

Reading Notes Template for Security Studies

1. **Complete bibliographic information** (see library.nps.edu/citation for elements needed)
 - a. Is there anything worth noting about the **author** (well known in the field? military experience?), **publisher** (academic, gov't, think tank?), or **source type**?
2. **Main question**—What are they trying to understand?
3. **Primary argument**—State in one sentence, usually claiming that X (inputs) contributes to Y (an outcome).
4. **Secondary argument(s), if any**—Other factors contributing to the outcome, other conditions that need to be present to see the outcome.
5. **Related to broad topics** (e.g., counterinsurgency, terrorism, great-power competition, US-China relations, diplomacy, international organizations)
6. **Theories, frameworks, and/or major concepts applied or tested?** (e.g., social mobilization framework, neorealism, band wagoning, patron-client relations, natural resource dependence, democratization, civil-military relations)
7. **What's the scope of the work? What cases did the author examine?** (e.g., US military-Afghanistan local-leader collaboration, 2005–2010, is one case related to understanding the broad topic of counterterrorism strategies)

Optional but useful to think about:

- a. [Do the cases seem applicable to/representative of the research question being asked?](#)
 - b. [Do you think the findings may be applied to other cases? If so, which ones?](#)
8. **Evidence presented?** (e.g., for US-Afghanistan collaboration, the paper might describe sharing of intel, weapons, transportation, other resources; frequency of meetings between actors; nature and frequency of fighting or training together).

Optional but very useful to think about:

- a. [Was the evidence adequate \(enough\)?](#)
 - b. [Is it reliable?](#)
 - c. [Is it convincing and reasonable, meaning logically connected?](#)
 - d. [Are you thinking of evidence that's missing, that would better answer the question or support the conclusions?](#)
9. **Any other data or background provided?** (e.g., Afghanistan election results from 2007, history of conflict dating back to Cold War, population or troop statistics—not the details, necessarily, but the type of data, so you're easily reminded where to find it)
 10. **Do the conclusions change your understanding of the topic? If so, how?**
 11. **Do you agree with the author? Why or why not?**