley's argument that theories focused on the pathologies of military organizations "need to be nested within a theory of civilian leaders."[13]

A second category argues that civilian policymakers determine strategy, focusing on governing institutions, policymaker preferences, and domestic political pressures. One strand contends that civilian oversight can overcome the challenge posed by military preferences.[14] The problem is the political preferences of civilian policymakers are rarely considered; military preferences are the problem, and civilian control is the solution regardless of their political goals. However, as D. Michael Shafer argues, "Whether or not political elites will undertake needed reforms [his prescription for counterinsurgency success] depends on the implications of reform for their interests"; policymaker preferences matter.[15]

A second strand argues civilian preferences are responsible for counterinsurgent failure.[16] In separate works, Andrew Mack and Gil Merom examine the ways domestic pressures, especially public opinion and electoral cycles, undermine a counterinsurgent's will to continue fighting, but they do not identify how these preferences shape particular strategies adopted. Caverley's study fills this gap by demonstrating that the desire to avoid alienating the electorate during the Vietnam War led to capital-intensive strategies reliant on taxation rather than labor-intensive strategies that forced voters to fight. However, none of these studies considers a role in foreign policy.

This leads to two key scope conditions for the argument. The first is expeditionary counterinsurgency: when a country intervenes in a conflict that threatens the government of a colony or ally. Although the observation that counterinsurgency goals will respond to the political preferences of policymaking elites is applicable to any conflict, geostrategic pressures are

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[11]Boer War: Keith Terrance Surridge, *Managing the South African War, 1899–1902: Politicians v. Generals* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 1998); Irish War: Charles Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland, 1919–1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); Malaya: Joshua R. Goodman, "Negotiating Counterinsurgency: The Politics of Strategic Adaptation" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2018); Vietnam: H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam* (New York: Perennial, 1998); Caverley, "The Myth of Military Myopia."
[12]Thomas E. Ricks, "Rumsfeld Rebuked by Retired Generals: Ex-Iraq Commander Calls for Resignation," *Washington Post*, 13 April 2006; Demitri Sevastopulo, "Military Calls Intensify for Rumsfeld to Go," *Financial Times*, 12 April 2006.
[13]Caverley, "The Myth of Military Myopia," 121.
[14]Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change*; Jackson, "Defeat in Victory."
[15]D. Michael Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 120.
[16]Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars"; Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*; Caverley, "The Myth of Military Myopia."

likely to be less consequential for domestic counterinsurgents fighting for their political and literal survival. The second scope condition is the existence of a civilian executive. This certainly applies to advanced democracies such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. It is likely, however, that this can be extended to apply to autocracies dominated by civilian leaders, suggesting wider applicability of the theory. However, the present study will confine its scope to democracies to follow much of the recent counterinsurgency literature's concern with US conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Strategic Planning, Foreign Policy, and Counterinsurgent Adaptation

Counterinsurgents can be conceptualized as nonunitary actors comprising civilian policymakers, responsible for selecting counterinsurgency strategy, and their civilian and military agents, responsible for advising policymakers and executing strategy.[17] Strategy is selected through a process where policymakers choose among the recommendations of agents who attempt, and often compete, to persuade policymakers to endorse their preferred strategies.[18] This leads to the first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). Counterinsurgency strategy is selected by civilian policymakers.

Civilian, rather than military or bureaucratic, primacy is a key component of normative theories of policymaking, but this claim should be verified empirically to support the theory's argument about the process of strategic change. Consequently, H1 constitutes an important "hoop test" for the theory that civilian policymakers' preferences are the key determinant of counterinsurgency strategy.[19] Additionally, evidence in favor of H1 poses serious challenges for theories of counterinsurgency that argue strategic choice is simply a product of military preferences.

The focus on the role of civilian policymakers is not a dismissal of militaries' organizational culture; military actors play a central role in shaping counterinsurgency strategy through the recommendations they make, which reflect their beliefs and preferences. In this way, organizational and political explanations for counterinsurgency strategy work together. The caveat is organizational explanations do not constitute a sufficient explanation for the choices counterinsurgents make. Although it is possible military actors

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[17]This largely conforms to Peter D. Feaver's principal–agent model of civil-military relations (Feaver, *Armed Servants*), the main difference being that counterinsurgency connects a principal to multiple (civilian and military) agents.

[18]Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1971), 168 [Hereafter *EOD*]; Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

[19]David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 4 (October 2011): 826–27; James Mahoney, "The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences," *Sociological Methods & Research* 41, no. 4 (November 2012): 574–76.

will control strategy in some campaigns, this power will have been delegated to them by policymakers, who will have had the opportunity to delegate strategic control to a number of actors, including the military and local diplomatic authorities such as an ambassador or high commissioner. The choice to empower military actors will reflect policymakers' beliefs that the military's preferred strategy is consistent with their own preferences.[20]

Whereas the governmental politics paradigm generally focuses on the competition between bureaucratic actors holding divergent preferences, the key insight here concerns the hierarchical nature of the policymaking process, which yields important insights into the preferences and pressures that shape counterinsurgency strategy. First, many critiques have been leveled at the governmental politics paradigm for its structural determinism, and the role of agency cannot be dismissed. Counterinsurgency objectives and strategies will reflect policymakers' personal preferences for the ultimate outcome of these campaigns. In the absence of significant changes to the composition of the government (incorporating new policymakers holding different preferences), these personal preferences are likely to persist, predicting the persistence of existing strategies.

However, structural or "professional" pressures play an equally important role in shaping preferences for counterinsurgency strategy and, consequently, the prospects for change. Graham T. Allison remarked, "Separate responsibilities laid on the shoulders of distinct individuals encourage differences in what each sees and judges to be important."[21] In addition to explaining divergent preferences among competing bureaucracies, this insight helps distinguish between the preferences of policymakers and their agents. As an individual's responsibility narrows, a narrower set of pressures will influence their preferences. Preferences of counterinsurgent agents are shaped by their specialized responsibilities and organizational cultures, producing a tendency toward bureaucratic parochialism and tunnel vision. Policymakers, on the other hand, are generalists, subject to a wide range of pressures stemming from their responsibility for multiple overlapping domestic and international political issues.[22]

Unlike major wars that directly threaten a regime's survival, insurgencies are rarely existential crises for expeditionary counterinsurgents, so policymakers are likely to hold a number of foreign policy goals and grand strategic objectives they perceive to be higher priorities.[23] This is important because counterinsurgency does not occur in a vacuum, and it cannot be isolated from other policy concerns; counterinsurgency outcomes and

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[20]Goodman, "Negotiating Counterinsurgency," 104–10.
[21]Allison, *EOD*, 145; Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications," *World Politics* 24 (supplement) (Spring 1972), 48.
[22]Allison, *EOD*, 144.
[23]Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars."

instruments have the potential to affect interests beyond the battlefield, potentially threatening (or contributing to) higher-priority policy goals. Certain strategies may create or amplify threats to a country's strategic interests elsewhere or may embolden adversaries or alienate allies, constituting a strategic liability. Although a certain strategy or outcome may be optimal in a vacuum, it may generate problems for a government's broader agenda. Policymakers, as generalists, are responsible for coordinating across multiple areas to ensure an integrated policy, and they select strategies for each issue that contribute to overarching foreign policy goals.

Counterinsurgency strategies, then, are subject to both internal and external pressures. Internal pressures include conflict dynamics generated by the interaction between insurgents and counterinsurgents, as well as environmental factors like demographics, terrain, and resources. Internal pressures determine the battlefield efficacy of the strategy. But external pressures, resulting from the ways conflict dynamics and outcomes affect policymakers' wider agenda, are equally important in shaping policymakers' preferences. The problem facing counterinsurgents is not the narrowness of bureaucratic preferences but the breadth of policymaker preferences.

In the absence of geostrategic shifts, the strategic status quo is likely to be consistent with existing international pressures and foreign policy goals. Even if they are ineffective on the battlefield, these strategies may be optimal from the perspective of policymakers' wider foreign policy agenda. Policymakers' preferences are likely to change when geostrategic changes create new pressures on foreign policy or generate new threats to national security, which in turn alter the perceived costs and benefits of counterinsurgency strategies. When such changes necessitate different outcomes or render existing counterinsurgency goals or strategies liabilities for their foreign policy objectives, policymakers' preferences will shift in favor of alternative strategies, enabling change. This yields the following hypotheses:

> *Hypothesis 2 (H2).* Geostrategic changes that lead policymakers to perceive that the retention of current counterinsurgency strategies will threaten their national security or foreign policy goals lead to strategic adaptation. Otherwise ineffective strategies are retained.

> *Hypothesis 3 (H3).* Strategies will be developed and articulated as responses to geostrategic incentives and constraints.

The overarching theory is depicted by the causal diagram in Figure 1.[24]

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[24]On causal diagrams, see David Waldner, "What Makes Process Tracing Good? Causal Mechanisms, Causal Inference, and the Completeness Standard in Comparative Politics," in *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, ed. Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 128; David Waldner, "Invariant Causal Mechanisms," *Qualitative and Multi-Method Research* 14, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 2016): 28–33.
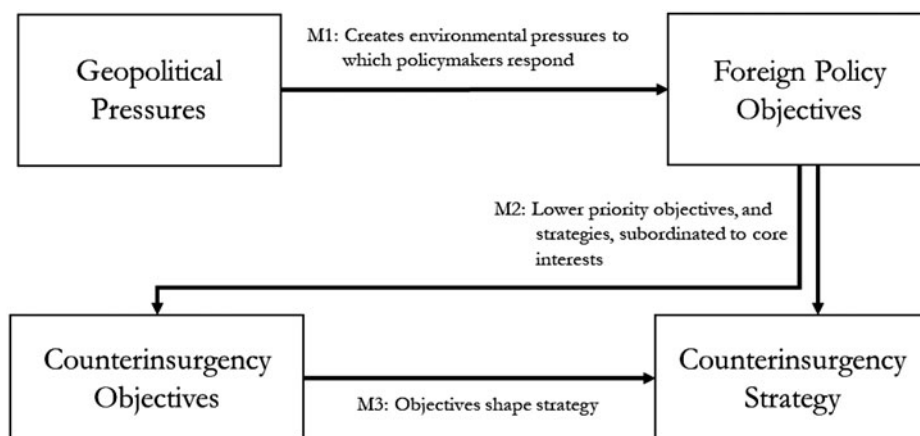
Figure 1. The geostrategic determinants of counterinsurgency strategy.[25]

Introduction to The Palestine Mandate and Research Design

The above theory will be evaluated by combining comparative analysis and process tracing, drawing on British responses to two anti-colonial insurgencies in the Palestine Mandate, the Arab Rebellion (1936–39) and the Jewish Rebellion (1945–47). This section will present an overview of British rule in Palestine to contextualize the following cases and introduce the comparative method, within-case process tracing, and archival data.

The territory of today's Israel and the Palestinian Territories was part of the British Empire from its conquest during World War I until a Jewish insurgency led the British to withdraw in May 1948. From 1922, the British governed Palestine as a League of Nations Mandate, which, among other things, directed the British to foster "such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home," cementing a foundation for conflict between Jews and Arabs.[26] From the beginning of British rule, tensions between Arabs, Jews, and the British were high, resulting in increasingly deadly bouts of violence in 1920, 1921, 1929, 1933, 1936–39, and, finally, from late 1945 until the termination of the Mandate. In the 1920s, violence was primarily intercommunal.[27] However, as it became increasingly clear to Palestinian Arabs in the 1930s that the British government would not take their political grievances seriously, Palestinian ire shifted toward the British, leading to a national uprising against the Mandate lasting from 1936 to 1939.[28]

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[25]M: mechanism, the invariant causal process that links nodes in the causal diagram.
[26]"The Palestine Mandate" (League of Nations, 24 July 1922), the Avalon Project, Yale University School of Law, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/palmanda.asp.
[27]Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918–1929*, vol. 1. (London: Frank Cass, 1974); Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion, 1929–1939*, vol. 2. (London: Frank Cass, 1977).
[28]Porath, *From Riots to Rebellion*, chaps. 5–6.

The Arab Rebellion included a general strike from May to October 1936 and two phases of rural insurgency: June–October 1936, concurrent with the strike, and September 1937–summer 1939, hereafter referred to as the Revolt.

The Arab Rebellion case study focuses on the second phase of the rural insurgency, from September 1937 through its suppression in the late spring of 1939. The first phase ended due to British threats of harsh repression and the promise to send a commission to investigate Palestinian grievances and recommend a political solution. However, the solution the British adopted, partition, was rejected by Palestinian nationalists, and the insurgency resumed in late summer 1937. This second phase can be divided into two strategic periods separated by policy discussions in October 1938. British strategy in the first phase aimed to implement a widely unpopular partition policy, which fueled insurgent resistance, but policymakers adopted a military strategy based on restrained force to avoid alienating the Palestinian population and undermining a political solution. Unable to locate elusive insurgents or enlist the assistance of Palestinian civilians through either conciliation or coercion, British strategy resulted in the disintegration of the Palestine Government in August 1938. In October, on the heels of the Sudeten Crisis, the British abandoned their political objective, partition, in favor of concessions to political demands of Britain's Arab allies, Egypt, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, to reinforce key regional alliances in preparation for war. At the same time, British policymakers authorized the army to wage an unrestrained campaign to quickly suppress the rebellion and free troops from internal security duties. Subsequently, the British successfully suppressed the insurgency in the span of seven months (November–May).

The British government's decision to make political concessions to Arab demands limiting Jewish development of Palestine alienated the Jewish community, known as the Yishuv.[29] With the war's end and following the election of a (traditionally pro-Zionist) Labor government, there was an expectation that Britain's pro-Arab policy would be repudiated and the Jews granted independence. The stronger restrictions contained in Britain's 1939 policy were relaxed, but the British refused to fully concede to Jewish demands. This led to the outbreak of an organized insurgency in October 1945, characterized by small units of Jewish fighters operating from urban centers engaged in a campaign of sabotage and assassination against British military and government targets, combined with an intense propaganda campaign against British rule, aimed especially at an American audience. Increasing US interest in and sympathy for the Zionist cause, coupled with

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[29]Yehuda Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance: A History of Jewish Palestine, 1939–1945* (New York: Atheneum, 1970).

a British belief that Arab friendship must be maintained, limited British options. US pressure and the desire for a diplomatic solution took repression off the table, and the need to maintain Arab support rendered political conciliation of Jewish demands impossible. Unable to respond effectively, the British government conceded failure and turned the question of Palestine over to the United Nations in February 1947.

The Arab and Jewish Rebellion case studies constitute a most similar comparison demonstrating divergent outcomes. Although there are a number of differences between the two cases, this comparison, focusing on the same counterinsurgent, controls for two dominant explanations for counterinsurgent behavior: military preferences/culture and institutions of decision making, both in London and Jerusalem.[30] Choosing cases from the same colony also controls for a range of environmental factors. Additionally, the focus on processes of decision making rather than campaign outcomes or conflict dynamics, as well as the focus on the question of strategic change rather than the impact of specific strategies, minimizes potential problems stemming from the most important differences between these cases, the internal structure of the insurgencies (these implications will be considered). They key differences, then, involve the geostrategic conditions surrounding the insurgencies.

Each case study examines the policymaking process that yielded decisions regarding counterinsurgency objectives and strategies to identify the factors that shaped Britain's decision to retain or change strategy. I assess the evidence for the hypotheses and build event-history maps that instantiate the theorized causal pathways for each case.[31] The theory presented in the previous section yields two goals for process tracing. First, it is necessary to identify the key actors in the policymaking process and how their interactions yielded a counterinsurgency strategy. Second, the preferences of various actors involved in the policymaking process, as well as the sources of those preferences, must be identified. If strategy changed, policymakers should reveal a belief that existing strategies were rendered liabilities by shifts in foreign policy pressures. If strategy persists, policymakers must articulate that the same set of pressures that led to the selection of existing strategies continued to prevent new measures from being adopted. If such evidence can be located, process tracing will provide a "smoking gun" that confirms the hypotheses presented in the previous section.[32]

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[30]Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 51.

[31]David Waldner, "What Makes Process Tracing Good?," 128; David Waldner, "Invariant Causal Mechanisms." The three-part presentation, including narrative, hypothesis testing, and event history maps, reflects Waldner's "completeness standard."

[32]Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing"; Mahoney, "The Logic of Process Tracing Tests."

The evidence presented in these case studies is drawn from primary sources gathered from government, military, and private archives in the United Kingdom, which avoid biases, interpretive claims, and omissions that often characterize secondary sources.[33] I draw on three types of documents that constitute two types of data: process and value. Process data helps reconstruct the process of decision making, which corresponds to the testing of H1 and gives the necessary background for H2–H3. Sources include records of interdepartmental and Cabinet discussions that articulate the policymaking process and the decisions reached by the British government. Value data aims to identify preferences and beliefs, and their sources, revealing the reasons policymakers made the choices they did, enabling an evaluation of H2–H3.[34] Evidence for these hypotheses must be sought in the subjective positions of the actors. Sources include internal departmental records generated by the Colonial, Foreign, and War Offices, notably telegrams, memoranda, internal accounts of discussions, and departmental minute sheets, which illuminate organizational preferences and the positions of principal Cabinet ministers. Additionally, the personal papers of and correspondences between key actors reveal personal beliefs, preferences, and attitudes.

Geostrategic Transformation and Strategic Change: The Case of the Palestinian Rebellion, 1937–39

By early September 1938, after a year of counterinsurgency operations against Palestinian insurgents, the British faced defeat, having been driven out of Palestinian towns and villages and forced to retreat into their base areas of Jerusalem and Haifa. Following discussions in London in October, the British were able to reverse their losses and successfully suppress the insurgency within seven months, between November 1938 and May 1939. The Revolt and the London discussions of October 1938 constitute a case of successful strategic change that entailed a transformation in the political objectives of the campaign as well as the political and military means used to attain those new goals. The shifting strategic situation in Europe resulting from the rise of the Axis, and more immediately, the threat of war caused by the Sudeten Crisis in September 1938, spurred these changes. These threats generated new geostrategic pressures on Britain's Middle East policy that pushed London to adopt a set of objectives and a military strategy that had been consistently rejected over the previous year.

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[33]Andrew Moravcsik, "Active Citation: A Precondition for Replicable Qualitative Research," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 43, no. 1 (January 2010): 31.
[34]Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson, "Business Power and Social Policy: Employers and the Formation of the American Welfare State," *Politics & Society* 30, no. 2 (June 2002): 277–325.

Britain's Initial Strategy: September 1937–September 1938

Following the end of the first phase of the Palestinian Rebellion, the British dispatched a technocratic commission to examine the causes of the uprising and recommend a solution. In July 1937, the Peel Commission proposed the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. The British government, led by the strong encouragement of Colonial Secretary William Ormsby Gore, endorsed the plan and adopted it as government policy.[35] However, partition produced widespread hostility by Arabs and Jews in Palestine, pro-Zionist forces in London, and Britain's Arab allies.[36] Within Palestine, the months of August and September were characterized by a deteriorating security situation and the reemergence of an organized rebellion.[37]

The British response to the initial wave of violence in September 1937 established British strategy for the coming year. Following the assassination of a senior member of the colonial administration in late September, Ormsby Gore's first move was to eliminate the Palestinian leadership by arresting and deporting the members of the Arab Higher Committee, an umbrella organization of Palestinian political parties. This carried important strategic implications: "If the Arab Higher Committee were suppressed wantonly there would be no body within Palestine with whom negotiations on partition question could be carried out."[38] There would be no further negotiation or concessions to Arab demands. In November, as the situation continued to deteriorate Ormsby Gore reaffirmed:

> The conclusion that partition is the best and most hopeful solution of the problem absolutely precludes us from any compromise with the demands of the Arab world *within and without Palestine*.[39]

As long as partition remained the objective, the British could expect stiff resistance from the Arabs. However, although the British policymakers accepted the Peel Commission's policy recommendations, they rejected its military recommendations:

> Our chief recommendation is this. Should disorders break out again … there should be no hesitation in enforcing martial law throughout the country under undivided military control. We are under no illusions as to what this means. Innocent people may be sacrificed … The imposition of martial law would undoubtedly increase the

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[35]Conclusions of a Cabinet Meeting, 27 June 1937, PRO CAB 23/88/15, British National Archives, Kew, UK; hereafter PRO; Commons debate, Hansard, HC Debate 21 July 1937, vol. 326 cc2235-367. The British white paper was command paper 5513.

[36]This opposition is recorded throughout the Foreign Office (FO) records. See PRO FO 371/20808-20820.

[37]Reports 2 and 3 in PRO CO 935/21, 9–11; Telegram 482 from OAG (officer administering the government) to Colonial Office (CO), 19 October 1937, PRO CO 733/332/10; Telegrams 565 and 571 from the high commissioner (HC) to CO, 17 and 20 December 1937, PRO CO 733/332/10, docs. 86–87.

[38]Telegram 435 from OAG to CO, 27 September 1936, PRO CO 733/332/11, doc. 19.

[39]Cabinet Memorandum CP 269(37), 7 November 1938, PRO CAB 24/272/16. Emphasis added.

resentment against the Mandatory Power and, it is to be feared, leave a legacy of hatred in its wake.[40]

On 30 September, policymakers rejected martial law:

> What is more necessary at the present time is to reestablish confidence in the Civil Administration and this can be achieved not by the transfer of its powers to the Military Authorities but by their effective exercise by the Administration itself.[41]

Resistance to a military takeover also stemmed from civilian reluctance to endorse recommendations for harsher repression against Palestinian civilians. As late as October 1938, the high commissioner opposed stronger repressive measures recommended by the army, stating, "I advocate repressive measures, but not unrestricted power to wage war on the Arab population of Palestine: that would be *politically* fatal besides being gratuitous."[42] This reflected a long-standing objective: "It is also our aim to achieve some settlement that will not leave an embittered, sullen, and in their hearts, rebellious Arab population," which reinforced policymakers' reluctance to hand the Mandate to military authorities.[43]

Ormsby Gore's personal dedication to partition eventually alienated his colleagues and led to his replacement, but British policymakers with weaker personal commitments expressed similar attitudes in late 1937 and early 1938. In a Cabinet meeting on 8 December 1937, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain concluded that they "had not … yet reached a point where we could say that it would be a folly to go on with the policy of partition."[44] Similarly, Malcolm MacDonald, who would replace Ormsby Gore as colonial secretary in May 1938, responded to mounting Foreign Office opposition:

> [Malcolm MacDonald] … could not close his eyes to the Foreign Secretary's view as to the trouble which partition was creating throughout the Arab world … He personally, however, would take a lot of convincing that partition was not the least objectionable solution.[45]

Over the course of the summer of 1938, the counterinsurgency took a turn for the worse. Initial military gains by the British were reversed as insurgents, previously operating in large units that were located and routed by the British army, dispersed into Palestinian villages. Insurgent coercion of Palestinian civilians undermined their willingness to cooperate with British forces, and British attempts to secure the population through the

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[40]*Palestine Royal Commission Report Presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament by Command of His Majesty* [*Peel Report*] (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), 202.
[41]Conclusions of a Conference at the Colonial Office, 30 September 1937, E5733/22/31: Introduction of Martial Law in Palestine, PRO FO 371/20815.
[42]HC discussions in E6217/1/31. 5th Meeting, 10 October 1938, PRO FO 371/21864, 2. Emphasis added.
[43]Secret letter from HC to colonial secretary, CF/469/36, 22 August 1936, PRO CO 733/297/4, doc. 143, folio 148.
[44]Ibid., 6.
[45]Cabinet Conclusions, 8 December 1937, PRO CAB 128/90a/8, 12.

defensive occupation of Palestinian villages only led to mounting insurgent ambushes of British soldiers, not to civilian collaboration. Despite the deteriorating situation, MacDonald maintained his position, concluding: "A scheme of partition on lines similar to those sketched out by the Peel Report is still the best solution of the problem," and "that the present [civilian] regime was the right one."[46]

By August, British strategy, characterized as the suppression of the insurgency through restrained and discriminate force to clear the way for partition, had resulted in the disintegration of the Palestine Government and the virtual disappearance of the civil authority. In June and July, there was an increase in assassinations of moderate Arabs and government employees, villagers were coerced into providing support for insurgents, and insurgent reprisals ended Arab collaboration with the British due to perceptions of British weakness. Insurgent ambushes of British patrols continued to increase in frequency and sophistication, leading to mounting British casualties. The British administration began to fall apart under the weight of insurgent progress, resulting in the evacuation and often the sacking of government offices throughout Palestine, the breakdown of transportation and communications across the country, and the retrenchment of the Palestine Government to its core bases in Jerusalem and Haifa.[47]

The Rise of The Axis and Britain's Palestine Policy

The rising threat of global war in 1937 and 1938 triggered major shifts in the preferences of British policymakers. Increasing Axis aggression in 1937 led incoming Prime Minister Chamberlain to adopt a grand strategy of appeasement as the means to buy time for British rearmament in preparation for confronting the Axis.[48] This had important consequences for Britain's Palestine policy. While partition remained the official objective until November 1938, Arab hostility pushed the Foreign Office into strong opposition as early as October 1937 due to the dangers partition posed for Britain's wider strategic interests, to which the Foreign Office was particularly attuned:

> This paper [Ormsby Gore's Cabinet memo quoted earlier] quite understates, or even overlooks, the difficulties and grave dangers with which the summary adoption of a summary policy must now plunge us with the entire Arab world. It also makes no

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[46]Cabinet Memorandum CP 193(38), Colonial Secretary MacDonald, "Talks in Jerusalem," 24 August 1938, E5151/1/31, PRO FO 371/21863.

[47]Report by General Edmund Ironside, H.P.305 to WO, 2 October 1938. PRO CO 733/372/8; "Monthly Report for September, 1938," Jerusalem District, PRO CO 733/372/18, 3–5.

[48]Robert J. Caputi, *Neville Chamberlain and Appeasement* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2000); Norrin M. Ripsman and Jack S. Levy, "Wishful Thinking or Buying Time? The Logic of British Appeasement in the 1930s," *International Security* 33, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 148–81.

attempt to *correlate these dangers with the state of world politics* and our own material resources.

In other words it *deals with Palestine as if it stood by itself (which it neither does nor ever will)* and, in so dealing, does less than justice—for silence is less than justice—to factors in which our very existence may perhaps depend.[49]

Incoming Colonial Secretary MacDonald appreciated these concerns, but through August 1938 he maintained this commitment to the local solution rather than focus on the mounting geostrategic pressures faced by the Foreign Office and the army. However, given the deteriorating global situation, MacDonald's attitude began to change in late August 1938:

Opinion in the surrounding Arab countries and in Egypt may be so bitterly opposed to Partition, and their hostility to us so dangerous *in the present international situation*, that we ourselves are forced to seek an alternative solution.[50]

The Sudeten Crisis

On 29 August 1938, the director of military operations and intelligence (DMOI) wrote:

We are faced with two imminent emergencies at the same moment. The first and of course the major one is in Europe … Parallel to this comes a scare from Palestine where they reckon the position is rapidly deteriorating … God, what a mess we have made of the whole of this Palestine affair![51]

On 25 August, the high commissioner for Palestine, Sir Harold MacMichael, described the rebel effort as "progressive, and may develop into an insurrection."[52] MacMichael reported that the garrison commander wanted the civilian police placed under military control, and they both requested a second full division be sent to reinforce the garrison, more than doubling its strength.[53] To this, the DMOI remarked:

So they ask for "a second division" well it just can't be done. With Europe in the state that it is and with the general, though as yet unacknowledged, swing towards the Western Commitment how can we be expected to despatch the half of our meagre land forces to carry out a role of internal security.[54]

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[49]Minute by Robert Vansittart, 13 November 1937, E6631/22/31, PRO FO 371/20819. Emphasis added.
[50]Cabinet Memorandum CP 190(38), Colonial Secretary MacDonald, "Discussions on Palestine," 21 August 1938, E 5237/1/31, PRO FO 371/21863, P1. Emphasis added.
[51]Pownall Diary, 29 August 1938, 74–75, HRPO 5, Henry Pownall Papers, Churchill Centre Archives (CCA), Cambridge University.
[52]Telegram 488 from HC to CO, 25 August 1938, PRO CO 733/367/1, doc. 64.
[53]Ibid.
[54]Pownall Diary, 29 August 1938. 75, HRPO 5, Henry Pownall Papers, CCA.

Consequently, on 31 August, Colonial Secretary MacDonald replied to MacMichael:

> It is impossible to say in what direction events will move in Europe during the next few weeks or so, and the possibility of sending a second division from home must of course depend on those events.[55]

British officials were reluctant to commit forces to Palestine, a lower priority than the defense of France and Egypt.[56] But both the army and the Colonial Office realized the situation in Palestine had to be resolved if Britain was to fight a global war, meaning that although forces needed to be sent to Palestine, they also needed to be released as quickly as possible. This pressure undermined policymakers' reluctance to endorse the levels of violence recommended by the army. On 12 September, the garrison commander assumed control of the civilian police force, and in early October, almost immediately following the conclusion of the Munich Agreement, Colonial Secretary MacDonald telegrammed the high commissioner with an urgent summons to London to consider military recommendations: "News of deplorable events … following on progressive deterioration of situation have made us seriously consider here whether situation has reached a point where further drastic steps to deal with situation are necessary."[57]

The London Discussions and Strategic Change in Palestine

The resolution of the crisis in Europe did not relieve pressure to bring the rebellion to a quick close. Policymakers gathered to consider what measures could be implemented to bring a swift resolution to the insurgency. The military's support for stronger repression remained unchanged.[58] However, there was wide agreement among civilian policymakers that "the problem was fundamentally political and not military," meaning that the challenge was not simply about the suppression of an armed revolt, but of finding a political solution that safeguarded Britain's strategic position.[59] Top civilian officials resisted military recommendations, arguing, "The actions of a purely military government in Palestine, not subject to this political principle, might well be disastrous *in the wider view*."[60] Pressure to prepare for war required the conciliation of Britain's Arab allies, who urged Palestinian

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[55]Telegram 376 from CO to HC, 31 August 1938, PRO CO 733/367/1, doc. 71, folio 204.

[56]Letter from chief of the imperial general staff (CIGS) to general officer commanding (GOC), 21 September 1938, PRO WO 106/2033.

[57]Draft Telegram from CO to HC, 4 October 1938, PRO CO 733/732/8, doc. 8; Lt. General Robert Haining, "Report on Operations Carried Out by British Forces in Palestine and Transjordan from 1 August to 31st October, 1938," PRO WO 32/9498, 4.

[58]Meeting 1, HC discussions in E6217/1/31. 7 October 1938, FO 371/21864, 4.

[59]Note of conference at the Colonial Office on 7th September, 1938, PRO CO 733/367/1, doc. 142, 8.

[60]Meeting 1, HC discussions in E6217/1/31. 7 October 1938, FO 371/21864, 5. Emphasis added.

demands for self-government and limitations on Jewish immigration be met. This pressure increased reluctance on the part of the foreign policy establishment to endorse military recommendations out of fear that it would alienate Britain's allies. More importantly, and for the same reason, it pushed the Cabinet to abandon partition. British policymakers continued to believe partition was the best local solution to the problem, but the emergence of new threats forced them to conclude the local solution would have to be subordinated to imperial concerns.

The October discussions in London aimed to reconcile these conflicting pressures. The principal policymakers responsible for overseeing British grand strategy, Chancellor Sir John Simon, Minister for Co-Ordination of Defense Sir Thomas Inskip, and Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax (Prime Minister Chamberlain was understandably occupied), were primarily concerned with reconciling the need for swift pacification with the need for political conciliation of their Arab allies to meet broader strategic threats.[61] These pressures yielded a compromise outcome, negotiated directly between the colonial secretary and the chief of the imperial general staff, which solved these contradictions and met the approval of the aforementioned key policymakers: Simon, Inskip, and Halifax.[62]

In addition to rejecting partition in favor of concessions to Arab demands, the new strategy adopted military recommendations with very few modifications. The military commander was given unprecedented powers over not only military forces but also civilian administrators, reducing civilians to political advisors and giving the army full control over counterinsurgency operations.[63] The new strategy was described by Colonial Secretary MacDonald as a "dual policy—(a) appeasement [of the Arab states] by agreement (b) use of force against the Palestine Arabs."[64] In this way, both elements of Britain's new strategy entailed embracing measures that had been refused over the course of the rebellion: military force against the Palestinian Arab population, unfettered by civilian-imposed restrictions, and political concessions to placate the demands of the Arab states. As for resistance to repression, the new position was best summarized by repression's greatest opponent, the Foreign Office:

> The extensive reinforcements which are now reaching Palestine should in fact be used … order must be restored, and the Foreign Office cannot well object to

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[61]These individuals can be characterized as the main powerbrokers based on the individuals named by the anti-appeasement polemic *Guilty Men*. Michael Foot, Peter Howard, and Michael Owen, *Guilty Men* (New York: F. A. Stokes, 1940).

[62]Minutes of a ministerial meeting at the War Office, 7 October 1938, 3, PRO CO 733/367/2, doc. 217, folio 21; See also "Situation in Palestine, Minutes of a Meeting of Ministers held at the Treasury," 13 October 1938, PRO CAB 104/7, 2.

[63]Telegram 698 from HC to CO, 18 October 1938, PRO CO 733/372/8, doc. 27; Executive Council minutes, 17 October 1938, CO 814/34.

[64]Telegram (unnumbered) from CO to OAG, 10 October 1938, PRO CAB 104/7.

whatever measures are necessary in this respect. But what we want to avoid at all costs *in view of our relations with the Arab States etc.* is saying that we have chosen the moment when we call those States into conference to institute a more rigorous offensive than ever before upon the Arabs of Palestine.[65]

Colonial Secretary MacDonald indicated that in light of the new situation, the government "do[es] not expect, or want, any immediate or conclusive settlement of the big issues," revealing a major shift in goals compared to Ormsby Gore's desire for a permanent solution for Palestine.[66] Partition was designed to solve the local problem, but rising geostrategic threats shifted British priorities from long-term local to immediate imperial concerns. This led to the decision to concede Palestinians' core demands to placate Britain's Arab allies. The May 1939 white paper (command paper 6019), negotiated directly between the British and Arab leaders in Cairo in March, limited Jewish immigration and Jewish land purchases and committed the British to Palestinian independence. This effectively placated Arab rulers, who pledged their support for Britain's war effort. This, however, could not guarantee an end to the insurgency, especially after insurgent leaders rejected Britain's offer. To bring a definitive end to the rebellion so that troops could be transferred to their wartime positions, the military was empowered to suppress it by whatever means necessary. And the army's preferred strategy worked; by the time Britain's new policy was announced in mid-May, over two months after it had been finalized, the principal leaders of the insurgency had been killed or captured, the rest had fled, and the organized rebellion had been crushed.

Discussion: The Revolt

The case of the Palestinian Rebellion provides compelling evidence of civilian control over decisions regarding counterinsurgency strategy. Although it is clear that military actors played an important role shaping military approaches to counterinsurgency, especially following London's act of delegation in October 1938, the willingness of policymakers to endorse those recommendations was determined by the political objectives of the campaign and the perceived political and strategic externalities of those measures. The military position remained consistent over the course of the rebellion, but it was only after civilian policymakers' preferences transformed to align with the army's that military recommendations were adopted as strategy. H1, predicting the primacy of policymakers in selecting strategy, receives clear support.

[65]Minute to E6038/1/31, 12 October 1938, PRO FO 371/21864. Underline in the original, italics added.
[66]Meeting 4, HC discussions in E6217/1/31, 8 October 1938, 9, PRO FO 371/21864.
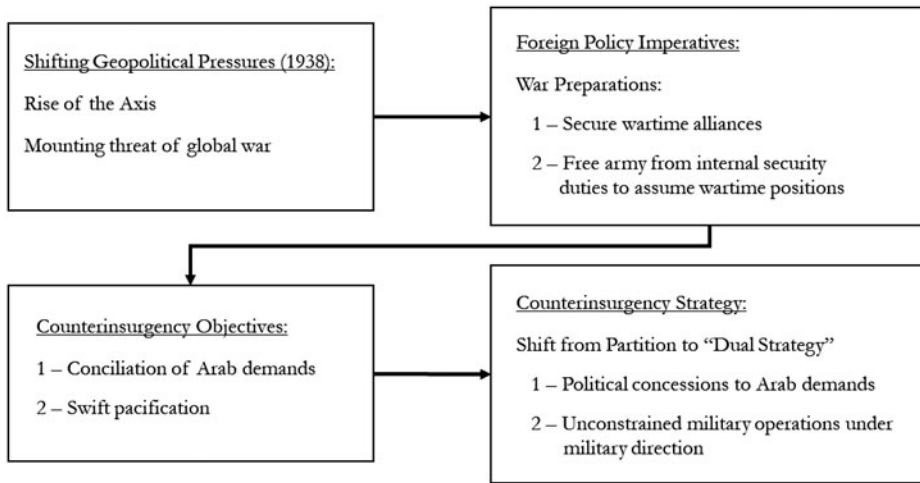
Figure 2. Strategic adaptation, 1938.

H2 and H3 similarly receive strong support. The rise of the Axis and the increasing threat of war rendered Britain's original strategy of partition and restraint immensely costly at the geostrategic level. While many in the British government saw partition as the most effective local solution, it threatened to alienate key allies. Similarly, a restrained approach to military operations may have preserved moderate Palestinian opinion, but it threatened to tie down large numbers of troops desperately needed elsewhere. The British had little choice but to endorse military recommendations for widespread repression. Abandoning partition and conceding to Arab political demands was the price to secure the acquiescence of the Arab allies for that repression.

The rise of the Axis thus created two geostrategic imperatives connected to the need to prepare for war. First, the British had to reinforce alliances in strategically vital regions, including the Middle East. Second, the British needed to release the army from internal security operations. This, in turn, shaped Britain's core objectives for Palestine: avoid alienating the Arab states and accelerate counterguerrilla operations. The dual strategy articulated by MacDonald in October 1938 reflected both imperatives. It was a risky strategy, one that British policymakers avoided for two years, but the rise of the Axis meant continued inaction was even more dangerous. Figure 2 demonstrates the causal chain for the case of the Palestinian Rebellion.

Persistence of External Constraints and The Failure to Adapt: The Jewish Rebellion, 1945–47

Between October 1945 and November 1947, the British faced a rebellion by the Jews of Palestine that ultimately resulted in Britain's decision to

abandon the Mandate. Despite recognition that the Palestine Government and the military were failing to check the rebellion, diplomatic and geostrategic constraints prevented the British from altering either their ultimate goals for Palestine or their strategy to suppress mounting violence. Although Palestine during the war had transformed into a military garrison, giving the impression of a heavy-handed military response to Jewish violence, at no point during the conflict did the army or the civil administration adopt proactive measures to suppress the insurgency, relying instead on existing static defenses, heightened but ineffective patrolling, and occasional bouts of settlement searches.[67]

The inability of the British to take the strategic offensive stemmed largely from external constraints generated by the consequences of World War II and the rise of the Cold War. Most important were Britain's commitment to the US alliance, which gave the pro-Zionist US government leverage over British policy, and the need to safeguard the British-Arab alliance to prevent Soviet gains in the region. Unable to suppress the rebellion by force due to US pressure, and unable to concede to Jewish demands for fear of driving the Arabs into the arms of the Soviets, British policymakers determined the benefits of remaining in Palestine were not worth the costs. In February 1947, the British government conceded failure and handed responsibility for Palestine's future to the United Nations.

The pressures perceived by the British can be divided into two periods. The first stretched from October 1945 until the American midterm elections in November 1946, and was characterized by US pressure for military restraint and concessions to Zionist demands. Following the election, the United States remained indirectly engaged, but once the repression option was definitively eliminated and attention shifted to finding a political solution to the insurgency, the primary constraint became fear of a Soviet-Arab alliance if the British implemented their preferred political solution: partition.

Palestine in Anglo-American and Anglo-Arab Relations

Cabinet records in October and November 1945 indicate the United States was taking an increasingly active interest in Palestine, urging the British to open Palestine to European Jewish refugees.[68] "The Prime Minister said that … there had been a marked increase in agitation on this question in the United States … It was essential to take steps to allay the agitation in the United States which was poisoning our relations with the United States

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[67]Cf. Bruce Hoffman, *Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917–1947* (New York: Vintage, 2016), epilogue.
[68]Cabinet Memorandum CP(45)196, "Palestine," 28 September 1945, P 1, PRO CAB 129/2/46.

Government in other fields."[69] However, the chiefs of staff warned that this move would alienate Britain's Arab allies, whose support was vital to maintaining Britain's position in the Middle East: "If we are to preserve our position in the Middle East, we must find a solution which will enable us to remain in Palestine without estranging the Arab world."[70]

The British found themselves trapped between countervailing pressures. Lord President Herbert Morrison recommended that the United States should be implicated in the Palestine problem as deeply and quickly as possible in hopes that the United States would realize the scope of the challenge and cooperate toward a solution. He proposed establishing a joint Anglo-American commission to examine the issue.[71] Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin supported this plan, concluding US pressure meant adherence to the pro-Arab white paper policy, adopted in May 1939, was no longer possible.[72] Bevin's calculations regarding Palestine were closely connected to his views on the nascent Cold War, which led him to emphasize the importance of cultivating the UK-US relationship.[73] The Anglo-American commission began its work in Palestine in early 1946, and the desire to preserve the diplomatic process and avoid angering the United States would dictate British strategy over the coming year.

Operation Broadside: January–August 1946

The organized Jewish rebellion began with a series of attacks on 31 October 1945, and violence escalated through December.[74] The high commissioner, General Sir Alan Cunningham, pressed London to respond, asserting that the Jewish Agency (JA; the de facto government of the Yishuv)'s refusal to cooperate against terrorism could no longer be ignored. He favored the detention of Agency leaders and the physical occupation of Agency headquarters.[75]

Similarly, the commanders in chief of Middle East Land Forces (MELF) believed that the "plan likely to achieve greatest success is to combine search for arms with seizure of leaders of Hagana and Palmach [the JA's

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[69]Cabinet Conclusions, 11 October 1945, PRO CAB 128/1/23.
[70]Ibid., 12; Cabinet Conclusions, 22 July 1946, CAB 128/6/9. 5; Quote is Norman Brook, Minute, Foreign Office, 14 January 1947, PRO PREM 8/627, which concurred with the military view.
[71]Cabinet Memorandum CP(45)216, "Palestine: Report of the Lord President," 10 October 1945, PRO CAB 129/3/16.
[72]Cabinet Committee meeting, 10 October 1945, PRO CAB 95/14, folio 60. The British had reached this conclusion during the war, when the secret committee on Palestine decided partition was the only feasible solution. PRO CAB 104/166.
[73]Ritchie Ovendale, "The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Government, 1945–1946" *International Affairs* 55, no. 3 (1979): 418.
[74]"Palestine Situation," PRO CO 733/456/10, doc. 6.
[75]Telegram 1855 from HC to CO, 30 December 1945. Cunningham Papers, box 1 file 1. Middle East Centre Archive (MECA), St. Antony's College, Oxford University.

militias]."[76] However, the groups primarily responsible for insurgent violence, Etzel and Lehi,[77] were not controlled by the JA and proved too elusive for the British to suppress without help. The army's proposed strategy was to use detention and disarmament to pressure the JA, their militias, and the Yishuv more generally, to assist the British against the insurgents. This became the basis for Operation Broadside.

The implications regarding the differences between the Arab and Jewish insurgencies require consideration given the implicit suggestion that the army's strategy, like the one adopted to suppress the Palestinian Rebellion, would have worked against the Jewish community. Although it is impossible to know whether the plan would have succeeded since it was never implemented, the strategic concept was sound. Even the high commissioner, himself an army general, suggested that if he were given the powers authorized during the Palestinian Rebellion, "he would guarantee to do it [suppress the rebellion] in six weeks."[78] Given the Yishuv's perception of their vulnerability to Arab aggression, the army's strategy of collective punishment and disarmament would have been deemed unacceptable, requiring the Yishuv to either fight the British or cooperate. Since open military confrontation was unthinkable, the Yishuv would have had little choice but to cooperate. The political costs of such a strategy, especially in the aftermath of the Holocaust, are obvious.

Consequently, British policymakers were not prepared to endorse military recommendations or any political measure that might upset the US administration.[79] Instead, the Cabinet hoped to appeal to the moderates within the JA to cooperate with the British in suppressing the insurgency through a policy of conciliation.[80] However, because the British would not meet the JA's political demands for independence and unlimited immigration, Jewish leaders refused British entreaties.

Rather than developing an alternate strategy, the Cabinet micromanaged Broadside, approving and rejecting individual operations according to the political pressures felt at the time. At the Cabinet meeting on 1 January 1946, Arthur Creech Jones (soon to become colonial secretary), opposed the recommendations of the army and the high commissioner: "The disadvantages of taking such a course still outweighed its advantages. It would throw power into the hands of the extremists and produce a strong

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[76]Telegram CCL/68 from Cs-in-C [commanders in chief], MELF [Middle East Land Forces] to Chiefs of Staff, 1 January 1946, PRO CAB 104/266, doc. 1b.
[77]Etzel: Irgun Tza'i Leumi (National Military Organization); Lehi: Lohamei Herut Yisrael (Freedom Fighters for Israel). Both were affiliated with the right wing of the Yishuv; the left controlled the Agency.
[78]Telegram 75 from Embassy Cairo to FO, 2 July 1947, PRO FO 371/61938.
[79]Among others, telegram 5901 from British Embassy, Washington to FO, 3 October 1946, E9938/4/31 in PRO FO 371/52560.
[80]Cabinet Conclusions, 23 July 1946, PRO CAB 128/6/10.

reaction in the United States."[81] Instead of seizing the initiative, security operations in Palestine focused on blanketing the country with static defenses.

Throughout the first half of 1946, Cabinet's attention focused on Anglo-American coordination while dismissing the deteriorating security situation. This included even the "carpark murders" on 25 April, a Lehi ambush in Tel Aviv that killed seven soldiers. The attack shocked the Palestine Government and led the army to strengthen recommendations for action against the Yishuv.[82] The Cabinet, absorbed with the impending release of the Anglo-American commission report, ignored the incident.[83] In early May, the colonial secretary again wrote the high commissioner, "In recent critical circumstances it is essential that nothing should be done to alienate US sympathy."[84] He elaborated:

> I appreciate the difficulty of the Commander in Chief and the troops in Palestine, but *wider considerations must be borne in mind*. To put into operation full plans … would have widespread repercussions at a time when it is hoped to deal with the Palestine problem through Anglo-American co-operation.[85]

A series of attacks from the evening of 16 June to the afternoon of the 18th forced London to respond.[86] The high commissioner and MELF head-quarters recommended the immediate implementation of Broadside as well as the suspension of further negotiations on Jewish immigration, a central element of the Anglo-American process. The Cabinet's response was to give limited approval to only the first recommendation.[87] The colonial secretary argued terminating negotiations would "have a very unfortunate effect in America," and Cabinet members agreed: "It would be a mistake to break off discussions with the United States."[88]

Agatha, the operation that resulted from the Cabinet decision, was all that remained of Broadside. Agatha had three components: a search of JA and Hagana headquarters, the arrest of members of the Palmach and the JA considered supportive of the insurgency, and the search of twenty rural Jewish settlements suspected of being militia bases.[89] Key elements of Broadside, notably a general policy of disarmament and sanctions against

[81]Ibid.

[82]Telegram 687 from HC to CO, 26 April 1946, PRO CO 733/456/10, doc. 56; Intelligence Summary 58, 1 May 1946, PRO WO 275/120.

[83]Various documents around this date, PRO CAB 104/266.

[84]Draft telegram from CO to HC, E4325/4/31, PRO FO 371/52523.

[85]Telegram 873 from CO to HC, 16 May 1946, Cunningham Papers, box 1 file 1, MECA. Emphasis added.

[86]"Attack on Communications Night 16/17 June 46," annexure A to "Events Leading Up to Operation Agatha," PRO WO 261-562, doc. 1; Telegram 992 from HC to CO, 18 June 1946, PRO CO 733/456/11, doc 76; Intelligence Summary 65, 21 June 1946, PRO WO 275/120.

[87]PRO CAB 128/5/60 contains the official conclusions; PRO CAB 195/4/46 contains the notebook of the Cabinet secretary.

[88]PRO CAB 128/5/60, P138.

[89]"Op Agatha," PRO WO 261/562, doc. 2.

the Yishuv, were discarded, undermining its strategic thrust. While Agatha produced a trove of evidence linking the JA and its militias to the violence, and successfully deterred further direct action against the British by the JA and the Hagana, the Agency continued refusing to cooperate against the insurgency.[90]

The Jewish response to Agatha came on 22 July, when an Etzel bomb destroyed the southwest corner of the King David Hotel, home to the Secretariat of the Palestine Government, killing 104 people.[91] Although the attack shocked and outraged British officials, it did not change attitudes toward policy or strategy in London. The high commissioner and the army again urged a swift response, including a halt to immigration, a collective fine, and widespread arms searches.[92] At an emergency Cabinet meeting on the 25th, the colonial secretary informed his colleagues that forces in Palestine were planning an operation to search for Etzel members in Tel Aviv. However, planning would take time, and some immediate striking action was necessary.

But the Cabinet, especially Prime Minister Clement Attlee, would not approve any measure that would target innocent Jews or upset American opinion, especially because President Harry Truman was expected to announce his support for the Anglo-American commission's recommendations.[93] The Cabinet approved Cunningham's proposal to search Tel Aviv but rejected the military's recommendation to combine the search with disarmament: "[The Cabinet] considered that the proposal might have repercussions on the policy of the United States Government."[94] Instead, policymakers resolved to continue negotiations with the Americans and to invite Arab and Jewish representatives into further discussions over a long-term solution. The resulting operation, codenamed Shark, was a rushed search of Tel Aviv. Without time to gather intelligence or plan the operation, Shark produced no more than a fleeting impression on the Yishuv, and it failed to compel JA cooperation or gain the upper hand over Etzel and Lehi.

British Failure: September 1946–February 1947

Agatha and Shark had no more than a momentary effect on the security situation in Palestine and no effect on the diplomatic situation. As the November midterm approached, US Democratic and Zionist opposition to

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[90]CIC/1050 from General Miles Dempsey to Montgomery, 2 July 1946, PRO WO 216/294, doc 1.
[91]Cabinet Conclusions, 23 July 1946, PRO CAB 128/6/10; "List of Terrorist Outrages since His Excellency's Arrival in Palestine," Cunningham Papers, box 5, file 4, doc. 91, MECA.
[92]23rd Meeting of the Defence Committee, DO(46)23, Confidential Annex Item 6, PRO CAB 131/1.
[93]Cabinet Conclusions, 29 July 1946, PRO CAB 128/6/12, 8; Cabinet Conclusions, 23 July 1946, PRO CAB 128/6/10; Telegram 4847 from Embassy Washington to FO, 30 July 1946, E7316/4/31, PRO FO 371/52546.
[94]Cabinet Conclusions, 25 July 1946, PRO CAB 128/6/11.

the Anglo-American plan mounted, culminating in Truman's decision to disavow his previous support and end active involvement in Palestine diplomacy; he would continue to monitor the situation from the sidelines.[95]

Etzel and Lehi's campaign against the British resumed in full force on the evening of 8 September.[96] Despite escalating violence, security measures continued to be subordinated to the preservation of negotiations with the Jews and Arabs, which the United States still strongly supported: "As you will of course understand, it is most important that nothing should be done by either side to prejudice the possibility of a successful issue to current negotiations with the Jews."[97] The deteriorating situation did not sit well with the army, especially as casualties mounted.[98] In November and December 1946, the chief of the Imperial General Staff, Lord (Bernard) Montgomery, launched his strongest push to convince the British government to abandon its policy of restraint, including appeals to the Cabinet and the Defense Committee and a trip to Jerusalem to confront Cunningham directly.

Creech Jones opposed the move, arguing, "The adoption of more aggressive tactics now would upset the political balance and make the task of achieving a settlement in Palestine more difficult."[99] However, most of the Cabinet agreed with Montgomery that the situation had become intolerable and the existing strategy had failed to restore order. Discussions in late December and early January produced a revised strategic directive, but the reality was that British strategy remained the same: the pursuit of a political settlement through conciliation and military restraint. The directive simply encouraged Cunningham to make wider use of existing measures in pursuit of the existing strategy. A negotiated settlement remained the goal, and diplomacy combined with military restraint would be the method. The directive reinforced the importance of avoiding interference with civilian life and categorically prohibited the reprisals requested by the army; collective punishments and pressure on the wider Yishuv continued to be forbidden.[100]

Whereas Montgomery publicly endorsed the proposal, he privately concluded, "The new directive to the HC [high commissioner] is of itself

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[95]Telegram 9551 from FO to Embassy Washington, 4 October 1946, E10160/4/31, PRO FO 371/52560, folio 166.

[96]Notably "Terrorist Activities from 8 Sept–30 Sept," "G" Branch, Historical Record, July–September 1946, PRO WO 261/562, doc. 4.

[97]Telegram 2008 from colonial secretary to HC, 21 October 1946, PRO CO 537/1779. doc. 36.

[98]64/CIGS 64505 from Montgomery to Dempsey, 5 August 1946, PRO WO 216/194; Letter CIC/142 from Dempsey to Montgomery, 16 November 1946, PRO WO 216/194; Letter CIC/1245 from Dempsey to Montgomery, 19 November 1946, PRO WO 216/194.

[99]Defence Committee meeting DO(47)1, 1 January 1947, PRO CAB 131/5, folio 14.

[100]Text of the final directive as approved by the Cabinet in telegram 134 from CO to HC, 20 January 1947, PRO CO 537/3870, doc. 9/10. See Cunningham's policy in telegram 1578 from HC to CO, 27 September 1946, Cunningham Papers, box 1, file 2, doc. 67, MECA.

useless."[101] Moreover, evidence suggests the British did not seriously intend to use these expanded powers. Responding to US concerns, the British declared, "There is, at present, no intention of declaring martial law in Palestine … powers granted to the High Commissioner are precautionary."[102]

At the same time, policymakers considered the question of Palestine's future. Since the British had concluded that their means could not be adjusted to achieve their desired ends, it was time to consider whether the ends could be adjusted to meet the acceptable means. But early Cold War concerns in late 1946 and early 1947 further constrained British options. In early 1947, many members of the Cabinet, notably Creech Jones, were privately concluding that partition was the best solution given both the moral issues and constraints on military action.[103] However, civilian and military advisors renewed warnings against conceding to Jewish demands over Arab objections. The primary concern was that partition would alienate the Arab states and drive them into an alliance with the Soviet Union, whose interest in the Middle East was a growing concern for the British throughout 1946.[104] The army shared these concerns, focusing on the need to retain Palestine for the defense of the Suez Canal against a potential "attack from the north."[105]

In Palestine, Jewish violence continued to escalate in January and February, but Cunningham did not make use of his expanded authority until March, preferring to back down in the face of threats of violence.[106] While these martial law operations represented an escalation, they occurred after the British decided to concede failure. Moreover, reprisals continued to be prohibited, and "martial law" consisted of little more than short-lived cordon and search operations, further demonstrating the persistence of the desire to minimize pressure on the civilian population.

Cunningham's reluctance to act against the Yishuv stemmed from his desire to prevent a breakdown of discussions with the JA, which resumed on 29 January.[107] However, talks collapsed two weeks later, as it became

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[101]CIGS 434 from Montgomery to Dempsey, 29 January 1947, BLM 210/9, Montgomery Papers, Imperial War Museum, London.

[102]Telegrams 765 and 786 from Embassy Washington to FO, 6 Feb 1947, PRO CAB 104/272, docs. 707–8.

[103]Cabinet Memorandums CP(47) 31 and 32, Creech Jones, "Palestine: Future Policy," 16 January 1947, PRO CAB 104/272, doc. 692–93; Cabinet secretary's notebook for Cabinet meeting, 15 January 1947, PRO CAB195/5/6; For ministerial support for partition, see Cabinet Conclusions, 14 February 1947, PRO CAB 128/9/22.

[104]Annex to JP(47)1, "Palestine: Strategic Requirements," Joint Planning Staff, 5 January 1947, PRO CAB 104/272, doc. 682; Cabinet secretary's notebook, 15 January 1947. PRO CAB195/5/6; Ovendale, "The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Government," 421. It should be noted that several Arab states, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, did eventually align with the USSR following pan-Arab nationalist coups in the 1950s and '60s. Western support for Israel, combined with a general anti-imperial ideology, was a significant motivation.

[105]Annex to JP(47)1, Joint Planning Staff, "Palestine: Strategic Requirements," 5 January 1947, PRO CAB 104/272, doc. 682; Chiefs of Staff Meeting COS(47)21, 6 February 1947, PRO CAB 104/272, doc. 704.

[106]Cabinet secretary's notebook, 5 January 1947, PRO CAB 195/5/6, 33; Telegram 244 from HC to CO, 28 January 1947, PRO CO 537/2294. doc. 6; Telegram 132 from HC to CO, 27 January 1947, PRO CO 537/3870, doc. 15.

[107]Record of talks in PRO CO 537/2326.

clear there was no common ground between the demands of the JA and Britain's desire to reconcile their obligations to Jews and Arabs.[108] Consequently, the colonial and foreign secretaries concluded that no solution was possible, and, in light of the high commissioner's confession that the "Civil Administration can no longer function in such an intolerable situation," they conceded failure.[109] Although there was strong agreement that retaining Palestine was important to Britain's strategic position in the Middle East, the British government had little choice but to conclude that the political costs were prohibitive.[110] In the Cabinet meeting on 14 February, the British government decided to hand responsibility for Palestine's future to the United Nations.[111] From February 1947 through the termination of the Mandate in May 1948, British counterinsurgency became a holding action.

Discussion: The Jewish Rebellion

Throughout the Jewish Rebellion, civilian politicians closely managed strategy and even individual operations. The perceived political constraints, largely stemming from policymakers' desire and American pressure for a negotiated settlement and military restraint, led Cabinet members to reject or weaken military recommendations and dismiss many of the political measures recommended by civilian and military advisors. While the army chafed at these restrictions, the chain of command was clear. Field Marshal Montgomery reminded his subordinates: "You can of course take NO repeat NO action until the High Commissioner gives you his directive."[112] H1, predicting civilian primacy in strategic decision making, again receives clear support.[113]

Throughout the first half of 1946, British policymakers justified their refusal to endorse their advisors' recommendations out of concern on the impact of these measures in the United States. Although policymakers desired the restoration of law and order, that goal was secondary to the need to placate American pressure, providing strong evidence for H2 and H3. In the second half of 1946 and early 1947, British references to US pressure were largely absent from policy discussions. However, there is circumstantial evidence, including US requests for clarification of British

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[108]Telegram 1523 from FO to British Embassy Washington, PRO CAB 104/272, doc. 722.
[109]Telegram 198 from HC to CO, 29 January 1947, PRO CAB 121/648, doc. 1466.
[110]CP(47)59, Colonial and Foreign Secretaries, "Palestine," PRO CAB 121/648, doc. 717; Cabinet Conclusions, 14 February 1947, CAB 128/9/22.
[111]Cabinet Conclusions, 14 February 1947, PRO CAB 128/9/22.
[112]64/CIGS 64505 from Montgomery to Dempsey, 5 August 1946, PRO WO 216/194.
[113]This refutes claims that military preferences were responsible for British failure. See especially, Bruce Hoffman, *The Failure of British Military Strategy within Palestine, 1939–1947* (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1983).

policy, that US interest continued to impact British strategy.[114] More importantly, the second period reveals the ways Cold War considerations constrained Britain's diplomatic options once the British turned to political solutions in lieu of military pacification, providing additional evidence for H2 and H3. The inability to adopt partition to meet the demands of the JA, due to wider Cold War pressures, meant the ends could not be adjusted to match the available means, ensuring the persistence of an ineffective counterinsurgency effort.

The question of alternative explanations for British restraint must be seriously considered, especially given the sympathy for the Yishuv by many within the Labor Party and the Cabinet.[115] Although there is no documentary evidence that British reluctance to pursue harsher measures was due to personal sympathies, these sympathies may have pushed the British in the same direction. However, personal preferences cannot easily explain the contradictions inherent in the policy–strategy nexus. On one hand, restraint and limitations on the use of coercion characterized counterinsurgency strategy, consistent with both US pressure and personal-preference arguments. On the other, the ultimate policy solution tilted away from Jewish and US demands, as well as from policymakers' personal preferences for partition, to safeguard British Cold War interests.

British rejection of partition due to concerns of an Arab-Soviet alliance reveals geostrategic pressures can overcome personal political preferences. The British government repeatedly returned to the conclusion that partition was the best solution to the Palestine problem, both on practical grounds and stemming from their sympathy for Zionism, including in the *Peel Report* in 1937, by the Secret Cabinet Committee on Palestine in 1943 and 1944, and, finally, by key members of the Cabinet by early 1947, including the colonial and defense secretaries and the chancellor of the exchequer.[116] Despite support for partition, Cold War considerations led British policymakers to conclude that the consequences of such a solution would threaten Britain's wider geostrategic position.

Moreover, Cabinet members held a variety of preferences vis-à-vis the Yishuv; whereas a majority were sympathetic to Zionism, the most consequential for Britain's Middle East policy, Foreign Secretary Bevin,

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[114]Mahoney, "The Logic of Process Tracing Tests," argues that evidence falling short of smoking gun can increase confidence in our hypotheses when it is considered "diagnostic."

[115]Cecil Bloom, "The British Labour Party and Palestine, 1917–1948," *Jewish Historical Studies* 36 (1999–2001), 157–62.

[116]On the 1943 proposals, see records of the Cabinet Committee on Palestine in PRO 95/14, especially conclusions of the committee meetings; Memorandum from Morrison to Prime Minister, 5 November 1943, PRO CAB 104/166; On attitudes in 1947, see Cabinet Conclusions CM(47)6, 15 January 1947, PRO CAB 121/648, doc. 1437, and secretary's notebook, PRO CAB 195/5/6, as well as secretary's notebook for the Cabinet meeting on 14 February 1947, CM(47)14, PRO CAB 195/5/22; Memorandum by the colonial secretary, CP(47)32, "Palestine: Future Policy," 17 January 1947, PRO CAB 121/648, doc. 1442.
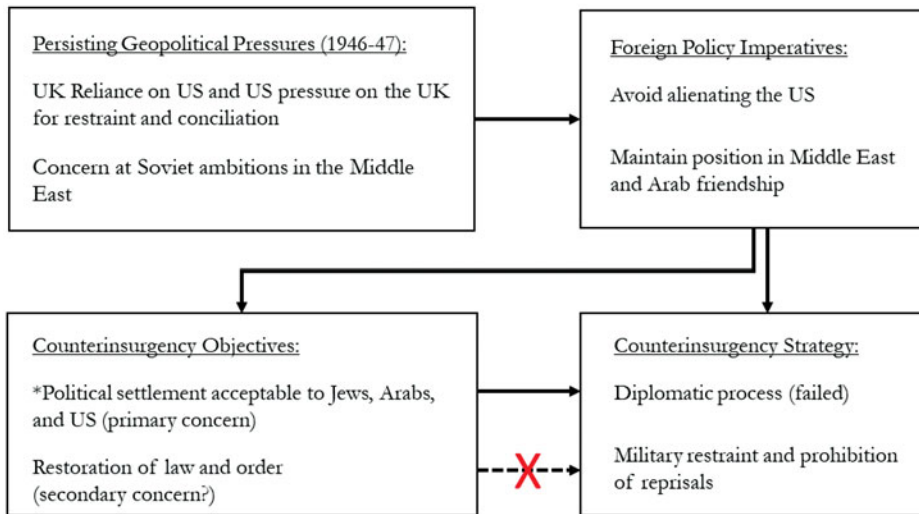
Figure 3. Strategic persistence, 1946–47.

was not.[117] However, Bevin was equally, if not more, committed to strategic restraint against the Yishuv.[118] Bevin's position is consistent with his ongoing concern about preserving London's relationship with Washington. Personal preferences would be a more convincing explanation only if evidence revealed that disagreements within the Cabinet on strategy coincided with various levels of support for Zionism. But records repeatedly stress the existence of consensus among Cabinet members against repression and against partition. Overall, the evidence is a bit weaker than in the previous case, but it is consistent with the claim that the persistence of geostrategic conditions and overarching foreign policy objectives should lead to the persistence of strategy. Figure 3 demonstrates the causal chain for the Jewish Rebellion.

Implications: The Politics of Strategic Planning, Effective Adaptation, and Future Research

Policymaker Primacy and International Politics

Although the case studies demonstrate different outcomes, both support the argument that politics matters; civilian policymakers' preferences ultimately determined counterinsurgency strategies in Palestine. The strategies selected were based on the recommendations of agents, both military and civilian, revealing a central role for bureaucratic actors, but military and political measures were subject to civilian oversight and conformed to their

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[117]Bloom, "The British Labour Party and Palestine," 165.
[118]Ibid.; Ovendale, "The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Government."

preferences at every step. Before concluding that responsibility for the strategies pursued by counterinsurgents lies with the military, or that military strategies simply reflect military preferences, the role of civilian policymakers in shaping those strategies must be ascertained. Studies of counterinsurgency focused on military preferences thus do not always appear sufficient to explain counterinsurgent behavior and performance.

Moreover, both case studies demonstrate that the strategies adopted by counterinsurgents cannot fully be explained without reference to the wider environment in which a conflict occurs. The strategies, and even to some extent the tactics and individual operations, adopted by the British to suppress rebellions in Palestine were significantly affected by pressures originating beyond the conflict. In both cases, policymakers clearly indicated that their strategic preferences were driven by "*wider* pressures" generated by developments beyond the battlefield, and they rejected strategies they felt would "might well be disastrous in the *wider* view."[119]

While some studies of counterinsurgency have identified the role of domestic political constraints on strategy, the case studies explored here further demonstrate that international politics matter. However, this study is not intended to supplant arguments about the role of domestic politics. Domestic political pressures constitute an alternative explanation for restraint and adaptation, but these two sources of constraint are not mutually exclusive. They largely draw on the same theoretical frameworks, making them fundamentally complimentary. Domestic politics explanations may do a better job explaining counterinsurgent behavior in some conflicts, including Ireland (1920–21) and Malaya (1949–52), or may work alongside international politics, as in Vietnam (see below) and Iraq (2006–7).[120] In the Palestine cases, though, domestic politics played little role; most of the pressure on strategy stemmed from foreign policy concerns, even to the extent that personal desires of key policymakers were superseded.

Another important implication of this study deals with the preoccupation with getting the doctrine right. Whereas much of the literature has focused on how military preferences can be oriented toward effective counterinsurgency, the nature of civilian control means counterinsurgency strategy is not determined by military doctrine but by policymakers' political interests. While military actors play a central role in shaping military strategy, this study reveals that although bad doctrine may be sufficient to sink a counterinsurgency, good doctrine does not ensure good strategy because

[119]Telegram 873 from colonial secretary to HC, 16 May 1946, Cunningham Papers, box 1 file 1, MECA; HC discussions in E6217/1/31, Meeting 1, 7 October 1938, FO 371/21864, 5. Emphasis added.

[120]Ireland: Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland*; Malaya: Goodman, "Negotiating Counterinsurgency"; Vietnam: McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*; Caverley, "The Myth of Military Myopia"; for Iraq, see speech by President George W. Bush, "President's Address to the Nation," 10 January 2007, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-7.html.

policymakers may prohibit its implementation. Moreover, the centrality of geostrategic pressures implies that, to an extent, factors that enable strategic adaptation may be beyond the control of policymakers. The issue is not simply that policymakers hold preferences that lead to "bad" outcomes. Rather, geostrategic pressures may simply create a situation where potentially successful strategies carry prohibitive costs, whereas optimal strategies from the point of view of broader foreign policy concerns cannot lead to satisfactory conflict outcomes.

External Pressures and Strategic Efficacy

One pressing question that remains regards the links between the decision to change strategy and the adoption of an "effective" strategy, one that advances counterinsurgents toward their political objectives. Beyond the question of whether it is possible to know if a strategy will be effective *ex-ante*, there is no guarantee new strategies will be effective because strategic change is responsive to political and geostrategic pressures originating beyond conflict dynamics. In fact, it is possible geostrategic changes necessitate the discarding of an effective strategy. However, these case studies suggest a preliminary answer to how geostrategic pressures may influence the prospects for adopting successful strategies. External pressures may constrain strategy directly or indirectly, as demonstrated in Figure 4(a). Indirectly, external pressure may dictate campaign objectives, which in turn shape strategy. This was evident in the case of the Arab Rebellion, where the rising specter of war necessitated both the release of troops and the preservation of Arab alliances. Alternatively, the exercise of certain instruments, for example, the use of indiscriminate violence or torture, or in some cases, excessive restraint, may generate external costs. Even if such instruments and strategies are anticipated to be effective on the battlefield, they may be prohibited due to their externalities. In this way, external pressures may directly constrain strategy, as was demonstrated in the case of the Jewish Rebellion.

Each pathway carries different implications for effective strategy. Figure 4(b) represents the indirect pathway. In this situation, policymakers perceive that external pressures require the counterinsurgency to attain a particular outcome. As the importance of attaining the objective increases, the relative costs of the instruments decline, allowing counterinsurgents to adjust strategy to their desired ends. The remaining challenge is to develop a strategy that will attain the counterinsurgent's objectives given local conditions. Figure 4(c) demonstrates a case where external pressures constrain strategy directly, disrupting the means–ends link and lowering the probability that the resulting strategy will be effective. This is not deterministic.
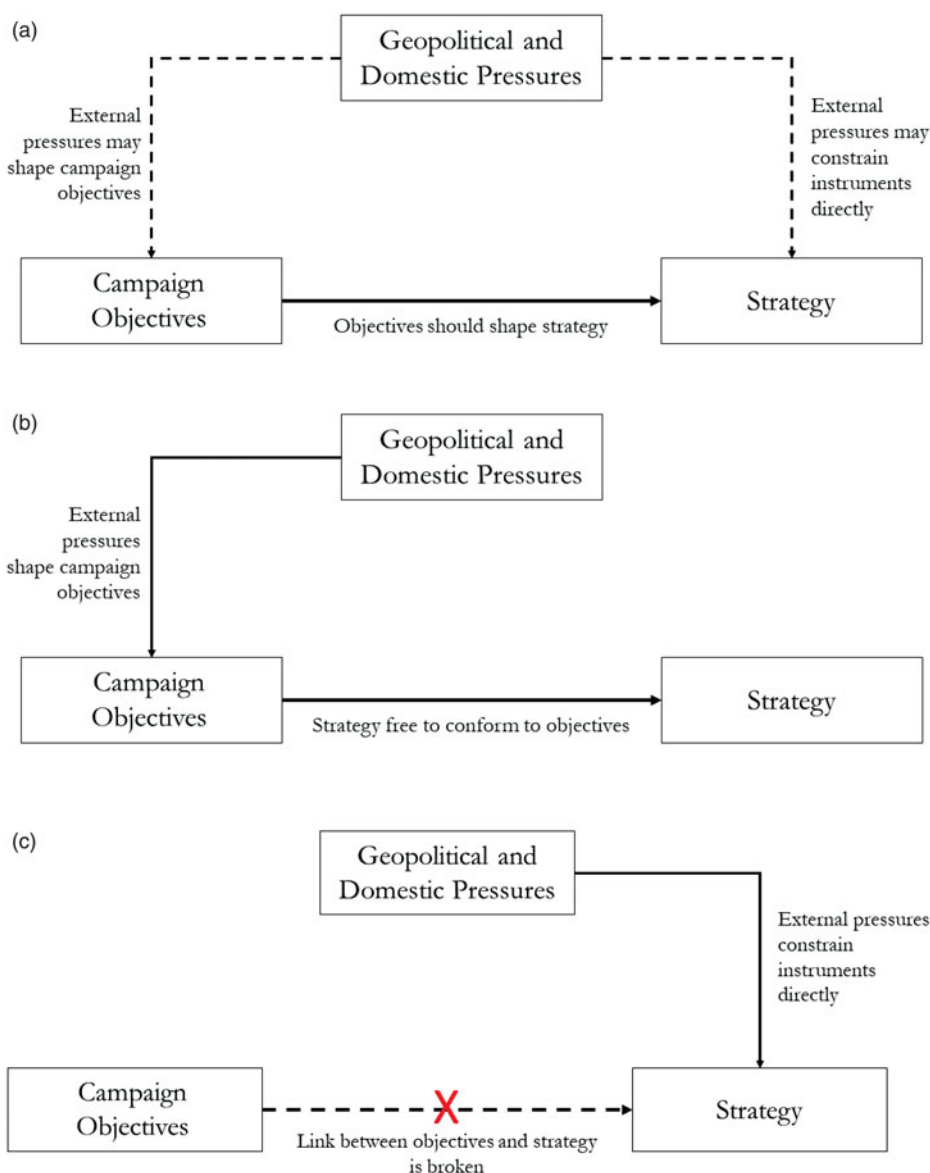
Figure 4. (a) Direct and indirect effects of external pressures on strategy. (b) External pressures shape campaign objectives. (c) External pressures constrain strategy.

Important objectives do not guarantee effective strategy, and direct constraints on instruments may be overcome by effective planners, as evidenced in Malaya, where military and financial constraints did not prevent General Harold Briggs from developing a winning strategy.[121]

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[121]Karl Hack, "Iron Claws on Malaya: The Historiography of the Malayan Emergency," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 30, no. 1 (1999); Joshua R. Goodman, "Shirking the Briggs Plan in Malaya—1950–1951," chap. 7 in "Negotiating Counterinsurgency."

This proposition is closely linked to the wider argument that military autonomy promotes effectiveness, whereas civilian interference is likely to undermine it, a claim going at least as far back as Sun Tzu: "No evil is greater than commands of the sovereign from the court."[122] In this case, the autonomy argument is that political or geostrategic constraints on the war's conduct may block the implementation of strategies designed to attain campaign objectives. This approach further indicates the necessity of good counterinsurgency doctrine; autonomy for an ill-prepared military is unlikely to promote a successful campaign.

Although the present study has suggested the ways external pressures may push counterinsurgents away from effective strategy, the evaluation of a limited number of cases cannot provide strong insight into the types of pressures likely to impact strategy directly or indirectly, especially because these pathways are merely probabilistic, raising or lowering the likelihood of adopting effective strategies. Future research should consider this question and examine a broader set of cases to identify whether certain types of pressures raise or lower the likelihood of adopting effective strategies.

Limitations and Future Research

One possible critique of the foregoing analysis is it represents a case of "most likely" due to the intensity of the threats Britain faced and its resulting vulnerability. As a theory-building exercise, the benefits lie in the ability to clearly demonstrate the mechanisms at work. Having demonstrated the plausibility of the theory, this analysis has opened several avenues for future research. The most important deals with cross-national generalizability, examining variation in cultures and institutions of decision making. While several studies contrast British and American cultures of civil-military relations, preliminary evidence from American cases suggests these dynamics are not unique to the British Empire.

For example, numerous aspects of the Vietnam War reveal similar dynamics, where strategic recommendations were approved, rejected, or modified to conform to policymaker preferences driven significantly by geostrategic concerns, an observation present in many works of history but absent in much of the political science literature examining Vietnam.[123] The administration's strategic calculations reveal a deep concern for US reputation among its Cold War allies and adversaries in Asia, Africa, and Europe: "Wouldn't all these countries say Uncle Sam is a paper tiger—

[122]Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 81; Huntington, *Soldier and State*; cf. Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine*; Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change*.
[123]Especially John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

wouldn't we lose credibility … if we [withdrew]. It would seem to be an irreparable blow."[124]

At the same time, the target set during the 1965 Rolling Thunder campaign was restricted to exclude targets in Hanoi and Haiphong out of fear this could lead to Chinese or Soviet intervention in Vietnam or elsewhere, revealing the ways geostrategic pressures may push policymakers to adopt more ambitious objectives while simultaneously constraining acceptable strategies.[125] Moreover, the decision to adopt a strategy designed to coerce Hanoi in 1965 reveals strategic change is possible absent major external shifts, but new strategies are still deeply constrained by geostrategic pressures. It follows that President Richard Nixon's diplomatic opening with China in the early 1970s, combined with a declining belief in the necessity of containment everywhere, lowered the perceived dangers of withdrawing from Vietnam, demonstrating how changes in foreign policy goals and perceptions of geostrategic pressures can alter the set of strategies policymakers deem acceptable.

Finally, although domestic political considerations, especially public and congressional reactions to troop call-ups and US escalation, were a concern to the administration throughout the war, evidence suggests that before the 1968 Tet Offensive, President Lyndon Johnson was driven more by foreign policy than by domestic politics; in 1965, Johnson stated, "I feel it would be more dangerous for us to lose this [the war] now, than endanger a greater number of troops."[126] However, this balance obviously changed over the course of the campaign as domestic opposition mounted. Few studies have considered the balance between domestic and foreign political concerns in Vietnam, tending to treat each in isolation. A study of the balance between foreign policy and domestic pressures, and its impact on campaign strategy, constitutes an important next step.

Finally, future research should examine whether the scope conditions can be expanded beyond democratic expeditionary counterinsurgency. This study follows a tradition within the literature to examine historical cases to consider implications for the challenges facing the United States and its allies in recent counterinsurgency campaigns, meaning the narrow scope conditions for the study still yield a significant payoff. However, it is highly

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[124]Comment by President Lyndon Johnson, 21 July 1965, Meetings of 21–27 July on Vietnam, 1965, regarding potential escalation in South Vietnam, 8 Meeting Notes File, box 1, Johnson Archive; Also meeting of 22 July, ibid.; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 238–39.

[125]George Ball, "Memorandum for the President," 13 February 1965. National Security Council History, Deployment of Major Forces to South Vietnam, box 40, tab 44; State Department telegrams 2769, 1 June 1965, and response 2984, 3 June 1965, National Security Council History, Deployment of Major Forces to South Vietnam, box 42, tabs 256–57; Afternoon meeting, 22 July, and meetings on 23 July 1965, Meetings of July 21–27 1965 on Vietnam, 1965, Meeting Notes File, box 1, including criticism of Operation Rolling Thunder by General John P. McConnell on 22 July 1965, 14. All in Johnson Archive.

[126]Comment by President Johnson, 21 July 1965, Meetings of July 21–27 1965 on Vietnam, regarding potential escalation in South Vietnam, Meeting Notes File, box 1, 5, Johnson Archive.

likely that these dynamics are not limited to democracies; authoritarian regimes, especially bureaucratic authoritarian regimes characterized by a chief executive overseeing specialized executive bureaucracies, should demonstrate similar dynamics, where the wider pressures facing leaders shape their preferences for certain counterinsurgency outcomes and instruments. This being the case, it is likely this framework can be applied to, for example, the Soviet campaign in Afghanistan or the Russian campaign in Chechnya.

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