

## *Constant attack by state forces will lead to a lowering of VEO activity.*

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### General Description of the Literature:

Some writers on military strategy theorize that continual attack against an enemy will lead to their defeat through attrition and exhaustion (Callwell 1903; Johnston 1998). Such a strategy is meant to keep the enemy off-balance, diminish the enemy's forces, and alienate popular support through a demonstration of resolve and success. In general, the scope of the literature is limited to discussion of interstate war and guerrilla warfare and relates less to terrorism and other forms of political violence. The support for such a hypothesis is primarily anecdotal.

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### Detailed Analyses

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**Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence:** Callwell (1903) attributes the successes of multiple British colonial campaigns (including responses to the Indian Mutiny and the Anglo-Zulu War). However, the analysis is anecdotal. Johnston (1998) also finds anecdotal support for the hypothesis in the context of interstate wars in the 19th and 20th centuries. On the other hand, Metz (2007) argues that a strategy of continual attack by U.S. forces against Iraqi insurgents in 2004-2005 escalated, rather than de-escalated, the insurgency. All of the analyses focus on short-term effects without considering the long-term implications of such a strategy.

### **Empirical Support Score: 1 = Anecdotal support only for the hypothesis**

**Applicability to Influencing VEOs:** The two studies showing limited support for the hypothesis are derived from radically different contexts than those most governments facing VEOs find themselves in today. The one study that is from a relevant context does not find support for the hypothesis.

**Applicability Score:** Low Confidence – Empirical results are derived from alternative contexts and you do not believe that they will necessarily apply to the VEO context, but there might be some possibility that they do apply.

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### Bibliography:

Callwell, Charles Edward. 1903. *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*. Second edition. London: Harrison and Sons.

Johnston, Paul. 1998. "The Myth of Manoeuvre Warfare: Attrition in Military History." In *The Changing Face of War: Learning from History*, edited by Allan Douglas English, 22-32. Montreal, Canada: The Royal Military College of Canada.

Metz, Steven. 2007. *Learning from Iraq: Counterinsurgency in American Strategy*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College.