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Paths to Victory

Detailed Insurgency Case Studies



Christopher Paul | Colin P. Clarke | Beth Grill | Molly Dunigan





NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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Prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

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Preface

This research follows and expands a previous study that examined and compared the 30 insurgencies begun and completed worldwide between 1978 and 2008, published in 2010 as *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*.¹ This volume is a companion to RR-291/1-OSD, *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies*; these two reports supersede that earlier publication in most respects. Like the original effort, the research documented in these two volumes recounts the demonstrated effectiveness of a variety of counterinsurgency (COIN) concepts through case studies of insurgencies. However, the base of evidence has been expanded to 71 cases—all of the insurgencies completed worldwide between 1944 and 2010.

In addition to expanding the number and scope of the cases, the effort entailed broadening the accompanying analyses. All analyses conducted as part of the original effort are repeated, but several new ones have been added, including an analysis of the duration of insurgencies and of factors that are unique to cases involving support to the counterinsurgent force from an outside actor.

The companion report presents findings from all the analyses and explains the study's case selection and methods. It also presents an overview and in-depth assessments of the key concepts, practices, and factors that feature prominently in successful COIN operations. This volume provides detailed case narratives for the 41 new case studies.

¹ Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-964-OSD, 2010b.

A similar companion volume to the original study, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies*, offers detailed case histories for each of the original 30 COIN campaigns addressed in the analyses.² A spreadsheet with the full case data for all 71 cases is available for download at http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR291z1.html.

This work will be of interest to defense analysts and military planners who are responsible for evaluating current and future U.S. operations and COIN approaches; to academics and scholars who engage in historical research on COIN, insurgency, and irregular warfare; and to students of contemporary and historic international conflicts.

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² Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-964/1-OSD, 2010a.

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Summary

Insurgency has been the most prevalent form of armed conflict since at least 1949.¹ Despite that fact, following the Vietnam War and through the remainder of the Cold War, the U.S. military establishment turned its back on insurgency, refusing to consider operations against insurgents as anything other than a “lesser-included case” for forces structured for and prepared to fight two major theater wars. In the post-9/11 world, however, insurgency rocketed back into prominence. As counterterrorism expert William Rosenau notes, “insurgency and counterinsurgency . . . have enjoyed a level of military, academic, and journalistic notice unseen since the mid-1960s.”² Countering insurgents, or supporting the efforts of allies and partners as they did so, became the primary focus of U.S. operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan. While debates continue to rage over how and even if the United States should be involved in future campaigns against insurgents, no one predicts that the future will be free of insurgencies.³ Indeed, at the time of this writing, insurgencies were ongoing in (at least) the following coun-

¹ See Thomas X. Hammes, “Why Study Small Wars?” *Small Wars Journal*, Vol. 1, April 2005. In his 2013 book, Max Boot makes the argument that insurgency, guerrilla warfare, and unconventional conflict have been the most common forms of warfare dating back to the Romans and the Jews in AD 66. See Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*, New York: Norton, 2013.

² William Rosenau, “Subversion and Terrorism: Understanding and Countering the Threat,” *The MIPT Terrorism Annual 2006*, Oklahoma City, Okla.: National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, 2006, p. 53.

³ See, for example, George Friedman, “The End of Counterinsurgency,” *RealClearWorld*, June 5, 2012.

tries: Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, India, Israel/Palestine, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Uganda, and Yemen. Countering insurgencies is now a major concern for regional governments, global coalitions, and international security policymakers alike.⁴

When a country is threatened by an insurgency, what strategies and approaches give the government the best chance of prevailing? Contemporary discourse on the subject is voluminous and often contentious. A variety of different concepts and areas of emphasis are advocated, but such advocacy is usually based on relatively limited evidence. Advice for the counterinsurgent tends to be based on little more than common sense, a general understanding of history, or a handful of detailed historical cases, instead of a solid and systematically collected body of historical evidence. A 2010 RAND report, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*, sought to improve this situation with thorough analyses based on a firm foundation of historical data, along with extensive and detailed comparative analyses of the 30 insurgencies begun and completed worldwide between 1978 and 2008.⁵ A 2013 RAND study expands on and supersedes that previous effort, adding 41 new cases (presented in this volume) and comparing all 71 insurgencies begun and completed worldwide between World War II and 2010. The current study also asked some additional questions, including questions about the approaches that led counterinsurgency (COIN) forces to prevail when supported or provided by another nation (an external actor) and questions about timing and duration, such as which factors are associated with the duration of insurgencies and which are associated with the length of post-conflict peace intervals (the durability of insurgency outcomes), as well as how long historical COIN forces had to be engaged in effective COIN practices before they won.

⁴ See Richard H. Shultz, Douglas Farah, and Itamara V. Lochard, *Armed Groups: A Tier One Security Priority*, United States Air Force Academy, Colo.: Institute for National Security Studies, Occasional Paper 57, September 2004.

⁵ Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-964-OSD, 2010b.

Case Selection and Analytic Approach

This research quantitatively tested the performance of 24 COIN concepts against the historical record. These concepts were identified through a survey of the existing literature and based on previous research in this area. Some of the concepts were drawn from classical perspectives on COIN from the previous century, such as pacification and resettlement; others are contemporary concepts suggested for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, such as “boots on the ground” and the concept implicit in U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*.⁶

The findings and analyses presented in the accompanying volume are based on the detailed case studies compiled for the 71 insurgencies.⁷ Each case is supported by a detailed case narrative and by quantitative data on nearly 300 individual factors.⁸ These analyses benefited considerably from both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as from the ability to move back and forth between the two. The qualitative narratives frequently suggested new factors or hypotheses, which were then tested comparatively across cases using the quantitative data. Patterns that did not make sense in the quantitative analyses were explored in the detailed narratives, with the nuance from the narratives subjected to quantitative analyses in the form of still more new hypotheses or new factors.

⁶ Headquarters, U.S. Department of the Army, and Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, Field Manual 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2007. For a review of classic approaches to COIN, see Austin Long, *On “Other War”: Lessons from Five Decades of RAND Counterinsurgency Research*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-482-OSD, 2006.

⁷ See Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, and Molly Dunigan, *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-291/1-OSD, 2013.

⁸ The 41 new case narratives are presented in this volume. The original 30 narratives can be found in Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-964/1-OSD, 2010a.

The selected cases are the 71 most recent resolved insurgencies, spanning the period from World War II through 2010.⁹ In addition to being perfectly representative of the modern history of insurgency, these cases represent geographic variation (mountains, jungles, deserts, cities), regional and cultural variation (Africa, Latin America, Central Asia, the Balkans, the Far East), and variation in the military capabilities and tactics of COIN forces and insurgent forces alike. The 71 cases do contain a subset of cases that are unlike the others, however, and are therefore not appropriate comparisons for the larger set of cases. Specifically, their outcomes were not driven primarily by the effectiveness of the COIN force but by exogenous factors related to broader historical currents: the end of colonialism and the end of apartheid. We removed the cases that fought “against the tide of history” (and one more case with an indeterminate outcome) from the cases used for the quantitative analyses, leaving an analytic core of 59 cases. (See Figure S.1; for a more detailed discussion, see Chapter Three in the accompanying volume.)¹⁰ We’ve made available all 71 case narratives both for comprehensiveness and because the nuance and rich detail make each case potentially instructive, even if it is not broadly comparable with other cases.

The data include several subsets of interest. First, we divided the 59 core cases into 44 “iron fist” cases, in which the primary emphasis of the COIN force was preponderantly (and often almost exclusively) on eliminating the insurgent threat, and 15 motive-focused cases, with primary or at least balanced attention to addressing the motives for beginning and sustaining the insurgency. Second, we isolated the 28 cases in which a major power contributed forces to the counterinsurgent side, further dividing the set into the 13 cases in which such force contributions were limited to advisers, special operations forces, or air power and the 15 cases in which significant external ground forces were present.

⁹ Only resolved cases were included because cases in which the outcome had yet to be determined would not have been useful for identifying the correlates of COIN success.

¹⁰ Paul, Clarke, Grill, and Dunigan, 2013.

Table S.1
Degree of Support for 24 COIN Concepts

Concept	Degree of Evidentiary Support
Development	Strong support
Pacification	Strong support
Legitimacy (government)	Strong support
Legitimacy (use of force)	Strong support
Reform	Strong support
Redress	Minimal support
Democracy	Minimal support
Unity of effort	Strong support
Resettlement	Minimal support
Cost-benefit	Strong support
Border control	Strong support
Initiative	Strong support
"Crush them"	Strong evidence against
Amnesty/rewards	Minimal support
Strategic communication	Strong support
Field Manual 3-24 (<i>Counterinsurgency</i>)	Strong support
Clear, hold, and build	Strong support
"Beat cop"	Strong support
"Boots on the ground"	Strong support
"Put a local face on it"	Minimal support
Cultural awareness	Minimal support
Commitment and motivation	Strong support
Tangible support reduction	Strong support
Criticality of intelligence	Strong support
Flexibility and adaptability	Strong support

and was evaluated based on the strength of the relationship of those factors with case outcomes, both in terms of correlation and in cross-tabulation. We considered concepts to have strong support if the relationship between the implementation of the concept (as represented by the factors) and the case outcome was very strong (i.e., implementation of the concept is a very strong indicator of outcome). We considered concepts to have minimal support if there was limited correlation between the implementation of the concept and the outcome. Finally, we considered there to be strong evidence *against* a concept if it was implemented in a greater proportion of losses than wins.

Seventeen of the 24 concepts had strong empirical support.¹² There was strong evidence against one concept: “Crush them.” We found that this concept was applied where the COIN force employed both escalating repression and collective punishment. Of 33 COIN forces implementing “crush them,” 23 lost to the insurgents.

In the discussion of the next key finding, we single out three of the strongly supported concepts for more detailed attention because they were identified as priority concepts that were always implemented by victorious COIN forces.

Effective COIN Practices Run in Packs, and Some Practices Are Always in the Pack: Tangible Support Reduction, Commitment and Motivation, and Flexibility and Adaptability

One of the key findings reported in *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency* was that “effective COIN practices tend to run in packs,” meaning that COIN forces that defeated insurgencies implemented numerous effective practices rather than just a few.¹³ This study confirmed that finding, but the wide range of cases considered here allowed us to further explore its nuances. Qualitative comparative analysis techniques identified three priority COIN

¹² The astute reader will note that 18 rows in Table S.1 are listed as receiving strong support; this is because a single concept, legitimacy, has been subdivided into two rows—one for government legitimacy and one for legitimacy of the use of force.

¹³ Paul, Clarke, and Grill, 2010b, p. xv.

concepts. These three concepts were implemented in each and every COIN win, and no losing COIN force implemented all three:

- tangible support reduction
- commitment and motivation
- flexibility and adaptability.

Implementation of all three of these concepts appears to be prerequisite for COIN success, based on the core historical data underlying this study.

Tangible support refers to the ability of the insurgents to maintain needed levels of recruits, weapons and materiel, funding, intelligence, and sanctuary. In every COIN win, COIN forces managed to substantially reduce tangible support to the insurgents; only two COIN forces managed to substantially reduce insurgent tangible support and still lost.

Tangible support is not the same as popular support. Although tangible support can come from a supporting population, it can also come from an external supporter—either a state sponsor or a diaspora or other nonstate sponsor. This research echoes the finding from *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* that “tangible support trumps popular support.”¹⁴ In many cases, tangible support came from the population, and the level of popular support corresponded with levels of tangible support. When they did not match, however, victory followed tangible support. All three cases in which the government had the support of the majority of the population but the insurgents’ tangible support was not significantly interrupted were COIN losses. Meanwhile, the COIN force won 12 of 14 cases in which the COIN force reduced flows of tangible support to the insurgents but the insurgents retained their popular support.

Commitment and motivation refers to the extent to which the government and COIN forces demonstrated that they were actually committed to defeating the insurgency, rather than maximizing their own personal wealth and power, bilking external supporters by extending

¹⁴ Paul, Clarke, and Grill, 2010b, p. xxii.

the conflict, or avoiding (or fleeing) combat. In all COIN wins, both the government and the COIN force demonstrated their commitment and motivation, whereas the insurgents won all 17 of the cases in which commitment and motivation were assessed as lacking.¹⁵ Note that this set of factors considered the commitment and motivation of both the threatened government and the COIN forces, not just one or the other.

Flexibility and adaptability captures the ability of COIN forces to adjust to changes in insurgent strategy or tactics. While some COIN forces failed to adapt in (and lost) early or intermediate phases in cases that they still managed to win, all successful COIN forces made any necessary adaptations in the decisive phase of each case.

Every Insurgency Is Unique, but Not So Much That It Matters at This Level of Analysis; the COIN Scorecard Discriminates Cases into Wins and Losses

A regular theme in discussions about insurgency is that “every insurgency is unique.” The distinct narratives for the 71 cases lead the authors to concur, except that those distinct or unique characteristics do not matter at this level of analysis. All the findings of this study hold across the core cases without an exception for unique narratives or cases.¹⁶ This holds for the prioritized concepts, and it holds for the COIN scorecard. A simple scorecard of 15 good practices and 11 bad practices perfectly discriminates the 59 core cases into wins and losses. Table S.2 lists 15 “good” COIN practices or factors and 11 “bad” COIN practices or factors.

As shown in Table S.3, subtracting the total number of bad practices in the decisive phase of each case from the total number of good

¹⁵ Before dismissing this result as trivial or obvious, note that there are several cases in the data in which an external actor contributed well-motivated and professional COIN forces in support of a government fighting an insurgency, but the government and indigenous COIN forces failed to demonstrate their resolve. All of these cases were ultimately COIN losses.

¹⁶ The distinctive features and characteristics of individual insurgencies most certainly *do* matter in actual efforts to implement approaches and practices on the ground. Our findings do not suggest a “one-size-fits-all” approach to COIN at the execution level; rather, these findings suggest that there is a finite set of good practices that a COIN force should always aspire to realize, but how a COIN force actually does so in any given operation will vary depending on the context.

Table S.2
“Good” and “Bad” COIN Practices

15 Good COIN Practices	11 Bad COIN Practices
The COIN force realized at least two strategic communication factors.	The COIN force used both collective punishment and escalating repression.
The COIN force reduced at least three tangible support factors.	There was corrupt and arbitrary personalistic government rule.
The government realized at least one government legitimacy factor.	Host-nation elites had perverse incentives to continue the conflict.
Government corruption was reduced/good governance increased since the onset of the conflict.	An external professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of the insurgents.
The COIN force realized at least one intelligence factor.	The host nation was economically dependent on external supporters.
The COIN force was of sufficient strength to force the insurgents to fight as guerrillas.	Fighting was initiated primarily by the insurgents.
Unity of effort/unity of command was maintained.	The COIN force failed to adapt to changes in adversary strategy, operations, or tactics.
The COIN force avoided excessive collateral damage, disproportionate use of force, or other illegitimate application of force.	The COIN force engaged in more coercion or intimidation than the insurgents.
The COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with the population in the area of conflict.	The insurgent force was individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated.
Short-term investments, improvements in infrastructure or development, or property reform occurred in the area of conflict controlled or claimed by the COIN force.	The COIN force or its allies relied on looting for sustainment.
The majority of the population in the area of conflict supported or favored the COIN force.	The COIN force and government had different goals or levels of commitment.
The COIN force established and then expanded secure areas.	
Government/COIN reconstruction/development sought/achieved improvements that were substantially above the historical baseline.	
The COIN force provided or ensured the provision of basic services in areas that it controlled or claimed to control.	
The perception of security was created or maintained among the population in areas that the COIN force claimed to control.	

Table S.3
Balance of Good COIN Practices and Bad
COIN Practices for the 59 Core Cases

Score	COIN Losses	COIN Wins
-11	1	0
-9	2	0
-8	2	0
-7	4	0
-6	3	0
-5	2	0
-4	4	0
-3	5	0
-2	4	0
-1	4	0
2	0	2
3	0	3
4	0	2
5	0	3
6	0	3
7	0	1
8	0	1
9	0	1
10	0	4
11	0	2
12	0	2
13	0	3
15	0	1

practices produces a scorecard score. If the score is negative (more bad practices than good), then the case was a COIN loss; if the score is positive (more good practices than bad), the case was a COIN win. This holds without exception. The first column of Table S.3 lists the scorecard scores, from -11 (no good practices and all the bad practices) to 15 (all the good practices and none of the bad). The second column lists the number of cases receiving each score that were COIN losses, and the third column lists the number of these cases that were COIN wins. The fact that there is no overlap between the second and third columns reinforces how effectively the scorecard discriminates historical wins from losses.

Quality Is More Important Than Quantity, Especially Where Paramilitaries and Irregular Forces Are Concerned

Of perennial interest to scholars of insurgency are the force requirements for effective COIN. The granularity of data in these cases does not allow for conclusions regarding force ratios between COIN forces and insurgents, nor does it allow us to identify specific COIN force composition ratios of regular forces, police, special operations forces, or paramilitaries. These analyses do support some higher-level observations that should be of interest nonetheless.

First, in no case did the COIN force win unless it overmatched the insurgents and could force them to fight as guerrillas by the decisive phase of the conflict. Governments that attempted to transition their COIN forces to overmatch the insurgents usually sought to increase both the quality and the quantity of their COIN forces. While quantity may have a quality all its own, COIN force quality appears to have been more important than quantity in every case in which it mattered among the historical cases examined here.

Second, most COIN forces used significant numbers of police, paramilitary troops, or militia personnel, with virtually no correlation with outcome. This was because, too often, these forces were inadequately armed or trained or otherwise ineffective. However, in the 23 cases in which police or paramilitaries were *not* ineffective, COIN forces won 69 percent of the time. This is another historical endorsement of the importance of quality of COIN forces and, further, an

endorsement of the inclusion of such forces, if they can be adequately prepared.¹⁷

Governments Supported by External Actors Win the Same Way Others Do

We repeated all the analyses for the subset of cases that involved forces from an external major power in support of the government (28 cases). The findings show that external or externally supported COIN forces win almost as often as wholly indigenous COIN forces. This suggests that using external forces is not inherently a bad COIN practice. Further, results for cases involving COIN support by external actors match results from the core data; the same concepts whose implementation was correlated with COIN success in the broader data were also correlated with success in the external actor cases.

The external actor analysis raised two cautions. First, as noted previously, commitment and motivation of the government and COIN force are critical to COIN success. This holds in external actor cases as well. No external COIN force or externally supported COIN force was able to prevail if the host-nation government was insufficiently committed. The caution, then, is for would-be external supporters: *You can't want it more than they do!*

Second, every case that involved external professional forces supporting the insurgents was a COIN loss, unless it was balanced by external professional forces supporting the government. This caution applies to those who advocate a “light footprint” in supporting COIN forces or support restricted to advisers, special operations forces, and air power. History suggests that if insurgents have external conventional forces on their side, the COIN force needs such support, too.

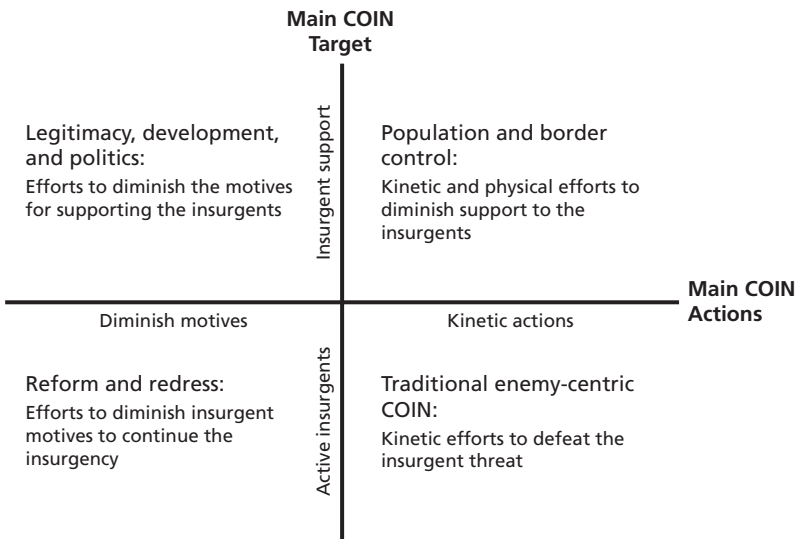
¹⁷ For more on the historical role of local defense forces, see Austin Long, Stephanie Pezard, Bryce Loidolt, and Todd C. Helmus, *Locals Rule: Historical Lessons for Creating Local Defense Forces for Afghanistan and Beyond*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1232-CFSOCC-A, 2012.

The Iron Fist COIN Path, Focused Primarily on Eliminating the Insurgent Threat, Is Historically Less Successful

The historical cases primarily followed one of two paths: The “iron fist” path, with a focus preponderantly (and often almost exclusively) on eliminating the insurgent threat, or the motive-focused path, with primary or at least balanced attention to addressing the motives for beginning and sustaining the insurgency. Figure S.2 shows these two new conceptual divisions and how they relate to one another.

While both paths can lead to success, historically, COIN forces following the iron fist path won only 32 percent of the time, while those on the motive-focused or mixed path won 73 percent of the time. Not only have iron fist COIN efforts failed more often than they have succeeded, but they have almost always involved atrocities or other COIN force behaviors that are considered “beyond the pale” by contemporary American ethical standards.

**Figure S.2
New COIN Dichotomies: Insurgent Support Versus Active Insurgents,
and Efforts to Diminish Motive Versus Kinetic Efforts**



While this finding appears particularly relevant to ongoing debates between advocates of population-centric and enemy-centric COIN, this report argues that different categories provide better context for these results and provide a more nuanced understanding of COIN going forward. Iron fist COIN forces struggle because of their focus on the insurgents at the expense of a focus on *support* for those insurgents, as well as their focus on kinetic action (fighting, killing, capturing) to eliminate the insurgents at the expense of efforts to diminish the *motives* for the insurgency (and for supporting the insurgents). Successful COIN forces find a balance on the spectrums of focal targets (insurgent support or the insurgents themselves) and focal actions (efforts to kinetically eliminate insurgents/support versus efforts to diminish the motives for insurgency/support). COIN forces on the motive-focused path succeeded not just because their main emphases included motive-diminishing actions, but because they also fought the insurgents and because they targeted both insurgents and their main sources of support. The (relatively small) number of iron fist path winners prevailed with a primary emphasis on smashing the insurgents but also found ways to diminish their support.

COIN Takes Time, but Some COIN Practices Help End Insurgencies Sooner and Lead to a More Durable Postconflict Peace

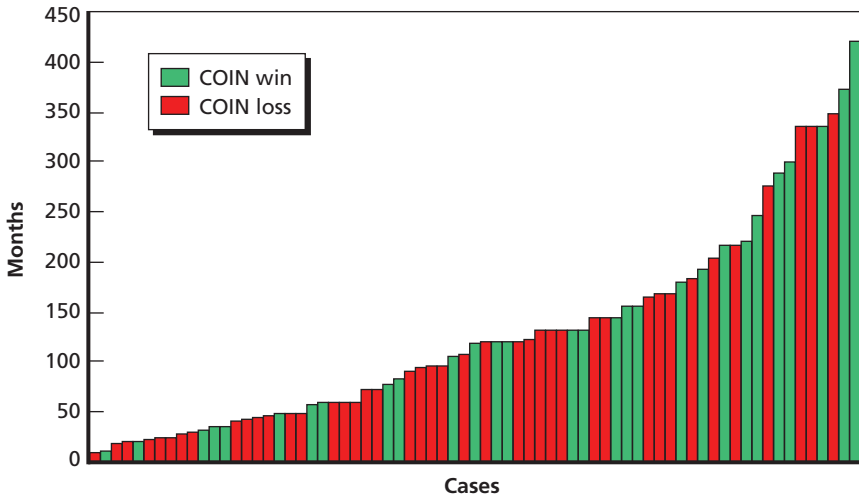
The durations of insurgencies vary widely. The median length of the 71 cases was 118 months (slightly less than ten years).¹⁸ Beating an insurgency takes longer than succumbing to one, on average: The median length of a COIN win was 132 months (11 years), while the median COIN loss was only 95 months (slightly less than eight years).¹⁹ Figure S.3 shows the duration in months of all 71 cases.²⁰

¹⁸ The mean duration is 128.4 months, pulled higher than the median by the few extremely long cases. The standard deviation for that mean is 99.3 months, due to the extreme variation in case durations, ranging from three months to 420 months (35 years).

¹⁹ The mean duration of a COIN win was 152.2 months, with a standard deviation of 109.9 months; the mean duration of a COIN loss was 112 months, with a standard deviation of 89 months.

²⁰ Note that these 71 cases include completed insurgencies only. If one considers insurgencies that are ongoing, a small number of very long cases would increase the average duration.

Figure S.3
Durations of 71 Insurgencies



RAND RR2912-S.3

Chapter Five in the accompanying volume presents analyses aimed at identifying factors and concepts whose presence was correlated with shortening COIN wins and prolonging the peace interval after a COIN win.²¹ The following concepts, in addition to being endorsed as associated with COIN success, all significantly decrease the remaining duration of a conflict when they have been implemented:

- tangible support reduction
- border control
- strategic communication
- beat cop.

These additional factors are also significantly associated with decreased duration:

- The COIN force was of sufficient strength to force the insurgents to fight as guerrillas (COIN force overmatch).

²¹ See Paul, Clarke, Grill, and Dunigan, 2013.

- COIN or government actions did not contribute to substantial new grievances claimed by insurgents.
- There were significant government reforms over the course of the conflict.

The analysis of postconflict peace intervals was much more limited, but it identified two factors significantly related to the stability of a COIN win and extending the length of the postconflict peace interval:

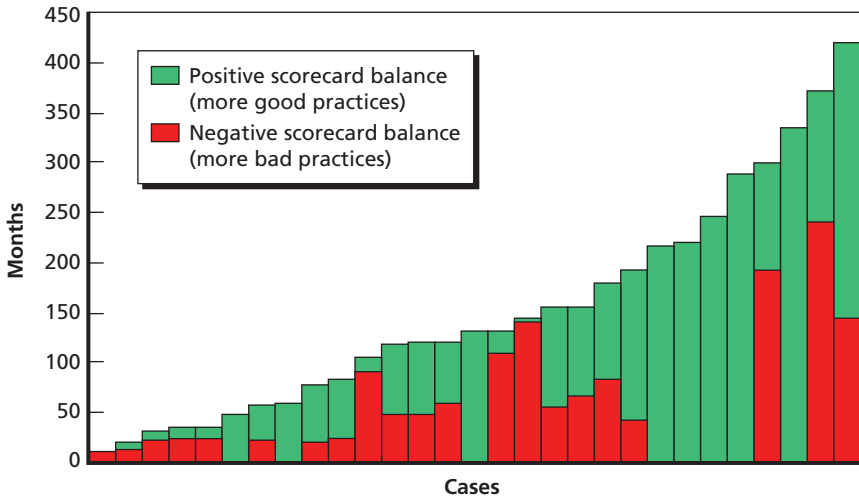
- There were significant government reforms over the course of the conflict.
- There were significant ethical, professional, or human rights–related military reforms over the course of the conflict.

Note that government and military reform is a supported COIN concept (see Table S.1), and it contributes to reducing conflict length and increasing postconflict peace intervals.

COIN Takes Time: After Good COIN Practices Are in Place, the Average Insurgency Lasts Roughly Six More Years

Because the COIN scorecard presented in Table S.2 discriminates historical wins and losses so effectively, it begs a further question: Once a COIN force manages to achieve a positive balance of good and poor COIN practices, how long does it have to sustain those practices to win? The answer: about six years, on average. Figure S.4 shows the duration, in months, of the cases in our study in which the COIN force ultimately prevailed. The figure also shows the amount of time the COIN force in each case spent with a scorecard balance below 2 (shown in red) and at least 2 (shown in green). All COIN winners had a scorecard score of at least 2 by the end of the conflict. The median remaining duration of an insurgency after the COIN force achieved a positive scorecard score was 69 months, so, on average, forces that establish effective COIN practices prevail in 69 months. Note

Figure S.4
Durations of Winning Cases and Time with Good and Bad COIN Scorecard Scores



RAND RR291/2-S.4

that there is considerable variation around that average, but it suggests a planning point nonetheless.²²

Poor Beginnings Do Not Necessarily Lead to Poor Ends

One of the key findings from *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* was that “poor beginnings do not necessarily lead to poor ends.” In short, this means that COIN forces that get off on the wrong foot can adapt over the course of an insurgency.²³ This finding holds over the more comprehensive set of cases. We divided each of the 71 cases into between one and five phases, for a total of 204 rows of data. We then scored each phase according to whether the COIN force or the insurgents had the upper hand at its end. Because each case had a single decisive phase, 204 total phases minus 71 total cases (and, thus, final phases) leaves

²² The variation in the amount of time spent with a positive scorecard score prior to the end of the conflict can be quantified: The median was 69 months, and the mean was 101 months, with a standard deviation of 95 months.

²³ Paul, Clarke, and Grill, 2010b, p. xxiii.

133 initial or intermediate phases. In more than half of the *intermediate* phases (32 of 58) en route to COIN wins at the case level, the insurgents held the upper hand. Only nine of 29 COIN winners at the case level “ran the table” and had the upper hand in every phase of the conflict. All of the others had at least one phase in which the insurgents got the better of the COIN force but the latter managed to win in the end.

Recommendations

Taken together, these key findings suggest the following recommendations:

Recommendations for Defeating Insurgencies

- Focus first on overmatching the insurgents, defeating their conventional military aspirations, and forcing them to fight as guerrillas.
- Identify insurgents’ sources of tangible support and seek to reduce them.
- Recognize that essential tangible support may or may not flow from the population.
- Be prepared to continue good COIN practices for six or more years after a substantial balance of good COIN practices is first achieved.
- Avoid the exclusively “iron fist” COIN path.
- Generate or retain capabilities to plan and pursue multiple mutually supporting lines of operation.

Recommendations for Helping Others Fight an Insurgency

- When building host-nation security forces to fight an insurgency, balance quality and quantity, but favor quality.
- Help host-nation governments reform—to improve their commitment and motivation and to increase legitimacy.

- Retain leverage over supported governments and elites to encourage sufficient commitment and motivation; avoid creating perverse incentives or dependencies.

Recommendations for COIN Doctrine and Theory

- Move away from strategic discussions that focus on a population-centric versus insurgent-centric dichotomy, and add nuance by specifying spectrums for targets (insurgent support versus insurgents) and actions (diminishing motives versus kinetic diminution) with the goal of achieving balance.
- Revise COIN doctrine to reinforce core principles and include key insights from this research.

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David Lowe, our principal point of contact in OSD(CAPE), provided critical support for and oversight of this effort. We owe Timothy Bright, also at OSD(CAPE), a debt of gratitude for his willingness to support foundational research with limited immediate application to the day-to-day challenges his office faces but of value elsewhere in the U.S. Department of Defense and of great possible future utility. We hope the host of interesting findings herein rewards their support.

We continue to be indebted to those whose thoughts, comments, and input supported the original *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* research that this effort builds upon: Andrew Caldwell, formerly of OSD(CAPE); Matthew Minatelli in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD[P]); Charles Ragin, Chancellor's Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Irvine; and several RAND colleagues, including Jefferson Marquis, and Daniel Byman. We further acknowledge the contribution made by the host of participants in briefings and discussions of the previous work at the Pentagon, with Army G-2, OSD(CAPE), and Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy personnel; the U.S. Air Force Special Operations School at Hurlburt Field, Florida; the Center for Army Analysis at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia; the National Defense University Center for Complex Operations in Washington, D.C.; the U.S. Army/U.S. Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas; the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California; and various other venues, institutions, and conferences.

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Omissions and errors remain the responsibility of the authors alone.

Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
BLF	Baluch Liberation Front
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COIN	counterinsurgency
CPK	Communist Party of Kampuchea
DDR	disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DK	Democratic Kampuchea
DMI	South African Directorate of Military Intelligence
DOM	Daerah Operasi Militer [military operations area]
DSE	Dimokratikos Stratos Elladas [Democratic Army of Greece]
EAM	Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo [National Liberation Front]

ELAS	Ethnikos Laikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos [National Popular Liberation Army]
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EOKA	Ethniki Organosis Kiprion Agoniston [National Organization of Cypriot Struggle]
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
ERP	Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo [People's Revolutionary Army]
FAA	Forças Armadas Angolanas [Angolan Armed Forces]
FAR	Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes [Rebel Armed Forces]
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale [National Liberation Front]
FNLA	Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola [National Front for the Liberation of Angola]
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique [Mozambique Liberation Front]
FRETILIN	Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente [Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor]
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka [Free Aceh Movement]
GRAE	Govêrno Revolucionário de Angola no Exílio [Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile]
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IED	improvised explosive device

IO	information operations
IPKF	Indian Peacekeeping Force
KAR	King's African Rifles
KKE	Kommounistiko Komma Elladas [Greek Communist Party]
LNLM	Lebanese National Movement
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MK	Umkhunto we Sizwe [Spear of the Nation]
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola [People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola]
MR-13	Movimiento Revolucionario 13 Noviembre [Revolutionary Movement 13th November]
MRLA	Malayan Race's Liberation Army
NAP	National Awami Party
NLF	National Liberation Front
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OAS	Organisation de l'Armée Secrète [Secret Army Organization]
OSD(CAPE)IW	Office of the Secretary of Defense, Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, Irregular Warfare Division

P4K	Planning Guidance for Perfecting Peace and Security
PAIGC	Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde [African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde]
PAVN	People's Army of Vietnam
PFLOAG	Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PGT	Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajadores [Guatemalan Workers' Party]
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PKK	Parti Karkerani Kurdistan [Kurdistan Workers' Party]
PKP	Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas [Philippine Communist Party]
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PSYOP	psychological operations
RENAMO	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana [Mozambican National Resistance]
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SADF	South African Defense Force
SAS	British Special Air Service
SFF	Special Frontier Force
SLA	South Lebanese Army
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization

SWATF	South West African Territory Force
TMT	Türk Mukavemet Teskilati [Turkish Defense Organization]
TMVP	Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal [Tamil People's Liberation Tigers]
Triple A	Alianza Anticomunista Argentina [Argentine Anticommunist Alliance]
UN	United Nations
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola]
UPA	União das Populações de Angola [Union of Angolan Peoples]
URNG	Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca [Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity]
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WWII	World War II
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe Independent People's Revolutionary Army

Detailed Overviews of 41 Insurgency Cases

UK in Palestine, 1944–1947

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

In 1923, following its confirmation by the League of Nations, the British Mandate for Palestine became the legal commission for the administration of Palestine. It was British limitations on Jewish immigration into Palestine—which had been established as a Jewish homeland under the terms of the mandate—that spurred three underground Jewish organizations to launch an insurgency against the mandatory government. As many as 100,000 British soldiers, plus mandatory police and British Special Air Service (SAS) forces, were involved in the conflict. The counterinsurgents’ tactics included extensive cordon-and-search operations, massive numbers of arrests and detentions, and the imposition of martial law in some areas. Although these tactics were generally successful, the British were not as highly motivated as the insurgents in this conflict. Fighting against the tide of history, they ultimately capitulated in late 1947, withdrawing from Palestine.

Case Narrative

Preamble Phase: “The Mandate Begins” (1923–1944)

In 1923, the Council of the League of Nations confirmed the British Mandate for Palestine, a legal commission for the administration of Palestine. The League of Nations’ mandate system administered parts

of the defunct Ottoman Empire, which had been controlled by Middle Eastern powers since the 16th century, “until such time as they are able to stand alone.”¹ The preamble of the mandate specifically established Palestine as a national home for the Jewish people, declaring,

Whereas the Principal Allied Powers have also agreed that the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2nd, 1917, by the Government of His Britannic Majesty, and adopted by the said Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country. . . .²

Yet, over the course of the next several decades, attempts to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine faced numerous challenges, particularly due to resentment from the native Arab population of the area. From 1933 to 1936—the first three years of Adolf Hitler’s reign in Germany—more than 130,000 Jews arrived in Palestine. This translated to an 80-percent increase in the Jewish population and was a direct cause of the 1936–1939 Palestinian Arab revolt against the British mandate. The British government seriously considered the option of partitioning Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, but the Conservative government in power in London at the time backed away from this proposal. Instead, to appease the Arab population in the wake of the revolt, Britain opted to drastically limit Jewish immigration to Palestine beginning in 1939. Indeed, in a white paper released in May 1939, the British government set a Jewish immigration quota of 75,000 over five years. After this, further Jewish immigration was to be contingent upon Arab consent.³

¹ The Covenant of the League of Nations (Including Amendments Adopted to December 1924), Article 22, London, December 1924.

² The Palestine Mandate, London, July 24, 1922.

³ Arieh J. Kochavi, “The Struggle Against Jewish Immigration to Palestine,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3, July 1998, p. 146.

Five years later, in 1944, three Jewish armed underground organizations in Palestine perpetrated a revolt against the mandate, motivated by a belief that the British were not fully protecting Jewish interests in the region. Of the three groups, the Haganah (“Defense”) was the largest and most prominent, and also closely identified with the Socialist-Zionist views of the Jewish leadership in Palestine. The Irgun (“Organization,” shorthand for “National Military Organization,” whose acronym in Hebrew is pronounced “Etzel”) was a right-wing revisionist Zionist armed formation that broke away from the Haganah in 1931. The Lehi (Lohamei Herut Israel, or “Fighters for the Freedom of Israel”) was a more radical revisionist faction that splintered from the Irgun in 1940.⁴

Several years before the conflict began, the British called upon armed Palestinian Jews to help defend British interests in the Middle East against aggression by the Axis powers during World War II (WWII). In the early spring of 1941, as Nazi infiltration of Syria became more pronounced, the British enlisted the help of the Haganah, which they had previously considered an illegal organization. The Haganah established a permanently mobilized Jewish task force, the Palmach, in May 1941. By early 1942, 11,000 Jews were serving alongside British forces in the Middle East in what were supposed to be mixed Arab-Jewish companies but that were almost entirely Jewish. By August of that year, 18,000 Palestinian Jews had been placed into purely Jewish battalions. However, the threat to Palestine subsided in the fall of 1942, and the British closed Palmach training bases, allowed Palmach platoons to dwindle, and collected the weapons it had distributed to the force. Palmach units responded by breaking into a government arsenal to reclaim their weapons, and the British relegated the Haganah to its former illegal status. As a result, the Haganah again went underground, and its ranks grew to 21,000 men and women.⁵ It

⁴ David Cesarani, “The War on Terror That Failed: British Counter-Insurgency in Palestine 1945–1947 and the ‘Farran Affair,’” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 23, Nos. 4–5, October–December 2012, p. 648.

⁵ Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, 2nd ed., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000, pp. 231–236.

was against this backdrop that the “Hebrew Revolt” launched in February 1944.

**Phase I: “Irgun/Lehi Terrorism and ‘The Season’”
(February 1944–October 1945)**

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Insurgency motive: war of liberation/independence; COIN or insurgent actions precipitated (or constituted) ethnic or religious violence; COIN force included significant numbers of police, paramilitary, militia, or other nonconventional personnel; COIN force received substantial intelligence from population in area of conflict; Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated

Beginning in February 1944, the Irgun and Lehi worked in concert to conduct a terrorist campaign aimed at dislodging the British mandatory government in Palestine. The major impetus for the conflict was the mandatory government’s limitation on Jewish immigration. This first leg of the Hebrew revolt culminated in the assassination of Lord Moyne, British Minister Resident in the Middle East, in November 1944.⁶ While British Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s cabinet had endorsed a plan to partition Palestine regardless of Arab opposition in January 1944—which would have appeased the Jewish population—Lord Moyne’s assassination prompted Churchill to delay the resolution of the technical details of the partition until a more appropriate time.⁷

Meanwhile, between September 1944 and May 1945, the Haganah made a concerted effort to decrease the effectiveness of the Irgun and Lehi (even hoping to eliminate them completely, if possible). Recognizing that the British government was considering a resolution of the Palestine question that was favorable to the Jewish population, the

⁶ David A. Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine, 1945–47*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989, pp. 17, 52.

⁷ Charters, 1989, p. 17.

Haganah found the revolt waged by the Irgun and Lehi to be ill timed. More fundamentally, the Haganah was concerned that both groups, especially the Irgun, posed a threat to its leadership of the Jewish political community.⁸

The Haganah's displeasure with the Irgun/Lehi campaign during this phase led it to actively cooperate with the COIN force to identify, arrest, and interrogate Irgun members. This period of cooperation was known as "the Season" and resulted in significant losses for the Irgun. The Irgun admitted defeat in April 1945, calling for the creation of a united Jewish front against the mandatory government.⁹ This became much more likely with Churchill's defeat in the general election in July 1945, after which the Labour Party resumed power and decided not to automatically adopt the previous cabinet's recommendation of a Palestinian partition.¹⁰ Because the British government was no longer seriously contemplating a settlement of the Palestine situation that was favorable to the Jewish population, the Haganah became more willing to cooperate with the other underground Jewish organizations working against the British in Palestine.

Phase II: "The United Resistance Movement and Beyond" (October 1945–September 1946)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Insurgency motive: war of liberation/independence; COIN or insurgent actions precipitated (or constituted) ethnic or religious violence; COIN force included significant numbers of police, paramilitary, militia, or other nonconventional personnel; Insurgents demonstrated potency through impressive or spectacular attacks; Curfews established for population control; Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or

⁸ Charters, 1989, p. 52.

⁹ Charters, 1989, p. 53.

¹⁰ Charters, 1989, p. 17.

better motivated; Insurgents employed unconstrained violence (against civilians) to create or sustain insecurity and instability (purposely or otherwise)

Accordingly, in mid-October 1945, the Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi reached an agreement to form a united front in the form of the United Resistance Movement (Tenuat Hameri Ha'ivri). Under this agreement, each organization retained its independent existence, but a three-man high command representing each organization would have to approve any proposed operations.¹¹

As a result of this merger, insurgent tactics evolved during this phase to include not only standard terrorist attacks but also “armed propaganda” operations to raise the morale of the Jewish population in Palestine. The United Resistance Movement also carried out increasingly violent attacks that included the premeditated killing of members of government security forces (a tactic that was condoned and encouraged by Lehi doctrine). The initial COIN response to these attacks entailed road curfews, roadblocks to enforce them, and searches. Indeed, COIN forces had conducted more than 55 searches by the end of June 1946.¹² Patrols, roadblocks, raids, and guard duties were conducted constantly during this phase, in addition to the more sporadic curfews and searches. Such tactics were useful in urban areas but were difficult to conduct effectively in rural areas because the vastness of the countryside did not lend itself to control by security forces.¹³

In June 1946, the insurgents initiated a series of spectacular and violent attacks. On June 17, 1946, Haganah units blew up ten of the 11 bridges connecting Palestine with surrounding nations, isolating the country from land communication with its neighbors.¹⁴ Then, on July 22, 1946, the Irgun placed a bomb in the wing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, which housed sections of the civil administration and the offices of the general officer commanding the Middle East

¹¹ Charters, 1989, pp. 53–54.

¹² Charters, 1989, pp. 111–112.

¹³ Charters, 1989, p. 116.

¹⁴ Sachar, 2000, p. 265.

Forces in Palestine. The attack killed 91 British, Arab, and Jewish citizens and injured 45 others.¹⁵ It was a divisive operation for the insurgents in that it horrified the Haganah as much as it did the British. The Haganah subsequently managed to prevent an Irgun plot to place a bomb in the British police headquarters in Tel Aviv.¹⁶

The British response to these more spectacular operations began with the nationwide Operation Agatha, which began on June 29, 1946, and lasted for two weeks. Termed “Black Sabbath” by the Palestinian Jewish population, the operation was largely unsuccessful in that it failed to uncover any ranking commanders from the Jewish insurgent organizations or any significant arms caches. This is surprising given the scope of the search operation, with 10,000 troops and 7,000 police performing cordon-and-search operations of Jewish settlements.¹⁷

After the King David Hotel bombing, however, the COIN response was more intensive. COIN forces launched Operation Shark, which employed more than 20,000 troops and placed all of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem under curfew for four days, completely isolating those two cities from the rest of the country.¹⁸ The intent was to isolate and locate members of the Irgun and Lehi who had gone underground in these urban areas. Operation Shark did not enjoy great success, however, mainly because the Irgun was highly motivated and therefore not easily deterred. While several Irgun commanders were caught and five arms caches were discovered, the senior leadership of the Irgun and Lehi escaped unscathed.¹⁹

After this, the Irgun intensified its attacks on military transport assets, destroying vehicles, paralyzing railroad traffic, and occasionally killing British personnel.²⁰ Beginning in August 1946, at least partially in response to the King David Hotel bombing, the Haganah

¹⁵ Cesarani, 2012, p. 654; Sachar, 2000, p. 267.

¹⁶ Sachar, 2000, p. 267.

¹⁷ Sachar, 2000, p. 265; Cesarani, 2012, p. 654.

¹⁸ Cesarani, 2012, p. 654; Sachar, 2000, p. 267.

¹⁹ Cesarani, 2012, p. 655.

²⁰ Sachar, 2000, p. 267.

once again abstained from hostilities against the British, instead focusing on facilitating illegal Jewish immigration into Palestine.²¹ Nonetheless, the security situation deteriorated in the fall of 1946.²² This was due, in part, to weaknesses in the COIN force itself. The COIN force was composed of approximately 100,000 British soldiers, mandatory Palestine police forces, and British special forces in the form of SAS troops. However, of those 100,000 soldiers, only about 25,000 were combat troops, and of these, only soldiers in the rifle companies in the infantry and airborne divisions were appropriately trained for COIN tasks. Meanwhile, the police force was roughly 50-percent understaffed.²³ Many colonial police forces created or expanded their paramilitary branches, and Palestine was one of the first British colonies to see such police expansion into paramilitary activity: By 1944, the Palestine police had a 2,000-strong mobile force equipped with small arms and light infantry.²⁴ However, the regular police force was so understaffed that in mid-1946 the Police Mobile Force, which comprised 919 personnel at the time and was intended to serve as a quick-reaction unit, was broken up and its members were used to supplement the regular police.²⁵

***Phase III: “Violence Extends Abroad”
(September 1946–September 1947)***

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Insurgency motive: war of liberation/independence; COIN force included significant numbers of police, paramilitary, militia, or other nonconventional personnel; COIN or

²¹ Charters, 1989, p. 59.

²² Cesarani, 2012, p. 655.

²³ Cesarani, 2012, p. 655.

²⁴ David French, *The British Way in Counterinsurgency, 1945–1967*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 17.

²⁵ Cesarani, 2012, p. 655.

insurgent actions precipitated (or constituted) ethnic or religious violence; Curfews established for population control; Postconflict government fragile/weak/unstable; Insurgency followed by another insurgency, significant terrorism campaign, or other conflict fomented by a different insurgent group; Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated; Insurgents employed unconstrained violence (against civilians) to create or sustain insecurity and instability (purposely or otherwise); Military action outside of host-nation borders (if insurgents relied on cross-border support or havens); Military action outside host-nation borders effective in reducing external havens/support

The third phase of the conflict was the most violent, at least in terms of COIN force casualties: Most of the 600 or more casualties suffered by the British in Palestine occurred between September 1946 and January 1947.²⁶ Indeed, insurgent activity escalated after the United Resistance Movement collapsed, with the Lehi alone conducting more than 100 acts of sabotage and murder between September 1946 and May 1948. The Irgun mimicked Lehi methods of killing during this period as well, feeling that armed force and active retaliation were the only ways to ensure extensive Jewish immigration and a Jewish state in Palestine.²⁷ Specific insurgent tactics included attacks against economically significant targets, particularly the railroads, and the extension of Irgun operations to Europe. The international scope of the Irgun's operations soon backfired, however. While the expansion overseas was intended to serve as a major armed propaganda campaign to win international support for the Irgun, bombings in Europe led U.S. and European powers to cooperatively pursue counterterrorism measures against the Irgun. These measures included better control over the Jewish refugee camps in Europe that were thought to be centers of resistance activity. Accordingly, by the end of 1946, the Italian police had arrested

²⁶ Charters, 1989, p. 60.

²⁷ Sachar, 2000, pp. 265–266.

21 Irgun members, including the organization's chief of international operations.²⁸

COIN efforts up to mid-November 1946 were primarily conducted by small military units in conjunction with the police and consisted of snap searches, road checks, and house and neighborhood searches. A road curfew was established at night, in addition to mounted mobile patrols, mobile and static roadblocks, off-road foot patrols, and restrictions on travel routes to prevent road mining. In November 1946, COIN forces launched Operation Earwig to protect the railroads from attack. The operation involved dispatching large numbers of troops to perform defensive guard duties along the entire length of the railway in Palestine, as well as aircraft to survey the railroad. The month-long operation was successful in halting railroad attacks and restoring normal rail service. Then, in January 1947, COIN forces conducted Operation Octopus, raiding specific areas of known insurgent activity. This operation was guided by accurate intelligence and succeeded in capturing 90 suspects, many of whom were detained. However, kidnappings at the end of January 1947 led the COIN force to halt Operation Octopus almost immediately, conduct additional cordon-and-search operations, and evacuate nonessential British personnel from Palestine.²⁹

Just over a month later, on March 3, 1947, the mandatory government imposed martial law in Tel Aviv and surrounding areas, as well as in a Jewish sector of Jerusalem. Under martial law, COIN forces first imposed a strict curfew, then cordoned off the area, published regulations, and issued passes, though they gradually relaxed the curfew and restored almost-normal living conditions in the areas in question. The government also imposed martial law in the town of Nathanya in July 1947 after two field security agents were kidnapped. In each case, daily searches by COIN forces led to numerous arrests and detentions but not the discovery of new intelligence. However, in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, the arrests did appear to temporarily affect insurgent operations, and the rate of attacks declined by more than 50 percent over a three-

²⁸ Charters, 1989, p. 64.

²⁹ Charters, 1989, pp. 120–121.

month period. Even while continuing similar operations and successfully arresting and detaining numerous suspects, the British government somewhat anticlimactically announced its intention to withdraw from Palestine in September 1947.³⁰

Conventional Explanations

The COIN force in this case was fighting against the tide of history, as the conflict was an anticolonial insurgency centered on the hot-button issue of Jewish immigration into Palestine, which the British government was trying to limit in the immediate postwar (and post-Holocaust) period. Indeed,

Immigration was the key. Even to a maximalist like Ben-Gurion, assurance of free immigration was more important than statehood. If, as late as 1946, Bevin had managed to devise a scheme for keeping Palestine within the Commonwealth and simultaneously assuring the unhampered flow of refugees from Europe, Ben-Gurion and the Agency Executive would have acquiesced. More than any other factor, it was London's preoccupation with Arab goodwill and, correspondingly, Bevin's agonized intransigence on the immigration issue that provoked the maximalist Zionist demands for Jewish statehood, that ignited the terrorism, launched the illegal refugee traffic to Palestine, undermined Britain's economy, eroded its international reputation, and finally doomed the Palestine mandate itself.³¹

International opinion at the end of the Holocaust was on the side of the insurgents, but Britain found itself trapped between the interests of Arabs and Jews in Palestine. Ultimately, the COIN force's motivation and interests in the region were too low relative to those of the insurgents, and this—combined with the pressure of fighting against the tide of history—eventually led the British to capitulate.

³⁰ Charters, 1989, pp. 122–124.

³¹ Sachar, 2000, p. 278.

Distinctive Characteristics

- COIN forces achieved many tactical successes in this case but were ultimately unsuccessful due to their relative lack of motivation and commitment to the conflict compared to that of the insurgents. Indeed, rather than being defeated in any one military engagement, the British essentially grew weary of the conflict, cut their losses, and withdrew from Palestine.
- This case is somewhat unique in that there were three insurgent organizations that operated in concert at times but also worked against each other at other times. The most extreme example of the insurgents working at cross-purposes was during “the Season” in Phase I, when the Haganah actively cooperated with COIN forces to identify, locate, and arrest Irgun and Lehi members.
- As in several other post-WWII cases, the British were fighting against a former ally whom they had armed and employed to fight for British interests during the war.
- The conflict in Palestine between Arabs and Jews has never truly been resolved and continues today, a fact that speaks to the challenges the British faced in this conflict.

Figure 1
Map of Palestine



RAND RR291/2-1

Greece, 1945–1949

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

As the Nazi occupation of Greece during WWII drew to a close and the Greek government in exile returned, the country's predominant communist insurgent group, the National Popular Liberation Army (ELAS), decided not to demobilize. Instead, it attempted to seize power in Athens to avoid a return to the prewar political status quo. The British quickly came to the government's rescue, defending Athens with 75,000 British troops and forcing a quick and apparently successful surrender by the insurgents. However, many of the insurgents merely went underground only to reemerge almost two years later to lead the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE), which aimed to democratize the country. With the Greek military still in the process of rebuilding itself after WWII, the insurgents were able to prevail in the second phase of the conflict. The DSE benefited substantially from the safe havens and external support provided by Greece's communist neighbors, which enabled the group to withstand the extensive military troops, training, and assistance that the British provided to the COIN effort. During the third phase of the conflict, external conditions led to a withdrawal of British support and its replacement by U.S. military aid, provided under the Truman Doctrine. At the same time, the insurgents' primary ally, Yugoslavia, closed its borders to their operations. Meanwhile, the insurgents made the tactical miscalculation of adopting conventional tactics prematurely, thus aiding the COIN force in securing a victory over the insurgency.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "The Battle for Athens" (December 1944–February 1945)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: COIN force attempted to use overwhelming force; Fighting in phase primarily COIN force using conventional forces to hammer insurgents, who mostly fled; Majority of population in area

of conflict supported/favored COIN force (wanted it to win); Terrain played a major role in conflict; Type of terrain that played a major role: urban; Insurgents delegitimized due to civilian casualties or other unacceptable behavior; External support to COIN from strong state/military

In April 1941, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy invaded Greece. The Axis troops were able to quickly overwhelm the Royal Greek Army, and they maintained a force of 180,000 troops in Greece for the next several years to keep transportation routes open for supplies to reach German forces in North Africa. The country was occupied and divided among Germany, Italy, and Bulgaria, with the Greek king and government officials fleeing to Egypt in exile.³²

The occupation had catastrophic effects on the Greek civilian population. It is estimated that more than 300,000 civilians died from starvation in Athens, while tens of thousands more died from Nazi reprisals. Moreover, the Greek economy was ruined.³³ When Hitler invaded the Soviet Union several months after the invasion of Greece, and, as a consequence, it became acceptable for communists to oppose Nazism, the Greek Communist Party (KKE) organized what would become the country's main resistance movement, the National Liberation Front (EAM). Shortly thereafter, in December 1942, the EAM created an armed guerrilla force, ELAS. ELAS benefited from British diplomatic and material support during WWII, as the British hoped that the Greek communists would defeat the German occupiers. ELAS was also able to acquire weapons from surrendering Italian forces in the fall of 1943 and from the Germans when they fled the country in 1944.³⁴

³² Anthony James Joes, *Guerrilla Warfare: A Historical, Biographical, and Bibliographical Sourcebook*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996, pp. 69–70.

³³ Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941–44*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993, p. 155.

³⁴ Joes, 1996, p. 70.

As the Germans retreated in late 1944, small British and Royal Greek Army elements landed in Athens and surrounding areas.³⁵ Fearing that the returning Greek government had no intention of sharing power with leftist parties and wanting to reinstate the prewar status quo, ELAS withdrew from the general demobilization and left the government on December 1, 1944.³⁶ Soon thereafter, the communist group attempted to seize Athens by force.³⁷ Using conventional tactics, the insurgents were greatly outnumbered and were rapidly overcome by 75,000 British troops within a period of just two months. Realizing that it could not win, ELAS agreed to a truce and signed the Treaty of Varkiza on February 12, 1945.³⁸ The treaty provided for the disarming and dissolution of the fighting units, amnesty, elections, and a plebiscite on the return of the king.³⁹

At the same time, ELAS executed thousands of hostages, including socialist politicians and labor leaders. This hindered any aspirations the group may have had of ingratiating itself with the Greek populace, leading the citizens of Athens to view the insurgents with profound hostility throughout the later periods of the war.⁴⁰

Phase II: "An Elusive Enemy" (March 1945–February 1947)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Majority of population in area of conflict supported/favored COIN force (wanted it to win); COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics; Insurgents delegitimized due to civilian casualties or other unacceptable behavior; Insur-

³⁵ Joes, 1996, p. 70.

³⁶ Klaus Jürgen Gantzel and Torsten Schwinghammer, *Warfare Since the Second World War*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2000, pp. 218–219.

³⁷ Andre Gerolymatos, "The Battle for Athens: Strategy and Tactics," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1996, pp. 39–40; Joes, 1996.

³⁸ Joes, 1996, p. 70.

³⁹ Gantzel and Schwinghammer, 2000, pp. 218–219.

⁴⁰ Joes, 1996, p. 70.

gents forcibly recruited from civilian population; External support to COIN from strong state/military

Following the signing of the Treaty of Varkiza, a substantial number of ELAS fighters withdrew to Yugoslavia rather than disbanding, with many hiding weapons and munitions inside Greece. The dispersed members of ELAS united in 1945 under the leadership of the KKE reemerging in December 1946 as the DSE. The DSE sought the democratization of Greece against conservative and antisocialist tendencies, proclaiming as its goals free parliamentary elections and the withdrawal of all foreign troops.⁴¹ The insurgency at this time was composed of long-standing KKE members, former ELAS guerrillas from the Nazi occupation period, Macedonian separatists (many of whom were probably not communists), and forced recruits and abductees, including many teenage girls.⁴²

The DSE, which received logistical support from all three of Greece's northern neighbors—Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania—launched a dual strategy designed by the KKE that entailed using guerrilla tactics to attack military and police outposts in border areas and destroy supply and transportation infrastructure, simultaneously seeking a political solution with the Greek government in Athens. The DSE grew quickly, numbering 16,000 by late 1946, and soon controlled fortified territories in border regions near Albania and Yugoslavia.⁴³ Peasants in these rural areas provided support to the insurgents—in some situations because they wanted to but in many others because they were forced.⁴⁴ Indeed, the insurgents did not receive an abundance of willing support from the local populace, primarily because they were not representative of the peasant population. Their membership was mainly derived from petit bourgeois intellectuals and socially marginalized groups, including students, tobacco farmers, and seamen. They did not treat the peasantry well, often executing them,

⁴¹ Gantzel and Schwinghammer, 2000.

⁴² Joes, 1996, p. 71.

⁴³ GlobalSecurity.org, "Greek Civil War," web page, last updated July 11, 2011d.

⁴⁴ Gantzel and Schwinghammer, 2000, pp. 221–222.

seizing their foodstuffs, taking hostages, and destroying their villages. The DSE also forcibly abducted almost 30,000 Greek children and sent them to communist states in Eastern Europe, a move that obviously served to decrease any support they might have enjoyed among the local population.⁴⁵

The Greek army, composed of approximately 90,000 troops by this point, was slowly growing and becoming increasingly professional, thanks to training, advising, and equipping by the British. Indeed, the British spent £85 million on direct security force assistance to Greece between 1944 and early 1947. Yet, the military's recovery from the WWII occupation was still in its early stages during this period, and the COIN force was easily outmaneuvered in many instances. The DSE would engage the army through attacks on outposts and then quickly disappear into the mountains and across Greece's borders into the safe havens provided by Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania.⁴⁶ The COIN force requested United Nations (UN) intervention, but the Soviet Union repeatedly vetoed it.⁴⁷

Phase III: "Friends Come and Friends Go"
(March 1947–November 1949)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Important internal support to insurgents significantly reduced; COIN force efforts resulted in increased costs for insurgents; Majority of population in area of conflict supported/favored COIN force (wanted it to win); Insurgents delegitimized due to civilian casualties or other unacceptable behavior; Flow of cross-border insurgent support significantly decreased or remained dramatically reduced or largely absent; Insurgents switched from guerrilla to conventional tactics; External support to COIN from strong state/military

⁴⁵ C. M. Woodhouse, *Modern Greece: A Short History*, 5th ed., London: Faber and Faber, 1991, p. 259; Joes, 1996, p. 73.

⁴⁶ GlobalSecurity.org, 2011d.

⁴⁷ Gantzel and Schwinghammer, 2000, pp. 221–222.

Citing economic strain in the post-WWII period, the British announced the withdrawal of its troops and all other forms of support from Greece in March 1947. The United States filled some of the void left by the British through its provision of financial and military assistance under the Truman Doctrine. It was some time before this U.S. support became apparent, however, particularly because the United States did not provide combat troops. Accordingly, even though several hundred American officers served as military advisers to the Greek army, the army's morale was low at the beginning of this phase.⁴⁸

The COIN force benefited from the insurgents' change in strategy, however. In 1948, the KKE's leadership decided that the DSE should move from guerrilla tactics to full-scale conventional war. This, in effect, led the insurgents to give up the benefits of mobility and surprise and to expose themselves to attack by the Greek air force and encirclement by the army.

Also in 1948, the Soviet Union and other newly formed socialist states broke off relations with President Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia. Forced to choose between loyalty to the Soviet Union and loyalty to its closest ally, the KKE eventually decided to follow the Soviet Union. This led President Tito to close the Yugoslav border to the DSE in July 1949, forcing the DSE to disband its camps inside Yugoslavia and trapping several thousand insurgents in both Yugoslavia and Thrace, as those in Thrace could no longer pass through Yugoslavia to get to Greece. While the Albanian border areas were still open to the DSE, they were a poor alternative to the safe havens the group had previously enjoyed in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the split with Tito launched a witch-hunt for "Titoites" within the KKE, which served to demoralize and disorganize the DSE. It also led to the dissolution of support for the KKE in Greece's urban areas.⁴⁹

Also significant in this phase was the appointment of Alexander Papagos as commander in chief of the Greek armed forces in January 1949. Papagos discontinued unproductive sweeps and impulsive measures to counter insurgent activities and instead worked to clear, secure,

⁴⁸ Joes, 1996, p. 72.

⁴⁹ Joes, 1996, p. 72.

and hold territory in well-defined areas, one at a time. He also enacted a resettlement program, relocating more than 800,000 villagers. This program was largely considered successful in hindering insurgent intelligence acquisition and logistical and moral support.⁵⁰

The loss of the Yugoslav safe havens, combined with the DSE's premature adoption of conventional tactics, the insurgents' alienation of the local peasant population among which it operated, the influx U.S. financial and military assistance, and Papagos's new policies, turned the tide of the conflict in favor of the COIN force during this phase in the war, leading to the ultimate success of the COIN effort.

Conventional Explanations

The COIN force's success in the Greek Civil War is argued to have varied over time for three main reasons: external support, internal support, and tactical decisions. First, some argue that external support played a definitive role for both sides during the conflict. When British troops were based in the country in large numbers at the end of the Nazi occupation, they were able to (at least temporarily) quell the insurgency. When the British had to pull back their support of the COIN effort at the beginning of Phase III, U.S. involvement in supporting the Greek government and military was crucial to the COIN force's eventual success. On the insurgent side, the withdrawal of Yugoslav support to the DSE was instrumental bringing about the insurgents' defeat.

Other arguments focus on how the insurgents' inability to solidify internal support among the populace was also crucial to the COIN force's eventual success, because the populace consistently viewed the insurgents less favorably than it did the COIN forces. This was true even when the populace was not incredibly enthusiastic about particular COIN force actions, and it was primarily due to the brutality of the insurgents toward peasants and other civilians.

Finally, some scholars focus on the fact that the insurgents made several tactical mistakes that benefited the COIN effort in Phases I and

⁵⁰ James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists*, Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2003, p. 103.

III. The most significant was the DSE's decision to switch from guerilla to conventional tactics prematurely in Phase III, which spelled disaster for the insurgents. And the decision of ELAS to attack Athens while greatly outnumbered by British troops was another mistake that led to a quick—if temporary—defeat in Phase I.

Distinctive Characteristics

- The Greek case is somewhat unique in that the first phase was nearly a separate conflict in and of itself, distanced by the passage of time and differing in the tactics and actors involved from the subsequent phases of the war. The period between Phases I and II allowed the insurgents time to go underground and rebuild their capabilities. Hence, the insurgents were able to pose a viable threat to the COIN force in Phase II after being handily overcome in Phase I.
- This case is notable for the insurgents' poor treatment of the civilian population. As mentioned earlier, the level of insurgent brutality toward civilians enabled the COIN force to win the public's support even when COIN activities were not entirely favorable to the public. If the insurgents had made any effort to treat civilians in the area of operation more favorably, these COIN practices may not have been sufficient to win internal support for the COIN effort.
- The role of safe havens is distinctive in this case, because the insurgents relied almost exclusively on external support they received from Greece's communist neighbors and lacked any significant sources of internal support. As a result, the insurgents were particularly vulnerable to the loss of Yugoslavia's support.

Figure 2
Map of Greece



SOURCE: Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Fact Book*, Washington, D.C., 2013.

RAND RR291/2-2

Indochina, 1946–1954

Case Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Case Summary

French efforts to reclaim their lost colony after the conclusion of WWII appeared to get off to a good start but ultimately became too costly (in blood, treasure, and concessions). While the French maintained air and conventional battlefield superiority throughout the conflict, Viet Minh insurgents learned to expose themselves to that technical superiority only when the French could be significantly outnumbered, leading to a mixed conflict of constant low-intensity guerrilla warfare punctuated by short, sharp, and numerically overwhelming conventional engagements. Jungle and mountain terrain decisively supported this approach.

The conflict turned to favor the insurgents after the Chinese Revolution in 1949, with 1950 bringing support to the insurgents from both the Chinese and the Soviets. Even with a massive influx of U.S. money and materiel, French firepower and political concessions were insufficient to defeat a numerically superior foe that could and did use the jungle to blunt French air power, constrain French maneuver capabilities, stretch French supply lines, and conceal insurgent movements. After the ignominious defeat at Dien Bien Phu, the 1954 Geneva conference divided Indochina at the 17th parallel and set the stage (or, perhaps, baited the trap) for much greater U.S. investment in fighting communists in Vietnam.

Case Narrative

Phase I: “Reclaiming a Lost Colony” (1946–1949)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factor: COIN force (and allies) had significant military equipment mismatch dominance over insurgents (and allies)

During WWII, the Japanese seized French holdings in Indochina. Although they allowed the French to continue the day-to-day adminis-

tration of the region, Japanese troops occupied the entire area by the end of 1941.⁵¹ When the Japanese withdrew, a nationalist (and communist) party, the Viet Minh, proclaimed a republic in September 1945 and set about trying to administer the region. Roughly ten months later, two divisions of a French expeditionary force arrived in Indochina to reassert French dominion over the colony.⁵²

While these French forces arrived peaceably under an agreement negotiated with the Viet Minh, the latter group was not prepared to return to prewar French domination. After a series of small, violent incidents, the Viet Minh opened hostilities with an all-out attack on French forces in Hanoi.⁵³ With superior firepower, the French blasted Viet Minh forces out of the city and the various provincial capitals, forcing them to take refuge in the region's abundant jungles and mountain caves.

As Bernard Fall recounted in his classic 1964 account, *Street Without Joy*,

During the first phase of active operations, that is, between December 1946 and November 1949, the French simply sought to take the whole Viet-Minh force into a series of ever-widening classical "pincers." . . . But as was to be the case later many times for almost twenty years, the enemy slipped through the conventional battle lines and armored stabs; yielded weapons and depots if he had to, but lived to fight another day.⁵⁴

The Viet Minh endured numerous setbacks in the first phase. They discovered the hard way that French forces would prevail in any relatively evenly matched pitched battle and embraced the art of guer-

⁵¹ Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

⁵² Bernard B. Fall, *Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina*, Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1964.

⁵³ Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954–1965*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

⁵⁴ Fall, 1964, pp. 27, 30.

rilla warfare, learning to conduct hit-and-run raids and ambushes of French convoys on the long, narrow roads through the jungle.

The Viet Minh also learned to fade away from French might and continued to spread their subversive message through the countryside. By 1947, the French were convinced that they had the situation well in hand, but it quickly became clear that the Viet Minh controlled more than half the countryside and, with it, the colony's rural populations.⁵⁵

While the French appeared to have the upper hand and control of the cities, they lacked sufficient military force to root the insurgents out of the jungles and were handicapped by a weak and divided government at home in Paris, where restoration of colonial rule was one of many competing national priorities.⁵⁶ French forces could (and did) force their way deep into the jungle, but always at high cost due to difficult terrain and risk of ambush. This cost was multiplied by the constant threat the guerrillas posed to lines of logistical support and lines of retreat. Frustrated militarily, the French sought a political solution, trying to restore to power the emperor of Vietnam, Bao Dai, and ceding some independence and autonomy to a Bao Dai government. This move formally established a state of Vietnam and ended its status as a French colony. Of course, the agreement stipulated that the French would retain control of Vietnam's military affairs and foreign relations, and it left the details of the transfer of other government functions to later negotiations.⁵⁷ After all, it was in France's interest to retain colonial power in the region, and if it surrendered those interests, why would French forces continue to fight?

Phase II: "Overextended and Undermotivated" (1950–1954)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: COIN force had air superiority, but use of airspace was significantly contested or COIN force was unable take advantage of

⁵⁵ Ronald H. Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years of the United States Army in Vietnam 1941–1960*, New York: Free Press, 1985, p. 87.

⁵⁶ Spector, 1985.

⁵⁷ Spector, 1985.

air power; COIN force not of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas; Case fought against the tide of history (end of colonialism); Terrain played a major role because it concealed the insurgents from the air; Terrain played a major role because it made it difficult for COIN force to maneuver and stretched COIN force logistics; External support to insurgents from strong state/military

The clear turning point in Indochina came with the conclusion of fighting in China in 1949, which allowed Chinese and Soviet communists to begin providing support to the Viet Minh.⁵⁸ This led President Truman to launch a campaign to provide U.S. assistance to the French in 1950. French and U.S. interests did not completely align, however. The French wanted to retain their colonial possession, a prospect that was becoming less and less likely; the United States wanted to stem the tide of communism, but the French were much less committed to that goal.⁵⁹ Because the French threat of simply pulling up stakes and leaving was very real, the United States lacked leverage and found itself spending more than \$1 billion per year on Indochina by 1954, an amount representing over 80 percent of the French war budget.

While Chinese and Soviet support, including not just small arms and supplies but also and heavy weapons and artillery, slowly increased the capabilities of the Viet Minh in the North; in the Southern region, the French began to make gains in the countryside. Boosted by U.S. commitment, the French re fortified many areas in the Mekong Delta, sweeping away insurgents and their shadow government and reestablishing a French presence in the area.⁶⁰

The very political maneuverings that allowed improvements in the French position in the Delta brought trouble, however. The French were allied with various militia factions (notably, the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao), but the French were also trying to promote the legitimacy of the Bao Dai government they had established. These other factions refused to surrender their autonomy to the Bao Dai government and

⁵⁸ Moyar, 2006.

⁵⁹ Spector, 1985, p. 108.

⁶⁰ Mark Philip Bradley, *Vietnam at War*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

splintered off; they still fought the Viet Minh but no longer answered to the government or the French.⁶¹

Amid these political maneuverings, the French engaged in three kinds of operations. The first were pacification operations, which involved cordoning off an area, sweeping it for insurgents, establishing and securing lines of communication, and trying to install some kind of working civil government and police presence. These operations were severely constrained by the availability of civil government officials and police personnel. The second type were vigorous offensive probes against the Viet Minh. These large-scale movements rarely resulted in engagements against the elusive Viet Minh regular units, and French troops suffered “death by a thousand cuts” as they slogged painfully through jungle terrain plagued by traps, mines, and sniper fire. Third, the French were forced to operate significant convoys to move troops and material; these operations, too, were plagued by ambushes, mines, and sniper fire.⁶²

The Viet Minh dominated the French in terms of intelligence. Because the French were forced to move in force, in heavy vehicles, and through thick jungle, and because the French camps were heavily penetrated by indigenous sympathizers, the Viet Minh always knew when the French were coming. The French, on the other hand, were constantly surprised by the Viet Minh. With virtually no informants or other intelligence sources inside the Viet Minh, and facing challenging terrain and patient, well-concealed insurgents, the relatively isolated French strongpoints were vulnerable to surprise attacks by very large formations of Viet Minh.⁶³

The Viet Minh’s singular attention to concealment effectively blinded French air power to the insurgents’ movements—and numbers. “[E]very regular Viet-Minh soldier on the march carried a large wiremesh disk on his back and head, adorned with the foliage of the terrain through which he was passing. As soon as the terrain changed,

⁶¹ Bradley, 2009.

⁶² Spector, 1985.

⁶³ Fall, 1964, p. 65.

it was the responsibility of each soldier to change the camouflage of the man ahead of him as the surroundings changed.”⁶⁴

Over the course of the second phase, Chinese and Soviet support allowed the Viet Minh to upgrade their forces in both size and capability. While the period did not see an unbroken string of Vietnamese victories over the French, the insurgents did make steady progress. The Viet Minh strategy involved stretching and isolating French forces over widespread defensive formations, then massing force near those formations and overrunning them.⁶⁵

When the French finally got the set-piece battles they sought, they lost—the most famous example being the French forces’ at Dien Bien Phu. The war finally ended with the July 20, 1954, Geneva conference and the loss of territory north of the 17th parallel to the Viet Minh under the leadership of communist President Ho Chi Minh.⁶⁶ One year later, Emperor Bao Dai would be deposed as leader of the southern half of the country and setting in motion a series of events that would bring the United States back to Vietnam in greater numbers than ever.

Conventional Explanations

Conventional explanations for the insurgents’ success point to a variety of factors. Many highlight the role of terrain and the adversary’s familiarity with it, coupled with the relatively modest size of the French force. Effective encirclement of an area of any size was nearly impossible for the COIN force under such conditions, so efforts to clear an area usually allowed the bulk of the insurgents’ forces to escape.⁶⁷ Others highlight the lack of commitment on the part of the French government, especially given its competing priorities and relatively weak position in the aftermath of WWII. Still others emphasize the impossibility of regaining a colony that had already tasted independence and the

⁶⁴ Fall, 1964, p. 65.

⁶⁵ Bradley, 2009.

⁶⁶ Fall, 1964, p. 312.

⁶⁷ Fall, 1964.

failure of limited French political concessions to earn the sympathy of the population.

Another factor was the criticality of intelligence and the role of operational and tactical surprise—abilities that the insurgents had and the French did not.⁶⁸

According to COIN scholar Anthony James Jones,

Any reasonable inventory of the factors explaining why the war ended the way it did would surely include the following: the internal political situation of France; the inadequacy of the French military effort; the growing realization that whatever the military outcome of the conflict, France's Vietnamese sun was setting; and last but by no means least, the effect on the war of Chinese aid to the Viet Minh.⁶⁹

Distinctive Characteristics

- The Viet Minh were at home in the country's dense jungle terrain and overgrowth that covered most of the country and knew how to use it to their advantage. The French, lacking intelligence on the insurgents' movements and numbers, were highly vulnerable to surprise attacks.⁷⁰
- The insurgents' tactics allowed them to sustain a constant guerrilla war and to collect and mass considerable conventional formations without detection. While these formations could never match an equivalent-sized French formation, they could and did regularly overrun smaller formations and isolated garrisons.
- Not only were the French fighting to retain a colony, but they were also fighting to retain a colony that had already tasted independence.

⁶⁸ Fall, 1964.

⁶⁹ Anthony James Joes, *Victorious Insurgencies: Four Rebellions That Shaped Our World*, Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2010, p. 130.

⁷⁰ Fall, 1964, p. 15.

Figure 3
Map of Indochina



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-3

Philippines (Huk Rebellion), 1946–1956

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

An agrarian peasant movement aimed at reducing economic and social inequality, the Hukbalahap (“Huk,” for short) insurgency was initially successful in winning extensive local support and perpetrating guerrilla attacks and robberies against a newly independent Philippine government. However, the Huks’ increasing violence and the addition of common criminals to their ranks led the government to appoint a liberal congressman and former provincial military governor, Ramon Magsaysay, to the post of secretary of defense in September 1950. Magsaysay’s appointment marked a turning point in the conflict, and he instituted sweeping reforms that succeeded in drying up civilian support for the insurgency, decreasing government and military corruption, and increasing the COIN force’s tactical effectiveness against the Huks. These reforms fortuitously coincided with strategic errors on the part of the insurgents, as well as the addition of U.S. financial and military support. All of these factors combined to lead the COIN force to victory in the conflict’s final phase.

Case Narrative

Phase I: “Insurgency in the New Republic” (July 1946–August 1949)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Government type: anocracy; Insurgents discredited/delegitimized COIN force/government; COIN force engaged in more coercion/intimidation than insurgents; Government repression and/or exclusion of significant societal groups from state power or resources; Insurgents exploited deep-seated/intractable issues to gain legitimacy; Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Insurgents mostly avoided engaging in large-scale operations against better-equipped regular troops and resorted primarily to guer-

rilla tactics (e.g., sniping, sabotage, small-scale ambushes/hit-and-run attacks, improvised explosive devices [IEDs])

The Hukbalahap, or “Huks,” were one of several guerrilla organizations that formed in the Philippines during the Japanese occupation in WWII. Named for the Tagalog pronunciation of the acronym for “People’s Army Against Japan,” approximately 10,000 Huks were engaged against the Japanese by 1943. By the time of the country’s liberation from Japanese occupation, the Huks were well armed with weapons taken from the Japanese or shipped to them from the United States.⁷¹

The Philippines gained independence from the United States on July 4, 1946, and held its first national election in November 1946. The Huks participated in the elections as part of a group of leftist organizations known as the Democratic Alliance, which won six seats in the Philippine Congress. Among the victorious was Luis Taruc, head of the wartime Huk movement. However, the newly elected president, Manuel Roxas, refused to seat the Democratic Alliance members in Congress, leading many Filipino peasants to join the Huk movement.⁷²

By late 1946, there was open fighting between the Huks and the forces of the newly independent Republic of the Philippines.⁷³ The insurgency was essentially a peasant movement. Its driving force was the breakdown of the traditional relationship between the *datu* (landlord) and *tau* (peasant) as Philippine society transitioned from an internal consumption-based economy to an export-led, capitalist economy.⁷⁴ During this transition, the country experienced vast economic inequality, with the lower classes constituting 90 percent of the population and rampant abject poverty.⁷⁵ Although nominally a com-

⁷¹ Joes, 1996, p. 89.

⁷² Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 116.

⁷³ Matthew H. Phares, *Combating Insurgency: Can Lessons from the Huk Rebellion Apply to Iraq?* thesis, Quantico, Va.: U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, April 2008, p. 7.

⁷⁴ Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002, pp. 5–12.

⁷⁵ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 113.

munist group, at least judging by the loyalties of the group's hierarchy, the extent of the Philippine Communist Party's (PKP's) control of the rebellion is questionable. This is particularly so because the ideology of the PKP was incompatible with the Filipino peasants' worldview.⁷⁶

The Huks' primary tactics in this phase included bank, payroll office, and train robberies, as well as small hit-and-run raids and ambushes that allowed them to avoid contact with large government formations. They never sought to hold territory and therefore there was no question of liberated zones.⁷⁷ During these first few years, the Huks numbered 5,000 active insurgents, 10,000 lightly armed reserves, and 35,000 other supporters. The group also enjoyed incredible levels of internal support, turning the wartime Barrio United Defense Corps into the People's Home Defense Guard, a loosely knit, locally recruited group of villagers that provided intelligence, food, and other support to the insurgency.⁷⁸ Indeed, an estimated 250,000 peasants actively supported the Huks during the first phase of the conflict.⁷⁹

The COIN force was not up to the task of controlling the Huk Rebellion during this period. Shortly after the country was granted independence, the Philippine army was reduced from 132,000 to 37,000. Approximately 24,000 of these forces were in the Military Police Command, which was tasked with combatting the insurgency. However, the command was poorly led and poorly equipped, and it succeeded only in alienating the population between 1946 and 1948.⁸⁰ In 1948, President Roxas reorganized the Military Police Command into the Philippine Constabulary, which remained neither well trained nor well equipped. It mainly practiced encirclement and sweeps, both of which were easily evaded by the Huks. The constabulary also sys-

⁷⁶ Michael McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counterterrorism, 1940–1990*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1992, Chapter 4; Corum and Johnson, 2003, pp. 114–115.

⁷⁷ Kerkvliet, 2002, pp. 210–213; McClintock, 1992, Chapter 4.

⁷⁸ Corum and Johnson, 2003, pp. 117–118.

⁷⁹ L. Grant Bridgewater, "Philippine Information Operations During the Hukbalahap Counterinsurgency Campaign," *IOSphere*, Spring 2006, p. 38.

⁸⁰ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 116.

tematically committed abuses against civilians, raiding villages, stealing civilians' possessions, and generally treating the populace worse than the Huks did.⁸¹ One COIN tactic, which involved sealing off a village to interrogate villagers and prevent them from supporting the Huks, had been used by the Japanese to interrogate, torture, and execute villagers. Such tactics cost the COIN force a large amount of popular support.⁸²

Phase II: "Insurgent Errors" (September 1949–August 1950)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Insurgents made critical strategic errors or voluntarily exited the conflict; Insurgents delegitimized due to civilian casualties or other unacceptable behavior

In the conflict's second phase, the Huks began making strategic and operational errors. Although they had enjoyed extensive popular support in Phase I, in this phase, the Huks failed to reach out to other disaffected groups to form a broad front. Moreover, the Huks increasingly employed many common criminals, which led peasants to fear the group. Probably most catastrophic to the Huks' public image was the group's assassination of Aurora Quezon, the wife of late former President Manuel Quezon and a popular public figure.⁸³ Her death ultimately catapulted the government into action.

Phase III: "The Magsaysay Era" (September 1950–1956)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Government a partial or transitional democracy; Free and fair elections held; Government corruption reduced/good governance increased since onset of conflict; Important internal support to insurgents significantly reduced; COIN force efforts resulted in increased costs for insurgents; Majority of population in area of conflict

⁸¹ Kerkvliet, 2002, pp. 194–195.

⁸² Bridgewater, 2006, p. 38.

⁸³ Bridgewater, 2006, p. 38.

supported/favored COIN force (wanted it to win); COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with population in area of conflict; Insurgents delegitimized due to civilian casualties or other unacceptable behavior; External support to COIN from strong state/military; Type of external support included: funding/financing; Type of external support included: training and/or advice (military advisers); Amnesty or reward program in place; Amnesty program reduced number of insurgents; Earnest IO [information operations]/PSYOP [psychological operations]/strategic communication/messaging effort; Significant ethical/professional/human rights–related military reforms since onset of conflict; Insurgents switched from guerrilla to conventional tactics; Insurgents’ switch to conventional tactics unsustainable (COIN forces able to prevail in vast majority of engagements)

As a result of Aurora Quezon’s murder, President Elpidio Quirino appointed liberal congressman Ramon Magsaysay as secretary of defense.⁸⁴ Magsaysay immediately instituted sweeping reforms. First, he put an end to both the extensive corruption within the COIN force and the abuses of civilians by the Philippine Constabulary and army personnel. He fired many high-level military officers and handpicked their replacements from the ranks of those who had demonstrated field experience fighting the Huks. He also put the constabulary under his personal control. Additionally, Magsaysay suppressed the troops’ brutal tactics against the population, established a civil affairs office to coordinate troops’ involvement in civic action projects (e.g., building schools, roads, and clinics), had the Army provide medical assistance to villagers, and increased pay for enlisted troops to remove their incentives for looting.⁸⁵ He also set up a telegraph system that provided a direct line to the defense ministry for any villager on the island of Luzon who wanted to contact his office.⁸⁶ As a result of these efforts, troop

⁸⁴ McClintock, 1992, Chapter 4.

⁸⁵ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 122; Joes, 1996, p. 91.

⁸⁶ Joes, 1996, p. 91.

morale increased and the government and COIN forces saw a dramatic decrease in corruption at the local level.⁸⁷

The second major area of reform was the COIN force's tactics. Magsaysay ended the useless sweep operations, insisting that insurgent areas that had been undisturbed be invaded. Such invasions served multiple ends, including disrupting the insurgents' food supply, depriving the insurgents of rest, forcing them into the swamps (where they would be subject to water-borne illness), and cutting them off from civilian support. He also offered substantial rewards for the capture of particular Huk leaders, vastly improving the COIN force's supply of intelligence. In addition, he enhanced the government's amnesty program with resettlement offers that provided former Huks with 20 acres of land and a small loan.⁸⁸

The third major category of reforms that Magsaysay undertook aimed to ensure the legitimacy of the 1951 congressional elections. He posted soldiers and cadets at polling stations to ensure a peaceful election and honest count. This tactic was quite successful: After two free elections, the populace's confidence in the army was restored.⁸⁹

All of Magsaysay's reforms combined to ensure a dramatic increase in the level of internal support for the COIN effort. However, two other factors were decisive in this phase. First, the COIN force began receiving assistance from the United States in late 1950, following President Truman's approval of National Security Council document 84/C, which defined U.S. policy and initiated U.S. assistance to the Philippine government in defeating the Huk Rebellion. This assistance emphasized political and economic reform and a PSYOP program to win popular support for the COIN effort, all of which were established with U.S. financial support and assistance from military advisers.⁹⁰ Magsaysay put this PSYOP program into effect, targeting it at dissidents, the neutral population, and even the army itself. In a

⁸⁷ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 122.

⁸⁸ Joes, 1996, p. 91.

⁸⁹ McClintock, 1992, Chapter 4; Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 122.

⁹⁰ McClintock, 1992, Chapter 4.

related move, he instituted a larger information operations campaign incorporating military deception to both infiltrate the Huks and lure them into areas that COIN forces were returning to, which succeeded in curtailing Huk foraging, increasing the Huks' operational tempo, and decreasing the group's readiness levels.⁹¹

The PKP tried to expand the Huks into a much larger conventional force during this phase, overestimating their capabilities and underestimating the capabilities of the COIN force. The Huks lacked the heavy weapons, training, and logistical infrastructure necessary to support conventional operations.⁹² By October 1951, the leaders of the movement realized the need to return to guerrilla tactics. However, by this time, the Magsaysay reforms had taken hold and it was too late for the Huks to achieve any success from such a tactical shift. The Huks slowly began to decline, with the COIN force's success culminating in the surrender of Luis Taruc, the leader of the Huk movement, in 1954. Bands of rebels continued to operate in the country until 1956, but government forces eventually prevailed.

Conventional Explanations

Explanations of the COIN force's ultimate success in the Huk Rebellion tend to focus on four aspects of the conflict: (1) the increased internal support and troop morale, and decreased military/police corruption, achieved by the Magsaysay reforms; (2) the external support provided by the United States in the last phase of the conflict, which provided the impetus for a successful PSYOP campaign to win over local populations and bring about other changes that benefited the COIN force; (3) the Huks' increasing alienation of the populace following the murder of the late former president's wife; and (4) the Huks' premature adoption of conventional tactics, which caused the group to lose any advantage it retained following the institution of the Magsaysay reforms. It is therefore generally argued that shifts in both internal and external support, as well as tactical mistakes on the part of the insurgents, were instrumental in bringing about a COIN victory.

⁹¹ Bridgewater, 2006, pp. 39–40.

⁹² Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 124.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Large swaths of the populace shifted their support from the insurgents to the COIN force halfway through the conflict. This was due to a combination of the insurgents' increasing violence, which alienated the populace, and the government's reforms, which improved the COIN force's treatment of civilians and helped it win local support.
- Magsaysay successfully implemented deep-penetration missions, directing the COIN forces to invade insurgent camps in the jungles to deprive the Huks of food, rest, and civilian support.
- With U.S. support, Magsaysay successfully instituted a multifaceted information operations and PSYOP program that targeted both the Huks and the civilian population, in different ways. This decreased the Huks' operational capabilities and increased the level of internal support for the COIN force.
- Magsaysay's reforms also included an innovative and improved amnesty program, which included a generous resettlement agreement for the insurgents.

Figure 4
Map of the Philippines



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR291Z-4

Colombia (“La Violencia”), 1948–1958

Case Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Case Summary

“La Violencia” in Colombia was a distinctive case in which an internal political conflict rose to the level of all-out civil war for a decade before culminating in a negotiated powersharing agreement. Beginning as an ideologically and politically motivated insurgency/revolution fought by Liberal Party members and supporters against the suppression of their political power by Conservatives in the government, La Violencia morphed into an economically motivated conflict involving extensive rural banditry. The COIN force, composed of both the national police and the armed forces, employed a number of good practices at times, such as measures designed to win popular support. However, it did so inconsistently over the course of the conflict. In the final phases of the conflict, the government and COIN forces under President Gustavo Rojas Pinilla became so repressive, and the Colombian economy deteriorated to such an extent, that Liberal and Conservative Party leaders on the sidelines were willing to overlook their differences and reach a compromise to both unseat Rojas Pinilla and form a coalition government.

Case Narrative

Phase I: “The Bogotazo and Its Aftermath” (April 1948–May 1953)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: COIN force employed escalating repression; Indigenous forces conducted majority of COIN operations; COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas it controlled or claimed to control; COIN force of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas (or to prevail in the preponderance of conventional engagements, should overmatched insurgents choose to give battle); Expropriable cash crops or mineral wealth in area of conflict; COIN force employed indiscriminate force; Government repression and/or exclusion of significant societal groups

from state power or resources; COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards

Violence between Colombia's two largest political parties, Liberal and Conservative, dates back to the mid-1800s, when warring factions of the postcolonial social elite first created them. By the late 1930s, the country was becoming increasingly urbanized, and this helped the Liberal Party, the dominant party in the larger cities, gain the national majority.⁹³ Violence flared up again after the 1946 elections, when the Liberal Party's vote split into two factions, taking Conservative Party candidate Mariano Ospina Pérez to the presidency.⁹⁴ With Conservatives taking over in both local and national government offices, violence broke out between followers of each party. Following the 1947 congressional elections, the level of violence increased, as did police intervention on the side of the Conservatives.⁹⁵

On April 9, 1948, this violence led to a riot in Bogota, where a pan-American conference was being held. A popular left-wing Liberal leader, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, was assassinated in the riot, sparking further riots and vandalism throughout the country. Known as "the Bogotazo," this outbreak of violence led to the deaths of 1,400 people over a two-day period and marked the beginning of La Violencia, which rapidly escalated from heightened rural violence to a state of undeclared civil war.⁹⁶

After the Bogotazo, President Ospina Pérez remained in office but declared a state of siege in the country, and his government became increasingly repressive. The government banned public meetings and fired all Liberal governors, the army forcibly closed Congress, and rural

⁹³ Richard L. Maullin, *Soldiers, Guerrillas, and Politics in Colombia*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-630-ARPA, 1971.

⁹⁴ Norman A. Bailey, "La Violencia in Colombia," *Journal of Inter-American Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4, October 1967, p. 565.

⁹⁵ Maullin, 1971.

⁹⁶ Dennis M. Rempe, *The Past as Prologue? A History of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in Colombia, 1958–1966*, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, March 2002, p. 3.

police forces mounted efforts against Liberal Party members. All Liberals holding public office resigned in protest.⁹⁷

Intense political maneuvering in this phase led to a seemingly hopeless situation for the Liberals, and they refused to run a candidate in the 1949 presidential election. As a result, the only Conservative candidate, Laureano Eleuterio Gómez, assumed the presidency in 1950.⁹⁸ Notably, the economy was fairly prosperous during Gómez's reign, primarily due to increased levels of foreign direct investment and an expansion of the country's export markets.⁹⁹ However, Gómez proceeded to significantly curtail citizens' rights, canceling pro-labor laws, striking down independent labor unions, holding congressional elections without opposition, censoring the press, and allowing mobs to attack Protestant chapels. His government was a "relentless anti-Liberal Party force," claiming that the Liberal Party sought the destruction of traditional Catholic values and a well-ordered hierarchy of social status in Colombia.¹⁰⁰ He also branded the Liberals as communists, and the violence between followers of the two parties continued.

In response, Liberal guerrilla squads took retaliatory action against Conservative farms and villages in the plains east of the Andes and elsewhere. Numbering approximately 20,000 members between 1949 and 1953, the Liberal guerrilla squads were challenged by Conservative civilians who similarly organized armed groups to both defend against and attack the Liberal factions.¹⁰¹ The conflict was extremely bloody, with an estimated 250,000 people losing their lives in riots, killings, and small-scale attacks between 1948 and 1956.¹⁰² At the height of the

⁹⁷ Mario Chacón, James A. Robinson, and Ragnar Torvik, "When Is Democracy an Equilibrium? Theory and Evidence from Colombia's La Violencia," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 55, No. 3, June 2011, p. 384.

⁹⁸ Chacón, Robinson, and Torvik, 2011, p. 384.

⁹⁹ Armed Conflict Events Database, "The 'Violencia' in Colombia 1948–1958," last updated December 16, 2000a.

¹⁰⁰ Maullin, 1971.

¹⁰¹ Maullin, 1971.

¹⁰² Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 361.

violence, deaths reportedly reached 1,000 per month.¹⁰³ Moreover, brutality and humanitarian abuses were rampant throughout the conflict. As Norman Bailey noted,

Certain techniques of death and torture became so common and widespread that they were given names, such as “*picar para tamal*,” which consisted of cutting up the body of the living victim into small pieces, bit by bit. Or “*bocachiquiar*,” a process which involved making hundreds of small body punctures from which the victim slowly bled to death. Ingenious forms of quartering and beheading were invented and given such names as the “*corte de mica*,” “*corte de franela*,” and so on. Crucifixions and hangings were commonplace, political “prisoners” were thrown from airplanes in flight, infants were bayoneted, schoolchildren, some as young as eight years old, were raped *en masse*, unborn infants removed by crude Caesarian section and replaced by roosters, ears were cut off, scalps removed, and so on.¹⁰⁴

Toward the end of this phase, Gómez became gravely ill and allowed his first presidential designate, Roberto Urdaneta Arbeláez, to become acting president. Significantly, Arbeláez refused to fire General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla from the Colombian military, despite Gómez’s suspicions that Rojas Pinilla was conspiring against the government.¹⁰⁵

Phase II: “Installation of a Seemingly Benevolent Military Government” (June 1953–December 1953)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Significant government or military reforms; Amnesty or reward program in place; Amnesty program reduced number of insurgents; COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas it controlled or claimed to control; COIN force of sufficient strength to force insur-

¹⁰³ Armed Conflict Events Database, 2000a.

¹⁰⁴ Bailey, 1967, pp. 562–563.

¹⁰⁵ Armed Conflict Events Database, 2000a.

gents to fight as guerrillas (or to prevail in the preponderance of conventional engagements, should overmatched insurgents choose to give battle)

In June 1953, General Rojas Pinilla waged a coup to depose Gómez when Gómez attempted to return to office. Rojas Pinilla then assumed the presidency and imposed a military government. To defuse the ongoing violence, he offered amnesty and government aid to fighters who willing to lay down their arms, relaxed press censorship, and released political prisoners. He also transferred the national police to the armed forces in an effort to depoliticize the police.¹⁰⁶ These measures were initially somewhat successful in reducing the extent of violence and persuading thousands of Liberal fighters to lay down their arms. This relative peace was short-lived, however, and as the fighting again intensified, it became clear that a real reconciliation between the parties was required before a lasting peace could be established.¹⁰⁷ Yet, the nature of the conflict had begun to change as a result of these measures, transforming from a politically motivated guerrilla conflict to an economically motivated one perpetrated by bandits. As a result, the conflict became increasingly localized in those areas where agrarian extortion was most easily practiced.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, wide swaths of the public initially supported the coup, primarily due to the benefits afforded to the urban working and lower-middle classes by Rojas Pinilla's ambitious government programs.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Rojas Pinilla created the National Social Welfare Service to meet the needs of the poorest citizens and restructured the tax system to place a greater burden on Colombia's elite. His government also embarked upon extensive public works projects to create jobs for the large number of unemployed citizens in the country. These projects included construction of improved transportation infrastructure and hospitals, as well as improvements of the credit system to aid small

¹⁰⁶ Bailey, 1967, p. 567; Armed Conflict Events Database, 2000a.

¹⁰⁷ Chacón, Robinson, and Torvik, 2011, p. 384.

¹⁰⁸ Bailey, 1967, p. 568.

¹⁰⁹ Maullin, 1971.

farmers. However, many of these reform programs were poorly administered and largely unsuccessful, rendering them counterproductive. Thus, while Rojas Pinilla continued to enjoy some popular support throughout the first two years of his presidency, support for his regime had already begun to fade somewhat during his first year in office.¹¹⁰

Phase III: "Rojas Pinilla Resorts to Repression"
(January 1954–June 1956)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Corrupt and arbitrary personalistic government rule; Expropriable cash crops or mineral wealth in area of conflict; COIN force employed indiscriminate force; Government repression and/or exclusion of significant societal groups from state power or resources; COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards; COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas it controlled or claimed to control

As noted earlier, the relative peace afforded by Rojas Pinilla's early actions was short-lived, and rural violence had flared up again by the end of 1953. By 1955, the conflict's transformation to one of economically motivated banditry was complete, and La Violencia was entirely in the hands of a highly organized, institutionalized consortium of rural bandits and urban gangsters, often working together with corrupt public officials and professionals. During this period, the insurgents were known as *pajaros*, and their operations and tactics had also shifted by this time. At times, they extorted wealthy urban and rural elements of the population. More often, they would demand a portion of an estate's crops or impose their own members as overseers of an estate, refusing access to the owners. They would then sell the crops to collaborators in urban areas and keep a portion of the profits. As a result, the profile of La Violencia took on a seasonal pattern, with violence and threats of violence escalating at harvest time. Meanwhile, the

¹¹⁰ Armed Conflict Events Database, 2000a.

pajaros were able to operate with impunity, securing compliance from state and local officials through very viable threats of assassination.¹¹¹

Rojas Pinilla's regime took several drastic steps to counter the violence, including raising police and military budgets, reversing its initial social reform measures, relying on repression, censoring the press, and jailing or fining anyone who referred to the president in a disrespectful manner.¹¹² The administration became increasingly corrupt during this phase, with Rojas Pinilla abolishing the existing Colombian constitution in 1954 and creating a new one that included a legislative assembly of 59 Conservatives and 33 Liberals (20 of whom were to be nominated by the president). The assembly elected Rojas Pinilla to the presidency for four years in 1954 and confirmed him as president again in 1957, a term that was to last until 1962.¹¹³

Meanwhile, the military became increasingly brutal in an effort to quell the violence. The economy was also deteriorating at this time, suffering a foreign-exchange crisis due to a drop in coffee prices and the government's inflationary policies.¹¹⁴ Faced with the threat of an ongoing military dictatorship, Liberal and Conservative elites decided to join forces to defeat Rojas Pinilla and began negotiating an alliance in early 1956.¹¹⁵

Phase IV: "Formation of the National Front" ***(July 1956–August 1958)***

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Postconflict government a power-sharing government, with some kind of representation by both sides in the conflict; Insur-

¹¹¹ Bailey, 1967, p. 568.

¹¹² This measure was taken to extremes at times. For instance, in the February 1956 Bull Ring Massacre, security forces killed a sizable number of citizens for failing to sufficiently cheer Rojas Pinilla. See Armed Conflict Events Database, 2000a.

¹¹³ Armed Conflict Events Database, 2000a.

¹¹⁴ Maullin, 1973, p. 20.

¹¹⁵ Rempe, 2002, p. 4.

gency followed by another insurgency, significant terrorism campaign, or other conflict fomented by the same (or lineal) insurgent group

In July 1956, former presidents Conservative Laureano Eleuterio Gómez (in exile in Spain) and Liberal Alberto Lleras Camargo signed the Declaration of Benidorm, laying the foundation for a coalition government. In 1957, reactionary Conservatives and Liberals signed the Sitges Declaration in Sitges, Spain, agreeing to a power-sharing plan.¹¹⁶ The plan was formalized later that year by the San Carlos Agreement.¹¹⁷

The San Carlos Agreement laid out the details of the coalition government, stipulating that a Conservative would be the first president under the National Front and would be selected by a National Congress, which was to be elected by popular vote. The agreement also called for the restoration of the 1886 constitution, the alteration of the presidency between the Liberal and Conservative parties every four years, parity between the parties in all legislative bodies, a two-thirds majority vote for passage of any legislation, the establishment of an administrative career service of neutral parties not subject to partisan appointment, women's suffrage and equal political rights for women, and the allocation of at least 10 percent of the national budget to education.¹¹⁸

Also in 1957, President Rojas Pinilla ordered the arrest of a Conservative leader involved in the formation of the National Front, Guillermo León Valencia. This arrest led to student demonstrations, massive strikes, riots, the church's declared opposition to the regime, and the defection of top-ranking military officers. As a result, a five-man junta led by General Gabriel París deposed Rojas Pinilla in May 1957, forcing him into temporary exile in Spain.¹¹⁹ General París proceeded to assume power, promising a free election of a civilian president in August 1958. However, in December 1957, Colombians voted overwhelmingly in a national plebiscite to approve the San Carlos and

¹¹⁶ Chacón, Robinson, and Torvik, 2011, pp. 384–385.

¹¹⁷ Armed Conflict Events Database, 2000a.

¹¹⁸ Armed Conflict Events Database, 2000a.

¹¹⁹ Rempe, 2002, p. 4.

Sitges agreements as amendments to the 1886 constitution.¹²⁰ These plebiscites marked the approval of the National Front as a coalition government to lead the country.

While most Colombian citizens welcomed the establishment of the National Front, some of the leftist guerrilla forces established during La Violencia moved to the mountains and isolated rural areas, where they carried on a low-level insurgency with a few hundred followers.¹²¹ The guerrillas continued operations under Colombian Communist Party's tutelage and received financial support from the party. This relationship was firmly established by 1964 with the formation of the Southern Bloc, an insurgent movement with revolutionary intentions. Significantly for the future state of Colombian security, the Southern Bloc would become the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas (FARC), or the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, in mid-1966.¹²² La Violencia was thus an important precedent to a much longer-lasting insurgent movement in Colombia.

Conventional Explanations

Most scholars of La Violencia focus on the repressive regime of Rojas Pinilla, as well as his failed economic and social policies, to explain the outcome of this conflict. The general argument holds that it took a government as unpopular as Rojas Pinilla's to convince Liberal and Conservative Party members to overlook their differences, join together to unseat Rojas Pinilla, and form a coalition government. Other explanations of the conflict focus on its transformation from a politically motivated insurgency affecting regions throughout the country to a more localized, economically focused conflict involving extensive agrarian banditry. Although this transformation is seen as narrowing its geographic reach, it is not considered to have decreased the extent of the violence in any significant way.

¹²⁰ Armed Conflict Events Database, 2000a.

¹²¹ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 361.

¹²² Maullin, 1971, p. 14.

Distinctive Characteristics

- La Violencia is distinct from many other insurgencies in that it began as a politically motivated guerrilla-inspired civil war that divided the country along party lines, later transforming into an economically motivated conflict involving extensive rural banditry in several smaller areas.
- The level of brutality employed by guerrillas on both sides of the conflict is notable, particularly to the extent that it reached innocent civilians and children.
- This conflict is unique in that its outcome was nearly evenly mixed, with both insurgents and COIN forces enjoying privileges and making concessions under the coalition government of the National Front. We consider the outcome to favor the insurgents because they gained the power of the presidency first under the National Front, but the COIN force did not “lose” in the traditional sense; it was willing to negotiate and was given substantial political rights under the National Front.

Figure 5
Map of Colombia



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-5

Malaya, 1948–1955

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

The British had already begun to cede government control back to the Malayan states following WWII, establishing a system whereby the states retained sovereignty under British protection. Still dismayed at the extent of their disenfranchisement under the new government, however, Chinese communists launched a Maoist guerrilla war to expel the British from the country in 1948. Beginning the conflict with an understrength military and police force, the British immediately created a sizable special constabulary, employing conventional tactics and large-scale jungle sweeps that proved largely ineffective. However, the COIN force ultimately adapted to shifts in insurgent strategy over the course of the conflict, and Phase II ushered in a COIN strategy focused on population and spatial control as part of the Briggs Plan's massive resettlements. These strategies were largely successful and were continued and improved upon in Phase III under the policies of Sir Gerald Templer. Along with efforts to win the "hearts and minds" of the population, Templer's focus on improved intelligence, as well as a better organized and larger COIN force and efforts to reach a political settlement to the conflict, contributed to the COIN force's success by the time the conflict officially ended in 1960 (violence was infrequent after parliamentary elections in 1955). Notably, Britain's efforts in Malaya are often held up as a paradigm of effective British COIN practice.

Case Narrative

Preamble Phase: "British Interests in the Malayan Peninsula" (1786–1948)

British interests in Malaya date back to the late 1700s, when the empire seized control of a portion of the Malay Peninsula to secure both the

Straits of Malacca and its commercial interests in the region.¹²³ Substantial tin deposits were then discovered, and, consequently, the British East India Company established a trading post at the mouth of the Kedah River. The British imported Chinese immigrants to work in the peninsula's rubber plantations and tin mines in the 1820s.¹²⁴ In 1896, Britain instituted diplomatic and economic incentives to urge the formation of the Federal Malay States and, by 1909, had extended its control to the boundaries of the Malay Peninsula.¹²⁵

During the WWII Japanese occupation of Malaya, the British supported the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), the Chinese communist guerrilla organization that had formed on the peninsula in the early 1940s, ostensibly to expel the Japanese occupiers from the country. Although the British equipped the MPAJA with weapons and supplies by air and submarine delivery during the war, the MPAJA realized that it was having very little impact on the Japanese and focused instead on strengthening itself for eventual action against the British after the war's end.¹²⁶

This period also saw the exacerbation of tensions between the two largest ethnic groups in the country—the Chinese and the Malays. The Chinese loathed the Japanese, and the Malays largely cooperated with the occupying force. These tensions were not helped by the fact that the population of 5.3 million in Malaya was incredibly ethnically diverse in the 1940s, with 49 percent Malays, 38 percent Chinese, 11 percent Indian, and just over 1 percent aboriginals. There were also 12,000 Europeans in Malaya at this time, many of whom owned rubber plantations or managed tin mines.¹²⁷

¹²³ Corum and Johnson, 2003, pp. 184–185; Joes, 1996, p. 83.

¹²⁴ James R. Arnold, *Jungle of Snakes: A Century of Counterinsurgency Warfare from the Philippines to Iraq*, New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009, p. 133.

¹²⁵ Corum and Johnson, 2003, pp. 184–185.

¹²⁶ John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2002, pp. 60–61.

¹²⁷ Nagl, 2002, p. 60.

It was against this backdrop of ethnic tension and the formation of a Chinese communist guerrilla group that the British decided to create the Malayan Union in 1946. Their intention was to cede Malaya back to its inhabitants, including the Chinese and Indian minorities, who were to have equal voting rights under the new constitution. The treatment of Malaya was by no means unique in this regard: British politicians, reflecting on Britain's numerous defeats during the war, had opted to also cede many other colonial possessions back to their native inhabitants during the postwar period. However, the creation of the Malayan Union was opposed by nearly the entire Malay population, who were violently objected to giving Chinese and Indian minorities on the peninsula any measure of equal rights.¹²⁸

In January 1948, the Malayan Union became the Federation of Malaya, which restored the autonomy of the Malay states' rulers under British protection.¹²⁹ Because the federation denied the Chinese population full citizenship rights, gave the Malay population preferential treatment in selection for government posts, and did not allow rural Chinese squatters to own the land they lived on, the Chinese population had little reason to support the new government and thus viewed communism as a viable alternative that would better support Chinese interests. As a result, in June 1948, the secretary general of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), Chin Peng, mobilized the former MPAJA guerrillas to wage a Maoist-inspired insurgency against the new federation government.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ J. Arnold, 2009, pp. 135–136; Nagl, 2002, p. 62.

¹²⁹ The Federation of Malaya Agreement provided for a strong central government headed by a British high commissioner, who would appoint executive and legislative councils. Each of the federation's nine states retained its sovereignty, with each Malay sultan (state ruler) accepting a British protectorate. This agreement was acceptable to the Malay majority, who were provided with a considerable amount of power at the state level, while the Chinese minority was essentially disenfranchised. See J. Arnold, 2009, p. 136. In practice, London directly governed two settlements in Penang and Malacca, while Malays governed the remainder of the peninsula. See Sergio Miller, "Malaya: The Myth of Hearts and Minds," *Small Wars Journal*, April 2012b, p. 2.

¹³⁰ J. Arnold, 2009, pp. 136–137.

Phase I: “Early Emergency Years” (June 1948–March 1950)*Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)*

Key Factors: External support to COIN from strong state/military; Terrain played a major role because it provided sanctuary for the insurgents (COIN forces could not/would not enter terrain); Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Case fought against the tide of history (end of colonialism)

The insurgency began when the Malayan People’s Anti-British Army (MPABA)—an outgrowth of the MPAJA—murdered three European planters in Northern Perak, along with Chinese workers in Perak and Johore Bahru, on June 16, 1948. In response, British authorities declared a state of emergency throughout the federation the following day.¹³¹

The group soon changed its name to the Malayan People’s Liberation Army and, later, to the Malayan Race’s Liberation Army (MRLA). Its aim was to drive the British out of the country.¹³² Living in large jungle camps of up to 300 insurgents, the MRLA relied on local sources for recruits, ammunition, and food. They also looted police outposts for supplies and food.¹³³ They used standard guerrilla tactics, attacking small police posts and ambushing civilian vehicles. The insurgents also practiced economic warfare and ignored Maoist teachings about prisoner treatment, killing every European captured and torturing Malayan and Chinese prisoners before killing them as well.¹³⁴ Indeed, by October 1948, the MRLA had killed 223 civilians, most of them Chinese civilians who were brutally murdered for their reluctance to support the revolution.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Nagl, 2002, p. 63; J. Arnold, 2009, p. 140; Joes, 1996, p. 84.

¹³² Joes, 1996, p. 84.

¹³³ Nagl, 2002, p. 64.

¹³⁴ Joes, 1996, p. 84.

¹³⁵ J. Arnold, 2009, p. 141.

At the beginning of the conflict, the federation had just ten battalions of troops, including two British, five Gurkha, and three Malay battalions, all of which were substantially understrength and remained so for some time. The police force was between 9,000 and 10,000 strong, and during the first three months of the insurgency, 24,000 Malays were enrolled into a special constabulary and used for static guard duties, freeing troops for mobile patrols. Several hundred police officers from Palestine were also used to shore up local defenses.¹³⁶ During this first phase of the insurgency, the police directed the COIN campaign with army support.¹³⁷

COIN forces took a conventional approach during the first phase of the conflict, with the commander of British forces in Malaya, Major General Charles Boucher, initially aiming to break insurgent concentrations, bring them to conventional battle, and keep them constantly moving so as to deprive them of food and recruits. Such a strategy was quickly understood to be unsuccessful, as the insurgents would not engage conventionally.¹³⁸ COIN forces then resorted to conducting large-scale multibattalion jungle sweeps that proved futile.¹³⁹ The dense jungle foliage gave the insurgents a distinct advantage in countering such a strategy, and their camps were nearly impossible to find by either air or ground reconnaissance.¹⁴⁰

Sir Henry Gurney, who became high commissioner to Malaya on October 8, 1948, recognized that the Chinese squatters were providing bases for the insurgents and were either willingly or unwillingly helping them obtain food, arms, money, and other supplies. Seeing the squatters as a formidable security threat, Gurney added tougher emergency regulations that provided for the deportation of detainees,

¹³⁶ Nagl, 2002, p. 65; J. Arnold, 2009, p. 142.

¹³⁷ Karl Hack, "The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2009, p. 386.

¹³⁸ J. Arnold, 2009, p. 143.

¹³⁹ Octavian Manea, "Setting the Record Straight on Counterinsurgency Strategy: Interview with Karl Hack," *Small Wars Journal*, February 2011, p. 2; Nagl, 2002, p. 66; J. Arnold, 2009, p. 143.

¹⁴⁰ J. Arnold, 2009, pp. 143.

collective punishment of violators, and the compulsory resettlement of individuals or whole villages.¹⁴¹ As a result, COIN forces burned down whole villages and relocated their populations to eliminate civilian support for the insurgency.¹⁴² This tactic, too, was largely unsuccessful.

The COIN force did, however, enjoy some success through its enforcement of the emergency regulations, with police arresting and detaining 1,779 known Malayan Communist Party members or sympathizers and deporting 637 of them to China by the end of 1948.¹⁴³ Yet, with the Army nominally under police command, COIN forces suffered from a confused organizational structure and were unable to collect reliable intelligence on insurgent locations or strategy during this phase.¹⁴⁴

Phase II: “The Briggs Plan” (April 1950–December 1951)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: External support to COIN from strong state/military; Perception of security created or maintained among population in areas COIN force claimed to control; COIN force established and then expanded secure areas; Earnest IO/PSYOP/strategic communication/messaging effort; COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas it controlled or claimed to control; COIN force undertook “clear” of “clear, hold, and build” in area of conflict; COIN force undertook “hold” of “clear, hold, and build” in area of conflict; COIN force resettled/removed civilian populations for population control; COIN campaign included significant (not necessarily primary) focus on physically denying the insurgents access to supportive populations (for example, through removal/resettlement or interdiction); Resettled population provided with reasonable standard of living (as opposed to level of typical refugee camp or worse)

¹⁴¹ Nagl, 2002, p. 66.

¹⁴² Hack, 2009, p. 386.

¹⁴³ Nagl, 2002, p. 64; Hack, 2009, p. 386.

¹⁴⁴ Nagl, 2002, p. 68.

In response to the COIN force's Phase I tactics, the insurgents—who numbered fewer than 8,000 during this phase of the conflict—reorganized into smaller, secret cells. These scaled-down insurgent units practiced hit-and-run guerrilla tactics, ambushes, wide-scale sabotage, and persistent and increasing penetration of rural settlements. Proceeding in this manner, the MRLA stepped up its activity to unprecedented levels.¹⁴⁵

COIN strategy successfully adapted to meet this shift in the MRLA's strategy and tactics.¹⁴⁶ This successful adaptation was largely due to the policies of Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs, who was appointed director of operations and assumed oversight for the direction of the COIN effort in Malaya in April 1950.¹⁴⁷ He quickly launched the “Briggs Plan,” an integrated approach to population and spatial control, to replace ad hoc responses to the challenge posed by the population of Chinese squatters supporting the insurgency.¹⁴⁸ As Andrew Mumford put it, “The essence of the plan was the insight that the insurgency could be defeated if the terrorists were cut off from their support base.”¹⁴⁹

First, in May 1950, Briggs created the Federal Joint Intelligence Advisory Committee to coordinate the collection, analysis, and distribution of intelligence on insurgent locations, activities, and plans from a range of civil, police, and military sources. He then created the Federal War Council to coordinate COIN force unity of effort. The council was replicated in district and state war executive committees throughout Malaya, bringing together army, police, civil administration, and Special Branch officials to circumvent bureaucratic delays and mismanagement.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Manea, 2011, pp. 3–4.

¹⁴⁶ Manea, 2011, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ Nagl, 2002, p. 71.

¹⁴⁸ Hack, 2009, p. 388; Manea, 2011, p. 3.

¹⁴⁹ Andrew Mumford, *Puncturing the Counterinsurgency Myth: Britain and Irregular Warfare in the Past, Present, and Future*, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, September 2011, p. 16.

¹⁵⁰ Nagl, 2002, p. 71; Hack, 2009, p. 388.

Briggs then began to take steps to improve both population control and spatial control. Understanding that the insurgents were getting their food, supplies, and intelligence from the local population, Briggs employed a comprehensive program to resettle 500,000 squatters and regroup up to 600,000 estate laborers into defensible perimeters. He brought resettlement areas under government administration and rebranded them as “New Villages.” Moreover, Briggs directed that these New Villages be placed near roads and that some of the surrounding vegetation be destroyed to allow for easier surveillance.¹⁵¹ The program commenced in June 1950 and was mostly complete by the end of 1951.¹⁵² It succeeded in both protecting the population and controlling the insurgents’ access to tangible support from the population.

Briggs also added two brigades to the available COIN forces and established a military framework whereby COIN units were assigned to specific areas for consistent, small-scale patrols.¹⁵³ Meanwhile, the remaining forces were to be concentrated as “striking forces” to eliminate the MRLA state by state from south to north, clearing and holding areas one at a time.¹⁵⁴ Briggs also established a sizable home guard numbering more than 250,000. All in all, this phase saw a marked increase in the size of the COIN force, which by now included 60,000 police, 40,000 foreign military forces (including British and Gurkha troops), the Home Guard, and thousands of Chinese in the Malayan Chinese Association.¹⁵⁵

The Briggs Plan saw much success in eliminating both tangible and popular support for the insurgency. However, COIN progress in clearing areas of insurgents using the clear-and-hold “oil-spot” strategy was slow, and by mid-1951, political hopes of a military success had

¹⁵¹ Manea, 2011, p. 3.

¹⁵² Hack, 2009, p. 388.

¹⁵³ Nagl, 2002, p. 74; Manea, 2011, p. 3.

¹⁵⁴ Hack, 2009, p. 388.

¹⁵⁵ Manea, 2011, p. 4.

faded.¹⁵⁶ COIN forces saw a change in command at the end of this phase; Gurney was assassinated in October 1951 and Briggs retired in December 1951 due to illness and died soon thereafter. Finally, in December 1951, the police commissioner was relieved of duty.¹⁵⁷

Phase III: “The Templer Era” (January 1952–1955)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Important internal support to insurgents significantly reduced; COIN force efforts resulted in increased costs for insurgents; External support to COIN from strong state/military; Earnest IO/PSYOP/strategic communication/messaging effort; COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas it controlled or claimed to control; COIN force undertook “clear” of “clear, hold, and build” in area of conflict; COIN force undertook “hold” of “clear, hold, and build” in area of conflict; COIN force resettled/removed civilian populations for population control; COIN campaign included significant (not necessarily primary) focus on physically denying the insurgents access to supportive populations (for example, through removal/resettlement or interdiction); Resettled population provided with reasonable standard of living (as opposed to level of typical refugee camp or worse); Intelligence adequate to allow COIN forces to disrupt insurgent processes or operations; Grievances leading to initial insurgency substantially resolved, with such reforms as government programs to improve the political process, establishment of an impartial and credible judicial system, reduction of corruption, improved economy, and efforts to address religious or cultural discrimination or to remove other sources of dissatisfaction that caused part of the population to side with the insurgents

To counter the COIN activities initiated under the Briggs Plan, the MRLA increased its levels of subversion and broke up into even smaller

¹⁵⁶ Mumford, 2011, p. 16.

¹⁵⁷ Nagl, 2002, p. 75.

units operating from deeper inside the inaccessible mountainous jungle of the peninsula and on the Thai-Malayan border.¹⁵⁸

Sir Gerald Templer—who was chosen to replace both Briggs and Gurney and assumed the combined post of high commissioner and director of operations in Malaya in February 1952—responded to these insurgent adaptations by committing to many of the central tenets of the Briggs Plan, but he also placed a premium on intelligence. He began offering high rewards for accurate information and succeeded in acquiring a large amount of intelligence from surrendered enemy personnel.¹⁵⁹ Improvements in intelligence, in turn, assisted continued efforts at population and spatial control, which peaked during this period. Templer also granted autonomy to the Special Branch and provided it with its own training school, which also greatly improved intelligence. Further organizational changes included an improvement in central control of the COIN force, improved collection and distribution of best practices among the various COIN forces, and large-scale police retraining.¹⁶⁰

Two of Templer's most important contributions were his improvement of conditions in the New Villages and his focus on finding a political solution to the conflict. Indeed, Templer introduced initiatives in the New Villages that would both accelerate their movement toward self-government, including local elections, and improve quality of life in general, including economic opportunities, community halls, traveling dispensaries, and other amenities.¹⁶¹ The focus on improving conditions in the New Villages was part of a broader strategy to win the hearts and minds of the population. In a speech, Templer explained, "The answer lies not in pouring more soldiers into the jungle, but in the hearts and minds of the Malayan people."¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Manea, 2011, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ Joes, 1996, p. 86; Mumford, 2011, p. 16.

¹⁶⁰ Manea, 2011, p. 4.

¹⁶¹ Manea, 2011, p. 4.

¹⁶² Quoted in Miller, 2012b, p. 2.

Despite this claim, Templer did rely heavily on large numbers of troops, as Briggs had done. By 1954, the COIN force comprised 40,000 regular troops (including British, Gurkha, commonwealth, and Malayan elements), 24,000 federation police, 37,000 special constables, and 250,000 armed Home Guard forces. Recognizing the crucial nature of the ethnic divide, Templer insisted that the Home Guard enroll and arm Chinese members. He also introduced a program to provide citizenship to all aliens born in Malaya, most of whom were Chinese, in an effort to marginalize the insurgents politically as well as physically.¹⁶³

Meanwhile, he made it clear to all parties involved that independence from Britain would be granted only when the emergency ended and convinced Chinese and Malay leaders to form an alliance in 1953. This presaged parliamentary elections, which were successfully held in July 1955. Very little combat occurred following Templer's departure from Malaya in 1954, though the emergency did not formally end until July 31, 1960.¹⁶⁴

Conventional Explanations

Explanations for the COIN success in Malaya fall into four categories. First, a number of scholars focus on the success of the strategies of population and spatial control implemented by Briggs and continued by Templer. A second group of scholars of the Malayan Emergency highlight the success of Templer's hearts-and-minds strategy, noting that while population and spatial control succeeded in bringing the conflict to a stalemate within 18 months, the efforts to win hearts and minds were necessary to solidify the COIN force's success. Some analysts refer specifically to Templer's personality and his ability to energize the COIN campaign as a driving force underlying COIN success in Malaya. Finally, John Nagl argues that the success of the British in Malaya was due to the nature of the British Army as a pragmatic

¹⁶³ Joes, 1996, p. 86.

¹⁶⁴ Joes, 1996, p. 86.

“learning organization” that was sufficiently flexible to adapt doctrine in theater with the changing context of the war.¹⁶⁵

Distinctive Characteristics

- The British response to the insurgency in Malaya is often considered the “archetypal COIN campaign” and the first modern counterinsurgency.¹⁶⁶ Templer’s focus on winning hearts and minds, in particular, has become a model for modern U.S. COIN doctrine, despite a vibrant debate on the extent to which this strategy was decisive in Malaya.
- This was not a typical anticolonial insurgency. The British had already begun to transfer government control to the Malayan population while keeping the country under British protection—first with the creation of the Malayan Union and then with the creation of the Federation of Malaya—when the insurgency began. Nonetheless, the British stayed on to assist the nascent Malayan government in finding a resolution to the ethnic tensions underpinning the insurgency.
- The resettlement program in Malaya was innovative in that it went beyond basic relocation, actually providing a community structure and amenities over and above what was necessary to meet the population’s basic needs. This was particularly true in the Templer era, and many regard this as being a defining feature of Templer’s successful efforts to win popular support for the COIN effort.

¹⁶⁵ Hack, 2009, p. 394; Nagl, 2002.

¹⁶⁶ Mumford, 2011, p. 15.

Figure 6
Map of 1950s Malaya



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR2912-6

Kenya, 1952–1956

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

The Mau Mau Rebellion was a brutal campaign that affected all of Kenya's Kikuyu people. The rebellion was an anticolonial struggle aimed at expelling the British colonial government from Kenya due to grievances over land rights, pay for African workers, and the underrepresentation of the Kikuyu people in politics. Entailing gross humanitarian abuses on both sides throughout all phases of the conflict, the main COIN strategies employed involved large-scale sweeps, arrests, detentions, and resettlement programs that were quite indiscriminate in nature. While the COIN force enjoyed the support of a majority of the Kikuyu people at the outset of hostilities, the repressive COIN tactics were pushing the Kikuyu over to the insurgents' side by the second phase of the conflict. British and local COIN forces did win back some level of popular support in Phase III (particularly in the detention centers), but popular support, on the whole, does appear to have been decisive in this conflict. Rather, it was the repressive, indiscriminate, and overwhelming force employed by the COIN force that eventually broke the back of the insurgency. This COIN success did not prevail over the long term, however, and Britain ultimately granted Kenya's independence less than a decade after the conclusion of the rebellion.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "The COIN Force Mobilizes as an Anticolonial Movement Turns Violent" (October 1952–February 1953)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Insurgents discredited/delegitimized COIN force/government; Insurgents employed unconstrained violence (against civilians) to create or sustain insecurity and instability (purposely or otherwise); Insurgency motive: war of liberation/independence; COIN

or insurgent actions precipitated (or constituted) ethnic or religious violence; Government repression and/or exclusion of significant societal groups from state power or resources; COIN force included significant numbers of police, paramilitary, militia, or other nonconventional personnel; Terrain played a major role in conflict; Type of terrain that played a major role: forests; COIN force resettled/removed civilian populations for population control; COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards

The Mau Mau (“Kenya Land and Freedom Army”)—an outgrowth of the banned revolutionary Kikuyu Central Association that had dominated Kenyan, and particularly Kikuyu, political life since the mid-1940s—first came to light in Kenya in March 1948.¹⁶⁷ It should be emphasized from the outset that not all Kikuyu supported the Mau Mau, especially at the beginning of the conflict. The Mau Mau’s primary aim was to remove British rule and European settlers from Kenya. By June 1950, the group was recognized as “an evil and subversive association,” and by August 1950 was proscribed as “an unlawful society” by notice of the British colonial government in Kenya at the time.¹⁶⁸ By mid-1952, Kenyan intelligence services estimated that more than 250,000 of Kenya’s Kikuyu population had taken the Mau Mau oath to drive white settlers and colonial rule from Kenya.¹⁶⁹

On October 20, 1952, angry about the land policies of the British colonial government, the low wages, and political underrepresentation of Africans under the colonial administration, the Mau Mau killed seven Africans and one European settler. The British colonial government’s response to the incident is widely considered to have been disproportionate and provocative. Declaring a colonial emergency, the government formed a COIN force consisting of British troops and per-

¹⁶⁷ The Kikuyu are a Bantu-speaking people and the largest single ethnic group in Kenya. Resenting occupation of their land and British colonial rule, the Kikuyu were the first native ethnic group in Kenya to wage an anticolonial insurgency. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Kikuyu,” undated.

¹⁶⁸ Frank Corfield, *The Origins and Growth of Mau Mau: An Historical Survey* (“*The Corfield Report*”), Nairobi: Government of Kenya, 1960, pp. 31, 64–65.

¹⁶⁹ Corfield, 1960, pp. 64–65.

sonnel from the King's African Rifles (KAR), the Kenya Regiment, the Home Guard, and the Kenya Police Reserve. Together, they launched Operation Jock Scott, arresting Mau Mau leader Jomo Kenyatta and 180 other alleged movement leaders in Nairobi.¹⁷⁰ In all, COIN forces arrested 8,500 suspected Mau Mau supporters and screened another 31,450 civilians. Operation Jock Scott did not decapitate the movement as the British had hoped; news of the crackdown was leaked beforehand, and moderates on the wanted list awaited capture while the real militants fled to the forests. From then on, the Mau Mau perpetrated brutal attacks against both Europeans and other Kikuyu, leading some to refer to the conflict as an intra-Kikuyu civil war.¹⁷¹

A month later, in response to the murder of another European, COIN forces placed another 2,200 Kikuyu men, women, and children, along with their livestock and other possessions, in so-called "reserves" behind barbed wire.¹⁷² By December 15, 1952, it was offi-

¹⁷⁰ The KAR contingent consisted of three battalions of KAR soldiers recalled from Uganda, Tanganyika, and Mauritius, for a total of 3,000 African troops. To placate European settlers, one battalion of British troops from the Lancashire Fusiliers was also flown from Egypt to Nairobi on the first day of Operation Jock Scott. See David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005, pp. 62–63.

The Kenya Regiment was a territorial unit composed of European settlers. Intended to mirror the British Army, its personnel were trained by noncommissioned officers from the Brigade of Guards and headed by seconded officers. It depended on the Kenyan government for logistical support but came under the regular British military chain of command in Kenya for discipline and operations. Its soldiers were increasingly seconded to work with British and KAR battalions as guides and trackers and also as platoon commanders with the KAR. The Kenya Regiment had a particular reputation for brutality.

The Home Guard was deployed in many joint operations with the Kenyan army, commanded by a number of Kenya Regiment troops, and trained by British regiments. The Kenya Police Reserve included many former officers from Palestine, Malaya, even Britain. The army went on numerous joint operations with the police and liaised closely on intelligence. See Huw Bennett, "The Mau Mau Emergency as Part of the British Army's Post-War Counter-Insurgency Experience," *Defense and Security Analysis*, Vol. 23, No. 2, June 2007, p. 155.

¹⁷¹ Anderson, 2005, p. 4; Daniel Branch, "The Enemy Within: Loyalists and the War Against Mau Mau in Kenya," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 48, No. 2, July 2007, p. 293.

¹⁷² David A. Percox, "British Counter-Insurgency in Kenya, 1952–56: Extension of Internal Security Policy or Prelude to Decolonisation?" *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1998, p. 64.

cial colonial administration policy to evict Kikuyu from areas where alleged Mau Mau crimes had occurred, despite the fact that large portions of the Kikuyu population did not support the Mau Mau. The COIN force continued a policy of punitive sweeps and mass evictions of Kikuyu from Mau Mau crime areas into 1953.¹⁷³ It has been argued that Britain's repressive and indiscriminate tactics during the months after Operation Jock Scott served only to alienate Kikuyu civilians and drive many of them to support the Mau Mau:

Murder, torture, and beatings were deployed not only to generally dissuade Kikuyu civilians from joining or passively supporting the Mau Mau, but also to encourage population movement into the Reserves (today called ethnic cleansing). For example, one estimation puts the number of people forcibly evicted or leaving voluntarily from November 1952 to April 1953 at between 70,000 to 100,000 from the Rift Valley and Central Provinces. The policy was reversed in mid-1953 when it became clear that the brutality with which the movements were achieved and the resultant horrific over-crowding in the Reserves actually aided Mau Mau recruitment.¹⁷⁴

These repressive tactics were originally intended to coincide with something of a “hearts-and-minds” approach. As early as October 28, 1952, Colonial Governor Evelyn Baring had announced development plans for Kenya as a “second prong” in the COIN campaign. As initially conceived, this development effort was to consist of a nearly £7 million expenditure on development and reconstruction, including road-building and water projects; the construction of schools, community centers, village halls, hospitals, and urban housing; a new airport for Nairobi; and a possible oil refinery in Mombasa. Additionally, £328,000 was to be spent on an “agricultural betterment” program. However, the colonial government did not even begin negotiating funding for the development effort until August 1953, the eventual allocation was only £5 million, the Colonial Office had firmly rejected

¹⁷³ Bennett, 2007, p. 155; Percox, 1998, p. 68.

¹⁷⁴ Bennett, 2007, p. 153.

the proposal for money to expand African education, and the development plan itself was not published until February 1954.¹⁷⁵ All of this indicates that, to the extent that development was carried out, it came late in the conflict and was emphasized to a much lesser extent than originally intended.

Meanwhile, in January 1953, the colonial administration approved the appointment of Major General W. R. N. Hinde as Baring's chief staff officer, setting the stage for Phase II of the conflict.¹⁷⁶

Phase II: "The Hinde/Early Erskine Phase"
(February 1953–March 1954)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Insurgency motive: war of liberation/independence; COIN or insurgent actions precipitated (or constituted) ethnic or religious violence; Government repression and/or exclusion of significant societal groups from state power or resources; COIN force included significant numbers of police, paramilitary, militia, or other nonconventional personnel; Terrain played a major role in conflict; Type of terrain that played a major role: forests; COIN force employed indiscriminate force; COIN force had and used uncontested air dominance; Earnest IO/PSYOP/strategic communication/messaging effort; COIN force resettled/removed civilian populations for population control; COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards

Hinde took up his appointment on February 1, 1953, and by the end of February 1953, 58,894 Africans had been screened. Under Hinde, the COIN emphasis remained on policing, with the military playing a support role. He also insisted that food-denial policies and protection of resettlements be adhered to strictly and recognized that the secu-

¹⁷⁵ Percox, 1998, pp. 65–66.

¹⁷⁶ Percox, 1998, p. 70.

rity forces were understaffed. As a result, General Sir John Harding, chief of the Imperial Staff, increased the number of troops deployed to Kenya soon after Hinde's appointment, recommending the dispatch of two additional battalions and one additional brigade headquarters to ensure that the troops could be widely dispersed.¹⁷⁷

This phase saw some of the conflict's most extensive battlefield violence, with the Mau Mau conducting their first major offensive on March 26, 1953. In this attack—the Lari Massacre—more than 300 Mau Mau insurgents hacked and burned to death 97 men, women, and children, wounding 29 others. In a related attack, a group of approximately 80 Mau Mau raided a police station at Naivasha, killing two African policemen and a Kenya police reserve officer, releasing 173 prisoners, and stealing weapons from the armory.¹⁷⁸

Subsequently, the British ordered the mass deportation of Kikuyu to the reserves. COIN forces were to move all Mau Mau suspects “through the pipeline,” screening them for further detention in a series of special camps. The pipeline consisted of a “white-gray-black” classification system, whereby “whites” were cooperative detainees who were repatriated back to the reserves, “grays” were those who had taken the Mau Mau oath but were fairly compliant and were moved through the detention camps to work camps in their local districts before being released, and “blacks” were suspected to be devoted Mau Mau members.¹⁷⁹

Meanwhile, a number of the most militant Mau Mau during this phase were based in the forests bordering the Aberdare mountain range. In response, the COIN force began a bombing and strafing campaign targeting Mau Mau hideouts in April 1953, and from November 1953 to July 1955, the Royal Air Force played a significant role in the conflict. At first, the Lincoln bomber sorties were restricted to the forests, but after May 1954, bombing beyond the forests was allowed. By June 1954, almost 900 insurgents had been killed or wounded by air

¹⁷⁷ Percox, 1998, p. 72.

¹⁷⁸ Percox, 1998, p. 73.

¹⁷⁹ Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya*, London: Pimlico, 2005, p. 136.

attack.¹⁸⁰ Aircraft were also deployed in this phase for reconnaissance and strategic messaging efforts, such as leaflet dropping.¹⁸¹

In early May 1953, British companies began patrolling the forests. Later that month, the War Office announced that Hinde was to be replaced with Lieutenant General Sir George Erskine. Erskine arrived in Kenya on June 7, 1953, marking the beginning of the gradual escalation of the COIN campaign. By the end of June 1953, more than 100 Mau Maus had been killed in the forest patrols. Yet, the forest terrain worked in the insurgents' favor when it came to COIN ground operations, with Erskine noting, "Mau Mau units are determined, well organized, well protected, and in hideouts deep in the forest and difficult to reach," and "their supporters in the reserves are numerous."¹⁸² Thus, by July 1953, the COIN force was seeing a drastic decline in the number of insurgents it was able to engage on the ground, due both to the COIN troops' wide dispersal and the insurgents' increasing familiarity with security force tactics. In August 1953, Erskine offered favorable terms to the Mau Mau if they surrendered; however, by the end of that month, only 66 Mau Mau had done so.¹⁸³ At the same time, Nairobi increasingly became a center for displaced Kikuyu, as well as a source of funding, weapons, supplies, and recruits for the Mau Mau. Thus, by March 1954, the COIN force continued to put pressure on the forest areas and the reserves while shifting its focus to Nairobi for Operation Anvil.

Phase III: "Operation Anvil and Beyond"
(April 1954–November 1956)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conven-

¹⁸⁰ Elkins, 2005, p. 37; Stephen Chappell, "Air Power in the Mau Mau Conflict: The Government's Chief Weapon," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 156, No. 1, February 2011.

¹⁸¹ Chappell, 2011.

¹⁸² Percox, 1998, p. 78.

¹⁸³ Percox, 1998, pp. 79–80.

tional formations); Insurgency motive: war of liberation/independence; COIN force included significant numbers of police, paramilitary, militia, or other nonconventional personnel; COIN or insurgent actions precipitated (or constituted) ethnic or religious violence; Government repression and/or exclusion of significant societal groups from state power or resources; Conflict had significant urban component; COIN force employed indiscriminate force; COIN force had and used uncontested air dominance; COIN force resettled/removed civilian populations for population control; COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards

In April 1954, COIN forces launched Operation Anvil, sealing off Nairobi and purging the city sector by sector. The colonial administration had developed new regulations allowing for the collective arrest of all adult males in Nairobi.¹⁸⁴ Security forces therefore took all Africans in the city to temporary barbed-wire enclosures. Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru males were sent to the Langata screening camp for further questioning, while all women and children were sent to the reserves. Operation Anvil lasted for two weeks, during which 20,000 Mau Mau suspects were taken to Langata and 30,000 others were sent to the reserves.¹⁸⁵

In June 1954, members of the colonial administration overseeing the COIN effort decided to implement a large-scale, forced resettlement of the Kiambu, Nyeri, Murang'a, and Embu districts to cut off the insurgents' supply lines. Eighteen months later, more than 1 million Kikuyu who had been living in the reserves had been relocated to 804 villages consisting of 230,000 huts.¹⁸⁶ Living conditions in the villages varied, with some intentionally treated better in an attempt to protect loyalist Kikuyu and others designed to punish Mau Mau sympathizers. All of the villages were surrounded by deep, spiked trenches and barbed wire, and members of the Home Guard kept watch over

¹⁸⁴ Percox, 1998, p. 81.

¹⁸⁵ Elkins, 2005.

¹⁸⁶ Elkins, 2005, p. 235; Anderson, 2005.

the villagers.¹⁸⁷ By early 1955, some districts were reporting starvation and malnutrition.¹⁸⁸

Later that year, the pipeline became a fully operational, well-organized system, and it began to produce results.¹⁸⁹ Many detainees confessed, and an increasing number became spies and informers within the detention camps or openly switched sides to support the COIN effort. Nonetheless, the Mau Mau forcibly oathed as many new initiates within the pipeline as possible, strangling or slitting the throats of those who refused to take the oath.¹⁹⁰ As in the villages, malnutrition and disease were rampant in the detention camps.¹⁹¹ Some have argued that the Mau Mau were never able to completely recover from Operation Anvil and that it marked the beginning of the end of the conflict. However, it appears that this was not immediately the case; it was more likely the combination of the pipeline, the resettlement program, and Operation Anvil that, over the course of a few years, gradually weakened the Mau Mau such that the capture of Mau Mau commander Dedan Kimathi in October 1956 was sufficient to decisively defeat the insurgency. Shortly thereafter, in mid-November 1956, Governor Baring announced the withdrawal of the army from operations.¹⁹² Death estimates for the insurgents over the course of the conflict vary, with official death tolls reporting 12,000 Mau Mau casualties and unofficial estimates numbering over 20,000, along with 2,633 captured and 2,714 surrendered. Of the COIN force, it is reported that 200 were killed and 579 were wounded.¹⁹³

While the COIN force was victorious in this conflict, the insurgency is commonly thought to have set the stage for Kenyan indepen-

¹⁸⁷ Anderson, 2005, pp. 293–294.

¹⁸⁸ Elkins, 2005, pp. 259–260.

¹⁸⁹ Elkins, 2005, pp. 179–191.

¹⁹⁰ Elkins, 2005, pp. 176–177.

¹⁹¹ Derek R. Peterson, “The Intellectual Lives of Mau Mau Detainees,” *Journal of African History*, Vol. 49, No. 1, March 2008, p. 84.

¹⁹² Percox, 1998, pp. 89–90.

¹⁹³ Anderson, 2005, p. 4.

dence, which was granted less than a decade after the conclusion of the rebellion, in December 1963.¹⁹⁴

Conventional Explanations

The British success in the Mau Mau Rebellion tends to be explained in the literature by the COIN force's successful employment of overwhelming force, resettlement, and large-scale searches, arrests, and detention to crush the insurgency. The COIN strategy emphasized repression and indiscriminate force—as illustrated by the air bombing and strafing campaign, Operation Anvil, and the elaborate detention system and pipeline screening process. Popular support is cited as a contributing factor to the COIN force's success in the third phase of the conflict, when it increased again among those in the pipeline, many of whom openly switched sides or worked as spies for the COIN effort. The resettlement program—while certainly reflecting practices that are considered beyond the pale of current U.S. ethical standards—is considered successful in cutting off the insurgents' supply lines, while the extensive detention system and pipeline weeded out more insurgents than it created. However, the COIN success here might best be considered only a temporary one. Because this case is considered by some to have set the stage for Kenyan independence just a few years later, it is unclear how many lessons can be drawn from it to inform efforts to win long-term COIN successes.

Distinctive Characteristics

- This is a case in which the COIN force was fighting against the tide of history (in the sense that it was an anticolonial conflict) and succeeded, but only in the near term: Kenyan independence was granted less than a decade after the end of hostilities.
- This is an interesting example of COIN resettlement, as the population was resettled various times in different locations, first in the reserves, then in detention centers, and finally in “villages”

¹⁹⁴ The Learning Network, “Dec. 12, 1963: Kenya Gains Independence,” *New York Times*, December 12, 2011.

bordered by deep, spiked trenches and barbed wire. While it has been argued that these resettlement policies represented ethnic cleansing to at least some extent, they were, by and large, successful at weeding out the Mau Mau and cutting off their supply lines.

- The British in this case are widely considered to have applied a disproportionate level of force to meet the threat at hand from the very beginning of the conflict, as illustrated by the vast differences in the number of casualties suffered by each side of the conflict.
- The COIN force in this case included a diverse array of local and external actors, both professional and militia. Yet, they all coordinated well together and had a well-established command-and-control system to ensure that they did not work at cross-purposes.

Figure 7
Map of Kenya



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-7

Algerian Independence, 1954–1962

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

The French-Algerian conflict, which has been described as the “last, the greatest and the most dramatic of colonial war,” was launched in 1954 with a series of uncoordinated bombing attacks by 300 members of the National Liberation Front (FLN) guerrilla movement.¹⁹⁵ Initially dismissed as “traditional banditry,” the FLN attacks drew an increasingly forceful response from the French army as the insurgency gained strength and began targeting civilians in the French settler community, known as *colons*, or colonists. In response, the French military increased its presence in the region and imposed brutal COIN tactics against Algeria’s native Muslim population and FLN leaders.

France became more entrenched in battle in 1957 after the FLN initiated a campaign of urban terrorism in the city of Algiers, which intentionally provoked a violent overreaction from the French army. French special forces were notorious for their roundups of innocent civilians, illegal executions, and forced disappearances, and they roused international condemnation for their systematic use of torture in conducting interrogations. While the army was able to make significant tactical gains against the insurgency in its military operations and its subsequent employment of effective COIN techniques, including a system of quadrillage and the construction of *cordons sanitaires* along Algeria’s borders, the military was unable to recover from the political losses that resulted from its engagement in the Battle for Algiers.

A change of power in Paris, due largely to the turmoil created by French actions in the Algerian war, led to the ascendancy of President Charles de Gaulle in 1958. De Gaulle instituted more effective COIN tactics and eventually announced his support for Algerian autonomy. This decision was violently opposed by members of the French settler community and radical army officers and led to the outbreak of a wave

¹⁹⁵ Paul-Marie de la Gorce, *The French Army: A Military-Political History*, New York: George Braziller, 1963, p. 447, quoted in Joes, 1996.

of attacks against Algerian Muslims and French officials. The violence ultimately failed to impede negotiations on France's withdrawal, however. After eight years of brutal conflict, the French government was forced to succumb to the growing pressure from the Algerian population, the public in metropolitan France, and the international community to end the war and concede its political, if not its military, defeat.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "Insurgent 'Bandits' Gain Strength and Draw a Brutal Response" (1954–September 1956)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Insurgency motive: war of liberation/independence; In area of conflict, COIN force *not* perceived as worse than insurgents; COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics

Local opposition to France's harsh colonial rule began soon after the French army invaded Algeria in 1830 and incorporated the country into metropolitan France in 1848. An organized movement calling for Algerian independence first formed in 1926 with the goal of defending "the material, moral, and social interests of North African Muslims," which it claimed were being unfairly abused by the French colonial powers.¹⁹⁶ These early efforts to achieve autonomy were suppressed by the French government and a minority of French settlers, or *colons*, who dominated Algerian political and economic life.¹⁹⁷ The movement sparked sporadic unrest and further acts of repression over the next two

¹⁹⁶ In 1909, Muslims, who made up almost 90 percent of the population but produced 20 percent of Algeria's income, paid 70 percent of direct taxes and 45 percent of the total taxes collected. GlobalSecurity.org, "Algerian National Liberation (1954–1962)," web page, last updated July 11, 2011a.

¹⁹⁷ By 1954, the Muslim population was approximately 8.4 million, while the *colons* numbered less than 1 million. The *colons* owned most of the land in Algeria and dominated the Algerian political assembly. Ian F. W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and Their Opponents Since 1790*, New York: Routledge, 2001, pp. 160–161.

decades.¹⁹⁸ After WWII, tensions increased as a sense of nationalism developed among the Algerian population, and France struggled to maintain control over its colonial empire.

In May 1945, a parade to celebrate the surrender of Nazi Germany in the town of Setif turned violent when French police attempted to seize banners criticizing French colonial rule and triggered an anti-French riot in which 100 European settlers were killed. French colonial forces responded by launching a major crackdown against several Algerian cities that left tens of thousands dead. (European historians put the figure at between 15,000 and 20,000, while Algerian sources maintain that 45,000 were killed.)¹⁹⁹ This event, which became known as the Setif Massacre, prompted more widespread demonstrations and the creation of an armed insurrection movement in Algeria. By the 1950s, drawing inspiration from the pan-Arab nationalist movement led by Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, various Algerian nationalist groups mobilized to form the FLN, which assumed the leadership of the armed struggle to achieve a sovereign Algerian state. The FLN called for a general insurrection on All Saints' Day in October 1954.

Growing opposition to French rule in Algeria corresponded with a series of strategic losses for France, both during and after WWII. France's defeat in the battle of Dien Bien Phu in Indochina and its subsequent withdrawal from the Morocco and Tunisia were considered a severe blow to the country's colonial influence and national prestige. The French army was particularly humiliated by the losses and betrayal of the pro-French regimes that had committed their support. At the same time, members of the French settler community in Algeria felt threatened by the loss of French colonial influence and the potential for the Muslim population to gain political power at its expense. As a result, the French government became increasingly intransigent in its position on Algerian autonomy and was unwilling to consider any form of compromise or retreat.

Against this backdrop of growing tensions, a group of 300 FLN guerrillas launched a series of coordinated attacks on French secu-

¹⁹⁸ GlobalSecurity.org, 2011a.

¹⁹⁹ Reuters, "Algerians Remember Massacres of 1945," *Washington Post*, May 9, 2005.

rity force installations, police posts, and communication facilities in November 1954, marking the beginning of the Algerian insurgency. The FLN justified its actions as a legitimate struggle for independence from France and broadcast a proclamation from Cairo calling on all Muslims to join in the effort to “restore the Algerian state, sovereign, democratic and social within the framework of the principles of Islam.”²⁰⁰

Armed only with hunting rifles, shotguns, and homemade bombs, most of the FLN’s operations were limited to hit-and-run assaults that allowed the rebels to avoid contact with French firepower and incurred few French casualties. To the FLN’s surprise, the local Muslim population remained largely apathetic and failed to endorse the group’s call to arms. Thus, the initial attacks failed to have the decisive impact on the French occupation that the insurgent leaders had anticipated. French security forces quickly disbursed the guerrillas, dismissing their attacks as traditional banditry.

The FLN, recognizing its need to gain greater popular support, then retreated to the mountainous interior of Algeria and refocused its efforts on creating resistance groups and cells whose main task was to recruit new members and to develop support for independence among the Algerian Muslim community.²⁰¹ Gradually, the FLN grew in strength and organization, enabling it to gain a dominant presence in the regions of Aures and Kabylie and in the mountainous areas around Constantine, Algiers, and Oran. By 1956, the FLN established military and civil committees that raised taxes and served as an alternative administration to the French. The insurgency also developed a growing base of external support, with Egypt and Syria providing training and arms and other members of the Arab League providing funding. More significantly, Morocco and Tunisia began to provide safe havens for the FLN, where the group’s members were able to build

²⁰⁰ Peter Chalk, “Algeria 1954–1962,” in Angel Rabasa, Lesley Anne Warner, Peter Chalk, Ivan Khilko, and Paraag Shukla, *Money in the Bank: Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, OP-185-OSD, 2007.

²⁰¹ Chalk, 2007, p. 18.

operational bases, and to facilitate the transit of personnel and materiel across the border, which greatly enhanced its military capabilities.

By 1955, the group also began to shift its tactics from limited guerrilla strikes against military and government targets to a large-scale terrorist campaign against the French *colons* and their Algerian supporters.²⁰² This campaign of violence succeeded in terrorizing the Muslim population into compliance and tacit support. It also provoked French authorities to initiate harsh reprisals and to impose tighter restrictions on the Muslim community, which drove more native Algerians to the insurgent movement.²⁰³

A watershed event occurred in August 1955, when the FLN initiated a massacre of civilians near the town of Philippeville in which 123 people were killed. The French governor general responded by killing 1,273 guerrillas and Algerian villagers in retaliation, which, in turn, touched off a cycle of bloodletting that resulted in the murder of more than 12,000 Muslims by French military and police forces and *colon* “vigilante committees.”²⁰⁴ Most of those killed by the French were innocent of wrongdoing, as the French followed the doctrine of collective responsibility in fighting the insurgency.²⁰⁵ Rather than containing the insurgency, however, such indiscriminate acts of violence served to the benefit of the FLN, and its leadership soon realized that such acts only led the Algerian people to “hate the French more.”²⁰⁶

²⁰² Mounir Elkhamri, Lester Grau, Laurie King-Irani, Amanda S. Mitchell, and Lenny Tasa-Bennett, *Urban Population Control in a Counterinsurgency*, Ft. Leavenworth, Kan.: U.S. Army Foreign Military Studies Office, 2005.

²⁰³ Anton Menning, “Counterinsurgency in the Battle of the Casbah: A Reassessment for the New Millennium and Its New Wars,” *Small Wars Journal*, October 2006.

²⁰⁴ Armed Conflict Events Database, “Algerian War of Independence 1954–1962,” last updated November 27, 2003.

²⁰⁵ The principle of collective responsibility was applied by French military officials in Philippeville based on the establishment of an extralegal regime in Algeria. In response to “terrorist acts” initiated by the FLN in August 1955, responsibility was attributed to nearby villages, which would be subject to brutal reprisals, including widespread torture and executions.

²⁰⁶ Corum and Johnson, 2003 p. 165.

The increasing level of violence in the Algerian countryside led the French to abandon any hope of accommodation with the insurgents. After the Phillippeville massacre, the French government abolished the Algerian Assembly and ruled Algeria by decree law, which granted the French military nearly total power.²⁰⁷ French Premier Pierre Mendès-France, declared to the French National Assembly, “One does not compromise when it comes to defending the internal peace of the nation, the unity and integrity of the Republic. . . . Between them and metropolitan France there can be no conceivable secession.”²⁰⁸ Moreover, militants in the *colon* community assumed free reign to carry out attacks on suspected FLN members and their Muslim supporters.

No longer dismissing the FLN attacks as banditry, the French began to view the insurgency as a significant challenge to French rule.²⁰⁹ Fearing that the insurgents were gaining the upper hand, the army ordered a rapid increase in forces to Algeria, raising the number of troops from 150,000 to 400,000 over the course of a year.²¹⁰ The intensity of military operations heightened, and the French began to launch increasingly brutal reprisals against the FLN leadership. However, these attacks often instigated further violence. In June 1956, when French COIN forces executed two FLN fighters by guillotine, the FLN leadership took a more radical turn, vowing that for every FLN fighter executed 100 Frenchmen would meet a similar fate and thus committing to even more violent attacks against civilian targets.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Anthony Toth, “Phillippeville,” *A Country Study: Algeria*, Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1994.

²⁰⁸ Armed Conflict Events Database, 2003.

²⁰⁹ Martha Crenshaw, “The Effectiveness of Terrorism in the Algerian War,” in Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism in Context*, State College, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 1995, p. 488; David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1954–1962*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-478-1/ARPA/RC [1963] 2006, p. 18

²¹⁰ Galula, 2006, p. 25; Corum and Johnson, 2003 p. 166.

²¹¹ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, p. 58.

***Phase II: “The Battle for Algiers and the Court of Public Opinion”
(September 1956–1957)***

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Conflict had significant urban component; COIN force employed escalating repression; COIN force employed collective punishment; Intelligence adequate to support kill/capture or engagements on COIN force’s terms; Intelligence adequate to allow COIN forces to disrupt insurgent processes or operations; COIN force engaged in more coercion/intimidation than insurgents; COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards; Change in level of popular support for insurgents during this phase

The FLN sought revenge against the French by adopting a new tactic of urban-based terrorism in 1956. Recognizing that they could not compete with the French army in a direct military confrontation, the insurgents decided to attack civilian targets in the heart of Algiers in an effort to provoke an overreaction by French security forces. Their intention was to drive a wedge between the local population and the colonial administration and draw the attention of metropolitan France and the international community to their cause; thus, they attempted to use terror to alter the political context of the Algerian conflict.

The new urban campaign began on September 30, 1956, with a series of bombings at public venues in the European sector of Algiers. Civilian targets included two restaurants frequented by *colons* and the Air France terminal at Algiers airport. These attacks were followed by the assassination of the city’s mayor and the killing of several other high-ranking officials in the colonial administration, as well as a general strike that disrupted Algiers’s communication and transportation services for several days.²¹² The FLN carried out an average of 800 shootings and bombings per month from the fall of 1956 to the spring of 1957, resulting in a high number of civilian casualties.²¹³

²¹² Chalk, 2007, pp. 18–19.

²¹³ GlobalSecurity.org, 2011a.

As the insurgents anticipated, France responded forcefully to the urban terrorist campaign, launching what came to be known as the Battle for Algiers in January 1957. In a change of tactics, the French army engaged its elite 10th Parachute Division and allowed it full authority to restore order to the city.²¹⁴ The elite forces conducted roundups of entire neighborhoods, ordering widespread summary executions and extrajudicial preemptive detentions of FLN suspects. Over the course of only nine months, the French arrested 24,000 men, 3,000 of whom disappeared while they were in detention.²¹⁵ The parachute regiment relied heavily on torture to extract information from suspects, becoming notorious for institutionalizing this technique into a systematic form of interrogation.²¹⁶ Electrocuting, simulated drowning, and abuse aimed at degrading human dignity were heavily utilized, and detainees who refused to talk or who died during questioning were commonly disposed of in what became commonly known as “work in the woods.”²¹⁷ Such brutal tactics enabled the French to break the FLN’s urban campaign by eliminating its leadership base in Algiers, but they also alienated much of the population and fostered greater sympathy for the insurgents. Despite carrying out its own atrocities, the FLN was increasingly viewed as “defenders of the rights of the people” against the abuse of French security forces in Algiers.²¹⁸

Outside the city of Algiers the French undertook a parallel effort to increase their force levels and crush the insurgency in the countryside. By 1957, France had committed more than 400,000 troops to Algeria. In addition to the elite French parachute regiments, Foreign Legion forces, and regular air force and naval units, France recruited

²¹⁴ Crenshaw, 1995, pp. 489–490.

²¹⁵ The total number of men arrested over a four-month period accounted for almost 40 percent of the population of the Arab quarter in Algiers. Chalk, 2007; Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 165

²¹⁶ Jacques Massu, *The True Battle of Algiers*, 1972, pp. 166–170, quoted in Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–1962*, New York: New York Review of Books, 2006, pp. 196–201.

²¹⁷ Horne, 2006, pp. 196–201.

²¹⁸ Chalk, 2007, p. 19.

and trained an irregular force of over 150,000 Algerian Muslims who volunteered to assist in the COIN effort. The Muslim fighters, known as *harkis*, were armed with shotguns and used guerrilla tactics, making them highly effective in conducting COIN missions.²¹⁹

This increase in military manpower enabled the French to establish a stronger physical presence throughout the country. In late 1957, the French army instituted a system of quadrillage, by which it divided the country into sectors and permanently garrisoned troops in each of the assigned territories. This effective use of static defense sharply reduced the number of FLN attacks. The French also established large areas as *zone interdites*, or forbidden zones, by evacuating farms and villages and resettling the population in large “self-defense villages” under strict military supervision. This resettlement effort, which was an attempt to cut off local support for the FLN, resulted in the movement of more than 1.3 million Algerians, approximately 10 percent of the population, into overcrowded, poorly maintained camps, with mixed effects.

The French army had more success in a major undertaking to disrupt the FLN’s source of external support by constructing a system of barriers to limit the infiltration of insurgents from their safe havens in Tunisia and Morocco. Along the borders, they built eight-foot electric fences that were illuminated by searchlights and surrounded by minefields. The Morice Line along the Tunisian border, which was completed in 1957, required 40,000 troops to patrol but had a kill ratio of 85 percent among those trying to breach the barrier to enter Algeria. From March to May 1958, repeated attempts by the FLN to punch through the line were beaten back, resulting in 3,000 guerrilla casualties. As a result, 20,000 insurgents remained confined to Tunisia until the end of the war.²²⁰ The Pedron Line, along the Moroccan border, was completed a short time after and was similarly effective.²²¹

²¹⁹ GlobalSecurity.org, 2011a.

²²⁰ H. Canuel, “French Counterinsurgency in Algeria: Forgotten Lessons from a Misunderstood Conflict,” *Small Wars Journal*, March 2010, p. 7.

²²¹ The French took more dramatic actions to reduce border traffic, such as forcing down a Moroccan plane in Algeria and bombing Tunisian village as a warning against FLN raids into Algeria.

By 1958, the combined efforts of the French special forces and the country's conventional air and land forces made great strides in destroying the FLN's infrastructure in Algiers and reducing its operational capabilities. Yet, while it won a tactical advantage, the French military lost a great deal of public support. Moderate Muslims were alienated after the Battle of Algiers and increasingly sided with the insurgency. Criticism of the French military's actions in Algeria continued to grow within metropolitan France, leading many to question the country's investment in the war effort. Moreover, the brutal methods of the French army and its widespread use of torture elicited opprobrium in international forums, which became increasingly difficult for Paris to ignore.²²² (The Algerian conflict was the subject of considerable debate in the UN, and support for the COIN effort declined in the Arab world as well as in the United States and Great Britain, placing French arms sales at risk.)

Phase III: "De Gaulle Takes Charge, Achieves a Military Victory but Ultimately Concedes to a Political Defeat" (1958–1959)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent materiel acquisition; COIN campaign included significant (not necessarily primary) focus on physically denying the insurgents access to supportive populations (for example, through removal/resettlement or interdiction); Active minority in area of conflict supported/favored COIN force or insurgents (wanted them to win)

The FLN adjusted to its operational losses by abandoning large-scale urban operations and resuming rural-based hit-and-run tactics on a much smaller scale than in the past. Politically, however, the insurgent leadership was determined to take more initiative and established a government-in-exile, known as the Provisional Government of the

²²² Hoffman, 2006, pp. 63–64; Chalk, 2007, p. 19.

Algerian Republic in Tunis, which received widespread international recognition.²²³

Changes in the public's perception of the Algerian war had a much more dramatic impact on French COIN policy and the government of France itself. Soon after the French parliament installed a new cabinet that was committed to negotiating with the FLN, riots broke out in protest. *Colons* seized control of government buildings in Algiers, and a faction of French army officers from Algeria took over the island of Corsica and threatened to march on Paris. General Charles de Gaulle was subsequently asked to come out of retirement to form a new government in an effort to restore army discipline and avoid a civil war in France.²²⁴

Under de Gaulle's leadership, the French army adopted a number of new tactics in Algeria in an attempt to defeat the insurgents and win over the general population. In late 1958, the French reduced their dependence on the quadrillage technique and deployed mobile "hunting commandos" in U.S. helicopters, conducting large-scale sweeping missions against FLN strongholds in the mountains.²²⁵ This military effort, which engaged more than 500,000 French troops, was intended to strike its harshest blows against the insurgents and force its leadership to negotiate for the conditions set by France.²²⁶

At the same time, the government offered humanitarian assistance to local communities as part of a five-year economic and infrastructure program to rebuild popular support on the ground. Such efforts were

²²³ The Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic was originally established in Cairo but was headquartered in Tunis. The government-in-exile was formally recognized by 39 states. Stefan Talmon, "Who Is a Legitimate Government in Exile? Towards Normative Criteria for Governmental Legitimacy in International Law," in Guy Goodwin-Gill and Stefan Talmon, eds., *The Reality of International Law: Essays in Honour of Ian Brownlie*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999.

²²⁴ Joes, 1996; Beckett, 2001, p. 162.

²²⁵ Jeffrey James Byrne, "*Je ne vous ai pas compris*: De Gaulle's Decade of Negotiation with the Algerian FLN, 1958–1969," in Christian Locher, Anna Nuenlist, and Garret Martin, eds., *Globalizing de Gaulle: International Perspectives on French Foreign Policies, 1958–1969*, Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010, p. 228.

²²⁶ Michael Webber, *Algerian War Reading*, undated.

reinforced at the political level with a referendum in December 1958 that extended the right to vote to all Muslim Algerians (a right that had previously been restricted to Algerians of European descent). De Gaulle also offered unconditional amnesty to members of the FLN, a move he called “peace of the brave” that was largely rejected by the FLN leadership.²²⁷

De Gaulle’s COIN efforts still could not change the course of the insurgency. Although the army’s sweeping operations effectively destroyed the FLN’s bases of operation in the mountains of Kabylia and Aures to the point that the insurgents experienced—by their own admission—a grave reduction in both combat potential and organizational structure, the army’s “pacification” efforts had a limited impact among the Muslim population, particularly those living in the thousands of resettlement villages across the country.²²⁸ After years of conflict, most Algerians saw independence from France as the only viable solution. More significantly, domestic and international pressure on the French government to withdraw from the Algerian conflict continued to grow.²²⁹ Political developments had already overtaken French army successes.²³⁰

An official acknowledgement of changing political realities came when now-President de Gaulle reversed his stance on the Algerian conflict in a speech in September 1959, explicitly recognizing the possibility of self-determination and subsequently promising a referendum on Algerian autonomy and majority rule within four years.²³¹ De Gaulle thus modified his strategic objectives and became committed to insti-

²²⁷ Webber, undated

²²⁸ Upward of 2 million Algerians had been displaced by 1959. Webber, undated; Galula, 2006, p. 244.

²²⁹ France took a beating on the world stage as Algeria was repeatedly the subject of discussion at the UN. Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 173.

²³⁰ Elkhamri et al., 2005.

²³¹ De Gaulle began to realize that the war in Algeria was becoming too great a risk to the French economy and the political fabric of the French nation. Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 173; Elkhamri et al., 2005.

tuting a policy of disengagement from Algeria—a stance that was not universally accepted among the French community in Algeria.

Phase IV: “The Colons’ Last Stand” (1960–1962)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Conclusion/suspension externally imposed or due to international pressure or other exogenous event; Case fought against the tide of history (end of colonialism, end of apartheid); *At end of the conflict*, separatists got: their own country or de facto administratively separate territory

While the FLN continued to engage in attacks against the French military after de Gaulle announced his willingness to negotiate a cease-fire and to hold a referendum on Algerian autonomy, a far more violent battle erupted between the French government and radical groups opposed to the French withdrawal after 1959. The change in the president’s position on Algeria sparked an insurrection by *colons* and hard-line elements within the French army who were determined to prevent France from retreating from Algeria as it had from Indochina. In January 1960, passive resistance quickly evolved into a direct confrontation in what became known as “Barricade Week,” when right-wing settlers began rioting in protest of the firing of French General Massu, who was critical of de Gaulle’s policies. After setting up of blockades, the protestors began taking control of government buildings and firing on French security forces, who returned fire and killed a number of *colons*. This engagement led to an escalation of violent protests by yet more radical elements opposed to the French withdrawal. Unlike the in previous insurrection, the *colons* and army officers who led the attacks did not receive widespread public support, and most of the military remained loyal to de Gaulle, yet they were still able to disrupt civic and political life in both Algeria and metropolitan France.

A year after Barricade Week, an extremist group of army officers in Algiers formed an “ultra” terrorist organization, known as Organisation de l’Armée Secrète (OAS). The OAS was committed to engaging in terrorist activity against both Algerian Muslims and French officials in an attempt to provoke an ethnic war in Algeria and a political crisis

in Paris that it believed would halt the French withdrawal.²³² The group carried out a bloody wave of attacks in Algeria that averaged as many as 120 a day before it was contained by French forces.²³³ Violent protests also spread to Paris, when four generals tied to the OAS launched a coup attempt against President de Gaulle in April 1961, only to fail for lack of support among the troops in Paris.²³⁴ In 1962, the OAS grew bold enough to try to assassinate de Gaulle and to conduct bombing attacks against French conscripts, but with each attack, the OAS alienated the French public; even some officers who had opposed French withdrawal were becoming increasingly eager to end the violence associated with the conflict in Algeria. Thus, within two years, the French government was able to contain the OAS and ultimately win greater public support for its engagement in negotiations for Algerian autonomy.

Throughout the period from 1960 to 1962, representatives of the French government and the FLN met in secret to work out the terms of an agreement for a cease-fire and an eventual withdrawal of forces. Several areas of contention, including the status of the oil-rich Sahara region, which France ceded to Algeria, and the civil rights and protection of members of the *colon* community, which the Algerians guaranteed, were eventually resolved and an agreement was signed in Evian in March 1962. It granted a full range of civil, political, economic, and cultural rights to the Algerians and guaranteed a popular referendum to decide whether the region should be a component of France or a sovereign state.²³⁵ Independence for Algeria was achieved a few months later, in July 1962, when the referendum resulted in a near-unanimous vote in favor of independence.²³⁶ After eight years of fighting and an

²³² According to Alistair Horne, the OAS's objective was to render peace talks impossible by killing the remaining "men of good will" on both sides and conducting random outrages against the Muslim population, creating an atmosphere conducive to neither negotiation nor compromise. Horne, 2006; Beckett, 2001, p. 167.

²³³ Chalk, 2007, p. 19.

²³⁴ De Gaulle directly challenged the leaders of the coup by broadcasting to French conscripts over the heads of the rebel officers, urging them to remain loyal to the nation.

²³⁵ Guy Arnold, *Wars in the Third World Since 1945*, London: Cassell Publishers, 1991, p. 8.

²³⁶ Chalk, 2007, p. 20.

estimated 17,500 French soldiers killed and 65,000 wounded, in addition to between 200,000 and 1,000,000 Muslim deaths, France relinquished power in Algeria and conceded political defeat.²³⁷

Conventional Explanations

The success of the FLN in defeating the French army is often attributed to the insurgents' ability to effectively combine guerrilla strategies with a campaign of urban terrorism that discredited the French position in Algeria and ultimately overcame France's determination to maintain control over the region.²³⁸ While the French invested heavily in the conflict and were able to destroy much of the insurgents' operational capability over the course of the eight-year war, this could not surmount the political advantage that the FLN achieved.

The FLN did not initially maintain a strong base of public support and was unable to draw significant attention to its cause. It was only during the second phase of the conflict that the insurgents realized that they could achieve a greater impact by pursuing terrorism as a tactic designed primarily to provoke an overreaction by French security forces, and they began to focus their efforts on civilian targets in the city of Algiers. As French Lieutenant Colonel David Galula, explained, the FLN found that "a grenade or bomb in a café [in Algiers] would produce far more noise than an obscure ambush against French soldiers in the Ouarsenis Mountains."²³⁹

Indeed, the French exhibited their greatest weakness in their response to the FLN terrorism campaign in Algiers. By undertaking reprisals against the civilian population and instituting widespread torture and abuse, the French allowed their rule to be defined as being morally corrupt and themselves as perpetrators of a brutal occupation. They not only estranged themselves from the Muslim population in Algiers, but they also disillusioned the public in metropolitan France and led international public opinion to shift more radically in sup-

²³⁷ Horne, 2006, p. 538.

²³⁸ Chalk, 2007, p. 17.

²³⁹ Galula, 2006, p. v.

port of decolonization.²⁴⁰ As Alistair Horne explained, “In the Algerian War what led—probably more than any other single factor—to the ultimate defeat of France was the realization in France and the world at large that methods of interrogation were being used that had been condemned under Nazi occupation.”²⁴¹ Thus, French actions in Algiers succeeded in dismantling the legitimacy of French rule and exposing the insurgency to favorable world attention, just as the FLN leaders had intended.²⁴²

After the Battle of Algiers, the French employed a number of COIN techniques that were effective in reducing the military capacity of the FLN, yet in many ways, their impact was too little and too late. France’s attempt to pacify the population by providing humanitarian and civic action assistance improved relations with the native population to some degree, but these initiatives could not overcome the lingering effects of the brutal campaign in Algiers or the subsequent agitation generated by radical *colons* who rejected any form of accommodation with the local population. The French army had more success in its effort to engage local Muslim fighters, or *harkis*, and in employing joint air-ground mobile defense units to attack insurgent bases. Moreover, interdiction efforts, including the well-patrolled electrified fences along the Tunisian and Moroccan borders, essentially cut off all cross-border traffic and nearly destroyed the FLN’s organizational structure by the late 1950s. Because the French never truly addressed the political nature of the Algerian insurgency, however, such military victories had little bearing on the outcome of the war.

While fighting between the FLN and the French continued until 1962, spurred by violence initiated by the French intransigent settler population, most analysts mark the turning point in the war to be the Battle for Algiers, in which French policy first put brutal repression ahead of political accommodation. From that time on, France was in a position in which it could win military battles but could never win the war. While it took five years to gain significant force, pressure from the

²⁴⁰ Chalk, 2007, p. 24.

²⁴¹ Horne, 2006, p. 19.

²⁴² Hoffman, 2006, p. 64.

native population in Algeria, as well as from members of the public in Paris and global leaders in the UN, ultimately led President de Gaulle to grant Algeria full autonomy.

It has also been argued that, regardless of the approach the French took against the Algerian insurgency, they would have failed. Indeed, no COIN strategy or investment in military, political, or economic resources would likely have enabled the French (or any great power) to hold onto a colonial territory indefinitely against a determined national liberation movement in the second half of the 20th century and thus succeed against the sweeping tide of history.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Algeria was not only a colony, but it was also an incorporated region of France. Since 1848, French Algerians (members of the colon community) maintained representation in the national government and close political ties to metropolitan France. The region also had strategic value due to its location on the southern flank of Europe and the discovery of oil in the Sahara. The long history of association between France and Algeria led the French government (and its citizens) to become more committed to maintaining control over Algeria than of more remote colonial territories in sub-Saharan Africa and Indochina.²⁴³ In 1954, French Interior Minister Francois Mitterand expressed such feelings in his plea to the National Assembly to support the Algerian war, stating, “Algeria is France. And who amongst you . . . would hesitate to employ all methods to preserve France?”²⁴⁴
- Nationalism among the native population was not inherently strong. Historically, the region was divided among Arabs and ethnic Berbers and had never been a unified Algerian nation. Even in the early stages of the war, a significant portion of the native population supported the French, who provided improvements

²⁴³ Canuel, 2010.

²⁴⁴ *Journal Officiel de la Republique Francaise*, 1954, quoted in Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 124.

in socioeconomic conditions and allowed for the continuation of local customs and traditions. Radical nationalist movements did not gain widespread support immediately after WWII as they had in the neighboring Arab countries of Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt. Over time, however, a sense of Algerian nationalism grew stronger, nurtured by the rise of the Third World movement in 1950s and 1960s, and even more so by France's brutal repression, which led many native Algerians to believe that political autonomy for the nation was the only way to secure a peaceful future.

- The presence of a significant minority population in Algeria, descendants of French settlers, helped to solidify France's commitment to the region and initially aided in its COIN efforts. However, as the settlers, better known as *colons*, grew more radical, their demands to maintain full control over the country and to reject any form of compromise with the Muslim population proved to be a detriment to the French position in Algeria and prolonged the resolution of the conflict. The French settler movement grew so strong that it contributed to the collapse of the French Fourth Republic in 1958 and ultimately required the engagement of the army to contain its most radical forces.
- The FLN was one of the first insurgent groups to recognize the publicity value of terrorism to mobilize sympathy and support from broader audiences outside its theater of operations. FLN theoreticians, such as Ramdane Abane, saw calculated acts of terrorism as their ultimate weapon and a means of drawing international attention to the Algerian cause. The insurgents' urban terrorism campaign in Algiers, for example, was deliberately planned to coincide with the General Assembly's annual opening session.²⁴⁵ Their success in developing the political dimension of terrorism became a model for subsequent national liberation movements, such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the African National Congress, by teaching that "international

²⁴⁵ Hoffman, 2006, p. 54.

(and domestic) opinion . . . is sometimes worth more than a fleet of jetfighters.”²⁴⁶

Figure 8
Map of Algeria



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR291/2-8

²⁴⁶ Hoffman, 2006, p. 61.

Cyprus, 1955–1959

Case Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Case Summary

The National Organization of Cypriot Struggle (EOKA), a nationalist, anticolonialist insurgent organization composed of Greek Cypriots, launched a guerrilla conflict against the British colonial government in Cyprus in April 1955. Its aim was to compel the British colonial government to disperse its forces and cede Cyprus to Greece. Greek Cypriots were the predominant ethnic group in Cyprus at the time, and EOKA was a predominantly youth-based movement that had the support of more than 80 percent of the population and was also popular in neighboring Greece. Due to this extensive public support, the insurgents were able to prevail despite the British colonial administration's reorganization of its COIN force structure, its imposition of martial law, and the creation of a Turkish-Cypriot paramilitary organization that actively supported the British in the second phase of the conflict. The hostilities ended in 1959 with a settlement negotiated by Britain, Greece, and Turkey that called for Cyprus to be granted its independence under a power-sharing constitution designed to allow representation for both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. However, this settlement did little more than intensify the acrimony between the two ethnic groups, and another war broke out just four years later that left the country divided along ethnic lines.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "A Youth-Dominated Movement to Annex Cyprus to Greece Takes Hold" (April 1955–June 1956)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Insurgents discredited/delegitimized COIN/government; Insurgents exploited deep-seated intractable issues to gain legitimacy; Curfews established for population control; Insurgency

motive: war of liberation/independence; Insurgency motive: ethno-nationalist; Active minority in area of conflict supported/favored COIN force or insurgents (wanted them to win)

In April 1955, EOKA launched a program of guerrilla warfare designed to expel the British colonial government from Cyprus. Interestingly, however, the movement did not strive for independent statehood but, rather, for the annexation of Cyprus to Greece. Because Greek Cypriots comprised approximately 80 percent of the population of Cyprus during this period, the insurgency was simultaneously ethno-nationalist and anticolonial, and it enjoyed extensive popular support.²⁴⁷ Retired Greek Army Colonel Georgios Grivas (himself a Greek Cypriot) led the insurgency, which numbered between 100 and 200 fighters at its inception.²⁴⁸ Over the course of the conflict's four-year duration, it is estimated that between 600 and 1,000 people died.²⁴⁹

EOKA's campaign started with a series of explosions at various administrative buildings and installations. The group then launched a strategic messaging campaign, producing and distributing leaflets to share information about its aims with the public.²⁵⁰ In July 1955, EOKA members made a number of assassination attempts against Greek Cypriot police officers, killing three by the end of August 1955.²⁵¹ This tactic was successful in frightening Greek Cypriot police from supporting COIN activities, and Greek Cypriots did not play any significant part in police efforts against the insurgency for the remainder of the conflict. As a result, the British colonial administration had to rely on British police, the British Army, and Turkish-Cypriot auxiliary police to build its COIN force, even though much of what the

²⁴⁷ Gantzel and Schwinghammer, 2000, pp. 222–223.

²⁴⁸ Chares Demetriou, "Political Violence and Legitimation: The Episode of Colonial Cyprus," *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 30, No. 2, June 2007, p. 175.

²⁴⁹ Gantzel and Schwinghammer, 2000, pp. 222–223.

²⁵⁰ Demetriou, 2007, p. 179.

²⁵¹ Demetriou, 2007, p. 182.

COIN force did entail basic police work.²⁵² The army had the added responsibility of protecting convoys, colonial officials, and vehicles.²⁵³

EOKA's was composed primarily of Greek-Cypriot youth. Indeed, 77 percent (154 of 200 total) Cypriots outlawed by the police between 1955 and 1959 were between the ages of 15 and 25. Moreover, 87 percent of individuals brought to trial for offenses ranging from possession of arms to throwing grenades and murder during this period were under the age of 25. Of those brought to trial for such offenses, 32 percent were high school students, while the rest were young technicians, including carpenters, mechanics, and electricians.²⁵⁴ Because of the young composition of the insurgency, school strikes and protests were another insurgent tactic. In the fall of 1955, students engaged in 46 strikes, and 21 schools took part in the demonstrations. By January 1956, 14 schools were on strike to protest the closing down of one school, and a student ringleader was shot and killed in the ensuing round of demonstrations.²⁵⁵

One of EOKA's strengths from early in the conflict was its ability to gain intelligence, and it penetrated all echelons of the colonial administration. As early as February 1955, Grivas ordered the surveillance of all EOKA members to weed out traitors, and, by January 1956, EOKA was undertaking high-level counterintelligence operations.²⁵⁶ Another strength was EOKA's ability to secure funding, manage it well, and operate on a tight budget. The Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus became the group's main source of funding, funneling money into the country from Greece. Various Greek communities in the United States also sent money to EOKA.²⁵⁷ Grivas, meanwhile, maintained strict economic discipline and ensured that EOKA could

²⁵² Demetriou, 2007, p. 183.

²⁵³ Panagiotis Dimitrakis, "British Intelligence and the Cyprus Insurgency, 1955–1959," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2008, p. 380.

²⁵⁴ Kyriacos C. Markides, "Social Change and the Rise and Decline of Social Movements: The Case of Cyprus," *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 1, No. 2, May 1974, p. 319.

²⁵⁵ Demetriou, 2007, p. 181.

²⁵⁶ Dimitrakis, 2008, pp. 384–385.

²⁵⁷ Dimitrakis, 2008, p. 386.

operate fairly inexpensively.²⁵⁸ This ability to secure funds and manage them well, in turn, increased EOKA's ability to secure public support, because it meant that the insurgents did not have to loot homes and businesses of potential supporters and could pay the market price for food and supplies.

At the time of the outbreak of hostilities in 1955, the police force in Cyprus was underfinanced, understrength, and unprepared to cope with the threat. Moreover, the small British military force on Cyprus was disorganized and unprepared.²⁵⁹ In response to EOKA's activities, the British colonial administration attempted to fix these structural shortcomings in the COIN force by appointing Field Marshal Sir John Harding (formerly chief of the Imperial General Staff) as the new governor of Cyprus in September 1955.²⁶⁰ Harding became director of operations, coordinating all civil, police, and military activities and placing a high priority on intelligence. He established a single joint operations center, staffed around the clock to ensure effective coordination and control over all operations. Harding also had direct contact with his military commanders and with the police, intelligence services, and civil administrators through two new posts that he created, chief of staff and undersecretary for internal security.²⁶¹

Along with these organizational changes, Harding imposed martial law, issuing a state of emergency in November 1955. Accordingly, the government issued curfews, performed searches, and detained indi-

²⁵⁸ EOKA spent an average of £1,540 per month in 1956, with 29.5 percent allocated to guerrilla groups, 19.2 percent to family allowances of EOKA members, 16.3 percent to war materiel (from the Cyprus black market), 17 percent to smuggling, 5 percent to propaganda (paper and printing costs), 2.5 percent to medical expenses, and 10.5 percent spent in legal fees for EOKA members on trial, courier expenses, and other petty expenses. See Dimitrakis, 2008, p. 386.

²⁵⁹ Bruce Hoffman and Jennifer Morrison Taw, *A Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Insurgency*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, N-3506-DOS, 1992, p. 13.

²⁶⁰ Clement Dodd, *The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 24; Hoffman and Taw, 1992, p. 13.

²⁶¹ Hoffman and Taw, 1992, p. 14.

viduals.²⁶² When the school strikes and demonstrations occurred, the colonial administration responded by temporarily closing down several schools and suspending classes at one indefinitely.²⁶³ In all, the British convicted 894 Greek Cypriots of various charges under emergency law during the conflict, hanging nine youths for charges ranging from gun possession to murder.²⁶⁴ Taken together, these measures intensified Greek-Cypriot civilians' resentment of the colonial administration and enhanced EOKA's prestige.²⁶⁵ Turkish Cypriots, who made up 18 percent of the population of Cyprus at the time, supported the British and participated in COIN activities when possible out of fear that the annexation of Cyprus to Greece would result in discrimination and hardship.²⁶⁶

Phase II: "Popular Support Trumps All" (July 1956–March 1959)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Insurgents discredited/delegitimized COIN force/government; Insurgents exploited deep-seated intractable issues to gain legitimacy; Curfews established for population control; Insurgency motive: war of liberation/independence; Insurgency motive: ethno-nationalist; Active minority in area of conflict supported/favored COIN force or insurgents (wanted them to win); Intelligence adequate to support kill/capture or engagements on COIN force's terms; COIN or insurgent actions precipitated (or constituted) ethnic or religious violence

In the conflict's second phase, COIN operations appeared at first to have a better chance of success than they did in the first phase. In mid-

²⁶² Demetriou, 2007, p. 175.

²⁶³ Demetriou, 2007, p. 181.

²⁶⁴ Markides, 1974, p. 320; Demetriou, 2007, p. 175.

²⁶⁵ Markides, 1974, p. 320.

²⁶⁶ Gantzel and Schwinghammer, 2000, pp. 222–223.

1956, the British acquired some high-quality intelligence about EOKA's methods and operations.²⁶⁷ The primary source of this intelligence was EOKA leader Georgios Grivas's confiscated diary, seized EOKA documents, and interrogations of arrested members (which reportedly entailed human rights abuses or torture, at times). The COIN force had acquired Grivas's diary in 1956, buying it from a low-level EOKA member after Grivas hid it when escaping a raid.²⁶⁸ The intelligence acquired included details on critical guerrilla espionage tasks, guerrilla communication networks, hiding practices, and EOKA's financing. However, no signal intelligence could be acquired, because EOKA used couriers and avoided wireless communication. Moreover, most British intelligence officers did not have basic Greek-language skills, which made it a challenge for them to apprehend couriers.²⁶⁹ Thus, despite the acquisition of intelligence through confiscated documents, Grivas's diary, and interrogations, COIN operations relied mostly on hints as opposed to actionable intelligence.²⁷⁰ Nonetheless, aided by interrogated EOKA members and "independent information," the COIN force's Operation Black Mac in early 1957 successfully led to the killing of EOKA's third-in-command, Markos Drakos.²⁷¹

Also during this period, the Turkish-Cypriot population organized its own insurgent organization, which grew of a group founded earlier in the conflict (Vulkan) with money from the Turkish government. The newest version of the group, the Turkish Defense Organization (TMT), was created in December 1956 and sided with the British after 1957.²⁷² Because the COIN force relied on a police regiment staffed entirely by Turkish Cypriots who would not take action against fellow Turkish Cypriots, TMT was immune to police interception.²⁷³

²⁶⁷ Dimitrakis, 2008, p. 376.

²⁶⁸ Dimitrakis, 2008, pp. 376, 381–382.

²⁶⁹ Dimitrakis, 2008, pp. 376, 379.

²⁷⁰ Dimitrakis, 2008, p. 377.

²⁷¹ Dimitrakis, 2008, p. 385.

²⁷² Gantzel and Schwinghammer, 2000, pp. 222–223; Dimitrakis, 2008, p. 381.

²⁷³ Dodd, 2010, p. 34.

Accordingly, hostilities between Greek and Turkish Cypriots reached a climax during an eight-week period in 1958, ending with 127 dead and more than 300 injured.²⁷⁴

Despite such relative improvements in COIN intelligence acquisition and the addition of organized internal support to the COIN force from TMT, the COIN force was ultimately unsuccessful in Cyprus due to the extensive amount of popular support enjoyed by EOKA, both within Cyprus and in neighboring Greece.²⁷⁵ This popular support for the insurgency limited COIN options, ruling out the possibility of any sort of relocation program, the establishment of “cleared areas,” or the creation of large-scale militias or indigenous paramilitary groups.²⁷⁶ Moreover, the extent of EOKA’s support throughout the island meant that the British were never completely able to defend civilians (mainly Turkish Cypriots) from insurgent reprisals or establish secure areas.²⁷⁷ It also meant that EOKA was not dependent on Greece for supplies, as it could cover its needs for food, ammunition, weapons, and other goods from fellow Greek Cypriots. This lack of dependence on external support nullified British efforts to cut off insurgent supply routes through Royal Navy patrols of the waters between Greece and Cyprus.²⁷⁸

The fate of Cyprus was decided in the 1959 London three-power treaty negotiated by Britain, Greece, and Turkey. The treaty conceded to EOKA’s demands to some extent, though not entirely. It allowed for Cypriot independence as of August 16, 1960, but did not annex Cyprus to Greece, and it constitutionally provided for Turkish-Cypriot participation in politics and administration. As guarantors of the treaty, Britain, Greece, and Turkey maintained a right to intervene and stationed a contingent of troops on the island. Under the treaty’s terms, a Greek Cypriot became president and a Turkish Cypriot became vice

²⁷⁴ Markides, 1974, p. 321.

²⁷⁵ Gantzel and Schwinghammer, 2000, pp. 222–223; Dodd, 2010, p. 15.

²⁷⁶ Dodd, 2010, p. 38.

²⁷⁷ Dodd, 2010, p. 39.

²⁷⁸ Dimitrakis, 2008, p. 380.

president.²⁷⁹ The Turks, making up only 18 percent of the population, were accorded 30-percent representation in the Cypriot parliament and in all civil service jobs.²⁸⁰ The new constitution resulted in intensified hatred between the two ethnic groups and led to open warfare between EOKA and TMT in December 1963.²⁸¹

Conventional Explanations

All accounts of the 1955 conflict in Cyprus emphasize the significance of the extensive public support enjoyed by EOKA. For instance,

According to calculations by the Council of Historical Memory, EOKA 1955-59, 25,000 Greek Cypriots worked on behalf of EOKA. Even if this number is skewed, the scale of EOKA's operations nevertheless suggests mass acquiescence. Guns and explosives were smuggled into Cyprus, an enterprise requiring a network of accomplices among the Greek Cypriot customs officials. Escapes of EOKA men from prison and from the hospital were possible because networks of supporters participated in planning and execution. . . . Guns and ammunition were concealed not only by individuals in barns, merchant shops, and the like, but by groups such as a high-school alumni association using a ditch outside the association's house. . . . The swift and widespread distribution of propaganda flyers required their own networks, as did the food supply and the internal mail system of EOKA. These activities, therefore, against the backdrop of the small and close Cypriot community, suggest that a wide network of EOKA supporters was at work and that an even wider part of the general population acquiesced.²⁸²

This widespread public support is often used to explain both the insurgents' ability to gain actionable intelligence and the COIN force's challenges in gaining the same. Some accounts also focus on the fact

²⁷⁹ Gantzel and Schwinghammer, 2000, pp. 222–223.

²⁸⁰ Markides, 1974, p. 321.

²⁸¹ Markides, 1974, p. 321.

²⁸² Demetriou, 2007, pp. 175–176.

that Britain was constrained in the amount of public support that it could win, citing the fact that British interests in Cyprus were strategic and Britain was therefore politically inflexible on the island. Its ability to offer political incentives to the civilian population was therefore limited.²⁸³

Distinctive Characteristics

- Although it was an anticolonial insurgency, EOKA did not strive for independent statehood for Cyprus in this conflict. Rather, the Greek-Cypriot insurgent organization aimed for Cyprus to be annexed to Greece. Ironically, the London treaty ending the conflict provided for Cypriot independence but not for its annexation to Greece. Because of this, the case outcome was mixed, though it favored the insurgents.
- This case illustrates that popular support can trump a well-organized and coordinated COIN force employing a number of good COIN practices. In this case, popular support was more important to intelligence collection than were COIN force efforts to restructure itself in a manner designed to aid intelligence collection.
- The Greek-Cypriot insurgents in this case were composed primarily of the island's youth. As a result, insurgent tactics included unique measures, such as school strikes and demonstrations, and the COIN force had to respond by closing down numerous schools.

²⁸³ Hoffman and Taw, 1992, p. 15.

Figure 9
Map of Cyprus



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR291/2-9

Cuba, 1956–1959

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

Leading a socialist insurgency in Cuba beginning in 1956, Fidel Castro presented himself as aiming to restore a legitimate democratic system on the island. He was successful due to both internal and external factors. Internally, Castro's mastery of propaganda and his appreciation of the importance of local support for an insurgency paid off, and he continually won both local civilians and Cuban army personnel over to his side. In contrast, the COIN force opposing Castro was poorly trained, corrupt, and suffering from low morale, which led it to engage in activities that alienated the population. External support to the COIN force from the United States, primarily in the form of military equipment and weapons, served only to prolong the conflict by propping up a corrupt and mismanaged Cuban regime. The United States eventually withdrew its support following Cuban President Fulgencio Batista's loss of popular legitimacy on the island. The conflict subsequently ended with an insurgent win and Batista's exile on January 1, 1959.

Case Narrative

Preamble Phase: "The 26th of July Attack" (1953–1955)

Even though in relative terms it was one of the most prosperous countries in Latin America in the 1950s, there were serious pockets of poverty and growing domestic dissent throughout Cuba during this period. Sergeant Fulgencio Batista had held a prominent position as one of the country's leading political figures since January 1934, when he toppled Ramon Grau San Martín from the presidency. When it became clear that he would lose the 1952 presidential election, Batista staged a coup.²⁸⁴ Batista's repressive and exploitative methods soon

²⁸⁴ Thomas G. Paterson, *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 16; Joes, 1996, p. 134.

alienated large portions of Cuban society, including citizens from all social classes and geographic regions.

In response to Batista's rule and the country's social and economic distress, Fidel Castro led a band of mainly student followers in an attack on a remote Cuban army outpost on July 26, 1953, hoping to gain support for a socialist revolution to push Batista out of power.²⁸⁵ The attack suffered from poor planning and was unsuccessful, and Castro was quickly arrested. He was released from prison in 1955 and thereafter went into exile in Mexico to plan the "26th of July" Movement aimed at creating a socialist revolution to overthrow Batista.²⁸⁶

**Phase I: "Pursuing a Socialist Revolutionary Dream"
(December 1956–May 1958)**

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: External support to COIN from strong state/military; Fighting in phase primarily initiated by insurgents; Insurgents demonstrated potency through impressive or spectacular attacks; Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated; Terrain played a major role because it provided sanctuary for the insurgents (COIN forces could not/would not enter terrain); Terrain played a major role because it made it difficult for COIN forces to maneuver and stretched COIN force logistics; Terrain played a major role because it allowed insurgents to avoid/overcome COIN force firepower or vehicle advantages; Conflict caused significant host-nation economic disruption

On December 2, 1956, Castro and approximately 80 armed followers invaded western Cuba, marking the beginning of Phase I of the conflict. Cuban security forces met the invading insurgents upon landing, easily overwhelming them. (Only 12 of 80 survived.) The survivors, however, found refuge in the Sierra Maestra mountains in the southeastern part of the island, building a secluded but comprehensive camp

²⁸⁵ Paterson, 1995, p. 17.

²⁸⁶ Miguel A. Faria, Jr., *Cuba in Revolution: Escape from a Lost Paradise*, Macon, Ga.: Hacienda Publishing, 2002, Chapter 4.

to house, sustain, and plan the operations of the insurgency. The conflict soon developed into a full-fledged guerrilla war, with Castro presenting himself as a democratic political reformer interested in restoring integrity, dignity, and clean elections to Cuban politics. In doing so, he proclaimed his goal to be the restoration of a constitutional government and free elections.²⁸⁷

Castro and his followers used guerrilla techniques to attack small patrols before withdrawing immediately to prepared sites from which they could launch further ambushes. They also developed an early mastery of the technique of winning the populace's loyalty by offering medical care to local civilians at the camp hospital and treating captured troops well. Castro was a "master of propaganda," and developed a press hut in the mountains to produce an insurgent newspaper, *El Cubano Libre* (*The Free Cuban*). The insurgents also transmitted radio broadcasts from their camp on Radio Rebelde (Rebel Radio), often airing live performances of a local peasant band, Quinteto Rebelde (Rebel Quintet). Such activities paid off; Castro and his followers relied extensively on local peasants for support throughout the conflict. The insurgency also had a strong urban base and the support of other anti-Batista groups that were active in the country at the time.²⁸⁸

The COIN force, consisting of the 15,000-strong Cuban army, greatly outnumbered the relatively small insurgency and was supported by U.S. sales of weapons and materiel to the Batista regime. However, it responded to the insurgency with the unsuccessful strategies of consolidating its smaller outposts, which lowered troop morale and effectively abandoned the countryside to the guerrillas, and attacking pro-Castro towns. Combined with Castro's benevolent treatment of the locals, this step had the counterproductive result of alienating the population from COIN efforts and increasing the level of popular support for the insurgents.²⁸⁹ The COIN force was not only inept at winning local support, but it was also plagued by poor training and exten-

²⁸⁷ Joes, 1996, pp. 134–135.

²⁸⁸ Michael Voss, "Reliving Cuba's Revolution," BBC News, December 29, 2008.

²⁸⁹ Voss, 2008; GlobalSecurity.org, "Cuban Revolution," web page, last updated July 11, 2011c.

sive corruption within its ranks.²⁹⁰ Indeed, none of the army's elements had proper COIN training, the high command was corrupt and lacked combat experience, political favoritism was rife, and the officer corps was demoralized. Because of these weaknesses in the COIN force, Castro was able to convince many army officers to desert the military and join ranks with the insurgency.²⁹¹

Meanwhile, the insurgency quickly began to take a serious toll on the Cuban economy. Due to its extensive production and export of sugar, Cuba in the 1950s ranked as “one of the four or five most developed nations in Latin America, and the most developed tropical nation in the world.”²⁹² Yet, with this wealth came great economic disparity. The poorest 20 percent of the population was estimated to earn between 2 and 6 percent of the island's income, while the wealthiest 20 percent of the population earned 55 percent. Although 1956 was the best year for the Cuban economy since 1952, by December 1956, the insurgency brought economic activity outside Havana to a “virtual standstill” and put the anticipated sugar harvest in “serious jeopardy.”²⁹³ The insurgency's progress by 1958 had thrown the Cuban economy into an “irreversible free fall.”²⁹⁴ The Cuban army's inability to gain control over the conflict in order to remedy the economic situation furthered distressed and alienated the population.

U.S. policymakers began to realize that Batista was losing legitimacy in the country as early as mid-1957. It therefore began contemplating abandoning him as the force that could hold Cuba together and safeguard U.S. interests on the island. U.S. policy toward Cuba subsequently became disjointed, with some policymakers wanting to see free elections under Batista, some seeking a renewal of arms ship-

²⁹⁰ Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, Jr., *The Real CIA*, New York: Macmillan Company, 1968.

²⁹¹ Joes, 1996, pp. 134–135.

²⁹² Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 166.

²⁹³ John Foran, “Theorizing the Cuban Revolution,” *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 36, No. 2, March 2009, p. 19.

²⁹⁴ Foran, 2009, p. 19.

ments, some favoring a military junta, and others seeing no possibility of supporting Batista without losing all U.S. credibility both in Cuba and domestically.²⁹⁵ Although the United States had played a relatively indirect role in supporting Batista up to this point, it had been providing crucial aid and equipment to his military. The decision to halt this support was put off until the second phase of the conflict.

Phase II: “The Withdrawal of External Support Collapses a Regime” (May 1958–January 1959)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Conclusion/suspension substantially due to withdrawal of international support for one or both sides; Fighting in phase primarily initiated by COIN force; Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated; Terrain played a major role because it provided sanctuary for the insurgents (COIN forces could not/would not enter terrain); Terrain played a major role because it made it difficult for COIN forces to maneuver and stretched COIN force logistics; Terrain played a major role because it allowed insurgents to avoid/overcome COIN force fire-power or vehicle advantages

On May 24, 1958, Batista’s forces launched Operation Verano, a direct attack on Castro’s forces in the Sierra Maestras. Outnumbering the insurgents and armed with superior weaponry—including aircraft, tanks, and artillery obtained from the United States—the army hoped to rout out the insurgency quickly.²⁹⁶ However, the COIN force took heavy losses in this operation, being unaccustomed to guerrilla tactics. The result was a decrease in military morale and desertion among the ranks.²⁹⁷

Following Operation Verano, the Eisenhower administration proclaimed an arms embargo on Cuba, effectively cutting off Batista’s

²⁹⁵ Foran, 2009, p. 19.

²⁹⁶ Voss, 2008; GlobalSecurity.org, 2011c.

²⁹⁷ GlobalSecurity.org, 2011c.

forces from U.S. weapons and military equipment. Then, on December 10, 1958, the U.S. Department of State announced that it was withdrawing its recognition of Batista's government. This was, in effect, the last straw for Batista and his generals.²⁹⁸ On January 1, 1959, Batista fled the country, and various elements of Castro's forces began to enter Havana.²⁹⁹ Castro was soon able to consolidate control of the country and establish a revolutionary government.³⁰⁰

Conventional Explanations

Scholars of the Cuban Revolution generally focus on a combination of factors to explain the failure of the COIN force. First, many view the case as a classic example of the importance of domestic popular support when fighting an insurgency. Batista's forces were not only unable to reduce the level of internal popular support for the insurgency, but they actually drove it to new heights through tactics that alienated local civilians, such as harassing and attacking towns and villages that supported the insurgents. Others focus on the importance of external support in this case, as the regime collapsed quickly following the U.S. withdrawal of military support and diplomatic recognition. Still others see the Cuban case as illustrating the necessity of maintaining a well-trained force adept at employing COIN tactics, of weeding out any corruption in the ranks, and of promoting activities that boost COIN force morale throughout the conflict. The Cuban army was woefully inept at countering guerrilla tactics. It suffered from low morale that contributed to high levels of desertion and was plagued by widespread corruption within its ranks. For these reasons, the Cuban army fell far short of its potential as a COIN force.

Distinctive Characteristics

- It is notable that Batista's regime collapsed as a result of a number of internal and external factors rather than being directly defeated

²⁹⁸ GlobalSecurity.org, 2011c.

²⁹⁹ Joes, 1996, p. 135.

³⁰⁰ GlobalSecurity.org, 2011c.

by the insurgency. Indeed, fewer than 300 of Batista’s troops died during the two-year conflict, indicating that the incompetence of the military—highlighted by desertion and troops joining ranks with the insurgency—played a significant role in the COIN force’s defeat.³⁰¹

- The speed with which Batista’s regime collapsed following the withdrawal of external support was notable in this case, indicating that this support had likely been lending both legitimacy and material strength to a weak government for some time.

Figure 10
Map of Cuba



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR291/2-10

³⁰¹ Joes, 1996, p. 135.

Oman (Imamate Uprising), 1957–1959

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

Long-standing tensions between sultanate rulers in the coastal regions of Oman and rebellious tribes in the interior of the country fueled a separatist insurgency led by the religious Imamate in 1957. Saudi Arabia and Egypt supported the imamate forces, enabling them to maintain the upper hand in the conflict until the British intervened to shore up the sultan's limited defenses. The British initially contained the rebels' advance by offering minimal ground troops and air support to the Omani armed forces. Later, when the rebels retreated and began an intensive guerrilla campaign from their safe haven in the northern Jebel Akhdar Mountains, London offered more targeted military assistance, which included designated Royal Air Force aircraft and seconded British officers to command the sultan's armed forces. It was not until the British engaged its Special Air Service (SAS) in the conflict that the COIN forces were able to establish full control over the interior of the country and achieve a decisive victory over the imamate insurgency.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "The British Help Contain an Imamate Insurgency" (July 1957–July 1958)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated; Insurgents switched from guerrilla to conventional tactics; COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics; Terrain played a major role because it allowed insurgents to avoid/overcome COIN force firepower or vehicle advantages

The Imamate insurgency against the Sultan of Oman was the manifestation of a long-standing conflict between the Sultanate rulers and

tribes in the interior of the country, as well as a contest between political and religious authority. Since the 19th century, the sultan's power was concentrated in Muscat and only barely extended into the country's interior, leaving the region nominally controlled by the authority of the imamate. Attempts by the sultanate to extend its power prompted a series of intermittent wars between Muscat and rebellious Omani tribes from the interior. Relations were formalized by a treaty in 1920 stipulating that the interior of the country was to be ruled by the imam while the sultan retained sovereignty over larger affairs of country. This agreement held until 1954, when the ruling imam died and Ghalib bin Ali was elected as his successor with a mandate from local tribal leaders to challenge the sultanate's power and to separate from its reactionary regime.³⁰²

Imam Ghalib first announced his intention to seek independence for the interior region in 1955, and he launched a brief rebellion. The sultan's forces and British-led Trucial Oman Scouts paramilitary force quickly defeated this initial uprising, but it set the stage for a more successful revolt. Ghalib's brother, Talib, escaped to Saudi Arabia to regroup and rebuild after the defeat. Benefiting from Saudi training and Egyptian financial support, Talib established the Oman Liberation Army, which was better prepared for guerrilla warfare.³⁰³

In June 1957, Talib returned to the northern region of Oman with the small Liberation Army and launched an effective rebellion against the sultan's authority. The rebel forces numbered over 200 and were armed with various Saudi-supplied weapons, including light machine guns, mortars, and antitank mines.³⁰⁴ They progressed quickly to the center of the country, where they were able to join forces with Imam Ghalib and other rebel leaders. The sultan was unprepared to confront

³⁰² In the 1950s, the sultan's severe restrictions on contact with the outside world led Oman to become one of the most isolated and least developed countries in the world.

³⁰³ G. Arnold, 1991, p. 81; J. E. Peterson, *Oman's Insurgencies: The Sultanate's Struggle for Supremacy*, London: Saqi Books, 2008, p. 79; Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 210.

³⁰⁴ The rebels reportedly received arms from the United States, as U.S. interests were tied to Saudi Arabia. J. E. Peterson, "Britain and the Oman War: An Arabian Entanglement," *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1976, p. 289; G. Arnold, 1991, p. 82.

the rebels. His limited military force, which consisted of only three companies of regular forces and unreliable tribal levies, was unable to defend against guerrilla ambushes on its troops and lines of communication. Within weeks, the sultan's forces collapsed and withdrew, enabling the imamate leaders to seize control of the country's interior.

The sultan then appealed to the British for support to regain control of the Omani interior, based on the two countries' long-term defense relationship and treaty of friendship. Despite some hesitation on political grounds, the British provided substantial military assistance, including the British-officered Trucial Oman Scouts, two rifle companies and a support company, and air support from the Royal Air Force.³⁰⁵ This intervention, particularly the introduction of British air power, had an immediate effect. The sultanate was soon able to regain military superiority and gain a precarious hold on the interior. It was not able to capture the rebel leaders, however, and they retreated to the mountainous area of the Jebel Akhdar (Green Mountain) with most of their forces.

Throughout the fall of 1957, the conflict remained at a stalemate. Britain withdrew its land forces, leaving the sultan's forces in control of the interior. The rebels maintained a safe haven in the mountains from which they could launch attacks at will. While the sultan's forces attempted to cordon Jebel Akhdar, they were too weak to launch an assault on the stronghold themselves. The British were also reluctant to commit the ground troops necessary to end the revolt, given the degree of support the rebels maintained from within the country and international pressure to limit British engagement in the region.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ Despite the British Parliament's call for a reduction in the country's military presence in the Middle East after the Suez crisis in 1956, British troops were sent to Oman from Kenya, Aden, and Bahrain, where they had gained experience in COIN warfare.

³⁰⁶ Britain had withdrawn its land forces from Oman in August 1957, when the subject of British intervention was raised in the UN. J. Peterson, 2008, pp. 84–92

Phase II: "A Covert SAS Campaign Leads to Victory"
(July 1958–March 1959)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: An external actor provided significant direct military support (troops, air power) to COIN force/government; COIN force established and then expanded secure areas; COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent materiel acquisition; Flow of cross-border insurgent support significantly decreased or remained dramatically reduced or largely absent; Amnesty or reward program in place; Insurgents' ability to replenish resources significantly diminished; COIN force of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas (or to prevail in the preponderance of conventional engagements, should overmatched insurgents choose to give battle); Overall importance of external support to conflict: critical/game changer

Rebel attacks on the sultanate forces steadily increased in 1958, leading the British to consider a wider role in the conflict. Initially, Britain sought to avoid sending troops to the region by increasing military assistance the sultan. It provided additional officers to the sultan's military and offered new arms subsidies and training to establish an Omani air force and navy. A British colonel was later seconded to Oman to command the sultan's armed forces. Moreover, to allow the sultan time to rebuild his forces, the British Royal Air Force increased its presence in the region, sending an additional five aircraft and increasing the number of its attacks on the rebel mountain redoubts.

When these efforts failed to reduce the strength of the imamate forces, which were receiving increasing support from Saudi Arabia, the British committed a squadron of 80 SAS forces from Malaya to the region. These troops were able to establish a foothold at the edge of the mountain and, with the addition of a second SAS squadron in January 1959, intended to lead a multipronged attack on Jebel Akhdar with assistance from the Royal Air Force, the sultan's air force, the Trucial Oman Scouts, and local tribes.

Using a combination of diversionary attacks and deception, in which the rebels were led to believe that a parachute supply drop was

a battalion of paratroopers, the combined British and Omani forces (numbering 1,100, of whom 250 were British) orchestrated a successful assault on Jebal Akhdar. The imamate forces, in fact, offered only minimal opposition. After several brief firefights, the rebel leaders abandoned their posts, and their forces either surrendered or faded away.³⁰⁷ The sultanate's authority over the interior of the country was once again restored, marking a decisive victory for the COIN forces. This military success was not indefinite, however. The imam and other leaders of the insurgency fled to Saudi Arabia, where they were able to plan intermittent acts of sabotage against the Omani government and plant the seeds of a subsequent insurgency in Dhofar several years later.³⁰⁸

Conventional Explanations

The sultanate's success in overcoming the imamate rebellion has been attributed to Britain's indirect strategy of support and its limited use of force. The weak disposition of the sultan's forces led Oman to become dependent on British assistance, yet the level of support provided was constrained throughout the conflict. British officers primarily played an advisory role and provided leadership assistance. Ground forces were committed for a short period, and the use of British air power was restricted by geography and thus played a limited but vital support role in suppressing the rebellion.³⁰⁹ Ultimately, it was the engagement of two squadrons of British special forces that proved to be a deciding factor in the conflict. Over a period of a few months, the SAS was able to plan and lead the Omani forces to victory over a well-armed and highly motivated insurgent force.

It has been noted, however, that the indirect strategy that the British employed in Oman in the 1950s had a limited long-term impact. While the assistance provided by the SAS enabled the sultan's forces to maintain a hold on the interior of the country, it did not provide

³⁰⁷ The imamate forces were encouraged to surrender by the sultan's offers of payment.

³⁰⁸ Stephen A. Cheney, *The Insurgency in Oman, 1962–1976*, Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, April 1984.

³⁰⁹ S. Monick, "Victory in Hades: The Forgotten Wars of the Oman, 1957–1959 and 1970–1976," *Scientia Militaria—South African Journal of Military Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1982.

them with the means to capture the leaders of the insurgency or to prevent the infiltration of fighters or arms from neighboring countries. Moreover, the British military advisers did little to address the inherent causes of the insurgency or to sufficiently strengthen local forces to prevent the outbreak of a future rebellion.

Distinctive Characteristics

- The tribes of Oman's interior had significant political grievances against the government, which was considered one of the most feudal and reactionary regimes of its time. Sultan Said bin Taimur, who had ruled since 1932, resisted nearly all contact with the outside world. The regime prohibited radios, music, and books. Opportunities for education were very limited: By the late 1960s, there were only three small primary schools in the country.³¹⁰ Despite the demand for greater openness from some segments of the population, the sultan maintained a despotic rule, maintaining control by fear.
- The sultanate's military forces were inherently weak. Only a minority of its armed forces were Arab, with the remainder consisting of hired forces from Baluchistan or members of the Trucial Oman Scouts from neighboring Gulf countries.³¹¹ British officers not only commanded the Omani army but also served as contracted officers and mercenary forces. The ability of the sultan to call upon British support was likely responsible for the military's, and indeed the regime's, continued existence.³¹²
- Great Britain and Oman maintained a unique relationship. While Oman was never a British colony, Britain had provided military protection to the sultanate for centuries and was bound by strong historical ties and enduring strategic interests in maintaining access to strategic oil routes through the Hormuz Strait and the

³¹⁰ Monick, 1982, p. 3.

³¹¹ Cheney, 1984.

³¹² Stephen Luscombe, "The British Empire," web page, undated.

Musandam Peninsula.³¹³ British and Omani forces therefore had a long history of cooperation and were able and willing to work together effectively in conducting COIN operations.

Figure 11
Map of Oman



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR2912-11

³¹³ Monick, 1982.

Indonesia (Darul Islam), 1958–1962

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

The Darul Islam insurgency was a politically and religiously motivated rebellion that challenged the centralization policies of the newly independent Indonesian government and sought to establish sharia law. From 1950 to 1958, Darul Islam conducted an effective guerrilla campaign in the province of West Java that threatened to spread to other regions of the country. The Indonesian government, under increasing political pressure, was able to change the course of the conflict in 1959 by adopting a comprehensive pacification strategy that combined civic action with cordon-and-search tactics and the forced engagement of the local population in security operations through a technique called *pagar bettis*, or the “fence of legs.” Benefiting from a lack of international scrutiny of its harsh COIN policies, the government was able to eliminate the leadership of the Darul Islam movement and win a decisive victory over the insurgency in 1962.³¹⁴

Case Narrative

Phase I: “Darul Islam Evolves from a Rebel Faction into a National Force” (1958)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Insurgency followed withdrawal of a colonial power; Government maintained weak policing capacity and infrastructural power; Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated; Terrain played a major role because it provided sanctuary for the insurgents (COIN forces could not/would not enter terrain)

³¹⁴ David J. Kilcullen, “Globalisation and the Development of Indonesian Counterinsurgency Tactics,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, March 2006.

The Darul Islam insurgency was rooted in Indonesia's independence movement. Among the forces fighting against the Dutch in the late 1940s were powerful factions that advocated for the creation of a federal state that would allow individual provinces to adopt sharia law. While these groups maintained a common cause in seeking independence, they opposed the creation of the centralized, secular state that was ultimately established in 1949.³¹⁵ Darul Islam, led by Kartosuwiryo, was the most prominent of the colonial-era groups that mobilized against the new government in Jakarta.³¹⁶

Kartosuwiryo was able to maintain his militia forces in West Java and develop an increasingly powerful resistance movement in the early 1950s, at a time when the new central government struggled to achieve political stability and administrative control over a highly fractured country.³¹⁷ Although the group often relied on intimidation and brutal tactics against the population, it was able to maintain a powerful stronghold in the region. Importantly, Darul Islam received no outside support. It was able to raise funding from its followers in the hinterlands and by looting communities that its members perceived as enemies of their cause.

Militarily, the Darul Islam movement maintained a strategic advantage by operating from bases in the mountainous areas of the province, from which they could raid low-lying villages and roads in the surrounding valleys.³¹⁸ The Indonesian army attempted to provide protection to the population but could not adequately guard against night raids or muster enough troop strength to secure every area. Thus, the insurgents were able to maintain operational freedom of action and launch attacks with virtual impunity.

By 1958, Darul Islam had gained the upper hand over the Indonesian COIN forces in West Java. According to the Indonesian defense

³¹⁵ Ron Sargent and James Campbell, "Special Detachment 88: Smart Power, Indonesian Style," *Asia Pacific Defense Forum*, July 1, 2007.

³¹⁶ David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 87; Sargent and Campbell, 2007.

³¹⁷ Kilcullen, 2010, p. 88.

³¹⁸ Kilcullen, 2010, p. 89

minister, “One could say that the rebels control every jungle-covered hill visible from Bandung. [Indonesian army] units have tended to operate autonomously without central coordination. This hands the initiative to the rebels.”³¹⁹ Moreover, the insurgency had become more than just a local threat. Two assassination attempts were made against the president, and various regional insurgencies in Central Java, Aceh, South Sulawesi, and South Kalimantan became associated with Darul Islam, leading to concerns that the movement was spreading throughout the country and posing a legitimate threat to Sukarno’s regime.

Phase II: “Indonesia Designs a New Pacification Strategy and Employs a “Fence of Legs” (1959–1962)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Government provided better governance than insurgents in area of conflict; COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent materiel acquisition; COIN force received substantial intelligence from population in area of conflict; COIN campaign included significant (not necessarily primary) focus on physically denying the insurgents access to supportive populations (for example, through removal/resettlement or interdiction); COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards

Recognizing the growing threat that the Darul Islam insurgency posed to the regime, the Indonesian government under Sukarno developed a comprehensive COIN strategy known as Planning Guidance for Perfecting Peace and Security (P4K). The P4K was essentially a territorial management plan that aimed to “defeat the enemy’s ability to maneuver, until the enemy is confined within certain discrete areas, which can then be cleared area by area.” The plan called for dividing the region into zones classified as either government-controlled, contested, or rebel stronghold areas. Different tactics were to be used in each region. In government-controlled areas, the strategy was to consolidate control through a combination of civic action and PSYOP activities.

³¹⁹ A. Sjarifuddin, *Kisah Kartusuwirjo dan Menjerahannya*, Soerabaja, Indonesia: Penerbitan Grip, 1962, p. 17, translated and quoted in Kilcullen, 2010, p. 89.

Rebel strongholds were designated to be cleared in a series of large-scale cordon-and search-operations to isolate the insurgents' leadership. Finally, contested areas were to be cleared in follow-up operations.³²⁰

On the tactical level, the P4K called for a strict code of conduct based on Islamic principles to ensure that the Indonesian army was perceived as a devout and effective security force, while a PSYOP campaign would portray the insurgents as brutal bandits. These targeted efforts helped to win the hearts and minds of the population. At same time, the pacification strategy emphasized the engagement of local militias to patrol and secure villages. By forming village security organizations, the army was able to reinforce its presence in the region and gain better intelligence on the insurgent activity on the ground.³²¹

The Indonesian military also employed an innovative method of engaging the local population in the protection of local villages through a technique called *pagar bettis*, or "fence of legs." The *pagar bettis* program recruited civilians from local villages to participate in a physical cordon encircling rebel-controlled hills. Villagers, armed with nothing but bamboo sticks and pots and pans, stood side by side along the base of the hills and signaled nearby army units when guerrillas attempted to exfiltrate from the territory. This primitive program, while requiring a good deal of intimidation and coercion to enforce, effectively minimized the manpower needed for cordoning operations and greatly improved village security. It also placed insurgents in a difficult position of deciding whether to remain in the villages to be captured or risk killing members of the local population by attempting to escape. Ultimately, it eliminated Darul Islam's previous strategic advantage in maintaining its base in the mountains.

The P4K strategy and new operational techniques were so successful in restricting the insurgents' territory and ability to maneuver that the Indonesian army was able to conduct a series of coordinated sweeps and decapitation strikes and defeat the Darul Islam movement

³²⁰ Kilcullen, 2010, p. 90

³²¹ Kilcullen, 2010, p. 91

in less than three years.³²² In June 1962, Kartosuwiryo and his five top lieutenants were captured by the army and executed. Many of their followers subsequently accepted amnesty offers and laid down their arms in exchange for livelihood assistance as part of an early deradicalization program.³²³

Following their success in West Java, Indonesian COIN forces were able to subdue other regional rebellions that were associated with the Darul Islam movement in Aceh in 1962 and in Sulawesi in 1965, where insurgent leaders either were killed or surrendered.³²⁴ The Darul Islam insurgency was thus essentially crushed and denied its goal of achieving an Indonesian Islamic state. While the group did not resurface in its original form, it reportedly served as the inspiration for other insurgent groups seeking the establishment of an Islamic state that developed decades later, most notably Jemaah Islamiyah and Ring Banten.³²⁵

Conventional Explanation

The Indonesian government's success in defeating the Darul Islam insurgency is often attributed to its adoption of a COIN strategy that combined civic action, PSYOP, and cordon-and-search techniques. The P4K enabled the COIN forces to secure the population and isolate the insurgents. Particular tactics developed under the P4K, such as the *pagar bettis* (fence of legs), were especially effective in engaging civilians in security operations and reducing the demands on military manpower. *Pagar bettis* had such an impact on the army's ability to turn the

³²² Montgomery McFate and Andrea V. Jackson, "The Object Beyond War: Counterinsurgency and the Four Tools of Political Competition," *Military Review*, January–February 2006.

³²³ Herbert Feith and Daniel S. Lev, "The End of the Indonesian Rebellion," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 36, No. 1, Spring 1963.

³²⁴ Sidney Jones, "Darul Islam's Ongoing Appeal," *Tempo Magazine*, August 18, 2010.

³²⁵ International Crisis Group, *Recycling Militants in Indonesia: Darul Islam and the Australian Embassy Bombing*, Asia Report No. 92, February 22, 2005; Sargent and Campbell, 2007.

tide in the conflict with Darul Islam that it became a key component of Indonesian tactics in countering future insurgent conflicts.³²⁶

Other conventional explanations for Indonesia's ability to crush the insurgency include the army's decision to employ local militias in the conflict, which helped improve the army's intelligence and knowledge of the enemy, as well as its use of elite special operations forces, which improved its ability to capture Darul Islam leaders. Finally, the military's emphasis on decapitation strikes has been attributed to Indonesia's effectiveness in bringing about the rapid collapse of the Darul Islam movement after its leader, Kartosuwiryo, was captured and killed. These lessons learned were applied with varying success in later COIN efforts as well.³²⁷

Distinctive Characteristics

- The geographic conditions and the high population density in West Java were unique to the region. The terrain in West Java, with low-lying villages surrounded by rolling hills, provided the COIN forces with the means of building clearly delineated cordons around population centers. High population density in the region was also critical to providing the level of manpower needed to complete a “fence of legs” around each village. In regions of the country that lacked these characteristics, the *pagar bettis* could not be as successfully applied.
- Popular support for the rebellion remained limited to small pockets of the country, and the insurgents received no assistance from an external actor. As a result, the Indonesian military could more effectively isolate the insurgents and remove their only sources of tangible support.
- The hierarchical structure of the Darul Islam movement made the organization particularly vulnerable to the decapitation techniques employed by the Indonesian army. Intelligence efforts could easily establish the chain of command, and once the leader

³²⁶ Kilcullen, 2010, p. 93.

³²⁷ Kilcullen, 2010, p. 91.

of the movement was eliminated, there were no capable leaders to assume control.

- Over the course of the 12-year conflict, the Darul Islam insurgency remained a little-known war. It received almost no attention from the international community and largely avoided any public scrutiny. The government was therefore not subject to criticism for its harsh COIN policies, including its forced employment of civilians in military operations, and received no international pressure to meet any of the insurgents' demands.³²⁸

Figure 12
Map of Indonesia



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR291/2-12

³²⁸ Kilcullen, 2010, p. 95.

Tibet, 1956–1974

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

The National Volunteer Defense Army (NVDA) at first posed a significant challenge to a heavy-handed Chinese occupying COIN force and, later, occupying government. While the COIN force practiced excessively brutal and demeaning tactics to assimilate Tibetans into the Chinese way of life, the relative deprivation of the population precluded any possibility of civilian assistance to the insurgents. External support from the United States and India prolonged the conflict and bought time for an insurgent win. However, a series of Tibetan tactical and operational errors, exacerbated by intermittent cutoffs, a repurposing of external aid, and the overwhelming force employed by the Chinese to crush the insurgency, eventually led to the insurgents' downfall. The conflict ended with a COIN win following Nepal's withdrawal of territorial access from the insurgents in 1973.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "Outbreak of Insurgency" (Spring 1956–March 1959)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: COIN force of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas; COIN force or government actions contributed to substantial new grievances claimed by the insurgents; In area of conflict, COIN force perceived as worse than insurgents; COIN force engaged in more coercion/intimidation than insurgents; COIN force (and allies) had significant military equipment mismatch dominance over insurgents (and allies); Terrain played a major role because it made it difficult for COIN forces to maneuver and stretched COIN force logistics

When Mao claimed victory in China in 1949, the Chinese government informed the Tibetan government that it must acknowledge Tibet as part of China. When Tibet refused to accede to this demand, in 1950,

the Chinese government sent 90,000 soldiers into the country.³²⁹ The invading force outnumbered Tibet's regular army by a ratio of ten to one and quickly captured the majority of Tibetan troops and sent them back to their homes. The Chinese invading force promised that it would not mistreat Tibetan civilians or dismantle their religion or monastic system. However, once the Chinese had brought in additional troops and constructed access roads and fortifications, they imposed numerous reforms, including settling large numbers of Chinese immigrants in Tibet, giving Tibetan land to Chinese squatters, imposing high taxes, and insisting that Tibetan schoolchildren be taught to speak, write, and read only in Chinese. They also brutally ridiculed the Tibetan culture and religion, tying Tibetan lamas (monks) to horses and dragging them through towns, beating many of them to death.³³⁰

In response, various Tibetan guerrilla groups—primarily composed of Khamba tribesmen—began waging an insurgency in late 1955 and early 1956, though the Chinese and Tibetans had been engaging in armed clashes as early as 1952. The first incident of open rebellion occurred in early spring 1956, when an undetermined number of Goloks massacred a Chinese garrison in the town of Dzachuka.

When the Tibetans practiced standard guerrilla tactics, quickly overrunning and destroying a Chinese garrison, then disappearing before reinforcements could arrive, they were fairly successful. However, their activities tended to be fairly uncoordinated, as they were all working toward personal ends. Furthermore, when they did coordinate, they fought using fairly conventional tactics, including fighting in large concentrations, planning overly complex maneuvers, and failing to use their superior knowledge of the harsh mountainous terrain to their advantage.³³¹ Their fighting improved once Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang, a Tibetan trader from a prominent family, began organizing them into the Chushi Gangdruk (the precursor to the NVDA) in late 1956 and early 1957. At the same time, the U.S. Central Intel-

³²⁹ Joes, 1996, pp. 171–172.

³³⁰ Joes, 1996, p. 172.

³³¹ Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison, *The CIA's Secret War in Tibet*, Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2002, p. 99.

ligence Agency (CIA) began providing covert assistance to the NVDA. This assistance involved airdrops of arms, ammunition, and supplies to the insurgents, as well as the training of Tibetans in guerrilla warfare techniques.³³²

The Chinese COIN force quickly adapted to the insurgents' tactics, employing artillery and bomber aircraft against civilians in villages and monasteries whom they suspected of having helped the insurgents. COIN forces also used aircraft reconnaissance and radio technology to search for bands of insurgents. This tactic was largely successful because the insurgents traveled with their families, possessions, and livestock and were therefore unable to disperse rapidly. Such Chinese adaptations led to the destruction of villages and monasteries and the torture, imprisonment, or killing of lamas and civilian leaders.³³³

Nonetheless, the high-altitude air in Tibet was too thin for many Chinese soldiers, and the terrain led to supply problems for the COIN force. Such problems weakened the COIN force such that 40,000 Chinese troops died in eastern Tibet between 1956 and 1958, many of them killed by the insurgents, who rarely took prisoners. As of 1957, approximately 80,000 insurgents were engaged in the conflict.³³⁴

As this phase came to an end, the COIN force shelled the Dalai Lama's palace on March 20, 1959, annoyed with the crowds of Tibetan citizens who—thinking he was still inside—had surrounded the palace to protect him from the Chinese. The Dalai Lama had escaped the night before, however, trekking to exile in India. By March 23, the Chinese realized that he had escaped, and five days later, a Chinese radio broadcast declared that the Chinese had dissolved the Tibetan government and taken direct control of the country, making the Pan-

³³² A. Tom Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1987, p. 150; Roger E. McCarthy, *Tears of the Lotus: Accounts of Tibetan Resistance to the Chinese Invasion, 1950–1962*, Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Company, 1997, p. 243; John B. Roberts II, "The Secret War Over Tibet," *American Spectator*, December 1997.

³³³ Warren S. Smith, Jr., *Tibetan Nation: A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996, p. 421.

³³⁴ Joes, 1996, pp. 173–174.

chen Lama (who had been residing in China for decades) the official leader of Tibet.

***Phase II: “Heavy-Handed COIN Takeover of the Government”
(March 1959–August 1959)***

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Important external support to insurgents significantly reduced; COIN force of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas; COIN force or government actions contributed to substantial new grievances claimed by the insurgents; In area of conflict, COIN force perceived as worse than insurgents; COIN force engaged in more coercion/intimidation than insurgents; COIN force (and allies) had significant military equipment mismatch dominance over insurgents (and allies); Terrain played a major role because it made it difficult for COIN forces to maneuver and stretched COIN force logistics; COIN force attempted to use overwhelming force

The Dalai Lama reached India on March 31, 1959, was granted asylum by the Indian government, and publicly denounced the 17-point agreement that he had developed with the Chinese invading force. He also declared that he and his government would continue to be recognized as the government of Tibet, even in exile.³³⁵

In response, the Chinese launched a propaganda campaign designed to make it seem as though the Dalai Lama had been captured and forced to go to India against his will. This included, among other things, calling on the Dalai Lama’s confidantes to claim that his statement from India did not conform to his will.³³⁶ The COIN force also launched a strategic communication campaign to push Tibetan citizens to adopt Chinese cultural norms and a Chinese worldview.

The international community did not accept China’s story, but neither did it condemn China for its activities in Tibet. Significantly,

³³⁵ Michael C. van Walt van Praag, *The Status of Tibet: History, Rights and Prospects in International Law*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987, p. 163.

³³⁶ W. Smith, 1996, pp. 464–465.

India failed to interfere at this point, though it did offer refuge to the Dalai Lama and would not hand him over to the Chinese.³³⁷

Soon after dissolving the Tibetan government, the Chinese declared martial law in the country. An additional 100,000 Chinese troops arrived in Tibet in April and May 1959 with more artillery, motorized transport, and air support. The COIN force followed a policy of massive retaliation against any attempts at resistance; indeed, any aid to the resistance was viewed as a crime punishable by death.³³⁸ Either as a result of this policy, or due to sparse food and supplies, the insurgents received little support from the population during this phase. The Chinese government also launched a major offensive against the insurgents during in April and May, resulting in the deaths of approximately 85,000 Tibetans. Such actions virtually decimated the insurgency.³³⁹

Simultaneously, the Chinese hastened the pace of so-called “democratic reforms,” including requiring Tibetans to give up their currency in exchange for Chinese yuan; beginning agricultural collectivization through the creation of “mutual aid teams”; demolishing or closing down monasteries across the country and confiscating their property and wealth; instituting “study groups” to force the Tibetans to engage in the Maoist tradition of mutual criticism, thus destroying the bonds of trust within family and peer groups; and establishing forced labor camps for those who would not easily transform.

***Phase III: “External Support Plays a Decisive Role”
(September 1959–1974)***

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Important external support to insurgents significantly reduced; Insurgents made critical strategic errors, failed to make obvious adaptations, or voluntarily exited the conflict; COIN force of suf-

³³⁷ W. Smith, 1996, p. 467.

³³⁸ Peter Hopkirk, *Trespassers on the Roof of the World: The Secret Exploration of Tibet*, London: John Murray, Ltd., 1982, p. 260.

³³⁹ Roberts, 1997, p. 35.

efficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas; COIN force or government actions contributed to substantial new grievances claimed by the insurgents; In area of conflict, COIN force perceived as worse than insurgents; COIN force engaged in more coercion/intimidation than insurgents; COIN force (and allies) had significant military equipment mismatch dominance over insurgents (and allies); Terrain played a major role because it made it difficult for COIN forces to maneuver and stretched COIN force logistics; COIN force attempted to use overwhelming force

U.S. support to the insurgents increased at the beginning of this phase, primarily through airdrops of food and supplies but also through a training program for the insurgents at Camp Hale in Colorado. India also increased its support to the insurgents following the 1962 Sino-Indian Border War, primarily by establishing the Special Frontier Force (SFF) in November 1962. The SFF was designed to be a 10,000-strong commando group composed of Tibetans trained and commanded by Indian officers. India was to provide SFF members with six months of basic training on par with that of the Indian Army. Then, CIA and Indian instructors were to provide supplemental training in commando tactics, guerrilla warfare techniques, sabotage, and the use of explosives.³⁴⁰

However, the insurgents were never able to translate this external support into long-term gains, for several reasons that were somewhat beyond their control. First, the insurgents' dependence on these resupply drops became glaringly obvious when the CIA unexpectedly halted airdrops of supplies and food on several occasions. One such interruption was due to U.S. orders to suspend all intrusions into the airspace of communist nations after a U.S. U-2 reconnaissance aircraft was shot down on May 1960. Another time, in June 1964, the insurgents compromised the secrecy of the U.S. assistance by allowing European reporters to film them ambushing a Chinese truck convoy, which led

³⁴⁰ John Kenneth Knaus, *Orphans of the Cold War: America and the Tibetan Struggle for Survival*, New York: PublicAffairs, 1999, p. 272.

the CIA to cease support to the insurgents for six months.³⁴¹ Many insurgents froze or starved to death without these resupply drops.

Second, the NVDA was bad at avoiding publicity of their activities, which meant that the Chinese could easily acquire intelligence on the insurgents. The group's notoriety also caused their ranks to overflow with volunteers, which again led to supply problems and the freezing or starvation of many in their ranks.

Third, India ended up using the SFF for the sole purpose of guarding its own borders, precluding any contributions the force could have made to the insurgency.³⁴²

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, it became clear as the conflict progressed that both the United States and India had vastly different aims from those of the insurgents. While the United States and India had future large-scale strategic interests in mind, the NVDA had as its sole purpose the expulsion of the Chinese occupying force from Tibetan soil.³⁴³

Yet, despite the fact that the external support provided to the insurgents did not allow them to ultimately defeat the COIN force, such support did serve to prolong the conflict substantially. The effects of this support were particularly striking given that the insurgents had been virtually decimated by the COIN force in the previous phase of the conflict. Furthermore, it was the 1973 withdrawal of external support from Nepal—which had allowed its territory to be used as a staging base by the insurgents for U.S.-aided operations against the Chinese—that ultimately led the COIN force to defeat the insurgency.³⁴⁴

Conventional Explanations

Several arguments have been put forth in the literature to explain the success of the COIN force in Tibet. First, this case is argued to be a classic example of how a COIN strategy of “crushing” the insurgents

³⁴¹ Grunfeld, 1987, p. 157

³⁴² Knaus, 1999, p. 273.

³⁴³ Knaus, 1999, p. 278.

³⁴⁴ W. Smith, 1996, p. 247.

can lead to long-term success. After an initial period of pacification that afforded COIN forces time to construct the critical infrastructure necessary to resupply their troops, the Chinese were ruthless and indiscriminate in their treatment of the Tibetans, wiping out not only their government and military but also the foundations of their culture. Other scholars focus on the role of external support, noting that the COIN strategy was aided over the long term by the fact that external support to the NVDA was both erratic and driven by interests that did not align with those of the insurgency. Indeed, both the United States and India were more concerned with balancing Chinese communist power than they were with restoring Tibetan rule over Tibet. Finally, some argue that the COIN strategy was also aided by several critical strategic errors on the part of the insurgents over the course of the conflict that ultimately reduced both their force strength and the extent to which external powers were willing to support them. Prominent among these errors were the insurgents' tendency to travel with their families and belongings, which made them highly visible targets for Chinese air strikes, and the inability of the NVDA to maintain the secrecy of its U.S.-supported operations against the COIN forces.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Despite the insurgents' much better knowledge of the (often inhospitable) mountainous terrain, the COIN force was able to secure its advantage by entering the country without resistance from the Tibetan government and building supply routes in several key areas. While these routes did not always allow seamless resupply missions, the Chinese would not have had even a chance of success without them.
- Once the Dalai Lama escaped into exile, the Chinese began to rule with an iron fist while simultaneously pursuing Maoist tactics of eliminating Tibetan culture and societal bonds. This both subdued and demoralized the population, making it easier to control.
- The Chinese sent large infiltrations of troops into Tibet at several points throughout the conflict, creating the image of a seemingly

unending supply of COIN forces prepared to support the attempt to takeover the country.

- External support to the insurgents was offered only sporadically and was inconsistent in its intended aims and ultimate effects. Such support sustained the insurgency longer than otherwise have been, but it was ultimately unable to lead the NVDA to defeat the COIN force.

Figure 13
Map of Tibet



RAND RR29112-13

Guatemala, 1960–1996

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

For a 36-year period between 1960 and 1996, Guatemala suffered the effects of a bloody insurgency in which approximately 200,000 people were killed or forcibly “disappeared,” with an additional 2 million internally displaced or exiled as refugees. The COIN force consisted of the Guatemalan government and armed forces, the traditional elite, and landowners, while the insurgents were a mix of leftists, nationalistic-socialist reformers, middle-class intellectuals, and peasants. Guatemala’s COIN campaign employed extremely brutal tactics against the insurgents and their base of support, particularly the country’s indigenous population. Right-wing paramilitaries routinely raped, murdered, and mutilated civilians at will. Eventually, a war-weary population and a beleaguered government agreed to negotiations with an umbrella group of guerrillas, addressing a wide range of grievances and working to rebuild a country whose infrastructure was decimated by ongoing violence and instability.

Case Narrative

Phase I: “Blowback from ‘the Bay of Pigs’” (1960–1970)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: COIN force employed indiscriminate force; COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards; Type of external support included: training and/or advice (military advisers); Insurgent leadership competent, able to develop and change strategy and ensure succession

In 1954, a CIA-engineered coup installed right-wing Guatemalan Army Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, usurping the communist-affiliated government of Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán. Four years later, Armas was assassinated, and General Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes seized power. Ydígoras allowed exiled Cubans to be trained on Guatemalan

soil for the Bay of Pigs invasion, which angered many Guatemalan soldiers. In November 1960, left-wing junior military officers of the Escuela Politécnica (the national military academy) and a third of the military joined together to attempt to overthrow the Ydígoras government.³⁴⁵ The insurgents' primary grievances included corruption in both the army and the government, as well as Ydígoras' decision to allow Cuban exiles to be trained in Guatemala, a move that the soldiers perceived as an act of submission to the United States.³⁴⁶ The revolt was snuffed out, and the insurgents fled to the surrounding hills, establishing contact with Fidel Castro and Cuba. Two U.S.-trained Guatemalan officers, Lieutenant Marco Antonio Yon Sosa and Second Lieutenant Luis Turcios Lima, assumed leadership of the insurgency.³⁴⁷ Sosa and Lima sought political support from the communist Guatemalan Workers' Party (PGT) before heading off into the mountains in the eastern part of the country to rally the support of the peasants. From the mountainous Orient (East) region of the Guatemala, the insurgents formed Revolutionary Movement 13th November (MR-13). The insurgents operated from areas such as Izabal, Puerto Barrios, and Zacapa.

Around the same time as the formation of MR-13, another insurgency sprung up briefly in the Huehuetenango department of western Guatemala. With no local support and no knowledge of the terrain, the small group of insurgents was soon rounded up and killed. In December 1962, the PGT proposed that all insurgent groups band together, which they did, into the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (Rebel Armed Forces), or FAR.³⁴⁸ The FAR directed the political front, while MR-13 executed the military campaign.³⁴⁹ A selected group of

³⁴⁵ Charles D. Brockett, *Political Movements and Violence in Central America*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 99.

³⁴⁶ Vincente Collazo-Davila, "The Guatemalan Insurrection," in Bard E. O'Neill, ed., *Insurgency in the Modern World*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1980, p. 110.

³⁴⁷ Collazo-Davila, 1980, p. 110.

³⁴⁸ Brockett, 2005, pp. 99–100.

³⁴⁹ Collazo-Davila, 1980, p. 100.

insurgents was sent abroad to train in Cuba and Honduras.³⁵⁰ The insurgents spent 1963 and 1964 hiding out and organizing their movement in the Sierra de las Minas. When they did attack during this period, the strikes were mostly small-scale, primarily ambushes and raids, to avoid anything other than limited contact with the COIN force.³⁵¹

Like many other Central and Latin American groups, the insurgents in Guatemala followed a strategy defined as *foco subversive*. By early 1966, the insurgents were back on the offensive and conducting more lethal attacks than before. The same year, President Julio César Méndez Montenegro assumed office and launched a COIN force offensive to combat the growing insurgency. Dubbed “Plan Piloto,” it was a military campaign with a development touch. Plan Piloto integrated a PSYOP campaign with development aid and assistance for the construction of roads and the provision of potable water, electricity, health care, irrigation systems, and agricultural tools.³⁵² Furthermore, the government put forth an offer of amnesty.

Civic actions were part of a three-pronged COIN strategy. The other elements of the plan included the deployment of regular army units to destroy the insurgents and militia forces to provide local security in an attempt to dismantle the insurgents’ infrastructure. Moreover, a training program initiated by U.S. Green Berets transformed Guatemala’s military into a superior fighting force.³⁵³ By November 1966, large-scale COIN operations began in Zacapa, directed against the Edgar Ibarra Front. Colonel Carlos Arana led a force of five rifle companies and several paramilitary groups against the insurgents.³⁵⁴ COIN combat actions were effective, and the insurgency’s popular

³⁵⁰ Mario M. Hernandez Ponce, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Guatemala*, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, 1991, p. 8.

³⁵¹ Ponce, 1991, p. 8.

³⁵² Ponce, 1991, p. 10.

³⁵³ Michael Allison, “Opportunity Lost: The Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (URNG),” in Bruce W. Drayton and Louis Kreisberg, eds., *Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding: Moving from Violence to Sustainable Peace*, London: Routledge, 2009, p. 190.

³⁵⁴ Collazo-Davila, 1980, p. 112.

support dwindled, facilitating COIN intelligence collection. By the end of 1967, the Ibarra Front was decimated, and the insurgents who survived regrouped in Guatemala City.

For the next three years, until the end of the phase, the insurgents waged a campaign of urban terrorism. They targeted the police and military forces in addition to executing sensational kidnappings and assassinations, including those of the Guatemalan deputy minister of defense and the chief of the U.S. military mission.³⁵⁵ Political kidnappings became commonplace. Ransoms exchanged for those kidnapped helped finance the insurgency. The insurgents' brutality and violence was matched by that of right-wing paramilitary groups, including Mano Blanca ("White Hand"), Consejo Anticomunista de Guatemala (the Anticommunist Council of Guatemala), and Nueva Organización Anticomunista (the New Anticommunist Organization).³⁵⁶ These groups are alleged to have been responsible for mass disappearances and the murder of insurgent-friendly labor leaders, union officials, and activists from 1966 onward.³⁵⁷

The end of the first phase came toward the latter half of 1970, when Sosa was killed by a Mexican army patrol after being chased out of Guatemala. The defeat was foreshadowed by the election of Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio as president. According to Vincente Collazo-Davila, Arana was elected on promises that he would "pacify the country even if it meant turning it into a vast cemetery."³⁵⁸ The insurgency was effectively quelled, at least temporarily, until it reemerged in Phase II and both old and new insurgent organizations joined together to fight on rural and urban fronts, especially in the Mayan highlands.

³⁵⁵ William D. McGill, *The Guatemalan Counterinsurgency Strategy*, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, 1989, p. 10.

³⁵⁶ Collazo-Davila, 1980, p. 113.

³⁵⁷ Brockett, 2005, p. 109.

³⁵⁸ Collazo-Davila, 1980, p. 113.

Phase II: "The Insurgent Offensive Succeeds" (1970–1982)*Phase Outcome: COIN Loss*

Key Factors: COIN force employed escalating repression; COIN force employed collective punishment; COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics; Insurgents demonstrated potency through impressive or spectacular attacks; Police, paramilitary, militia, or other nonconventional personnel largely absent or ineffective because of poor training, poor armament (relative to the insurgents), cowardice, corruption, human rights abuses, or other reasons

After being beaten back into the mountains at the end of the first phase, the small remnants of the insurgency that survived the COIN force onslaught banded together to organize an offensive, beginning in the early 1970s. The insurgents' strategy was predicated on four main pillars: Plan for a prolonged struggle, establish bases and infrastructure in rural areas, include indigenous peoples and rural peasantry in the fight, and establish an international front to provide legitimacy and resources.³⁵⁹

Two insurgent groups rose to prominence during this phase. The Organización Revolucionario del Pueblo en Armas (the Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms) spent much of the 1970s organizing its infrastructure and delayed its official public announcement until around 1979. The other, the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (the Guerrilla Army of the Poor), gained the popular support among the indigenous peasants and used this population as a base for supplies and recruits.³⁶⁰ Some scholars speculate that, by the end of Phase II, the insurgents were drawing on the support of between 250,000 and 500,000 supporters.³⁶¹

In 1974, General Kjell Laugeroud succeeded Arana as president. One of his first actions was to construct a military studies center and a

³⁵⁹ McGill, 1989, p. 15.

³⁶⁰ Allison, 2009, p. 190.

³⁶¹ Susanne Jonas, *Of Centaur and Doves: Guatemala's Peace Process*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000, p. 23.

school to train his troops for COIN operations. But Laugeroud failed to develop a clear-cut COIN strategy, despite his penchant for advocating development as a goal of his administration. A massive earthquake in 1976 killed approximately 25,000 people and left another 1 million homeless. As the Guatemalan army became preoccupied with disaster relief, the insurgents took the opportunity to press forward with attacks, including kidnappings, assassinations, and bombings. After U.S. President Jimmy Carter withdrew economic assistance in response to growing concerns over human rights abuses, the Guatemalan government and COIN force continued to cede ground to the insurgency.

General Romeo Lucas García took control of Guatemala in 1978 but was unable to curb the violence, which continued to escalate. Around the same time, insurgents split off and formed a new PGT cell devoted to armed struggle. Meanwhile, in nearby Nicaragua, the Sandinistas took power in 1979 and shortly thereafter began providing the Guatemalan insurgents with political and military support. Toward the end of the 1970s, in response to increased insurgent attacks, right-wing paramilitaries went on the offensive, targeting university staff, teachers and students, professionals, trade union leaders, journalists, politicians, clergy, and indigenous peasants.³⁶² The Guatemalan government offered tacit approval of what amounted to right-wing death squads.

On January 31, 1980, a group of peasant farmers stormed and occupied the Spanish embassy in Guatemala City to protest the disappearance of their friends, neighbors, and relatives in Uspantan. The disappearances were blamed on elements of the COIN force. A hastily planned and poorly executed police raid on the embassy went awry and led to the deaths of 36 people. As a result, Spain severed ties with Guatemala for four years. Subsequent repression by the COIN force pushed parts of the civilian population to join the insurgents, especially between 1980 and 1981. An antigovernment undercurrent swept through the country: Ordinary Guatemalans were growing tired of

³⁶² McGill, 1989, p. 18.

government corruption and a perceived lack of transparency.³⁶³ With continued insurgent success and a growing appeal among portions of the Guatemalan population, a new insurgent group was born—Frente Patriótico 31 de Enero (the Patriotic Front of 31 January). Meanwhile, the FAR continued to pursue a joint track of mass organization and the use of violence.³⁶⁴

Insurgent attacks were damaging the Guatemalan economy; insurgents relentlessly assaulted ongoing development projects, including transportation and communication infrastructure. This helped the insurgents achieve their goal of sowing instability throughout the country by discouraging tourism, disrupting the economy, and subverting the population. The attacks were so successful that, by 1981, the insurgents had established large pockets of no-go zones and were ready to declare the western region of the country “liberated territory.”³⁶⁵ From crowded cities to coastal plains to the flat jungle of El Peten, the insurgents conducted a widespread campaign of assassinations and bombings. They insurgents funded these activities by kidnaping local and foreign businessmen for large ransoms and extorting civilians to pay a “tax” to ensure safe passage.

The country’s 1982 elections were allegedly plagued by rampant voter fraud. In response, a military junta was installed, with General Efraín Ríos Montt at the helm. At this point in the phase, the insurgent forces totaled between 3,000 and 6,000 fighters and had developed into a serious politico-military threat. In addition to thousands of fighters, it was estimated that the insurgents’ support base numbered as many as 500,000 people, a staggering percentage of Guatemala’s population, which was approximately 7.5 million at the time.³⁶⁶

The COIN force launched a major military operation at the end of 1981 to expel the insurgents from the northwestern part of the country. It force relied on a network of informers, civic action programs,

³⁶³ McGill, 1989, p. 20.

³⁶⁴ Brockett, 2005, p. 118.

³⁶⁵ Ponce, 1991, p. 13.

³⁶⁶ Allison, 2009, p. 190.

and an indiscriminate reign of terror imposed by the right wing paramilitaries. Continued COIN force offensives in rural areas drove the insurgents and their civilian supporters toward Mexico, which became a base of support and supplies for the insurgents.³⁶⁷ Although the counterinsurgents hit the FAR hard in the jungle of the northeastern parts of the country, Phase II was dominated by the insurgency. Recriminations reverberated throughout the government and paved the way for the final phase, beginning in 1982.

Phase III: “Stalemate and the Push for Peace” (1982–1996)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: COIN force collateral damage *not* perceived by population in area of conflict as worse than insurgents’; COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent materiel acquisition; Amnesty program reduced number of insurgents; COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics

The third and final phase of the insurgency in Guatemala began with the election of President Aníbal Guevara in March 1982. Two weeks later, the army deposed the new government and a military government led by General Efraín Ríos took power, defining a new COIN strategy dubbed “Victory 82.” The new COIN strategy emphasized offensive action and aimed to keep the insurgents off-balance, denying them the benefits of popular support.³⁶⁸ The strategy was intended to combat the growing threat posed by the insurgents, who had coalesced to form the group Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) in February 1982. Now a united front, URNG militants received training in Cuba, Nicaragua, Eastern Europe, Vietnam, and the Soviet Union.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ Ponce, 1991, p. 13.

³⁶⁸ Ponce, 1991, pp. 15–17.

³⁶⁹ Allison, 2009, pp. 191–193.

Victory 82 followed a three-point strategy.³⁷⁰ The first element of this strategy was strengthening the military so it could fight in rural areas. This included improving command and control, mobilizing more than 5,000 reservists, and establishing tactical combat groups in the Chimaltenango, Quiche, and Huehuetenango departments. From a group field headquarters, small patrols were dispatched to secure and expand areas of control. The second part of this strategy featured the establishment of civil defense forces. They were not just paramilitary units but also local political organizations that collected and shared intelligence with the COIN force. The third piece of the new COIN strategy was the implementation of a comprehensive socioeconomic plan, based on the successful civic action programs of the 1960s.

From an operational perspective, the new strategy was successful. However, COIN force gains were neutralized by unnecessary and counterproductive acts of brutality. Attempts at resettlement often involved forced relocations and COIN force coercion, which was frequently characterized by a scorched-earth campaign.³⁷¹ As brutal as COIN force tactics were at times, they were also effective. By 1986, the insurgents were reduced to just the hard-core *focos* hiding out in the highlands and the Peten jungle.³⁷²

The follow-on component of Victory 82 was “Firmeza 83,” which saw the establishment of “poles of development” that brought the component of public service to the pacification process. Security commands were increased from nine to 22 and spread across the individual departments, establishing a unit of battalion or larger in each. Model villages were constructed through the program dubbed “roofs, work, and tortillas,” and there was an emphasis on land, loans, and technology.³⁷³ In 1983, Ríos Montt was deposed as president by his defense minister, General Óscar Humberto Mejía Victores, who was cognizant of the importance of winning the support of Guatemala’s indigenous popula-

³⁷⁰ McGill, 1989, pp. 20–21.

³⁷¹ McGill, 1989, p. 22.

³⁷² McGill, 1989, p. 27.

³⁷³ Ponce, 1991, p. 18.

tion. As more development projects were launched, more refugees were encouraged to return home.

In 1985, Vinicio Cerezo, a civilian politician and president of Guatemala's Christian Democratic Party, won the national election. While this appeared to be an important victory for pro-democracy advocates, the military continued to wield significant influence behind the scenes. Despite the objections of the military elite, Cerezo's administration participated in on-again, off-again negotiations with the insurgents during his second year in office. Cerezo and other Central American leaders signed the Esquipulas II peace agreement in August 1987. The crux of the agreement was a move toward further democratization in Central America, but it was also a pledge by the leaders to eschew supporting rebel movements in their respective countries. Shortly after Esquipulas II, the Guatemalan government formed a national reconciliation commission and declared nationwide amnesty.³⁷⁴

In November 1990, Jorge Antonio Serrano Elías was elected president under the banner of the Movimiento de Acción Solidaria, Movement of Solidarity Action. Serrano continued negotiations with the insurgents, presenting them with a comprehensive peace plan that called for a cease-fire to be followed by a reintegration program. Over the next few years, negotiations proceeded pell-mell but moved forward. Six months after a failed coup, the URNG and the Unión del Cambio Nacionalista (Nationalist Change Union), led by Ramiro de León Carpio, signed the "Framework Accord," which focused on human rights, refugees, and internally displaced persons. Furthermore, the accord created an assembly of civil society organizations, which brought together disparate groups to help further the peace process.

Capitalizing on positive momentum, Álvaro Arzú's Partido de Avanzada Nacional (National Advancement Party) won elections in 1995 and brought the conflict to a close. Unlike his opponent in the election, Ríos Montt, Arzú had the political will and negotiation skills to bring an end to the insurgency. The political situation in the country became far more inclusive, and the Frente Democrático Nueva Guatemala (New Guatemala Democratic Front) gained political clout, which

³⁷⁴ Allison, 2009, p. 197.

gave new voice to previously disenfranchised groups in society.³⁷⁵ The conflict officially ended in December 1996, when the URNG was legalized as a party, and the organization's general secretary, Rolando Morán, signed a peace accord with the Guatemalan government.

Conventional Explanations

The story most often told in Guatemala is one of COIN force brutality and widespread human rights abuses. "The Guatemalan soldiers were encouraged to be as violent as possible. Soldiers were promoted and praised based upon 'the ability to kill, to take initiative during massacres, and to demonstrate cruelty in the course of operations.'"³⁷⁶ Repressive measures were compounded by a failing economy and a series government administrations defined by corruption and arbitrary, personalistic rule. In fact, by 1979, Guatemala was the most unequal country in terms of land ownership in all of Central America.³⁷⁷

But while the reporting on atrocities is undoubtedly true, much of the story remains untold. First, the insurgents were not as incompetent as portrayed by some authors. During the second phase, especially, insurgent tactics included hit-and-run attacks and ambushes of small army patrols, raids on outposts to secure weapons and materiel, banditry on the highways to sow chaos, consistent propaganda, an effective kidnapping-for-ransom campaign, and the widespread use of terrorist tactics.³⁷⁸

What is even less well known are many of the positive initiatives undertaken by the Guatemalan COIN force. These included the creation of local security and civil defense forces, strategic hamlets, and civic action programs, as well as the use of intelligence to limit insurgent freedom of movement throughout the country. Moreover, while the conflict is portrayed almost exclusively as "big-stick COIN," there was a considerable amount of "carrot" involved, too. "The gov-

³⁷⁵ Allison, 2009, pp. 198–199.

³⁷⁶ Allison, 2009, p. 194.

³⁷⁷ Allison, 2009, p. 192.

³⁷⁸ Collazo-Davila, 1980, p. 109.

ernment gave each village a stake in its security while simultaneously tremendously increasing the number of people working for it,” as civil patrollers reached 700,000 in 1983, or 10 percent the population and 14 times the number of army and security forces.³⁷⁹ From the 1960s through the 1980s, the COIN force developed effective countersubversive strategies and “soft means of countersubversion,” including PSYOP.³⁸⁰ Finally, the offers of amnesty in Phase II and Phase III had a major impact in reducing the strength of the insurgency and helping to bring the conflict to a close.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Throughout most of the conflict, the insurgency operated in patchwork form. That is, there were multiple groups operating in different areas of the country, each with a different level of political and military capabilities and each employing a different strategy.³⁸¹
- The insurgency in Guatemala was the first in Latin America to declare itself an openly socialist revolution. This brought the insurgents in contact with other Latin American insurgents in Cuba and Nicaragua and also garnered external support from the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc nations.³⁸²
- For most of Phase II and the beginning of Phase III, because of its shoddy human rights record, Guatemala was not eligible to receive U.S. aid. When funding resumed in the mid-1980s, support amounted to only \$300,000 in International Military Education and Training funding.
- Following Operation Victory, the insurgents’ rural support network was in shambles, and many fled over the border into Mexico. Insurgents found safe haven in the Guatemala-Chiapas border region, which was characterized by organized armed groups,

³⁷⁹ McGill, 1989, p. 30.

³⁸⁰ Ponce, 1991, p. 21.

³⁸¹ Allison, 2009, p. 188.

³⁸² Collazo-Davila, 1980, p. 109.

criminal networks, and a population with access to arms.³⁸³ Furthermore, an absence of state institutions and border control made it easy for the insurgents to slip back and forth between Guatemala and Mexico.

Figure 14
Map of Guatemala



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR291/2-14

³⁸³ Steven Boraz, “Case Study: The Guatemala-Chiapas Border,” in Angel Rabasa, Steven Boraz, Peter Chalk, Kim Cragin, Theodore W. Karasik, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Kevin A. O’Brien, and John E. Peters, *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-561-AF, 2007.

Laos, 1959–1975

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

Lamented as “the forgotten war,” the insurgency in Laos was heavily influenced (and often overshadowed) by the conflict in neighboring Vietnam. A victim of geography, Laos experienced half-hearted fighting between different factions and may well have worked itself out in a lasting compromise if not for pressure from North Vietnamese communists to control areas of the country for the infiltration of troops and materiel into South Vietnam (the Ho Chi Minh Trail) and U.S. efforts to oppose the communist presence and influence.

Beginning in earnest in 1959, fighting pitted variously rightist Royal Lao government forces supported by Hmong guerrillas against the leftist Pathet Lao (indigenous communists) and their North Vietnamese supporters. These participants were joined at times by other players, including U.S. advisers, Filipino troops, U.S. air power, Thai commandos and artillery formations, and “neutralist” Lao forces. By the time of the 1973 cease-fire and neutralization, the government of Laos controlled little more than the capital and the Mekong River valley—and that only by virtue of the Hmong and U.S. air power. With the withdrawal of U.S. support (both air power and funding) in 1973, the Hmong were demobilized, and the Lao government was left to its fate; it would ultimately fall relatively quickly to the communists.

During the conflict, Laos was underdeveloped in every way: The government was corrupt and ineffective, the economy wholly dependent on outside support, and the military corrupt and ineffective.

Case Narrative

Preamble Phase: “The Lull” (1954–1958)

The story of the Laotian case begins, really, with the conclusion of the Indochina case, with Laos having been a part of that broader conflict. The 1954 Geneva agreements divided Vietnam into a communist north and a pro-Western south, while both Cambodia and Laos

were declared neutral.³⁸⁴ In actual practice in Laos, this “neutrality” involved the French maintaining two garrisons in the country and providing materiel and training to Lao government forces; forces that had been part of the opposition were left in de facto control of two provinces. This opposition was the Pathet Lao, the same group that had sided with the Viet Minh since 1950 and had refused accommodation with the French.³⁸⁵

During this preamble period, indigenous conflict was relatively mild. Royal Lao government troops and the Pathet Lao engaged in half-hearted skirmishes, and Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma opened dialogue with his brother, a leader of the Pathet Lao, about reintegrating the insurgents’ forces and returning their occupied territories to government supervision.³⁸⁶

External actors were much busier, however. As the United States became more invested in Vietnam, it also increased its support to Laos. By the end of 1955, the United States provided 100 percent of the Lao military budget, while the French continued half-hearted training for government forces.³⁸⁷ North Vietnamese backers of the Pathet Lao sought to grow that force, supporting a significant recruiting campaign and sending many of the recruits to North Vietnam for schooling and training.³⁸⁸ This led to greater U.S. investment in materiel and training for the government forces and included, beginning in 1957, efforts to arm Hmong guerrillas, who would play an important role later in the conflict.

Despite these martial rumblings, 1957 elections moved toward a neutralist coalition government, with significant representation from both sides. However, the country’s parliament was deadlocked and

³⁸⁴ Kenneth Conboy, *War in Laos: 1954–1975*, Carrollton, Tex.: Squadron/Signal Publications, 1993, p. 6.

³⁸⁵ Paul F. Langer and Joseph J. Zasloff, *North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao: Partners in the Struggle for Laos*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970, p. 2.

³⁸⁶ Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy’s Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

³⁸⁷ Conboy, 1993, p. 6.

³⁸⁸ Langer and Zasloff, 1970, p. 58.

would not form a government until the United States suspended aid in 1958, at which point it finally confirmed a right-wing government coalition, alienating leftists. Tensions in the compromise government escalated, and it fractured in May 1959, when a planned reintegration of two Pathet Lao battalions into the government forces fell apart. One of the battalions fled into communist North Vietnam, leading to a series of arrests of Pathet Lao officials in the capital.³⁸⁹

Phase I: “The Period of Turbulence” (1959–1962)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated; External professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of insurgents; Government/state *not* competent

The breakdown of the coalition government led to turmoil within the Lao government and coincided with increased intensity in the conflict. The government was rocked by a series of coups, first in mid-August 1960, when neutralist paratroop commander Kong Le seized power,³⁹⁰ and then in December, when right-wing General Phoumi Nosavan seized the government, instilling more chaos and driving Kong Le and his neutralist forces out of the capital and into encampments aligned with the Pathet Lao.³⁹¹

The communist Vietnamese interest in Laos was primarily in securing the so-called “panhandle” region through which the Ho Chi Minh Trail allowed the North Vietnamese to infiltrate troops and materiel into South Vietnam. A secondary consideration was the support of a fellow communist movement (the Pathet Lao). The Vietnamese used government chaos to their benefit, increasing attacks on government forces and expanding the territory under their influence or

³⁸⁹ Conboy, 1993, p. 6.

³⁹⁰ Sergio Miller, “Armed Nation Building: The West’s Unhappy History,” *Small Wars Journal*, February 2012a.

³⁹¹ Langer and Zasloff, 1970.

control. During this period, many attacks were instigated by North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars, who attacked and overwhelmed a position, then let their Pathet Lao allies occupy the area and claim the victory. Thus, the Pathet Lao could at least pay lip service to maintaining the neutralization of Laos.

These NVA-led attacks and several attempted counterattacks by Royal Lao government troops against Pathet Lao positions revealed the gross incompetence of the government's regular forces. This lack of capability stemmed from several sources, including a generally half-hearted martial tradition, a preoccupation with profiteering and political games by the senior leadership, lack of earnest efforts by the French responsible for their training until late 1958, and a fundamental lack of motivation.³⁹² Despite the vigorous efforts of U.S. trainers and millions of dollars in materiel over the course of the conflict, Royal Lao government forces would never become a consequential fighting force. In this phase, the only effective forces on the government side were the Hmong tribesmen, trained and provisioned by the CIA and fighting as guerrillas.

International pressure (from the United States as well as from China and Russia, which preferred to avoid unnecessarily provoking the United States) and support (from the United States and other allies) prevented the complete collapse of the government of Laos in this phase and pushed for another neutralization through a coalition government. Another conference convened in Geneva to iron out the details. The North Vietnamese were content to allow negotiations to take place, as they had succeeded in securing what they needed: the Ho Chi Minh Trail.³⁹³

Phase II: "False Neutralization, Then Back to the Grind" (1962–1968)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: External professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of government; COIN force had air superiority, but use of air-

³⁹² Fall, 1964.

³⁹³ Moyar, 2006.

space was significantly contested or COIN force was unable take advantage of air power; COIN force employed “counter-gangs,” “scouts,” or “ferret forces” against insurgents

After months of wrangling, 1962 finally saw another Geneva agreement, this time for a neutralized Laos with a coalition government representing the three major factions: the rightists, the leftists, and the neutralists. Part of the neutralization agreement included the removal of foreign forces from Laos. While U.S. and allied personnel who had been fighting on the side of the country’s government were withdrawn, very few of the substantial number of NVA forces withdrew.³⁹⁴ Nor, of course, did the CIA cease its work with the Hmong.

The new coalition government proved shaky. The right-wing forces—still the most numerous at about 50,000 under arms, as opposed to 8,000 neutralists and close to 20,000 Pathet Lao—still were hoping for outside support for a “third round” with the communists.³⁹⁵ For their part, the communists were consolidating their gains and marshaling their strength. The coalition lasted little more than a year, after which the communists again quit the government and fighting increased in intensity.

Turmoil again rocked the Lao government with continued political maneuvering by greedy generals and several more coups. Regional military commanders ran their zones like private fiefdoms, rarely dispatching their troops outside the Mekong River valley.³⁹⁶ A series of spectacular failures by the Lao government forces all but ensured that they would never seek to take the initiative and act in other than a strictly defensive capacity again.

Between 1964 and 1968, the conflict was primarily between the U.S.-supported paramilitaries (backed by U.S. air power) and the Pathet Lao. The cycle of dry season and wet season, each favoring one side or

³⁹⁴ Langer and Zasloff, 1970.

³⁹⁵ Fall, 1964.

³⁹⁶ Conboy, 1993.

the other,³⁹⁷ saw very modest back-and-forth movement between the two primarily irregular forces, with little change from year to year.³⁹⁸

Phase III: “The Communists Get Serious” (1969–1973)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated; External professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of insurgents; COIN force *not* of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas

Everything changed in 1969. The communist dry season offensive of 1968 did not end with the onset of the rainy season, and gains were substantial. In early 1970, the communists seized a provincial capital for the first time, and later that year they seized another.³⁹⁹

Between 1964 and 1968, the NVA had been present and supporting the Pathet Lao, but 1968 saw growing impatience from Hanoi. The NVA subsequently pushed aside the Pathet Lao and assumed the role of primary combatant against the Lao government forces.⁴⁰⁰

In the now-traditional way, Hmong guerrillas counterattacked. However, after nearly a decade of war, the CIA’s secret army was nearly fought out.⁴⁰¹ Battling superior numbers of regular troops, the Hmong became more and more reliant on U.S. air power and support from Thai artillery. Bombing in southern Laos expanded such that, by 1971, it was more extensive than bombing in South Vietnam and Cambodia combined.⁴⁰² “By the summer of 1971, Lao was hanging on by its

³⁹⁷ The dry season, from November through March, favored the communists, as dry roads allowed them to receive fresh troops and supplies. When the wet season washed out roads and broke communist supply lines, the advantage shifted to the air power–supported irregulars.

³⁹⁸ Conboy, 1993.

³⁹⁹ Langer and Zasloff, 1970.

⁴⁰⁰ Conboy, 1993.

⁴⁰¹ John Prados, *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945–1975*, Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2009, p. 43.

⁴⁰² Mai Elliott, *RAND in Southeast Asia: A History of the Vietnam War Era*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, CP-564-RC, 2010, p. 577.

fingernails, but the monsoon rains gave the government forces a short reprieve.”⁴⁰³

The communist dry season offensive that started in December 1971 brought extraordinary pressure on the government. For the first time, NVA forces used significant armor, as well as large-tube artillery and even some use of MiG fighters for air cover, during attacks.⁴⁰⁴ The Hmong were battered and quickly thrown back. After another year of significant communist gains, the Lao government and its international supporters once again sought a cease-fire.

Phase IV: “Collapse” (1973–1975)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: COIN force *not* of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas; External support to COIN from strong state/military withdrawn

U.S. bombing ended statutorily in 1973, and most clandestine support was suspended as well. International pressure led to a cease-fire, yet another neutralization, and yet another power-sharing government.

At the time of the cease-fire, the Lao government was left in control of the Mekong River valley and little else.⁴⁰⁵ Royalists, neutralists, and the Pathet Lao formed a coalition government in 1974. By that point, U.S. and Thai forces had withdrawn, leaving only the Hmong guerrillas and the traditionally useless Royal Lao Army to face considerable communist forces. The guerrillas were by far the best-trained and -equipped forces in the country. However, with the cease-fire and general U.S. drawdown in the region, the United States cut support for the guerrillas, forcing their merger into regular forces or their demobilization, ending the Hmong as an independent and effective fighting force and ending already slim hopes for resistance to the communists.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ Conboy, 1993.

⁴⁰⁴ Conboy, 1993.

⁴⁰⁵ Conboy, 1993.

⁴⁰⁶ Conboy, 1993, p. 62.

While playing at participating in the coalition government, communist forces consolidated their gains and prepared for a final push:

By early May of 1975, the Royal Laotian government, shocked by the victory of communist forces in Cambodia and South Vietnam, was beginning to collapse from within. The Pathet Lao, which were on equal footing as coalition partners in Vientiane, encouraged anti-Royalist protests in most of the major town throughout the country. By June, Pathet Lao forces quietly seized control of all [government force] units and began sending Royalist officers to “reeducation camps” in Sam Neua Province. By December, the monarchy was abolished, replaced by the Lao People’s Democratic Republic—the war had ended.⁴⁰⁷

Conventional Explanations

Scholars of the Laos case offer several different explanations of the outcome. One is fairly straightforward: The Royal Lao government forces were no match for NVA regulars in any way (motivation and training foremost among the differences) and lost to them every time it mattered. When available, U.S. air power made the communists pay a heavy price, but one cannot hold ground with air power alone.

A second explanation is a variation on that theme. The Hmong tribesmen were extraordinarily effective as guerrillas until they were disbanded. In much the same way that Viet Minh guerrillas were effective against regular French units during the Indochina case, Hmong guerrillas repeatedly and effectively ambushed Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese formations in Laos. However, it does not appear that one can hold a government with guerrilla forces alone, and good guerrilla training is not a substitute for an invested motive for fighting.⁴⁰⁸

Several scholars also make much of the series of cease-fires and neutralizations and the fact that they always favored the side that respected them the least—that is, the communists. Of the domestic forces, only the Hmong guerrillas were ever particularly effective. When fighting was primarily among the Lao, the conflict tended toward stalemate.

⁴⁰⁷ Conboy, 1993.

⁴⁰⁸ Fall, 1964.

Periods of heavy North Vietnamese involvement, however, always led to substantial gains by the insurgents, fought off only with significant intervention on the government side and curtailed through a series of cease-fires in which Laos once again became, at least nominally, governed by a coalition of the competing factions, neutralized to outside intervention.

Others observe the fundamental underdevelopment of Laos in every respect—government, economy, and military. Improvement efforts really only focused on the military, and these efforts failed due to corruption and lack of motivation.

Distinctive Characteristics

- During this conflict, Laos was very rugged and very sparsely populated. This allowed insurgents to occupy territory that would not otherwise be contested, and “vast areas of no-man’s-land, where any platoon that marches through can claim control.”⁴⁰⁹ Such terrain was also ideal for guerrilla operations and for avoiding air strikes.
- External actors drove much of the fighting. Lao-on-Lao battles were often half-hearted affairs. Further diminishing incentives for decisive combat is the extent to which the Lao elite was interrelated to an unusual degree, with family generally strong enough to prevent complete alienation even among politically competing elements. Studies of the Lao revolutionary movement found that virtually every one of its leaders had close relatives on the government side.⁴¹⁰ Without external intervention and pressure, it is much more likely that some form of power-sharing government could have succeeded, and without nearly as much blood being shed.
- Although fought primarily in small formations with guerrilla-style hit-and-run attacks, this conflict was much more like a conventional war in its strategic shape, with the two sides push-

⁴⁰⁹ Langer and Zasloff, 1970, p. 2.

⁴¹⁰ Langer and Zasloff, 1970.

ing fairly clear “lines” back and forth as different seasons played to the opponents’ different strengths. Perhaps due to the sparse overall population or the consensual choice to avoid fighting near built-up areas, the population played a very limited role.⁴¹¹

Figure 15
Map of Laos



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.
RAND RR291/2-15

⁴¹¹ Langer and Zasloff, 1970.

Namibia, 1960–1989

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

To quell a burgeoning insurgency in southwestern Africa, South Africa initially deployed the South African Police Service, even as South African COIN forces were stretched thin by the African National Congress (ANC)–led insurgency within the country’s own borders. The first decade of the war involved low-level but consistent fighting and an increasingly assertive insurgent force. Terrain significantly aided the guerrillas in their ability to elude South African security forces that were operating beyond their traditional zones of comfort. At the end of Phase I, the South African military took over responsibility for prosecuting the war and employed a significant special forces component. The COIN force was able to deny the insurgents permanent bases within Namibia and was effective in raiding Angola to strike at South West African People’s Organization (SWAPO) fighters based in that country. The conflict ended when the South African Defense Force (SADF) agreed to withdraw from Namibia in exchange for Cuban troops’ withdrawal from Angola. Subsequently, SWAPO emerged victorious in a UN-monitored election for a constituent assembly.

Case Narrative

Phase I: “Out of the Bush and into the Breach” (1960–1973)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Terrain played a major role because it concealed the insurgents from the air; Level of violence low/manageable; Type of external support included: safe haven/transit

Part of what came to be known in South Africa as “the border war” had roots stretching back to a post–World War I settlement established by the League of Nations in 1919, when South Africa took over from Germany the administration of the territory today known as Namibia. The apartheid government in South Africa ruled the region, known at

that time as South West Africa, as an extension of its own territory. In the early 1960s, when the ANC was organizing its own insurgency in neighboring South Africa, SWAPO sent its members abroad to Algeria, China, Egypt, Ghana, the Soviet Union, North Korea, and Tanzania for training in military tactics and strategy.⁴¹² When its core group of fighters returned, SWAPO organized its forces for military action under the banner of the South West Africa Liberation Army (known as the People's Liberation Army of Namibia from 1969 onward), with an explicit goal of liberating the country from white South African rule. Many in the South African government feared a domino effect. If South West Africa gained independence, black rule in South Africa could be next.

At the beginning of the first phase, SWAPO lacked both arms and ammunition, though it was able to find sanctuary beyond its borders in Tanzania and Zambia, where the group went about building a political and logistical support structure.⁴¹³ In 1966, the International Court at the Hague determined that South Africa was not guilty of militarizing South West Africa, which would have been a violation of its mandate. In preparation for launching an insurgency, SWAPO fighters infiltrated the Ovambo area in north-central Namibia in August 1966; this area would become the center of the insurgency.⁴¹⁴ Shortly thereafter, protesting and rioting broke out in Ongulumbashe, in the western portion of Ovamboland, where SWAPO fighters engaged in a gun battle with South African police, who were supported by South African Air Force helicopters.⁴¹⁵ Toward the end of the year, the UN terminated South Africa's mandate over the territory of South West Africa.

SWAPO's main efforts focused on gaining control of the Caprivi Strip, which would give its fighters access to the rest of Namibia. Without a contiguous sanctuary, the insurgents were forced to haul heavy

⁴¹² Richard Dale, "The Namibian Bush War, 1966–1989," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, June 2007, p. 203.

⁴¹³ Dale, 2007, p. 203.

⁴¹⁴ Robert C. Owen, "Counterrevolution in Namibia," *Airpower Journal*, Winter 1987–1988.

⁴¹⁵ Richard Dale, "Melding War and Politics in Namibia: South Africa's Counterinsurgency Campaign, 1966–1989," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 7, Fall 1993, p. 10.

equipment, including 82-mm mortars and recoilless guns, across large swaths of territory and into the country. SWAPO insurgents preferred to operate in the rainy season, which fell between November and April. Heavy rains afforded them sufficient drinking water and also provided thick foliage to conceal their movements.⁴¹⁶

South Africa's COIN doctrine was heavily influenced by the Portuguese experience in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau. For the South Africans, who fought alongside Rhodesian COIN forces against Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) insurgents, the use of mine-protected vehicles, the fire force concept, and the notion of preemptive cross-border operations were all takeaways from Rhodesia.⁴¹⁷ For the most part, though, South Africa saw SWAPO as more of a nuisance than a threat throughout most of the first phase. The COIN force treated the insurgency as a criminal issue that could be mollified by the police. In addition to relying on the police for its COIN efforts, the South African government passed Terrorism Act No. 83 of 1967, which consisted of draconian provisions associated with security trials, during which suspected insurgents were detained, and pursued its "Homelands" policy of separating African groups according to their respective ethnicities.⁴¹⁸ According to Dale, "particularly when used in conjunction with other, internal security legislation, the 1967 Terrorism Act was almost guaranteed to secure the conviction of captured guerrillas."⁴¹⁹ Just before the end of the phase, South Africa began to realize that its strategy of relying primarily on the police was ineffective. To remedy this, the government prepared South African special forces to begin operations

⁴¹⁶ Abel Esterhuysen and Evert Jordaan, "The South African Defence Force and Counterinsurgency, 1966–1990," in Deane-Peter Baker and Evert Jordan, eds., *South Africa and Contemporary Counterinsurgency: Roots, Practices, Prospects*, Cape Town, South Africa: UCT Press, 2010, p. 107.

⁴¹⁷ Esterhuysen and Jordaan, 2010, p. 104.

⁴¹⁸ Richard Dale, "The Armed Forces as an Instrument of South African Policy in Namibia," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, March 1980, pp. 66–67.

⁴¹⁹ Dale, 1993, p. 10.

in Namibia and neighboring African states that offered sanctuary to SWAPO insurgents.

Phase II: “From Fiefdom to Freedom” (1974–1989)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Military action outside of host-nation borders (if insurgents relied on cross-border support or havens); Important internal support to insurgents significantly reduced; COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards

In 1974, the Carnation Revolution in Portugal led that government to abandon its colonial holdings in Africa. This proved to be a boon for SWAPO fighters, who as a result, were able to move their bases and headquarters from Tanzania to Angola, giving them direct access to infiltrating Namibia. To meet this new threat, South African COIN forces shifted the onus of their effort from the police to the military. SADF commanders used a joint command center in southeastern Angola for reconnaissance and troop transport purposes.⁴²⁰

One of the COIN force’s top operational priorities in this phase was to clear a strategic zone from along the “cutline,” the name given to the Namibian-Angolan border, which lay adjacent to the insurgents’ infiltration corridors. To achieve this, SADF soldiers launched Operation Savannah, an offensive consisting of 2,500–3,000 troops driving north from Namibia into Angola. COIN forces were aided by fighters from the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola, two groups that were fighting the Soviet- and Cuban-backed government of the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola.⁴²¹ Operation Savannah was a success, providing COIN forces with an operational area that stretched from Kaokoland in the northwest to the Caprivi

⁴²⁰ John A. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution, Volume II: Exile Politics and Guerilla Warfare (1962–1976)*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978, p. 266.

⁴²¹ Dale, 1993, p. 12.

Strip in the northeast. Between 1974 and 1976, the COIN force tripled its number of troops in this area, from 15,000 to 45,000.⁴²²

By denying SWAPO bases inside the country, the COIN force was able to deny the insurgents access to vital materials, intelligence, and recruits. Other efforts included destroying and capturing weaponry, especially land mines, and forcing the insurgents to move weapon depots and training areas away from the Namibian border and deeper into Angola. This made it more difficult for the insurgents to infiltrate Namibia to conduct attacks. The COIN force launched seven major cross-border raids into Angola between 1978 and 1985. These “sanctuary denial” operations were supported by artillery, rocket launchers, and close air support, in addition to airborne and air-mobile assaults.⁴²³

In 1976, the UN declared South Africa’s control over Namibia an “occupation” and, in 1977, the UN General Assembly recognized SWAPO as the country’s legitimate ruling party. This meant little to the South African government, which continued to tinker with its COIN strategy. In 1980, the South West African Territory Force (SWATF) was formed and immediately adopted a defensive posture. The SWATF mobilized troops and officers across Namibia’s diverse ethnic spectrum, but in total it was about 70 percent nonwhite. This is important because protests by white Namibians against conscription were becoming commonplace during this period. By 1984, SWATF forces trained for local defense and COIN operations numbered approximately 11,000.⁴²⁴ Besides SWATF personnel, elite police COIN forces known as *koevoet* (“crowbar” in Afrikaans) were alleged to have conducted crimes against civilians, including assault and rape.⁴²⁵

Toward the end of the phase, SWAPO benefited from significant growth in the Namibian domestic political infrastructure, accompanied by an influx of support from the insurgents’ external sponsors, primarily Eastern Bloc countries and several African countries sym-

⁴²² Dale, 1993, p. 12.

⁴²³ Owen, 1987–1988.

⁴²⁴ Owen, 1987–1988.

⁴²⁵ Dale, 1993, p. 12.

pathetic to the insurgents' cause. Namibian moderates briefly formed an interim government known as the Transitional Government of National Unity in June 1985, and the next year, more than 13,000 people attended SWAPO's first legal meeting. Although low-intensity conflict continued until the very end of the phase, a U.S.-mediated peace agreement setting a timetable for Namibian independence was signed by South Africa, Cuba, and Angola in 1988. The quid pro quo included the withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia in return for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. SWAPO was swept into power in 1989 following national elections.

Conventional Explanations

Because the period of the SWAPO insurgency in Namibia overlapped with the ANC insurgency in South Africa for the majority of their respective durations, the conflict in Namibia was regarded as far less important to the South Africans and thus commanded fewer COIN force resources. Throughout most of the conflict, the insurgents were unable to establish bases within the country, but the prevalence of land mines in the border area still made it difficult for the South Africans to operate with complete impunity. By the second phase of the conflict, both domestic and international opinion began to shift markedly. In both South Africa and Namibia, an anticonscription campaign took root among the white population. Meanwhile, international sanctions against the South African government in Pretoria increased. COIN force operations often killed large numbers of insurgents, and the South Africans inflicted considerable punishment on SWAPO insurgents, but international opinion favored independence for Namibia. The tide of history therefore ushered in a COIN loss that, in different geopolitical conditions, likely would have been a COIN win.

Distinctive Characteristics

- The insurgency in Namibia came to be known throughout South Africa as “the corporal’s war” because it was characterized

by small-unit mobility, constant patrolling, and low-intensity combat operations.⁴²⁶

- Even though South Africa was initially banned from militarizing neighboring Namibia, by 1976, there were 45,000 troops in the operational area of the country. By some accounts, the territory had become a “military fiefdom.”⁴²⁷
- About midway through the second phase of the conflict, the South African government recognized that its priority had to be defending South Africa proper, and it began to shift resources away from Namibia and back toward protecting its major cities and towns.

Figure 16
Map of Namibia



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR2912-16

⁴²⁶ Dale, 1993, p. 12.

⁴²⁷ Dale, 1993, p. 12.

South Africa, 1960–1990

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) fought against the apartheid government of white minority rule in South Africa over a period of more than 30 years, from 1960 to 1994. The ANC and its armed wing, Umkhunto we Sizwe (MK), or “Spear of the Nation,” waged a protracted campaign of sabotage, assassination, and bombing against a militarily superior SADF. In the early stages of the conflict, the ANC was unable to establish a robust presence within South Africa itself, so instead the insurgents operated from bases in external countries favorable to the ANC, including Angola, Namibia, and Mozambique, at different times throughout the conflict. By the 1990, international opinion had turned against the government in Pretoria, and apartheid as a system of government was deemed illegitimate, paving the way for Mandela’s ascension to power and the end of white rule in South Africa in 1994. Despite practicing sound COIN concepts on balance, the South Africans were unable to overcome the tide of history and the collapse of apartheid as an acceptable system of government.

Case Narrative

Phase I: “The Spear of the Nation” (1960–1969)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: COIN force of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas (or to prevail in the preponderance of conventional engagements, should overmatched insurgents choose to give battle); COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent intelligence; COIN force employed indiscriminate force; COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent recruiting

When the ANC was initially declared illegal, some in the South African security establishment thought that this would be a debilitat-

ing blow to the group. The result, however, was to push the insurgents underground and hasten the start of the conflict. Sympathy and recruits for the ANC flooded in following the murder of 69 protesters in the Sharpeville Massacre in March 1960. By the time it was officially banned, the ANC had been planning a move underground for the better part of the previous decade. The Mandela Plan transitioned the ANC from mass democratic politics to revolutionary warfare.

In 1963, the South African government passed the Sabotage Act. This law gave the authorities the right to detain individuals for up to 90 days without trial. Many prominent ANC leaders, including Nelson Mandela, were arrested under the Sabotage Act and placed in jail for extended periods. In response to a raid on their safehouse at Liliesleaf farm in Rivonia and the trial that followed, the insurgents looked to move their operations outside South Africa. Operation Mayibuye was the ANC's plan to establish an external network and was implemented in 1963.

During the first phase of the insurgency, there was little evidence of the stalemate that was to ensue years later. On the contrary, the COIN force most certainly retained the upper hand. The insurgents were unorganized, poorly equipped, and militarily inferior on the whole. The SADF, on the other hand, was without question *the* preeminent military force in southern Africa. South Africa's Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) was a well-equipped and steadily resourced branch that sent its officers abroad for advanced training in such countries as France, Germany, the United States, and Great Britain.⁴²⁸ A civilian counterpart to the DMI, known as Republican Intelligence, was initially assigned the mission of containing and eliminating MK activities within South Africa.

⁴²⁸ According to Rocky Williams, DMI members received "on-the-job training" through participation in foreign COIN campaigns. South African General Magnus Malan was deployed to Algeria with the specific mandate to hone his interrogation techniques and conduct counterintelligence operations with the French army. These lessons were then passed on to Republican Intelligence. Rocky Williams, "The Other Armies: A Brief Historical Overview of Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK), 1961–1994," *Military History Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 5, June 2000.

Another genuine effort to blunt the insurgency during its initial phases was the creation of the Bureau of State Security Z-Squad in the mid-1960s. The Z-Squad was a unit with responsibility for eliminating ANC activists in the townships. Because bringing the supporters and sympathizers of the ANC to trial was both difficult and costly, the Z-Squad circumvented this problem by killing these individuals.⁴²⁹

In its search for sanctuary and training, the ANC came into contact with myriad other insurgent groups. One of these groups was the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and its armed wing, the Zimbabwe Independent People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA). In August and September 1967, the Luthuli Detachment of the ANC/MK teamed with ZAPU/ZIPRA to fight a pitched battle against Rhodesian COIN forces in the Wankie Game Reserve near the border of Zambia and Botswana. These joint operations continued from December 1967 until July 1968, during the Sipolilo Campaign fought against a combined South African–Rhodesian security force detachment.

To deal with the mounting threat posed by the insurgents, the South African government passed Terrorism Act No. 83 of 1967; similar to the Sabotage Act of 1963, it allowed the authorities to detain individuals suspected of terrorist activities for up to 60 days without trial. At this point in the conflict, both the insurgents and the counter-insurgents began to abandon prior restraints.

Phase II: "No Longer Playing by Queensbury Rules" (1969–1977)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent materiel acquisition; External support to insurgents from strong state/military; COIN force employed indiscriminate force; COIN force engaged in more coercion/intimidation than insurgents

At the Morogoro Conference in 1969, the MK presented its "strategy and tactics" document, which signified the official beginning of no-holds-barred armed struggle. This document guided ANC operations

⁴²⁹ For a fascinating firsthand account of the Z-Squad, see Gordon Winter, *Inside BOSS: South Africa's Secret Police*, London: Penguin Books, 1981.

for two decades and called for a greater emphasis on insurgent operations in the rural areas of the country. The harmonization of the political and military branches of the ANC was a key issue at the conference. One by-product was the establishment of the Revolutionary Council, tasked with the difficult job of streamlining the activities of these two elements. Some progress was made, but these dual tensions dogged the ANC throughout the conflict. Not to be outdone, the Z-Squad stepped up its campaign of assassinations.⁴³⁰ As assassination became a favored tool of the COIN force, South African special forces assumed an even greater role in the conflict.

When the last Portuguese troops left Mozambique and Angola in 1974 and the government of Rhodesia collapsed, the ANC moved into these countries and devised a strategy referred to as “hacking the way home,” back to South Africa. The COIN force countered with its “Total National Strategy Policy,” announced in a 1975 white paper. The strategy incorporated lessons from conflicts in Rhodesia and Namibia and the British imperial policing techniques used in Kenya. The security forces, including the British South African Police and South African Police Service personnel, were trained in sabotage, assassination, and COIN tactics.⁴³¹ No longer surrounded by friendly states, South African COIN forces went beyond their borders to capture and kill insurgents in what were termed “hot-pursuit” operations.⁴³²

With the COIN force focusing on events outside its own borders, the Soweto Uprising erupted in 1976 and altered the domestic political landscape entirely. The Soweto Uprising, also known as “June 16th,” took place on that date in 1976 in Soweto Township. The uprising began as a series of high school student–led protests, organized by the South African Students Movement Action Committee,

⁴³⁰ Kevin A. O’Brien, “The Use of Assassination as a Tool of State Policy: South Africa’s Counter-Revolutionary Strategy, 1979–1992 (Part II),” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2001a, p. 110.

⁴³¹ Kevin A. O’Brien, “Counter-Intelligence for Counter-Revolutionary Warfare: The South African Police Security Branch, 1979–1990,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 16, No. 3, September 2001c, p. 41.

⁴³² Esterhuysen and Jordaan, 2010, p. 113.

in response to the introduction of the Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974, which declared Afrikaans the official language of instruction in local schools for science and tradecraft subjects. Approximately 15,000 students assembled and marched to Orlando West Junior Secondary School. The police initially attempted to disperse the crowd with tear gas, but when that failed, they shot into the crowd, killing two children.⁴³³ When news of the killings spread, others joined the protest, including Indian and Colored teens. Violent riots spread throughout Soweto, the Transvaal, and to the Cape. Government buildings were vandalized. A favorite target was state-owned beer halls and liquor shops, two sources of revenue for the township's administration. According to Robert Price, the response to the police brutality that ignited the Soweto Uprising was "unprecedented in its scope and endurance" and transformed Soweto into a "war zone."⁴³⁴

In clashes throughout the township, protesters hurled rocks, bricks, and stones at the police, who responded in kind with gunfire from pistols and automatic rifles.⁴³⁵ Three days into the uprising, the press reported that 97 people (including two whites) had been killed and another 1,118 individuals had been wounded. In total, 430 schools were burned down and 124 administration board buildings and 222 official vehicles were destroyed.⁴³⁶ In the beginning, the protestors' anger was directed at Bantu education and Afrikaans instruction, but it soon evolved into an outpouring of hatred whose ire became the apartheid system as a whole. Now that the ANC perceived a broad enough base of support *within* South Africa, and with Pretoria dis-

⁴³³ Roger B. Beck, *The History of South Africa*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000, p. 160.

⁴³⁴ Robert M. Price, *The Apartheid State in Crisis: Political Transformation in South Africa, 1975–1990*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 46–47. Also see Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill, *Whirlwind Before the Storm: The Origins and Development of the Uprising in Soweto and the Rest of South Africa from June to December 1976*, London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1980, and Republic of South Africa, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Riots at Soweto and Elsewhere* (Cillie Commission Report), Pretoria, South Africa, 1980.

⁴³⁵ Price, 1991, p. 47.

⁴³⁶ Price, 1991, p. 48.

tracted, the insurgents launched a campaign of armed propaganda and a “people’s war.”

Phase III: “Toward a Total National Strategy” (1977–1984)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Level of violence low/manageable; *No* parts of the area of conflict were no-go or otherwise denied to COIN force; COIN force morale remained high throughout the phase; COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics

The ANC leadership visited Vietnam in 1978 to meet with former insurgents and learn from their experiences in the Vietnam War that could benefit the ANC. The report from this trip became the basis for the ANC’s “green book,” also known as the *Theses on Our Strategic Line*. The strategy came out of a meeting of the ANC’s Politico-Military Strategy Commission. One of the takeaways from the Vietnam trip was the need to increase the group’s operational tempo.

With the increase in insurgent incidents, SADF Chief General Magnus Malan ordered the South African police to create an intelligence collection capability in neighboring Namibia, modeled on Rhodesia’s Selous Scouts. The unit formed under Operation K and came to be known as *koevoet* (Afrikaans for “crowbar”), although its official title was the South African Police Counter-Insurgency Unit. The *koevoet* went operational in 1979.⁴³⁷ That same year, the National Security Management System was created based on a series of committee recommendations on the best ways to fight insurgents operating in South West Africa, particularly from the Territory Counterinsurgency Committees.⁴³⁸ In 1983, the *koevoet* leadership was sent to Vlakplaas, a farm outside Pretoria, and set about reconfiguring different elements of the covert operators’ structure and command. The result was the creation of C1, a unit designed to identify and track ANC and Pan-

⁴³⁷ O’Brien, 2001c, p. 43.

⁴³⁸ O’Brien, 2001a, p. 112.

Africanist Congress insurgents to “flip” them to work against their former comrades.⁴³⁹

Rearranging subunits in the security forces did help the COIN forces become better organized, but it did not put an end to increasingly bold insurgent attacks. In 1980, the same year that the SADF absorbed soldiers from Rhodesia, the ANC conducted a spectacular attack on a Sasol oil refinery. In a February 1981 speech to Parliament, Chief General Malan declared, “We shall, by means of our security forces, locate and destroy hostile terrorist bases, wherever they may be established.” This statement would guide the special forces’ security strategy throughout the 1980s.⁴⁴⁰

In January 1982, the ANC attacked the Koeberg nuclear power plant. At the end of the year, COIN forces conducted a cross-border raid into Lesotho that killed 42 people, 30 of whom were ANC fighters.⁴⁴¹ Operation Drama was set into motion in 1983. The crux of this effort was the creation of “Super ZAPU,” a spoiler group used to destabilize the government of Zimbabwe. Also in 1983, the DMI set up its Delta-40, which replaced the Z-Squads as the primary vehicle for the South African security forces’ policy of assassination. These covert units were not constrained by territory or boundaries; instead, they were sanctioned to chase insurgents into any country where they fled. Between 1981 and 1984, Mozambique was raided 12 separate times.

The Nkomati Accord was a nonaggression pact signed by the governments of South Africa and Mozambique on March 16, 1984. While not an attempt at conflict resolution between the government and the insurgents, this particular accord is relevant to this analysis because of the effect it had on the conflict. Although it did not involve the insurgents per se, it did involve the COIN force/host-nation government, as well as a government that provided valuable support to the insurgents.

The crux of the agreement was that each state would stop supporting active insurgent movements targeting the other’s government.

⁴³⁹ O’Brien, 2001a, p. 46.

⁴⁴⁰ Kevin O’Brien, “Special Forces for Counter-Revolutionary Warfare,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Summer 2001b, p. 96.

⁴⁴¹ O’Brien, 2001b, p. 98.

In the years leading up to the accord, the People's Republic of Mozambique had provided support to the ANC, while the Republic of South Africa assisted the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) in its quest to destabilize the Mozambique Liberation Front–controlled government of Mozambique.⁴⁴² RENAMO was the brainchild of Portuguese and Rhodesian special forces and had no ties to the tribal structure in Mozambique.⁴⁴³ At first, Mozambique's leader, Samora Machel, failed to follow through on his end of the bargain. In turn, Pretoria continued to supply RENAMO with weapons and supplies. RENAMO insurgents conducted deadly operations against the government in Maputo. No longer able to withstand the attacks, Machel agreed to expel the ANC/MK from Mozambique and close down the group's bases. For its part, South Africa offered economic and infrastructural aid and support to the government of Mozambique.⁴⁴⁴ The regional proxy war ended with the signing of the Rome General Peace Accords as part of the end of the Mozambican civil war. The UN Mission to Mozambique supervised the détente until 1994. Following the Nkomati Accords, MK moved its command structure from Maputo, Mozambique, to parts of Zambia and Angola.⁴⁴⁵

Phase IV: “Crossing the Rubicon with a Revolutionary Onslaught” (1985–1990)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily initiated by insurgents; COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent materiel acquisition; Flow of cross-border insurgent support significantly decreased or remained dramatically reduced or largely absent; External support to insurgents significantly reduced

⁴⁴² Francis Meli, *A History of the ANC: South Africa Belongs to Us*, Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988, pp. 194–195.

⁴⁴³ Kevin A. O'Brien, *The South African Intelligence Services: From Apartheid to Democracy, 1948–2005*, London: Routledge, 2011, p. 124.

⁴⁴⁴ O'Brien, 2011, p. 124.

⁴⁴⁵ Tom Lodge, “State of Exile: The African National Congress of South Africa, 1976–1986,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 1, January 1987, p. 10.

Government ministers and military leaders within South Africa's security establishment were confounded that a poorly organized, ill-equipped insurgent force like the ANC could pose such a serious challenge to the hegemony of the state. To fix the problem, they decided to increase expenditures. Between 1985 and 1990, the South African Police Service budget more than doubled.⁴⁴⁶ This period also witnessed the South African government conscripting large segments of the white population. These conscripts were told that the insurgents were part of a larger communist threat to the state.⁴⁴⁷

The South African Police Service and what came to be known as the "Third Force" were foundational elements of the South African government's new strategy, known as "Total Counter-Revolutionary Strategy." The Third Force was the column of security force personnel that operated outside of the law, beholden to no particular agency or organization.⁴⁴⁸ Under Operation Marion, DMI and special forces personnel trained members of the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party in the Caprivi Strip in northern South West Africa.⁴⁴⁹ Due in large measure to the upsurge in attacks during this period, it was not uncommon for the COIN forces to overreact. In June 1985, the South African unit known as Recce 5 launched a raid into Botswana that killed 12 people, injured six, and destroyed five houses.⁴⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the operation was based on faulty intelligence, and the individuals targeted were not ANC insurgents.⁴⁵¹ During Operation Katzen in July 1986, the army

⁴⁴⁶ O'Brien, 2001b, p. 38.

⁴⁴⁷ Pierre du Toit, "South Africa: In Search of Post-Settlement Peace," in John Darby and Roger MacGinty, eds., *The Management of Peace Processes*, New York: Palgrave, 2000, p. 19.

⁴⁴⁸ For the most comprehensive picture of the Third Force, see Stephen Ellis, "The Historical Significance of South Africa's Third Force," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, June 1998, pp. 261–269.

⁴⁴⁹ O'Brien, 2001a, p. 120.

⁴⁵⁰ The Recces played a major role in the COIN conflicts throughout Southern Africa and were utilized in a range of ways, including conducting direct operations against insurgents, pseudo-operations, regional destabilization, and training proxy forces. Anita M. Grossman, "Lost in Transition: The South African Military and Counterinsurgency," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 2008, p. 546.

⁴⁵¹ O'Brien 2001b, p. 99.

intelligence unit affectionately known as “the Hammer” was conducting urban COIN operations in the Eastern Cape province when it shot and killed four activists from Cradock.⁴⁵²

In 1986, Delta-40 was transformed into the Civil Cooperation Bureau. While this was a far more benign-sounding name, the unit was no less deadly. Other changes during this period included the establishment of the Joint Security Staff (Gesamentlike Veiligheidstaf, referred to as Geveilstaf) within the strategic communication directorate (Stratkom) and the formation of the Counterrevolutionary Intelligence Task Team (Teen Rewolusionere Inligtings Taakspan, or Trewits).

Each reorganization was accompanied by more sophisticated operations on the part of the South Africans, but as the mid-1980s wore on, the stalemate grew further entrenched. Undeterred, Pretoria fought on. In August 1986, one month after the Cradock debacle, the COIN forces adopted its “Strategy for the Combating of the ANC,” which had at its core two objectives: Neutralize the ANC leadership, and neutralize the power and influence of well-connected individuals within the organization.⁴⁵³ Four months later, the document was updated with more specific goals: Neutralize “intimidators” through formal and informal policing and identify and eliminate insurgent leaders, “especially those with charisma.”⁴⁵⁴ The reference to “informal policing” came from a report proposed by Major General Abraham “Joup” Joubert, commander of the South African special forces. In his report, known as the “Joubert Plan,” he argued for increased autonomy for the special forces and an expanded role to go after MK fighters.

As the late 1980s approached, a growing stalemate was apparent to even the most biased observers. The apartheid system was buckling from a combination of international pressure, a faltering economy, and relentless attacks by the insurgents, even in the face of stepped-up efforts by the security forces, including such extralegal actions as assassinations.

⁴⁵² O’Brien, 2001a, p. 121.

⁴⁵³ O’Brien, 2001a, p. 121.

⁴⁵⁴ O’Brien, 2001a, p. 121.

In South Africa, “talks about talks” was a euphemism for the informal and secret talks that took place between representatives of the South African apartheid government and members of the ANC’s leadership cadre. Since the talks were informal and secret, they were construed as having low exit costs; the participants could withdraw at a moment’s notice and maintain plausible deniability about participating in the first place. Eight separate meetings were held between October 1987 and July 1990.⁴⁵⁵

The negotiations went through iterations of what issues were most important and refined them to focus almost exclusively on those deemed most salient to the commencement of official negotiations. These included the release of Mandela from prison, support among white South Africans for a peace process, ANC violence, a realistic timetable for transition, the communist factor, sanctions, ANC views on power sharing, and the composition of the ANC leadership.⁴⁵⁶ This strategy undoubtedly had a positive impact on official peace talks once they began, and it paved the way for the Congress for a Democratic South Africa, which set as a goal the establishment of an interim government. Between 1990 and 1994, political violence spiked as both sides experienced setbacks in negotiations, but it did not reach the levels seen prior to 1990. Finally, on April 24, 1994, South Africa held elections that brought the ANC to power with 62.5 percent of the vote.

Conventional Explanations

Conventional explanations mostly concur that if it were not for the collapse of apartheid, the South Africans would have been in a militarily dominant position vis-à-vis the insurgents. However, there are several areas that need further elaboration. During the first phase, the government’s security branch began conducting “pseudo-operations” against the insurgents, in which government forces disguised themselves as

⁴⁵⁵ Though it has not been proven, some observers suggest that talks initially started about ten to 15 years prior to these “talks about talks.” Philip Frankel, *Soldiers in a Storm: The Armed Forces in South African’s Democratic Transition*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁶ Frankel, 2000, p. 23.

insurgents and infiltrated insurgent-controlled territory. These operations were conducted alongside insurgent defectors who were “flipped” by the COIN force.⁴⁵⁷ In the case of South Africa, the insurgent defectors were known as *askaris* (Swahili for “fighters”) and were recruited from both the ANC and the Pan-Africanist Congress.⁴⁵⁸ The *askaris* were able to provide the COIN force with extremely valuable intelligence on the current state of the ANC/MK, which was then used against the insurgents.

During the second phase of the conflict, the release of a South African government strategy document laid out Pretoria’s intention to conduct total and complete warfare. It explicitly made reference to the “total onslaught” being waged by the ANC insurgents and countered that the South African government needed to meet this total onslaught with a “total strategy.” For most of the 1970s and early 1980s, South African COIN forces launched cross-border attacks against ANC insurgents in their external sanctuaries in Angola and Mozambique.

By 1990, the South African government had become increasingly isolated and was treated as a pariah in the international community. The apartheid system was collapsing under its own weight, and white South Africans began mobilizing against conscription into the security forces. Moreover, the security forces had accrued so much power that numerous covert organizations were no longer beholden to the state. Private companies staffed by ex-commandos were involved in smuggling ivory, hardwood, diamonds, and other products.⁴⁵⁹ Others, like 32 Battalion and C1, had morphed into death squads.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Pseudo-operations in South Africa were modeled on similar British operations against the Mau Mau in Kenya (1952–1956), as well as on the Selous Scouts in Rhodesia. Used to great effect,

⁴⁵⁷ Lawrence E. Cline, *Pseudo-Operations and Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Other Countries*, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, June 2005.

⁴⁵⁸ O’Brien, 2001c, pp. 37–41.

⁴⁵⁹ Ellis, 1998, p. 276.

pseudo-operations involved *askaris* leading unsuspecting ANC fighters back into South Africa, where they would be ambushed, abducted, or killed by the South African security forces.

- For the majority of the second phase, Pretoria enjoyed a *cordon sanitaire*; until 1974, South Africa was buffered by white settler governments or nations too economically dependent on the apartheid regime to make independent foreign policy decisions.
- From 1975 to 1976, South Africa participated in the civil war in Angola under the banner of Operation Savannah.⁴⁶⁰ Operation Disa/Silwer was another operation launched to support UNITA in Angola.⁴⁶¹

Figure 17
Map of South Africa



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR291/2-17

⁴⁶⁰ For more on Operation Savannah, see David Williams and Greg Mills, “The Military Role in Political Victory: South Africa, Namibia, and Apartheid,” in David Richards and Greg Mills, eds., *Victory Among People: Lessons from Countering Insurgency and Stabilising Fragile States*, London: RUSI, 2011, pp. 208–211.

⁴⁶¹ O’Brien, 2001b, p. 101.

South Vietnam, 1960–1975

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

Historical accounts of the conflict in Vietnam vary widely in the points emphasized and the explanations offered. Disputes are facilitated by the personal experiences of many direct observers who saw or participated in sometimes very different slices of the conflict at different times, at different operational levels, and in different parts of the country. What, if anything, could have been done to change the outcome of the war (and who is to blame for the outcome) remains fairly hotly contested. What the outcome was, however, is not contested: U.S. forces withdrew in 1973, and the Saigon government fell to the combined pressure of the insurgency and North Vietnamese regular forces in April 1975—unequivocally a COIN loss.

A vigorous rural insurgency that began in 1960 would remove the government's representatives from rural villages and govern in their stead. With significant support from communist North Vietnam, the insurgents spread rapidly. South Vietnamese COIN efforts were heavy-handed, often alienating the rural population and increasing the insurgents' ease of recruiting. U.S. military aid increased, often at the expense of other forms of development aid, and the United States became increasingly frustrated with the failure of the Saigon government to heed its advice regarding political liberalization and government reform. The year 1963 saw the first of roughly a dozen coups or other changes of government in succession, none being any more effective at governance or COIN than the previous.

The domestic insurgency, bolstered by infiltrations of personnel and materiel from North Vietnam, put sufficient pressure on government forces to prompt the United States to commit combat forces beginning in 1964. This commitment rapidly surged to more than 180,000 U.S. troops by the end of 1965 on the way to a peak of more than 500,000 in 1969. Constrained by a desire to avoid drawing China into the war, U.S. action against North Vietnam would never stem the flow of soldiers and resources to the south, and large-scale sweeps of

jungle territory did little to pacify insurgent cadres and their peasant supporters. After 1965, U.S. forces regularly fought not only insurgent guerrillas but also substantial formations of North Vietnamese regulars. Employing air support and overwhelming firepower, the United States almost always prevailed in these engagements, but the south-bound flow of support did not abate.

The infamous Tet Offensive, timed to coincide with the celebration of the lunar new year in early 1968, gave the lie to American claims of a “light at the end of the tunnel” as the insurgents staged coordinated attacks in virtually every urban center in Vietnam. Though psychologically devastating, these attacks were quickly beaten back, with heavy losses inflicted on the communists. The insurgents would never fully recover their strength, especially in the face of a subsequent new U.S. emphasis on the identification and elimination of their political apparatus and on security and pacification in rural villages. However, the damage had been done. Although the United States gained ground against the domestic insurgency, pressure from Chinese- and Soviet-armed North Vietnamese regulars continued to increase as domestic American support for the war waned. When the United States withdrew in 1973, it left a large and well-equipped South Vietnamese army that was no match for the combined might of the domestic insurgency and communist regular forces.

Case Narrative

Phase I: “Unfinished Business” (1960–1963)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: In area of conflict, COIN force perceived as worse than insurgents; Government *failed to provide* better governance than insurgents in area of conflict; Government sponsorship or protection of unpopular economic and social arrangements or cultural institutions; Government maintained weak policing capacity and infrastructural power

The war in Indochina concluded in July 1954 with the Geneva agreement, ending French dominion over the region, dividing what is now

Vietnam at the 17th parallel, and ceding the Northern portion to the communists. The subsequent insurgency did not formally begin until 1960, but the period between the two cases was not without conflict, and it constitutes an important preamble to the South Vietnam case.

The period was marked by a massive state-building project in South Vietnam and a government created out of the end of the Indochina conflict with some residual bureaucratic capacity inherited from the French but little else in terms of infrastructure or governance. Between 1954 and 1960, the United States poured nearly \$1.5 billion in development assistance into South Vietnam to build a government and attendant bureaucracy, create an economy (and currency), establish an industrial base, build transportation infrastructure, and train and equip a national police force and a military.⁴⁶² These efforts were remarkably successful for such an ambitious undertaking over a relatively short period, but the new state was neither genuinely independent (largely relying on continued foreign aid) nor wholly competent by the time the conflict renewed in earnest.

The South Vietnamese president during this preamble phase (and, in fact, during all of Phase I) was Ngo Dinh Diem, a figure viewed quite differently across historical accounts. During the interconflict period, Diem oversaw and shaped the development of the new South Vietnamese government and the country's new army. He had mixed success in balancing traditions, competing elite interests, and his own preferences. The new communist challenge to Diem's government began as early as 1957, when the Viet Minh launched a campaign of terror and assassination aimed largely at village mayors and administrators, the government's sole representatives in rural areas.⁴⁶³

The loss of these predominantly newly appointed officials stung the government, and Diem responded harshly, launching an anticommunist denunciation campaign. While this campaign did considerable damage to the protoinsurgents' support networks, the "brutal, corrupt, and capricious" manner in which it was conducted alienated large seg-

⁴⁶² James M. Carter, *Inventing Vietnam: The United States and State Building, 1954–1968*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

⁴⁶³ Fall, 1964.

ments of the population, both urban and rural.⁴⁶⁴ This alienation, coupled with the fact that the Viet Minh would replace the mayors they assassinated with communist cadres who were much more sympathetic to the plight of local peasants, contributed further to the subversion of the fledgling government.⁴⁶⁵

This preamble period came to an end in May 1960, when a segment of the Viet Minh, a residual element of the communist insurgency that had defeated the French, declared itself the National Liberation Front (NLF) and, with substantial support from North Vietnam, launched a vigorous insurgency. After a brief spate of uprisings and attacks, the communist leadership in Hanoi in North Vietnam called a halt to such tactics, as they were too easily defeated by the conventional forces of the South Vietnamese government. Instead, the North Vietnamese communists pushed the war into the shape they had originally intended: a rural insurgency that would initially rely on small-scale guerrilla action and rise gradually in intensity.⁴⁶⁶ This rural guerrilla campaign was supported by what was at first a trickle of fighters and materiel down an unimproved infiltration path from the north, through Laos, and into South Vietnam. This route would come to be known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail and, by war's end, it would extend along the majority of both the Laotian and Cambodian borders with South Vietnam.⁴⁶⁷

According to Mark Atwood Lawrence, "By the start of 1961, then, the communists had laid the political and military groundwork for a new war. The conflict had also acquired one of the most distinct features it would have over the years to come: it was simultaneously a civil war among Southerners and a cross-border effort by Hanoi to reunify the country on its own terms, a complexity that would often elude American policymakers prone to see the conflict simply as a result of

⁴⁶⁴ Spector, 1985, p. 310.

⁴⁶⁵ Raymond Millen, *The Political Context Behind Successful Revolutionary Movements, Three Case Studies: Vietnam (1955–63), Algeria (1945–62), and Nicaragua (1967–79)*, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, March 2008.

⁴⁶⁶ Moyar, 2006.

⁴⁶⁷ Lawrence, 2008, p. 65.

Northern aggression against the South.”⁴⁶⁸ By 1962, the insurgents had killed upwards of 10,000 village chiefs from a total of 16,000 villages. By mid-1963, communist tax collections were prevalent in 42 out of 45 provinces.⁴⁶⁹ This led to Bernard Fall’s famed conclusion that a state that loses an insurgency is “not out-fought but out-governed.”⁴⁷⁰

The intensification of the insurgency resulted in several new developments. First, the government’s rapid expansion of the relatively new Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) increasingly led to conscription.⁴⁷¹ Second, the United States increased its support, providing more money, materiel, and advisers. The creation of U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, in early 1962 marked the official start of U.S. direct involvement in the war.⁴⁷² Third, despite investments made in the preamble period, Vietnamese infrastructure (especially in and around ports) lacked sufficient capacity for the throughput demanded by increasing U.S. military aid. This, in turn, led to increased attempts to build up the country’s infrastructure. However, this new effort focused exclusively on military needs, allowing the broader development needs of the fledging Vietnamese state to languish.⁴⁷³ What the insurgency did not bring was government reform. Supremely frustrating to U.S. embassy personnel, Diem refused to adopt many of the reforms the embassy pressed; he had not liberalized the economy or the political system, nor had he pursued land reform in earnest or abandoned the practice of awarding sinecures to friends and relatives.⁴⁷⁴ “Although Diem inherited a functional administration from the French, he failed to pursue judicial, economic, and administrative reforms, empower subordinates to exercise government authority, or create a system of

⁴⁶⁸ Lawrence, 2008.

⁴⁶⁹ Millen, 2008.

⁴⁷⁰ Bernard B. Fall, quoted in David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 88.

⁴⁷¹ Bradley, 2009.

⁴⁷² Fall, 1964.

⁴⁷³ Carter, 2008.

⁴⁷⁴ Carter, 2008.

oversight to curb corruption. Consequently, corruption abounded in all forms.⁴⁷⁵ South Vietnam's economic dependence on the United States increased, but the government's responsiveness to U.S. requests and demands remained ambiguous.

U.S. assistance did lead to military improvements, and despite the considerable gains by the insurgents, the conflict was not wholly one-sided.⁴⁷⁶ Where South Vietnamese forces were able to find and engage the insurgents, they prevailed. The insurgents avoided such engagements where they could, however, and the focus of U.S. assistance on training and equipping conventional forces left local police and paramilitary forces "ill-equipped, badly trained, and poorly motivated, and unable to provide local security."⁴⁷⁷ The need for local security, however, led to an effort to physically separate the insurgents from the population.⁴⁷⁸ The strategic hamlet program sought to relocate vulnerable populations in more defensible fortified hamlets, poorly mirroring British resettlement efforts in Malaya.⁴⁷⁹ While somewhat successful in separating the peasants from the insurgents, the campaign failed to consider the importance of the peasants' ties to their ancestral lands, and corruption prevented many of the incentives or benefits designed to ameliorate the dislocation from reaching the population.⁴⁸⁰ Ultimately, the program expanded more rapidly than the supporting resources and the forces securing the host of new settlements could sustain, condemning the effort to failure.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁵ Millen, 2008, p. 17.

⁴⁷⁶ Andrew J. Birtle, "Triumph Forsaken as Military History," in Andrew Wiest and Michael J. Doidge, eds., *Triumph Revisited: Historians Battle for the Vietnam War*, New York: Routledge, 2010.

⁴⁷⁷ William Rosenau, *US Internal Security Assistance to South Vietnam: Insurgency, Subversion and Public Order*, New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 116.

⁴⁷⁸ Ann Marlowe, "The Picture Awaits: The Birth of Modern Counterinsurgency," *World Affairs Journal*, Summer 2009.

⁴⁷⁹ Fall, 1964.

⁴⁸⁰ Carter, 2008.

⁴⁸¹ Marlowe, 2009.

While the various efforts to combat the insurgents met with some success, ultimately “both Diem and his American advisers failed to recognize the extent to which the measures aimed at suppressing the Viet Cong increased antigovernment sentiment in the countryside and created a reservoir of potential recruits for the Viet Cong.”⁴⁸²

Phase II: “One Incompetent Vietnamese Government After Another Leads to the Americanization of the War” (1964–January 1968)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: COIN force and government had different goals/levels of commitment, or both had relatively low levels of commitment; Host-nation economically dependent on external actor; Flow of cross-border insurgent support significantly *increased*; Corrupt and arbitrary personalistic government rule; Fighting in phase substantially balanced between conventional and small-unit engagement; Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated

Fractious and ambitious Vietnamese elites had long plotted against Diem, and he fought off or foiled several coup attempts in the early 1960s. Growing dissatisfaction with Diem among certain parts of the U.S. mission led to tacit support for a coup in late 1963—a coup that succeeded. Though Diem had, at times, been difficult for the Americans to work with, the government that succeeded him was worse. The 1963 coup did lead to political liberalization, which the United States had wanted, but this did not prove beneficial. “Rather than improving the government as those Americans had predicted, liberalization had the opposite effect, enabling enemies of the government to undermine its prestige and authority, as well as to foment discord and violence between religious groups.”⁴⁸³ Following the coup, various elite factions became “a collection of competitive, ambitious, insecure, and war-weary men, whose internecine bickering occupied most of their

⁴⁸² Spector, 1985, p. 335.

⁴⁸³ Moyar, 2006, p. xvii.

energies.”⁴⁸⁴ Disappointed with the new government, the United States supported yet another coup in January 1964.⁴⁸⁵ The resulting leadership change made little difference. The string of coups continued. Between 1963 and 1965, there were fully 12 different governments in South Vietnam.⁴⁸⁶ Not only did each coup paralyze progress and heighten uncertainty, but it usually also increased turmoil, making things worse instead of better. With each new administration came a round of government purges, removing previously appointed governors and prefects and replacing them with a new round of sinecure appointments.⁴⁸⁷ In this way, the few competent governors who were available were dismissed, and all pretense of consistency in administration was abandoned. These constant changes hampered the war effort and ceded the initiative to the NLF.

The NLF adopted a newly aggressive strategy in 1964 and gained substantial ground, including a large liberated zone in central Vietnam. Only the cities remained under firm government control, and the North Vietnamese continued to improve and extend the Ho Chi Minh Trail until it was capable of accommodating large trucks, and thus more fighters and materiel, including regular People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN) formations.⁴⁸⁸

On August 2, 1964, the USS *Maddox* was attacked by North Vietnamese torpedo boats in international waters off the coast of North Vietnam. A second attack on the *Maddox* was reported on August 4, but probably did not actually take place.⁴⁸⁹ An enraged U.S. Congress hastily passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution on August 7, enjoining President Lyndon Johnson to take “all necessary measures” in support

⁴⁸⁴ Carter, 2008, p. 154.

⁴⁸⁵ Lawrence, 2008.

⁴⁸⁶ Bradley, 2009.

⁴⁸⁷ Prados, 2009.

⁴⁸⁸ Bradley, 2009.

⁴⁸⁹ Robert J. Hanyok, “Skunks, Bogies, Silent Hounds, and the Flying Fish: The Gulf of Tonkin Mystery, 2–4 August 1964,” *Cryptologic Quarterly*, Vols. 19–20, Nos. 4–1, Winter 2000–Spring 2001.

of the South Vietnamese government and making an open-ended commitment to the war.⁴⁹⁰ Americanization of the conflict soon followed.

The presence of U.S. troops grew rapidly, with approximately 184,300 in the country by the end of 1965—a number that would more than double by the end of 1966.⁴⁹¹ U.S. action against North Vietnam was never unconstrained, however. Two principles guided this restraint. First, mutual concern about provoking the Chinese and bringing China into the war limited the support of both external powers.⁴⁹² Second, President Johnson and his advisers believed that North Vietnam could be pressured by a slowly escalating bombing campaign.⁴⁹³ The stated intentions of the air campaign against the north were to bolster South Vietnamese morale, prevent the infiltration of fighters and materiel, and punish the insurgents to the point that they would sue for peace. However, it unambiguously failed to accomplish the latter two tasks. Bolstered by Chinese support, which included antiaircraft weapons, the crews to operate them, and troops to help repair bomb damage, the North Vietnamese accelerated the southward flow of reinforcements and materiel.⁴⁹⁴

In the south, U.S. troops engaged in ambitious sweep operations in the jungles and dropped nearly twice the tonnage of bombs that they had dropped in the north between 1965 and 1968. The U.S. strategy was one of attrition, intending to reduce the numbers of available NLF and PAVN combatants faster than the north could replenish them. Efforts to combat the domestic insurgency in the south, the political organization and the cadres of the NLF, were left largely to the ARVN.⁴⁹⁵ The jungle and residual Vietnamese skill and attention to camouflage (see the discussion in the Indochina case) gave the insurgents a considerable advantage, allowing their forces to avoid large for-

⁴⁹⁰ Lawrence, 2008.

⁴⁹¹ Bradley, 2009.

⁴⁹² Bradley, 2009.

⁴⁹³ Moyar, 2006.

⁴⁹⁴ Lawrence, 2008.

⁴⁹⁵ Lawrence, 2008.

mations of troops, attacking only smaller formations when they had a numerical advantage. This reduced the ability of the United States and the ARVN to operate in small units, which, in turn, reduced their overall mobility and increased the insurgents' freedom of action in the countryside.⁴⁹⁶

After 1965, guerrilla warfare substantially began to transition to operations much closer to conventional warfare. While guerrilla attacks and raids still occurred, NLF and PAVN units, generously equipped with Chinese and Soviet weapons, massed to engage U.S. and southern conventional forces with increasing frequency.⁴⁹⁷ Military morale, already low in the ARVN, began to slide for U.S. troops as well. Between 1965 and 1968, desertions, drug use, and the number of U.S. soldiers absent without leave increased rapidly.⁴⁹⁸

Efforts to combat the political apparatus of the NLF and foster development among the Vietnamese peasantry were hampered both by insecurity and by government incompetence and corruption. U.S. aid grew to be a huge portion of South Vietnam's economy, exceeding the country's absorptive capacity, distorting the domestic economy, surging inflation, and fueling corruption.⁴⁹⁹ "In mid-1966, U.S. official reporting suggested that theft, bribery, the black market, currency manipulation, and waste accounted for as much as 40 per cent of U.S. aid funds and goods entering South Vietnam."⁵⁰⁰

Still, some of the aid reached its targets. The ARVN grew in size (if not necessarily fighting quality or COIN capability), and the number of U.S. forces in the country grew. U.S. forces continued to prevail when they engaged large military formations, inflicting much heavier casualties on communist forces. To forestall increasing ambivalence about the war among the American populace, official reporting on the conflict became undeservedly rosy and optimistic. Much would

⁴⁹⁶ Moyar, 2006.

⁴⁹⁷ Moyar, 2006.

⁴⁹⁸ Prados, 2009.

⁴⁹⁹ Bradley, 2009.

⁵⁰⁰ Bradley, 2009, p. 122.

change in early 1968 after an offensive during the Tet celebration to mark the lunar new year.

Phase III: “Too Little, Too Late” (1968–1973)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: COIN force and government had different goals/levels of commitment or both had relatively low levels of commitment; Host-nation economically dependent on external actor; Flow of cross-border insurgent support significantly *increased*; Fighting in phase substantially balanced between conventional and small-unit engagement; Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated; External professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of insurgents; COIN force *no longer* of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas; Host-nation elites had perverse incentives to continue conflict

The third phase of the Vietnam conflict is one of the most contentious in the competing histories and explanations of the case. The Tet Offensive is argued to have been both a victory and a defeat for the communists, and subsequent improvements in U.S. pacification efforts are variously characterized as being either so successful that their subsequent abandonment was tantamount to abandoning victory, or too little, too late.

The phase began with the countrywide Tet Offensive of 1968. In an unanticipated strategic surprise, roughly 84,000 insurgent and PAVN troops launched attacks against hundreds of cities and villages from the 17th parallel to the Mekong Delta.⁵⁰¹ “Most remarkably, a squad of NLF commandos briefly penetrated the U.S. embassy compound in Saigon, the symbolic epicenter of American power in the country.”⁵⁰² The offensive, and its apparent success, was short-lived. Within days, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces had beaten back the onslaught, and at immense cost to communist forces. The NLF was hit

⁵⁰¹ Lawrence, 2008.

⁵⁰² Lawrence, 2008, p. 115.

particularly hard, not only suffering massive casualties as their attacks were repelled but also losing potential recruits due to the disappointment at the failure of this “final offensive.”⁵⁰³ The NLF would never fully recover. However, even if the insurgency had dealt itself a heavy blow and the offensive gained little in traditional military terms, its psychological impact cannot be overestimated:

[T]he Tet attacks . . . undermined the frequent promises of General William Westmoreland, the American commander in Vietnam, that he could see “the light at the end of the tunnel.” The gap between rhetoric and reality in the early days of the offensive astounded and outraged many Americans, so much so that President Johnson felt compelled to quit his re-election campaign in the aftermath of Tet. Even after American and South Vietnamese forces rallied to defeat the offensive, Tet proved to be a turning point in US perceptions and policy towards the war. Support for the war and the American relationship with the South Vietnamese government began to unravel.⁵⁰⁴

With the military advantage gained after Tet, U.S. forces intensified their efforts, making 1969 the bloodiest year of the war on both sides. That year also saw the high-water mark for U.S. troops in country, 543,400.⁵⁰⁵ General William Westmoreland was replaced as the commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam by General Creighton Abrams, who made two significant strategic changes: First, U.S. forces adopted a focus on providing security to the South Vietnamese population and attacking and dismantling the insurgency’s political apparatus, and, second, the United States sought to shift more of the combat burden to ARVN forces to put more forces in the field, lessen the casualty burden of U.S. forces, and move toward the creation of a force that might maintain security once the United States withdrew.⁵⁰⁶ Both efforts

⁵⁰³ Bradley, 2009.

⁵⁰⁴ Bradley, 2009, p. 153.

⁵⁰⁵ Lawrence, 2008.

⁵⁰⁶ Lawrence, 2008, p. 131.

bore fruit. U.S. pacification initiatives, including civil operations, revolutionary development support, the U.S. Marine Corps Combined Action Platoons initiative, and the local intelligence-gathering Phoenix program, put increasing pressure on the NLF.⁵⁰⁷ The ARVN grew larger and better equipped.⁵⁰⁸ The extension of government control over the South Vietnamese countryside created new opportunities for rural development projects, and, finally, earnest land reform began under the “Land to the Tiller” program.⁵⁰⁹

However, pacification and ongoing military efforts did not always work well together. Combat activities and a large military presence tended to alienate the rural population and undermine pacification efforts, and continued combat increased the flow of refugees. “More than once did heavy combat operations destroy a village that had already been the object of much aid attention.”⁵¹⁰

Mounting problems for the insurgents did not mean that the United States had belatedly found the formula for success, however. COIN forces still confronted formidable military and political problems.⁵¹¹ For another, though larger and better armed, the ARVN still retained fundamental weaknesses, suffering a shortage of qualified, competent, and honest officers, as well as generally low morale and a lack of aggressiveness, particularly relative to their well-motivated counterparts in the PAVN.⁵¹² Further, morale was low and dropping among U.S. forces. Drafted enlisted soldiers were more interested in surviving their tours than fighting the enemy. “Working it out” became slang for a sort of rough battlefield democracy that emerged, in which officers and troops reconciled and adjudicated orders; mutiny, a large-scale refusal to carry out orders, became an actual possibility.⁵¹³ Finally,

⁵⁰⁷ Prados, 2009.

⁵⁰⁸ Lawrence, 2008.

⁵⁰⁹ Lawrence, 2008, p. 144.

⁵¹⁰ Carter, 2008, p. 217.

⁵¹¹ Lawrence, 2008, p. 133.

⁵¹² Bradley, 2009.

⁵¹³ Prados, 2009.

a host of weaknesses continued to plague the South Vietnamese government. Corruption was pervasive in all sectors of the administration, and the Tet fighting had created over 1 million new refugees, increasing pressure on an already overwhelmed national infrastructure and bureaucracy.⁵¹⁴

The Chinese began to offer even greater quantities of supplies to the North Vietnamese, including, for the first time, tanks.⁵¹⁵ At the same time, due to domestic political pressure, the United States was drawing down troop levels in the country and beginning to search for a political solution to the conflict. Through diplomatic back channels to Hanoi, President Richard Nixon signaled a willingness to withdraw all U.S. troops from South Vietnam without a simultaneous pullout by North Vietnamese forces, in effect acknowledging that the United States could not dislodge North Vietnamese power from the south.⁵¹⁶ An agreement was finally reached along those lines in early 1973.

Phase IV: “The Precipitous Decline” (1973–1975)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: COIN force and government had different goals/levels of commitment or both had relatively low levels of commitment; Host-nation economically dependent on external actor; Flow of cross-border insurgent support significantly *increased*; Fighting in phase primarily force on force conventional fighting; Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated; External professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of insurgents; External professional military *no longer* engaged in fighting on behalf of government; Corrupt and arbitrary personalistic government rule

The peace settlement, signed in Paris in January 1973, led to the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the region (including Vietnam, Laos, and

⁵¹⁴ Lawrence, 2008.

⁵¹⁵ Prados, 2009.

⁵¹⁶ Lawrence, 2008.

Cambodia) by the end of March 1973. This severely weakened the South Vietnamese state: Not only were the troops gone but so too were the support personnel and the construction firms that had built much of the infrastructure.⁵¹⁷ The South Vietnamese government still stood, and copious economic and military aid still flowed from the United States, but the fact that more than 150,000 North Vietnamese troops remained in South Vietnam was menacing indeed.⁵¹⁸

It was the South Vietnamese who would violate the cease-fire by launching attacks seeking to relieve areas controlled by the communists. Despite the continued flow of U.S. money and materiel, these attacks brought little success, and ARVN forces soon found themselves on the defensive. Aggressive action by the NLF and PAVN regulars in late 1973 and early 1974 led to ARVN routs in several areas, with the communists retaking their former strongholds and demolishing remaining pacification efforts. As time separated the United States from the Paris agreement, Washington steadily distanced itself from Saigon and its promised commitments diminished. In 1974, the U.S. Congress approved just \$750 million in economic and military assistance, less than a third of the \$2.3 billion provided in 1973.⁵¹⁹

South Vietnam teetered, with military shortages and poor troop morale, growing economic woes, and burgeoning resentment in the cities and the countryside alike. Total victory for the communists came much sooner than anticipated. Communist pressure in early 1975 led the ARVN to abandon the Central Highlands, which precipitated a rout that led to the fall of several major coastal cities.⁵²⁰ The communists pressed their advantage, soon attacking Saigon directly. Ultimately, the South Vietnamese government surrendered the city and the country on April 30, 1975.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁷ Bradley, 2009.

⁵¹⁸ Lawrence, 2008.

⁵¹⁹ Lawrence, 2008.

⁵²⁰ Lawrence, 2008.

⁵²¹ Prados, 2009.

Conventional Explanations

There are quite a few competing explanations of the outcome of the Vietnam case. Several such explanations focus on U.S. shortcomings. One is the so-called “wrong war” thesis, which suggests that U.S. efforts were aimed at fighting (and prepared their South Vietnamese allies to fight) against a conventional invasion by the North Vietnamese instead of a domestic insurgency. While efforts against the NLF were only marginally effective prior to 1968, this thesis fails to take note of the significant threat posed by North Vietnamese regular forces and the fact that Saigon ultimately fell to these forces.

Another explanation maintains that the United States lost because its military was forced to fight with “one hand tied behind its back.” This thesis holds that troop levels were insufficient to fulfill the pacification mission and hold off PAVN regular forces, that the bombing campaign was constrained by President Johnson’s logic of escalating pressure, and that U.S. forces were prevented from moving against North Vietnamese forces in North Vietnam. Proponents of this explanation lament but do not excuse the fact that some of these constraints were driven by a desire to avoid drawing the Chinese into direct conflict with the United States and all that such a development would entail.

Another view lists U.S. military mistakes, such as the following:⁵²²

- the poor “tooth-to-tail” ratio of U.S. forces: the fact that, of 543,000 U.S. forces deployed, only some 80,000 were combat troops and the rest were support personnel of some kind
- the overemphasis on firepower, excessive use of force, attrition, and the “body count” until it was already too late
- The concentration of forces for search-and-destroy missions in the Central Highlands, neglecting the delta and the coastal plain, where approximately 90 percent of the population lived.

⁵²² Thomas R. Mockaitis, “Trends in American Counterinsurgency,” in Paul B. Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, New York: Routledge, 2012.

Other explanations focus on the advantages held by North Vietnam, including the following:

- the benefits accruing to the communists in terms of motivation and commitment stemming from having the power of an idea on their side: the goal of reunifying the nation⁵²³
- the success the communists enjoyed in integrating their political and military elements in all aspects of the campaign⁵²⁴
- the ability to infiltrate fighters and materiel along paths lying predominantly in neutralized or safe-haven countries
- the ability to engage in guerrilla warfare when convenient, keeping their adversary massed for fear of conventional assault from the north, coupled with the ability to mass or deploy conventional forces when desired.

Still other explanations emphasize the shortcomings of the Vietnamese state, ascribing the loss to the failure to build South Vietnam into an independent, modern, and legitimate democratic state.⁵²⁵ Others focus more narrowly on the corruption and reticence of the Saigon government, highlighting the perpetual unwillingness to reform and the ubiquitous corruption.⁵²⁶ Perhaps Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara summed up these explanations best when he noted that “military force—especially when wielded by an outside power—just cannot bring order in a country that cannot govern itself.”⁵²⁷

Key Disputes

Because the historiography on Vietnam is so contested, this case merits a special subsection on key disputes in the literature to ensure that readers are aware of some of the competing contentions.

⁵²³ Prados, 2009.

⁵²⁴ Prados, 2009.

⁵²⁵ Carter, 2008.

⁵²⁶ Prados, 2009.

⁵²⁷ Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, New York: Random House, 1995, p. 261.

One of the points contested in different accounts is the strength and capability of the first South Vietnamese president, Ngo Dinh Diem. Clearly, there was sufficient dissatisfaction with his leadership on the part of some in the U.S. government that the coup that took his life was allowed to proceed. Equally clearly, none of the leaders who followed him ended up being any more satisfactory. Some scholars take the view that he was obtuse, tyrannical, and an obstacle to U.S. aims, while others contend that he was a wise and effective leader, albeit with a very difficult job, and that his loss was a telling blow for the prospects for success in Vietnam.⁵²⁸

Another dispute relates to the “wrong war” thesis and concerns the extent to which U.S. efforts and the development of South Vietnamese forces should have focused on internal security, pacification, and traditional COIN, rather than conventional forces to oppose conventional foes. On one side, critics observe that “regular forces, bogged down with their heavy equipment, were used time and time again for anti-guerrilla missions for which they were neither trained nor psychologically suited.”⁵²⁹ The other side contends the imperative of big-unit warfare, asserting that, “in the absence of big U.S. conventional operations, North Vietnamese main force units would simply have conquered South Vietnam blitzkrieg style.”⁵³⁰

Related to this dispute is the “abandoned victory” thesis, which asserts that, after Tet, U.S. pacification efforts were working and, had U.S. forces stayed the course, would have prevailed. Proponents point to the damage the NLF inflicted on itself during Tet and the gains and improvements of the subsequent pacification campaign.⁵³¹ Opponents cede improvement, but they either focus on a different interpretation of improvement in the countryside (that peasants were hunkering down,

⁵²⁸ Moyer, 2006.

⁵²⁹ Fall, 1964, p. 345.

⁵³⁰ James Dingeman, “Triumph Impossible,” in Andrew Wiest and Michael J. Doidge, eds., *Triumph Revisited: Historians Battle for the Vietnam War*, New York: Routledge, 2010, p. 84.

⁵³¹ Dingeman, 2010.

oppressed by both sides, rather than rallying to the Saigon flag)⁵³² or point out the host of other unresolved challenges, including the incompetence and corruption of the South Vietnamese government and military, as well as the failure of the bombing to stop the flow of fighters and materiel from the north.⁵³³

There is disagreement about who won the Tet Offensive and what the balance of military strength was between the various combatants after Tet. On one side is the contention that the NLF spent its strength on Tet and had all but defeated itself, and that subsequent COIN efforts “broke the back of the insurgency.”⁵³⁴ The other side points to the low level of NLF defections and desertions after Tet, contending that, while the Tet Offensive did have a high cost for the NLF, the organization remained viable and healthy.⁵³⁵ What is not contested, however, is that Tet dealt an immense psychological blow, permanently turning U.S. public opinion against the war and making a U.S. draw-down and withdrawal inevitable.

The details and importance of the Phoenix program remain contested. To some, it was a nefarious assassination program, an exemplar of brutality and CIA excess. To others, it was a highly effective intelligence-gathering effort, though plagued by corruption and inaccuracies, and unavoidably associated with sometimes-extreme direct action taken as a result of intelligence gathered.⁵³⁶ Some claim Phoenix as a substantial success; others denigrate it as having been ineffective and immoral.⁵³⁷ Recent research suggests that, “contrary to both

⁵³² Prados, 2009.

⁵³³ Lawrence, 2008.

⁵³⁴ For a discussion of this view, see Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-965-MCIA, 2010.

⁵³⁵ Prados, 2009.

⁵³⁶ Prados, 2009.

⁵³⁷ William Colby, *Lost Victory: A Firsthand Account of America's Sixteen-Year Involvement in Vietnam*, New York: Contemporary Books, 1989.

extreme views of Phoenix, the historical record shows that Phoenix was neither wildly successful nor a massive assassination program.”⁵³⁸

Distinctive Characteristics

- The insurgents’ goal of reunification of North and South Vietnam partially blurred the line between the domestic southern insurgency and the support and forces of the “invading,” separated north.
- This was not only a case of insurgency (NLF) but also of foreign invasion (PAVN) in a particularly potent combination.
- The geography of Vietnam, including the long, thin, overall shape of the country and its heavy jungle terrain, affected the conflict by enabling cross-border support flows to the insurgents down the full length of South Vietnam, concealing insurgent movements and providing them sanctuary while highly constraining COIN mobility and logistics.

⁵³⁸ William Rosenau and Austin Long, *The Phoenix Program and Contemporary Counterinsurgency*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, OP-258-OSD, 2009, p. vii.

Figure 18
Map of Vietnam



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR2912-18

Eritrea, 1961–1991

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

Ethiopia gained control of the former Italian colony of Eritrea and unilaterally annexed the region in 1962, which led to the outbreak of an insurgency. Initially limited to a small group of guerrilla fighters supported by Arab nationalist regimes, the insurgency developed into a broad-based secessionist movement supported by both the Muslim and Christian Eritrean communities. This broadening of the conflict occurred after the Ethiopian government launched a brutal COIN campaign that resulted in a high number of civilian casualties and significant population displacement. By the mid-1970s, the insurgency posed a serious threat to the Ethiopian regime and contributed to a Marxist coup against the monarchy. The new revolutionary government continued to employ repressive COIN tactics against the Eritrean population. Although it benefited from extensive Soviet military assistance, it could not defeat an increasingly resilient insurgency. Finally, weakened by years of war and famine and suffering from a withdrawal of Soviet support, Ethiopian forces were defeated in Eritrea. As a result, the government in Addis Ababa was toppled in 1991. Insurgent leaders were then able to establish a provisional government in Eritrea and were guaranteed a referendum on independence, which passed in 1993.

Case Narrative

Phase I: “Ethiopia’s Annexation Sparks an Insurgency, and the Brutality of the Military Response Fuels a War” (1961–1977)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Insurgency followed withdrawal of a colonial power; Occupation/outside intervention created legitimacy gaps exploited by insurgents; Government repression and/or exclusion of significant societal groups from state power or resources; COIN force employed escalating repression; COIN force employed collective punishment; COIN force resettled/removed civilian populations for population control;

COIN force engaged in more coercion/intimidation than insurgents; COIN force (and allies) had significant military equipment mismatch dominance over insurgents (and allies); COIN force employed indiscriminate force; COIN force attempted to use overwhelming force

The roots of the Eritrean insurgency stemmed from the region's 60-year history as a colony under Italian and British rule. During this period, an Eritrean national identity developed among the region's religiously and ethnically diverse population, and a political independence movement eventually formed.⁵³⁹ Growing local sentiment in favor of independence was suppressed after WWII, when, pressured by the United States, a UN commission recommended that Eritrea become part of a federation with Ethiopia rather than a separate nation. Tensions arose soon after the federation was established in 1952, as Ethiopia imposed harsh restrictions on Eritrean political and civic life. Political parties were banned, freedom of the press was disallowed, and teaching in indigenous languages was forbidden. This led Eritreans, fearful of being taken over by their more powerful neighbor, to launch political protests. By 1958, it had become clear that the Ethiopian government intended to fully integrate Eritrea into Ethiopia. As a result, Eritrean exiles in Cairo formed the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), modeling it on the nationalist movements in other countries in the region.⁵⁴⁰ The ELF developed a military arm soon thereafter, and as Ethiopia moved closer to annexing Eritrea, the Eritrean resistance took a more militant form.

The ELF began an armed struggle in September 1961, when a small band of 11 guerrilla fighters attacked a police post in western Eritrea and engaged in battle with Ethiopian soldiers. The small group of insurgents expanded to 500 fighters over the course of a year and perpetrated widespread but sporadic acts of sabotage against government installations and bridges. Following the Ethiopian emperor's offi-

⁵³⁹ International Crisis Group, *Eritrea: The Siege State*, Africa Report No. 163, September 21, 2010.

⁵⁴⁰ International Crisis Group, 2010, p. 3; Jon Stephenson, *Eritrea and Ethiopia: Continual Conflict*, Inventory of Conflict and Environment Case Study No. 199, December 2006.

cial annexation of Eritrea in November 1962, the insurgents diversified their activities to include ambushes of convoys and trains.⁵⁴¹ The insurgent attacks eventually made most of the lowland countryside impassable to government forces, other than when they traveled in military convoys.

The insurgent movement initially drew support from the Muslim community in Eritrea, which constituted approximately half of the Eritrean population. ELF leadership was predominantly Muslim, and the group received most of its external support from Arab nationalist regimes. Egypt, Syria, and Iraq provided funding, weapons, and training, and neighboring Sudan provided a safe haven for the front's leadership and transit access for military equipment and supplies. It should be noted that, during this early phase of the conflict, a significant portion of the Christian community was in favor of being incorporated into Ethiopia. As the conflict evolved and political and economic conditions in Eritrea deteriorated, however, the ELF gained support from the Christian community. The Christian community further expanded its support of the insurgency when the ELF adopted a broader anti-imperialist stance and began to receive aid from Cuba and the Soviet Union.⁵⁴²

A combination of growing popular and external support enabled the insurgents to challenge the Ethiopian forces throughout Eritrea by the early 1970s. The size of the insurgent force rose to 2,500 as it stepped up its attacks and more readily engaged with army patrols in an increasingly systematic guerrilla campaign. Although the ELF was weakened by an internal conflict when a Marxist faction broke away to form a separate organization known as the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), the insurgent movement continued to grow. The EPLF eventually became the leading insurgent group and succeeded in expanding its ranks by mobilizing a large portion of the Christian population and developing a more organized military structure under

⁵⁴¹ Human Rights Watch, *Evil Days: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia*, New York, September 1991, p. 41

⁵⁴² Human Rights Watch, 1991, p. 41

a nonsectarian, Marxist banner. As a result, the Eritrean insurgency began to pose a serious threat to the Ethiopian government.⁵⁴³

After first dismissing the ELF's attacks as acts of banditry, the Ethiopian government responded to the insurgency's increasing potency with escalating repression. The Ethiopian army launched a series of punitive reprisals against civilians, interspersed with large-scale offensives and forced relocations in an effort to reduce the insurgents' base of support. Such COIN strategies, which followed a colonial model, were designed to impress the subjugated population with the firepower and determination of the government.⁵⁴⁴ The loss of life and human rights abuses that resulted from this policy often had the opposite effect, however.

The Ethiopian army burned villages and massacred hundreds of civilians. Soldiers were known to requisition food, destroy crops, kill animals, and drive people from their land. Blockades were established to block the population from fertile areas, leading to widespread impoverishment and famine. As the military began to use hunger as a weapon, Eritrean perceptions of the Ethiopian government grew increasingly negative.⁵⁴⁵ Civilian conditions continued to decline over the course of the decade, leading tens of thousands of refugees to pour into Sudan. Any remaining Eritrean support for the Ethiopian government evaporated as a result of this flow of refugees, and popular support for the insurgency increased.⁵⁴⁶

Ethiopia's strategic relationship with the United States helped it maintain consistent external military support during the initial phase of the COIN campaign. As Washington's closest ally in Africa, Ethiopia provided critical basing for U.S. forces in the Red Sea and served as a bulwark against the Soviet presence in the region. The country was the largest recipient of U.S. assistance in Africa from 1953 through 1976. It received more than \$285 million in military grants and loans

⁵⁴³ Kalewongel Minale Gedamu, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: The Quest for Peace and Normalizations*, thesis, Tromsø, Norway: University of Tromsø, Centre for Peace Studies, 2008.

⁵⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch, 1991, p. 42.

⁵⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch, 1991, p. 41

⁵⁴⁶ Hans van der Splinter and Mebrat Tzehaie, "History of Eritrea," Eritrea.be, undated.

to build the country's conventional forces.⁵⁴⁷ The United States initiated targeted COIN assistance to Ethiopia in the mid-1960s, when it sent 200 special advisers and 12 F-5A fighter jets, which could be used in both conventional and COIN campaigns. Israel provided additional training and advice to the Ethiopian military. Such outside support enabled the Ethiopians to deploy a military force of as many as 25,000 troops in Eritrea, backed by sophisticated weaponry, but it did not allow the Ethiopian forces to achieve significant success against the insurgents. By the mid-1970s, Ethiopian force was losing popular support to the ELF and the EPLF due to its continued use of repressive tactics against civilians in response to guerrilla raids.⁵⁴⁸

In 1974, the counterinsurgents' position in Eritrea was weakened further by the overthrow of the Ethiopian emperor by a socialist military junta, known as the Derg. Taking advantage of the chaos caused by the revolution, the ELF and EPLF consolidated their forces and launched powerful joint attacks on the Ethiopian army, gaining thousands of new recruits from among Eritreans who had served in Ethiopian police and commando units.⁵⁴⁹ Between 1975 and 1977, the ELF and EPLF succeeded in overrunning almost the entire territory, and they nearly outnumbered the Ethiopian forces.

The new Derg-controlled Ethiopian government was expected to take a more accommodating approach to the Eritrean insurgency, due to the socialist ideology it shared with the EPLF and the fact that the regime's first leader was of Eritrean origin. However, when Mengistu Haile Mariam took control of the government in 1977, the state adopted a more aggressive military strategy. The Derg launched violent attacks against civilian targets, instituted a food blockade of the Eritrean highlands, and tried to mobilize a peasant army to overwhelm the ELF and the EPLF by sheer weight of numbers. These efforts proved only to increase support for the two groups, however. EPLF strength

⁵⁴⁷ Dan Connell, "Eritrea and the United States: Towards a New US Policy," in Richard Reid, ed., *Eritrea's External Relations: Understanding Its Regional Role*, London: Chatham House, 2009.

⁵⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch, 1991.

⁵⁴⁹ Van der Splinter and Tzehaie, undated.

alone grew from 2,500 in 1974 to 43,000 in 1977.⁵⁵⁰ By the end of 1977, the Ethiopian government estimated that 13,000 soldiers and 30,000–50,000 civilians had been killed or wounded. An additional 200,000 Eritreans were forced into exile. Still, Ethiopian forces made little headway in containing the Eritrean insurgency.

Phase II: “Soviet Assistance Fails to Stem the Tide of Support for the Insurgency” (1977–1984)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: External support continues to sustain conflict that otherwise would likely have ended; COIN force employed escalating repression; COIN force employed collective punishment; COIN force resettled/removed civilian populations for population control; COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with population in area of conflict; COIN force (and allies) had significant military equipment mismatch dominance over insurgents (and allies); COIN force of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas (or to prevail in the preponderance of conventional engagements, should overmatched insurgents choose to give battle); COIN force employed indiscriminate force; COIN force employed substantial indirect fire (air strikes, artillery, or both); COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards; COIN force attempted to use overwhelming force

Seemingly on the brink of defeat, Ethiopian COIN forces were fortified by an influx of external support in 1977, a result of changing alliances in the region. Soon after the United States ended its support for Addis Ababa over human rights abuses and the radicalization of the Ethiopian government, the Soviet Union stepped in to meet and exceed the previous U.S. military assistance. As the new Ethiopian government under Mengistu decided to step firmly into the “anti-imperialist” camp, Moscow terminated its military ties to Somalia.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁵⁰ Beckett, 2001, p. 238.

⁵⁵¹ The change in U.S. policy toward Ethiopia was also the result of declining U.S. interests in the region and changes in the presidential leadership in both the United States and Ethio-

This shift in relationships led Ethiopia to become the Soviet Union's closest ally in the region. Moscow then proceeded to provide more than \$10 billion and 1,000 military advisers to Ethiopia, as well as massive quantities of armored vehicles, artillery, rockets, and air power to the COIN forces in Eritrea.⁵⁵² Cuba also shifted sides as result of the Soviets realignment, leading to the engagement of thousands of Cuban troops in support of the Ethiopian regime.⁵⁵³

The mass influx of assistance gave the Ethiopian army an advantage over the ELF and the EPLF, which did not receive any corresponding support from the United States or other Western countries.⁵⁵⁴ By the summer of 1978, the course of the conflict appeared to change as the insurgents were overcome by Soviet air and naval bombardment and weakened by their own factional rivalries. Ethiopian forces conducting massive conventional offensives were able to reoccupy Eritrea's major towns and regain control of 90 percent of the territory. This led the ELF to fall back on hit-and-run guerrilla tactics and the EPLF to retreat to the northern mountains.⁵⁵⁵

Despite the army's overwhelming advantage in manpower and weaponry, the insurgents were able to hold out against the Ethiopian offensives because they maintained strategic defensive positions in mountains and had developed a highly disciplined military organization. The EPLF were outnumbered eight to one, yet the group was able to ambush and attack advancing columns of Ethiopian forces with

pia as President Jimmy Carter and Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, respectively, came to power.

⁵⁵² From 1977 to 1978, Moscow provided \$1 billion in military assistance, surpassing in a matter of months the total value of U.S. aid to Ethiopia between 1953 and 1977. Thomas P. Ofcansky, "National Security," *A Country Study: Ethiopia*, Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991. See also G. Arnold, 1991, pp. 25–26

⁵⁵³ "Cuban Troops in Eritrea," *Los Angeles Times*, March 23, 1978.

⁵⁵⁴ The United States was hesitant to support the Eritrean insurgency due to its leftist leanings. The insurgents also lost much of their support from Egypt, Syria, and Iraq during this period. After the rise of the Derg, conservative Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, became the insurgents' primary supporters. Alexis Heraclides, "Secessionist Minorities and External Involvement," *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 3, Summer 1990, pp. 350.

⁵⁵⁵ G. Arnold, 1991, pp. 25–26.

machine guns as they stormed EPLF-held mountainsides.⁵⁵⁶ At the same time, the Ethiopian army's capacity was also limited by a weak government in Addis Ababa, ineffective military leadership, and poor morale among its troops.⁵⁵⁷ Ethiopian forces were thus unable to effectively employ Soviet weaponry, including Soviet tanks and heavy artillery, or to prevent it from falling into EPLF hands.⁵⁵⁸ As a result, the insurgents continued to engage the army in a series of bloody battles in which tens of thousands of forces were killed on both sides. Ethiopian forces incurred as many as 40,000 casualties, and large numbers of civilians were killed as the army continued to engage in saturation bombings in areas of rebel strength.

The Ethiopian army orchestrated a major effort to crush the insurgency in 1982, when it launched a coordinated offensive designated "Operation Red Star." The Red Star campaign, conducted with Soviet support, included the mobilization of 120,000 forces to engage in a mass assault on EPLF base areas. It also included a sustained aerial bombardment and ground attack that devastated large areas of northern and western Eritrea. The campaign also incorporated other typical COIN strategies, including the establishment of protected villages and population-control measures, such as curfews, requests for identification, and travel restrictions. There were attempts to initiate economic reconstruction projects and to secure the return of refugees from Sudan as well, but military objectives appeared to take precedence over efforts to win hearts and minds.⁵⁵⁹

The Red Star campaign proved unsuccessful. Despite being outnumbered by a ratio of at least eight to one, the EPLF ultimately wore

⁵⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch, 1991, p. 118.

⁵⁵⁷ The Ethiopian army was also struggling to overcome an insurgency launched by the Tigray People's Liberation Front, an opposition movement in the province of Tigray.

⁵⁵⁸ Christopher Clapham, "War and State Formation in Ethiopia and Eritrea," paper presented at the Failed States Conference, Florence, Italy, April 10–14, 2001.

⁵⁵⁹ The Ethiopian state invested approximately \$50 million to resettle displaced villagers, resuscitate the economy, and rebuild infrastructure, factories, and schools. Gebru Tareke, "From Lash to Red Stare: The Pitfalls of Counter-Insurgency in Ethiopia, 1980–82," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 3, September 2002, p. 475.

down the Ethiopian army. The EPLF, which was more determined and better organized than the army, was able to maintain strategic defensive positions from which it could launch counterattacks on government positions.⁵⁶⁰ Advancing columns were repeatedly ambushed as they stormed the EPLF-held mountainsides, resulting in as many as 40,000 casualties among the government forces.⁵⁶¹ By the end of the year, the Ethiopian army was able to infiltrate the Eritrean highlands, but it could not eliminate the EPLF, which still possessed the capacity to launch hit-and-run strikes. Once the Red Star offensive ended, the EPLF regrouped its forces to seize the military initiative.

The Ethiopian army attempted to launch a number of counter-offensives in response to these EPLF attacks, with the help of sophisticated Soviet artillery and aircraft. However the EPLF was again able to sustain its attacks and threaten Ethiopian troops by resorting to more traditional guerrilla tactics. In particular, the EPLF was effective in disrupting government supply lines and attacking convoys. Subsequent attempts by the Ethiopian government to resume its forced relocation and scorched-earth policies, which reportedly included widespread napalm bombing, also had little effect. Such tactics only served to aggravate the ecological crisis in the region stemming from a long-term drought and contributed to a devastating famine that began in 1984.⁵⁶² As result, civilian suffering increased, further reducing public support for the Ethiopian government and its COIN forces.

⁵⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch, 1991, p. 115

⁵⁶¹ The protracted civil war and the government's mistrust of Westerners hampered worldwide efforts to provide food and medical aid to Ethiopia's population. During the 1980s, an estimated 1 million Ethiopians died from starvation as a result of famine. Human Rights Watch, 1991, p. 115

⁵⁶² The Ethiopian government reportedly used the denial of humanitarian assistance and food aid as a means of pacifying the population. The rebels also used this aid as part of their strategy to secure popular support in areas that they controlled, and they attacked humanitarian assistance convoys in transit to government-controlled areas. Human Rights Watch, 1991.

Phase III: “Famine and the Withdrawal of External Support Force a Negotiated Settlement” (1985–1991)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: COIN force employed escalating repression; COIN force employed collective punishment; Important external support to insurgents significantly reduced; COIN force *not* of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas (or to prevail in the preponderance of conventional engagements, should overmatched insurgents choose to give battle); Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated; COIN force employed indiscriminate force; COIN force employed substantial indirect fire (air strikes, artillery, or both); Conclusion/suspension substantially due to withdrawal of international support for one or both sides; *At end of conflict*, separatists got: their own country or de facto administratively separate territory

By 1985, already weakened by severe drought and resulting famine, Ethiopia was faced with economic hardship and military shortages. It also began to face declining support from the Soviet Union after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power and put pressure on Addis Ababa to negotiate a settlement in Eritrea.⁵⁶³ The Derg government was not willing to compromise with the EPLF, however. It continued to bomb insurgent strongholds and attempted to control the population through forced relocations to protected villages. With fewer resources, Ethiopian COIN efforts were less effective in combatting the EPLF militarily but were still capable of alienating the public through human rights abuses perpetrated through the resettlement campaign.

Eritrean fighters quickly took advantage of the declining Soviet support and reoccupied strategic cities and regions of Eritrea. Over the next three years, EPLF advances enabled the group to capture large quantities of artillery and tanks and to transform itself into a more

⁵⁶³ The value of arms deliveries from the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies declined to \$774 million in 1985 and to \$292 million in 1986. The number of Soviet military advisers in Ethiopia also declined, to around 1,400 in 1988. Ofcansky, 1991.

conventional army.⁵⁶⁴ The EPLF was also able to broaden its base of public support by losing much of its Marxist ideology, which had previously prevented it from gaining more Muslim members. Bolstered by its increased political and military strength, the insurgent front was able to seize the Ethiopian army at Afabet in 1988, killing as many as 18,000 troops in two days and gaining a major strategic stronghold as well as a major weapon arsenal.⁵⁶⁵ The EPLF also made the decision to align with the Tigrayan separatists in northern Ethiopia and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democracy Front and to battle the Ethiopian government near the capital. Taken together, these actions posed a direct challenge to the stability of the Derg regime.

The Ethiopian army responded to the EPLF's military challenge by withdrawing to its garrisons in Eritrea's western highlands after 1988 but continuing to impose harsh reprisals against civilians throughout the region. As a result, up to 110,000 Eritrean villagers were displaced between 1988 and 1991.⁵⁶⁶ These displacements only served to delay the resolution of the conflict, however. Increased international pressure on Ethiopia to reach a negotiated settlement and the disintegration of the Soviet bloc led to the evaporation of foreign military assistance, and the Ethiopian government held little chance for changing the course of the war.⁵⁶⁷

Finally, in 1991, the EPLF succeeded in clearing Eritrea of Ethiopian troops. The Ethiopian army lost its will to fight, and the country's

⁵⁶⁴ Tracey L. Cousin, *Eritrean and Ethiopian Civil War*, Inventory of Conflict and Environment Case Study No. 2, November 1997.

⁵⁶⁵ Armed Conflict Events Database, "Eritrean War of Independence 1961–1993," last updated December 16, 2000b.

⁵⁶⁶ The year 1988 was particularly bloody as the government cast aside all restraint in its repeated attacks on civilian targets. Throughout the last years of the war, the EPLF also committed significant human rights abuses as it continued to assassinate civilians accused of collaborating with the security forces. On average, the EPLF announced approximately one such assassination every two weeks in the last months of 1990 and the start of 1991. Human Rights Watch, 1991, p. 235, 248.

⁵⁶⁷ Throughout 1990, Moscow continued to reduce its military commitment to Ethiopia and refused any new weapon contracts with the Mengistu regime. The Soviet Union did, however, honor all commitments set forth in the military assistance agreement that was in place until 1991. Ofcansky, 1991.

political leaders conceded defeat. In May 1991, the EPLF took complete control of Eritrea, Mengistu resigned as head of state and fled the country, and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democracy Front took control of Addis Ababa. The EPLF then established a provisional government to administer Eritrean affairs until a referendum could be held on independence and a permanent government established. The leader of the EPLF became the head of the new government, and the EPLF Central Committee served as its legislative body. After a UN-sponsored referendum, Eritrea received independence in May 1993.

Conventional Explanations

The failure of the Ethiopian government to uproot the Eritrean insurgency, despite the significant advantage it maintained in manpower and weaponry, is most often attributed to its brutal COIN practices that “wrought terror not only on the rebel groups but on the civilian population and denied basic needs.” Throughout the 30-year conflict, the army's efforts to crush the insurgent resistance through a scorched-earth policy, and its use of food assistance as a weapon, are widely believed to have reduced the legitimacy of the government and strengthened support for the insurgency.⁵⁶⁸ The cumulative experience of warfare, famine, forced resettlement, and restrictions on the movement of people and goods alienated the peasantry and virtually eliminated any public support for Addis Ababa or the incorporation of Eritrea into the Ethiopian state.⁵⁶⁹

Some analysts have stressed that the Ethiopian COIN effort was ineffective due to the incompetent leadership of the military and political parties, as well as the contentious relationship between the two. They contend that poor leadership led to a lack of effective strategy and

In 1989, the Ethiopians were able to renew some support from Israel in the form of weapons and military training, but this was on a far lower level than that provided by the Soviet Union. Human Rights Watch, 1991, p. 369.

⁵⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, 1991.

⁵⁶⁹ Paul B. Henze, *The Ethiopian Revolution: Mythology and History*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, P-7568, 1989, p. 5.

command in the conduct of the war.⁵⁷⁰ Therefore, it was not that the EPLF leadership was better organized or more committed to the war than the Ethiopian army but, rather, that the Ethiopian army failed to adopt effective tactics or make necessary adaptations to its COIN campaign (such as eliminating its flawed resettlement plans) that led to the Ethiopian army's defeat.⁵⁷¹

Another major factor affecting the evolution of the Ethiopian COIN effort was the role of external sponsors. U.S. support for the Ethiopian government helped fuel the conflict, and Washington's unqualified diplomatic and military support for Addis Ababa allowed the country to annex Eritrea without considering the political grievances of the population. Later, large-scale military assistance from the Soviet Union enabled Ethiopia to recover from near defeat and to sustain a sophisticated COIN force, but it failed to address the underlying conditions of the war or to force any adjustments in Ethiopia's repressive COIN tactics. Soviet support thus succeeded only in prolonging the conflict for 15 years. The withdrawal of Soviet support in 1991 clearly contributed to the downfall of the Ethiopian government and its retreat from Eritrea; however, the negative impact of external support extended throughout the 30-year history of the conflict.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Although it was initially led by Arab nationalists, the Eritrean insurgency was not motivated by ethnicity or religion. The insurgent movement under the ELF included both Muslims and Christians, and the EPLF developed a broad base of support by adopting a nonsectarian socialist ideology. Moreover, as the insurgency progressed, it adopted a more universal nationalist message.
- The Eritrean people were, in fact, never united by a common religion or ethnic identity. Historically, the population consisted of seven different ethnic groups. Highlanders were mostly Christians

⁵⁷⁰ Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009; Tareke, 2002.

⁵⁷¹ Tareke, 2009, 2002.

and spoke Tigrinya; lowlanders were Muslim and spoke Arabic and Afar. A sense of national identity developed, in part, according to common territory and a shared historic colonial experience, although there was no unified resistance to Italian colonialism. Opposition to Ethiopia and its annexation of Eritrean territory appeared to be a critical factor in developing a national consciousness, which then intensified over the course more than 30 years of political repression and armed resistance.⁵⁷²

- The Cold War had a major impact on the Eritrean conflict, yet the conflict was not conducted along strict ideological lines. There were Marxists on both sides, and the superpower sponsors switched sides during course of the war.
- The terrain in Eritrea and Ethiopia makes the region particularly susceptible to drought and famine. Unique to the conflict were the use of food policy restrictions, with humanitarian aid being employed as a weapon by both the insurgents and COIN forces. This tactic resulted in significant civilian suffering on both sides. An estimated 1 to 1.5 million people died as result of the famine in Ethiopia.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷² Gedamu, 2008; Edmond J. Keller, “The Eritrean National Question,” in Bernard Schechterman and Martin Slann, eds., *The Ethnic Dimension in International Relations*, Westport Conn.: Praeger, 1993, p. 173.

⁵⁷³ Human Rights Watch, 1991.

Figure 19
Map of Eritrea



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR2912-19

Iraqi Kurdistan, 1961–1975

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

After decades of contention between the Kurdish minority in northern Iraq and the central government, a rebellion was sparked in 1961 by growing frustration with the nationalist Iraqi government's failure to deliver on its promise to provide the Kurds with political autonomy. Initially, Kurdish guerrillas, known as *peshmerga*, launched limited small-scale attacks on government forces. The Iraqi army responded with conventional counteroffensives, which served to widen the war and alienate the population. Despite various attempts to reach a cease-fire, fighting grew more intense as both sides benefited from greater levels of external support from the Soviet Union, Iran, and the United States. Finally, in 1974, *peshmerga* forces, advised by their Iranian and U.S. supporters, attempted to launch a direct conventional attack on the Iraqi regime. This mistaken attempt was met with a full-scale counterassault that enabled the Iraqi forces to penetrate deep into Kurdish territory and threaten the insurgents' mountain safe havens. Having obtained the military advantage, Iraq solidified its gains by negotiating an agreement with the Shah of Iran to withdraw his critical military support to the Kurds in exchange for a territorial claim to the Shatt al-Arab waterway. Once the Kurdish forces lost the support of the Iranian military, the rebellion was crushed.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "Guerrilla Attacks and Conventional Counterattacks End in a Stalemate" (1961–1970)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: COIN force employed collective punishment; Insurgents mostly avoided engaging in large-scale operations against better-equipped regular troops and resorted primarily to guerrilla tactics (e.g., sniping, sabotage, small-scale ambushes/hit-and-run attacks, IEDs); Government employed significant numbers of locally recruited

military/paramilitary/militia/police forces (i.e., from the areas in which they operated); COIN force attempted to use overwhelming force; COIN campaign included significant (not necessarily primary) focus on physically denying the insurgents access to supportive populations (for example, through removal/resettlement or interdiction); Amnesty or reward program in place

The Kurdish rebellion of 1961 stemmed from a 40-year history of contention between a growing Kurdish minority and an evolving Iraqi state. Since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the disposition of the Kurdish population of 4.7 million straddling Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey remained unsettled. While the 1920 Treaty of Sevres provided for the creation of a Kurdish state, subsequent international agreements reversed this decision, leading to periodic uprisings by frustrated Kurdish tribes in the early 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.⁵⁷⁴ In Iraq, where the Kurds made up a significant minority of as much as 20 percent of the population and resided in a strategically and economically important area that included the Kirkuk oil fields, the issue of Kurdish independence was particularly contentious. The government in Baghdad made several attempts to work out a settlement with the Kurds after 1945, and even tried to collaborate with Kurdish fighters after the fall of the monarchy in 1958, but the competing interests of Iraqi nationalism and Kurdish demands for autonomy led to repeated outbreaks of violence and deepening suspicions on both sides.⁵⁷⁵

In 1961, tensions came to a head as Kurdish tribes grew frustrated with the new Iraqi government's failure to fulfill its promises of Kurdish autonomy, and political leaders in Baghdad became increasingly concerned about the potential challenge that the Kurdish militias

⁵⁷⁴ G. Arnold, 1991, p. 75

⁵⁷⁵ Iraqi leaders, including President Abd al-Karim Qasim, initially employed Kurdish fighters to suppress various Arab revolts in Iraq in the late 1950s. However, such attempts at collaboration ended when Qasim became suspicious of the growing political influence of Kurdish militia leader Barzani, and relations between the government and the Kurds deteriorated. Michael G. Lortz, *Willing to Face Death: A History of Kurdish Military Forces—the Peshmerga—from the Ottoman Empire to Present-Day Iraq*, thesis, Tallahassee, Fla.: Florida State University, 2005; G. Arnold, 1991, p. 75

posed to their power. After a series of small, armed clashes between the tribal and government forces, the Iraqi army launched air strikes across the Kurdish region. Mullah Mustafa Barzani, a prominent Kurdish military leader who had returned from exile in the Soviet Union in 1958, responded by mobilizing a *peshmerga*, or guerrilla force, which, in turn, sparked a full-scale revolt.⁵⁷⁶

The *peshmerga* initially consisted of 5,000 fighters under Barzani's command but expanded with the engagement of various tribal militias serving as irregulars and conducting guerrilla attacks on Iraqi military positions. Once news of the rebellion spread, thousands of Kurdish soldiers serving in the Iraqi army began to defect, which helped swell the ranks of the *peshmerga* forces to between 15,000 and 20,000.⁵⁷⁷ External support for the Kurdish rebellion was limited during the early stages of the revolt, however. While the *peshmerga* received some funding from sympathetic Kurds living in Iran and Turkey, their hopes of obtaining military assistance from the Soviet Union went unfulfilled.⁵⁷⁸ They were therefore constrained by a lack of sufficient weapons and materiel.

Peshmerga attacks on Iraqi forces consisted largely of raids and ambushes. Due to their relatively small numbers and limited supplies, the rebels relied on unconventional tactics, such as roadblocks, sniper attacks, and other approaches designed to “starve out” the government's soldiers.⁵⁷⁹ The guerrillas' strategy focused on endurance, speed, movement by night, and deception, which were particularly effective in the mountainous areas of the region. The *peshmerga* continued to make progress throughout 1962 and 1963, succeeding in gaining control of

⁵⁷⁶ The *peshmerga* represented an organized guerrilla force that was originally established by Barzani in 1943 and reconstituted upon his return to Iraq in 1958. *Peshmerga* directly translates to “those who face death.”

⁵⁷⁷ Lortz, 2005, p. 43.

⁵⁷⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *The Soviet Union and Iraq Since 1968*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, N-1524-AF, 1980.

⁵⁷⁹ Lortz, 2005, p. 43.

much of the mountains and the main road to Iran. These territorial gains posed a challenge to the Iraqi regime.⁵⁸⁰

The Iraqi army's primary response to the guerrilla offensives was aerial bombardment of Kurdish villages. Finding itself unprepared for an unconventional battle, the Iraqi COIN force consisted of only 20 battalions and six mobile police units in 1961. However by 1963, nearly three-quarters of the Iraqi army was engaged in combat operations in the region. Unlike the *peshmerga*, these troops were reinforced with heavy weaponry, armor, and Soviet-built air support.⁵⁸¹ The Iraqis were also aided by the large number of Kurds who remained in their armed forces, as well as Kurdish militiamen who were recruited to fight on the government's behalf. These forces, which the Kurds called *jash* forces, were motivated by tribal rivalries or monetary payment and included as many as 10,000 personnel at their peak. Yet, their numbers declined as the rebellion spread, and many refused to fight against their own people.⁵⁸² Some members of the *jash* forces also proved to be of questionable loyalty.⁵⁸³

By end of 1963, the conflict had reached a stalemate. The Iraqi army was able to gain control of the cities and major towns but could not make headway in the mountains, where Kurdish defensive, small-unit guerrilla forces prevailed.⁵⁸⁴ Baghdad made an attempt to turn the tide of the insurgency by launching a new military offensive with the assistance from the Syrian army and air force. Not only did the army conduct more air and ground attacks, but it also initiated an Arabization policy through which army troops forcibly removed the Kurdish population from contested areas, particularly the oil-rich region of

⁵⁸⁰ G. Arnold, 1991, p. 76.

⁵⁸¹ Lortz, 2005, p. 43.

⁵⁸² The Kurdish forces fighting for the Iraqi army were called *fusan* ("knights") by the Iraqis and *jash* ("little donkeys") by the Kurds. Lortz, 2005, p. 44.

⁵⁸³ "Running with the hares but hunting with the hounds was enduring feature of the 'pro-government' Kurds." David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 3rd ed., London: I. B. Tauris, 2004, p. 312

⁵⁸⁴ Paul R. Viotti, "Iraq: The Kurdish Rebellion," in Bard E. O'Neill, ed., *Insurgency in the Modern World*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1980, p. 195.

Kirkuk.⁵⁸⁵ These more aggressive efforts weakened the *peshmerga* forces but failed to reduce either their access to safe havens in the mountains or their base of popular support. In fact, the army's harsh COIN tactics only served to alienate the Kurdish population and make them line up more solidly behind Barzani.⁵⁸⁶

Recognizing the difficulty of defeating the insurgency militarily, the Iraqi government offered the rebels a cease-fire agreement in 1964 that provided the Kurds with additional political rights. The *peshmerga* agreed to negotiate but refused to lay down their arms, and fighting resumed a year later. The Iraqi army then attempted another major offensive, deploying an army of 100,000 against the Kurdish force of 15,000. Strengthened by increased support from Iran, including more modern weaponry, the guerrillas were again able to maintain their ground.⁵⁸⁷ The war then continued on and off for the next three years, with neither side able to gain an advantage.

Not until 1969, after many repeated attempts at negotiations had failed, was a settlement reached.⁵⁸⁸ The agreement, which took effect in March 1970, provided limited autonomy for the Kurds. It also offered amnesty for all insurgents and assured that the Kurdish language would have equal status with Arabic in Kurdish areas, that Kurdish areas would be administered by Kurds, and that the national government would include a Kurdish vice president. Moreover, the settlement offered a compromise on the future status of the *peshmerga*. Rather than requiring the force to disband, it allowed former fighters to serve in a "frontier militia force" that would "protect the safety of the fron-

⁵⁸⁵ Vera Beaudin Saeedpour, "Wars Against the Kurds Never Become World's Issue," *Los Angeles Times*, September 7, 1988.

⁵⁸⁶ Fukuyama, 1980.

⁵⁸⁷ Prime Minister Abd ar-Rahman al-Bazzaz offered a more comprehensive 12-point plan to the Kurds that recognized Kurdish nationalism and provided for greater political autonomy, but he was removed from power before the plan could be implemented.

⁵⁸⁸ Negotiations stalled due to instability within the Iraqi government and internal dissent within the Kurdish movement. It was not until after the Baath party assumed full control of the government and Barzani began to consolidate power among the Kurds that the two sides were able to establish a peace agreement.

tiers of the Republic of Iraq.”⁵⁸⁹ Nevertheless, none of these carefully negotiated stipulations ensured lasting peace.

Phase II: “A Stalemate Ends and a Military Build-Up Begins” (1971–1973)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: COIN force undertook “build” of “clear, hold, and build” in area of conflict; Insurgents exploited deep-seated/intractable issues to gain legitimacy; Military goals routinely took precedence over political goals; External support to COIN from strong state/military; External support to insurgents from strong state/military; An external actor provided significant financial and materiel support to COIN force/government

A year after the peace settlement, tensions between the Iraqi government and the Kurds resumed. Protests among the Kurds broke out over the government’s failure to implement the autonomy plan (particularly its delay in conducting a census of disputed areas) and its unwillingness to allow Kurdish representatives in the national government. At the same time, Baghdad was leery of the Kurds’ refusal to close the border with Iran as they had promised. A failed assassination attempt on Barzani’s life in 1972, followed by news that the Kurdish leadership had made an appeal for aid from the United States, increased the level of hostility. As a result, each side grew suspicious of the other’s motives for engaging in negotiations and began to use the period of relative calm to rebuild their forces.

Barzani consolidated the *peshmerga* and continued to recruit during the early 1970s, raising the group’s ranks to 50,000 by 1974. He also gained increasing support from the Shah of Iran, who agreed to provide the *peshmerga* with heavy weapons in an effort to put pressure on the Baathist regime in Baghdad. Additional support was provided by the United States, with the CIA supplying the Kurds with money

⁵⁸⁹ Although Barzani hoped for 10,000 *peshmerga* to remain active, the Baath party allowed only 6,000.

and weapons to counter Iraq's ties to the Soviet Union.⁵⁹⁰ According to some reports, Israel agreed to provide assistance to the *peshmerga* as well, sending commandos to advise and train the guerrilla forces.⁵⁹¹

Iraq similarly received additional external support for its military after it signed a 15-year treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union in April 1972. The treaty committed Moscow to strengthening Iraq's defense and solidified its role as Baghdad's chief arms supplier.⁵⁹² It also formally ended the Soviets' relationship with the Kurds.⁵⁹³ Perhaps most importantly, the treaty served to raise the stakes of the Kurdish rebellion by placing it in the context of both a wider regional conflict and the Cold War, as increased Soviet support of Iraq drove both Iran and the United States to provide more support to the Kurds.

As Iran and the Soviet Union became more invested in building up the Kurdish and Iraqi forces, respectively, it became clear that the peace agreement would not hold. Although the Iraqi government invested heavily in infrastructure development and reconstruction projects in Kurdish villages in the early 1970s and implemented some clauses of the accord, these efforts had little impact on the Kurdish public's perceptions of the government. Instead, they were more affected by the growing belligerency of Iraq's military forces, which left them with greater mistrust of Iraqi intentions. At the same time, the promise of increasing external support made Barzani less willing to compromise with the Iraqis and more confident in his forces' ability to engage in a direct confrontation with the Iraqi army.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹⁰ McDowall, 2004, p. 330.

⁵⁹¹ Lortz, 2005, p. 41.

⁵⁹² While the Soviet Union had previously supported the Kurdish cause, it became more closely tied to the Iraqi regime after 1959, when Colonel Qasim overthrew the pro-Western monarchy.

⁵⁹³ In previous years, the Soviet Union had provided significant military assistance to the Kurds.

⁵⁹⁴ McDowall, 2004, pp. 329–333.

Phase III: "Insurgents Attempt a Conventional Assault" (1974–1975)*Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)*

Key Factors: Insurgents switched from guerrilla to conventional tactics; Insurgents made critical strategic errors, failed to make obvious adaptations, or voluntarily exited the conflict; COIN force of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas (or to prevail in the preponderance of conventional engagements, should overmatched insurgents choose to give battle); Fighting in phase primarily force-on-force conventional engagement; COIN force established and then expanded secure areas; Successful to use overwhelming force; COIN force undertook "hold" of "clear, hold, and build" in area of conflict

In March 1974, the Iraqi government broke the political stalemate with the Kurds by presenting an autonomy agreement that went further in meeting the Kurds' demands than in their previous negotiations and ordering the Kurds to respond to the offer within two weeks. The proposal, which abided by the 1957 census and provided the Kurds with considerable administrative authority, still fell short of Barzani's demand to gain control of Kirkuk (a strategically located Kurdish region with substantial oil reserves) and to secure political and financial control over the region.⁵⁹⁵ Barzani rejected the agreement, and within days the Iraqi army began to mobilize to enforce the law by government decree.

The Kurds, benefiting from increased military assistance and training from Iran, the United States, and Israel, completely reorganized their forces in an attempt to mount a conventional military response to the government's ultimatum. Barzani abandoned the guerrilla tactics that had been successful in the past and reorganized the *peshmerga* into conventional units. With a force of 50,000 trained *peshmerga* and nearly as many irregular forces, and bolstered by Iranian-supplied artillery and antitank missiles, he felt prepared to face the Iraqi army head on. Moreover, he was confident that Iranian and U.S. support would

⁵⁹⁵ McDowall, 2004, p. 336.

enable his troops to prevail.⁵⁹⁶ In March 1974, *peshmerga* units began operations by seizing northern Iraqi towns along the Turkish border in an effort to hold the mountainous region of the country while keeping the Kirkuk oil fields within artillery range. While the Kurdish forces lacked heavy weaponry, they intended to defend themselves against the Iraqi forces with U.S. antiaircraft weapons and Iranian artillery.⁵⁹⁷ However, when the Iraqi army counterattacked, it was quickly apparent that the *peshmerga* were ill prepared to withstand a full conventional assault.

Baghdad reacted quickly to the *peshmerga*'s attack, committing 120,000 troops to the region to reinforce their besieged garrisons in Kurdish-controlled areas. Launching a coordinated air and land assault with 1,200 armored tanks and 200 fighter aircraft, Iraqi forces were quickly able to take the offensive.⁵⁹⁸ They attacked deep into Kurdistan, where they captured and held territory throughout the winter rather than retreating as they had in the past.

The Kurdish fighters put up a fierce resistance to the Iraqi counter-offensive. They were able to claim a ratio of 20–30 Iraqi soldiers killed for every Kurd lost, yet they were no match for the well-equipped and highly disciplined Iraqi military.⁵⁹⁹ Iran came to the *peshmerga*'s aid by sending Iranian Kurds and regular forces dressed in Kurdish garb to the region. It also provided additional long-range support and U.S.-made antiaircraft missiles that were effective against Iraq's warplanes. This level of support enabled the *peshmerga* to survive, but it could not save them from eventual defeat. Only direct intervention by Iran would likely have changed the outcome of the war, but this was an eventuality that both Iran and Iraq wanted to avoid.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁶ Kerim Yildiz, *The Kurds in Iraq: The Past, Present and Future*, London: Pluto Press, 2004, p. 23; McDowall, 2004, p. 337; Lortz, 2005, p. 49.

⁵⁹⁷ Lortz, 2005, p. 49.

⁵⁹⁸ McDowall, 2004, p. 337.

⁵⁹⁹ McDowall, 2004, p. 337.

⁶⁰⁰ McDowall, 2004, p. 338.

Phase IV: "Iran Pulls Out and the Kurds Fall" (April 1975)*Phase Outcome: COIN Win*

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily force-on-force conventional engagement; Insurgents' switch to conventional tactics unsustainable (COIN forces able to prevail in vast majority of engagements); Overall importance of external support to conflict: critical/game changer; Flow of cross-border insurgent support significantly decreased or remained dramatically reduced or largely absent; Conclusion/suspension substantially due to withdrawal of international support for one or both sides

In March 1975, the Kurdish rebellion came to an abrupt end after the Iraqi government negotiated an agreement with the Shah of Iran during an Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) summit in Algiers. Under this agreement, Iraq conceded its territorial claims to the Shatt al-Arab waterway in exchange for Iran's withdrawal of support for the Kurdish rebellion. Soon after the Algiers agreement was announced, Iran withdrew all support for the *peshmerga*, and U.S.-provided military assistance that had been tied to the Shah was suspended. This left the already battered forces nearly defenseless.⁶⁰¹

Iraqi forces launched a final assault on the *peshmerga* the next day, killing hundreds of remaining Kurdish fighters and civilians. They then offered Barzani a cease-fire agreement and an opportunity for his forces to either retreat to Iran or surrender. Within a matter of weeks, the *peshmerga* abandoned their fight. Seventy percent of the forces surrendered, and nearly all of the rest escaped to Iran. Barzani fled Iraq and withdrew from political life. The surviving *peshmerga* were either forced underground or ordered to live in settlements, where they were unable to carry their rifles. Thus the *peshmerga's* military capability and its leadership were virtually destroyed.

After defeating the *peshmerga*, Baghdad initiated a series of reprisals against the Kurdish population in an attempt to prevent a future rebellion. The Iraqi army created a 600-mile long security zone along the Iranian and Turkish borders, destroying as many as 1,500 Kurdish

⁶⁰¹ Lortz, 2005; McDowall, 2004.

villages and resettling more than 600,000 people to “collective” resettlement camps in the process. The government also sought to change the demographic balance by removing as many as 1 million residents from disputed districts and replacing them with Egyptian and Iraqi Arab settlers. These efforts took a major toll on the *peshmerga* and the civilian Kurdish population. However, they did not prevent Barzani’s sons from eventually taking over the leadership of the Kurdish movement and returning to guerrilla warfare several years later.

Conventional Explanation

The conventional explanation for Iraq’s success in crushing the Kurdish rebellion is that Barzani made critical errors in attempting to launch a conventional assault on the Iraqi forces and in predicating his campaign on Iranian backing.⁶⁰² While the Kurdish forces were able to challenge the Iraqi military from their mountain redoubts using guerrilla tactics, without a high level of external support, they could not compete conventionally in a head-on contest with a Soviet-backed force that was numerically and qualitatively superior. It is widely believed that the Kurdish leadership had, in fact, received assurances from its Iranian and U.S. advisers that such support would be forthcoming. Barzani was reported to have told the Iranians directly, “If you give us arms to match [Iraqi] arms, we will fight. Otherwise, we will make peace. We don’t want to be massacred.”⁶⁰³

External support is considered a critical factor in determining the course of the Kurdish conflict. In an effort to extend its sphere of influence in the region, the Soviet Union initially supported the Kurds (and, later, Iraq), while Iran, the United States, and Israel maintained an interest in fostering the insurgency to contain Iraqi power.⁶⁰⁴ Yet, none of these external powers was willing to risk engaging directly in an all-out war. Outside strategic interests therefore helped fuel the conflict and also brought about its abrupt end.

⁶⁰² Heraclides, 1990.

⁶⁰³ McDowall, 2004, p. 336.

⁶⁰⁴ Viotti, 1980, p. 196.

Distinctive Characteristics

- While Kurds share the same Muslim religion with Iraqi Arabs, they form a distinct ethnic group based on a separate lineage, language, and culture. This separate identity was nurtured over centuries under Ottoman and British rule, which established a basis for Kurdish nationalism.
- The Kurdish areas of northern Iraq include very rugged mountain ranges and deep river gorges that make the region virtually impassable during the winter. The area was an ideal safe haven for the Kurdish insurgents, who operated in mountain caves and other hideouts, trapping government forces attempting to penetrate the area.⁶⁰⁵
- While Iran and the United States were the main sources of support for the *peshmerga*, “both Iran and the U.S. hoped to benefit from an unsolvable situation in which Iraq was weakened by the Kurd’s refusal to give up their semi-autonomy. Neither Iran nor the U.S. wanted to see the situation resolved or to engage directly in a conventional war.”⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰⁵ Viotti, 1980, p. 196.

⁶⁰⁶ McDowall, 2004, p. 331.

Figure 20
Map of Iraq



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR2912-20

Angolan Independence, 1961–1974

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

The Angolan war of independence began in earnest in 1961 and continued unabated for the next 13 years. (A follow-on insurgency began immediately afterward and lasted for an additional 27 years.) The insurgency was divided among three separate insurgent groups for most of the first phase but still managed to inflict significant damage on the Portuguese COIN force. In Phase II, the COIN force implemented military and political reforms, separated the insurgents from the population, instituted development programs, and enlisted locals into the security forces. Toward the end of the insurgency, the COIN force had reduced troop casualty rates and began making tangible progress in pacifying the population. However, the April 1974 Carnation Revolution in Portugal led Lisbon to withdraw from Angola, essentially handing a tailor-made victory to the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).

Case Narrative

Phase I: "Many Groups, Many Goals" (1961–1967)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Insurgents' ability to replenish resources significantly diminished; COIN force (and allies) had significant military equipment mismatch dominance over insurgents (and allies); Insurgents exploited deep-seated/intractable issues to gain legitimacy

The insurgency in Angola was sparked by a strike organized by Angolan peasants working in the cotton fields of Baixa do Cassang in northern Angola on January 4, 1961. Strikers burned cotton seeds, looted shops, and harassed Europeans.⁶⁰⁷ The Portuguese responded harshly by send-

⁶⁰⁷ Richard Cornwell, "The War for Independence," in Jakkie Cilliers and Christian Dietrich, eds., *Angola's War Economy: The Role of Oil and Diamonds*, Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, 2000, p. 48.

ing in the army, with air support from a squadron of PV-2 Harpoons, which quickly stamped out the insurrection.⁶⁰⁸ One month after the strike in Baixa do Cassang, on February 4, anti-government agitators in Luanda attacked police installations, a prison, and the radio station, killing seven policemen and injuring many more. Racial violence followed shortly thereafter and the next week, another jail was attacked. Following this second attack on a police facility, the bodies of dead black Africans were left in the streets to serve as a warning for others with ideas of attacking white Angolans.

It was around this time that loosely organized anti-government activists and others appalled by recent colonial actions began to coalesce into more formal groups. Three insurgent groups emerged from the strife of the early 1960s. The first, the MPLA, was formed in 1956 by Marxist-influenced urban intellectuals from Luanda, the country's capital. The MPLA members were primarily from the Mbundu and Chokwe ethnic groups, including *mestizos*, or mixed-race persons.⁶⁰⁹

The group developed its military wing, the Popular Army for the Liberation of Angola, in 1962 with a nascent force of between 250 and 300 fighters trained in Ghana and Morocco.⁶¹⁰ The MPLA initially experienced difficulty recruiting, primarily due to ethnic tensions and an ongoing competition with the Union of Angolan Peoples (UPA), which successfully pressured the Congo to expel MPLA fighters from Leopoldville in 1963 and force the group to move to Brazzaville. As a result, the MPLA did not become a potent military force until 1966, when it eventually found safe haven in Zambia.

The UPA was formed in the mid-1950s and had been led by Holden Roberto since 1958. Its strength resided mostly in Angola's rural areas, and its members were drawn from the Bakongo ethnic group. The UPA formed its military wing, the Army of National Lib-

⁶⁰⁸ For more on this strike and its aftermath, see John P. Cann, "Baixa do Cassang: Ending the Abuse of Portuguese Africans," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 23, No. 3, July 2012.

⁶⁰⁹ John P. Cann, "The Artful Use of National Power: Portuguese Angola, 1961–1974," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 22, No. 1, March 2011, p. 202.

⁶¹⁰ John P. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War, 1961–1974*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997a, p. 20.

eration of Angola, in June 1961. In its early stages, the UPA's leadership and training were lackluster and ineffective, and its fighters were undisciplined. In March 1961, the UPA conducted a multipronged attack in northern Angola with between 4,000 and 5,000 insurgents, who marauded through the area in a display of wholesale violence.⁶¹¹

After joining the UPA and rising to the rank of secretary general, Jonas Savimbi orchestrated the group's merger with the Angolan Democratic Party to create the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA). The FNLA subsequently went on to form Angola's Revolutionary Government in Exile (GRAE) as a provisional government operating out of Leopoldville.⁶¹² This group emerged as the Organization of African Unity Liberation Committee's primary recipient of aid.

After a falling-out with the leadership of FNLA/GRAE, Savimbi traveled to China, where he received guerrilla warfare training in the Maoist tradition at Nanjing Military Academy. Upon his return to Angola in early 1966, he formed the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Savimbi's group got off to a rather inauspicious start as it struggled to execute numerous attacks on the COIN forces only to be beaten back by Portuguese soldiers in Cassamba and Luau, respectively. The attack in Luau was an attempt to disrupt the Benguela Railway, which delivered Zambian and Congolese copper shipments to the port in Lobito.⁶¹³ After this attack, Zambia turned against UNITA and outlawed its presence in the country, eliminating a critical safe haven for the insurgents.

Phase II: "Renewal in Continuity" (1968–1974)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Unity of effort/unity of command maintained (government and COIN force); Significant government or military reforms;

⁶¹¹ Cann, 1997a, p. 27.

⁶¹² Cornwell, 2000, p. 51.

⁶¹³ W. S. van der Waals, *Portugal's War in Angola, 1961–1974*, Pretoria, South Africa: Protea, 2011, p. 185.

COIN force resettled/removed civilian populations for population control

Of the three insurgent groups operating against Portuguese forces in Angola, the MPLA posed the most serious threat to the COIN force. By the beginning on Phase II, the MPLA opened a new front in eastern Angola, amassing in both the central heartland of the country and parts of the southeast, where the COIN forces had deployed only four battalions. By 1968, FNLA/GRAE was severely attenuated, and UNITA was disorganized and capable of inflicting only minor damage.⁶¹⁴

With the MPLA expanding its operations in eastern Angola, the COIN force recognized the need to reinforce its troops, which it did by sending in mine-resistant vehicles and helicopters. As the insurgents took control over larger swaths of the country, the COIN force attempted to lure them into overstretching their supply and logistical lines, as well as their infiltration routes. The MPLA took the bait. As a result, the guerrillas had to travel long distances between their bases in Zambia and central Angola. The resettlement of the civilian population into *aldeamentos* was also successful in separating the insurgents from the population, identifying the guerrillas, and targeting the vulnerable fighters for elimination. The resettlement program succeeded in exposing the insurgents, especially when they concentrated their forces. In addition, the COIN force adjusted its tactics, waiting for the MPLA to gather in larger units before launching devastating attacks—a move that was particularly effective during dry-season offensives.⁶¹⁵ After several years of repeated COIN force maelstroms, MPLA action was limited to the area near the Zambian border.

To solidify this reversal of momentum, politicians and military officials in Lisbon decided to implement a host of reforms. These included the establishment of the General Council for Counter-Subversion, the District Council for Counter-Subversion, and the Council for the Guidance of Psychological Action. These councils were designed to accomplish collect intelligence that was adequate to sup-

⁶¹⁴ Van der Waals, 2011, p. 159.

⁶¹⁵ Van der Waals, 2011, pp. 203–204.

port kill/capture of insurgents, disrupt insurgent materiel acquisition and logistic supplies, and conduct “limited military and related action of a preventative and retaliatory nature.”⁶¹⁶ According to W. S. van der Waals, “Portuguese counteraction in 1967–1974 was characterized by increased aggressiveness, an improved command and control structure, large scale resettlement of the east Angolan population and continued socioeconomic reforms.”⁶¹⁷

Ever cognizant of the difficulties posed by Angola’s terrain, which was a veritable patchwork of mountains, swamps, jungles, and long stretches of thickly wooded elephant grass that provided the insurgents with cover from the air, the Portuguese changed course in the second phase to focus on containment and the restriction of infiltration to specific geographic areas that were well known to the COIN force. Army troops were backed up by paramilitary units, including 2,000 *flechas*, as well as members of the secret police.

As they had done in both Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, the Portuguese reoriented their military from a conventional force to a COIN outfit, recruited locals for militias and paramilitary units, focused on small-unit tactics, implemented a range of economic and social programs, and spent a considerable amount of time discerning the best way to conduct a PSYOP campaign in the colony.⁶¹⁸ These changes helped compensate for what were serious shortcomings when the insurgency first began, including poor motivation among junior conscripted officers, inadequate air support, and political restrictions on strikes aimed at the cross-border sanctuaries of the MPLA, FNLA/ GRAE, and UNITA.⁶¹⁹

By the end of 1972, violence in Angola had decreased by 29 percent, and the casualty rates of the COIN force and civilian population had been cut in half.⁶²⁰ According to a vice consul report the following

⁶¹⁶ Van der Waals, 2011, p. 209.

⁶¹⁷ Van der Waals, 2011, p. 159.

⁶¹⁸ Cann, 1997a, p. 20.

⁶¹⁹ Van der Waals, 2011, p. 215.

⁶²⁰ Van der Waals, 2011, p. 215.

year, conditions in Angola were improving to the point that victory seemed all but inevitable, barring a “political collapse” in Portugal.⁶²¹ Much to the dismay of Portuguese soldiers who were fighting and winning in Angola, a political collapse is precisely what occurred with the Carnation Revolution in Portugal in April 1974. Despite their best efforts, the COIN force ceded victory to the MPLA and the remaining insurgents in Angola, all of whom dug in and prepared for the impending civil war.

Conventional Explanations

Numerous books and scholarly articles on the conflict in Angola place much of the spotlight on the myriad insurgent groups operating against Portuguese COIN forces. Although the MPLA did pose a significant threat to the force, especially in Phase II, the more interesting story of this conflict is the success that the COIN forces were able to achieve (a scorecard score of 6) while still losing the war. As they did in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, Portuguese COIN forces in Angola relied on a combination of resettlement, local recruiting, the use of various internal security units, and extensive PSYOP operations to effectively reduce the operational capability of the insurgent forces.

Portugal faced the challenge of fighting three geographically spread insurgencies simultaneously in a colony that was far from Portugal itself, a situation that posed logistical and resupply challenges. Nevertheless, Portugal was able to overcome these challenges and fight effectively in Angola after instituting a series of political and military reforms and tailoring its military to wage a COIN conflict rather than a conventional war. Portugal’s actual COIN success in Angola was obscured by decisions made on the domestic front, yet its tactics still provide important lessons learned.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Although they coexisted and even worked together at various points throughout the insurgency, the MPLA and UNITA would

⁶²¹ Van der Waals, 2011, p. 215.

go on to fight a brutal civil war immediately following the end of the war for Angolan independence in 1975, a conflict that lasted until 2002.

- Due to Angola's proximity to South Africa and the tendency of SWAPO and ANC guerrillas to use Angola as sanctuary, the South African military conducted numerous incursions onto Angolan soil during the Angolan war for independence, adding to an already complex battlefield picture.
- Portuguese manipulation of regional states, including Zambia and Malawi, helped mitigate against the insurgents' use of these areas as unfettered sanctuaries. Due to Angola's importance to sub-Saharan Africa's economy, the Portuguese frequently relied on economic leverage to manage the evolving geopolitical situation.

Figure 21
Map of Angola



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-21

Guinea-Bissau, 1962–1974

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

Led by Amílcar Lopes Cabral, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) waged an insurgency to overthrow Portuguese colonial rule in Guinea-Bissau. Of Portugal's three African COIN campaigns, Guinea-Bissau was considered the least valuable, and, as a result, troops fighting there were often left wanting for supplies and resources. The insurgents enjoyed several important advantages, including external sponsorship from a number of countries and safe havens in neighboring French Guinea (Guinea-Conakry). Relentless attacks by PAIGC guerrillas confined the Portuguese to large garrisons, further alienating the COIN force from the population. Despite a change in leadership in the second phase, which resulted in a reequipped and resupplied COIN force conducting operations beyond their garrisons, domestic political events in Portugal led to a withdrawal of troops and the establishment of independent Guinea-Bissau.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "Portugal's Third Front" (1962–1967)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: *No* parts of the area of conflict were no-go or otherwise denied to COIN force; COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent intelligence; Terrain played a major role in conflict

The PAIGC was formed in late September 1956 by *assimilados* and educated Cape Verdeans and headed by Amílcar Lopes Cabral.⁶²² The group's first organized action was a dockworkers' strike in Pijiguiti in

⁶²² Cann, 1997a, p. 23. A concise but informative background on Cabral can be found in Peter Karibe Mendy, "Amilcar and the Liberation of Guinea-Bissau: Context, Challenges, and Lessons for Effective African Leadership," *African Identities*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2006.

1959, during which urban violence led to the deaths of 50 strikers.⁶²³ Open hostilities erupted in January 1963, when the insurgents attacked a Portuguese garrison in Tite, near the Corubal River south of Bissau, the capital of Portuguese Guinea. To counter the growing insurgency, Portuguese COIN forces established fortified bases in Tite and Catio. These bases served as staging points from which to gather intelligence and conduct COIN operations.⁶²⁴

From the very start, the insurgents were well trained, well led, and well equipped, with important sanctuary offered by neighboring states Senegal and Guinea-Conakry. PAIGC guerrillas also enjoyed the benefits of terrain. Operating from jungles and mangrove and swamp forests proved useful in allowing the insurgents to sneak in and out of the country to resupply and to attack Portuguese COIN forces. As the conflict wore on, insurgent attacks spread across the colony, from Oio in the north to Boe in the central-southeast. The COIN force spread its troops out to combat the insurgents, but as it did so, the guerrillas attacked its convoys and mounted vicious ambushes against its supply lines.

Once the insurgents were able to consolidate large pockets of territory in the southern part of the country, the COIN force suffered from a lack of reliable intelligence. To remedy this, it dispatched 2,000 elite Portuguese troops to Guinea-Bissau under the direction of an army captain from Angola. With these new troops in place, other military leaders arrived from Portugal to help put together an operation to seize insurgent strongholds near Como, a critical PAIGC resupply point.⁶²⁵ The COIN force sealed off Como and then sent in the air force to conduct a bombing campaign for the next two and a half months.

COIN force bombing had the effect of generating sympathy for the insurgents among the population at large. Sensing this, Cabral held the Cassaca Congress in February 1964 to reorganize the war effort

⁶²³ Thomas H. Henriksen, "People's War in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea Bissau," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, September 1976, p. 378.

⁶²⁴ Mustafah Dhada, "The Liberation War in Guinea-Bissau Reconsidered," *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 62, No. 3, July 1998, p. 572.

⁶²⁵ Dhada, 1998, p. 572.

and establish a national army, known as the Forças Armadas Revolucionárias do Povo, or Revolutionary Armed Forces of the People.⁶²⁶ Political indoctrination was a significant part of the insurgents' platform as they prepared to spread their forces to the eastern part of the country. In 1965, the insurgents expanded attacks in the northern area of the country, where—at the time—only the Frente de Luta pela Independência Nacional da Guiné, or the Struggle Front for the National Independence of Guinea, a minor insurgent force, was operating.

Toward the end of the first phase, the PAIGC began openly receiving military support from abroad, from such states as China, Cuba, and the Soviet Union. Some of its more accomplished fighters were sent abroad to receive further training in Algeria and Czechoslovakia.⁶²⁷ The insurgents were able to use neighboring French Guinea (Guinea-Conakry) as a safe haven from which they could organize and launch attacks against the Portuguese.⁶²⁸

Unlike in Mozambique or Angola, COIN troops in Guinea were on the defensive. Small groups of soldiers were used to guard critical infrastructure, which left them vulnerable to insurgent attacks in the countryside, where PAIGC support was at its zenith. The insurgents relentlessly attacked Portuguese army encampments, demoralizing COIN troops who no longer felt safe even in their barracks. The insurgent military offensive was paired with the economic sabotage of Portuguese-owned businesses and government-run industries, including in what were once extremely lucrative agricultural and timber markets.⁶²⁹ Indigenous Guineans boycotted trade with many Europeans, banned the use of Portuguese currency in insurgent-held zones, and ceased paying taxes to the Portuguese colonial administration.

The COIN forces were tired, frustrated, and stretched thin. A lack of popular support meant dwindling intelligence, which led the COIN force to rely less on precision strikes and more on indiscrimi-

⁶²⁶ Cann, 1997a, p. 25.

⁶²⁷ Cann, 1997a, p. 24.

⁶²⁸ John P. Cann, "Operation Mar Verde: The Strike on Conakry, 1970," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 8, No. 3, Winter 1997b, p. 65.

⁶²⁹ Dhada, 1998, p. 578.

nate bombing. This, in turn, further reduced popular support for a continued Portuguese presence. Furthermore, to blunt the effects of COIN force air power, the insurgents demonstrated remarkable agility and flexibility by dismantling large bases and instead operating from smaller, semipermanent bases that could be set up and broken down quickly.⁶³⁰

Phase II: “Aldeamentos and Africanization” (1968–1974)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: COIN force resettled/removed civilian populations for population control; COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas it controlled or claimed to control

Recognizing the need for change, the Portuguese dispatched General António de Spínola to Guinea-Bissau in March 1968. Steeped in experience fighting insurgents, Spínola instituted a series of civil and military reforms that sought to ebb and then reverse insurgent control throughout the country. Similar to his counterparts in Portugal’s other African theaters, Mozambique and Angola (where he had already fought), Spínola arrived in Guinea-Bissau looking to tweak his military’s COIN strategy. One major change implemented by Spínola was the concept of local defense forces. Each village maintained its own militia for self-defense, equipped with radios, protected by antipersonnel mines, and supplied with a range of weaponry, including machine guns, AK-47s, bazookas, and rifles.⁶³¹ In many cases, these militias were used as second-line forces in support of the *aldeamento* program. The *aldeamentos*, or strategic hamlets, were constructed in cities, towns, and villages that held strategic importance to Portuguese war aims.

Another layer of security on top of the self-defense forces was the Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado, or the International State Defense Police, an internal security unit that was essentially the equiv-

⁶³⁰ Dhada, 1998, pp. 579–582.

⁶³¹ Cann, 1997a, p. 161.

alent of the “secret police,” known to be both “skilled and powerful.”⁶³² As COIN force garrisons lessened in number, internal security units supplemented this absence of force and were granted sweeping powers to act with impunity, often in extrajudicial ways. On the political front, the new COIN strategy relied on the Frente Unida de Libertação (United Liberation Front), better known as FUL-Spínola. This organization brought together an array of anti-PAIGC elements, including 92 anti-Cape Verdean PAIGC activists.⁶³³ By exploiting differences between the Cape Verdeans and the Guineans in the PAIGC, the COIN force was able to penetrate the insurgency with informers, spies, and double agents.

Eager to snuff out insurgent cross-border sanctuaries, Spínola executed Operation Mal Verde, a raid into Guinea-Conakry, in November 1970. Two previous operations, Operation Nebulosa and Operation Gata Brava, both failed to achieve the desired effect of contesting and disrupting PAIGC cross-border activity.⁶³⁴ Operation Mal Verde succeeded in damaging the insurgents’ headquarters while also retaking COIN force prisoners of war.

Perhaps encouraged by the success of Operation Mal Verde, Spínola went on the offensive. The COIN force conducted Operation Solitary Sapphire and a follow-on bombing campaign bolstered by improved intelligence. In an attempt to retard COIN force gains, the insurgents reorganized again, forming several offshoot organizations, including the *Milícia Popular* (the People’s Militia), the *Forças Armadas Locais* (Local Armed Forces), and the *Grupo do Exército Popular* (the People’s Army), which fell under the umbrella of the *Forças Armadas Nacionais* (National Armed Forces).⁶³⁵ The insurgents and

⁶³² This force was later renamed the *Direcção Geral de Segurança*, or Bureau of General Security. Thomas H. Henriksen, “Lessons from Portugal’s Counter-Insurgency Operations in Africa,” *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 123, No. 2, June 1978, p. 32.

⁶³³ Anti-Cape Verdean activists were frustrated by the fact that the majority of the insurgency’s leadership consisted of ethnic Cape Verdeans, not ethnic Guineans. Dhada, 1998, pp. 579–582.

⁶³⁴ Cann, 1997b, pp. 69–70.

⁶³⁵ Dhada, 1998, p. 588.

counterinsurgents went back and forth, each side inflicting damage on the other but neither wielding sufficient muscle to force the other side to quit.

On January 20, 1973, Cabral was assassinated. Contrary to what the COIN force had hoped for, the insurgency was galvanized by the death of its leader. In May 1973, a mere five months later, the insurgents carried out Operation Amílcar Cabral, which culminated in the seizure of vast quantities of COIN force weaponry in a siege in Guiledge.⁶³⁶ Operation Abel Djassi resulted in the capture of a major garrison in Copa. As 1973 drew to a close, the insurgents controlled most of the country and had declared the liberated zones independent territory.

As it did in both Mozambique and Angola, the April 1974 Carnation Revolution signaled the end of Portugal's commitment to its colony. Lisbon granted independence to Guinea-Bissau in July 1974, though considering the way the insurgency was unfolding toward the end of the second phase, it is certainly plausible that the insurgents were on their way to defeating the Portuguese militarily, as evidenced by their string of impressive victories throughout the early 1970s.

Conventional Explanations

So much of the story of Portugal's wars of decolonization focuses on the fact that the Portuguese were forced to wage three separate COIN campaigns in three different African territories. While true, this only tells part of the story. Of the three conflicts, Portugal's war in Guinea-Bissau was the most difficult battle for its forces. PAIGC insurgents proved to be worthy adversaries, attracting external support from the Eastern Bloc, as well as sanctuary in neighboring territories. Portugal's air power advantage was neutralized by Guinea-Bissau's terrain, which allowed the insurgents freedom of movement. Insurgent attacks also led the Portuguese to retreat to their garrisons, and the guerrillas progressively increased their control of territory.

The COIN force followed a strategy in Guinea-Bissau that was similar to the one they employed in Angola and Mozambique, rely-

⁶³⁶ Dhada, 1998, p. 590.

ing on the “Africanization” of its troops over time and separating the insurgents from the population through the use of *aldeamentos*. The Portuguese were clearly not inept, as evidenced by the “–2” scorecard score for this case. But in Guinea-Bissau, the COIN force had much less success in exploiting insurgent leadership rifts and overcoming trade boycotts that severely hampered the local economy. By the time insurgent leader Cabral was assassinated in 1973, it was too late. The following year saw the Carnation Revolution sweep Portugal, which led to the withdrawal of Portuguese troops and the establishment of an independent Guinea-Bissau.

Distinctive Characteristics

- The composition of the insurgency was divided sharply along ethnic lines. The leadership of the PAIGC was almost exclusively Cape Verdean, while most of its foot soldiers were ethnic Guineans. This proved to be a complicating factor throughout most of the conflict, as both sides grew wary of the other’s intentions.
- Spínola’s leadership in Phase II was a boon for the COIN force and demonstrates how changing COIN leadership midway through the conflict can have positive results. Although the COIN force ultimately lost the insurgency to the “tide of history,” Spínola was widely recognized as an agile and adept leader whose aggressive style contrasted with that of his predecessor.
- According to Mustafah Dhada, General Spínola’s aide-de-camp recalled, “We withdrew from these outposts as it became too expensive to keep our men supplied with beer.”⁶³⁷

⁶³⁷ Dhada, 1998, pp. 584–585.

Figure 22
Map of Guinea-Bissau



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-22

Mozambican Independence, 1962–1974

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

Mozambique was one of three concurrent insurgencies that Portuguese colonial forces battled throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. In the first phase of this conflict, General António Augusto dos Santos prosecuted a low-intensity population-centric COIN campaign characterized by psychological warfare and limited operations. In Phase II, General Kaulza de Arriaga switched course, taking a comprehensive approach that included development, resettlement, recruitment of indigenous troops, and an increase in airborne search-and-destroy operations in an attempt to win the war decisively and bring the conflict to a victorious end for the Portuguese. Despite a largely successful COIN campaign, the 1974 Carnation Revolution led Portugal to withdraw from its overseas colonies, bringing about an insurgent victory and the ascension of the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO).

Case Narrative

Phase I: “In Defense of the Ultramar” (1962–1969)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: COIN forces maintained credibility with population in area of conflict (includes expectation management); Type of external support included: training and/or advice (military advisers); Level of violence low/manageable

FRELIMO was a Marxist-Leninist group formed at a conference in 1962 by the merger of various nationalist groups, including the Moçambique União Nacional Africano (Mozambican African National Union), the União Nacional Africano de Moçambique Independente (National African Union of Independent Mozambique), and the União Nacional Democrática de Moçambique (National Democratic Union of Mozambique). Shortly after FRELIMO’s formation, two of its leaders, Eduardo Mondlane and Marcelino dos Santos, traveled to Algiers

to meet with Algerian President Ahmed Ben Bella, who agreed to provide training in the use of small arms, explosives, sabotage, subversion, and commando tactics.⁶³⁸ Once training was completed, the insurgents returned to Tanzania, where they maintained their external sanctuary and organized under the direction of Filipe Samuel Magaia. With newly supplied weaponry and military training, the insurgency began in earnest in 1964 with a surprise attack near Mueda in Cabo Delgado.⁶³⁹

In the first few years of Phase I, insurgent attacks took the form of small strike teams of between ten and 15 insurgents who attacked lightly guarded administrative posts in such areas as Chai Chai, Niassa, and Tete in central Mozambique. From there, the attacks spread south to Meponda and Mandimba, where the insurgents conducted joint operations with forces from the neighboring Republic of Malawi.

FRELIMO grew its force size in this phase by including formerly exiled Mozambicans, as well as female fighters. With these greater numbers, FRELIMO could launch attacks with groups as large as 100 fighters. The insurgents relied on classic guerrilla tactics—ambushes, hit-and-run attacks, sabotage operations, and the extensively placed land mines, which were used to great effect.

Overall, popular support for the insurgency could be considered high in this phase, as the insurgents relied on the locals for basic provisions. External support brought everything from weapons to medicine and flowed to the insurgents from myriad sources, including independent African states, communist and Eastern Bloc countries, and non-governmental organizations in the West. Particularly valuable was the support provided to the insurgents by the Nyanja and Makonde tribes based in Niassa and Cabo Delgado. These tribes lived along the border area near neighboring Tanzania and Malawi and helped facilitate the movement of supplies into the country.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁸ Walter C. Opello, Jr., "Guerrilla War in Portuguese Africa: An Assessment of the Balance of Force in Mozambique," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Summer 1974, p. 29.

⁶³⁹ Opello, 1974, p. 29.

⁶⁴⁰ Opello, 1974, p. 30.

For the first several years of Phase I, the Portuguese COIN forces suffered from an equipment shortfall. After all, the conflict in Mozambique was just one of the three African insurgencies that the Portuguese were fighting during these years. The COIN force had no armored vehicles, only five planes at Vila Cabral (and no helicopters), and just one gunboat at Lake Nyasa.⁶⁴¹ Logistical issues hampered resupply efforts, exacerbating this lack of equipment. At 784,961 sq km, Mozambique is nine times the size of Portugal and characterized by diverse terrain. It was not only far from Portugal but also far from Portugal's other theaters in Africa at the time, Angola and Guinea-Bissau. As John P. Cann noted, "For the most modern intertheater transport aircraft in the Portuguese fleet of the time, these distances represented a hard several days' work for both aircrew and machine."⁶⁴²

By 1967, the insurgents controlled a significant slice of Mozambican territory. As the insurgents pushed south in 1968 and opened new fronts throughout the country, the Portuguese stepped up efforts to drive a wedge between the various ethnic groups and tribes in Mozambique in a classic divide-and-conquer strategy. This strategy bore fruit when Magaia was shot dead by a fellow FRELIMO fighter suspected of being a double agent working for the COIN force, a move that exploited the traditional tribal rifts between the Makonde on one side and the Makwa and Yao on the other.⁶⁴³

The Cahora Bassa Dam project, commenced in 1969, forced indigenous Mozambicans to relocate. The insurgents capitalized on popular resentment by launching a series of attacks against the dam. COIN troops were diverted from the battlefield to guard the project. By the end of the phase, the insurgents switched their focus from attacking the dam to influencing the local population in the Tete district.⁶⁴⁴ Coercion was a key tool in this regard, as the insurgents began systematically eliminating tribal chiefs in the district to consolidate control.

⁶⁴¹ Opello, 1974, p. 30.

⁶⁴² Cann, 1997a, p. 2.

⁶⁴³ Opello, 1974, p. 31.

⁶⁴⁴ Cann, 1997a, p. 124.

The COIN force underestimated both the popularity of the insurgents in Tete and their capabilities, which was essentially the result of a failure of intelligence that led to “rapid subversion of the district.”⁶⁴⁵

However, FRELIMO leader Mondlane was assassinated in 1969. This provided the opportunity for the COIN force to reevaluate its strategy going forward. Years into the conflict, the level of violence remained manageable from the perspective of the Portuguese. Still, to make progress on both the political and military fronts, the COIN force decided to alter its strategy heading into Phase II, relieving its top general of command and refashioning its effort to include a more comprehensive approach focused on winning the hearts and minds of the people.

Phase II: “The Last Vestiges of a Lost Cause” (1970–1974)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: COIN force resettled/removed civilian populations for population control; Unity of effort/unity of command maintained (government and COIN force); COIN campaign included significant (not necessarily primary) focus on physically denying the insurgents access to supportive populations (for example, through removal/resettlement or interdiction); COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards

General Kaúlza de Arriaga took control of COIN force strategy beginning in March 1970 and implemented changes immediately. Arriaga preferred a more direct method of fighting the insurgents than did his successor, General António Augusto dos Santos, and launched Operation Gordian Knot in July 1970. This operation was conducted in northern Mozambique and involved between 10,000 and 15,000 troops. Gordian Knot was the largest counteroffensive of the war and focused on dislodging insurgents from the Makonde Plateau in the north and the eastern highlands near Lake Malawi.⁶⁴⁶ The operation

⁶⁴⁵ Cann, 1997a, p. 125.

⁶⁴⁶ Henriksen, 1978, p. 32.

was successful in disrupting the insurgents' major infiltration routes and resupply networks, capturing numerous caches of weapons, and limiting the insurgents' ability to launch attacks.

A critical element of the COIN force strategy in Phase II was the acceleration of its resettlement program, known as *aldeamentos*, or fortified villages.⁶⁴⁷ The goal of the *aldeamento* program was to separate the insurgents from the population and provide Mozambicans with improved social and economic programs, protect them from insurgent intimidation and coercion, and facilitate PSYOP activities.⁶⁴⁸ By the end of the conflict in Mozambique, an estimated 969,396 Mozambicans had been resettled into 953 villages.⁶⁴⁹

Under Arriaga, there was an increased emphasis on improving COIN force unity of command. In Niassa, the Portuguese army and navy used a small fleet of patrol boats to conduct joint operations on the shores of Lake Nyasa.⁶⁵⁰

Accompanying this renewed focus on improving unity of command was a move to recruit more locals to conduct COIN force operations. From 1972 forward, there was growing demand for *flechas*, units composed of local tribesmen that specialized in tracking, reconnaissance, and counterterrorism operations. The "Africanization" of the insurgency in Mozambique was a deliberate policy adopted by the Portuguese with the intent of limiting metropole casualties, maintaining solidarity with the local population, and facilitating intelligence collection through African recruits' knowledge of the local terrain.⁶⁵¹

One of the insurgents' most frequently voiced grievances was that ethnic Mozambicans were isolated from what came to be seen

⁶⁴⁷ For a comprehensive analysis of Portugal's *aldeamento* program, see Brendan F. Jundanian, "Resettlement Programs: Counterinsurgency in Mozambique," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 4, July 1974.

⁶⁴⁸ Cann, 1997a, p. 155.

⁶⁴⁹ Cann, 1997a, p. 156.

⁶⁵⁰ Opello, 1974, p. 31.

⁶⁵¹ Pierre Pahlavi and Karine Ali, "Institutional Analysis and Irregular Warfare: Portugal's Involvement in Angola, Guinea Bissau, and Mozambique (1961–1974)," *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Spring 2012, p. 47.

as a European-centric—namely, Portuguese—economy. To ameliorate these concerns, development projects became a key element of the COIN force strategy in Phase II. “The Portuguese are now providing the Africans with all the material things they had asked for—education, roads and buses, land, co-operative farms, medical centres, cattle dips, fertilisers and libraries and of the great improvements in the status of the African,” explained Michael Calvert in a synopsis of the changes taking place in 1970s Mozambique.⁶⁵²

In November 1972, the insurgents launched a major offensive in Tete province. Relying in part on a “crush them” concept, designed to punish the insurgents and undermine their support from the local population, the COIN force responded with search-and-destroy operations involving small shock-troop sweeps. In December 1972, the Portuguese launched Operation Marosca against a cluster of settlements in central Mozambique. This operation featured a widespread bombing campaign by Portuguese jets, followed by a commando raid. In what came to be known as the Wiriyamu Massacre, COIN forces looted and destroyed huts, raped and disemboweled women, and beat and burned civilians.⁶⁵³

Following the bloodshed at Wiriyamu, the insurgency degenerated into a sadistic spiral of violence perpetrated by both sides. In 1973, FRELIMO’s new commander, Samora Machel, abandoned Mondlane’s previously enforced policy of mercy for Portuguese settlers. Just as was occurring in the United States concerning the Vietnam War, developments in Portugal’s African colonies were making these wars increasingly unpopular with the population of Portugal. On the domestic front, Portugal was experiencing a period of political instability and suffering from attacks by Marxist-inspired groups against its military targets. The Carnation Revolution of April 1974 led Portugal to divest

⁶⁵² Michael Calvert, “Counter-Insurgency in Mozambique,” *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 118, No. 1, March 1973, p. 82.

⁶⁵³ Bruno C. Reis and Pedro A. Oliveira, “Cutting Heads or Winning Hearts: Late Colonial Portuguese Counterinsurgency and the Wiriyamu Massacre of 1972,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, March 2012, p. 82.

itself of its overseas colonies and withdraw its troops from Mozambique, in effect ceding control of the country to FRELIMO insurgents.

Conventional Explanations

While conventional explanations of the insurgency in Mozambique reference major events, such as Operation Gordian Knot, attacks on the Cahora Bassa Dam, and the Wiryamu Massacre, what many accounts fail to discuss is that the Portuguese COIN forces actually acquitted themselves quite well in battle. Although it is impossible to separate politics and warfare, especially in COIN, analyzing what the Portuguese did from a COIN perspective shows that they did many good things, including successfully separating the insurgents from the population through the use of *aldeamentos*, effectively utilizing indigenous forces for scouting and reconnaissance, and implementing a host of development projects designed to win the allegiance of ethnic Mozambicans.

While it is difficult to forecast whether or not the Portuguese would have won the conflict if not for the April 1974 Carnation Revolution, what is beyond dispute is that the COIN forces were making significant progress throughout the second phase, albeit not without certain setbacks, like Wirimayu. If the Portuguese had not unilaterally withdrawn, there is a strong possibility that the insurgents would have been defeated in Phase II, especially after FRELIMO's leader, Mondlane, was assassinated at the end of the first phase.

Distinctive Characteristics

- According to Cann, “27,000 insurgents spread over three theaters was a problem for Portugal in that it was difficult to prevent their entry, and once across the border, it was difficult to locate them. Their ability to cross the long, unpatrolled borders in the remote areas of Africa and make contact with the population represented a dangerous threat. In no other modern insurgency was there such

a multiplicity of national movements across such a wide front in three theaters.”⁶⁵⁴

- Portuguese practices that wrought success included “small patrols of well-trained men who could penetrate rugged terrain to gather intelligence, kill guerrillas, disrupt food gathering and courier traffic, call down artillery or air strikes where appropriate, and above all, make contacts with the population.”⁶⁵⁵
- “The fact that Portugal lost the war because it failed to find a political solution to the conflict does not negate its military achievements and the fact that they may still hold lessons for others in future conflicts.”⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁴ Cann, 1997a, p. 7.

⁶⁵⁵ Christopher C. Harmon, “Illustrations of ‘Learning’ in Counterinsurgency,” *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 11, No. 1, January–March 1992, p. 36.

⁶⁵⁶ Cann, 1997a, p. 11.

Figure 23
Map of Mozambique



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-23

Yemen, 1962–1970

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

An insurgency was launched in North Yemen after the country's ruling imam was overthrown in a coup by Egyptian-trained military officers in 1962. Seeking to restore the old order, the imam rallied tribal forces, with support from Saudi Arabia, to launch a guerrilla campaign against the new republican government, which maintained a weak hold on the country. Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser responded to the growing insurgent threat to a fellow revolutionary regime by providing an increasing level of military support to the Yemeni government. Initially supplying military advisers and special forces teams, Egypt sent 60,000 troops to Yemen by 1965 to become the primary COIN force. Yet, despite their overwhelming land and air power, the Egyptian forces could not adequately defend against the imam's attacks or achieve popular support due to their brutal COIN tactics and modern socialist ideology, which was antithetical to traditional Yemeni culture. Nasser briefly agreed to mediation efforts but subsequently recommitted a large contingent of Egyptian troops to the region as he sought to fill the strategic vacuum left by Great Britain's withdrawal from South Yemen.

It was only after Egypt's humiliating defeat in the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War in 1967 that Nasser decided to withdraw from Yemen. The Yemeni conflict continued at a reduced pace after Egypt's withdrawal, finally ending two years later, when moderate leaders emerged on both sides. In May 1970, the republicans agreed to establish a more moderate government that provided the imam's supporters with significant political autonomy.

Case Narrative

Phase I: “A Republican Coup Sparks a Counterrevolutionary Insurgency and Draws Egypt into a War” (1962–1963)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Insurgency followed a coup or was a counterrevolution; Motives for external participant: Global/regional influence or regional power struggle; COIN force employed escalating repression; COIN force employed collective punishment; COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics; COIN force engaged in more coercion/intimidation than insurgents; External support to COIN from strong state/military; External support to insurgents from strong state/military; External professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of government; COIN force (and allies) had significant military equipment mismatch dominance over insurgents (and allies); Relationship between external and host-nation forces: primary counterinsurgent; COIN force attempted to use overwhelming force; An external actor provided significant direct military support (troops, air power) to COIN force/government

The outbreak of conflict in North Yemen was sparked by a coup d'état against Yemeni monarch Imam Muhammad al-Badr by members of his palace guard in September 1962. The coup, which occurred just one week after Imam al-Badr assumed power, was led by Egyptian-trained officers who established a revolutionary republican government in Sana'a, the capital. Their goal was to modernize and reform Yemen's feudal society according to the socialist principles espoused by President Gamal Abdel Nasser.⁶⁵⁷ Egypt immediately backed the new Yemeni government and provided limited military support to help it consolidate its rule. Opposition to the new government arose quickly as Imam al-Badr and his followers escaped capture and sought help from Saudi Arabia to launch a counterrevolutionary insurgency.

⁶⁵⁷ According to some historical analyses, Egypt actually planned and helped execute the coup against the imam. Saeed M. Badeeb, *The Saudi Egyptian Conflict Over North Yemen, 1962–1970*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986, p. 26.

Within a few weeks of the coup, the imam rallied tribal forces in Northern Yemen in support of his effort to restore the old order. He organized an armed resistance movement and launched a series of hit-and-run guerrilla attacks in October 1962, which inflicted heavy losses on republican forces and the Egyptian troops that supported them. As al-Badr's campaign progressed, his base of support widened and extended beyond tribal lines. By early 1963, his "royalist" forces included as many as 20,000 fighters and gained control of the mountainous regions of the country.⁶⁵⁸

The imam's forces received significant external support from the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Jordan, who sought to aid a fellow monarch against revolutionaries and contain Nasser's influence in the region. The Saudis provided the imam with safe haven, allowing him to set up a government-in-exile within its borders, and supplied the insurgents with money, weapons, and training. King Hussein of Jordan provided funding and equipment to the imam's forces. In addition, the British offered covert assistance in the form of indirect shipments of arms and advisory services through mercenaries.⁶⁵⁹

Yemen's republican government responded to this growing insurgent threat by requesting more support from Egypt. President Nasser, who maintained an interest in sustaining the Yemeni revolutionary movement and extending his influence in the Arab world, was Yemen's primary ally and was willing to meet the government's escalating needs for military assistance. At first, Egyptian military advisers were dispatched to Yemen. Then, Egypt deployed a commando unit of 100 troops to safeguard the republic and consolidate control over the country. The commandos were expected to accomplish their mission in three months.⁶⁶⁰ However, within a few weeks, it became clear that they would be unable to defend against the imam's attacks, and Cairo deployed 5,000 additional troops and more than 200 aircraft to the region.

⁶⁵⁸ David M. Witty, "A Regular Army in Counterinsurgency Operations: Egypt in Yemen, 1962–1967," *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 65, No. 2, April 2001, pp. 407.

⁶⁵⁹ Mark Curtis, *Unpeople: Britain's Secret Human Rights Abuses*, London: Vintage, 2004.

⁶⁶⁰ Witty, 2001, p. 410.

In October and November 1962, Egypt's strategy was to use its air and land forces to overwhelm the insurgents. The objective was to eliminate support for the insurgency by closing the Saudi-Yemeni border and to gain control of all of northern Yemen.⁶⁶¹ Such goals soon proved to be too ambitious. When the Egyptian air force bombed several Saudi border towns that served as royalist bases, their attacks failed to weaken the royalist forces and only increased the level of Saudi support for the insurgency.⁶⁶² A subsequent attempt by the Egyptian army to deploy armored column brigades to draw the royalists into battle had an equally adverse effect. The insurgents refused to engage in conventional operations, responding instead by interdicting supply lines and ambushing Egyptian convoys, which were more difficult for conventional forces to defend.

Recognizing that a quick victory was not at hand, Cairo doubled its commitment of troops in 1963 and launched a more targeted effort to gain control over Yemen's most populated areas. These precision efforts resulted in more successful offensive attacks and enabled the Egyptians to gain control over the center of the country. However, they did not reduce the level of support for the insurgency or significantly reduce the insurgents' freedom of action. Tribes throughout the country continued to offer assistance to al-Badr. Royalist forces were able to maintain control of rural areas and travel freely in small guerrilla bands through government-controlled areas as well.⁶⁶³ It also became increasingly clear in 1963 that Yemeni forces lacked the capacity to engage in the COIN effort and were often unwilling to fight their fellow Yemenis in support of a government that was largely under Egyptian control.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶¹ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 383.

⁶⁶² As a result of the cross-border attacks, the Saudis began providing increased political and financial support to the royalists, and the conflict began to evolve more into a proxy war between the states. Joseph Churba, "Yemen: Disengagement in Protracted War," *Air University Review*, January–February 1969.

⁶⁶³ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 384.

⁶⁶⁴ The republican army consisted of fewer than 7,000 troops and was led by Egyptian officers. The army was plagued by desertions, and its combat effectiveness was extremely limited. Witty, 2001, p. 421; Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 384.

Therefore, most of the burden for fighting the war continued to fall to the Egyptians, creating demand for an even greater commitment of external forces.⁶⁶⁵

In an attempt to gain support from the local population, the Egyptians adopted a carrot-and-stick approach toward the Yemeni tribes. In the early stages of the conflict, they sought to buy tribal loyalty with offers of gold, yet this often led to a bidding war with the royalists, with many tribes accepting money from both sides. Later, the Egyptians offered weapons to tribes in an attempt to create tribal auxiliaries that would fight on the government's behalf.⁶⁶⁶ It became clear that these groups were "republican by day and royalist by night."⁶⁶⁷ Moreover, such incentives for cooperation were often overshadowed by the Egyptians' brutal policy of dealing with tribes who were suspected of supporting al-Badr. In 1963, Egyptian forces began conducting aerial attacks against rural villages, which killed hundreds of civilians, in an effort to intimidate the population to support the government. They also began a campaign to destroy agricultural lands and wells of tribes in royalist-controlled areas. Rather than helping to gain support from the tribes, the brutality of these acts served to drive many to support the royalists in an effort to rid the country of Egyptians.⁶⁶⁸

By the end of 1963, the conflict in North Yemen had reached a stalemate. After the first two years of fighting, it became clear that the Egyptian forces were sorely unprepared to combat the royalist insurgency. Despite its overwhelming manpower, airpower, armor, and artillery, the army could not adequately defend itself against guerilla attacks or penetrate the insurgency's safe havens in the mountains. Egypt was unable to extend its control beyond a small triangle of

⁶⁶⁵ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 384.

⁶⁶⁶ Witty, 2001, p. 423.

⁶⁶⁷ Daniel Corstange, "Tribes and the Rule of Law in Yemen," paper presented at the annual conference of the Middle East Studies Association, Washington, D.C., November 22–25, 2008.

⁶⁶⁸ Witty, 2001, p. 423.

land from Sana'a to the port of Hodeida to Taiz.⁶⁶⁹ Moreover, it soon became obvious that carpet-bombing suspected rebel villages did not win friends for the Egyptians but instead led them to be viewed as brutal occupiers.⁶⁷⁰

Phase II: "The Conflict Intensifies and the Guerrillas Gain Strength" (1964–1966)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: COIN force employed escalating repression; COIN force sought to engage and establish positive relations with population in area of conflict; COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics; COIN force engaged in more coercion/intimidation than insurgents; External support to COIN from strong state/military; External support to insurgents from strong state/military; External professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of government; Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Motives for external participant: Global/regional influence or regional power struggle; Relationship between external and host-nation forces: primary counterinsurgent; COIN force attempted to use overwhelming force; An external actor provided significant direct military support (troops, air power) to COIN force/government

The Egyptian army intensified its COIN efforts in 1964 with a series of conventional initiatives and a concerted civic action program. In June 1964, the Egyptian army launched a major offensive against al-Badr's forces, including a bold attempt to drive two armored columns into the

⁶⁶⁹ Youssef Aboul-Enein, "The Egyptian-Yemen War (1962–1967): Egyptian Perspectives on Guerrilla Warfare," *Infantry Magazine*, January–February 2004.

⁶⁷⁰ The UN made a brief attempt to mediate the conflict in April 1963. International negotiators persuaded Saudi Arabia to agree to cut off aid to royalists and Egypt to promise to withdraw troops, and sent a team of 200 observers to the country. Both sides abided by the agreement, however, and observers were withdrawn less than six months later. G. Arnold, 1991, p. 457.

imam's headquarters in northern Yemen. The assaults killed thousands of royalist supporters and forced the imam to flee to Saudi Arabia, but they did little to change the course of the war. The insurgents quickly regained their ground and were able to check the Egyptians' further advance by blocking roads and conducting ambushes. Royalist forces retained a military advantage over the conventional forces by operating in small guerrilla bands that were difficult to spot from the air. They were also able to protect their own supply lines from detection and interdiction by using pack mules and camel trains to transport their weapons and supplies across the desert.⁶⁷¹ Although Egyptian troop levels neared 70,000—roughly equal to one-third of the entire Egyptian armed forces—neither the army nor the air force could adequately compete against the insurgents' guerrilla tactics.⁶⁷²

Efforts by the Egyptians to engage in government reform and civic development programs in Yemen also proved to be counterproductive. Modernization initiatives undertaken by Egyptian advisers working with the Yemeni government, as well as construction projects to build schools and hospitals and teaching programs to instruct farmers on new agricultural procedures, were rejected by the local population. While many Yemenis were illiterate and lacked the benefits of modern health care and agricultural methods, they preferred their traditional way of life and rejected the Egyptians' modern revolutionary ideology.⁶⁷³ Therefore, rather than winning popular support for the government, the civic action projects had the reverse effect of creating greater animosity toward the government, and the Egyptians in particular.⁶⁷⁴

By late 1964, a combination of military and political losses took its toll on the Egyptian forces. Following the failure of a major offensive against the royalists in September, President Nasser decided to

⁶⁷¹ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 385.

⁶⁷² Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 386.

⁶⁷³ Approximately 300 Egyptian primary and secondary school teachers came to Yemen, along with administrative advisers and doctors. A special section of the army installed water pumps, dug wells, and provided agricultural advice, introducing the Yemen's rural populations to more modern technology. Witty, 2001, p. 420; Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 385.

⁶⁷⁴ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 385.

withdraw from the northwest regions of the country, which enabled the royalists to reoccupy the area.⁶⁷⁵ A few months later, the republican and Egyptian front in eastern Yemen collapsed completely. The royalists then gained control of the chain of mountains in the north and continuously cut off the major supply lines on which the Egyptian forces depended, placing the army at risk on the western, northern, and central fronts.⁶⁷⁶ In an apparent act of desperation, Nasser attempted to regain an upper hand against the insurgents, threatening to launch a ground invasion of Saudi Arabia to cut off their main source support. The Egyptians backed down, however, when Saudi Arabia amassed 10,000 troops along the border in response, and instead decided to accept an offer of mediation from Saudi King Faisal.

Mediation talks between Nasser and King Faisal concluded with an agreement known as the Jeddah Pact. The Jeddah Pact included a pledge by the Saudis to stop supplying the royalists and a promise from the Egyptians to withdraw their forces from Yemen within a year.⁶⁷⁷ The signing of the agreement resulted in a temporary calm in fighting and a decline in Egyptian troop levels, down to 20,000. However, tensions between the royalists and the republicans (who were largely excluded from the negotiations, which were dominated by the Saudis and the Egyptians) resumed in December 1965, when the two sides failed to reach a compromise on the creation of a provisional government. Then, in March 1966, strategic considerations in the region began to shift due to Great Britain's planned withdrawal from South Yemen. Subsequently, Egypt received a pledge from the Soviet Union to underwrite its continued involvement in Yemen, and Nasser, in turn, gained a renewed interest in pursuing his involvement in Yemen.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁵ Craig V. Thorn, "Egypt's Vietnam: A Case Study of Egypt's War in Yemen 1962–1967," *Lyrisense.com*, November 26, 2007; Witty, 2001, p. 424.

⁶⁷⁶ The royalists controlled half of the country, and the Egyptians and republicans were in no position to retake lost territory.

⁶⁷⁷ Saudi sources reported that, at Jeddah, Nasser said to King Faisal, "I beg you to save the prestige of the Egyptian Army."

⁶⁷⁸ Nasser announced that Egypt was revising its plans so that it might stay in Yemen for five years or longer, if necessary, stating that "we shall reduce our forces and expenditures in Yemen, but shall not leave the posts which are important." Witty, 2001, p. 154.

Within a matter of weeks, Nasser announced that the Jeddah agreement would no longer be implemented. He then ordered a large contingent of Egyptian troops to be sent to the region, and Egyptian bombing raids resumed. King Faisal responded to the renewed attacks by encouraging the royalists to resume fighting, and the war intensified. The Egyptians adopted a new strategy during this phase, called “the long breath,” which was intended to allow Egyptian forces to remain in Yemen indefinitely. As part of the strategy, the Egyptians withdrew to enclaves in the capital of Sana’a and Yemeni port towns. They no longer launched major operations and only occasionally bombed Saudi border areas and the Yemeni countryside. Most engagements consisted of smaller skirmishes. Greater effort was expended on training the republican forces, enabling the Yemeni army to defend itself in some areas without Egyptian assistance.

By 1967, the conflict reached a new plateau in which Egyptian and republican forces were able to retake areas that they had lost to the royalists two years earlier. Still, the Egyptians remained unable to gain control of the countryside (which constituted two-thirds of the country) or make any headway in gaining popular support. Thus, a new stalemate was reached in which neither side was able to claim a clear advantage or escalate to victory. According to one Egyptian general, had it not been for the outbreak of the Six-Day War in June 1967, the Egyptians might have maintained a low-scale conflict and remained in Yemen indefinitely.⁶⁷⁹

Phase III: “The Six-Day War Leads to an Egyptian Withdrawal, the Fall of the Revolutionary Republican Government and Ultimately a Compromise” (1967–1970)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Conclusion/suspension substantially due to withdrawal of international support for one or both sides; External support continues to sustain conflict that otherwise would likely have ended; Insurgents’ grievances substantially addressed since onset of conflict; Impor-

⁶⁷⁹ Witty, 2001, p. 428.

tant external support to insurgents significantly reduced; External actor fought/supported another significant conflict or COIN force; External primary COIN force drew down or left prior to end of conflict

The Arab-Israeli war in June 1967 marked a turning point in Egypt's foreign policy and the beginning of the end of the Yemeni conflict. Facing a humiliating military defeat on his own borders, Nasser's interest in foreign wars diminished appreciably. He immediately stated his intention to withdraw from Yemen and begin a process of political retrenchment, which required him to focus on cutting his losses in the region. After years of rejecting negotiations, Nasser agreed to a new peace agreement two months later, in August 1967. The agreement, signed in Khartoum, called for the complete withdrawal of Egyptian forces, an end of Saudi assistance to the royalists, and for Yemen's political future to be decided by the Yemenis themselves.

Indicative of Egypt's overriding desire to retreat, Nasser withdrew his forces before the peace agreement was implemented. In November, Yemeni republican leader President Abdullah al-Sallal was overthrown. Still undaunted, Nasser instructed the last Egyptian troops to depart in December amidst accusations of betrayal by the Yemeni republicans.⁶⁸⁰ Following the withdrawal of the Egyptian army, the Yemeni conflict continued at a reduced pace. Sensing an opportunity for victory, Imam al-Badr's forces launched a major offensive, engaging more than 50,000 tribesmen in early December 1967. Yet, after two months, they were weakened by desertions and a lack of supplies. By this time, the Saudis also lost interest in the war and had greatly reduced their level of support to the royalists. No longer driven by regional competition, Riyadh ended all aid to Yemen by March 1968. The republicans, who received external support from the Soviet Union, were then able to regain ground, resulting in a stalemate in which each side controlled roughly half the country.

Over the course of the next two years, minor skirmishes occurred as both the royalists and the republicans, riven with internal conflicts and defections, were unable to launch effective military actions yet

⁶⁸⁰ Witty, 2001, p. 430.

were unwilling to commit to peace negotiations. Not until moderates took over the leadership of both parties were productive negotiations held. (In November 1967, the military carried out a coup against the republican government, replacing it with a more conservative administration. Divisions among the royalist forces also led to more moderate leadership by 1969.) Finally, in May 1970, under pressure from the UN and other regional states, Saudi Arabia was able to broker a compromise in which the republicans agreed to establish a more moderate government that guaranteed representation for the imam's supporters, and the royalists agreed to remove Imam al-Badr and his family from power.⁶⁸¹ Thus, the conflict ultimately ended with the royalists achieving significant concessions on political autonomy.

Conventional Explanations

The outcome of the Yemeni insurgency was considered an embarrassing defeat for the Egyptian military.⁶⁸² Despite the engagement of tens of thousands of its best troops and the employment of sophisticated weapons and extensive resources over the course of five years, Nasser's army failed to gain the upper hand against the imam's tribal militia force and was unable to train the fledgling republican forces to successfully engage the insurgent force on their own.

This lack of success has been attributed to the inherent weakness of the republican forces, as well as the Egyptians' failure to adopt an effective COIN strategy. Lacking a base of local support, the republican contingent was never able to build a credible military force of its own. At the same time, the Egyptian military, which was built to defend against conventional armies, was unprepared to fight a guerrilla war. It conducted large-scale assaults against a dispersed enemy, seeking to win simply by applying overwhelming force. Even when the Egyptians developed some COIN strategies, they were introduced very late in the conflict and were not effectively implemented.⁶⁸³ Egypt's attempt to

⁶⁸¹ Imam al-Badr and his family were exiled to Great Britain.

⁶⁸² James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, *Civil War Termination*, draft, Stanford University, September 12, 2008.

⁶⁸³ Witty, 2001, pp. 434–438.

support civil government and meet the needs of the population backfired as the Egyptians tried to modernize Yemen and build a nation based on socialist principles that were antithetical to Yemen's tribal culture. Any reforms based on the Egyptian or revolutionary model served only to further alienate the public.

Egypt's foreign political ideology, its reliance on large-scale conventional military operations, and the significant role it assumed in directing Yemen's military and civil affairs led it to be viewed as an occupier, which, in turn, prompted an increase in popular support for the insurgents. Many of the difficulties that the Egyptians faced in North Yemen are common among external powers that attempt to counter local insurgencies—most notably, the Soviets in Afghanistan and the United States in Vietnam. Indeed, Nasser himself reportedly referred to the Yemeni conflict as his Vietnam War.⁶⁸⁴

The outcome of the Yemeni conflict also demonstrated the impact that external contests for power have over local conflicts. Egypt's extensive investment in the conflict was driven by its desire to spread the cause of Nasser's revolutionary movement and to gain influence in the region. In turn, Saudi Arabia grew increasingly committed to supporting the royalist movement in an effort to retain the influence of traditional Islamic society and its dominant role in the Arabian Peninsula. Thus, what began as a civil war escalated rapidly into a war by proxy between Egypt and Saudi Arabia.⁶⁸⁵ Not only did the regional contest intensify the conflict, but it also brought about its end, as external events compelled Egypt and, later, Saudi Arabia to withdraw, leaving the republicans and the royalists greatly weakened and ultimately willing to compromise.

⁶⁸⁴ Witty, 2001, pp. 438–440.

⁶⁸⁵ British support for the royalists and Soviet support for the republicans were similarly motivated by global power concerns in the context of the Cold War. Fawaz A. Gerges, "The Kennedy Administration and the Egyptian-Saudi Conflict in Yemen: Co-opting Arab Nationalism," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 2, Spring 1995, pp. 292–293; Churba, 1969.

Distinctive Characteristics

- North Yemen has long been one of the world's most conservative and isolated regions. Prior to 1962, the country was governed by Imam al-Badr's father, Imam Ahmed, who ruled ruthlessly and rejected nearly all forms of modernization. According to Fred Halliday, Yemen was "one of the most isolated and static countries in the world, and had not changed in fundamental systemic ways from the Yemen of two or even seven centuries earlier."⁶⁸⁶ While Imam al-Badr was considered more progressive than his father, he did not offer the promise of significant reform.
- A unique feature of the Yemeni conflict was its sharp contrast to the communist-inspired "war of national liberation" characteristic of the revolutionary process in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In Yemen, the newly emergent forces representing republicanism and social progress gained control over the government and were based in the nation's major cities, whereas the reactionary royalists led the a counterrevolutionary insurgency from the countryside with the support of the rural population. Thus, the conflict was in many ways a war of national liberation in reverse.⁶⁸⁷
- Among the traditional Yemeni population, individuals owed their primary loyalty to their tribe, yet tribal loyalties often shifted during the course of the conflict on the basis of both inter- and intratribal dynamics. Local tribes often changed sides depending on which faction was being supported by one of their traditional enemies. This made it difficult for the COIN force to know who was a royalist and who was a republican or to differentiate between friend and foe.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁶ Fred Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans*, Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1975, p. 19, quoted in Clive Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War, 1962–1965: Ministers, Mercenaries and Mandarins: Foreign Policy and the Limits of Covert Action*, Portland, Ore.: Sussex Academic Press, 2004.

⁶⁸⁷ Churba, 1969.

⁶⁸⁸ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 383; Witty, 2001, p. 407.

- Yemen was a fellow Arab country, yet the Yemeni environment and culture was totally foreign to most Egyptians. The Egyptian army lacked even basic maps of the Yemeni terrain and was unfamiliar with the organization or motivation of the insurgent opposition. According to the chief of Egyptian military intelligence at the time, the Egyptian military resembled “a person who entered a test unprepared.” The only thing Egypt knew about Yemen was that it bordered Saudi Arabia.⁶⁸⁹ This lack of knowledge contributed to the Egyptians’ reliance on conventional military tactics and made it more difficult for them to adopt effective COIN techniques.
- There was little external pressure on Egypt and Saudi Arabia to prevent the two nations from escalating their involvement in the Yemeni conflict or to implement a peace agreement prior to 1970. The influence of the Arab League was weakened by the split among its members between those supporting the Arab nationalists and those backing the traditional monarchical regimes. Similarly, the international community was largely divided along Cold War lines, with the Soviet Union supporting Egypt and Great Britain and the United States supporting Saudi Arabia, which provided little impetus to force a compromise.

⁶⁸⁹ Witty, 2001, p. 409.

Figure 24
Map of Yemen



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-24

Uruguay, 1963–1972

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

A Marxist-Leninist urban insurgency perpetrated by the Tupamaros in Uruguay, this conflict was motivated by the rapid decline of the country's previously successful economy in the early 1960s.⁶⁹⁰ The innovative Tupamaros—who at first were masters at solidifying public support and turning the populace against the government—were easily able to overcome Uruguay's inept COIN force, which was composed of police and, later, paramilitary forces, during the first two phases of the conflict. However, the insurgents' increasingly aggressive tactics in the later years of the war led to an increase in popular support for the COIN effort and aided in the supply of human intelligence to COIN forces. At the same time, the COIN effort was strengthened by the president's decision to order the army to take control of the conflict from the inadequately trained and understrength police force. The army rapidly prevailed over the Tupamaros once it became directly involved in the conflict, in part by initiating a PSYOP campaign to inform the populace of the threat posed by the insurgents. Ultimately, the army was so successful that it became a menace in its own right, dissolving the country's democratic parliament and imposing military rule in Uruguay immediately following its defeat of the insurgents. The military continued to rule the country for 12 years after the end of the conflict.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "Low-Level Urban Insurgency Begins" (1963–May 1968)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Insurgents discredited/delegitimized COIN force/government; COIN force included significant numbers of police, para-

⁶⁹⁰ The Tupamaros took their name from Túpac Amaru, the last of the ruling Incas, who was assassinated by the Spanish in 1572.

military, militia, or other nonconventional personnel; COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas it controlled or claimed to control; Police, paramilitary, militia, or other nonconventional personnel largely absent or ineffective because of poor training, poor armament (relative to the insurgents), cowardice, corruption, human rights abuses, or other reasons; Terrain played a major role in conflict; Type of terrain that played a major role: urban; Insurgents exploited deep-seated intractable issues to gain legitimacy; External support to COIN from strong state/military

By the end of the 1950s, Uruguay was one of the most highly developed societies in Latin America, with a moderate social-democratic political culture and a robust market economy. The country was seemingly quite stable. However, this quickly changed following a slump in global demand for its two primary exports (wool and meat) after the Korean War, which led the Uruguayan economy to rapidly decline. The economic problems combined with increasing government corruption to cause social and political tensions that erupted into a socialist insurgency in 1963.⁶⁹¹

In 1963, Raul Sendic, a law student studying in Montevideo, founded the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional, or National Liberation Movement, to revolt against the country's growing economic and social problems, as well as against corruption in the bloated state bureaucracy. Because more than 80 percent of Uruguay's population lived in urban areas, the insurgents—known as the Tupamaros—made a conscious decision very early on in the conflict to wage an urban insurgency.⁶⁹² The Tupamaros concentrated the majority of their activity in and around Montevideo, the capital city. During this first phase of the conflict, the insurgents concentrated on gathering resources and

⁶⁹¹ Peter Waldmann, "How Terrorism Ceases: The Tupamaros in Uruguay," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 34, No. 9, September 2011, p. 718.

⁶⁹² Waldmann, 2011, p. 718.

avoided indiscriminate terrorist acts, primarily engaging in such activities as robbing banks, gun shops, and private businesses.⁶⁹³

The Tupamaros enjoyed the support of large swaths of young and working-class citizens, including bank employees, teachers, high school students, and university students.⁶⁹⁴ In contrast, the government and COIN forces—which, during the first phase, were composed almost exclusively of Uruguayan police—alienated the public and were largely ineffective in bringing the insurgency under control. A significant contributor was simply the inadequacy of the police force, which was understrength and lacked the necessary training in COIN techniques to effectively contain the insurgency.⁶⁹⁵ The police force remained weak despite an influx of funding and training since 1962 from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) through its Office of Public Safety.⁶⁹⁶ The COIN effort also suffered through the actions of the Uruguayan president at the time, Jorge Pacheco Areco, who instituted repressive measures, including severe press censorship, in response to the insurgency. Such measures effectively pushed additional popular support toward the insurgency, including that of liberal and left-wing scholars in the country.⁶⁹⁷

Phase II: “Period of Insurgent Innovation” (June 1968–August 1971)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Change in level of popular support for COIN force/government; Change in level of popular support for insurgents; COIN force included significant numbers of police, paramilitary, militia, or

⁶⁹³ S. Connolly and G. Druehl, “Tupamaros: New Focus in Latin America,” *Journal of Contemporary Revolutions*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Summer 1971; S. L. D’Oliviera, “Uruguay and the Tupamaro Myth,” *Military Review*, Vol. 53, No. 4, April 1973.

⁶⁹⁴ Connolly and Druehl, 1971; Waldmann, 2011, p. 721.

⁶⁹⁵ Frank H. Zimmerman, *Why Insurgents Fail: Examining Post–World War II Failed Insurgencies Utilizing the Prerequisites of Successful Insurgencies as a Framework*, thesis, Monterey, Calif.: Naval Postgraduate School, March 2007.

⁶⁹⁶ Jennifer S. Holmes, *Terrorism and Democratic Stability*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2006, p. 182.

⁶⁹⁷ Waldmann, 2011, p. 721.

other nonconventional personnel; COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas it controlled or claimed to control; Police, paramilitary, militia, or other nonconventional personnel largely absent or ineffective or because of poor training, poor armament (relative to the insurgents), cowardice, corruption, human rights abuses, or other reasons; COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics; External support to COIN from strong state/military; Terrain played a major role in conflict; Type of terrain that played a major role: urban

In June 1968, the Uruguayan government declared a state of national emergency in response to a strategic and tactical shift by the Tupamaros. The insurgents' strategy in this phase became more well defined. The group had evolved into what was essentially a Marxist-Leninist movement aiming to demoralize the police and the armed forces through subversive propaganda and a campaign of selective terrorism and to drive the government toward the use of drastic COIN measures; in this way, the group hoped to win over liberals at home and abroad.⁶⁹⁸

Accompanying this shift were several major tactical innovations, including political kidnapping, "armed propaganda," and intimidation of security forces. The Tupamaros employed political kidnapping as an alternative to assassinations, which helped them maintain popular support. Indeed, because the kidnappings targeted unpopular and corrupt officials and involved less violence, the populace did not react as strongly as it likely would have against assassinations. However, the aggressive police reaction to the kidnappings, which often entailed massive cordon-and-search operations, did prompt a negative public response. The insurgents employed an "armed propaganda" tactic in response to the government's censorship of the press, running their own mobile radio transmitter in Montevideo, temporarily seizing radio stations to broadcast propaganda, and maintaining an underground

⁶⁹⁸ Robert Moss, "Uruguay: Terrorism Versus Democracy," *Conflict Studies*, Vol. 14, August 1971.

press. Groups of Tupamaros would also occupy meetings halls, cafeterias, and cinemas and make speeches, holding the audience captive. The third explicit tactic employed by the insurgents during this phase was intimidation of the security forces. Because the police were leading the COIN effort at this point, the Tupamaros began to selectively assassinate police officers in late 1969. This succeeded in shaking the morale of the COIN force, and, in June 1970, there was a general police strike for higher pay and the right to work in civilian clothes.⁶⁹⁹

All in all, these tactical innovations were quite successful. The Tupamaros grew to a force of approximately 3,000 by 1970 and appeared to be easily defeating the police.⁷⁰⁰ The government response to the Tupamaros was uneven and clumsy, however. Despite continued funding and training from the United States, the police were still understaffed and lacked training in COIN techniques. The security forces as a whole were hampered by a lack of reliable informants and a coordinated network for sharing and disseminating intelligence.⁷⁰¹ This was true even after the 1968 creation of the paramilitary Metropolitan Guards force of 20,000, which was intended to supplement the 22,000 police leading the COIN effort. Moreover, the COIN force's habit of conducting massive cordon-and-search operations alienated the public more often than not, and a series of government corruption scandals between 1970 and 1971 further undermined public support for the government.⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁹ Antonio Rafael de la Cova, "The Tupamaros of Uruguay," undated.

⁷⁰⁰ Arturo Porzecanski, *Uruguay's Tupamaros: The Urban Guerrilla*, New York: Praeger, 1973; Jonathan R. White, *Terrorism and Homeland Security*, Stamford, Conn.: Cengage Learning, 2011, p. 340; Clara Nieto, *Masters of War: Latin America and U.S. Aggression from the Cuban Revolution Through the Clinton Years*, Chris Brandt, trans., New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011, p. 177.

⁷⁰¹ Holmes, 2006, p. 182.

⁷⁰² De la Cova, undated.

**Phase III: “The Communists Are Defeated”
(September 1971–November 1972)**

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Change in level of popular support for COIN force/government; Change in level of popular support for insurgents; COIN force efforts resulted in increased costs for insurgents; COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent intelligence; COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent command and control; Earnest IO/PSYOP/strategic communication/messaging effort; COIN force received substantial intelligence from population in area of conflict; Majority of population in area of conflict supported/favored COIN force (wanted it to win); Intelligence adequate to support kill/capture or engagements on COIN force’s terms; Intelligence adequate to allow COIN forces to disrupt insurgent processes or operations; Insurgents delegitimized due to civilian casualties or other unacceptable behavior; External support to COIN from strong state/military

The third phase of the conflict marked a major turning point for the COIN effort. The decisive factor was President Pacheco’s decision on September 9, 1971, to put the army in charge of all COIN activity after more than 100 Tupamaros escaped from prison.⁷⁰³ Because the army had been playing only a supporting role to the police and Metropolitan Guards, its direct involvement quickly began to turn the tide of the conflict. To achieve its success, the army primarily used saturation tactics, such as mass arrests, torture, and large cordon-and-search operations. During this phase, COIN forces also employed PSYOP strategies aimed at informing the public about the threat posed by the Tupamaros.⁷⁰⁴ President Pacheco’s successor, Juan María Bordaberry, took additional steps in April 1972 to solidify COIN gains, suspending civil liberties and declaring a state of eternal war with the

⁷⁰³ GlobalSecurity.org, “Tupamaros Uprising,” web page, last updated July 11, 2011f; Waldmann, 2011, p. 722.

⁷⁰⁴ D’Olivera, 1973.

Tupamaros.⁷⁰⁵ U.S. support for the COIN effort continued in this phase as well, with USAID providing an additional \$225,000 to the Uruguayan police in 1972.⁷⁰⁶

Aiding the COIN force's success in this phase was the fact that the Tupamaros' increasingly aggressive tactics eventually became unpalatable to the public and cost the group some measure of popular support. The group's most notable loss of support came after its assassination in August 1970 of Dan Mitrione, an American official in USAID's Public Security Office who was working with the Uruguayan security forces.⁷⁰⁷

These elements combined to usher in an overwhelming COIN success within just six months. Most of the insurgents were captured, and the remainder fled the country. By November 1972, the Tupamaros had ceased to be a threat.⁷⁰⁸ Uruguay did not make it through the conflict unscathed, however. After its defeat of the Tupamaros, the army seized power and dissolved the Uruguayan parliament. What had been one of the most stable democratic societies in Latin America lived under a military government for the next 12 years, from 1973 to 1985.⁷⁰⁹ The army finally retired from politics in 1985, at which point the Tupamaros were released from prison and quickly reestablished themselves as a political group. While their initial aim was to begin another socialist revolution, they quickly realized that most Uruguayans wanted an elected, constitutional government by this time. The Tupamaros therefore embraced democracy and remain among the most prominent political groups in Uruguay as part of the *Movimiento de Participación Popular*, or Popular Participation Movement party.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁵ De la Cova, undated.

⁷⁰⁶ Holmes, 2006, p. 182.

⁷⁰⁷ David Ronfeldt, *The Mitrione Kidnapping in Uruguay*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, N-1571-DOS/DARPA/RC, 1987; Porzecanski, 1973.

⁷⁰⁸ Dominic J. Caraccilo, *Beyond Guns and Steel: A War Termination Strategy*, New York: Praeger Security International, 2011, p. 101.

⁷⁰⁹ Waldmann, 2011, p. 722.

⁷¹⁰ Waldmann, 2011, p. 722.

Conventional Explanations

Scholars of the Tupamaro conflict highlight several reasons for the COIN force's initial failure to achieve resounding success in this case. Of primary importance was the competence of the COIN force itself, which affected both its ability to collect accurate and timely intelligence and its ability to crush—or, indeed, even to control—the Tupamaro insurgency. When it was dominated by the police, and even when it was supplemented with the paramilitary Metropolitan Guards beginning in the conflict's second phase, the COIN force was unable to prevail due to inadequate training in COIN techniques and insufficient strength to counter the threat at hand. Thus, “it was the army's intervention into the struggle against subversion that changed the whole situation within a few months.”⁷¹¹ At the same time, the role of intelligence—supplied by a supportive public in the later phases of the conflict—was also crucial in defining the success of the COIN effort. It was therefore the combination of the insurgency's decreasing level of popular support and the commitment of the Uruguayan army to the COIN effort in Phase III that shifted the tide of the conflict and led to a quick COIN success.

Distinctive Characteristics

- The Tupamaros, who were based in urban centers and attempted to influence a mostly urban population, are widely considered to have invented the concept of “urban insurgency.”
- Uruguay's political and socioeconomic situation in the period prior to this conflict was somewhat unique: The country was a relatively strong, stable democratic society with a robust market economy. Only when that economy began to falter due to fluctuations in the price of Uruguayan exports on the global market did the prospect of an insurgent movement become viable.
- The rapid turnaround of the COIN effort in Phase III of this case is also unique, illustrating how the commitment of adequate numbers of well-trained forces pursuing COIN tactics, when

⁷¹¹ Waldmann, 2011, p. 722.

combined with an increasing level of popular support and the intelligence benefits that such support brings, can be decisive in shifting the outcome of a conflict.

- Uruguay's political situation in the period following this conflict is also interesting in that the COIN force took on a life of its own, with the military seizing power and dissolving the state's democratic structures following the Tupamaros' defeat.

Figure 25
Map of Uruguay



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR291/2-25

Oman (Dhofar Rebellion), 1965–1975

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

The Dhofar rebellion began as a separatist movement by tribes seeking independence from the repressive rule of the reactionary Sultan Said ibn Taimur. After a Marxist government gained power in neighboring South Yemen, the insurgency adopted a communist ideology, and the conflict evolved into a regional war involving multiple external actors. Great Britain, Iran, and Jordan supported the sultan, while South Yemen, China, and the Soviet Union supported the “communist” insurgents. Despite extensive external support, the Omani military was unable to contain the rebellion due to the sultan’s refusal to modernize his forces or to provide even the most basic government services to his subjects. After the sultan’s son, Sultan Qaboos, took power in a coup, the Omani forces and their British advisers adopted a more effective COIN strategy that combined conventional operations with civil development and political reform. Once Qaboos addressed the needs of his population, seized the military initiative, and reduced the insurgents’ access to support and sanctuary, he was able to achieve a decisive victory.⁷¹²

Case Narrative

Phase I: “Small-Scale Rebellion in Dhofar” (1965–1967)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Insurgents discredited/delegitimized COIN force/government; COIN force employed escalating repression; COIN force employed collective punishment; Terrain played a major role because it allowed insurgents to avoid/overcome COIN force firepower or vehicle advantages; COIN force attempted to use overwhelming force; Government/state *not* competent; Insurgents mostly avoided engaging

⁷¹² Jim White, “Oman 1965–1976: From Certain Defeat to Decisive Victory,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, September 1, 2008.

in large-scale operations against better-equipped regular troops and resorted primarily to guerrilla tactics (e.g., sniping, sabotage, small-scale ambushes/hit-and-run attacks, IEDs)

The Sultanate of Oman and the tribes in the internal areas of the country had a long history of conflict, which reached its zenith during a period of increasing repression by the reactionary regime of Sultan Said ibn Taimur. Eventually, a separatist rebellion broke out in the southwestern province Dhofar. The rebellion was initially led by the Dhofar Liberation Front, an organization of tribal leaders who sought to remove the sultan and his “British imperialist mercenaries” from the region and ultimately from the nation.⁷¹³ In 1965, the group launched a limited guerrilla campaign from the Jebel Akhdar (Green Mountain) region of Dhofar.⁷¹⁴ Rebel attacks were limited to small-scale ambushes on the sultan’s forces in the valley below. The most notable of their exploits was the nearly successful assassination attempt on the sultan in April 1966.⁷¹⁵

The Omani armed forces, which were commanded by British officers, responded swiftly to the threat to the sultan’s regime. They conducted a brutal COIN campaign that involved mass detentions of men suspected of supporting or engaging in the insurgency and capping wells as reprisals for insurgent attacks.⁷¹⁶ These measures, along with subsequent search-and-destroy missions, weakened the guerrillas militarily but did not defeat the insurgency.

⁷¹³ J. Peterson, 2008, p. 193.

⁷¹⁴ The Jebel Akhdar mountain range divided the interior of the country of Oman from the coastal area dominated by the capital of Muscat, forming a physical border between the outward-looking society of merchants and seamen along the coastal area and the interior, inward-looking, conservative, and frequently xenophobic society of Dhofar. John B. Meagher, *The Jebel Akhdar War, Oman 1954–1959*, Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1985.

⁷¹⁵ J. E. Peterson, “Guerrilla Warfare and Ideological Confrontation in the Arabian Peninsula: The Rebellion in Dhufar,” *World Affairs*, Vol. 139, No. 4, Spring 1977, p. 280.

⁷¹⁶ Geraint Hughes, “A ‘Model Campaign’ Reappraised: The Counter-Insurgency War in Dhofar, Oman, 1965–1975,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, April 2009, pp. 279–280.

The Dhofari rebels received only limited military assistance and training from Egypt and Iraq during this phase. They were sustained by a strong base of popular support, however. The local populace provided the movement with basic provisions and intelligence, enabling the guerrillas to avoid contact with the military forces and continue to conduct hit-and-run attacks.⁷¹⁷

The brutality of the Omani forces, combined with the extraordinary lack of civil development in the region, sparked significant grievances among the inhabitants of Dhofar that the insurgents were able to successfully exploit. (After two years, even some British officers seconded to the Omani armed forces became disillusioned with the punitive tactics they were ordered to employ and wondered whether Said's despotism was worth defending.)⁷¹⁸ Thus, while the COIN force remained militarily superior, the insurgents maintained the upper hand in winning hearts and minds.⁷¹⁹ Unable to inflict significant damage on Oman's armed forces but able to hide in Dhofar's rugged interior, insurgents endured and the conflict remained a stalemate.

Phase II: "The Insurgency Turns Communist and Gains the Upper Hand" (1967–1970)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: External support to insurgents from strong state/military; Insurgency motive: ideological; COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics; Change in level of popular support for insurgents; Government/state *not* competent

The nature of the Dhofari rebellion changed dramatically after the British withdrew from Aden and a Marxist regime ascended to power in neighboring South Yemen in December 1967. The new Yemeni government influenced the insurgent leadership to adopt a new ideologi-

⁷¹⁷ Marc R. DeVore, "A More Complex and Conventional Victory: Revisiting the Dhofar Counterinsurgency, 1963–1975," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 23, No. 1, March 2012, p. 146.

⁷¹⁸ Hughes, 2009, p. 280.

⁷¹⁹ DeVore, 2012, p. 146.

cal bent, provided significantly higher levels of military support, and led the conflict to assume a greater degree of strategic importance in the context of the Cold War. By 1968, the name of the insurgency was changed to the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG), and the movement adopted a new mission to pursue the unification of all Arabian emirates into a socialist state.⁷²⁰ South Yemen began to send PFLOAG money, arms, and supplies and provided a border town as a safe haven. Moreover, both China and the Soviet Union provided training to the insurgents and used South Yemen as a conduit to provide them with additional weapons and material support.⁷²¹

Armed with machine guns, mortars, rocket launchers, mines, and AK-47 assault rifles, as well as with the benefit of specialized training, the Dhofari rebels were prepared to fight the government's troops on their own terms.⁷²² Rebel forces attacked government targets throughout Dhofar, eventually endangering nearly all government patrols and nearly closing the only road linking Dhofar to the rest of Oman. In August 1968, Dhofari rebels attacked Salalah air base. By the following year, nearly 80 percent of Dhofar was in rebel hands. Despite the benefits of British leadership, the Omani forces remained understaffed and ill equipped and were ultimately forced to retreat.⁷²³ The sultan's armed forces consisted of only 3,000 troops. Many of the soldiers were Baluchi mercenaries who were regarded by Dhofaris as outside occupiers. Army equipment was largely antiquated due to the sultan's hostility toward modernization. He maintained no helicopters to transport troops, supplies, or wounded soldiers.⁷²⁴

⁷²⁰ Yemeni support provided the means for Marxist elements within the leadership of the Dhofar rebel movement to gain ascendancy.

⁷²¹ Hughes, 2009, p. 280

⁷²² DeVore, 2012, p. 148.

⁷²³ J. E. Peterson, *The Experience of British Counterinsurgency Campaigns and Implications for Iraq*, Arabian Peninsula Background Note No. APBN-009, August 2009; DeVore, 2012, p. 150.

⁷²⁴ Hughes, 2009, pp. 280–281.

By 1970, the situation had reached a stalemate. PFLOAG rebels controlled Dhofar's interior, while government forces controlled the more densely populated coastal plain and administrative center of Salalah. The insurgents—now firmly under the control and leadership of PFLOAG—controlled the entire *jebel*, or mountain region, while the sultan's forces maintained authority only in Salalah and, to a lesser degree, the coastal towns of Taqa and Mirbat, which the insurgents simultaneously used as sources of resupply of food and ammunition and even as rest centers for their fighters.

It is important to note that while the influx of communist assistance to the Dhofar rebellion greatly improved the military capability of the insurgent forces, it did not result in a corresponding increase in their popularity. The Marxist objectives to create a modern, egalitarian, and atheist society were not broadly shared by Dhofari residents.⁷²⁵ When rebels sought to reinforce their control over territory they had “liberated” with forced collectivization of land and political indoctrination of Marxist-Leninist dogma, which included the repudiation of Islam, they alienated much of the local population.⁷²⁶ Those who opposed their initiatives were either killed or found their land and cattle confiscated and children removed for training in South Yemen and the Soviet Union. Dhofari tribes soon found that they merely exchanged the harsh rule of Said for tyranny of PFLOAG.⁷²⁷

Regardless of the lack of public support for the rebellion, the deteriorating military conditions raised concern in Britain over the possibility of a Marxist-run government gaining control in Oman. The British deployed Royal Air Force regiment to protect the Omani air base and later sent SAS troops on a covert mission to respond to Iraqi incursions on the border.⁷²⁸ British advisers also increased their pressure on the sultan to implement economic development programs in

⁷²⁵ DeVore, 2012, p. 149.

⁷²⁶ J. Peterson, 1977.

⁷²⁷ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 211.

⁷²⁸ Because the diplomatic agreement guaranteeing access to Masirah obliged Britain to defend Salalah, it dispatched units to protect the airfield, including elements of the Royal Air Force, in 1968 and a high-tech mortar-locating radar unit in 1970. DeVore, 2012, p. 150.

the Dhofar region and to allow some political accommodation of the population. British efforts to protect the sultan's regime were hampered by the Labour government's commitment to withdraw its forces from the Persian Gulf by 1971 and by the sultan's refusal to reappraise his flawed COIN strategy or reform his administration.⁷²⁹ Recognizing the sultan's obstinacy, the British command began considering efforts to facilitate a change of leadership in Oman that could better ensure that the country was not lost to the rebels.⁷³⁰

Phase III: "A New Sultan and the Adoption of a Comprehensive Counterinsurgency Strategy Change the Course of the War" (1970–1975)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Change in level of popular support for COIN force/government; COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent materiel acquisition; Amnesty program reduced number of insurgents; Phase included significant DDR [disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration] efforts beyond amnesty; Important internal support to insurgents significantly reduced; COIN force and government employed an integrated political and military strategy; Significant government reforms since onset of conflict; Planned reconstruction/development improvements substantially above historical baseline (trying to "reconstruct" to a level not previously achieved); Insurgents' switch to conventional tactics unsustainable (COIN forces able to prevail in vast majority of engagements); Motive for external participant: balance of power

In June 1970, a palace coup was launched with the assistance of British military advisers, marking a turning point in the course of Oman's COIN campaign. After a brief gun battle, Sultan Said abdicated to his son, Qaboos. Qaboos, who was educated at Sandhurst and committed to modernization, immediately launched a five-point program of

⁷²⁹ Hughes, 2009, p. 281

⁷³⁰ DeVore, 2012, p. 151.

social and military reform that addressed many of the inadequacies of his father's regime and adopted a more effective strategy for combating the Dhofari rebellion. The components of the new sultan's plan included the following reforms:⁷³¹

1. Offering general amnesty to all those of his subjects who had opposed his father.
2. Ending the archaic status of the Dhofar province and formally incorporating it into the state.
3. Improving the lives of the populace through a vigorous nation-wide development program.
4. Providing effective military opposition against those rebels who do not accept amnesty.
5. Starting a diplomatic initiative to enable Oman to be recognized as an Arab state with a legal form of government and to isolate [South Yemen] by ending the support it was receiving from other Arab states.⁷³²

The sultan's strategy reflected the British approach of combining conventional military operations with political reform, civil development, and efforts to win the hearts and minds of the population. This revamped strategy had an immediate impact on the ground. Within a month after the coup, the offer of amnesty and cash grants to insurgents who were willing to relinquish their weapons induced more than 200 rebels to defect from PFLOAG.⁷³³ Qaboos's amnesty campaign also helped to establish an effective tribal militia, known as *firqats*, by providing an opportunity for former insurgents to return to their tribal areas to serve as irregular forces under the leadership of British SAS detachments. The *firqats*, who eventually numbered 1,800, proved to be "indispensable" to intelligence efforts, primarily due to

⁷³¹ The plan, which included many lessons learned from British COIN efforts, was most likely written with a great deal of input from British Foreign Office and SAS planners. Jim White, 2008.

⁷³² Cheney, 1984.

⁷³³ By 1975, as many as 1,037 insurgents had defected. Bard E. O'Neill, "Reactionary War in Oman," in Bard E. O'Neill, ed., *Insurgency in the Modern World*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1980.

their intimate “knowledge of the ground and their influence with the civilians.”⁷³⁴

After announcing that Dhofar would become a province with a leader, or *wali*, with the equivalent standing to the governor in the capital of Muscat, Sultan Qaboos improved the status of the region and addressed some of the political grievances that the local population had expressed under his father’s regime. The start of a nationwide development program was even more clearly in line with the demands of the population and, perhaps most importantly, PFLOAG’s leaders. Civil action teams drilled wells, built schools, repaired mosques, and provided medical and veterinary services. They also established local government centers to maintain a long-term presence in the area.⁷³⁵ By paying attention to civil affairs, Qaboos was able to directly target the legitimacy of the insurgency and compete with PFLOAG in the battle for the hearts and minds of the Dhofari tribesman.

The sultan diplomatic efforts also facilitated Oman’s admission to the UN in October 1971, and provided the country with increased assistance from neighboring regional powers.⁷³⁶ By emphasizing the threat that a Marxist victory in Dhofar posed to regional stability, Qaboos was able to convince other conservative regimes to aid his COIN campaign.⁷³⁷ Jordan agreed to provide military training, Saudi Arabia contributed equipment and financial support, and the United Arab Emirates provided troops. In 1973, the sultan made a special appeal to the Shah of Iran, who eventually committed 3,000 combat troops, helicopters, and fixed-wing aircraft to Oman, which proved instrumental in opening transportation links with the country’s interior and cutting off outside support for the rebel forces in Dhofar.⁷³⁸

⁷³⁴ John Akehurst, *We Won a War: The Campaign in Oman, 1965–1975*, Salisbury, UK: Michael Russell Publishing, 1982, quoted in Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 468; Cheney, 1984.

⁷³⁵ O’Neill, 1980, p. 225.

⁷³⁶ Cheney, 1984.

⁷³⁷ O’Neill, 1980.

⁷³⁸ J. Peterson, 1977; O’Neill, 1980.

Qaboos also appealed to Britain for increased military assistance, requesting greater involvement of personnel beyond an advisory role in the Omani armed services command. London agreed to increase the number of British forces from 49 seconded officers, 71 contracted personnel, and about 60 pilots in 1971 to a force of 700 by 1975, which included 220 officers on private contract, 60 SAS members, 75 members of the Royal Engineers, and 147 Royal Air Force personnel.⁷³⁹ This increase in British presence, particularly the engagement of the SAS, had a significant impact on the Omani forces' ability to conduct a more comprehensive COIN campaign.

More importantly, the new sultan sought to improve his military's effectiveness in opposing the insurgency by building up his national armed forces. He increased the number of native Omanis serving in the military, leading to an almost fivefold increase from 1970 to 1973—from 2,500 to 11,700.⁷⁴⁰ Qaboos also made a significant effort to improve the capabilities of his military by purchasing more advanced military equipment with the country's growing oil revenues.⁷⁴¹ By 1973, the military had 22 aircraft, including helicopters for personnel lift, logistical support, and medical evacuation, which was critical to maintaining troop morale.⁷⁴²

Finally, Sultan Qaboos achieved success by employing diplomatic efforts to isolate South Yemen while at the same time cutting off its aid to the insurgency by constructing physical barriers. In May 1973, he established formal relations with China as it began to reduce its support for the insurgency. Moreover, the Omani armed forces dedicated their resources to building a fortified barrier (secured with sensors, barbed wire, and mines) between rebel sanctuaries in South Yemen and population centers in Dhofar. These *cordon sanitaires*, known as the Hornbeam and Damavand lines, reduced the flow of insurgents

⁷³⁹ J. Peterson, 1977.

⁷⁴⁰ With the expansion of SAF troops, the force was no longer predominantly staffed by Baluchi soldiers. J. Peterson, 1977, p. 282.

⁷⁴¹ O'Neill, 1980, p. 226.

⁷⁴² Corum and Johnson, 2003, pp. 212–213.

and weapons into the region and hindered PFLOAG's ability to sustain its guerrilla forces.⁷⁴³

The combined elements of Qaboos' five-point plan severely weakened the PFLOAG-led insurgency and allowed the sultan's armed forces to launch a successful military campaign to rout the rebels from the country. Aided by significant external support, particularly from the British SAS and Iranian ground troops, the military was able to isolate the insurgents in the mountains of Dhofar and conduct a series of successive clearing operations.

PFLOAG made an attempt to regain the initiative in the conflict by launching a conventional military attack on Omani troops in the coastal town of Mirbat in 1972 and by bombarding the Hornbeam Line and Salalah in early 1974. However, these offensives were quickly defeated, and the insurgents suffered unsustainable losses as a result. PFLOAG then reverted to a guerrilla campaign from December 1974 to March 1975 but was ultimately destroyed as a military force. Outmaneuvered and overpowered by the government's helicopters and artillery, the last of the guerrilla fighters retreated to South Yemen in November 1975, leading Sultan Qaboos to proclaim an end to the Dhofar rebellion.⁷⁴⁴ While sporadic guerrilla activity continued until 1976 and a brief outbreak of tension occurred in 1981, when the possibility of renewed attacks caused Oman to close the border with South Yemen, the insurgency no longer posed a threat to the Omani regime.

Conventional Explanations

Sultan Qaboos is often praised for conducting an exemplary COIN campaign during the final phase of the Dhofar rebellion. By applying many of the lessons learned from previous British COIN campaigns, Qaboos and his British-led military were able to reverse the ineffective strategies undertaken by his father, Sultan Said, and overcome a fortified insurgency that maintained the advantages of hospitable terrain, legitimate popular grievances, and substantial external support.⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴³ DeVore, 2012, p. 151.

⁷⁴⁴ DeVore, 2012, p. 164.

⁷⁴⁵ Jim White, 2008.

Most scholars consider the combination of political and military reforms and the pursuit of civil action programs aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the population to be the most critical components of Qaboos's COIN strategy. Some emphasize the importance of his efforts to isolate the insurgents through *cordon solitaires* or his unique amnesty program that offered cash incentives to defectors and effectively induced former insurgents to serve the government as irregular militia forces. Still others stress the extensive scope of maneuver that the Omani armed forces were able to achieve as they built up their military capability and acquired greater air power. The general consensus is that the sultan's forces succeeded by "doing most things right."⁷⁴⁶ Once Qaboos addressed the needs of his population, seized the military initiative, and reduced PFLOAG's access to support and sanctuary, he had laid the foundation for his eventual victory.⁷⁴⁷

The limited intervention of British forces in the Dhofar conflict is also referenced as a model for the engagement of external powers in the COIN efforts of foreign partners. British officers who served as advisers and commanded Oman's armed forces provided a critical role in designing the COIN strategy that Qaboos adopted and, indeed, helped orchestrate the coup that brought Qaboos to power without becoming directly engaged in the conflict. British special forces also provided military training to Omani officers, raised irregular militia units, and built civil action teams that greatly bolstered the regime's military capabilities and enhanced its ability to gain popular support among the Dhofari tribes. Yet, by explicitly avoiding the engagement of combat troops in the Dhofar conflict (unlike in the COIN campaign in the Jebel Akhdar region two decades earlier), the British were able to encourage Oman to increase the number of native troops and reach out to regional allies for support. Such actions were considered to be more effective in maintaining the legitimacy of the Qaboos

⁷⁴⁶ Jim White, 2008.

⁷⁴⁷ Jim White, 2008.

government and deflecting criticism from other foreign powers (as well as the British public).⁷⁴⁸

Distinctive Characteristics

- Political grievances exploited by the leaders of the insurgency stemmed not only from the relative neglect of the Dhofar region by the government but also from the extremely reactionary policies of Sultan Said ibn Taimur's regime. Sultan Said rejected all forms of modernity and contact with the outside world, denying his subjects nearly all opportunities for education, medical services, or travel. No forms of communication were permitted, including newspapers, radio, and television.
- Although the rebellion began as a small-scale conflict, it took on strategic importance in the context of the Cold War after a communist state was established in neighboring South Yemen and the leaders of the Dhofar rebellion adopted a Marxist agenda. As a result, the conflict attracted increasing levels of external support, first for the insurgency and later for the Omani sultanate. Initially, support from Yemen, China, and the Soviet Union gave the rebels the upper hand. Then, after 1970, increased support from Jordan and Iran, as well as Britain, helped tilt the scales in the government's favor.
- Oman held particular strategic importance to Britain. The British feared that the spread of communism through southern Arabia could undermine its long-term relationship with the Omani regime and lead to a loss of access to the Strait of Hormuz, through which 70 percent of Europe's oil flowed.⁷⁴⁹ The country's unique colonial-like engagement with the Omani regime also facilitated British officers' close integration within the Omani army (and, indeed, they commanded the armed forces) and major role in designing and implementing Oman's COIN policies. This type

⁷⁴⁸ Walter C. Ladwiq III, "Supporting Allies in Counterinsurgency: Britain and the Dhofar Rebellion," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 19, No. 1, March 2008, p. 80.

⁷⁴⁹ Beckett, 2001, p. 217.

of involvement with a foreign partner was unique at the time, even for Britain, which was in the process of disengaging from the Middle East and relinquishing its strategic responsibilities across much of the globe.

- The traditional tribal culture in Oman was incompatible with many aspects of Marxist ideology, leading to a decrease in popular support for the insurgency movement after 1967. Forced indoctrination programs and the condemnation of religion alienated much of the population and made insurgent leaders more willing to seek amnesty from the government during the final phase of the conflict.
- Little media attention was devoted to the Dhofar rebellion. The decade-long conflict evolved without general public knowledge of the repressiveness of Sultan Said's regime or the harsh practices employed by both sides. There was also little international pressure (outside of Britain) to reach an accommodation to resolve the conflict and thus avoid a decisive military confrontation.

Figure 26
Map of Oman



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-26

Zimbabwe/Rhodesia, 1965–1980

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

The Rhodesian conflict began when the British colony of Southern Rhodesia unilaterally declared its independence and asserted its right to maintain white-minority rule. This declaration prompted the country's two major black African nationalist parties, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), to launch a rural guerrilla insurgency to achieve political rights for the black majority. Initially, the guerrillas launched small-scale attacks against white settlers from bases in Zambia. The insurgency then expanded as ZANU and ZAPU established training and logistical bases along the eastern and western borders of the country and drew support from the local population in Rhodesia. The guerrillas were unable to gain the upper hand in the conflict, however, as the Rhodesian security forces adopted a series of innovative COIN tactics in road security, tracking, and reconnaissance and intelligence gathering that contained the number of insurgent attacks and preserved military control over the country. It was only when political tensions became too great and external pressure weighed in against the government that Salisbury was willing offer concessions to the black majority and concede defeat.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "Rhodesian Forces Successfully Contain Limited Insurgent Attacks" (1965–1972)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: In area of conflict, COIN force *not* perceived as worse than insurgents; Unity of effort/unity of command maintained (government and COIN force); Intelligence adequate to support kill/capture or engagements on COIN force's terms; Level of violence low/manageable; Military goals routinely took precedence over political

goals; Government repression and/or exclusion of significant societal groups from state power or resources

The Rhodesian conflict began in 1965 when the white-minority government of the colony of Southern Rhodesia under President Ian Smith resisted British efforts to transfer power to the country's black majority and unilaterally declared its independence from Britain.⁷⁵⁰ In response to this declaration, the two major black nationalist parties, ZANU and ZAPU, began to organize a rural guerrilla insurgency with the intention of fomenting sufficient violence to either force the Rhodesian government to capitulate or compel the British and other Western countries to intervene and pave the way for black-majority rule.⁷⁵¹

Both insurgent organizations that mobilized against the Rhodesian government adhered to a Marxist ideology, but they were divided by tribal loyalties and maintained different external partners. ZANU, which was composed of members of the Shona tribe, received most of its military assistance and training from China. The ZAPU, on the other hand, was dominated by the Ndebele tribe and was primarily armed and trained by the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries.⁷⁵² The armed wings of the movements became known as the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and the Zimbabwe Independent People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), respectively.

Initially, the two nationalist parties operated separately but followed a similar military strategy. They planned to infiltrate groups of heavily armed guerrillas into northern Rhodesia from safe havens in

⁷⁵⁰ Britain and the UN responded by issuing severe trade sanctions against the new government, which ultimately proved ineffective because the government was able to skirt the restrictions with the cooperation of South Africa and Mozambique.

⁷⁵¹ Paul Jackson, "The Civil War Roots of Military Domination in Zimbabwe: The Integration Process Following the Rhodesian War and the Road to ZANLA Dominance," *Civil Wars*, Vol. 13, No. 4, December 2011; Bruce Hoffman, Jennifer M. Taw, and David W. Arnold, *Lessons of Contemporary Counterinsurgencies: The Rhodesian Experience*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-3998-A, 1991, p. 7.

⁷⁵² The two parties also received support from Ghana, Algeria, and Tanzania, as well as the Organization of African Unity, the World Council of Churches, and the third-world lobby of the UN. Corum and Johnson, 2003, pp. 294–329; Hoffman, Taw, and Arnold, 1991, p. 2.

Zambia. Their goal was to establish bases in sparsely populated areas of Rhodesia from which they could launch guerrilla attacks and, in turn, spark widespread fighting. From April 1966 through 1969, the insurgents attempted to launch numerous incursions across the border but failed to establish a presence inside the country due to their own strategic miscalculations and the quick-reaction capabilities of Rhodesian security forces.

The Rhodesian government, while isolated from much of the world and under severe economic sanctions from Great Britain and the United Nations, was able to maintain a small but well trained and very capable military force, consisting of light infantry, special forces, an air force, and large police and intelligence units. It also received assistance from South African police and military units that were concerned about collaboration between Rhodesian guerrillas and indigenous South African insurgent groups, such as the African National Congress (ANC).⁷⁵³

Through a coordinated effort, the Rhodesian security forces were able to orchestrate highly effective track-and-kill operations against the nationalist insurgents soon after they crossed the border. Large groups of guerrillas crossing the desolate plains of northern Rhodesia, cumbersome saddled with supplies, were easily spotted by aircraft. Special branch officers in the Rhodesian police force able launched intelligence operations against the groups (often penetrating their organizations with local recruits), which enabled them to identify the guerrillas and gain advance notice of their infiltrations and movement on the ground. At same time, the insurgents overestimated the support they would receive from the local population, which often feared them or were indifferent to their cause, leading them to tip off the security forces.

Rhodesian forces were therefore able to intercept the guerrillas before they could establish a base of operations within the country, and many were captured without a struggle. When the insurgents did

⁷⁵³ An alliance between ZAPU and the ANC in 1967 likely contributed to South Africa's decision to send a contingent of 2,000 paramilitary police to patrol northern Rhodesia. Michael Evans, "The Wretched of the Empire: Politics, Ideology and Counterinsurgency in Rhodesia, 1965–80," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, June 2007, p. 183.

fight, they were devastated by the Rhodesian army.⁷⁵⁴ Security forces killed 300 guerrillas and captured an additional 500 from 1966 to 1972, coming away from the fighting with just 14 soldiers killed and 27 wounded.⁷⁵⁵ By the spring of 1972, Rhodesia was able to shut down ZANLA's bases in Zambia and defeat most of the insurgent attacks were defeated. Neither ZANU nor ZAPU posed any significant threat to the Rhodesian government. (Guerrilla forces killed only two white settlers from 1966 to 1972.)⁷⁵⁶ The crushing victory by the COIN force during this stage led to a major retrenchment of the black nationalist insurgents, however.

ZANU began to withdraw its fighters from the conflict on the border to engage in retraining with Chinese advisers in Tanzania. It also began to adopt Maoist rural guerrilla techniques, which placed greater emphasis on the need to win the loyalty and support of the local population. ZAPU, while continuing to launch hit-and-run attacks in Rhodesia, started to focus more on developing a conventional army with the assistance of the Soviet Union. Both groups also sought to expand their base of operations beyond Zambia. The Rhodesian forces, somewhat overconfident in their ability to defeat the insurgency, were not immediately prepared for these changes.

Phase II: "Increasing Insurgent Activity Inspires Innovative Counterinsurgency Tactics" (1973–1976)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Change in level of popular support for insurgents; COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent materiel acquisition; COIN force employed collective punishment; Military goals routinely took precedence over political goals; Insurgents discredited/delegitimized COIN force/government; External support to COIN from strong state/military; Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement; Government repression and/or exclusion of significant

⁷⁵⁴ Hoffman, Taw, and Arnold, 1991, p. 7.

⁷⁵⁵ Michael Evans, 2007, p. 183.

⁷⁵⁶ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 295.

societal groups from state power or resources; COIN force employed “counter-gangs,” “scouts,” or “ferret forces” against insurgents; Case fought against the tide of history (end of colonialism, end of apartheid)

Much to the surprise of the Rhodesian forces, insurgent attacks intensified in 1973 as ZANLA forces began to establish more secure bases both inside and outside the country. Benefiting from its ties to the FRELIMO guerrilla movement that was fighting against the Portuguese in Mozambique, ZANLA was able to maintain a safe haven along Rhodesia’s eastern border. At the same time, ZANU’s efforts to build a popular base of support among the black rural population were beginning to pay off as local tribes started providing a reliable source of food and shelter for the rebel forces in Rhodesia.⁷⁵⁷ Local tribes also helped ZANLA fighters conceal their activity from the security forces and assisted them in transporting material and arms across the border, making cross-border operations less onerous for the insurgents.⁷⁵⁸

The insurgency continued to gain strength after Mozambique and Angola achieved independence in 1974 and 1975, respectively. When FRELIMO gained power in Mozambique, it enabled ZANLA forces to extend their logistical bases and increase training for recruits. Similarly, when the MPLA achieved victory over the Portuguese in Angola, ZIPRA established new military bases, where its forces received valuable training from both Cuban and Soviet forces. This expansion of safe havens and increased external support enabled both ZANLA and ZIPRA to launch more effective attacks on the farms of white settlers and to conduct new mine-laying operations that disrupted rural commercial traffic and inhibited the mobility of the security forces.⁷⁵⁹

The Rhodesian forces were weakened by the newly aggressive insurgent attacks and their dwindling base of support. In contrast to the insurgent forces, the government continued to suffer from international trade sanctions, reduced assistance from South Africa, and a

⁷⁵⁷ J. K. Cilliers, *Counterinsurgency in Rhodesia*, Dover, N.H.: Croom Helm, 1985, p. 13.

⁷⁵⁸ Hoffman, Taw, and Arnold, 1991, p. 10.

⁷⁵⁹ ZIPRA was unable to launch a major conventional attack on Rhodesian security forces, but it continued to lay land mines and conduct calculated armed attacks against civilians.

chronic shortage of manpower. Yet, despite such restrictions, the Rhodesian security forces adopted a series of innovative military countermeasures. In an effort to counter the increasing threat of deadly land mines, for example, they engineered design modifications to military and commercial vehicles to prevent them from exploding. This served to dramatically decrease mine-related casualties (by as much as 90 percent) and enabled Rhodesian forces to regain control of vital roads in the countryside.⁷⁶⁰

To compensate for its lack of manpower, the Rhodesian military relied on police units to patrol rural areas and employed small-unit tactics and special forces capabilities to respond to insurgent actions. Small reaction forces, known as “fire forces,” with as few as 30 light infantry soldiers and paratroopers were supported by four helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft equipped with rockets and machine guns that could quickly engage guerrillas.⁷⁶¹ British SAS forces also engaged in cross-border raids and intelligence operations against insurgent training camps and logistical bases in Zambia and Mozambique, which weakened the insurgency militarily.

To overcome the loss of intelligence sources in the local tribal regions, the Rhodesian military created specialized “pseudo-” or “counter-gang” forces, called Selous Scouts, that were deployed to live in local villages or patrol alongside the ZANLA and ZIPRA forces and report back on insurgent activities. (Many of the Selous Scouts were former insurgents who had defected and joined the government.) The Selous Scouts were credited with greatly improving the effectiveness

⁷⁶⁰ These basic measures included filling tires with water and air to dissipate the explosive force and mounting V-shaped capsules on the chassis of vehicles. Hoffman, Taw, and Arnold, 1991, p. 20.

⁷⁶¹ Rhodesian security forces used aircraft to spot incursions, then inserted light infantry forces via helicopter several kilometers forward along the expected axis of the advancing insurgent force. These small light infantry forces would then work in tandem with helicopters, forcing the insurgents into open terrain where they would be vulnerable to ground forces or aircraft. Timothy M. Bairstow, *Border Interdiction in Counterinsurgency: A Look at Algeria, Rhodesia, and Iraq*, thesis, Ft. Leavenworth, Kan.: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2007.

The fire forces provided Rhodesians with a tactical edge over the insurgents, enabling them to achieve a ten-to-one kill ratio. Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 298.

of Rhodesian security force operations, accounting for as many as 68 percent of all insurgent kills and captures.⁷⁶²

Rhodesian forces also sought to establish a *cordon sanitaire*, a series of minefields along the border with Mozambique, to cut off insurgent infiltration, yet they did not have sufficient manpower to police the cordon. Additional efforts to launch a protected villages program also failed, as the government did not provide any physical protection for the population against guerrilla attacks. Similarly, a government-sponsored self-defense program received little funding or attention from the army and was provided only with antiquated weapons and minimal training, leaving the population more rather than less vulnerable to guerrilla attacks.

While the Rhodesian forces were able to adopt many effective military tactics against the insurgents, they were far less successful in their engagements with the local population. Whether the government simply viewed civic action as an afterthought or completely discounted the political character of the threat it faced, concerns about the public perceptions of the government appeared to play a minimal role in the Rhodesians' COIN strategy. For most of the rural population, the only contact with government forces was through the implementation of collective punishment efforts, such as the imposition of curfews and martial law and forced resettlement campaigns.⁷⁶³ The leaders of the insurgency were able to exploit this fact to turn local village leaders and apolitical groups against the Rhodesian government.⁷⁶⁴ (At the time, the majority of the local population did not necessarily support ZANU or ZAPU.)⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶² Hoffman, Taw, and Arnold, 1991, p. 47.

⁷⁶³ The Rhodesian forces implemented a comprehensive program called Operation Hurricane from 1972 to 1975 that included a *cordon sanitaire*, protected villages, food control, curfews, and, eventually, martial law. Cilliers, 1985, p. 15.

⁷⁶⁴ Bobby Ray Pinkston, *Rhodesian Insurgency: A Failure of Regional Politics*, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, March 2005.

⁷⁶⁵ Cilliers, 1985, p. 17.

***Phase III: “Political and External Pressures Force a Concession”
(1977–1980)***

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent materiel acquisition; COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent intelligence; COIN force employed escalating repression; Insurgents discredited/delegitimized COIN force/government; [Withdrawal of] External support to COIN from strong state/military; Government repression and/or exclusion of significant societal groups from state power or resources; Conclusion/suspension externally imposed or due to international pressure or other exogenous event

From 1977 to 1980, ZANLA forces continued to expand the group’s base of operations in Mozambique, from which they launched operations along the entire eastern border of Rhodesia. ZIPRA was also able to rebuild its forces with the benefit of Cuban training and launch attacks from Zambia and Botswana, along the northern and western borders of the country. Both groups built a growing base of popular support within Rhodesia and worked to reduce the level of infighting among their supporters. By 1978, the two guerrilla armies formed a loose alliance called the Patriotic Front, which was able to challenge the Rhodesian security forces with a three-front war. (In a particularly notable incident in September 1978, ZIPRA forces shot down a civilian airliner with a surface-to-air missile.)

The Rhodesian forces responded to the challenge by making new adaptations to their military tactics and weapons. Their small-unit tactical forces enabled them to inflict heavy losses on the guerrilla forces, improved intelligence capabilities contained the disruption caused by insurgent attacks, and continued interdiction efforts, spearheaded by Rhodesian special forces, allowed for continued cross-border raids against insurgent bases. Therefore, while the insurgents continued their infiltrations, the outnumbered security forces were able to maintain an

operational edge, and the country remained securely in the hands of the white settlers.⁷⁶⁶

Politically, however, the Rhodesian government was far less effective. As the war dragged on, the insurgency gained increasing support from the black population, costing the government political control over large portions of the country.⁷⁶⁷ Many whites also began to emigrate in the late 1970s, growing war-weary from the demands of military conscription, which often required a commitment of six months per year. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, external political pressure led the Rhodesian government to concede defeat. Seeking to reduce tensions in the region, South Africa withdrew its troops and aircraft from the country and pushed Rhodesia to make concessions and accept a plan to transition to majority rule.⁷⁶⁸ In April 1980, the political conflict officially came to an end as Zimbabwe received its independence and ZANU's leader, Robert Mugabe, was elected as the new country's prime minister.

Conventional Explanations

The outcome of the Rhodesian conflict is often explained as a classic case in which the COIN force won the battle but lost the war. Militarily, the Rhodesian forces launched an admirable COIN campaign. In fact, the innovative techniques in road security, tracking and reconnaissance, small-unit tactics, special operations, and intelligence gathering have been viewed by Bruce Hoffman and others as a model for security forces functioning under financial and manpower constraints.⁷⁶⁹ The tactical capabilities of the security forces provided the Rhodesian

⁷⁶⁶ Corum and Johnson, 2003 p. 299.

⁷⁶⁷ Pinkston, 2005.

⁷⁶⁸ The United States and Great Britain also asserted diplomatic pressure on the white Rhodesian government to agree to majority rule, but the actions of the South African government were most influential in the outcome.

⁷⁶⁹ For example, the Rhodesians made significant improvements in road security by introducing innovative and expensive modifications to ordinary military and commercial vehicles, such as filling tires with water and air to dissipate the explosive force of land mines, which enabled the security forces to retain control over the countryside. Hoffman, Taw, and Arnold, 1991, pp. iv, 3.

government with the time and leverage it needed to prevent the insurgent forces from ever winning an outright victory. However, military tactics alone could not overcome the overwhelming political obstacles that the government faced in sustaining its regime. A variety of factors contributed to Rhodesia's loss. The failure of the security forces to adopt few if any COIN techniques that addressed the social or political needs of the black population is most obvious. This stemmed from the radical right-wing ideology adopted by the Rhodesian government that viewed the insurgency as an external communist threat and dismissed the legitimate demands of the black majority. According to a member of the Rhodesian parliament at the time,

The gloved hand approach to administration, with pardons, amnesties, hearts and minds campaigns and rehabilitation will not work here. . . . We are facing a pagan enemy with an intellect different from that of the Caucasian, bent upon annihilating our society and we are going to have to fight with every physical resource at our disposal, without soul-searching and recrimination.⁷⁷⁰

Thus, the government did not entertain any consideration of political reform.

International pressure and economic sanctions imposed by Great Britain and the UN also clearly had an impact on the ability of the Rhodesian government to sustain its military campaign against the insurgency. Moreover, South Africa's withdrawal of its military support had the most immediate impact on the government's decision to accept transition to majority rule. Yet, ultimately, it was "the tide of history" that ensured the defeat of Rhodesia's anachronistic political system and a white-minority government in the postcolonial era.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁷⁰ Letter from Rodney Simmonds to the editor of the *Rhodesia Herald*, April 11, 1974, quoted in Michael Evans, 2007, p. 186

⁷⁷¹ Hoffman, Taw, and Arnold, 1991, p. 4

Distinctive Characteristics

- Rhodesia was in a unique position in the British Empire of having the status of a self-governing colony since 1923. Its government was led by a well-established white settler population that remained largely insulated from British society, which enabled it to develop a radical right-wing political ideology uninfluenced by the liberal democratic thought that was gaining favor in other parts of the world during the 1960s.⁷⁷² Rhodesia also maintained its own military and police force, both of which were well equipped and well trained. It was thus more capable of launching a COIN campaign than other, more traditional colonies.
- Neither the United States nor Great Britain played a major role in the Rhodesian conflict, as the insurgency did not assume a high level of importance in the context of the Cold War. Moreover, the insurgency received relatively little attention in the Western press in its early stages. As a result, South Africa was able to set the strategic agenda and there was little international pressure to address the political rights of Rhodesia's black majority.⁷⁷³
- The extremist ideology of the white settler movement, which portrayed African nationalism as an external instrument of world communism rather than an indigenous phenomenon, led the government to ignore the political dimension of the conflict, including the need to appeal to the hearts and minds of the population. Instead, it pursued a military approach to COIN that focused almost exclusively on applying maximum force, with little regard for the impact of civilian casualties.

⁷⁷² Michael Evans, 2007, pp. 175–180.

⁷⁷³ Pinkston, 2005.

Figure 27
Map of Zimbabwe



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-27

Argentina, 1969–1979

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

Initially a socialist insurgency aimed primarily at restoring the power of exiled president Juan Perón, the insurgency in Argentina evolved into revolt against the government of the reinstated Perón and eventually became much more focused on military goals in lieu of political aims. Throughout the conflict, the country's political system morphed from military government to an elected socialist government, before shifting back to a military regime with the ousting of Isabel Perón's administration in 1976. Through these transitions, the government's COIN strategy shifted from one of relative leniency focused on legal mechanisms to one that adopted increasingly illegal, brutal tactics, culminating in the indiscriminate "dirty war" waged against large swathes of Argentine society after 1976.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "A Popularly Supported Insurgency Meets Little Government Resistance" (1969–February 1973)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Insurgency followed a coup or was a counterrevolution; Level of violence low/manageable; Insurgents discredited/delegitimized COIN force/government; External support to COIN from strong state/military; Type of external support included: funding/financing; Type of external support included: training and/or advice (military advisers)

In 1946, socialist Juan Perón assumed the presidency of Argentina and began to transform the country along socialist lines. His policies included nationalization of the major means of production and distribution and giving a voice to organized labor. After being ousted in a 1955 coup and exiled from the country, Perón stirred up a socialist insurgency in Argentina and used it to break the political impasse, to connect with and take advantage of the country's rebellious youth,

and to inspire a worker-based mass movement.⁷⁷⁴ During Perón's exile, a number of urban insurgent groups emerged. They soon decided to either disperse or join either the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) or the Peronist Montoneros; the Montoneros would eventually become the largest and most active of the insurgent organizations in Argentina at the time, but they close ties to the ERP.

A sudden, sharp upsurge in guerrilla violence occurred in 1969, peaking in 1971. Both the ERP and the Montoneros received a steady supply of insurgents from the ranks of Argentina's radicalized youth during the conflict's early period, and the groups limited their activities to kidnapping and extortion, "armed propaganda," and assassinations of "traitors." Kidnappings succeeded in establishing a strong financial base for the insurgency throughout the conflict. "Armed propaganda" included such activities as hijacking food delivery vans and delivering the provisions to shantytowns, bombing empty buildings and monuments on Peronist and Guevarist anniversaries, bombing elite country clubs and the homes of foreign business executives, and commando-style occupations of small towns outside Buenos Aires. Because the insurgents understood the psychological objectives of armed propaganda, they tried to avoid killing people in these operations. But those in their ranks who turned against them were viewed as traitors and were not so lucky; the groups assassinated deserters and informers, as well as labor union leadership. These tactics were successful in winning popular support for the insurgency, with survey data collected during this first phase of the conflict indicating that nearly half of the Argentine population considered the insurgents' operations to be justified.⁷⁷⁵

The government's COIN efforts received external support from the United States throughout the conflict's first two phases, with military aid alone amounting to \$810 million between 1960 and 1975. In addition, the United States trained 4,017 Argentine military person-

⁷⁷⁴ Max G. Manwaring, *Shadows of Things Past and Images of the Future: Lessons for the Insurgencies in Our Midst*, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, November 2004, pp. 9–10.

⁷⁷⁵ Manwaring, 2004, p. 13.

nel between 1950 and 1979, many of them in COIN techniques.⁷⁷⁶ Although the COIN response to the insurgency at this point employed tough tactics at times, the government tried to maintain an image of legitimacy by relying to a large extent on the legal system to prosecute insurgents. One reason was that the military junta had already met with political and economic failure, and the government began to realize that its reign was coming to an end. Low-level and sporadic death-squad activity did occur prior to 1973, but most of the people seized by the security forces did not “disappear” like they did in later periods. COIN forces also employed torture at times during interrogations, but detainees were generally brought before a judge within a few days and then treated according to the law. The government created a special court staffed with nine judges to try cases involving subversion.⁷⁷⁷ Above all, Argentina’s political parties were forced to deal with the problem of unrest, raising their status once again in the country and leading to elections in the next phase.

Phase II: “The Government Cracks Down in Legal and Illegal Ways” (March 1973–March 1976)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Insurgents delegitimized due to civilian casualties or other unacceptable behavior; External support to COIN from strong state/military; Type of external support included: funding/financing; Type of external support included: training and/or advice (military advisers)

Exhausted and unpopular, the military held elections in 1973, turning the government over to Héctor Cámpora, who acted as a stand-in for Perón until the latter returned from exile and reassumed the presidency. While the Montoneros initially pledged their support to

⁷⁷⁶ Frederick H. Gareau, *State Terrorism and the United States: From Counterinsurgency to the War on Terrorism*, Atlanta, Ga.: Clarity Press, 2004, p. 107.

⁷⁷⁷ Richard Gillespie, “Political Violence in Argentina: Guerrillas, Terrorists, and Carapintadas,” in Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism in Context*, State College, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 1995, p. 239.

Perón—with many of them receiving important posts in the government and the national universities—the ERP renewed its insurgency in 1973, particularly in rural areas.⁷⁷⁸ Indeed, the ERP took control of the rural province of Tucuman in 1974, actually governing the territory for a short while. Perón ordered the army into Tucuman to restore state control there, which the military did quickly and efficiently.⁷⁷⁹ By 1975, following its defeat in Tucuman, the insurgency retained a solely urban focus.⁷⁸⁰

Meanwhile, in September 1974, those Montoneros who had not been co-opted into the state bureaucracy under Perón's administration failed to abandon their aspirations of taking total control of the state. As a result, they broke with Perón, and the level of violence escalated to unprecedented levels, remaining high through 1975.⁷⁸¹ Insurgent violence during this phase entailed an increase in assassinations of traitors and informants, as well as larger-scale and more indiscriminate kidnappings and bombings that were increasingly likely to involve civilians. By 1975, more than 5,000 Montonero combat troops operated throughout the country, primarily in Buenos Aires and the surrounding area. Furthermore, the group had the support of over 8,000 political activists, who were capable of mobilizing thousands of demonstrators for protests or other events.⁷⁸² The insurgents were greatly outnumbered when facing the 60,000-member Argentine military establishment.⁷⁸³ Yet, they increasingly turned to more militarized tactics during this phase of the conflict.

The insurgents began waging more daring and spectacular operations directly against the armed forces that were increasingly designed

⁷⁷⁸ Paul H. Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals: The "Dirty War" in Argentina*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002, p. 51; Steven Metz and Raymond A. Millen, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Reconceptualizing Threat and Response*, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, November 2004, p. 14.

⁷⁷⁹ Manwaring, 2004, p. 9.

⁷⁸⁰ Gillespie, 1995.

⁷⁸¹ Manwaring, 2004, p. 14; Lewis, 2002, p. 51.

⁷⁸² Metz and Millen, 2004, p. 15; Manwaring, 2004, p. 11.

⁷⁸³ Metz and Millen, 2004, p. 15.

only to demonstrate their military strength.⁷⁸⁴ Notable operations included an attack on the Argentine navy's first modern missile-carrying frigate by Montonero frogmen and the destruction of an air force transport aircraft carrying COIN personnel. Perhaps most spectacular was the Montoneros' hijacking of an aircraft and takeover of a provincial airport, combined with an attack on a major army garrison and seizure of its arms cache. The insurgents used the hijacked aircraft to escape with the stolen weapons.⁷⁸⁵ These tactical and operational innovations cost the insurgents a fair amount of popular support, particularly as their attacks became increasingly indiscriminate and more likely to involve innocent civilians.

In response to the increasing level of insurgent violence, the Perón administration employed various military, legal, and illegal mechanisms to bring the conflict under control.⁷⁸⁶ The most pronounced of these was a change in the overall strategy of the COIN effort. The military—which, prior to the Tucuman operation, had been employed only in a support capacity to the police—took on a much larger role in this phase, securing a role for itself in the new internal security council headed by the president in October 1975. The provincial police forces were placed under military control. In November 1975, the army, navy, police, and border guards conducted COIN operations throughout the country, and the military succeeded in pressuring the government to ban the Montoneros, as well as all Montonero-related front organizations and their publications.⁷⁸⁷

Other measures introduced by the Perón administration included a January 1974 penal code reform in that permitted much more severe punishments for guerrilla activities than had existed under the military regime, as well as a September 1974 anti-subversion law designed to counter guerrilla propaganda that allowed for one- to three-year prison

⁷⁸⁴ Manwaring, 2004, p. 15.

⁷⁸⁵ Gillespie, 1995; Manwaring, 2004, p. 15.

⁷⁸⁶ After Juan Perón's death in 1974, his wife Isabel assumed the presidency and continued the policies of his administration. See Metz and Millen, 2004, p. 15, and Manwaring, 2004, p. 15.

⁷⁸⁷ Gillespie, 1995, p. 240.

sentences for leaders of illegal strikes. Press censorship laws followed, declaring it illegal for journalists to even mention the insurgent groups by name.⁷⁸⁸ Even when arrested under these laws, captured insurgents were generally imprisoned without trial, and groups of ERP members captured during combat appear to have been brutally killed on at least two occasions.⁷⁸⁹ Moreover, the government sponsored the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance (Triple A) death squad, which originated as a loose right-wing federation of gunmen from the country's social welfare ministry, pro-Perón fascist organizations, and trade union headquarters, as well as an array of European fascist mercenaries.⁷⁹⁰ The Triple A carried out three main tasks: (1) it published death lists of people in the arts, sciences, and politics who were suspected of left-leaning sympathies and were invited to leave the country; (2) it attempted to control labor militancy through repression; (3) it aimed to eliminate the regime's opponents.⁷⁹¹ Although the group's composition shifted somewhat after the incorporation of new federal police chiefs in 1974, the government's sanctioning of the death squad contradicted any efforts it took to adhere to legal measures in countering the insurgency.

Phase III: "The Dirty War" (March 1976–1979)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: COIN force engaged in more coercion/intimidation than insurgents; COIN force employed collective punishment; COIN force attempted to use overwhelming force; Successful use of overwhelming force; COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards; Important internal support to insurgents significantly reduced; COIN force efforts resulted in increased costs for insurgents; External support to COIN from strong state/military; Type of external support included: funding/financing;

⁷⁸⁸ Gillespie, 1995, pp. 239–240.

⁷⁸⁹ Gillespie, 1995, p. 241.

⁷⁹⁰ Manwaring, 2004, p. 14; Gillespie, 1995, p. 241.

⁷⁹¹ María José Moyano, *Argentina's Lost Patrol: Armed Struggle, 1969–1979*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995, p. 83.

Type of external support included: training and/or advice (military advisers); Insurgents made critical strategic errors, failed to make obvious adaptations, or voluntarily exited the conflict

In March 1976, the Argentine military successfully executed a coup to depose Isabel Perón. Upon its return to power, the military embarked on what has since been referred to as the “dirty war,” employing an intensive and brutal strategy aimed at “crushing” the insurgents.⁷⁹² As part of this strategy, captured insurgents, known or suspected “subversive delinquents,” and innocent civilians who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time were murdered or imprisoned without trial. Those who were murdered were buried in mass graves or “disappeared.” The military then looted the victims’ property. Those who were detained were interrogated and tortured without legal constraint, often at one of an estimated 340 secret detention camps created by the government. Babies born in detention camps were sold to more “deserving parents.”⁷⁹³

Meanwhile, the United States continued its support of the Argentine government, continuing bilateral military contacts, training courses, and military programs until 1982. There is some evidence to indicate that high-level American officials from the Ford administration—namely, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger—authorized the Argentine generals to conduct the 1976 coup against Isabel Perón’s government at a meeting during the sixth General Assembly of the Organization of American States in Santiago, Chile, in June 1976.⁷⁹⁴ Other documentary evidence indicates that the CIA used U.S. embassies in Latin America to cooperate with the repressive governments in the region during this period.⁷⁹⁵

In December 1976, the Montonero leadership quietly went into exile but continued to direct insurgent operations in Argentina until the

⁷⁹² Lewis, 2002, p. 51.

⁷⁹³ Manwaring, 2004, pp. 16–17.

⁷⁹⁴ J. Patrice McSherry, *Incomplete Transition: Military Power and Democracy in Argentina*, New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 1997, p. 81.

⁷⁹⁵ McSherry, 1997, p. 81.

final “popular counteroffensive” of 1979.⁷⁹⁶ While in exile, the group’s leadership made several strategic and operational errors that reduced the Montoneros’ effectiveness and ultimately assisted the COIN effort. First, it began ignoring the sociopolitical elements of the conflict and focusing solely on military activities, leading it to abandon noncombatant political activists. These noncombatants then became easy targets for the COIN forces, greatly reducing the insurgency’s end strength. Second, the national leadership of the group reorganized, expanding from a four-person directorate into five large, bureaucratic “national secretaryships.” This hindered the group’s decisionmaking and support processes, lowering its cohesiveness and effectiveness.⁷⁹⁷

The COIN forces’ repression of the insurgents and others in the population continued for at least a year after the insurgents lost their operational capacity, only really ending when the British defeated Argentina in the Falklands War in 1982.⁷⁹⁸ The so-called “dirty war” had a devastating effect on wide swathes of Argentine society, claiming the lives of roughly 5,000 combatants and 30,000 noncombatants.⁷⁹⁹

Conventional Explanations

In seeking to explain the outcome of this case, some scholars point to strategic and operational errors on the part of the insurgents in the second and third phases of the conflict, which lowered their effectiveness and decreased the level of internal support they received. According to María José Moyano,

Guerrilla groups transformed themselves into a parody of the armed forces they were seeking to destroy. In their obsession with becoming a regular force, combatants copied all of the vices and none of the virtues of military action. . . . The political objectives that had originally animated the fight were sacrificed to military considerations, and the groups that were supposed

⁷⁹⁶ Manwaring, 2004, p. 15.

⁷⁹⁷ Manwaring, 2004, pp. 11–12.

⁷⁹⁸ Lewis, 2002.

⁷⁹⁹ Manwaring, 2004, pp. 16–17.

to bring national and social liberation to the country developed into bureaucratized structures consumed by the cult of personality.⁸⁰⁰

Meanwhile, others emphasize the COIN force's swift and successful employment of a strategy aimed at crushing the insurgency. Once the COIN force decided to undertake such a strategy, it was able to do so quite effectively. Nonetheless, the success of the COIN force in this case is often overlooked in the literature due to the grievous human rights abuses it perpetrated in the latter years of the conflict.

Distinctive Characteristics

- This case involved extensive levels of indiscriminate, brutal violence targeted at civilians as well as insurgents. This legacy of violence left a scar on Argentine society for decades.
- The COIN force in the earlier phases of the conflict employed an interesting combination of both legal mechanisms and brutal tactics in an effort to lend some legitimacy to the effort while simultaneously aiming to extract intelligence from captured insurgents and deter further insurgent activity.

⁸⁰⁰ Moyano, 1995, p. 163.

Figure 28
Map of Argentina



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR291Z-28

Cambodia, 1967–1975

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

As the conflict in neighboring Vietnam led North Vietnamese forces to make more and more use of logistics lines passing through Cambodia, and under U.S. pressure to join forces with the South Vietnamese, Cambodia's mercurial Prince Norodom Sihanouk walked a tightrope of pseudo-neutrality, allowing the North Vietnamese to operate unopposed in his country's hinterland but refusing to be drawn further into the war. Sihanouk's balancing act ended up alienating many key stakeholders, both within and outside Cambodia, and came to an end in 1970, when his government fell to a coup.

The new government declared war against the communists and joined the broader conflict on the side of the South Vietnamese and the United States, a move that dissolved the tenuous restraint previously shown by the North Vietnamese. North Vietnamese forces, when directly engaged by the Cambodians, cut them to ribbons in a series of campaigns in 1970 and 1971. They also bolstered their forces with Cambodian communists whom they had sheltered in exile since 1955.

The year 1972 brought a cease-fire in Vietnam as a prelude to the communist victory there, and Vietnamese troops began to withdraw from Cambodia. Assuming them to be puppets of the Hanoi regime, many were surprised when the Cambodian communists continued to fight. Massive U.S. bombing in the first half of 1973 postponed a communist victory (and killed an inestimable number of innocent Cambodians), but U.S. congressional action stopped the bombing and ended all hope for the feeble and kleptocratic Cambodian government. The communists' slow advance toward victory ended in April 1975, when they captured the capital, ushering in the horror of the Pol Pot era.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "A Delicate Balancing Act" (1967–1970)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Majority of citizens in area of conflict viewed government as legitimate; Level of violence low/manageable

Cambodia emerged from the first Indochina war as an independent nation allied with the French Union under Prince Sihanouk. Sihanouk sought to keep his country from being drawn into the war in Vietnam, a challenge made all the more difficult by the countries' shared border and the desire of the North Vietnamese to use Cambodian ports to receive shipments of materiel from China and their reliance on areas in northeast Cambodia as sanctuaries and supply lines for forces infiltrating South Vietnam. Unable to deny the North Vietnamese, Sihanouk extorted what he could from them, publicly claiming neutrality to avoid the ire of the United States. This tension ultimately led him to break ties with the United States in 1963.

In addition to international pressure related to the Vietnam War (which included a substantial North Vietnamese presence inside Cambodia), Sihanouk faced significant internal pressure. Population displacement from the spillover of violence led to greater urbanization and other demographic changes, while rice sold directly to Vietnamese forces (roughly one-quarter of the total Cambodian harvest by 1966) was not subject to export taxes, substantially reducing government revenue. Further, students and teachers in the small country looked with admiration at the accomplishments of the Chinese revolution and were increasingly willing to express their disgust at inequality, injustice, and corruption at home.⁸⁰¹

Internal pressure boiled over in 1967, with a modest outbreak of rebellion in Samlaut, a province in northwestern Cambodia—the opening act in what would, in time, become a much more consequential insurgency. The early uprising sprang from a collection of local

⁸⁰¹ David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution Since 1945*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991.

grievances and injustices and escalated to violence with the prompting of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). The revolt was brutally put down and followed by a resettlement program, with token development aid. Sihanouk blamed the communists for the uprising, isolating himself from that faction. Still too weak to wage strong, open opposition to the government, Cambodian communists hid in the “liberated zones” overseen by the North Vietnamese and regrouped, trained their forces, and indoctrinated local populations.

Sihanouk continued to try to walk the tightrope and sent his military forces mixed signals: “On the one hand, Cambodian military trucks continued to funnel weapons and supplies to Vietnamese camps along the border, and the officer corps continued to enrich itself in the process. . . . On the other hand, the army and the population were now enjoined to use arms against local insurgents, supposedly the lackeys of the North Vietnamese.”⁸⁰² Of course, efforts were made to avoid direct confrontation with the North Vietnamese, balanced by overtures to the United States. Sihanouk’s regime teetered on a razor’s edge.

Historian David Chandler highlights three important trends in this phase: broadly, the left’s ascendancy, the urban elite’s increasing restlessness, and Sihanouk’s power in decline.⁸⁰³ Together, these realities made Sihanouk’s efforts to preserve Cambodian neutrality unsustainable, particularly with pressure increasing from the war in neighboring Vietnam.

Phase II: “Falling Off the Tightrope” (1970–1973)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Government leaders *no longer* selected in a manner considered just and fair by majority of population in area of conflict; Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated; COIN force employed substantial indirect fire (air strikes, artillery, or both); Government type: kleptocracy

⁸⁰² Chandler, 1991, p. 177.

⁸⁰³ Chandler, 1991.

The year 1969 saw new U.S. bombing efforts in Cambodia to disrupt North Vietnamese supply lines and headquarters there. Although of limited impact on the North Vietnamese, these events proved highly destabilizing for Cambodia.⁸⁰⁴ Sihanouk's nonaligned alignments—keeping Cambodia from being forced to choose sides—made the country (and its leader) look weak and further increased domestic frustration.

Cambodia fell off the tightrope in March 1970, when Sihanouk was replaced in a military coup.⁸⁰⁵ The coup's pro-U.S. leaders closed communist embassies and demanded the immediate departure of all North Vietnamese forces, with an absurd 72-hour deadline.⁸⁰⁶ The deposed prince became a figurehead and spokesperson for the insurgents, but his pronouncements were closely monitored, and he had no real leadership role.

The end of neutrality wrought many changes. U.S. aid began to flow again, and a combined South Vietnamese/U.S. force entered Cambodia to fight the North Vietnamese.

In some ways, the operation was successful. Invading troops captured large quantities of equipment and food and may have set back communist military planning by a year or more. By other measures, the invasion was a disaster. Instead of destroying Vietnamese communist forces, it pushed them farther into the Cambodian interior, where they invigorated the Khmer rouge. At the same time, the invasion sparked an unprecedented political explosion in the United States.⁸⁰⁷

In addition to the disruption of having foreign powers fighting on Cambodian soil, events led to much greater North Vietnamese support to the CPK insurgents. Further, the U.S. bombing campaigns in Cam-

⁸⁰⁴ Chandler, 1991.

⁸⁰⁵ Bradley, 2009.

⁸⁰⁶ Prados, 2009.

⁸⁰⁷ Lawrence, 2008, p. 146.

bodia killed many civilians, helping to drive the broader Cambodian population into the arms of the rebels.⁸⁰⁸

When domestic political constraints led U.S. troops to withdraw, the best forces on the ground belonged to the North Vietnamese. Of course, this fact was not evident to the Cambodian army until it was severely stung in a series of failed offensives against communist-held areas.⁸⁰⁹ These routs led many in the capital to believe that the war was lost and that the government should open negotiations with Sihanouk.⁸¹⁰ By 1972, after appearing to be on the verge of defeat, the Cambodian army maintained its ground with the aid of continued U.S. bombing raids on enemy positions and supply lines.

This short-term stability came at great cost. Cambodian civilians continued to lose their lives in the bombing and fighting, and the flow of U.S. aid allowed corrupt government and military elites to double down on their larceny. The fighting created new refugees, and the corrupt government did little for them. Many who might have served the government honorably became dispirited and drifted away to join the insurgents.⁸¹¹

In late 1972, three of the four North Vietnamese divisions fighting in Cambodia withdrew into Vietnam, paving the way for a transition to a new phase—a phase in which the insurgents would take the lead in the fighting.⁸¹² Finally freed from the supervision of the North Vietnamese, CPK forces purged pro-Sihanouk elements and cadres that had trained in exile in Vietnam.

These now-unconstrained indigenous communists pushed hard to take the capital in early 1973 but took heavy casualties from U.S. air power. Then, on August 15, 1973, the bombing stopped, ended by act of Congress.⁸¹³ Over the course of the conflict, U.S. warplanes had

⁸⁰⁸ Bradley, 2009.

⁸⁰⁹ Prados, 2009.

⁸¹⁰ Chandler, 1991.

⁸¹¹ Chandler, 1991.

⁸¹² Chandler, 1991.

⁸¹³ Chandler, 1991.

dropped half a million tons of bombs on Cambodia, more than three times the tonnage dropped on Japan during WWII.⁸¹⁴ Ultimately, the bombing did little to change the outcome of the conflict, though it certainly helped extend it.

Phase III: “Sewing the Killing Fields” (August 1973–1975)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: COIN force *no longer* provided or ensured provision of basic services in areas it controlled or claimed to control; COIN force *no longer* of sufficient strength to force insurgents to fight as guerrillas; External professional military *no longer* engaged in fighting on behalf of insurgents *or* government; Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated; Government type: kleptocracy

Once both the United States and the Vietnamese had abandoned their respective partners in Cambodia, it still took several years for the CPK to seal the deal. There were several reasons for the delay. According to David Chandler,

One is that Cambodian forces had needed Vietnamese assistance to smash Lon Nol’s units and lacked the weapons, ammunition, and training to do so once the Vietnamese were gone. Another is that the CPK’s control of the countryside was uneven. Cambodia east of the Mekong, except for a few large towns, was under Communist administration from the end of 1970 until 1975. Areas closer to Phnom Penh changed hands more than once during the war. Still others in the northwest remained under the Khmer Republic until 1975.⁸¹⁵

The slow and progressive encirclement by the CPK drove more and more of the Cambodian population into the cities, overwhelming food supplies and basic services. Corruption among Cambodian elites

⁸¹⁴ Chandler, 1991.

⁸¹⁵ Chandler, 1991, p. 220.

continued to exacerbate these challenges. Finally, in early 1975, the noose closed, and the insurgents took the capital, ushering in the Pol Pot period.

The fall of the government did not alleviate the suffering of Cambodian population:

Under the regime of Democratic Kampuchea (DK), a million Cambodians, or one in eight, died from warfare, starvation, overwork, misdiagnosed diseases, and executions. Most of these deaths, however, were never intended by DK. Instead, one Cambodian in eight fell victim to the government's utopian program of total and rapid social transformation, which its leaders had expected would succeed at far less cost. This does nothing to alleviate the horror or their responsibility for it. When their program failed, the leaders were confused but unrepentant.⁸¹⁶

Conventional Explanations

Most conventional explanations for the outcome of the Cambodian conflict involve the importance of events and actors outside the country. The adjacent Vietnam conflict and associated pressures were just too much for Cambodia to bear. This included corruption associated with the country's relations with the North Vietnamese, who had to be allowed to use Cambodia as a line of supply and, if refused, would have done so anyway. There was also continued corruption associated with the receipt of U.S. aid. The ravages of foreign forces fighting on Cambodian soil, including copious U.S. bombing, damaged the economy, diminished the legitimacy of the government, and drove the population toward the insurgents. Finally, the arms supplied to both sides in the conflict by their respective external sponsors ultimately served the insurgents better, as they were less interested in profiting monetarily from the arms provided and more interested in using them.⁸¹⁷

Chandler also reports on the intellectual influence of events outside of Cambodia, coupled with demographic trends after indepen-

⁸¹⁶ Chandler, 1991, p. 1.

⁸¹⁷ Bradley, 2009.

dence from France. The traditional patrimony of the Cambodian elites began to fray in the face of urbanization and expanded education and literacy. New excesses of traditional corruption combined with increasing awareness of revolutionary ideas and successes elsewhere in Asia necessitated changes in how the government of Cambodia interacted with its people—changes that simply were not made.⁸¹⁸

Distinctive Characteristics

- Cambodia suffered from the worst imaginable “neighborhood effect,” with the war in neighboring Vietnam creating unavoidable pressure to at least passively participate in that conflict. More open participation led the conflict to spill over into Cambodia, ultimately weakening the government and strengthening the insurgents.
- Especially during phases with prominent participation by forces originating in Vietnam, this conflict was fought more as a conventional war, with formations, artillery, and air support, than as a war against insurgents or with much attention paid to the population.

⁸¹⁸ Chandler, 1991.

Figure 29
Map of Cambodia



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR2912-29

Northern Ireland, 1969–1999

Case Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Case Summary

The Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) waged a three-decade-long insurgency against the British Army and various Protestant paramilitaries during a period widely referred to as “The Troubles” in Northern Ireland. Support for the PIRA by Northern Ireland’s Catholic minority, the Republic of Ireland, and the United States increased substantially following a clumsy and inchoate British COIN campaign in the first seven years of the conflict. In the late 1970s, the police assumed primacy over the army, and the COIN force focused on improving its intelligence capabilities. As a military stalemate settled in, efforts to transition away from violence and toward peace gained momentum on both sides. By the final phase of the conflict, both the Protestants and Catholics were war-weary. It was during this final phase that the insurgent leadership shifted the majority of its resources away from the PIRA and toward the organization’s political wing, Sinn Fein. In 1998, after 30 years of fighting, the insurgents agreed to lay down their arms and joined a power-sharing government in Northern Ireland’s parliament.

Case Narrative

Phase I: “‘The Troubles’ Begin” (1969–1976)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Insurgents unable to maintain or grow force size; COIN force employed indiscriminate force; COIN force employed collective punishment; COIN force avoided culturally offensive behaviors and messages

While civil strife between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland dates back centuries, the most recent iteration of violence erupted

during the civil rights movement in the late 1960s.⁸¹⁹ The minority Catholic population had long agitated for equal treatment in employment, housing, and politics, while the Protestant majority closely guarded its access and favored status throughout this British province.⁸²⁰ The predominantly Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) force was unprepared to deal with civil disturbances and, in effect, reacted in a sectarian and draconian manner.

In early July 1970, to quell some of the street skirmishes that were breaking out between Catholics and Protestants, the British Army imposed a curfew on Falls Road, a predominantly Catholic section of West Belfast. Over a three-day period, four civilians were killed and 60 were injured, 1,600 canisters of CS antiriot teargas were fired into the neighborhood, and 58 allegations of looting and other misconduct against British troops were reported.⁸²¹ During what came to be known as “the Rape of the Falls,” young Scottish Protestant soldiers destroyed crucifixes and shoved holy pictures into toilets.⁸²²

Precisely because it was a peacekeeping and not a COIN mission, there was little thought to winning the support of the Catholic population. Homes in Catholic neighborhoods were subjected to raids and ransacked while troops searched for weapons. Occupants in automobiles were stopped and searched, and pedestrians on the street were harassed and humiliated. Between 1971 and 1975, the British Army employed “P-tests,” which involved stopping civilians at random to ask for per-

⁸¹⁹ For more detail on the origins of the PIRA and a historical background on Irish terrorism, see Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA*, New York: Palgrave, 2000.

⁸²⁰ The insurgency literature routinely characterizes the PIRA as an ethno-nationalist group. In Northern Ireland, the division was between Irish Catholics (also known as Republicans or Nationalists) and Protestants, who associated themselves with Great Britain and the United Kingdom (commonly referred to as Unionists or Loyalists). In brief, Unionists tended to be middle- to upper-class Protestants, while Loyalists were primarily working-class Protestants.

⁸²¹ Paul Dixon, “‘Hearts and Minds’? British Counter-Insurgency Strategy in Northern Ireland,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3, June 2009, p. 455.

⁸²² Coogan, 2000, p. 345.

sonal details, including family profile, social life, and employment.⁸²³ Meanwhile, highly combustible events, such as the Protestant Orange parades, were allowed to continue unchecked.⁸²⁴ Despite the likelihood that these parades would end in sectarian violence, the administration in Stormont (the center of government in Belfast) threatened “ferocious reprisals against anyone who tried to impede them.”⁸²⁵

A policy of internment without trial was implemented in August 1971 and consisted of sweeping up large numbers of Catholics, who were detained without access to lawyers or trials.⁸²⁶ The Northern Irish government applied immense political pressure on London to introduce this draconian measure.⁸²⁷ But because the army did not have quality intelligence on suspected PIRA members, the arrests were counterproductive. Indeed, during the opening stages of what was referred to as Operation Demetrius, the British Army and police arrested 342 individuals. Fewer than 100—less than one-third—had any connection whatsoever to the PIRA.⁸²⁸

This policy proved devastating, and a boon to PIRA recruitment. It also contributed significantly to resentment against the British Army, which, in turn, made intelligence gathering even more difficult. Commenting on the effects of internment, Ed Moloney observed, “Internment enlarged the IRA into a six-county-wide army and transformed it

⁸²³ Keith Jeffrey, “Intelligence and Counter-Insurgency Operations: Some Reflections on the British Experience,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1987, p. 132.

⁸²⁴ Thomas H. Henriksen, *What Really Happened in Northern Ireland’s Counterinsurgency: Revision and Revelation*, Hurlburt Field, Fla.: Joint Special Operations University, Report, 08-5, October 2008, p. 22.

⁸²⁵ Anthony James Joes, *Urban Guerrilla Warfare*, Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2007, p. 113.

⁸²⁶ Initially, no Protestants were detained as a result of this policy. Coogan, 2000, p. 342.

⁸²⁷ Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 139.

⁸²⁸ English, 2003, p. 139.

into a force that could now seriously challenge British rule in Northern Ireland.”⁸²⁹

The clumsiness of the British Army was due as much to deliberate British policy as it was a consequence of out-of-date intelligence.⁸³⁰ This antiquated intelligence led to a disastrous operation on January 30, 1972, when British paratroopers opened fire on unarmed civil rights marchers who had organized to protest internment.⁸³¹ The events of “Bloody Sunday” left 13 civilians dead and significantly altered the political landscape of Northern Ireland. Six months later, the insurgents orchestrated the attacks of “Bloody Friday,” a July 21 reprisal in which they detonated 20 car bombs in an hour in Belfast. The Bloody Friday attacks killed nine and injured 130 people.

In the aftermath of Bloody Sunday and the internment program’s implementation, Catholics who were previously unaligned with the PIRA now had sympathy for the group, and both active and passive support proliferated. COIN force troops could not even enter—much less gather any operational intelligence from—Creggan, Brandywell, and the Bogside in Derry, among other areas, as well as large pockets of West Belfast. This changed on July 31, 1972, when the British launched Operation Motorman, an offensive that included 27 infantry battalions and two armored battalions of 22,000 regular troops and 5,300 reserve soldiers from the Ulster Defence Regiment.⁸³²

In 1973, the first honest attempt at political reconciliation failed when the Sunningdale Agreement collapsed, disavowed by both Catholics and Protestants. A year later, the two sides negotiated a cease-fire agreement, but it was subsequently broken. By the end of the first phase, the British Army realized that its current strategy was not work-

⁸²⁹ Ed Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2002, p. 103.

⁸³⁰ Bradley W. C. Bamford, “The Role and Effectiveness of Intelligence in Northern Ireland,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4, December 2005, p. 583.

⁸³¹ English, 2003, p. 151.

⁸³² M. L. R. Smith and Peter R. Neumann, “Motorman’s Long Journey: Changing the Strategic Setting in Northern Ireland,” *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 19, No. 4, December 2005.

ing. Discord between London and the government of Northern Ireland in Stormont contributed to mistrust between politicians and the army.

Phase II: “‘The Dirty War’ Gets Dirtier” (1977–1989)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Intelligence adequate to support kill/capture or engagements on COIN force’s terms; Intelligence adequate to allow COIN forces to disrupt insurgent processes or operations; Change in level of popular support for insurgents; COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent materiel acquisition

By 1977, British security service elites had realized that the army was ill suited for the role of primary COIN force. As such, the police would take the lead while the army played a lesser, but still complementary, role. This shift was outlined in a document titled *The Way Ahead*, which emphasized the criminalization of PIRA terrorists and insurgents and shifted the focus of countering militant Republicanism to intelligence operations.⁸³³ After the assassination of Queen Elizabeth II’s cousin, Lord Louis Mountbatten, and an insurgent bomb attack at Warrenpoint that killed 18 soldiers in August 1979, Sir Maurice Oldfield was appointed security coordinator for Northern Ireland.

The policy of criminalization meant that jailed PIRA members were stripped of their status as political prisoners and reduced to ordinary criminals. In protest, PIRA prisoners embarked on a well-publicized hunger strike in 1981. The death of Bobby Sands and nine other strikers before the eyes of the world broadened sympathy for the Republican cause. The insurgents capitalized on this propaganda victory by turning sympathy into an influx of funds and weaponry in the early 1980s. Sands’s death and the perception of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s cruel indifference galvanized the support of the Irish diaspora in the United States. In October 1984, the PIRA nearly made good on its promise to kill Thatcher when a bomb exploded

⁸³³ Bamford, 2005, p. 584.

in the Brighton Hotel where she was attending a Conservative Party conference.

The change in COIN force strategy was implemented alongside a change in the physical environment of Northern Ireland itself. Almost overnight, Belfast and other predominantly Republican areas were transformed into miniature police states. “Selected homes and neighborhoods” were enveloped by “an invisible cage of electronic and human surveillance” that was “Orwellian in its implications for a liberal society,” according to Tony Geraghty.⁸³⁴ Among the fiercest and most disciplined PIRA units—those operating in South Armagh near the border with the Republic of Ireland—developed a reputation for lethality over the course of the insurgency. To counter PIRA active service units that operated throughout the border region, the British employed helicopters for border surveillance, SAS soldiers in covert observation posts, and “listeners” and “watchers” with bugging devices that could monitor individuals in their homes, vehicles, or in public places.⁸³⁵

The decision by the COIN force to focus more closely on intelligence was influenced by the experiences and writings of General Frank Kitson, author of *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peace-Keeping*. Kitson emphasized the use of informers, whom he had employed successfully in Kenya, as well as the importance of collecting low-grade intelligence. His theory was that through direct security force observation, including prototypical beat-cop behaviors, COIN forces could gain familiarity with the baseline level of activity in a particular area and then apply human information-processing skills and decisionmaking techniques to identify anomalies in everyday patterns.⁸³⁶ To bolster its intelligence capabilities, British COIN forces employed an array of agencies against the insurgents, including, at various points, the Military Reconnaissance/Reaction Force,

⁸³⁴ Tony Geraghty, *The Irish War: The Hidden Conflict Between the IRA and British Intelligence*, Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, p. 74.

⁸³⁵ Bamford, 2005, p. 594.

⁸³⁶ Brian A. Jackson, “Counterinsurgency Intelligence in a ‘Long War’: The British Experience in Northern Ireland,” *Military Review*, January–February 2007, p. 76.

the Force Research Unit, MI5, and MI6, among others. These agencies were responsible for surveillance, interrogation, and recruiting agents and informers, or “freds.” By the middle of the second phase, both the police and the army benefited from the centralization of raw intelligence at the RUC’s Castlereagh station.⁸³⁷

In response to the COIN force’s new strategy, the insurgents adapted the structure of their organization. The PIRA replaced its brigade/battalion/company structure with a more cellular structure to prevent infiltration by British security forces. This rearrangement had its roots in the jails and was credited with the group’s operational success, particularly in the detonation of remote-controlled bombs.⁸³⁸ During this phase, the United Kingdom’s relationship with both the Republic of Ireland and the United States grew closer, and, as a result, both countries became less hospitable to the PIRA. Unable to depend on a steady supply of weapons from contacts in the United States, the PIRA embraced Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi, who supplied the insurgents with a diverse array of weaponry, including Semtex (a Czechoslovakian-made, odorless plastic explosive), Russian RPG-7 rockets and Kalashnikov rifles, Chinese Simarol rifles, Armalites, and M60 machine guns.⁸³⁹

Despite the PIRA’s restructuring, the COIN forces successfully infiltrated the highest levels of the group’s internal security unit.⁸⁴⁰ COIN force infiltration and subversion translated into tangible operational successes. In 1987, an informer provided information to the COIN force that enabled it to intercept a shipment of weapons that the insurgents were to receive from Libya—weapons that the PIRA intended to use to launch an Irish version of the Tet Offensive. The *Eksund* was a Panamanian-registered vessel loaded with 1,000

⁸³⁷ Bamford, 2005, p. 593.

⁸³⁸ English, 2003, p. 213.

⁸³⁹ English, 2003, p. 344.

⁸⁴⁰ For more on this, see Jon Moran, “Evaluating Special Branch and the Use of Informant Intelligence in Northern Ireland,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1, February 2010, and Greg Harkin and Martin Ingram, *Stakeknife: Britain’s Secret Agents in Northern Ireland*, Dublin, Ireland: O’Brien Press, 2004.

Romanian-made AK-47 automatic rifles, 1 million rounds of ammunition, 430 grenades, 12 rocket-propelled grenade launchers with ample supplies of grenades and rockets, 12 heavy Russian DShK machine guns, more than 50 SAM-7 surface-to-air missiles, 2,000 electric detonators, 4,700 fuses, 106-mm cannons, general-purpose machine guns, antitank missile launchers, flame throwers, and two tons of Semtex.⁸⁴¹ The capture of the *Eksund* was a devastating blow to the PIRA and its hopes of escalating the insurgency against the British.

Phase III: “From Bullets to Ballots” (1990–1999)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Insurgents delegitimized due to civilian casualties or other unacceptable behavior; Occupied population accepted claim of occupier intent to withdraw its troops under attainable circumstances as credible; Flow of cross-border insurgent support significantly decreased or remained dramatically reduced or largely absent; Amnesty program reduced number of insurgents

By 1990, the conflict in Northern Ireland was entering its third decade. Irish Republican insurgents, Protestant paramilitaries, and the British Army each recognized the existence of a military stalemate on all sides. Fearful of being shut out of any future political solution to the conflict, the combatants began positioning themselves for a negotiated settlement. In 1993, the British and Irish governments agreed to the Downing Street Declaration, in which the British openly declared no self-interest—economic, political, or military—in the affairs of the Republic of Ireland. The main tenets of the statement that caused the biggest stir were the principle of self-determination and the principle of consent, which essentially stated that it would be the right of the people of Ireland as a whole, both North and South, to determine their fate, including the Unionist majority in the North. The importance of the Downing Street Declaration was that, for the first time, civilians

⁸⁴¹ Moloney, 2002, pp. 3–4.

in Northern Ireland accepted the claim of the British that they would withdraw their troops if the fighting were to end.

A cease-fire agreement was reached in 1994, and, unlike the one 20 years earlier, this pause in hostilities would not be used as an opportunity to rest and rearm. On the contrary, the small respite in fighting was seized upon to move forward with a genuine push for peace. The PIRA's leadership took notice of an interesting dynamic. In reviewing the past dozen years, dating back to Sinn Fein's entry into electoral politics in 1982, there appeared to be an inverse relationship between PIRA violence and Sinn Fein electoral success. Put simply, the fewer people the insurgents killed, the better their political wing fared at the polls.

Hardliners within the PIRA's leadership were displeased with the cease-fire agreement, specifically, and with the shift in resources from the PIRA to Sinn Fein more generally. In early 1996, these hardliners orchestrated an attack to convey just how disillusioned they had become. On February 9, the insurgents detonated a massive truck bomb near Canary Wharf Tower in South London, killing two and causing approximately £100 million in damage.⁸⁴² The Canary Wharf attack notwithstanding, longtime PIRA commander and Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams pushed ahead with peace talks between the insurgents and the COIN force.

In 1998, the insurgency in Northern Ireland officially came to an end with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. This historical agreement was the culmination of 30 years of conflict in Northern Ireland. Fifteen years after the signing of this historic peace deal, all parties to the conflict have remained focused on politics and a lasting peace has settled in throughout the region, pockmarked by only episodic acts of violence practiced by fringe groups and criminals.⁸⁴³ The

⁸⁴² Moloney, 2002, pp. 440–441.

⁸⁴³ See John Horgan and John F. Morrison, "Here to Stay? The Rising Threat of Violent Dissident Republicanism in Northern Ireland," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 2011, and Martyn Frampton, *The Return of the Militants: Violent Dissident Republicanism*, London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, 2010.

PIRA laid down its arms and stepped aside for Sinn Fein, completing a process that had begun years earlier.

Following the announcement of the Good Friday Agreement, a violent dissident faction of the PIRA splintered off to form the Real Irish Republican Army, a group that claimed responsibility for the August 1998 Omagh bombing that killed 29 people. In 2000, the decommissioning process started by George Mitchell five years earlier bore fruit when the PIRA Army Council agreed to put all weapons “beyond use” and to allow international inspection of major arms dumps. Any quixotic dreams of a return to violence ended on September 11, 2001. In a post-9/11 era, there was no sympathy for groups committing terrorist acts, and the PIRA decommissioned an “unspecified” amount of weaponry, ending the conflict in no uncertain terms.

Conventional Explanations

The insurgency in Northern Ireland grew out of sectarian strife between the minority Catholic population and the majority Protestant community. The all-Protestant RUC was ill equipped to handle the insurgency, so the British Army deployed was a peacekeeping force. In Phase I, British Army COIN forces employed collective punishment and committed culturally offensive acts, which served to antagonize the population and aid the recruitment of fighters into the insurgency.⁸⁴⁴ Incidents like Bloody Sunday and policies like internment without trial helped the PIRA win the popular support of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland, as well as the passive and active support of followers in the Republic of Ireland and the United States. The British Army simply could not break with the habits of colonial COIN, which tended to backfire in the domestic setting of Northern Ireland.

In Phase II, the COIN force adopted a strategy that shifted primary responsibility for prosecuting the conflict from the army to the police and intelligence services, with the army playing a supporting role. *The Way Ahead* pushed the COIN force to collect and analyze

⁸⁴⁴ In his work on proto-insurgencies, Daniel Byman notes that state repression can politicize a community that was previously wary of politics. See Daniel Byman, *Understanding Proto-Insurgencies*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, OP-178-OSD, 2007, p. 22.

intelligence more efficiently. As a result of improved intelligence, the COIN force killed and captured PIRA members operating around the world while also disrupting the insurgents' ability to resupply their dwindling arsenal. The capture of the *Eksund* in 1987 prevented the PIRA from launching a self-styled Irish version of the Tet Offensive. In the third and final phase, with the population suffering from war-weariness and all sides locked in a military stalemate, the peace process gained momentum. The insurgents agreed to a cease-fire in 1994 and then ended the conflict officially by signing the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and completely decommissioning in 2000. By joining the power-sharing government, Martin McGuinness, the PIRA's former second-in-command, became the second most powerful government minister in Northern Ireland.

Distinctive Characteristics

- On the political front, the British were able to endure 100 deaths a year in perpetuity. Successive British governments felt comfortable with this number. Following Operation Motorman in 1972, when the death toll was above 500, violence never again reached a level that created enough pressure on the British government, at least in strategic terms, to radically reconsider its stance. The conflict was locked in a military stalemate from the mid-1970s until its end in 1998. After 1972, the violence never again reached civil war-like proportions.
- In the first phase of the insurgency, COIN force human intelligence was especially poor.⁸⁴⁵ To compensate, the COIN force implemented intelligence techniques that were questionable in legality. But the “dirtier” the “dirty war” became, the more effective the COIN force was in penetrating the insurgent command structure. This posed an obvious quandary to a liberal democracy like that in the UK, which sought to balance the demands of

⁸⁴⁵ Aaron Edwards, “Misapplying Lessons Learned? Analyzing the Utility of British Counterinsurgency Strategy in Northern Ireland, 1971–1976,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, June 2010, p. 308.

prosecuting a COIN campaign with the focus on humanitarianism in the rules, laws, and morals that define the state's character.

- The conflict in Northern Ireland featured multiple actors. At various points throughout the insurgency, armed groups included the Provisional IRA, the Continuity IRA, the Real IRA, the Irish National Liberation Army, the Ulster Defence Association, the Ulster Freedom Fighters, the Ulster Volunteer Force, the Red Hand Commando, and several other smaller, less known groups.
- Looking back at history, some scholars see Operation Motorman as a turning point in the conflict. Although the British Army was able to successfully penetrate formerly “no-go” areas in Catholic neighborhoods, the COIN force missed an opportunity by eschewing the “build” of “clear, hold, and build.”⁸⁴⁶
- The PIRA was one of the most ruthless and capable insurgent forces in modern history. Had the PIRA been fighting against any force other than the British Army, it is likely that the insurgents would have defeated the counterinsurgents.

⁸⁴⁶ Bamford, 2005, p. 583.

Figure 30
Map of Northern Ireland



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR2912-30

Jordan, 1970–1971

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

The Palestinian insurgency in Jordan was strongly influenced by political forces in the Middle East in 1970. The conflict evolved after the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War, which led the Palestinian national liberation movement and its *fedayeen* militia to establish their headquarters in Jordan. As the *fedayeen* gained political and military power, they posed a challenge to the legitimacy of the Hashemite regime, leading King Hussein to initiate a COIN campaign culminating in a full military assault on Palestinian strongholds in Amman and northern Jordan. Ten days of intense fighting followed, during which the *fedayeen* received only limited reinforcement from neighboring Arab armies whose support they had counted on. As a result, the insurgency was nearly crushed. Leaders in the Arab world provided sufficient support to the Palestinian fighters to enable them to sustain a low-level insurgency for an additional ten months. However, overriding concerns over the political stability of their own regimes, and the region more generally, prevented them from providing the military support necessary to turn the tide of the war. In July 1971 the Jordanian regime succeeded in defeating the guerrillas and from expelling the *fedayeen* from the country.

Case Narrative

Phase I: “Growing Tensions Lead to the Outbreak of Civil War” (September 1970)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: External professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of insurgents; COIN force had and used uncontested air dominance; conclusion/suspension substantially due to withdrawal of international support for one or both sides

Following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the leaders of the Palestinian liberation movement and their armed militias, known as the *fedayeen*,

established a strong presence in Jordan. The two largest of the Palestinian *fedayeen* groups, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Yasser Arafat, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), led by George Habash, set up bases in refugee camps along the Jordanian border and raised civilian militias throughout the kingdom to support their armed struggle against Israel. King Hussein was initially supportive of the *fedayeen*, providing them with training sites and limited assistance. However, as they began to threaten the legitimacy of the regime by defying Jordanian government control and launching commando attacks on Israel that prompted major retaliatory raids on Jordanian territory, the king grew less tolerant of the militias and sought to contain their influence.⁸⁴⁷ From 1968 to 1970, Jordanian police engaged in a series of skirmishes with the Palestinian fighters.

Growing tensions came to a head in September 1970, when the *fedayeen* attempted to assassinate King Hussein and hijacked three commercial airliners. PFLP guerrillas forced TWA, Swissair, and Pan Am jets to land in Jordan with hostages and blew up the planes as soon as the passengers were evacuated. These incidents received widespread international media coverage and were perceived to be an act of open defiance against King Hussein's authority. The king responded by declaring martial law and appointing a military government under orders to take all necessary measures to "restore security, order and stability to the country."⁸⁴⁸

On September 17, 1970, the Jordanian army launched a military assault against *fedayeen* strongholds in Amman and northern Jordan. Ten days of intense fighting ensued, during which the insurgents absorbed heavy losses as they failed to receive the support from neighboring Arab countries that they had expected. Initially, the Palestin-

⁸⁴⁷ Palestinian guerrillas openly carried weapons, established autonomous systems of administration and social services, and refused to submit to the king's authority. Rebecca Gruskin, "Walking the Diplomatic Tightrope: How King Hussein of Jordan Justified His Actions Against the *Fedayeen* in September 1970," Harvard University, May 13, 2010.

⁸⁴⁸ King Hussein appointed Brigadier General Mohammed Dawud, a Palestinian, as head of the military government. Fuad Jabber, "The Palestinian Resistance and Inter-Arab Politics," in William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, and Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1973, p. 201.

ians were disappointed by the withdrawal of Iraqi ground forces from the country, which left them without the tanks and armored vehicles that they had been promised as reinforcement.⁸⁴⁹ This lack of anticipated external support proved critical to the Palestinians.

They had a brief reprieve when Syria sent an armored brigade across the border to provide military support. The impact of Syrian assistance was soon constrained, however, after military posturing by the United States and Israel (and, likely, political pressure for Moscow) threatened Damascus with retaliation if it attempted to escalate the war, and Syria decided not to engage its air force in the conflict.⁸⁵⁰ Bereft of air cover, the Syrian forces were quickly driven back by Jordanian aircraft and withdrew from the country within a matter of days. The remaining Palestinian guerrilla forces were then defeated after intense house-to-house fighting. On September 25, the *fedayeen* leaders agreed to an internationally imposed cease-fire.

The cease-fire agreement between the Palestinians and King Hussein was also heavily influenced by external actors. Despite the Palestinians' defeat on the ground, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser pressured King Hussein into negotiating with the Palestinians as an equal party and providing significant political concessions to the *fedayeen*, including the assurance of their right to continue to operate in Jordan. While the Arab nations failed to provide sufficient military support to the Palestinians during the civil war, their diplomatic support ensured that the *fedayeen* remained a viable political force, thus extending the length of the insurgency.

⁸⁴⁹ The 12,000-strong force stationed in Jordan initiated a rapid withdrawal on the first day of fighting. Egypt also refused to provide assistance to the Palestinian forces.

⁸⁵⁰ The U.S. Navy dispatched the Sixth Fleet to the region, and Israel undertook military exercises that demonstrated a willingness to engage if necessary. Reconnaissance flights by the Israeli Air Force above the Syrian force, for example, were perceived by Damascus as a direct threat of war. Uriya Shavit, "Out of Jordan," *Haaretz*, May 28, 2002.

Phase II: “Salami Tactics and Political Maneuvering” (October 1970–June 1971)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Important external support to insurgents significantly reduced; COIN force established and then expanded secure areas

Fighting resumed between guerrilla forces and the Jordanian army within weeks of the September 1970 cease-fire agreement, but on a reduced scale. The *fedayeen*, significantly weakened and disorganized by the civil war, tried to avoid direct clashes with the Jordanian government as they regrouped their forces. At the same time, the Jordanian regime sought to reestablish its authority throughout the country without incurring a reaction from other Arab governments.⁸⁵¹ Rather than engaging in full-scale military assaults, the Jordanians engaged in “salami tactics,” designed to chip away at the *fedayeen*’s influence.

International intervention was also limited during this stage by changes in political leadership in Syria and Egypt and a reticence among regional leaders to engage directly in the conflict. (The United States was also hesitant to provide public support for King Hussein, though it did quietly increase arms shipments to the country.) Interestingly, Jordan’s neighboring Arab governments participated in an inter-Arab observer mission in Jordan, following the stipulations of the cease-fire agreement, yet the mission did little more than issue pronouncements of support for the Palestinian cause. In fact, the observer mission was believed to stifle the airing of Palestinian grievances against the actions of the Jordanian military.⁸⁵²

⁸⁵¹ William Quandt, “Political and Military Dimensions of Contemporary Palestinian Nationalism,” in William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, and Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1973, pp. 130–131.

⁸⁵² Jabber, 1973, p. 206.

Thus, the period from October 1970 through June 1971 was marked by a series of broken agreements and small-unit battles between guerrilla forces and the Jordanian army.⁸⁵³ King Hussein's regime appeared to have the upper hand in most of these battles; it successfully ousted the *fedayeen* from Amman and many of the kingdom's central cities and sought to cut off transportation routes between the cities and Palestinian strongholds in the northern part of the kingdom. Still, both sides engaged in political maneuvering to gain popular support that had little relevance to conditions on the ground. In the spring of 1971, despite being weakened militarily, the Palestinians raised the intensity of their political demands by issuing a new call for the overthrow of King Hussein's regime and reportedly considered forming a government-in-exile in Jordan.⁸⁵⁴ This act of defiance proved to be the last straw for the king, who decided to launch a more aggressive attack on the guerrillas.

Phase III: "Final Offensive" (June–July 1971)

Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily COIN force using conventional forces to hammer insurgents, who mostly fled; COIN force attempted to use overwhelming force; Successful use of overwhelming force

King Hussein reasserted his authority with conventional military force during the third and final phase of the Palestinian insurgency. Ten months after the initial assault on the *fedayeen*, the king directed his prime minister to "deal conclusively with plotters who wanted to establish separate Palestinian state and destroy unity of Jordanian and Pal-

⁸⁵³ On October 13, King Hussein and Yasser Arafat signed another agreement under which the *fedayeen* were to recognize Jordanian sovereignty and the king's authority, withdraw their armed forces from towns and villages, and refrain from carrying weapons outside their camps. In return, the Jordanian government agreed to an amnesty arrangement for the guerrillas who had fought in the civil war. The leaders of the PFLP openly rejected the agreement, leading to renewed conflict.

⁸⁵⁴ Quandt, 1973, p. 139

estinian people.”⁸⁵⁵ Beginning on July 13, 1971, the Jordanian army engaged large conventional forces to expel the *fedayeen* from their final redoubts in the mountainous northern cities of Jerash and Ajloun in what was referred to as extensive and harsh mopping-up operations.

Outnumbered and outgunned, the remaining Palestinian guerrillas refused to surrender. After four days of battle, the Jordanian army was able to overcome the last pockets of resistance. Upon the conclusion of the battle, the Jordanians announced that more than 2,000 *fedayeen* had been arrested and that the remaining fighters had fled to southern Lebanon. The army had effectively crushed the Palestinian insurgency and eliminated the threat that the guerrillas had posed to the Jordanian regime.

King Hussein faced immediate repercussions for his actions from leaders of the Arab world. Kuwait and Libya immediately ended their financial aid to Jordan, and Syria closed its borders and airspace to Jordanian traffic. Two years later, however, most of the country’s diplomatic relations were normalized as a result of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war.

The Palestinian resistance movement survived, though in a different form. The Fatah wing of the PLO established an organization called Black September to avenge the attacks. The Black September organization carried out a public assassination of the Jordanian prime minister in Cairo and launched a successful attack on Israeli athletes and coaches at the 1972 Munich Olympics.⁸⁵⁶ Yasser Arafat continued as the leader of the larger PLO through bases in Lebanon and Tunisia until he was expelled from those countries. The PLO then became a more “clandestine” organization, operating out of Lebanon and Syria and launching guerrilla attacks on Israeli and international targets without undertaking military actions or public relations efforts in its host nations.⁸⁵⁷

⁸⁵⁵ June 3, 1967, *New York Times* article, quoted in Quandt, 1973, p. 139.

⁸⁵⁶ Israel subsequently launched a series of retaliatory attacks on Black September members, leading the Fatah wing of the PLO to dissolve the organization in December 1974.

⁸⁵⁷ Quandt, 1973, pp. 140–141.

Conventional Explanations

King Hussein's regime succeeded in expelling the Palestinian *fedayeen* through the application of overwhelming force. Failing to receive the military support that they anticipated from the Arab world, the *fedayeen* were left vulnerable to well-coordinated assaults by Jordanian air and land forces, both in the early and final stages of the conflict. While the intervention of Syrian land forces helped to extend the Palestinian campaign, it was not sufficient to change the course of the war.

The *fedayeen* also lacked sufficient popular support to sustain their insurgency. While the majority of the Palestinian refugees and native Jordanian population, or the "East Bankers," supported the national liberation movement, many did not favor open confrontation with the Jordanian government. When Palestinian fighters and civilians began to take heavy casualties, local support for the armed insurgency declined further. More importantly, the *fedayeen* did not receive the level of political support that they needed from the larger Arab world, particularly in the latter phases of the conflict. The inter-Arab observer mission that was sent to Jordan after the September civil war did little more than offer public criticisms of the Jordanian regime. None of the leaders of the Arab world exerted pressure on King Hussein to halt attacks on Palestinian-controlled areas of the country or to prevent a final crackdown on the resistance movement in July 1971.

The Jordanian regime, on the other hand, had substantial political support from the United States and Israel throughout the course of the war, which served to contain potential spillover violence. Moreover, in many ways, the Jordanian regime received the passive support of most leaders of the Arab world who did not actively challenge the legitimacy of the regime.

Distinctive Characteristics

- The conflicting motivations of the regional actors in the Middle East constrained the degree of external support that the Palestinian insurgency received. President Nasser of Egypt, who served as the symbolic leader of the Arab world in the 1960s, was a primary supporter of the Palestinian resistance, but he also had an

interest in maintaining stability in Jordan and supported a U.S.-sponsored Arab-Israeli peace plan. According to the editor of the newspaper *al-Abram*, “Nasser felt that King Hussein and the Palestinian Resistance had by necessity to co-exist.”⁸⁵⁸ For this reason, he tempered his assistance to the Palestinians, providing rhetorical support but not military aid during the conflict. He also applied pressure on the Jordanians to accede to a cease-fire agreement that was more favorable to the Palestinian fighters.

- Similarly, Iraq and Syria portrayed themselves as ardent supporters of the Palestinian resistance but were equally concerned about the large *fedayeen* presence in their own countries and the possibility of political unrest. Thus, they hedged their support for the Palestinian resistance. (For Iraq, this entailed a refusal to provide troops as promised. For Syria, it led to the decision to supply tanks but not air power.)
- The conflict was also unique in the role that Israel and the superpowers played. Rather than engaging directly, the Israeli military supported the Jordanians by providing the king with intelligence and moving its forces toward its borders with Jordan and with Syria on the Golan Heights.⁸⁵⁹ (It also flew reconnaissance flights over Syria.) The United States brought naval vessels closer to the scene to threaten possible military engagement but did not move further due to the risk of prompting a response from the Soviet Union (which had reportedly threatened to strike if Israel attacked Syria).⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁵⁸ Editor of *al-Abram* newspaper, Mohammed Hasanayn Haykal, December 26, 1970, quoted in Jabber, 1973, p. 200.

⁸⁵⁹ Ziv Rubinovitz, “Blue and White ‘Black September’: An Israeli Perspective of the Jordan 1970 Crisis,” University of Haifa, 2009.

⁸⁶⁰ Rubinovitz, 2009.

Figure 31
Map of Jordan



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR291/2-31

Bangladesh, 1971

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

The 1971 insurgency in Bangladesh was a separatist conflict launched in response to the Pakistani government's efforts to subjugate the Bengali people socially, economically, politically, and militarily. The impetus for the conflict was the overwhelming victory of an East Pakistani (Bengali) political party in the country's first general election, which spurred the West Pakistani leaders of the country to arrest the leader of the winning party and launch a military offensive throughout East Pakistan. The Bengali response, to declare Bangladesh an independent state and foment an insurgency, was met with overwhelming force, indiscriminate killing, torture, looting, the destruction of villages, and the mass, systematic rape of women and girls throughout the region. With growing international attention being paid to the extent of the violence, India eventually launched a direct military intervention, bringing a decisive end to the conflict in two weeks. However, the COIN response to the insurgency was so brutal that it is widely considered to have constituted a genocide. In the nine short months of conflict, an estimated 3 million were killed, 10 million fled to India as refugees, and 30 million were displaced within Bangladesh. Additionally, it is estimated that 200,000 women and girls were raped during the war.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "Secession and Genocide" (March 1971–December 1971)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Insurgents discredited/delegitimized COIN force/government; Insurgents exploited deep-seated intractable issues to gain legitimacy; COIN or insurgent actions precipitated (or constituted) ethnic or religious violence; COIN force employed collective punishment; Type of external participant: major power; Type of external support included: direct military support (troops); Type of external sup-

port included: weapons/materiel; Type of external support included: funding/financing; Type of external support included: safe haven/transit; Type of external support included: weapons/materiel; External professional military engaged in fighting on behalf of insurgents; COIN employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards

The partition of India in 1947 created the independent state of Pakistan, which consisted of two territories that were 1,600 km apart and inhabited by Muslim majorities. However, the Muslims in East Pakistan were divided from those in West Pakistan by more than geography: They also differed in language, ethnicity, and culture.⁸⁶¹ East Pakistan also included a large Hindu minority that received little support from India.⁸⁶² The Bengali Muslims of East Pakistan made up a majority of the country's population, but the ruling elites in West Pakistan marginalized them and their language and culture. The Bengalis had little representation in Pakistani politics, with either unelected civilians or military dictators from West Pakistan ruling the country. They also had little representation in the Pakistani military, as the British colonial rulers had considered them to be a "nonmartial race." Moreover, West Pakistan employed unfair trade practices in importing resources from East Pakistan, exploiting the region economically.⁸⁶³

Against this backdrop, in 1970, the Awami League, which was led by a Bengali nationalist politician, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was overwhelmingly victorious in the country's first free general election. Following the Awami League's victory, the West Pakistani leadership refused to hand over power. Instead, they arrested Sheikh Mujib on March 25, 1971, and launched a military campaign throughout East Pakistan. The East Pakistanis responded by declaring Bangladesh an independent state on March 26, 1971, and organizing

⁸⁶¹ Rounaq Jahan, "Genocide in Bangladesh," in Samuel Totten and William S. Parsons, eds., *Century of Genocide: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*, 4th ed., London: Routledge, 2012, p. 249.

⁸⁶² "Liberation War of Bangladesh," *Bangladesh News*, March 23, 2008.

⁸⁶³ Jahan, 2012, pp. 249–251.

the Mukti Bahini (“Freedom Fighters”) to wage a guerrilla insurgency against the Pakistani military for Bangladesh’s independence. The group had superior knowledge of the terrain and guerrilla tactics and became increasingly skillful and effective as the conflict progressed. To bolster its strength against the insurgency, the military created several paramilitary groups, including the al-Badr, al-Shams, and Razakars (“Volunteers”), whom they tasked with hunting down insurgents and delivering them to the military for torture and killing.⁸⁶⁴

One of the military’s first attacks, on March 25, was indicative of the indiscriminate brutality that would be employed by COIN forces throughout the war. An estimated three battalions of troops were used to attack Dhaka, where Sheikh Mujib lived. As part of this attack, one column of troops led by M-24 WWII-era tanks massacred 200 unarmed students at Dhaka University, taking over the British Council Library as a base from which to shell nearby dormitories.⁸⁶⁵

The war continued in this vein for nine months, with the Pakistani military indiscriminately killing innocent civilians, destroying and looting villages and homes, torturing insurgents and civilians, and raping women en masse. Awami League activists, students, professionals, businessmen, and other potential leaders among the Bengali population were particularly targeted, and it is argued that the military attempted to exterminate or drive out of the country a large part of the Hindu population.⁸⁶⁶ Rape was used particularly often by the military to force the submission of the populace and assert COIN force power. Bangladesh authorities estimate that 200,000 women and girls were raped, nearly 3 million people were killed, 10 million took refuge in India, and 30 million were displaced within Bangladesh itself during the relatively short war.⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶⁴ “Liberation War of Bangladesh,” 2008.

⁸⁶⁵ Robert Payne, *Massacre: The Tragedy at Bangla Desh and the Phenomenon of Mass Slaughter Throughout History*, New York: Macmillan Company, 1973, p. 48.

⁸⁶⁶ Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981, pp. 78–79.

⁸⁶⁷ Jahan, 2012, p. 250.

On December 3, 1971, with the international community becoming increasingly concerned about the scope of the violence in Bangladesh, India launched a full-scale military intervention in response to a preemptive Pakistani air strike against 11 airfields in northwestern India. In the preceding months, India had been gradually increasing its involvement in the conflict, providing indirect artillery fire support to Mukti Bahini units as early as September 1971 and conducting army operations up to ten miles within Bangladesh territory by November 1971. But Indian army units took a center role in fighting for the majority of the final stage of the conflict, devoting nine infantry divisions with attached armor units and close air support to an assault on Dhaka. India launched naval and air operations against Pakistan as well, seeing this as a chance to weaken its rival and return to their homeland the millions of refugees who had fled across its border seeking a safe haven.⁸⁶⁸ India's involvement in the conflict in Bangladesh became known as the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971.⁸⁶⁹

China provided support to Pakistan in the form of continued economic and military aid, though it was reported that China was reluctant to approve new weapon shipments to Pakistan through the spring and summer of 1971. Meanwhile, the United States and Soviet Union placed arms embargoes on Pakistan, refusing to approve new arms sales to the country during the conflict and working to halt shipments in progress. Interestingly, the Soviet Union completely switched sides during the conflict. It initially sold weapons to Pakistan and attempted to maintain a balanced policy toward India and Pakistan; however, with the signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation in August 1971, the pretense of a balanced policy ended, and Moscow increased its military sales to India. Unconfirmed reports in the Indian press even claimed that Soviet military personnel were

⁸⁶⁸ Wardatul Akmam, "Atrocities Against Humanity During the Liberation War in Bangladesh: A Case of Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2002, p. 549.

⁸⁶⁹ GlobalSecurity.org, "Indo-Pakistani War of 1971," web page, last updated May 11, 2012.

directly involved in combat aboard Indian aircraft and naval units, but these reports were denied.⁸⁷⁰

India's intervention on the side of the insurgents was decisive, particularly as Pakistan made a conscious decision to conserve its hard-hit forces, launching only minimal retaliatory attacks. The Pakistani government agreed to an unconditional surrender on December 16, 1971, just two weeks after India became involved.⁸⁷¹ In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, Sheikh Mujib was released from detention and returned to Dhaka to establish Bangladesh's first parliament. However, reprisal killings were rampant in the months that followed, with reports estimating that 150,000 people were murdered by the vengeful victors.⁸⁷² The insurgents therefore achieved victory, but at great cost.

Conventional Explanations

Much of the literature on this case focuses on its genocidal aspects, noting that the COIN force employed a strategy to crush the insurgents, but did so in such a brutal manner as to draw international opprobrium for its actions within a matter of months. This attention then instigated an external intervention on the side of the insurgents that was ultimately decisive in ending the conflict. It helped, of course, that India was a neighboring country that had a strong rivalry with Pakistan, as well as a shared religious affinity with Hindu Bengalis, thus providing an obvious choice for a country to intervene on the side of the insurgents.

Distinctive Characteristics

- The 1971 liberation war in Bangladesh is widely considered to have constituted a genocide, with millions dying, being displaced, or fleeing the country in just nine short months.

⁸⁷⁰ Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1990, pp. 241–261.

⁸⁷¹ Akman, 2002, p. 549.

⁸⁷² Rudolph J. Rummel, *Death by Government*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1997, p. 334.

- Rape was a particularly powerful tool utilized by the COIN forces during the conflict. As such, the conflict had a particularly disturbing impact on the women of Bangladesh and has left a legacy of trauma that pervades Bengali society to date.
- The role of external support to the insurgents was decisive, with India's military intervention bringing an end to the conflict within just two weeks. This case therefore provides a strong illustration of the impact that direct external support can have in shaping the outcome of a conflict.

Figure 32
Map of Bangladesh



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-32

Philippines (MNLF), 1971–1996

Case Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Case Summary

The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a Muslim separatist movement in the southern provinces of the Philippines, waged an on-and-off insurgency against the government of the Republic of the Philippines for approximately 15 years. Although its original aims included the establishment of an independent Muslim state in the province of Mindanao, it soon shifted its goals to the withdrawal of government troops from the southern Philippines, the return of lands taken from the Moros (Muslim Filipinos), increased autonomy, and the ability to implement Islamic law in Muslim-dominated areas. The government initially responded to MNLF activity with the imposition of martial law, and the Philippine armed forces engaged the insurgents in large-scale conventional battle in the conflict's first phase. This was followed by a series of cease-fires and negotiations—some more successful than others—and a shift on the part of the MNLF from conventional to guerrilla tactics. In the middle of the second phase of the conflict, a change in the political players involved brought a new COIN strategy focused on civilian population protection combined with offensive force and a continued willingness to negotiate. It was this change in strategy that eventually led to the COIN force's mixed success in this conflict.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "Large-Scale Conventional Operations Lead to Stalemate and Negotiations" (1971–1976)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily force-on-force conventional engagement; Insurgency motive: secessionist; Flow of cross-border insurgent support significantly decreased or remained dramatically reduced or largely absent; Amnesty or reward program in place

Moros, most of whom were concentrated in the southern Philippine provinces of Sulu, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, and Cotabato, formed the MNLF in the late 1960s. At its inception, the MNLF was composed primarily of Muslim students and sought to challenge government rule and the traditional Muslim leadership in Mindanao and Sulu. The exact date of the insurgency is difficult to identify, but clashes between private armed groups of Muslims and Christians began to attract the attention of the Philippine government in 1971. While there is a long tradition of conflict between the Moro population and the country's various governments, the impetus for the MNLF's formation was the steady stream of Christian Filipino immigrants entering the southern Philippines from other regions of the archipelago.⁸⁷³

However, when the MNLF officially took up arms following the Philippine government's declaration of martial law in late 1972, the group had shifted its aims away from the establishment of an independent Muslim Mindanao. Instead, it sought the withdrawal of government troops from the southern Philippines, the return of lands taken from Moros, increased autonomy, and the ability to implement Islamic law in Muslim-dominated areas.⁸⁷⁴

This shift in goals was due at least in part to a loss in military strength, as insurgents began surrendering following sustained heavy battles between 1973 and 1975.⁸⁷⁵ Indeed, during this two-year period, the MNLF's military arm—the Bangsamoro Army—fielded approximately 30,000 fighters, supported by arms imports from Malaysia. The MNLF also enjoyed a strong relationship with the countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Arab countries, Pakistan, Malaysia, and most ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) members.⁸⁷⁶

⁸⁷³ Joes, 1996, p. 167.

⁸⁷⁴ Rachael M. Rudolph, "Transition in the Philippines: The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Abu Sayyaf's Group (ASG)," in Anisseh van Engeland and Rachael M. Rudolph, eds., *From Terrorism to Politics*, Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing, 2008, p. 152.

⁸⁷⁵ Rudolph, 2008, p. 152.

⁸⁷⁶ Rudolph, 2008, pp. 156–157.

The COIN strategy of President Ferdinand Marcos, who ruled the country from 1969 to 1986, was focused on martial law, with little or no emphasis on population security.⁸⁷⁷ The Philippine army deployed approximately 70–80 percent of its troops in response to the MNLF uprising, primarily engaging the rebels in large-scale conventional battles in which an estimated 50,000 people were killed. At the height of the conflict, the country's military had 24 battalions deployed on Jolo Island, a Moro stronghold.⁸⁷⁸ Although this period saw claims of a military-instigated genocide of Filipino Muslims, the government enjoyed partial success in employing a variety of nonmilitary tactics during this phase, including economic aid programs and political concessions. Amnesty and land were offered to encourage factionalism and the rebels' desertion from the ranks of the MNLF. Toward the end of the phase, arms imports from Malaysia dramatically decreased, further hindering the insurgents' position.⁸⁷⁹ This is not to imply that COIN forces achieved a resounding success in this phase, however: By 1975, Manila's governing and political machinery ceased functioning in the Moro-controlled areas of Mindanao and Sulu, leaving the Marcos administration willing to negotiate with the insurgents.⁸⁸⁰

The phase ended with the 1976 signing of the Tripoli Accord by the Philippine government, the MNLF, Libya, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. This agreement stipulated that a plebiscite on the question of local autonomy would be held in 13 provinces on the island of Mindanao, where most Filipino Muslims lived.⁸⁸¹ As a result of the agreement, a cease-fire was declared in three provinces and ten cities on December 26, 1976.⁸⁸² However, the peace negotiated through this agreement was short-lived, as were hopes for the auton-

⁸⁷⁷ Mike Fowler, "Philippine Counterinsurgency Strategy: Then and Now," *Small Wars Journal*, January 2011, p. 9.

⁸⁷⁸ GlobalSecurity.org, "Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)," web page, last updated July 11, 2011e.

⁸⁷⁹ GlobalSecurity.org, 2011e.

⁸⁸⁰ Rudolph, 2008, p. 152.

⁸⁸¹ Joes, 1996, p. 167.

⁸⁸² Rudolph, 2008, p. 153.

omy plebiscite of April 1977. A free election under foreign observation resulted in a resounding defeat for the Moros when only ten of the 13 regions in the southern Philippines voted for autonomy. This was predictable, as most of the population was non-Muslim, but it nevertheless led to a resumption of hostilities in Phase II.⁸⁸³

An unintended consequence of the Tripoli Accord was the separation of the MNLF into factions; the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) formed as an offshoot of the MNLF. While the MILF shared the primary aims of the MNLF, it was more extremist and less secular than the socialist-nationalist MNLF, emphasizing Islam as the basis for any political action.⁸⁸⁴ As a result of this factionalism, the MNLF's external support base split along with its internal one, with Libya supporting the incumbent MNLF leadership and Egypt supporting the newly formed MILF.⁸⁸⁵

Phase II: “The Long Road to Compromise” (1977–1996)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Insurgency motive: secessionist; *At end of conflict*, separatists got regional autonomy, but were still administratively part of host nation (and pay host-nation taxes)

Hostilities between the government and MNLF resumed in 1977, following the unsuccessful autonomy plebiscite and a failure to reach compromise during further negotiations. President Marcos was still in power at this point, and, hence, martial law remained a focal point of the government's COIN strategy for the first part of this phase.⁸⁸⁶

⁸⁸³ Joes, 1996, p. 167.

⁸⁸⁴ David C. Palilonis, *Operation Enduring Freedom—Philippines: A Demonstration of Economy of Force*, Newport, R.I.: U.S. Naval War College, May 2009; Max Boot and Richard Bennett, “Treading Softly in the Philippines,” *Weekly Standard*, January 5–12, 2009, p. 22; “Security, Philippines,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment*, posted May 24, 2010, p. 4.

⁸⁸⁵ Joes, 1996, p. 168.

⁸⁸⁶ Fowler, 2011, p. 9.

Indeed, by 1981, there were 35,000 Philippine troops in the southern provinces where the MNLF operated.⁸⁸⁷ Meanwhile, MNLF fighting strength declined to approximately 15,000 by 1983, with the group unable to fully recover from the splintering off of the MILF. Moreover, the government increased its support among Arab states in this phase, further decreasing the external support flowing to the insurgency.⁸⁸⁸

As in the previous phase, population protection was not a priority for the COIN force in the early years of this phase, with its strategy focused on search-and-destroy missions throughout the 1980s.⁸⁸⁹ These were primarily conventional operations and were largely counterproductive, sacrificing the element of surprise and opting for overwhelming force in its place. COIN forces also harassed the civilian population in an attempt to gain intelligence on insurgent locations, which alienated the locals and increased popular support for the insurgency. Meanwhile, the MNLF rebels were often able to evade these operations, choosing to fight with guerrilla tactics at another time and place that better served them. Despite these military failures, however, Marcos succeeded in constraining the MNLF during the early years of this phase by bribing local leaders with government positions.⁸⁹⁰

President Marcos was ousted in a coup in March 1986. Upon entering office, his successor, Corazon Aquino, almost immediately appointed a commission to draft a new Philippine constitution with provisions for autonomy in Muslim Mindanao.⁸⁹¹ Along with a renewed focus on diplomatic solutions, President Aquino's COIN strategy also incorporated the concept of civilian protection, aiming to elicit the support of the population to a much greater degree.⁸⁹² That year, she successfully negotiated another cease-fire with the MNLF, and, in January

⁸⁸⁷ Joes, 1996, p. 167.

⁸⁸⁸ John Gershman, "Self-Determination Regional Conflict Profile: Moros in the Philippines," *Filipino Muslims*, Washington, D.C.: Foreign Policy in Focus, revised October 2001.

⁸⁸⁹ Fowler, 2011, p. 9.

⁸⁹⁰ Fowler, 2011, p. 9.

⁸⁹¹ Gershman, 2001.

⁸⁹² Fowler, 2011, p. 9.

1987, the MNLF signed an agreement with the government in which it relinquished its goal of independence for the country's Muslim regions and instead accepted the offer of autonomy.⁸⁹³

This was the first step in what was to be a lengthy process leading to a negotiated outcome, but it was far from seamless. Indeed, negotiations over a proposed autonomous region deadlocked in late 1987, and the MNLF officially resumed insurgent operations in February 1988. Yet, the government pressed ahead with plans for an autonomous Muslim region even without the MNLF's cooperation, with Article 10 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution mandating that the Philippine Congress create the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Acceptance of the ARMM was slow: Only four provinces voted to accept the autonomy measure in a November 1989 plebiscite. However, one year later, in November 1990, the ARMM was officially inaugurated.⁸⁹⁴

This did lead to an immediate conclusion of hostilities between the MNLF and the government. However, in 1996, the two parties signed a peace agreement that would establish a new regional autonomous government and finalize the ARMM's political structure.⁸⁹⁵ Notably, the ARMM, though autonomous, was to "remain an integral and inseparable part of the national territory of the Republic." Furthermore, while the ARMM's regional governor would have the power to create sources of revenue and levy taxes, fees, and charges, the president of the Philippines retained supervisory control.⁸⁹⁶ Among these other stipulations, the 1996 agreement also required the Philippine government to provide amnesty to approximately 7,000 insurgents.⁸⁹⁷

Following the signing of the 1996 peace agreement, MNLF leaders entered the legitimate political system in the southern Philippines,

⁸⁹³ Gershman, 2001.

⁸⁹⁴ Gershman, 2001.

⁸⁹⁵ Gershman, 2001.

⁸⁹⁶ For this reason, we consider this case to have a mixed outcome favoring COIN. See "ARMM History and Organization," GMA News, August 11, 2008.

⁸⁹⁷ Rudolph, 2008, p. 155.

where many of them continue to serve.⁸⁹⁸ On the whole, the agreement was quite successful in conclusively ending the hostilities and integrating the MNLF back into civilian life in a peaceful manner. While other insurgent movements—such as the MILF—continue to plague the government, the grievances of the MNLF have, for the most part, been addressed, and the group has largely been co-opted into the regional government.

Conventional Explanations

One prominent explanation for the COIN force's (albeit mixed) success in this case is its focus on negotiation as a strategy.⁸⁹⁹ Negotiations did not always succeed and could be argued to have prolonged the conflict in some sense, as they were often lengthy, multiyear endeavors.

Another explanation in the literature holds that the MNLF was fragmented and disorganized until the Marcos administration imposed martial law, which motivated the MNLF to foment an organized armed rebellion:

The movement remained fragmented and its organization rudimentary until the imposition of martial law and the efforts of the new regime to collect weapons left many Muslims feeling they would be left with no recourse against a regime they perceived as being increasingly intrusive, abusive, and alien. The alternative was armed rebellion, which began spontaneously and spread rapidly. . . . Under these circumstances the MNLF moved into prominence.⁹⁰⁰

Distinctive Characteristics

- This case is one of very few in which the insurgents were successfully co-opted into the government relatively soon after the con-

⁸⁹⁸ Gershman, 2001.

⁸⁹⁹ Fowler, 2011, p. 9.

⁹⁰⁰ Lela G. Noble, "Muslim Separatism in the Philippines, 1972–1981: The Making of a Stalemate," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 21, No. 11, November 1981, p. 1098.

clusion of hostilities. This inclusion of former MNLF members in the government machinery has contributed to the enduring nature of the peace between the government and the MNLF.

- Both the government and the insurgents were willing to repeatedly enter into lengthy negotiations at multiple points during the conflict.
- Several other insurgencies took place in the Philippines during the MNLF uprising, stretching the Philippine armed forces and distracting them from their conflict with the MNLF at various times. These conflicts included the long-standing communist insurgency waged throughout the country by the New People's Army, as well as the secessionist conflict waged by the MNLF's splinter group, the MILF, in the Philippines' southern provinces in the 1980s and 1990s. Finally, the Abu Sayyaf Group continues to wage a terrorist insurgency, but much of its activity in the Philippines began in the early 2000s in the aftermath of the MNLF's 1996 peace agreement with the government.

Figure 33
Map of the Philippines



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-33

Baluchistan, 1973–1978

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

The 1973 conflict in Baluchistan was the fourth in a series of separatist insurgencies in the region since its incorporation into Pakistan in 1947. The Baluch People's Liberation Front (later, the Baluch Liberation Front, or BLF) had widespread support from the Baluch people and employed standard guerrilla tactics to cut off major supply lines and transportation routes between Baluchistan and neighboring provinces. However, the insurgents were unable to prevail against the larger and better-equipped COIN force composed of Pakistan's army and a special forces units, which successfully employed overwhelming force to crush the insurgency. Interestingly, the "crush them" concept worked somewhat more gradually and indirectly than in other cases, as the insurgents established bases in Afghanistan after the decisive period of the conflict and continued to wage a low-level insurgency across the border when possible. The basing of insurgents in Afghanistan did little more than prolong the conflict, however, which had essentially been decided before they moved across the border.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "A Widely Supported and Inspired Insurgency Begins" (1973–June 1974)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Insurgents discredited/delegitimized COIN force/government; Insurgents exploited deep-seated intractable issues to gain legitimacy; Majority of population in area of conflict supported/favored COIN force (wanted it to win); Terrain played a major role in conflict; Type of terrain that played a major role: mountains

Six million Baluch people were forcibly incorporated into Pakistan when it was created in 1947.⁹⁰¹ This led to a series of separatist insurgencies in the region to protest against economic and political discrimination, with the 1973 conflict being the fourth in the series. The others occurred in 1948, 1958–1959, and 1963–1969, respectively.⁹⁰² The 1973 insurgency began due to the efforts of Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto the year before to marginalize regional powerbrokers who posed a political threat to the government. In the early 1970s, Prime Minister Bhutto lifted the ban on the National Awami Party (NAP) that former Pakistani leader Yahya Khan had imposed during his reign from 1969 to 1971.⁹⁰³ However, when the NAP won the 1972 elections in Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier Province, Prime Minister Bhutto ended up dismissing the NAP provincial government in Baluchistan and replacing it with a government more in line with his political views.⁹⁰⁴

Bhutto's dismissal of the NAP provincial government in Baluchistan drove the *sardar* (leader) of the Marri tribe, Khair Bakhsh Marri, to organize the Baluch resistance into the Baluch People's Liberation Front (later shortened to Baluch Liberation Front, or BLF). He then led large numbers of Marri and Mengal tribesmen into guerrilla warfare against Pakistan's central government. Although the fighting focused in the districts of Khuzdar and Kohlu, the insurgency enjoyed the widespread support of the Baluch people.⁹⁰⁵ The Baluch were particu-

⁹⁰¹ Selig S. Harrison, "Pakistan's Baluch Insurgency," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English edition), October 2006.

⁹⁰² Syed F. Hasnat, *Global Security Watch: Pakistan*, Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2011, p. 78; Kristen P. Williams, *Despite Nationalist Conflicts: Theory and Practice of Maintaining World Peace*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001, p. 157; Selig S. Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981, pp. 27–28; International Crisis Group, *Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan*, Asia Report No. 119, September 14, 2006, p. 4.

⁹⁰³ "Yahya Khan," *Story of Pakistan: A Multimedia Journey*, June 1, 2003.

⁹⁰⁴ Jason Heeg, *Insurgency in Balochistan*, Ft. Leavenworth, Kan.: Foreign Military Studies Office, undated, p. 12.

⁹⁰⁵ Haris Gazdar, "'Counter-Insurgencies' in Pakistan," *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 20, 2006, pp. 1952–1953.

larly inspired by Bangladesh's success in breaking away from Pakistan just two years earlier and hoped to have similar success.⁹⁰⁶

During the conflict's first phase, the guerrillas, led by 72-year-old Laung Khan, cut off the main roads linking Baluchistan with surrounding provinces, disrupted coal shipments to Punjab by blowing up railroad lines, and attacked oil-drilling operations.⁹⁰⁷ They faced a COIN force comprising three divisions of the Pakistan Army in central and eastern Baluchistan (covering the Sarawan/Jhalawan and Marri-Bugti areas), as well as the elite commando Special Services Group. While the COIN force cleared the villages in these areas fairly easily, it faced stiff resistance at Mali, the sector headquarters of Laung Khan. Though Khan and a number of his followers were eventually killed, the insurgents enjoyed some modest successes in this phase by inflicting army casualties, gaining control of most ground lines of communication entering the province from the east, and cutting off the railway supplying Punjab with Baluch coal.⁹⁰⁸ Above all, however, the COIN force was very motivated to quell the separatist conflict in Baluchistan, particularly in the aftermath of Bangladesh's successful insurgency just a few years earlier.⁹⁰⁹ This motivation became decisive in the next phase, when additional Pakistan Army troops were devoted to the conflict and the COIN force received external military assistance from Iran.

Phase II: "External Support and a Major Battle Are Decisive"
(June 1974–December 1974)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conven-

⁹⁰⁶ Heeg, undated, p. 12; GlobalSecurity.org, "Balochistan Insurgency—Fourth Conflict 1973–77," web page, last updated July 11, 2011b.

⁹⁰⁷ Selig S. Harrison, "Remarks by Selig S. Harrison at a Seminar on Baluchistan Sponsored by the World Sindhi Institute," Washington, D.C., March 7, 2005.

⁹⁰⁸ Heeg, undated, p. 13; GlobalSecurity.org, 2011b.

⁹⁰⁹ Heeg, undated, p. 13.

tional formations); Insurgents discredited/delegitimized COIN force/government; Insurgents exploited deep-seated intractable issues to gain legitimacy; Terrain played a major role in conflict; Type of terrain that played a major role: mountains; Type of external participant: minor/regional power; Type of external support included: fighters; Type of external support included: weapons/materiel; COIN force attempted to use overwhelming force; Successful use of overwhelming force; COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards

In the second, decisive phase of the conflict, the insurgents continued using standard guerrilla tactics and retreating to mountain hideouts, frustrating the Pakistani COIN forces. They spared no opportunity to attack army convoys and camps, and they blocked transportation routes, including gravel roads linking Baluchistan with the neighboring provinces of Punjab and Sind, as well as railway traffic. They also attacked oil and gas survey and drilling teams operating in Marri-Bugti. The insurgents were so successful that army convoys moved under protection in areas where insurgents were known to operate, and the army resorted to prior scouting and picketing of convoy routes.⁹¹⁰

However, two factors converged in this phase to enable a resounding COIN success that was sustained not only through this phase but also through the end of the conflict. First, the COIN force received substantial external military support from Iran in the form of 30 AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters, as well as several crews to assist in flying them. The COIN force used these helicopters to mitigate the insurgents' superior knowledge of Baluchistan's mountainous terrain.⁹¹¹

Second, in September 1974, Pakistani troops strafed and burned the encampments of 15,000 Baluch families who were grazing their livestock in the fertile Chamalang Valley, assuming that this would draw the insurgents out of their mountain hideouts to protect their

⁹¹⁰ GlobalSecurity.org, 2011b.

⁹¹¹ Heeg, undated, p. 13.

families.⁹¹² The tactic was successful: Baluch guerrillas appeared around the tent villages, only to face conventional attacks by Pakistani ground troops supported by air assets. The insurgents, forced to retreat back into the mountains when they ran out of ammunition, inadvertently led the troops to their hideouts. Casualty figures for the Battle of Chamalang are conflicting, but the insurgency clearly suffered a major setback.⁹¹³ This period was the most violent of the entire conflict, with 84 of 178 major encounters between insurgents and the army taking place in the Marri area in 1974.⁹¹⁴ While the Battle of Chamalang was certainly not the only battle in this phase, it is widely viewed as the decisive battle of the conflict.

Phase III: “The Long Tail” (1975–1978)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Fighting in phase primarily guerrilla/terrorist/small-unit engagement (even if COIN forces deployed/operated in large conventional formations); Terrain played a major role in conflict; Type of terrain that played a major role: mountains; Type of external participant: minor/regional power; Type of external support included: safe haven/transit; Planned reconstruction/development improvements substantially above historical baseline (trying to “reconstruct” to a level not previously achieved); Reconstruction/development succeeded in bringing significant portions of the area of conflict to a level of development above preconflict baseline; Amnesty or reward program in place; Amnesty program reduced number of insurgents; Insurgency followed by another insurgency, significant terrorism campaign, or other conflict fomented by the same (or lineal) insurgent group

In late 1975, then-leader of the BLF Mir Hazar Ramkhani changed strategy, moving across the border into Afghanistan with other commanders and creating a number of sanctuaries there. The insurgents

⁹¹² Harrison, 2006.

⁹¹³ Harrison, 2005; Heeg, undated, p. 13; GlobalSecurity.org, 2011b.

⁹¹⁴ GlobalSecurity.org, 2011b.

developed five bases in Afghanistan during this phase: one in Kandahar, one in Kalat Ghilzai, and three close to the Pakistan border. The base in Kandahar was the main headquarters for the supply of arms, equipment, and training, while the Kalat Ghilzai base served as an intermediary point for the three forward operating bases.⁹¹⁵ The Afghan government characterized the bases as “refugee camps” and provided support to the Baluch, including food, ammunition, and funding, in addition to the safe haven.⁹¹⁶ From there, the Baluch insurgents continued to use guerrilla tactics and mounted cross-border raids whenever they had the opportunity to do so. Yet, the conflict had essentially been decided in the preceding phase, and the fighting was much less intense than in Phase II.

Tensions between the Baluch and Pakistan’s central government began to gradually decline during this phase. This is likely due, at least in part, to government efforts to appease the tribal *sardars*, who still enjoyed much prestige among the population. For instance, the central government made a conscious effort to gain the favor of the highly politicized *sardar* of the Bugti tribe, Nawab Mohammad Akbar Khan. To do so, the government relied on both political favors and regional development projects. Khan was installed as governor of his province, and during his tenure, army engineers constructed critical roadways from Kohlu to Maiwand and from Fazil Chel to Kahan. These measures succeeded in bringing the entire Marri area within reach of the government. By 1976, the army had constructed 564 miles of new roads, including a key route between Sibi and Maiwand. As a result, medical aid, automobiles for passenger transport, and resources for children’s education became available in Baluchistan’s interior for the first time. Finally, the government gave land to the tribes.⁹¹⁷

These development initiatives coincided with political and military concessions following the coup waged by Pakistani General Mohammad Zia-ul-Huq in July 1977. In 1978, Zia released 6,000 Baluch prisoners and offered amnesty to the guerrillas. Although he

⁹¹⁵ GlobalSecurity.org, 2011b.

⁹¹⁶ Heeg, undated, pp. 13–14.

⁹¹⁷ GlobalSecurity.org, 2011b.

failed to address or resolve the underlying causes of the separatist movement, armed insurrection and guerrilla actions against Pakistan's security forces essentially ended in 1978. However, political unrest did continue in the province after this.⁹¹⁸

All in all, it is estimated that 80,000 Pakistani troops and 55,000 Baluch were involved in the fighting at the height of this conflict.⁹¹⁹ While death tolls vary, it is estimated that the Pakistani military lost 300–400 soldiers during the conflict and that between 7,300 and 9,000 Baluch insurgents and civilians were killed.⁹²⁰

Conventional Explanations

One explanation offered by scholars of the 1973 Baluchistan insurgency is that this conflict follows the trend established in the country's earlier conflicts: The government never adequately addresses the underlying grievances of the Baluch and employed just enough force and effort to control the situation until the Baluch reached the limits of their ability to fight; the Baluch were then willing to negotiate from a position of weakness, setting aside their secessionist goals. As Jason Heeg has noted, "This nuance is important because, although they want an independent state, they do not have the requisite military force to reach this goal and always settle for whatever concessions the government gives them."⁹²¹

Related explanations support the argument put forth above that the COIN force, along with the external military support provided by Iran, successfully crushed the insurgents in this case.⁹²²

⁹¹⁸ Heeg, undated, p. 14.

⁹¹⁹ Harrison, 2006.

⁹²⁰ "Balochistan Conflict," Balochmedia.com: The National Baloch Media Network, May 28, 2011.

⁹²¹ Heeg, undated, p. 11.

⁹²² GlobalSecurity.org, 2011b.

Distinctive Characteristics

- The second phase rather than the final phase was decisive in this conflict, due to a combination of Iran's provision of attack helicopters and crews and the COIN force's success in the Battle at Chamalang.
- Because the second phase was decisive, the third phase of the conflict was essentially a long period of gradual decline in hostilities. Interestingly, much of the insurgency moved into Afghanistan for this third phase, waging guerrilla attacks across the border whenever possible.
- While the government initiated development projects to appease the tribal *sardars*, their benefit to the region as a whole likely played a part in finally bringing guerrilla activities to an end, at least in the near term.

Figure 34
Map of Pakistan



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-34

Angola (UNITA), 1975–2002

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

Shortly after the end of Angola's war of independence, the country descended into bitter fighting as the victors against the Portuguese failed to agree on which group would rule the postcolonial government. The United States and South Africa supported Jonas Savimbi and his National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) insurgents against the Cuban- and Soviet-backed People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) COIN forces. This conflict was a classic Cold War proxy battle and a centerpiece of the Reagan Doctrine to contain and confront communism around the globe. By the end of the 1980s, as Soviet support for its proxies dried up, UNITA seemed to be in a position to overtake the MPLA. Instead of capitalizing on COIN force weakness, however, Savimbi ordered an internal purge of his organization, which alienated both his own fighters and the Angolan population. In the final phase of the conflict, no longer the beneficiary of U.S. or South African support, the insurgents turned to financing the conflict through diamond trafficking. The insurgency soon degenerated into criminality, and the COIN force finished off UNITA by killing Savimbi and bringing the conflict to a close.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "MPLA Steals, UNITA Kills" (1975–1991)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: External support to COIN from strong state/military; External support to insurgents from strong state/military; COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics; Type of external support included: training and/or advice (military advisers); Type of external support included: direct military support (troops)

The Alvor Accords officially ended the Angolan war of independence on January 15, 1975. Per the terms of the agreement, which was signed by the post-Salazarist Portuguese government and representatives from the main Angolan groups—the MPLA, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), and UNITA—assembly elections would be held in October that year. However, negotiations over power-sharing and economic development soon broke down, and Angola descended into civil war shortly thereafter.⁹²³

The MPLA became the de facto government by gaining control of Luanda, Angola's capital, and the surrounding areas, where the Mbundo and *mestico* peoples predominated.⁹²⁴ This control was consolidated with significant external assistance from both the Soviet Union and Cuba, two of the MPLA's chief supporters.⁹²⁵ In the early stages of the COIN campaign, Cuba provided troops to the MPLA.⁹²⁶ This much-needed direct military support helped the nascent COIN force defeat UNITA insurgents, who were backed by preoccupied South African army forces.⁹²⁷ In 1977, Agostinho Neto and his allies in the *nomenklatura* led a failed coup against the group's adherents of a more populist brand of socialism.⁹²⁸ From 1979 onward, the MPLA was led by José Eduardo dos Santos.

⁹²³ Fernando Andresen Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*, Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1998.

⁹²⁴ In 1974, the MPLA changed the name of its guerilla wing, the Exército Popular de Libertação de Angola (People's Army for the Liberation of Angola), to the Forças Armadas de Libertação de Angola (Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola).

⁹²⁵ Vladimir Shubin, *Hot "Cold War": The USSR in Southern Africa*, London: Pluto Press, 2008.

⁹²⁶ For more on Cuba's role in Angola during the early stages of the civil war, see Gerald J. Bender, "Angola, the Cubans, and American Anxieties," *Foreign Policy*, No. 31, Summer 1978, and Abraham F. Lowenthal, "Cuba's African Adventure," *International Security*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Summer 1977.

⁹²⁷ Assis Malaquias, "UNITA's Insurgency Lifecycle in Angola," in Klejda Mulaj, ed., *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 299.

⁹²⁸ Tony Hodges, *Angola from Afro-Stalinism to Petro-Diamond Capitalism*, Oxford, UK: James Currey, 2001.

Following the breakdown of Alvor, UNITA fighters spread throughout the countryside. UNITA represented Angola's most populous ethnic group, the Ovimbundu, which made up approximately 35–40 percent of the population. The Ovimbundu were most prominent throughout the central plateau provinces of Huambo, Bie, and Benguela. In addition to the unsuccessful attempt by South Africa to propel UNITA to an early victory, the insurgents received external support from Zaire and, later, the United States. The FNLA, headed by Roberto Holden, was initially backed by Zaire. This group, which consisted largely of ethnic Bakongos living in the northwestern part of Angola, withdrew into exile and was never again a major factor in the conflict.

To garner regional backing, MPLA COIN forces began to support South Africa and Zaire's domestic opponents by providing safe haven and limited military assistance to insurgent groups, including the African National Congress (ANC), South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), and Zaire's Front National pour la Libération du Congo (National Front for the Liberation of the Congo). Though it was a more important factor in the second and third phases of the insurgency, the MPLA did use Angola's vast oil reserves to finance its war effort against UNITA.

For most of the first phase, the insurgents were aided by "frequent and well-planned" military incursions by the South African Defense Force (SADF) into Angolan territory.⁹²⁹ Between 1976 and 1988, the SADF carried out 12 operations against SWAPO insurgents in Angola or MPLA COIN forces. In addition to providing direct military support, the South Africans transformed UNITA from an inchoate faction of revolutionaries into a fully restructured fighting force, modeled along the lines of a conventional army, with brigades, regular battalions, semiregular battalions, and "special forces," or small groups of a few dozen insurgents reserved for sabotage operations.⁹³⁰ Besides helping with organization and restructuring, according to scholar Assis Malaquias, South African support to the insurgents enabled them to

⁹²⁹ Malaquias, 2010, p. 300.

⁹³⁰ Malaquias, 2010, p. 301.

“seriously disrupt food production in rural areas, bring the vital Benguela Railway to a standstill, and to threaten onshore oil production and disrupt diamond exploration.”⁹³¹

UNITA spent the 1980s renewing its relationships and established a robust diplomatic and political presence throughout Africa, as well as in Western Europe. In 1984, partly in response to successive MPLA offensives against UNITA in southwestern Angola, the Reagan administration repealed the Clark Amendment, which prohibited U.S. support to Angolan insurgents. What followed looked similar to the country’s support to the *mujahedin* in Afghanistan. The United States supplied UNITA with weaponry, including Stinger missiles, which ended nearly a decade of COIN force air dominance. U.S. support for Angola was ramping up just as Soviet support for the MPLA was on the decline. With the introduction of U.S. arms, COIN force offensives aimed at removing UNITA’s bases in Southern Angola were met with failure.

From September to October 1987, the belligerents fought the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. Once again, the SADF intervened in Angola, this time employing long-range artillery, air power, and ground forces to push back MPLA forces with the help of UNITA. In Mavinga, on the River Loma, the COIN forces’ motorized offensive was crushed.⁹³² The SADF’s main goal was to capture the strategically important town of Cuito Cuanavale. Fearing that this outpost would be overrun, dos Santos appealed to Castro to send in Cuban reinforcements in February 1988.⁹³³ Castro acquiesced and dispatched an additional 15,000 Cuban troops to Angola, bringing the total number to around 40,000.

On December 22, 1988, the governments of South Africa, Cuba, and Angola signed the New York Accords, removing Cuban troops from the battlefield. The Bicesse Accords followed in 1991, laying the groundwork for a negotiated settlement to the civil war. This agree-

⁹³¹ Malaquias, 2010, p. 301.

⁹³² John A. Marcum, “Africa: A Continent Adrift,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 1, 1987–1988, p. 165.

⁹³³ Bernice Labuschagne, *South Africa’s Intervention in Angola: Before Cuito Cuanavale and Thereafter*, thesis, Cape Town, South Africa: Stellenbosch University, December 2009, p. 40.

ment ratified a cease-fire and called for UNITA forces to be integrated, along with the government's armed forces,⁹³⁴ into the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA). Bicesse created three joint commissions for oversight and verification purposes. These commissions were anchored by the Joint Political-Military Commission, made up of Angolan government officials and UNITA representatives, with the “troika” of Portugal, Russia, and the United States in an observer role.⁹³⁵ In reality, Bicesse merely eliminated state sponsors from the conflict and only provided a temporary respite from violence.

Phase II: “Nem Guerra, Nem Paz” [“Neither Peace nor War”] (1992–1997)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Change in level of popular support for insurgents; Insurgents made critical strategic errors, failed to make obvious adaptations, or voluntarily exited the conflict; Expropriable cash crops or mineral wealth in area of conflict

The insurgents essentially used the peace process as an opportunity to rearm and reorganize. Jonas Savimbi, UNITA's cultish leader, grew convinced that the COIN forces were weak and vulnerable from years of fiscal mismanagement, internal fighting, and war-weariness.⁹³⁶ In September 1992, UNITA lost in elections and disputed the results. In turn, the insurgents launched a major conventional military offensive to take over areas previously controlled by the Angolan government. The offensive succeeded in reaching all the way to the outskirts of Luanda. In the aftermath of the Bicesse Accords, the insurgents gained control over most of southeast Angola.

⁹³⁴ Alex Vines and Bereni Oruitemeka, “Beyond Bullets and Ballots: The Reintegration of UNITA in Angola,” in Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko, eds., *Reintegrating Armed Groups After Conflict: Politics, Violence and Transition*, London: Routledge, 2009, p. 218, note 2.

⁹³⁵ João Gomes Porto and Imogen Parsons, *Sustaining the Peace in Angola: An Overview of Current Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration*, Bonn, Germany: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2003, pp. 20–21.

⁹³⁶ Malaquias, 2010, p. 307.

From November 1992 onward, following a failed electoral process, MPLA and UNITA relied on oil and diamonds to fund their organizations and escalate the fighting. During this phase, neither the insurgents nor the counterinsurgents could rely on superpower support. Without this assistance, both sides turned to exploiting Angola's natural resources to perpetuate the conflict. According to Will Reno, by 1993, UNITA was earning an estimated \$1 billion annually from gemstone exports.⁹³⁷ That same year, the United States imposed sanctions on the insurgents while officially recognizing the MPLA government.

In November 1994, a new round of peace accords, known as the Lusaka Protocol, set out to correct the errors of Bicesse. Lusaka developed a new DDR framework, established another cease-fire, called for a second round of elections, and sought to reform Angola's security sector.⁹³⁸ Still, just as it did during the Bicesse negotiations, UNITA retained dubious intentions of complying with the peace process. The group refused to send its best soldiers to demobilization centers, preferring a range of stalling tactics instead. No longer able to count on external support, the insurgents organized a march on Lunda Norte, Lunda Sul, and Malange, the diamond-producing regions of Angola.⁹³⁹ Despite UNITA's apparent hypocrisy of committing to peace while continuing to fight, the process stumbled along. In 1995, 7,000 UN peacekeepers arrived under the mandate of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission III.

For the remainder of the phase, Savimbi's capriciousness continued to vex Angola observers. In 1996, dos Santos and the UNITA leader agreed to form a unity government and join forces in a national military. Yet, in April of the following year, Savimbi declined to take part in the power-sharing government. According to Ian Spears, the Lusaka Protocol owed its failure to several factors. First, Savimbi was unable to accept the proposed subordinate role as vice president in the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation. The UNITA leader

⁹³⁷ Will Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1998, p. 64.

⁹³⁸ Porto and Parsons, 2003, p. 22.

⁹³⁹ Malaquias, 2010, p. 307.

was unwilling to accept anything less than the country's most powerful post, which he believed he could obtain by returning to war. Second, while some UNITA deputies did arrive in Luanda to participate in the new government, many of the group's top leadership refused. With memories of failed attempts in both 1975 and 1992 still fresh, top UNITA deputies remained obstinate. Third, a "peace for diamonds" proposal that focused on wealth sharing collapsed because UNITA fighters were unwilling to cede control of the mines in exchange for the right to profit legally from diamond revenues.⁹⁴⁰ Fourth, as mentioned earlier, the insurgents refused to comply with the disarmament process as outlined in the accords. Fifth, and finally, the insurgents refused to withdraw from territory they controlled and allow Angolan central administration to reclaim towns and villages previously under UNITA rule. Instead, using money culled from their control of the diamond trade, the insurgents began an earnest buildup of their forces into a conventional military.

One major critical strategic error on the part of the insurgents during this phase was their failure to grasp the importance of courting the support of the civilian population. Throughout the conflict, UNITA focused almost exclusively on military means over political efforts, much at the behest of Savimbi, who developed a cult of personality on par with other infamous insurgent leaders, like Velupillai Prabhakaran of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam or Joseph Kony of Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army. What supporters UNITA did have it alienated. Members joined the organization voluntarily but were prevented from leaving. Under the paranoid leadership of Savimbi, the group's top leaders were purged and the torture and killing of civilians continued unabated. When advised to eschew such tactics, Savimbi demurred. In sum, winning popular support was "not regarded as part of a broader contest for political loyalty and legitimacy involving, first and foremost, winning 'the hearts and minds' of the people. In fact, for

⁹⁴⁰ Ian S. Spears, *Civil War in African States: The Search for Security*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2010, p. 213.

UNITA, the people came to be regarded as a burden whose displacement by military means was often justified.”⁹⁴¹

Phase III: “Diamonds Are Forever, UNITA Is Not” (1998–2002)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Flow of cross-border insurgent support significantly decreased or remained dramatically reduced or largely absent; Insurgents made critical strategic errors, failed to make obvious adaptations, or voluntarily exited the conflict; Insurgents switched from guerrilla to conventional tactics; Insurgents’ switch to conventional tactics unsustainable (COIN forces able to prevail in vast majority of engagements)

By the time the insurgency entered its third and final phase, UNITA had acquired a vast arsenal of sophisticated weaponry. But by this phase in the conflict, the regional balance of power had shifted significantly—in favor of the Angolan government. By the end of 1998, full-scale fighting resumed. Mobile conventional units of UNITA fighters attacked FAA troops in Cuito and Huambo using armored fighting vehicles, long-range artillery, and guided antitank missiles.⁹⁴² In response, the COIN force launched attacks against UNITA strongholds in Bailundo and Andulo, though they were met with fierce resistance. With its forces resupplied and confidence high, the insurgency made a final push for the capital. By July 1999, UNITA fighters overtook the town of Catete, a mere 60 km from Luanda.

The balance of power began to shift, however, with increasing international sanctions levied against UNITA’s diamond exploitation. In parallel with the sanctions, the Angolan government sold drilling licenses to companies hoping to profit from oil discoveries off the coast of Angola.⁹⁴³ The demobilization and reintegration processes that accompanied the Bicesse and Lusaka agreements deprived

⁹⁴¹ Malaquias, 2010, p. 308

⁹⁴² Jakkie Potgieter, “Taking Aid from the Devil Himself: UNITA’s Support Structures,” in Jakkie Cilliers and Christian Dietrich, eds., *Angola’s War Economy: The Role of Oil and Diamonds*, Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, 2000, p. 263.

⁹⁴³ Spears, 2010, p. 218.

the insurgents of their top military leaders. In the late 1990s, high-ranking insurgent commanders, including Eugenio Manuvakola and Geraldo Nunda, defected in droves. The COIN force even went so far as to help organize a political party of insurgent defectors, known as UNITA-Renovada.

UNITA's push to overtake Luanda stretched its lines of operation and made its forces vulnerable to COIN force counterattack. With international opinion now firmly behind the Angolan government, the COIN forces launched a military offensive to destroy insurgent-held strongholds once and for all. At this point, UNITA realized that its attempt to switch from guerrilla tactics to conventional warfare was unsustainable. The end for UNITA eventually arrived in February 2002. Angolan COIN forces worked with U.S. and Brazilian intelligence, as well as Israeli communication specialists, to locate and track Savimbi in the Moxico province in eastern Angola. On February 22, 2002, the longtime insurgent commander was killed in a fierce gun battle.⁹⁴⁴ Savimbi's death led the remaining insurgent fighters to surrender and sign a peace deal in Luena on April 4, 2002, officially ending UNITA's 26-year insurgency. The decapitation of the insurgency precipitated the full collapse of UNITA's organization.

The Luena Memorandum of Understanding was signed in April 2002. This agreement reaffirmed the principles of the Lusaka Protocol, and, most importantly, the process was organically Angolan—agreed to by the military leaders of the FAA and UNITA with no outside intervention. This provided a previously absent sense of legitimacy to the conflict resolution process for the parties involved and for Angolans in general. But the outcome left little doubt as to which side emerged victorious. As Spears has concluded, “As impressive as the Lusaka Protocol was, it was still power-sharing with a balance of power that favored the government.”⁹⁴⁵

⁹⁴⁴ Spears, 2010, p. 222.

⁹⁴⁵ Spears, 2010, p. 209.

Conventional Explanations

As in Mozambique, Angola moved directly from a war of independence to an armed insurgency in which a group that previously fought a guerrilla war against the Portuguese was now cast in the role as a COIN force. External support to both the COIN force and the insurgents was a major factor throughout the first two phases of the conflict. Resources fueled the war—diamonds on the insurgent side and oil on the side of the COIN force. UNITA's strategic miscalculation in the third and decisive phase to transition its forces from guerrilla warfare to a conventional military force foreshadowed the group's downfall. After the death of Savimbi, UNITA collapsed. Historically, some insurgent leaders have been so central to their organization that upon their demise, the insurgency soon winds down. Abimael Guzmán of Peru's Sendero Luminoso ("Shining Path") and Abdullah Öcalan of Turkey's Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) are two examples commonly referenced in the literature. So it was with the killing of UNITA's Savimbi, whose death paved the way for the FAA's victory over an attenuated insurgency, a victory that João Gomes Porto and Imogen Parsons consider "central to this conflict's ripeness for resolution."⁹⁴⁶

Distinctive Characteristics

- The 1988 battle at Cuito Cuanavale had wide-ranging implications for the conflict in Angola. Backed by Cuban troops, Angolan COIN forces fought the SADF to a standstill. As a result, negotiations were expedited and the New York Accords were agreed to in December 1988, granting Namibia independence and setting a concrete timetable for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola.
- Throughout the 1990s, UNITA insurgents engaged in a diamonds-for-weapons exchange with South African mercenaries, as well as regional sympathizers in Zaire, Togo, Congo-Brazzaville, and Burkina Faso.⁹⁴⁷

⁹⁴⁶ Porto and Parsons, 2003, p. 31.

⁹⁴⁷ Spears, 2010, p. 219.

- In an effort to choke off external support to UNITA, Angola backed Laurent Kabila's insurgency in neighboring Zaire against Mobutu Sese Seko's government. Luanda also supported the overthrow of Congo-Brazzaville's leader, President Pascal Lissouba, who allowed UNITA insurgents to maintain bases and training camps on his territory.⁹⁴⁸

Figure 35
Map of Angola



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR2912-35

⁹⁴⁸ Spears, 2010, p. 219.

Indonesia (East Timor), 1975–2000

Case Outcome: COIN Loss

Case Summary

The conflict in East Timor began soon after Portugal ended its colonial rule and departed from the region, leaving a Marxist-leaning group, the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (FRETILIN), as the strongest party in the Timorese independence movement. Indonesia responded to this potential communist threat by invading and annexing the region in July 1976. This conventional intervention by the Indonesian army evolved into a brutal COIN campaign over the next two decades that resulted in the deaths of as many as 200,000 civilians but failed to crush the insurgency. It was only in the mid-1990s that the course of the conflict changed, as FRETILIN adopted a more subversive urban strategy and drew greater international attention to its fight for independence. At the same time, the end of the Cold War left Indonesia without a clear rationale for its occupation of East Timor, and without the tacit support of the West. By 1999, Jakarta was ultimately forced to cede to international pressure and agree to grant sovereignty to East Timor, thus ending its COIN campaign in defeat.

Case Narrative

Phase I: “An Invasion and a Brutal ‘Crush-Them’ Campaign Fail to Defeat the FRETILIN” (1975–1980)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Insurgency followed withdrawal of a colonial power; COIN force attempted to use overwhelming force

The insurgent movement in East Timor was precipitated by a military coup in Portugal in 1974 that led the former colonial power to launch a rapid withdrawal from its former colonies. Upon Portugal’s withdrawal, a civil war broke out between competing political groups in the region. The Marxist-oriented FRETILIN asserted itself as the most powerful of the political parties and took the lead in declaring

an independent state of East Timor. Indonesia initially responded to the rise of what it perceived as a potential communist threat on its borders by aiding opposition political groups and engaging special forces, with locally raised militias, to weaken the FRETILIN forces. However, when the attempt to create an effective proxy force failed, Jakarta launched a direct invasion of East Timor in December 1975.

Indonesia claimed that its armed intervention was a preemptive response to a communist threat, an argument that received at least tacit support from the United States, Britain, and Australia. Legally, the invasion was justified as a response to a request from parties that represented a majority of the population, which favored integration with the Indonesian state.⁹⁴⁹ Neither of these arguments was accepted by the UN, however, and it never recognized the integration of East Timor as Indonesia's 27th province in 1976. Still, the reaction from the international community to the invasion was restrained, and there was little pressure on the Indonesian government to withdraw its troops. This was due largely to the fact that the United States and its Western allies were preoccupied with the Cold War and eager to stem potential communist threats wherever they appeared.

Contrary to its expectations for a quick victory, the Indonesian army met significant resistance to its invasion. While the army was able to gain control of the lowland areas along the border regions and the coast, FRETILIN controlled most of the population centers in the interior. The Indonesian army responded by launching an intensive COIN campaign to gain territorial control, using U.S.-supplied weapons.⁹⁵⁰ The campaign involved the encirclement of villages and the annihilation of any potential supporters of the insurgency, which

⁹⁴⁹ Maria Clara Maffei, "The Case of East Timor Before the International Court of Justice: Some Tentative Comments," *European Journal of International Law*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1993.

⁹⁵⁰ Recently released National Security Archives records revealed that U.S.-supplied aircraft, including OV-10s, were critical to Indonesia's COIN campaign against FRETILIN. The East Timor truth commission found that U.S. "political and military support were fundamental to the Indonesian invasion and occupation." Brad Simpson, ed., *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 176*, January 24, 2006.

included tens of thousands of civilians.⁹⁵¹ It also included a decapitation strategy aimed at killing or capturing key FRETILIN leaders.⁹⁵²

While this brutal strategy greatly weakened FRETILIN movement, it was unable to crush the insurgency. FRETILIN's decentralized, cell-based organization allowed the movement to survive the loss of most of its original leaders and the capture of its president by Indonesian special forces in December 1978. Moreover, the strong, unifying political and nationalist ideology of the insurgency enabled it to maintain a strong popular base of support.⁹⁵³ By 1980, a small group of remaining insurgent leaders was able to reorganize and launch new attacks against the Indonesian forces.

Phase II: “Guerrilla Attacks Continue Despite New COIN Techniques” (1981–1989)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: COIN force and government employed an integrated political and military strategy; Planned reconstruction/development improvements substantially above historical baseline (trying to “reconstruct” to a level not previously achieved); COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards; COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics; Change in level of popular support for COIN force/government; Change in level of popular support for insurgents; Insurgents switched from guerrilla to conventional tactics

In 1981, as new leadership assumed control of FRETILIN under Xanana Gusmao, the Indonesian military began to employ a new set of COIN tactics. It began an extensive campaign of development and civic action in an attempt to win the support of the population. At the same time, it engaged civilians in a technique of known as *pagar bettis*, or the “fence of legs,” which had been used successfully in previous

⁹⁵¹ John G. Taylor, *East Timor: The Price of Freedom*, London: Zed Books, 2000, p. 115

⁹⁵² Kilcullen, 2010, p. 97.

⁹⁵³ Kilcullen, 2010, p. 97.

COIN campaigns. This technique involves having local villagers form a human cordon around insurgent bases to aid in the military's cordon-and-search efforts. In other areas, the army instituted a resettlement campaign, moving civilians from one area to another to create large depopulated "free-fire zones."⁹⁵⁴ These tactics succeeded in reducing the number of FRETILIN attacks, but they created significant hardship for the local population and failed to eliminate their support for the guerrillas. As a result, a stalemate developed in which neither side was able to gain the upper hand.

Over the course of the decade, the Indonesian army was able to reduce the size of FRETILIN's bases and virtually eliminate its ability to fight as a conventional force. Yet, the insurgency developed support networks in the resettlement villages and reorganized itself into small mobile units that could attack Indonesian troops and ambush convoys to disrupt supply lines and capture weapons.⁹⁵⁵ Thus, the insurgents continued to launch limited guerrilla attacks for which the Indonesian army was ill prepared.

Phase III: "An Urban Insurgency and a Changing Global Environment Lead to a Referendum on Independence" (1990–2000)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Conflict primarily urban; COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics; Change in level of popular support for COIN force/government; Change in level of popular support for insurgents; Type of external support (to insurgents) included: sanctions, serious political pressure; *No* external support to COIN from strong state/military; Conclusion/suspension externally imposed or due to international pressure or other exogenous event

The nature of the insurgency continued to evolve in the 1990s. While FRETILIN survived in its mountain bases and occasionally attacked the army, it was no longer able to maintain the scale and intensity of its

⁹⁵⁴ Kilcullen, 2010, p. 97.

⁹⁵⁵ Taylor, 2000, p. 116.

attacks seen during the previous decade. Instead, its leaders began to develop a more extensive underground resistance network and became more of a subversive urban organization. They launched a new branch of the movement, called the Clandestine Front, that emphasized civil disobedience and propaganda and aimed to launch attacks that would provoke a disproportionate response from the occupying power.⁹⁵⁶ The Clandestine Front was also more effective in drawing the attention of the global media and in gaining support from the Timorese diaspora community in Australia and Europe, which helped generate international backing for their cause.

In response to this new challenge, the Indonesian government attempted to increase its use of covert paramilitary and intelligence groups. It established a network of informants in the local community and, to some degree, within the Clandestine Front as well. It also relied heavily on local militias to engage with the population and to carry out a covert countersubversion and COIN campaign.⁹⁵⁷ The militia did not prove to be effective in responding to public protests initiated by the Clandestine Front and its supporters, however. Often reacting to the demonstrations with violence, they served only to increase support for the insurgency and to create negative international publicity with reports of human rights abuses.⁹⁵⁸

The first notable confrontation between the East Timor protestors and Indonesian forces occurred in 1991, when the Indonesian army and associated militia fired upon a group of young demonstrators at a mourning service at a cemetery, killing or wounding more than 200 people. The event was filmed by Western journalists and received widespread media attention, sparking the emergence of an international solidarity movement and forcing Western governments to confront the issue of East Timor's brutal fight for independence.⁹⁵⁹ The

⁹⁵⁶ Kilcullen, 2010, p. 102.

⁹⁵⁷ Kilcullen, 2010, pp. 98–99.

⁹⁵⁸ Samuel Moore, "The Indonesian Military's Last Years in East Timor: An Analysis of Its Secret Documents," *Indonesia*, No. 72, October 2001, p. 33.

⁹⁵⁹ Conference of Defence Associations Institute, *The Rationale for International Intervention: A Comparative Case Study of East Timor and Tibet*, Ottawa, Ont., April 2009.

U.S. Congress, meanwhile, reacted to the cemetery massacre and other human rights violations by cutting off military training assistance to Indonesia. The U.S. Department of State subsequently withdrew its support for Indonesia in the UN.⁹⁶⁰

A more significant international development at the time was the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1992. This shift in global politics essentially eliminated both the rationale for Indonesia's occupation of East Timor and U.S. strategic interest in sustaining its military and providing Indonesia with immunity from criticism.⁹⁶¹

Thus, throughout the mid-1990s Indonesia faced increasing international pressure to end its harsh COIN tactics and withdraw from the region. Finally, in 1998, after Indonesian President Suharto left office, Jakarta agreed to hold a referendum on the future of East Timor. The subsequent referendum—which indicated that more than 78 percent of the population favored succession from Indonesia—did not end the conflict, however.⁹⁶² Fighting continued for another year as the Indonesian armed forces and local militias continued to kill hundreds of civilians and forced as many as 500,000 East Timorese to flee their homes. Only after an Australian-led UN peacekeeping force was deployed to the region in 1999 did the confrontations end and the Indonesian forces agree to withdraw.⁹⁶³ East Timor then spent three years under UN transitional authority before ultimately becoming an independent nation on May 20, 2002.

Conventional Explanations

Indonesia's decision to withdraw from East Timor and grant independence to the region marked the unsuccessful end to a 25-year COIN campaign. Jakarta's failure to defeat the FRETILIN-led insurgency is generally attributed both to the inherent difficulties of an occupying power without historical or cultural claims seeking to subdue a nation-

⁹⁶⁰ Rachel Whitman, "U.S. Policy Toward East Timor," web page, December 2004.

⁹⁶¹ Conference of Defence Associations Institute, 2009; Kilcullen, 2010, p. 102.

⁹⁶² Conference of Defence Associations Institute, 2009.

⁹⁶³ Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Indonesia's Transformation and the Stability of Southeast Asia*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1344-AF, 2001.

alist insurgency and to the changing global environment that eliminated the rationale for its occupation and exposed its COIN tactics to international scrutiny.

The first of these explanations argues that in launching its invasion of East Timor, Indonesia faced a number of significant obstacles. It was an external power that had little more than a geographical tie to the region. The two parties did not share a common history or religion; East Timor was primarily Catholic and was under Portuguese control during the colonial period. This not only made it difficult for the Indonesian forces to appeal to the cultural or religious values of population to win their hearts and minds, but it also enabled the insurgents to develop a stronger sense of separatist identity. Throughout the conflict, the FRETILIN movement was able to exploit this sense of separatism to maintain a base of popular support despite the Indonesians' brutal attempts to crush the insurgency.

The second explanation argues that, until the 1990s, Indonesia was able to sustain its COIN campaign despite these obstacles because of the tacit support of Australia and the United States and the lack of international interest in the region. When these conditions changed with the end of the Cold War, and the increased coverage of the human rights atrocities in the global media, Jakarta faced insurmountable pressure to constrain its COIN tactics and, ultimately, to withdraw its forces from the region. The adaptations made by the FRETILIN leadership and its Clandestine Front to develop into a subversive movement and publicize the human rights abuses of Indonesian forces helped facilitate this change. To a significant degree, changes in the international environment made Indonesia's loss of East Timor inevitable.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Indonesia's campaign in East Timor was conducted as an "expeditionary" COIN campaign rather than a domestic one. Indonesia's forces invaded from outside the region's borders, and its annexation of East Timor was not recognized by the United Nations. Religious and cultural differences between the Indonesians and the population of East Timor, which was largely Catholic, created

additional barriers to Jakarta's efforts to integrate the region into the Indonesian state.

- The United States reportedly provided tacit approval of Indonesia's invasion but did not officially support its COIN efforts. Indonesia launched its 1975 invasion of East Timor hours after Indonesian President Suharto and U.S. President Gerald Ford met in Washington, D.C. The United States doubled Indonesia's military aid following the meeting and continued to provide military equipment in the 1970s and 1980s, despite reports of severe human rights violations by Indonesian forces. Although the United States never endorsed Jakarta's initiatives, it blocked the UN from taking any action in support of East Timorese independence. Only in the 1990s did the United States begin to limit its support and call upon the Indonesian government to show greater respect for human rights.
- East Timor's guerrilla movement received no known international assistance in terms of arms or training. The only form of political support it received during the conflict was from Portugal.
- The UN also showed little interest in the conflict until the mid-1990s. It was not an important issue of discussion in the UN General Assembly or Security Council. While UN resolutions were passed, none called for intervention. Only after the end of the Cold War did the conflict receive greater scrutiny on the world stage.

Figure 36
Map of Timor-Leste



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-36

Lebanese Civil War, 1975–1990

Case Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Case Summary

The Lebanese Civil War lasted from 1975 to 1990 and quickly led to the breakdown of government structures as Lebanon was engulfed by anarchy, earning the nickname the “militia republic.”⁹⁶⁴ The multi-dimensional nature of the conflict saw “several phases, each marked by complex shifting alliances and dozens of failed cease-fire agreements.”⁹⁶⁵ In 15 years of fighting, the war included both large-scale massacres of civilians (the most notable of which was the infamous slaughter of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in 1982) and vast numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees. Besides the myriad Lebanese actors involved in the civil war, regional rivalries between Syria and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), between the PLO and Israel, between Israel and Syria, and between Iran and Iraq all contributed to the chaos in Lebanon.⁹⁶⁶ Because this was an extremely complex case, it is necessary to stipulate that while the Lebanese security forces acted as a COIN force, it was really the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) that served as the primary COIN player, especially in the second phase.

Case Narrative

Preamble Phase: “Consociationalism and Conflict” (1943–1975)

Many scholars and observers of Lebanese politics trace the country’s troubles back to the National Pact of 1943, which has been criticized as a “precarious and dangerously static pact” that sowed the seeds for Lebanon’s 1958–1959 civil war.⁹⁶⁷ Tensions rose once again in April

⁹⁶⁴ Michael C. Hudson, “Trying Again: Power Sharing in Post-Civil War Lebanon,” *International Negotiation*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1997, p. 112.

⁹⁶⁵ Hudson, 1997, p. 109.

⁹⁶⁶ Hudson, 1997, p. 112.

⁹⁶⁷ Elizabeth Picard, *Lebanon, A Shattered Country: Myths and Realities of the Wars in Lebanon*, New York: Holmes and Meier, 1996, p. 63.

1975, when four Phalangists were killed during a botched assassination attempt on Pierre Gemayel, leader of the Kataeb (Phalangist) Party.⁹⁶⁸ Palestinians were suspected of the murders, and, in retaliation, Phalangists killed 27 Palestinians.⁹⁶⁹ But if the Lebanese civil war of 1975–1990 initially erupted as a result of domestic factors, it was soon exacerbated by the involvement of a host of external ones. In Lebanon, the country’s unique ethnic and religious makeup and confessional political system contributed to an ongoing political deadlock that prevented the government from making even a modicum of progress on some of the country’s most pressing political issues.

Michael Hudson’s analysis of Lebanon’s consociationalist political system described it as government rule by a cartel of ethno-sectarian elites responsible for managing “their respective ‘flocks’” and maintaining a civilized working relationship.⁹⁷⁰ This system of government was a byproduct of Lebanon’s legacy of colonialism and a pragmatic attempt to balance the levers of power between a population that was one-third Shi’a Muslim, one-third Sunni Muslim, and one-third Christian Maronite, with a smattering of “others,” including Armenian Christians, Greek Orthodox, Druze, Phalangists, and Palestinian refugees. One of the most notable characteristics of the conflict was the extent to which the violence that engulfed Lebanon involved the majority of the territory and most of the country’s population, with factions switching sides and exiting and reentering the conflict at various stages.

⁹⁶⁸ The Phalange, known in Arabic as the Kataib, was formed in 1936 as a Maronite paramilitary youth organization and modeled after fascist organizations in Germany and Italy. As Lebanese Christians, the Phalange were considered pro-French, anticommunist, and against the promotion of pan-Arabism. Thomas Collelo, ed., *Lebanon: A Country Study*, Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1987.

⁹⁶⁹ David Gilmour, *Lebanon: The Fractured Country*, Oxford, UK: Martin Robertson, 1983, p. 109.

⁹⁷⁰ Hudson, 1997, p. 105. For a thorough treatment of Lebanon’s political system, see Michael C. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon*, New York: Random House, 1968.

Phase I: “The Birth of the ‘Militia Republic’” (1975–1981)*Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)*

Key Factors: COIN force employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas it controlled or claimed to control; Militias/local irregular forces did *not* work at cross-purposes with COIN/government; Level of violence low/manageable; COIN or insurgent actions precipitated (or constituted) ethnic or religious violence

In the early to mid-1970s, the PLO was interjected into the midst of ongoing sectarian strife in Lebanon after the group’s expulsion from Jordan. With 400,000 Palestinians residing in Lebanon, the PLO proved to be the spark in an already tense situation between Lebanese Christians and Lebanese Muslims.⁹⁷¹ The PLO used Lebanon as a staging ground to attack Israel, which responded by pounding Lebanon. In turn, Lebanese Christians demanded that the Lebanese army be deployed to oust the PLO from the country. The driving force behind this demand was twofold. First, the Christians wanted the PLO evicted from Lebanon to stop Israeli reprisals against Beirut. Second, expelling the PLO from the country would effectively weaken the power of Lebanese Muslims as an armed force, since the PLO had become the Muslims’ biggest private militia.

With the Lebanese army and government paralyzed from political deadlock, the Christians turned to their own private militias, the Phalangist and Tigers militias. Intense fighting broke out in the streets between the sectarian militias, and the Lebanese army split along sectarian lines. The proliferation of armed groups led to a steady increase in unlawful practices as the Lebanese state suffered from legitimacy deficits, capacity gaps, and functional holes. The deterioration of central authority and internal security foreshadowed the country’s descent into state failure.

Lebanon became divided geographically along the following lines: South Lebanon and the predominantly Muslim western half of Beirut

⁹⁷¹ Hudson, 1997, p. 109.

became the power base for the PLO and various Lebanese Muslim militias, with Amal and Hizballah in the south; the eastern half of Beirut and an enclave on Mount Lebanon were Christian-controlled; the north and east of the country was dominated by the Phalangists and their Christian allies; and the rest of Lebanon, including both the northern port area of Tripoli and the Bekaa Valley, was the dominion of the Syrians.

In 1976, the Lebanese Front was formed as a coalition of Christian leaders from the National Liberal Party, the Kataeb Party, and the Lebanese Renewal Party. For security, these parties each maintained their own militias—the Tigers, the Kataeb Regulatory Forces, and the Guardians of the Cedars, respectively—which came to be known as the Lebanese Forces. Among these groups, the Kataeb and the Kataeb Regulatory Forces were the dominant elements and were led by Bashir Gemayel.

Some of the fiercest battles in the beginning of the first phase were between Phalangist Christians on one side and Palestinians and their Lebanese National Movement (LNM) supporters, headed by Kamal Jumblatt, on the other. Syria eventually intervened on the side of the Maronite-dominated government, and Elias Sarkis was elected president of the country, following pressure from the Syrians.

The Syrians worried that if the Christians were defeated in Lebanon, Israel would use this as a pretext to invade and occupy territory there. In response, the Syrians dispatched thousands of soldiers to fight against LNM/PLO insurgents. (By 1988, the Syrian troop presence would number roughly 40,000.) After Syria's intervention, the Palestinians, the LNM, and the Lebanese Front agreed to a cease-fire, bringing the fighting to a temporary halt.

In March 1977, LNM leader Jumblatt was assassinated, and Syria was implicated in his murder. He was succeeded by his son, Walid, who took over his role as the leader of the Druze Progressive Socialist Party.

Between February and April 1978, the Hundred Days' War erupted as a subconflict to the main insurgency. The Christian Lebanese Front militia fought Syrian troops of the Arab Deterrent Force. Bitter fighting led to the expulsion of Syrian forces from East Beirut,

and the alliance between Syria and the Lebanese Front began to fray. During this same time period, in March 1978, PLO militants crossed from Lebanon into Israel and slaughtered civilians in what came to be known as the Coastal Road massacre. Israel responded with Operation Litani, a six-day military campaign that established a COIN force security zone in Southern Lebanon.

Although Operation Litani failed to curb Palestinian terrorism completely, it did give Israel possession of territory adjacent to the border, which the Israelis controlled through a proxy Christian-Shi'a militia group, the South Lebanese Army (SLA).⁹⁷² The insurgents continued to attack both the SLA in Southern Lebanon and Israel while Israel responded with bombardment, killing civilians in West Beirut and southern Lebanon.⁹⁷³ By the end of the phase, Syrian troops turned against the various Christian militias that were fighting each other, as well as the Muslim belligerents to the conflict. Continued Israeli incursions into southern Lebanon did manage to achieve the intended effect of complicating the relationship between the Palestinians and the Shi'a militia Amal.

On July 7, 1980, the Safra massacre saw Bashir Gemayel and his Phalangist militia slaughter 83 members of the Tigers militia in an effort to consolidate control of Lebanon's Christian forces.⁹⁷⁴ Despite the massacre, Israel backed Gemayel and sought to install him as the leader of Lebanon as a quid pro quo for guaranteeing Israel's security. Beginning in December 1980 and for the next six months, the Lebanese Front reengaged the ADF/PLO alliance in battle during the Zahleh campaign. As 1981 drew to a close, what remained of the Lebanese army dissolved and the sectarian groups reconstituted among their respective ethnic/religious militias.

⁹⁷² Augustus Richard Norton, "Hizballah and the Israeli Withdrawal from Southern Lebanon," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1, Fall 2000, p. 23. For a detailed analysis of the SLA, see Austin Long, Stephanie Pezard, Bryce Loidolt, and Todd C. Helmus, *Locals Rule: Historical Lessons for Creating Local Defense Forces for Afghanistan and Beyond*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1232-CFSOCC-A, 2012, pp. 107–130.

⁹⁷³ Thomas L. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, New York: Anchor Books, 1995, p. 106.

⁹⁷⁴ Also known as "the Day of Long Knives."

Phase II: “Israeli Occupation, Syrian Domination, and the Birth of Hizballah” (1982–1990)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: COIN force *not* viewed as an occupying force in area of conflict; Militias/local irregular forces did *not* work at cross-purposes with COIN/government; Unity of effort/unity of command maintained (government and COIN force); COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards

Phase II began in June 1982 with Operation Peace for Galilee, an operation ostensibly intended to remove the threat of PLO guerrillas launching attacks against Israel from Lebanese territory.⁹⁷⁵ Galilee was an effort to finish the job left undone four years earlier by Operation Litani. It consisted of a force of six Israeli divisions, 70,000 soldiers, and 1,000 tanks, supported by the Israeli Air Force.⁹⁷⁶ The main objective of the 1982 invasion, led by then–Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, was to eliminate the PLO as a politico-military force. The Israelis mounted an effective combined-arms campaign, as the Israeli Army and Air Force uprooted the PLO from its defensive positions, causing the insurgents to flee toward Beirut. Although the Palestinians surrendered and agreed to leave Lebanon altogether, Syrian forces operating in the eastern part of the country posed a stiffer resistance, using an array of surface-to-air missiles, radars, and communication systems to create a sophisticated air defense system. The Israeli Air Force relied on deception, electronic warfare, and Harm missiles to disrupt and destroy these capabilities.⁹⁷⁷

An ancillary objective of invading Lebanon in 1982 was to install a government willing to sign a peace agreement with Israel. The Israelis’ choice for this the top post was Bashir Gemayel, leader of the Christian

⁹⁷⁵ A cogent and highly readable synopsis of Operation Peace for Galilee can be found in Chaim Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East*, New York: Random House, 1984, pp. 339–370.

⁹⁷⁶ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 404.

⁹⁷⁷ Corum and Johnson, 2003, p. 404.

Phalange Party. Gemayel was elected president with Israeli backing in August, but he was assassinated one month later, and the Syrians were implicated in his death. Sharon and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin decided that the best option at this point was to attack west Beirut, despite promises to the United States that they would not enter this area once the PLO withdrew. In mid-September of 1982, Israeli COIN forces launched a two-pronged attack. One target was the PLO Research Center, which housed Palestinian records, land deeds, historical archives, and maps of pre-1948 Palestine. The other target was the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps, thought to be the epicenter of insurgent popular support since the PLO arrived in Lebanon after being expelled from Jordan.⁹⁷⁸ The Israelis surrounded the Sabra and Shatila, even illuminating the area with flares during the night, while Phalangist militias rampaged through the camps, “liquidating whatever humanity came in their path.”⁹⁷⁹

Shortly after the PLO left Lebanon in the fall of 1982, the Multinational Force in Lebanon arrived, which included a contingent of 1,000 U.S. marines, in addition to French and Italian peacekeepers. In April 1983, 63 people were killed when a Hizballah suicide attack targeted the U.S. embassy in Beirut. Six months later, on October 23, 1983, another Hizballah suicide bomber struck, this time killing 241 U.S. marines.⁹⁸⁰

By early 1984, the deterioration of the Lebanese army accelerated, and lawlessness prevailed throughout the country. Between 1984 and 1989, many “little wars” erupted within the larger civil war.⁹⁸¹ From 1985 to 1987, the Syrians supported the Shi’a Amal militia against the PLO, leftists, and Druze fighters in what came to be called the “War of the Camps.” Meanwhile, Maronite Christians squared off against Druze militias in a bloody war in the Shouf mountains.

⁹⁷⁸ Friedman, 1995, p. 159.

⁹⁷⁹ Friedman, 1995, p. 159.

⁹⁸⁰ Daniel Byman, “The Lebanese Hizballah and Israeli Counterterrorism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 34, No. 12, 2011, p. 919.

⁹⁸¹ Picard, 1996, p. 135.

After three years of operating in southern Lebanon (in direct violation of UN Security Council Resolution 425, which called for Israel to withdraw to the recognized international border), the Israeli government voted on and approved a measure to establish a “security zone” in southern Lebanon on January 14, 1985.⁹⁸² The security zone was demonstrable evidence of Israel’s commitment to occupying Lebanon on a long-term basis, building a defense infrastructure that consisted of 45 SLA and IDF outposts, between 1,000 and 1,500 Israeli soldiers, and 2,500 SLA fighters, in addition to another several hundred Israeli intelligence officials spread over a 328-square-mile area.⁹⁸³ It also demonstrated Israel’s disregard for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, which Israel clearly saw as an inferior instrument of ensuring security in the area. The stated reasons for establishing the security zone were to counter attacks from Palestinian guerrillas and to prevent Hizballah from launching Katyusha rockets into northern Israel.

Lebanese Prime Minister Rashid Karami was assassinated on June 1, 1987. Christian Maronite and Lebanese army General Michael Aoun assumed power as the acting prime minister of Lebanon in September 1988, during which time he was receiving assistance from Iraq’s Saddam Hussein, who was, himself, trying to influence the balance of power and Iranian support of such groups as Hizballah and Amal. There was a rift between these two Shi’a militias, and they, too, fought a “little war” against each other toward the end of the second phase. The last serious clashes took place in 1989 with the “War of Liberation.” This conflict pitted General Aoun against the Syrian army, which

⁹⁸² During the initial phase of the security zone operation, the Internal Security Forces relied on a force structure that was more suitable for high-intensity conflicts than COIN. The obstacles encountered by the IDF in making this transition are documented in Tamir Libel, “Crossing the Lebanese Swamp: Structural and Doctrinal Implications on the Israeli Defense Forces of Engagement in the Southern Lebanon Security Zone, 1985–2000,” *Marine Corps University Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 2011. See also Eliot A. Cohen, Michael J. Eisenstadt, and Andrew J. Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles: Israel’s Security Revolution*, Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998.

⁹⁸³ Gal Luft, “Israel’s Security Zone in Lebanon—A Tragedy?” *Middle East Quarterly*, September 2000, p. 14.

he was unable to dislodge from the country. The following year, Aoun went to war against the Christian Lebanese Forces militia.

The first major breakthrough in the 30-year insurgency was the signing of the Taif Accords in 1989, a peace agreement that officially ended the Lebanese Civil War. A tripartite commission of Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Algeria helped broker the agreement, with the Saudis playing the leading role. As a result of the Taif Accords, the presidency was still reserved for a Christian and the prime minister would still be a Sunni Muslim, but now the prime minister would report not to the president but instead to the legislature, as in a traditional parliamentary system.

Conventional Explanations

The Lebanese Civil War is understandably treated as a confusing and complex conflagration characterized by collusion and conflict. Shortly after the fighting commenced, the country was divided along sectarian lines. Southern Lebanon and western Beirut were controlled by Palestinian and Muslim militias. Christians were in control of east Beirut and the Christian section of Mount Lebanon, while the Green Line divided Beirut, the capital.

The conflict in Lebanon is referred to, perhaps aptly, as “Israel’s Vietnam.” As counterinsurgents, the Israelis were playing an away-game, outside of familiar environs. Civil-military discord and an inchoate COIN policy, coupled with a poorly defined timeline, led to low soldier morale among Israeli troops, despite a high level of military effectiveness.

Throughout Phase II, Hizballah maintained the popular support of the population, the will to fight, the skill to conduct guerrilla warfare against a superior adversary, and the backing of Iran. The Israeli COIN force believed that establishing the 328-square-mile security zone, which included 45 SLA and IDF outposts staffed by 1,000–1,500 Israeli soldiers, 2,500 SLA members, and several hundred Israeli intelligence officers, would enervate the insurgency and convince Hizballah that the costs far outweighed the benefits. Yet, as Clive Jones has noted, “[A] close examination of the operations carried out by the IDF would suggest that far from undermining Hizb’Allah, Israel’s actions have

served only to entrench still further the position of the Islamic Resistance Organisation—both in symbolic and practical terms—among the Shi'a population of south Lebanon.” By the end of Phase II, SLA field intelligence operatives were selling maps to Hizballah insurgents that detailed IDF positions and routes to navigate minefields, in addition to information about Internal Security Forces/SLA operations.⁹⁸⁴

Distinctive Characteristics

- The Lebanese Civil War featured significant intervention on the part of external actors, ranging from nonstate actors to major powers and international organizations. At various points, these external actors included Lebanon's immediate neighbors (the PLO, Israel, and Syria), regional actors (Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab League), and international powers and organizations (the United States, the Soviet Union, France, and the UN).⁹⁸⁵ This undoubtedly blurred the lines between internal and external actors.
- The paralysis of formal state-run agencies and government institutions limited the provision of public services by the state and opened the door for substate actors, especially Hizballah, to fill the void of providing services in exchange for the support of Lebanese civilians—the Shi'a population, in Hizballah's case.
- Between 1982 and 1985, Hizballah and Amal unleashed a wave of suicide attacks and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices against Israel, killing approximately 650 Israeli soldiers.⁹⁸⁶ This significantly soured the Israeli public on what came to be called “Israel's Vietnam.”

⁹⁸⁴ Clive Jones, “‘A Reach Greater Than the Grasp’: Israeli Intelligence and the Conflict in South Lebanon, 1990–2000,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2001, p. 10.

⁹⁸⁵ Oren Barak, “Lebanon: Failure, Collapse, and Resuscitation,” in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *State Failure and Weakness in a Time of Terror*, Cambridge, UK: World Peace Foundation, 2003, p. 309.

⁹⁸⁶ Clive Jones, “Israeli Counter-Insurgency Strategy and the War in South Lebanon, 1985–97,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1997, p. 83.

- It is difficult to draw concrete COIN lessons from the first phase of this conflict because so many actors fought at different points and switched sides. The most useful analytic traction results from looking at the role of the PLO and the subconflict between Israel and Hizballah in the second phase. The Israelis learned the importance of popular support. Despite practicing sound COIN techniques, the Israelis were never able to gain the trust of southern Lebanon's Shi'a population.

Figure 37
Map of Lebanon



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR291/2-37

Western Sahara, 1975–1991

Case Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Case Summary

The conflict in Western Sahara began in 1975 after Spain withdrew as a colonial power, allowing Morocco to occupy the region (where it staked a historical claim).⁹⁸⁷ Morocco's occupation was contested by the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro (Polisario) movement that had been formed to fight for independence from Spain. Initially, the Polisario launched an effective guerrilla campaign against the Moroccan army, with external support from Algeria and Libya. By the mid-1980s however, the COIN force was able to gain the upper hand by attracting significant military assistance from the United States and France and building more than 1,000 miles of defensive sand berms that cut insurgents off from Saharan population centers and their sources of material support.

A stalemate developed during the final phase of the conflict, with Morocco sustaining a military advantage and the Polisario maintaining a diplomatic edge, as well as UN support for Western Sahara's right to self-determination. Yet, unlike in similar conflicts, the international community lacked sufficient interest and attention to force the Moroccan government to agree to a political settlement. After years of negotiation, a cease-fire agreement was reached that called for a future referendum on independence. This agreement brought about an end to active fighting, but it did not resolve the conflict. Voting on the referendum was repeatedly postponed, and diplomatic skirmishes continued, leaving the conflict largely unresolved for decades.

⁹⁸⁷ Morocco claimed that the Western Sahara was part of the historic Moroccan kingdom during the precolonial period. This claim was rejected by the International Court of Justice.

Case Narrative**Phase I: “Morocco Stakes a Claim and Faces Resistance” (1975–1982)***Phase Outcome: COIN Loss*

Key Factors: Overall importance of external support to conflict (for insurgents): critical/game changer; COIN force had air superiority, but use of airspace was significantly contested or COIN force was unable take advantage of air power; COIN force employed escalating repression; Insurgents switched from guerrilla to conventional tactics

Upon Spain’s decision to withdraw its forces from its colonial territories in the Western Sahara, the Moroccan government staked a historic claim to the region. Although the International Court of Justice and the UN rejected this claim, it received broad support from the Moroccan public. In October 1975, King Hassan organized the “Green March,” recruiting 350,000 civilians to enter into the Western Sahara from Morocco in a symbolic act of recovering the territory. Enjoined by the Mauritanian army, which held a claim to the southern portion of the region, the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces established a permanent presence in the Sahara and caused a majority the ethnic Sahrawis to flee to neighboring Algeria.⁹⁸⁸

The Polisario Front, which had previously fought the Spanish colonial forces, organized against these new occupying forces. Operating from bases across the border in Algeria, with arms and support from both Algeria and Libya, they were able to launch a successful guerrilla campaign.⁹⁸⁹ Morocco was on the defensive against highly motivated and tactically superior Polisario mobile units, which conducted a war of attrition against Moroccan forces. Morocco responded by tripling the size of its armed forces to approximately 150,000, stationing more than half of them in Western Sahara, and conducting

⁹⁸⁸ Maria J. Stephan and Jacob Mundy, “A Battlefield Transformed: From Guerrilla Resistance to Mass Nonviolent Struggle in Western Sahara,” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3, Spring 2006.

⁹⁸⁹ Several Moroccan garrisons were established in the occupied territories, but they failed to control the desert regions, where small enemy units could move mostly at will. János Besenyő, *Western Sahara*, Pecs, Hungary: IDRResearch Ltd./Publikon, 2009.

large-scale sweeps of its own. Such efforts were largely unsuccessful, however.

Aided by Soviet anti-aircraft weapons (particularly SA-6 surface-to-air missiles), the Polisario were also able to deny Morocco air supremacy. They were also able to briefly engage in conventional fighting with the assistance of Algerian forces, launching an attack across the border into Morocco. These cross-border attacks prompted the United States to initiate arms sales to Morocco.

In 1979, the Polisario defeated the Mauritanian troops, and, by 1982, they had restricted the Moroccan army's presence to approximately 15 percent of Western Saharan territory.⁹⁹⁰ Moreover, the insurgents attracted significant popular support both locally and within the international community due to their rejection of terrorist tactics. Sahrawi guerrillas were known to attack only security forces and to avoid civilian targets.⁹⁹¹ In contrast, Morocco engaged in a violent campaign of state terror against Polisario activists and supporters in an attempt to rid the Western Sahara of nationalist sentiment. The government was accused of severe human rights violations, including the systematic torture of political prisoners and widespread "disappearances" of suspected Sahrawi activists, their associates, and their relatives.⁹⁹²

Phase II: "Changes in External Support and Sand Walls Lead to a Stalemate" (October 1983–1988)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: An external actor provided significant financial and materiel support to COIN force/government; Insurgents' ability to replenish resources significantly diminished; Important external support to insurgents significantly reduced; COIN force undertook "hold" of "clear, hold, and build" in area of conflict

⁹⁹⁰ Stephan and Mundy, 2006.

⁹⁹¹ Stephan and Mundy, 2006.

⁹⁹² Stephan and Mundy, 2006.

The military tide of the conflict shifted in the mid-1980s as the Moroccan army began to receive significantly higher levels of military assistance from France, the United States, and Saudi Arabia and focused its efforts on a new COIN tactic of building physical barriers to combat the insurgency. The position of the insurgency was further weakened by a reduction in support from its major allies, Algeria and Libya.

Cold War motivations and a long-term alliance with Morocco, which provided access to the Mediterranean in support of Western interests in the region, led the United States and France to increase weapons sales to Morocco and provide its forces with military training and advisory services in 1983.⁹⁹³ President Ronald Reagan's administration approved the sale and delivery of M60 tanks, OV-10 reconnaissance planes, and 20 F-5E fighter jets to Morocco, which it had previously been denied.⁹⁹⁴ The arrangement also increased the number of training slots allotted to Moroccan military officers in the United States and the number of advisory positions in Morocco.⁹⁹⁵

Morocco began constructing a system of defensive sand walls, or berms, that effectively separated the insurgents from population centers and resources in the Sahara. The berms included fortified positions with early-warning equipment and extended more than 1,200 miles by 1987. They severely limited the Polisario's freedom of movement and its ability to launch successful attacks. At the same time, the insurgency was weakened by a reduction in aid from its primary external supporters. Libya began to reduce its aid to guerrilla organizations, and Alge-

⁹⁹³ Official U.S. policy toward the Western Sahara conflict was (and continues to be) to support an end to hostilities through negotiations. The United States did not recognize Morocco's claim to the region and prohibited the use of U.S. military equipment in COIN operations. In the mid-1980s, the United States assumed a policy of "positive neutrality," which entailed supporting Morocco militarily but not politically. Abdel-Rahim Al-Manar Slimi, "The United States, Morocco and the Western Sahara Dispute," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 17, 2009; Claudia Wright, "Journey to Marrakesh: U.S.-Moroccan Security Relations," *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 4, Spring 1983.

⁹⁹⁴ Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Drops Sahara Issue in Arms Sales to Morocco," *New York Times*, March 26, 1981.

⁹⁹⁵ Jacob Mundy, "The Morocco-Polisario War for Western Sahara, 1975-1991," in Barry Rubin, ed., *Conflict and Insurgency in the Contemporary Middle East*, New York: Routledge, 2010.

ria, which faced increased domestic political concerns, began to restrict both the level of arms and political assistance it supplied to the insurgency. Thus, the Polisario was left without the resources to overcome Morocco's more aggressive COIN tactics.⁹⁹⁶

By 1987, the Polisario insurgents found themselves closed off from 80 percent of Saharan territory in the western sector of the region (a complete reversal from a decade prior) and incapable of launching anything more than limited attacks along the Moroccan army's defensive walls.⁹⁹⁷ Many of the Polisario guerrillas emigrated to Mauritania or Morocco.⁹⁹⁸ While nearly defeated militarily, the Polisario achieved diplomatic success by gaining recognition from more than 70 countries as a government-in-exile, designated the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, and achieved full membership in the Organization of African Unity.⁹⁹⁹ This diplomatic recognition fell short of full political support for the Polisario's cause, however: The international community was unwilling to impose sufficient pressure on Morocco to grant independence because of the conflict's low profile and the country's low strategic importance. As a result, the conflict reached a stalemate.

Phase III: "A Military Stalemate Evolves into an Ongoing Diplomatic Battle" (October 1988–1991)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Level of violence low/manageable; Conclusion/suspension (not) externally imposed or due to international pressure or other exogenous event

⁹⁹⁶ The Moroccan government also attempted to consolidate its presence in the region by investing in infrastructure projects, including the construction of schools, hospitals, and telecommunication facilities, which were staffed by tens of thousands of Moroccan civilians. Ana Torres-Garcia and Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Western Sahara War," in *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*, 2nd ed., New York: Macmillan, 2004.

⁹⁹⁷ Stephan and Mundy, 2006.

⁹⁹⁸ Fearon and Laitin, 2008.

⁹⁹⁹ No state recognized Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara as legitimate. International Crisis Group, *Western Sahara: Out of the Impasse*, Middle East/North Africa Report No. 66, June 11, 2007.

The Western Sahara conflict remained at a stalemate from 1988 to 1991 as Morocco maintained a military advantage and the Polisario achieved a diplomatic advantage in the UN and the Organization of American States (where its claims for independence received widespread support). Low-level fighting continued over this three-year period, while both sides pursued negotiations and engaged in diplomatic skirmishes over a cease-fire.

In August 1988, the Polisario and Morocco first announced their tentative acceptance of a UN proposal for a cease-fire. The proposal included the withdrawal of Moroccan forces from the territory, to be followed by a referendum on self-determination (with a choice between independence and integration into Morocco). Three years of negotiations over the implementation of the plan followed, ending in the final approval of a settlement plan that included the appointment of a UN mission to supervise an uneasy cease-fire and ensure a future referendum.

The plan effectively ended active fighting between the Polisario and Moroccan forces, but it did not bring about a resolution to the conflict. Human rights abuses in the region continued as political protests were met with violent repression. The government undertook a controversial strategy of “Moroccanization” to increase the number of Moroccan settlers in the region and to resettle native Sahrawis in Morocco. Diplomatic skirmishes over the plan’s implementation continue as of this writing, becoming what has been considered a war by other means.¹⁰⁰⁰ The major source of contention has been over the identification of the electorate that will participate in a referendum.

Decades after the signing of the cease-fire agreement, political maneuvering by Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic leadership continued as the two sides pushed sharply divergent definitions and criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of potential

¹⁰⁰⁰ Jacques Eric Roussellier, “Quicksand in the Western Sahara? From Referendum Stalemate to Negotiated Solution,” *International Negotiation*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2005, quoted in International Crisis Group, 2007.

electors.¹⁰⁰¹ International negotiators, including then–UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the UN’s special envoy to Western Sahara (until 2004), former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, attempted to broker a compromise on the issue of autonomy. Yet these attempts were unsuccessful, due largely to the international community’s failure to generate sufficient pressure to force a settlement of the issue, which was subsumed to other strategic priorities. According to Baker,

[T]he real issue is whether or not any country on the Security Council is going to expend political chips on the issue of Western Sahara. That’s what makes this so difficult because the profile of the issue is so very low, and they’re not going to want to risk alienating either Morocco, on the one hand, or Algeria, on the other, by taking a firm position. And they’re not willing to ask either one or both of the parties to do something they don’t want to do.¹⁰⁰²

Conventional Explanations

The unresolved outcome of the Western Sahara conflict is often attributed to its low international profile. Since the start of the conflict, Morocco’s historical claim to the region has been rejected by the International Court of Justice and the UN, yet the kingdom has received relatively little public criticism of its occupation, which has helped to prolong its stay. The Polisario insurgency, on the other hand, has suffered from a lack of notoriety. Algeria and Libya have been the only countries to provide assistance to the insurgents, and, while the Organization for African Unity has provided recognition to the Saharan government-in-exile, it has not effectively advocated for its sovereignty.

¹⁰⁰¹ Initially, the two sides agreed that the electorate would be determined by a 1974 census of the Western Sahara, when it was still under Spanish control. Morocco subsequently insisted that voter rolls be expanded to include up to 150,000 people whom, it said, belonged to Western Saharan tribes but had migrated to Morocco decades earlier. International Crisis Group, 2007.

¹⁰⁰² James Baker III, “Sahara Marathon,” interview with Mishal Husain, *Wide Angle*, PBS, August 19, 2004.

Due to overriding strategic concerns stemming from the Cold War, much of the fighting between the two parties was also conducted below the radar of the press and the international community. This allowed the Moroccan army to employ brutal COIN tactics against the Polisario while continuing to receive extensive military assistance from the United States and France. Moreover, unlike other postwar COIN campaigns against national liberation movements, the Moroccan government did not receive any international sanctions for its actions.

Finally, the lack of attention from the global community allowed Morocco to evade any significant diplomatic pressure to implement a political settlement. The kingdom has refused to allow a referendum that might result in independence for the region, and none of the major powers were willing to expend the political capital to alienate Rabat or assume the risk of regional instability to compel it to accept a political settlement on a relatively minor conflict. The case has therefore been presented as an example of how external actors can influence a COIN campaign through their inaction as well as their action.

Distinctive Characteristics

- The Western Sahara conflict is a unique case of decolonization. Spain remained in control of the territory until 1975, well after most European colonies achieved their independence. It then reneged on a promise to hold a referendum to determine the political status of the region, agreeing to divide the territory between Morocco and Mauritania without any consultation with the indigenous population. This decision essentially preempted self-determination and established the basis for a long-term political stalemate.¹⁰⁰³
- Morocco received a significant degree of military and diplomatic support from France and the United States due to its strategic importance to the West during the Cold War, the Gulf War, and, later, the global war on terrorism. While unrelated to the Western Saharan conflict, this had a significant effect on its outcome.

¹⁰⁰³ International Crisis Group, 2007.

- Unlike most other foreign occupations in the post-WWII era, there was virtually no vocal public opinion expressed in Morocco over its engagement in the Western Sahara. King Hassan was able to rally the population to support the government's actions under a nationalist banner, and few citizens or journalists dared to go against the prevailing view of the issue.¹⁰⁰⁴ This allowed the government to pursue its policies with little concern over public backlash.
- The conflict also received far less attention from the international community than most other wars of national liberation. Largely due to a lack of external political pressure, the former Spanish Sahara is one of the last colonial territories to achieve independence.

Figure 38
Map of Morocco/Western Sahara



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

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¹⁰⁰⁴ Nizar Messari, "National Security, the Political Space, and Citizenship: The Case of Morocco and the Western Sahara," *Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Winter 2001, quoted in International Crisis Group, 2007.

Expressions of public support for West Saharan independence are indeed illegal, which has contributed to making the subject taboo. Stephan and Mundy, 2006.

Indonesia (Aceh), 1976–2005

Case Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Case Summary

The Aceh conflict began as a limited insurgency triggered by the centralization policies of the Indonesian government and the imposition of petroleum rents in the mid-1970s. Over the next three decades, the insurgency evolved into a broader conflict of ethnic separatism prompted largely by the human rights abuses perpetrated by Indonesian COIN forces. Only after the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998 did the separatist group known as the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) gain widespread public support and become locked into battle with Indonesian COIN forces in an effort to achieve independence.

Initially, the Indonesian government responded to the GAM's resurgence with an attempt to reach a negotiated settlement and offers of limited political autonomy. When these efforts failed, the government imposed a state of emergency and launched a large-scale military initiative against the GAM. These forceful actions left GAM forces severely weakened and reduced their base of popular support. Still, the insurgency dragged on until a natural disaster altered the course of the conflict. In December 2004, an earthquake and tsunami devastated the province and left both sides more willing to compromise and eager to conclude a peace agreement to secure relief from the international community. A peace agreement, signed in 2005, provided for expanded political autonomy for Aceh but fell short of delivering full independence to the region.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "A Limited Insurgency over Resources" (1976–1979)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Majority of citizens in area of conflict viewed government as legitimate; Insurgents unable to maintain or grow force size; No change in level of popular support for insurgents; Level of violence

low/manageable; Insurgency motive: opportunity; Insurgent leadership competent, able to develop and change strategy and ensure succession

A small rebel group known as the GAM initiated the insurgency in Aceh in 1976. The GAM evolved in opposition to the Indonesian government's centralization policies and its exploitation of Aceh's natural gas resources. Led by a charismatic business leader, Hasan Muhammad di Tiro, the GAM called for Aceh's independence from the "imperialist Javanese" government in Jakarta. Di Toro's objective was to reestablish Aceh as a sovereign sultanate, with himself as the constitutionally empowered monarch.¹⁰⁰⁵

The GAM organization was small and underfinanced, with membership estimates ranging from 24 to 200. It engaged in few military activities, directed primarily at liquid natural gas facilities. Fighting resulted in fewer than 100 deaths. The GAM's leadership was organizationally weak and unable to develop a strong popular base of support,¹⁰⁰⁶ and at no time did the group control any territory.

In response to this limited threat, the Indonesian government employed a military and economic strategy in which military means took precedence. The armed forces frequently targeted not only the GAM and its supporters but also Acehnese civilians. GAM suspects were arrested and tortured, and the women and children in their families were held as hostages by the government when they evaded arrest.¹⁰⁰⁷ Civilians also suffered from random acts of violence committed by the military.¹⁰⁰⁸ At the same time, the government initiated new road projects, installed new television relay stations in remote rural

¹⁰⁰⁵ Michael L. Ross, "Resources and Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia," in Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis, eds., *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*, Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2003.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Achim Wennmann and Jana Krause, *Resource Wealth, Autonomy, and Peace in Aceh*, working paper, Geneva, Switzerland: Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding, 2009.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ross, 2003.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Minorities at Risk Project, "Assessment for Acehnese in Indonesia," web page, December 31, 2006.

areas, and persuaded civic leaders to oppose the GAM.¹⁰⁰⁹ However, such civic action programs failed to win the hearts and minds of the population.

By 1979, the Indonesian forces succeeded in driving di Toro out of the country with most of his remaining followers. Military operations against the GAM continued until 1982, at which time the movement effectively disappeared. The government was thus able to effectively to suppress the insurgency and maintain control of the region, but its harsh tactics set the stage for future grievances against the Indonesian government and for the GAM's resurgence.

Phase II: "Indonesia Responds to GAM Attacks by Declaring a Military Operations Area, Launching the 'DOM' Era" (1989–1992)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: Type of external support (to insurgents) included: training and/or advice; COIN force employed escalating repression; COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards; Change in level of popular support for insurgents

During much of the 1980s, the GAM appeared to be largely dormant, with its activities limited to occasional ambushes and anticolonial rhetoric directed against the Indonesian government. The movement was, in fact, reorganizing and receiving training from Libya during this time.¹⁰¹⁰ From bases outside the country, di Toro and his advisers planned to remobilize their insurgency to take advantage of growing public distrust of Indonesian corruption and the exploitation of the province's resources.¹⁰¹¹

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ross, 2003, p. 13.

¹⁰¹⁰ Between 250 and 2,000 GAM recruits, drawn primarily from the Acehnese population in Malaysia, received military training in Libya in the late 1980s. Di Toro and other GAM leaders directed the rebuilding of the force from their base of operations in Sweden. Ross, 2003, p. 13.

¹⁰¹¹ Shane Joshua Barter, "Resources, Religion, Rebellion: The Sources and Lessons of Acehnese Separatism," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 19, No. 1, March 2008, p. 52.

Active engagement between the GAM and Indonesian forces resumed in 1989, when between 150 and 800 Libyan-trained fighters returned to Aceh. Benefiting from better training and organization, the GAM was more aggressive than it had been in 1979. The group launched a series of attacks on soldiers and non-Acehnese migrants. It lacked adequate weapons, however, because Libya had provided little material assistance, leaving the movement dependent on weapons it could steal from Indonesian security forces. And while the GAM was able mobilize local guerrillas in Aceh's northeast region to conduct hit-and-run attacks, it did not control any territory. Therefore, the insurgency was not widespread.

The Indonesian government reacted to the GAM's resurgence with increasingly harsh security measures. In an effort to discourage support for the insurgency, Indonesian security forces undertook a strategy of "shock therapy," which included indiscriminate attacks against civilians and severe human rights abuses. President Sukarno declared the province a military operations area—Daerah Operasi Militer (DOM)—in June 1990, drawing an additional 6,000 troops to the area, including special COIN units.¹⁰¹² Under the DOM plan, more than 1,000 civilians were killed and many more were arrested, tortured, raped, or arbitrarily detained for prolonged periods. Hundreds of men disappeared.¹⁰¹³

The Indonesian military also mobilized civilian militias at the village level to aid in its COIN operations. Tens of thousands of villagers were reportedly forced to assist in the hunt for GAM members and to participate in a *pagar bettis* program (a "fence of legs," now a fixture of Indonesian COIN campaigns), in which villagers were compelled to

¹⁰¹² Indonesian paramilitary police units (*brimob*), were known to be particularly indiscriminate in their use of the violence, frequently resorting to collective punishment in retaliation for attacks on their members. Angel Rabasa and John Haseman, *The Military and Democracy in Indonesia: Challenges, Politics, and Power*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1599-SRF, 2002.

¹⁰¹³ Human Rights Watch, *Indonesia: The War in Aceh*, New York, August 2001, p. 8; Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, ed., *Aceh Under Martial Law: Conflict, Violence and Displacement*, Oxford, UK: Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, Working Paper No. 24, July 2005.

create a physical cordon of suspected GAM areas ahead of the COIN force.¹⁰¹⁴ The military also recruited local civilians to serve as informants, which increased the level of violence and suspicion among the Aceh population.¹⁰¹⁵

By the mid-1990s, the GAM was greatly weakened. It no longer benefited from Libyan assistance as Muammar Gaddafi withdrew his support for liberation movements around the world. While some GAM members, di Tiro, found refuge in Sweden, most of the organization's leadership on the ground in Indonesia was either captured or killed by Indonesian COIN forces. Still, martial law under DOM remained in force in Aceh until 1998. As a result, human rights abuses and acts of repression in the region continued. This led to increasing public resentment and distrust of the central government. The brutal tactics the Indonesians pursued created a new set of grievances against the government and ultimately prompted greater support for the GAM.

In large part, GAM's resurgence was made possible by Hasan di Tiro's ability to secure support for GAM from Libyan dictator Gaddafi. The group's growth was also spurred by continued central government neglect and interference.

Phase III: "The Post-Suharto Period: Military Operations and Peace Negotiations" (1999–2002)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss (Mixed, Favoring Insurgents)

Key Factors: Government a partial or transitional democracy; Insurgents exploited deep-seated/intractable issues to gain legitimacy; COIN force employed practices considered beyond the pale by contemporary U.S. ethical standards

¹⁰¹⁴ Due to the coercion and the threats of military reprisal for disobedience, it has been reported that villagers who besieged the GAM fighters did so without caring whether "they are from the village or are family members." Amnesty International, *Shock Therapy: Restoring Order in Aceh, 1989–1993*, London, July 1993, p. 12.

¹⁰¹⁵ Edward Aspinall and Harold Crouch, *The Aceh Peace Process: Why It Failed*, Washington, D.C.: East-West Center, 2003.

After a second dormant period in the mid-1990s, the GAM reemerged in 1999 with the fall of the Suharto regime—this time as a stronger and more popular movement. New freedoms of expression and the lifting of many of the political controls that had been imposed under Suharto's New Order benefited the GAM. Revelations of the atrocities committed by the Indonesian military during the DOM era began to be revealed in the press, and the population grew frustrated with the government when it refused to prosecute the perpetrators. Support for Aceh independence increased as Jakarta offered a referendum on independence to the restive population in East Timor. Hundreds of guerrillas returned to Aceh from exile and were able to exploit the disarray in Jakarta and the growth of popular support for independence by expanding their presence in the province, stepping up attacks, and beginning to set up an alternative administration.¹⁰¹⁶

Indonesian intelligence estimated that the GAM's armed strength rose to 1,000–2,000 fighters with weapons in 1999.¹⁰¹⁷ Fortified by the sanctuary and logistical support they received in rural areas of Aceh, as well as an increase in the number of weapons smuggling from Thailand, GAM insurgents launched an increasing number of attacks against government officials and Javanese residents and began to engage in armed clashes with Indonesian security forces. The GAM also attacked strategic economic targets, such as natural gas facilities, and threatened the Indonesian government politically by calling for a boycott of the elections that Indonesian government believed were critical to its legitimacy.

The Indonesian government initially responded to the GAM's resurgence with a conciliatory approach. President B. J. Habibie lifted the province's status as a theater of military operations, granted Aceh special autonomy to apply Islamic law, and launched an investigation into past human rights abuses (though only two cases were brought to trial). Habibie's successor, President Abdurrahman Wahid, raised the possibility of negotiating a referendum on Aceh's status and entered into cease-fire negotiations with the GAM in 2000. These efforts did

¹⁰¹⁶ Rabasa and Haseman, 2002, p. 100.

¹⁰¹⁷ Rabasa and Haseman, 2002, p. 101.

not significantly reduce the level of violence in the region, however. Military force remained the government's primary approach, and it launched increasingly repressive measures against the GAM.

Indonesian COIN forces were subsequently reorganized, with the national police given greater responsibility for operations in 2001. By April 2001, the government deployed more than 25,000 troops to the region. Although the official nature of the operations changed from a military offensive to a campaign to restore security and public order, the excessive use of force continued, and coordination among the security forces worsened.¹⁰¹⁸ Violence escalated as the GAM stepped up its attacks on Indonesian military and police posts, and Indonesian forces executed more suspected GAM sympathizers and engaged in collective punishment in retaliation. An estimated 2,000–2,500 Acehnese were killed in 2001 alone.¹⁰¹⁹ While the GAM committed significant human rights abuses of its own, particularly against informers, those abuses paled beside those of the Indonesian army and police, which raised popular anger against the government.¹⁰²⁰ Thus, the GAM continued to gain strength over the next two years, fueled in a large part by the Indonesian forces' heavy-handed efforts to crush it. By the end of the phase, the GAM had gained significant public support and had secured large tracts of territory and was taking on many government functions.¹⁰²¹

Phase V: "Martial Law and a Tsunami Spur Accommodation and a Peace Agreement" (May 2003–2005)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: COIN force effectively disrupted insurgent command and control; Change in level of popular support for insurgents; Government corruption reduced/good governance increased since onset of

¹⁰¹⁸ Rizal Sukma, *Security Operations in Aceh: Goals, Consequences, and Lessons*, Washington, D.C.: East-West Center, 2004.

¹⁰¹⁹ Rabasa and Haseman, 2002.

¹⁰²⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Indonesia: Why Aceh Is Exploding*, New York, August 27, 1999.

¹⁰²¹ Barter, 2008, p. 41.

conflict; Conclusion/suspension externally imposed or due to international pressure or other exogenous event

The Indonesian government responded to the GAM's increasing influence in Aceh by undertaking a more aggressive COIN strategy. On May 19, 2003, President Megawati declared a state of emergency and martial law throughout the province. A day later, a hundreds of Indonesian soldiers parachuted into Aceh as part of a military offensive supplemented by a rapid increase in the deployment of government troops.¹⁰²² For the first time, the Indonesian government announced a mass evacuation of the civilian population as part of its COIN operations.¹⁰²³

The martial law campaign—which included arrests not just of GAM fighters but of all people branded GAM sympathizers—increased human rights violations and forced the displacement of more than 120,000 villagers, further alienating the population.¹⁰²⁴ Militarily, however, it proved to be successful in reigning in the GAM. Within a year of the new campaign, the GAM's supply lines and communications were seriously disrupted. It was more difficult to move about, and the movement's strength in urban areas had all but disappeared.¹⁰²⁵ The insurgency's leadership was seriously weakened by internal divisions. Combat fatigue and decimation of its middle ranks greatly reduced the GAM's capacity and will to fight. War-weariness also took its toll on public support for the GAM. While the insurgents were still ahead in the battle for hearts and minds, their weakened position vis-à-vis the army left the GAM with fewer followers who were willing to fight and die for the cause.¹⁰²⁶ By late 2004, GAM leaders had begun to engage in secret discussions with the government on a future peace agreement.

¹⁰²² Hedman, 2005.

¹⁰²³ Hedman, 2005.

¹⁰²⁴ International Crisis Group, *Aceh: How Not to Win Hearts and Minds*, Asia Briefing No. 27, July 23, 2003.

¹⁰²⁵ International Crisis Group, *Aceh: A New Chance for Peace*, Asia Briefing No. 40, August 15, 2005.

¹⁰²⁶ Barter, 2008, p. 54.

This process of reconciliation was greatly accelerated by a devastating tsunami that hit the Aceh region on December 26, 2004. The mass destruction and death of an estimated 160,000 people wrought by the natural disaster made both sides more willing to seek an immediate and peaceful end to the insurgency. Recovery efforts became the top priority in the region, and a peace agreement became a condition for receiving relief assistance from international donors. Facing international pressure, the Indonesian government and GAM leaders signed a peace agreement in Helsinki in 2005 that provided for Aceh's expanded political autonomy. It also provided for the formation of local political parties and security arrangements in the region, and it called upon the GAM to disarm in exchange for offering amnesty to all of its members. Finally, it mandated that 70 percent of the province's natural resources would stay in Aceh and established a human rights court to expose the abuses committed during the conflict. While Aceh was permitted to use its own national flag, Jakarta controlled the nation's finances and defense. The result was more generous than the government's previous offers but still far short of the GAM's initial demand for political independence.

Conditions of the agreement were upheld and December 2006 saw elections for local government posts in Aceh. A former GAM strategist was elected governor, underlining the dramatic transformation brought about by the peace. Minor infighting among former rebels continued, but there have been no major outbreaks of violence or signs of a return to insurgency.

Conventional Explanations

Conventional explanations of Indonesia's success in concluding a peace agreement with the GAM that maintained its sovereignty over the region emphasize the GAM's military weakness and the devastation of the tsunami. While there were several attempts to negotiate a settlement agreement during the previous five years, neither side was willing to make significant compromises. The GAM was not willing to accept anything less than full independence, and political leaders in Jakarta would not consider any compromise that could undermine the

integrity of the state.¹⁰²⁷ After the tsunami, political conditions on the ground changed dramatically, and both sides maintained an overriding interest in reaching a compromise that could secure immediate international aid.

To a significant degree, the GAM was in a weaker position in these negotiations due to the heavy losses that it sustained following the imposition of martial law in Aceh in 2003. Lacking any major source of international support for its cause, the GAM had no choice but to accede to the government's offer of limited political autonomy. At the same time the Indonesian government, while maintaining an upper hand in negotiations with the GAM, faced significant internal political pressure to conclude a successful peace agreement from the country's newly democratic electorate and the leaders of Indonesia's powerful armed forces.¹⁰²⁸

Distinctive Characteristics

- Aceh is a unique case in which the trigger long preceded the main causal factors of the insurgency. While a conflict over natural gas resources and government centralization policies sparked the creation of the GAM, human rights abuses committed by the Indonesian military in response to the small-scale conflict led to the public's mobilization against the government and widespread support for a separate state.¹⁰²⁹
- Unlike the sites of other Indonesian separatist insurgencies, such as East Timor, the Aceh region was central to the Indonesian nationalist movement and was economically indispensable to the state due to its significant natural resources and fertile agriculture.¹⁰³⁰ Government leaders in Jakarta were therefore less inclined to entertain the concept of autonomy for the region.

¹⁰²⁷ Michael Morfit, "The Road to Helsinki: The Aceh Agreement and Indonesia's Democratic Development," *International Negotiation*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2007.

¹⁰²⁸ Morfit, 2007.

¹⁰²⁹ Barter, 2008, p. 52.

¹⁰³⁰ Human Rights Watch, 1999.

- At the same time, Aceh's population had a history of resisting government centralization. In the 1950s, the region contested the incorporation of Aceh into the province of North Sumatra and participated in the Darul Islam rebellion that sought to impose sharia law in the region. (These demands were partially met by Indonesia's acceptance of a "special region" status for Aceh in 1959, a commitment that was then broken by Suharto's decentralization policies in the 1970s.)¹⁰³¹
- The GAM insurgency for the most part occurred under the radar of the international community. Virtually no nation actively supported the option of independence for Aceh.¹⁰³² There were no widespread protests against human rights abuses nor was there political pressure from major powers to force an end to the conflict.
- The tsunami, in fact, raised the profile of the conflict and served as the driving force behind international pressure to conclude a peace agreement. According to a Finnish leader involved in the negotiations,

The interest of the European Union hinged on [the tsunami]. Otherwise, there would have been almost no interest in such a remote place. Because it [the peace negotiation] was linked to the tsunami relief, it had to be quick. It's not Sudan: who's heard of Aceh?¹⁰³³
- The impact of the tsunami on the parties to the conflict was also unique. Both the GAM and the Indonesian government held a vested interest in securing relief and, thus, in coming to a peace agreement. Both sides admitted that there would have been no peace without the disaster.¹⁰³⁴

¹⁰³¹ Rabasa and Haseman, 2002.

¹⁰³² Hans Ferdinand Illy, *Conflict Resolution, Political Decentralization, Disaster Risk Management and the Practice of Sharia Law: The Case of Aceh, Indonesia*, Freiburg, Germany: Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Freiburg, Occasional Paper No. 7, January 2012.

¹⁰³³ Edward Aspinall, *Peace Without Justice? The Helsinki Peace Process in Aceh*, Geneva, Switzerland: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, April 2008.

¹⁰³⁴ John Aglionby, "Amnesty for Aceh Rebels as Peace Deal Ends 29-Year Insurgency," *The Guardian*, August 15, 2005.

Figure 39
Map of Indonesia



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR291/2-39

Mozambique (RENAMO), 1976–1995

Case Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Case Summary

From 1976 to 1995, the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) waged a protracted campaign of violence against the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) in an insurgency that wracked the country and dragged in several outside actors, including Rhodesia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Over a 17-year period, insurgent and state-sponsored violence contributed to more than 1 million casualties, resulted in massive refugee flows and internal population displacement, and paralyzed the country's economy.¹⁰³⁵ Even against a lackluster COIN force, the insurgents were never able to muster enough strength to overtake Maputo, the capital. The most intense period of fighting ended in October 1992, when both sides signed the Rome General Peace Accords. Shortly thereafter, FRELIMO won the country's elections, and RENAMO quit the fight. This set the stage for one of the most comprehensive reintegration programs ever conducted under the auspices of a UN peacekeeping operation.

Case Narrative

Phase I: "From Independence to Insurgency" (1976–1983)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Conflict caused significant host-nation economic disruption; COIN force or government actions did *not* contribute to substantial new grievances claimed by the insurgents; External support to insurgents from strong state/military; Type of external support included: direct military support (troops)

Following Mozambican independence, the victorious FRELIMO assumed power of the country. Just as they did after the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola's (MPLA's) victory in that country,

¹⁰³⁵ Chris Alden, "The UN and Resolution of Conflict in Mozambique," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1, March 1995, p. 103.

the white minority governments in both Rhodesia and South Africa viewed FRELIMO as an immediate threat. As expected, FRELIMO extended offers of sanctuary to both ZANU/ZAPU and the African National Congress (ANC).

As political neophytes heavily influenced by Soviet communism, FRELIMO's leadership implemented radical land reform programs and collectivized production among agricultural workers. These policies, in turn, angered broad swaths of the peasantry, including rural chiefs who began to organize support for an opposition.¹⁰³⁶ This opposition included witch doctors, church and religious organizations, and groups of young men called *mujibas*, who ultimately provided RENAMO with a modest base of potential recruits.¹⁰³⁷ Shortly after independence, Mozambique found itself enmeshed in a low-intensity conflict with Rhodesia.

Between 1976 and 1978, Rhodesian troops carried out operations on Mozambican territory nearly 400 times.¹⁰³⁸ In addition to invading Mozambique to attack insurgents who were using it as a sanctuary, Rhodesia formed a commando unit most commonly referred to as RENAMO.¹⁰³⁹ The group was headed by a former FRELIMO commander, André Matsangaissa, until he was killed in an insurgent attack on Villa Paiva, a Mozambican regional center. Matsangaissa was succeeded by Afonso Dhlakama. By the time Dhlakama assumed leadership of RENAMO, the organization had grown to between 1,000 and 2,000 fighters.

Until December 1979, when it signed the Lancaster House Agreement, the insurgents were almost entirely dependent on the Rhodesian

¹⁰³⁶ Paul Rich, "Warlords, State Fragmentation and the Dilemma of Humanitarian Intervention," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1999, p. 87.

¹⁰³⁷ *Mujibas* often acted as intelligence scouts and messengers for the insurgents and, in some areas, as enforcers for RENAMO against the civilian population. See Paul L. Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War: A Military History*, Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 2008, p. 72.

¹⁰³⁸ David Alexander Robinson, *A Curse on the Land: A History of the Mozambican Civil War*, thesis, University of Western Australia, 2006, p. 99.

¹⁰³⁹ Alex Vines, *RENAMO: From Terrorism to Democracy in Mozambique?* Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Centre for Southern African Studies, 1991, p. 16.

government's support. RENAMO operated alongside Rhodesia's Selous Scouts and mounted joint operations against COIN force barracks, as well as the civilian transportation system, which included attacks on trains and buses and the placement of land mines on busy roads.¹⁰⁴⁰ Continued attacks against Mozambican infrastructure took a heavy toll of the nation's economy. Portuguese entrepreneurs and business owners who remained after independence began to leave in earnest.

Throughout the first phase, FRELIMO enforced sanctions on Rhodesia, denying its access to the coast and declaring its overt support for Zimbabwean insurgents fighting the apartheid government. After its independence, Zimbabwe returned the favor by sending 10,000 troops to guard the Beira Corridor road while the Zimbabwe National Army mounted joint offensives with FRELIMO. But the COIN forces were so weak and disorganized militarily that as soon as the Zimbabweans departed, RENAMO insurgents overtook FRELIMO and recaptured bases and territory.¹⁰⁴¹

In 1979 and 1980, when Rhodesian support ebbed, South African support flowed. William Thom contended that "sponsorship in the form of training, equipment, and advisory support under Pretoria was far more extensive than under Rhodesia."¹⁰⁴² Perhaps on purpose, South Africa encouraged RENAMO to operate much like the ANC was operating against its own government in Pretoria. The South Africans took the lead on most operations, while RENAMO sabotaged hydroelectric power stations, oil installations, power and water supplies in Beira, and general infrastructure in Manica, Sofala, and Gaza. Toward the end of the first phase, the insurgents burned villages, razed fields of crops, and repeatedly attacked rail lines throughout the country. In response to this wanton violence and destruction, the FRELIMO government placed at-risk provinces under martial law. The COIN forces also attempted to mobilize peasant militias.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Robinson, 2006, p. 99.

¹⁰⁴¹ William G. Thom, *African Wars: A Defense Intelligence Perspective*, Calgary, Alb.: University of Calgary Press, 2010, p. 107.

¹⁰⁴² Thom, 2010, p. 105.

The insurgents controlled most of the countryside and boasted a force of nearly 20,000 fighters by 1983.¹⁰⁴³ Because of this widespread presence, RENAMO fighters were able to successfully attack the Harare-Maputo rail line with increasing frequency. The government in Maputo realized that the support it was providing to black nationalists and insurgent groups was unsustainable, since FRELIMO could not withstand the brunt of South Africa's onslaught. Having lost control of the countryside and with its cities under siege, the COIN forces decided to make a deal.

Phase II: "From Komatipoort to Rome" (1984–1995)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Insurgents' ability to replenish resources significantly diminished; Change in level of popular support for insurgents; Insurgents employed unconstrained violence (against civilians) to create or sustain insecurity and instability (purposely or otherwise); Insurgents forcibly recruited from civilian population

After seven years of fighting RENAMO, the COIN force was battered and on the defensive. That FRELIMO troops were undisciplined, inept, and lacked motivation should not have come as a major surprise. Indeed, this was a force just barely removed from its own 12-year tenure as an insurgency against the Portuguese. During the Mozambican war of independence, FRELIMO fighters fought hard, but victory was made possible only by Portugal's decision to withdraw from its African colonies. Now, just as occurred in parts of Latin America and Asia, erstwhile insurgents had been thrust into the role of counterinsurgents. As William Minter observed, as a military force, FRELIMO was "without experience in either conventional or counterinsurgency warfare."¹⁰⁴⁴

By the beginning of the second phase, FRELIMO's top cadres thought it wise to agree to a *détente* with South Africa. On March 16,

¹⁰⁴³ Thom, 2010, p. 106.

¹⁰⁴⁴ William Minter, *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique*, Johannesburg, South Africa: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994, p. 235.

1984, Mozambique and South Africa signed the Nkomati Accord on Non-Aggression and Good Neighbourliness. The crux of the agreement stipulated that, in return for denying the ANC sanctuary in Mozambique, South Africa would cease its support for RENAMO. Although certain elements within South Africa's defense establishment continued to provide support to the insurgents, this support was severely limited and inconsistent.

Despite the insurgents' diminished external backing, the government still failed to maintain a robust presence in rural parts of the country. RENAMO controlled these areas, while the COIN force maintained the cities and corridors connecting them. These corridors were lined with land mines, which FRELIMO relied on as a means to defend vital infrastructure. Nevertheless, even with an advantage in force size, FRELIMO struggled to defend its own armed convoys, much less the civilian population it claimed to represent. During the second phase, the insurgents systematically committed atrocities against civilians, including mass killings, rape as a weapon of war, the mutilation of noncombatants, and the use of child soldiers and forced labor. One of the worst atrocities committed by the insurgents was the Homoine massacre of 1987, in which nearly 400 civilians, including women and children, were savagely murdered.¹⁰⁴⁵ Violence increased over time and peaked in 1991, shortly before the signing of the Rome Accords.¹⁰⁴⁶

Bipartisan wrangling in the United States over which side to support in the Mozambican civil war led to a muddled U.S. policy. The U.S. Department of Defense and conservative Republicans were sympathetic to RENAMO, while the U.S. Department of State and members of the Democratic Party believed that the United States should support FRELIMO, the less predatory of the two belligerents.¹⁰⁴⁷ The former viewed the conflict through the lens of the Cold War and believed that,

¹⁰⁴⁵ Michael Parks, "Toll Over 380, Guerillas Blamed: Massacre in Mozambique, Babies, Elderly Shot Down," *Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 1987.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Lisa Hultman, "The Power to Hurt in Civil War: The Strategic Aim of RENAMO Violence," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 2009, p. 830.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Thom, 2010, pp. 108–109.

despite egregious human rights violations committed by the insurgents, the Reagan Doctrine necessitated supplying RENAMO with arms and funding. Republican support for RENAMO waned considerably after the 1987 Homoine massacre, though a group of wealthy and influential evangelical Christians continued to lobby for support to the group.¹⁰⁴⁸

The first direct talks between the insurgents and the COIN force took place in 1990, even amid escalating violence on both sides. By 1992, in the absence of external support, and with all sides of the conflict suffering from the legacy of decades of war, the parties came to a cease-fire agreement, which paved the way for the Rome Accords. Also known as the General Peace Agreement, the framework enabled a transition to democratic multiparty elections, the assembly and demobilization of troops, the formation of new armed forces, the reintegration of demobilized combatants, and the resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons.¹⁰⁴⁹ As part of the agreement, the UN Operation in Mozambique peacekeeping force was deployed to monitor the transition period and provide stability during elections. In the end, FRELIMO prevailed victorious in the elections, and RENAMO accepted the results.

Conventional Explanations

Throughout the course of the conflict, FRELIMO never grew into a formidable COIN force. From the start, it struggled to achieve some basic requirements of successful COIN operations, including safeguarding critical infrastructure and civilian populations, rapid mobility, protecting supply lines to both defensive garrisons and assault forces, and maintaining command, control, communications, and intelligence capabilities.¹⁰⁵⁰ Indeed, during the period in question, FRELIMO was

¹⁰⁴⁸ Vines, 1991, p. 44.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Andrea Bartole, Aldo Civico, and Leone Gianturco, "Mozambique—Renamo," in Bruce W. Dayton and Louis Kriesberg, *Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding: Moving from Violence to Sustainable Peace*, London: Routledge, 2009, p. 149.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Minter, 1994, p. 236.

widely regarded as “one of the worst armies in Africa.”¹⁰⁵¹ On the insurgent side, RENAMO attacks started out small and amateurish but grew more sophisticated over time as a result of South African mentorship. Despite a multitude of COIN force weaknesses, the insurgents were never able to overtake Maputo, the capital and FRELIMO’s main stronghold. RENAMO was a politically naïve organization that relied on violence and coercion to sustain itself. Once South African support for RENAMO dissipated, the COIN forces were able to retain the upper hand until a cease-fire and peace agreements were set in place.

Distinctive Characteristics

- Mozambique was a case in which the Reagan Doctrine did not follow suit. During the Cold War, the United States offered support to many third-world revolutionaries, including those that were seen as “anticommunist” insurgents, even if this was merely a nominal designation. In Mozambique, the U.S. government provided military and development aid to FRELIMO, an organization with known communist sympathies.
- Throughout the conflict, the insurgents received support from a diverse array of sponsors. RENAMO conducted joint operations with the Rhodesians, then the South Africans, who were far superior militarily to the COIN force. Other sponsors included Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and private sources from Portugal.
- As occurred in West Africa in the 1990s, practices including witchcraft, a belief in magic, and widespread drug-fueled orgies of violence, rape, and torture.
- In Angola, despite numerous setbacks and broken promises, the United States and other countries provided years of unwavering support for UNITA insurgents against MPLA COIN forces. In Mozambique, however, RENAMO lacked a leader who could mirror the influence, leadership and charisma of Jonas Savimbi, and so RENAMO insurgents never enjoyed the same degree of external support.

¹⁰⁵¹ Thom, 2010, pp. 108–109.

- RENAMO insurgents implemented a system known as *gandira*, in which the civilian population in rural areas was forced to produce food for the insurgents, transport goods and ammunition, and offer its women to the fighters to serve as sex slaves.

Figure 40
Map of Mozambique



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-40

Sri Lanka, 1976–2009

Case Outcome: COIN Win

Case Summary

Years of discrimination by the Sinhala majority against the Tamil minority boiled over in Sri Lanka during the Black July riots of 1983. Shortly thereafter, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) emerged as the most capable Tamil insurgent group, prepared to wage a campaign of violence and terror against the Sri Lankan state and non-Tamil civilians. Over time, the LTTE distinguished itself as perhaps the most capable insurgent force in modern history. By the third phase of the conflict, the group boasted a navy, an air force, and an elite suicide commando unit used to assassinate heads of state and COIN force commanders. A transnational diaspora network provided funding and weaponry to sustain the Tigers for most of the group's existence. In the end, however, a combination of factors allowed the COIN force to employ brutal tactics in snuffing out the remnants of a once-powerful insurgency.

Case Narrative

Phase I: “Black July, Eelam War I, and the Emergence of the Tigers” (1976–1986)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Insurgent force individually superior to the COIN force by being either more professional or better motivated; External support to insurgents from strong state/military; COIN force employed collective punishment

The Tamil insurgency began in earnest when violence erupted in northern Sri Lanka in the early 1970s. Several Jaffna politicians were targeted for assassination, and, in 1974, a common criminal by the name of Chetti Thanabalasingam and his student, Velupillai Prabhakaran, founded the Tamil New Tigers, the first precursor to the

LTTE.¹⁰⁵² To counter intimidation of the Tamil minority in a highly polarized society, the Tamil United Liberation Front emerged in 1976 amid calls for a separate Tamil state. Two years later, a small group of hard-core Tamils broke off to form a separate Tamil organization—and the LTTE were born.¹⁰⁵³

Between the late 1970s and early 1980s, a coherent, militarized Tamil insurgency had formed and consisted of several groups. In addition to the LTTE, these groups included the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization, the People's Liberation Organization for Tamil Eelam, the Tamil Liberation Front (precursor of the Tamil Liberation Organization),¹⁰⁵⁴ and the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front.¹⁰⁵⁵ Through a combination of violence and coercion, the LTTE consolidated control over these other organizations and “established itself as the principal and most lethal voice of militant Tamil aspirations.”¹⁰⁵⁶

In the earliest stages of the conflict, the COIN forces of the government in Colombo were completely unprepared to deal with an insurgency. The Sri Lankan armed forces were more of a “parade force” than a military. They had no combat experience and barely any concept of how to wage a successful COIN campaign against a well-disciplined and motivated insurgent group. Since the Tamils effectively controlled the Jaffna Peninsula in the northeast of the country, the LTTE had a home base from which it could train, plan, and execute attacks against the military. Furthermore, across the Palk Strait in Tamil Nadu, India,

¹⁰⁵² Rohan Gunaratna, *International and Regional Implications of the Sri Lankan Tamil Insurgency*, Herzliya, Israel: International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, December 2, 1998.

¹⁰⁵³ Robert I. Rotberg, “Sri Lanka’s Civil War: From Mayhem Toward Diplomatic Resolution,” in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *Creating Peace in Sri Lanka: Civil War and Reconciliation*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵⁴ The Tamil Liberation Organization originated in London in the mid-1970s and is distinct from the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization. Gunaratna, 1998.

¹⁰⁵⁵ C. Christine Fair, “Diaspora Involvement in Insurgencies: Insights from the Khalistan and Tamil Eelam Movements,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Spring 2005, p. 138.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Fair, 2005, p. 138.

the LTTE could rely on the support—both active and passive—of thousands of ethnic Tamils who sympathized with the group.

In the insurgency that ensued, the LTTE leadership followed a deliberate strategy of provoking COIN force overreaction and using the resulting collateral damage to generate popular support among its constituency. To be sure, the Tamils needed little help in this area. The military’s “disordered brutality” led to the mass killing of civilians—“one of the basic anti-insurgency tools of the security forces” throughout the conflict—and earned a reputation as an occupation force.¹⁰⁵⁷

In July 1983, the LTTE slaughtered 13 government soldiers, prompting sectarian rioting and ethnic conflict throughout the country. More than 300 Tamils were killed or died violently during the riots.¹⁰⁵⁸ Afterward, 125,000 Tamils who had been living in southern Sri Lanka relocated to the predominantly Tamil north of the country, while 5,000 Sinhalese Sri Lankans departed the Jaffna peninsula and resettled in the south.¹⁰⁵⁹ Tens of thousands of Tamils fled the country altogether and moved to Tamil Nadu. Until the end of the phase, the LTTE relied almost exclusively on the Indian intelligence services, especially the Research and Analysis Wing, to provide arms and explosives.¹⁰⁶⁰

In the aftermath of the ethnic riots of 1983, thousands of Tamil refugees fled overseas to India, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom.¹⁰⁶¹ This sowed the seeds for the Tamil diaspora and the transnational nature of the LTTE’s insurgency. The global diaspora

¹⁰⁵⁷ Gordon Weiss, *The Cage: The Fight for Sri Lanka and the Last Days of the Tamil Tigers*, London: Bodley Head, 2011, pp. 72–73.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Cécile Van de Voorde, “Sri Lankan Terrorism: Assessing and Responding to the Threat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” *Police Practice and Research*, Vol. 6, No. 2, May 2005, p. 184.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Gunaratna, 1998, p. 199.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Daniel Byman, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, and David Brannan, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1405-OTI, 2001, p. 117.

¹⁰⁶¹ Peter Chalk, “The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam Insurgency in Sri Lanka,” in Rajat Ganguly and Ian MacDuff, eds., *Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism in South and Southeast Asia*, London: Sage Publications, 2003, p. 131.

was a major part of the organization's fundraising and propaganda network, but the Tamil Nadu sanctuary was the heartbeat of the LTTE's military infrastructure. Insurgents connected with insurgents but also formed bonds with elements of the Tamil Nadu political class, including such political groups such as the Dravidar Kazhagam, the Kamraj Congress, and the Pure Tamil Movement.¹⁰⁶² These political ties would prove extremely valuable over the course of the insurgency.

As the LTTE developed contacts abroad, it soon engaged in procurement activities in Northeast and Southeast Asia (especially China, North Korea, Cambodia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Vietnam, and Burma), Southwest Asia (Afghanistan and Pakistan), former Soviet Republics (primarily Ukraine), Southeast Europe and the Balkans (Greece, Bulgaria, and Cyprus), the Middle East (Turkey and Lebanon), and Africa (Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and South Africa).¹⁰⁶³

Phase II: "IPKF Intervention Goes Awry" (1987–1990)

Phase Outcome: COIN Loss

Key Factors: Occupying troops and occupied population predominantly different religions; Occupation/outside intervention created legitimacy gaps exploited by insurgents

The Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) deployed 13,000 troops to Sri Lanka in late July 1987 as per the terms of the Indo–Sri Lanka Accord. Some figures place the number of Indian troops dispatched to Sri Lanka at between 50,000 and 100,000—numbers that the Indian military would likely play down lest it risk further embarrassment.¹⁰⁶⁴ Although the IPKF was sent on a peacekeeping mission, shortly after reaching Sri Lanka it was forced to wage a COIN campaign against the LTTE.

¹⁰⁶² Gunaratna, 1998.

¹⁰⁶³ Van de Voorde, 2005.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Rohan Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka: The Role of India's Intelligence Services*, Colombo, Sri Lanka: South Asian Network on Conflict Research, 1993, p. 269.

The Indian force was plagued with difficulties from the very beginning of the intervention. First, the LTTE never really bought into the concept of a peacekeeping force. Prabhakaran was pressured to accept the Indo–Sri Lanka Accord, but he soon reversed course and denounced the agreement. The LTTE was supposed to disarm, but the insurgents mostly handed over outdated weapons and stockpiled their better weaponry. Even though India is geographically proximate to Sri Lanka and has many cultural similarities, the IPKF was still viewed by many (both Tamils and Sinhalese) as an occupying force.¹⁰⁶⁵ This was a major challenge for the IPKF in Sri Lanka, despite its efforts to avoid civilian casualties and an honest attempt to repair and rebuild critical infrastructure in war-torn areas.

Second, because the Sri Lankan police were viewed as a sectarian force and were already discredited in the eyes of the local population, the IPKF struggled with law-and-order issues, as well as intelligence collection and analysis. This situation was compounded by IPKF's small numbers during its first wave of operations.¹⁰⁶⁶ Thus, the Indians were unable to conduct effective sealing operations against the insurgents. Furthermore, Indian rules of engagement were rather restrictive. Limited mobility, inadequate weaponry, and the imperative to avoid civilian casualties at all costs hampered COIN forces that fought skilled insurgents with no such restrictions.¹⁰⁶⁷

Third, Indian forces had no experience fighting insurgencies in an urban environment. Throughout its history, the Indian state has battled multiple, overlapping insurgencies on its own soil (Kashmir, the Sikh insurgency in Punjab, the Naxalites in “the red corridor” in India's east and northeast), but its experience in urban settings was

¹⁰⁶⁵ David Edelstein argues that occupations are generally likely to succeed only if they are lengthy; extended occupations, however, are likely to produce nationalist reactions that can stymie an occupation's chances of success. See David Edelstein, “Occupational Hazards: Why Military Occupations Succeed or Fail,” *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 1, Summer 2004.

¹⁰⁶⁶ C. Christine Fair, *Urban Battlefields of South Asia: Lessons Learned from Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-210-A, 2004, p. 21

¹⁰⁶⁷ For a historical treatment of this phenomenon, see Jeffrey Record, *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win*, Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2009.

minimal. The IPKF had no contingency plans to guard against many of these shortcomings, and its mission creep elicited comparisons to the U.S. experience in Vietnam.¹⁰⁶⁸ The Indian government assumed that the IPKF would be welcomed in its role as a peacekeeping force and failed to prepare for the possibility of a protracted armed conflict with the LTTE.¹⁰⁶⁹

Finally, the IPKF's inability to conduct joint operations severely hindered its performance. During this same period, maintaining a strong posture vis-à-vis Pakistan took precedence over all else. According to Eric Ouellet, India's military command pieced together the IPKF from several smaller units. "The net result was a fair bit of confusion, as the IPKF became a heteroclite construct of units."¹⁰⁷⁰

In addition to the shortcomings faced by the COIN forces, the insurgents enjoyed several advantages. First, unlike the IPKF, the LTTE was fighting on its home turf. Even after the insurgents were pushed out of Jaffna city, they were able to transition to rural guerrilla warfare without too much trouble. Second, because they were operating in their own communities, the insurgents enjoyed a much higher level of popular support from the population. Effective propaganda techniques reinforced this level of support. Third, even though the LTTE had discarded some of its weapons as stipulated by the terms of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, it kept the lion's share of its arsenal. Moreover, the LTTE was resupplied with weapons from operatives working in Singapore, India's Research and Analysis Wing (working at odds with the Indian military), and even the Sri Lankan government once Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa requested the immedi-

¹⁰⁶⁸ James D. Scudieri, *The Indian Peacekeeping Force in Sri Lanka, 1987–1990: A Case Study in Operations Other Than War*, Ft. Leavenworth, Kan.: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1994, p. 21.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Kumar Rupesinghe, "Ethnic Conflicts in South Asia: The Case of Sri Lanka and the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF)," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 25, No. 4, December 1988, p. 350.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Eric Ouellet, "Institutional Analysis of Counterinsurgency: The Case of the IPKF in Sri Lanka (1987–1990)," *Defence Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2011, p. 478.

ate departure of the IPKF on June 2, 1989.¹⁰⁷¹ Most fighters preferred 7.62-mm AK-47s and G-3 assault rifles, though some used Chinese T-56s, M-16A1s, and an array of submachine guns and light and heavy machine guns, including U.S.-made 0.30 and 0.50-caliber models.¹⁰⁷²

From a tactical perspective, the LTTE demonstrated remarkable agility and battlefield innovation against the IPKF. To further restrict the movement of the 36th Infantry Division, the insurgents placed IEDs along the most frequently traveled roads used by the COIN forces, including the road connecting Trincomalee, Vavuniya, and Elephant Pass, the major artery for Indian personnel, vehicles, and supplies coming into Jaffna city from the port at Trincomalee.¹⁰⁷³ The IEDs were constructed using plastic cylinders filled with 100 kg of high-grade explosives, buried beneath the road surface, and activated using pull and pressure switches that could be placed away from the bomb. The group also used remote-controlled devices and electrical current to complete the circuit.¹⁰⁷⁴

The IPKF intervention was a major event in the course of the LTTE's insurgency. While the IPKF was not without its triumphs, including pushing the Tigers out of Jaffna city during Operation Parwan, on balance, "the IPKF actions are nearly universally recognized as a failure."¹⁰⁷⁵ The experience gained from fighting Indian troops—at the time, the world's fourth largest army—during the 32-month interregnum in Tamil-controlled Sri Lanka enhanced the LTTE's effectiveness by providing the group with invaluable experience in urban-rural insurgency.¹⁰⁷⁶

¹⁰⁷¹ Ouellet, 2011, p. 477.

¹⁰⁷² Scudieri, 1994, p. 23.

¹⁰⁷³ Fair, 2004, p. 22

¹⁰⁷⁴ Fair, 2004, p. 22.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Fair, 2004, p. 22.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Fair, 2004, p. 23.

Phase III: "Eelam War II" (1990–April 1995)*Phase Outcome: COIN Loss*

Key Factors: COIN force *failed* to adapt to changes in insurgent strategy, operations, or tactics; Military goals routinely took precedence over political goals; Fighting in phase substantially balanced between conventional fighting and small-unit engagement (hybrid); Insurgents demonstrated potency through impressive or spectacular attacks

In March 1990, the IPKF withdrew its troops from Sri Lanka. The resulting power vacuum led to the beginning of Eelam War II in June 1990. The Sri Lankan military enjoyed some early successes, capturing Mannar and several islands near Jaffna. From June to July of 1990, the LTTE fought Sri Lankan COIN forces in the Battle of Kokavil.¹⁰⁷⁷ After two weeks of intense fighting, the insurgents prevented the soldiers from resupplying their food, water, and ammunition stocks. The insurgents eventually captured the military camp, but the COIN force would not have to wait long for a victory. Shortly after losing at the Battle of Kokavil, the Sri Lankan air force launched Operation Eagle, which resupplied and rescued critically wounded soldiers from the old Dutch fort at Jaffna. The operation was widely hailed as a success, providing the COIN forces with a much-needed morale boost at a time when LTTE victories seemed to dominate the headlines.

In March 1991, a suicide car bomb killed Sri Lankan Defense Minister Ranjan Wijeratne. But the most significant attack of Eelam War II, and some argue of the entire insurgency, was executed in May 1991, when a young woman named Dhanu detonated an explosive belt, killing herself, 17 bystanders, and her intended target, the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.¹⁰⁷⁸ Gandhi's assassination was major turning point in the LTTE's relations with India, both the state and its population. From May 1991 on, the Tigers stepped up their effort to expand

¹⁰⁷⁷ For more on the Battle of Kokavil, see Hiranthi Fernando, "Don't Worry Sir, I Will Fight Until I Die," *Sunday Times* (Sri Lanka), October 1, 2000.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Manoj Joshi, "On the Razor's Edge: The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1996, p. 29.

internationally and sought external sources of weapons, money, and safe haven. The Tigers followed up Gandhi's assassination by bombing the Sri Lankan government's joint operations command center in Colombo in June 1991.¹⁰⁷⁹

The COIN forces soon realized, correctly, that they needed to answer the LTTE's assassination and bombing campaign with some serious firepower. From July to August 1991, the government deployed nearly 11,000 troops to fight against the insurgents in the First Battle of Elephant Pass. Between 500 and 1,000 insurgents were killed as the Sri Lankan army gained control of the strategically important strip of land that linked the northern mainland, known as Wannai, with the Jaffna peninsula. From July 14 through August 9, COIN forces executed Operation Balavegaya, their most successful operation of the second phase of the insurgency. The amphibious assault helped them win the First Battle of Elephant Pass and further develop their ability to conduct joint operations.

The back-and-forth between the insurgents and the COIN forces continued during the summer of 1992. In June, the Sri Lankan army advanced on Tellipalai, while the navy destroyed two Sea Tiger bases off the coast of Jaffna. To strike back, the LTTE assassinated two Sri Lankan generals and eight other soldiers in an IED attack on Kayts Island. In that attack, Lieutenant General Denzil Kobbekaduwa, commander of northern operations, and Brigadier General Vijaya Wimalaratne were both murdered.¹⁰⁸⁰ But an even more high-profile attack occurred in November 1992, when the LTTE killed the Sri Lankan navy chief, Vice Admiral Clancy Fernando. That same month, the insurgents massacred Muslim and Sinhalese farmers in the Polonnaruwa district near Batticaloa, killing 161 civilians, eight soldiers, and 12 police officers.¹⁰⁸¹

To stem the tide of the insurgency and gain the upper hand, the COIN force initiated the Yal Devi offensive in September 1993. The operation sought to take control of insurgent-held territory from

¹⁰⁷⁹ Joshi, 1996, pp. 154–155.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Joshi, 1996, p. 36.

¹⁰⁸¹ Joshi, 1996, p. 36.

Elephant Pass to Kilali and seal off routes across the Jaffna lagoon all the way to the Jaffna peninsula. But rather than occupy the area, the COIN force destroyed 120 insurgent swamp boats and outboard motors before retreating back to its military base at Elephant Pass.¹⁰⁸²

To close out the year, the LTTE planned to counter the Yal Devi offensive and reverse some of its losses. In November 1993, the two sides fought the Battle of Pooneryn. This two-day skirmish saw the LTTE overrun the Sri Lankan naval base in Pooneryn, in the north of the country, leading to the deaths of approximately 600 Sri Lankan troops. By the end of 1993, nearly one-third of the Sri Lankan navy had been destroyed.¹⁰⁸³

A new era was ushered in with the November 1994 election of President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, the head of the People's Alliance. As the LTTE continued a wave of fratricidal killings, eliminating Tiger cadres judged to be too close to India's intelligence services, President Kumaratunga undertook one of the most ambitious attempts at peace in the history of the conflict. Fulfilling her campaign promises, throughout late 1994 and early 1995, Kumaratunga engaged the LTTE in the most earnest negotiations since the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987. The negotiations broke down on April 19, 1995, when the LTTE sabotaged two Sri Lankan navy gun boats, killing 22 sailors, and destroyed five Sri Lankan air force planes.¹⁰⁸⁴

Phase IV: "Eelam War III" (May 1995–2001)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win (Mixed, Favoring COIN)

Key Factors: Insurgents demonstrated potency through impressive or spectacular attacks; COIN force and government had different goals/levels of commitment or both had relatively low levels of commitment;

¹⁰⁸² V. Jayanth, "A Big Offensive: The Kilali March," *Frontline* (India), November 5, 1993, pp. 32–33.

¹⁰⁸³ M. R. Narayan Swamy, *Inside an Elusive Mind: Prabhakaran*, 6th edition, Colombo, Sri Lanka: Vijitha Yapa Publications, 2008, p. 252.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Teresita C. Schaffer, "Peacemaking in Sri Lanka: The Kumaratunga Initiative," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *Creating Peace in Sri Lanka: Civil War and Reconciliation*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005, p. 132.

Government repression and/or exclusion of significant societal groups from state power or resources

The breakdown of the Kumaratunga peace talks initiated an insurgent-led offensive that included a string of bombings and shootings over the next several weeks, resulting in the deaths of 264 security personnel and 57 civilians in the north and east of the country.¹⁰⁸⁵ On May 25, 1995, the LTTE perpetrated the Kallarawa massacre, in which insurgents murdered 42 Sinhalese civilians, including women and children, in a small fishing village on the eastern seaboard of Sri Lanka.¹⁰⁸⁶ In July, COIN forces launched a major military offensive to retake the Jaffna peninsula. The offensive failed to displace the insurgents, but it did have the unintended effect of causing mass refugee flows as civilians escaping the violence moved east to Vanni.

With many civilians now outside of Jaffna, the Sri Lankan military hoped to capitalize on gains from its July offensive. In October 1995, it conducted a combined military operation code-named Operation Riviresa.¹⁰⁸⁷ The ratio of insurgent to COIN force deaths was four to one, and when the 49-day battle ended, the Sri Lankan military had captured Jaffna city and extended its writ throughout most of the peninsula.¹⁰⁸⁸

With its Jaffna sanctuary under attack, the LTTE took its war out of the north and east and into other parts of the country. In January 1996, the insurgents unleashed a series of bombings and assassinations, including a bomb blast at the Colombo Central Bank, which killed 90 civilians and injured an additional 1,400.¹⁰⁸⁹ In July, the Tigers attacked

¹⁰⁸⁵ Asoka Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, and Political Economy*, London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 162–164.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Chris Kamalendran, “Lighting a Candle in the Storm,” *Sunday Times* (Sri Lanka), October 4, 1998.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Operation Riviresa was preceded by Operation Leap Forward and Operation Thunder Strike. Both paved the way for the more comprehensive Operation Riviresa, which involved 20,000 Sri Lankan troops.

¹⁰⁸⁸ “Jaffna Falls to Sri Lankan Army,” BBC News, December 5, 1995.

¹⁰⁸⁹ “Timeline of the Tamil Conflict,” BBC News, September 4, 2000.

an army base at Mullativu, killing 1,200 Sri Lankan soldiers, including the Jaffna commander. That same month, the LTTE bombed a train in Dehiwala, resulting in the deaths of between 60 and 70 civilians. Neither the insurgents nor the COIN force could break the stalemate. In May 1997, Sri Lankan military operations against the LTTE in Vanni and Mullativu had little effect, other than enraging the Tigers. The LTTE exacted revenge on October 15, 1997, when it bombed the Colombo World Trade Center. This attack killed 15 and wounded 105, but the psychological damage it inflicted was immeasurable. Another major attack occurred in January 1998, when a four-man LTTE Black Tiger squad detonated a car bomb outside the Temple of the Tooth, a sacred Buddhist shrine in Kandy.¹⁰⁹⁰ Although the attack managed to kill only seven and injure another 25, it was highly symbolic.

In March 1998, an LTTE suicide bomb killed 36 and injured 250–300 people. Two months later, the Black Tigers assassinated Sarojini Yogeswaran, Jaffna's mayor, and Brigadier General Larry Wijeratne. In September 1998, the two sides faced off in the Battle of Kilinochchi. COIN forces ultimately captured Mankulam, but the LTTE launched Operation Unceasing Waves II, an offensive that allowed it to recapture a supply route and several villages. Perhaps one of the most devastating blows to a possible peace deal came on July 29, 1999, when Neelan Tiruchelvam, a Tamil United Liberation Front politician and the architect of the devolution process, was killed in Colombo by an LTTE suicide bomber. A mere two months later, in September, the insurgents murdered 54 ethnic Sinhalese in retaliation for a Sri Lankan air force bombing that killed 22 Tamils weeks earlier.

With no end to the violence in sight, the LTTE succeeded in regaining valuable ground from the COIN forces with the military triumph of the Oddusuddan offensive in October and November of 1999, followed by the Second Battle of Elephant Pass in April 2000. To complete its string of spectacular attacks against the Sri Lankan armed forces, the LTTE simultaneously attacked the Katunayake air force base and the adjacent Bandaranaike Airport in July 2001.

¹⁰⁹⁰ "Suicide Attacks by the LTTE," South Asia Terrorism Portal, web page, undated.

Occasionally, as it did in Mullativu in 1996, the LTTE would raid Sri Lankan military bases and steal whatever weapons were available. The Mullativu raid proved extremely bountiful; the insurgents acquired multibarrel rocket launchers, T69-1 rocket-propelled grenade launchers, artillery batteries (122-, 130-, and 152-mm), various mortars (120-, 106-, 81-, and 60-mm), and an array of antiarmor and anti-aircraft systems, including W-85 anti-aircraft guns.¹⁰⁹¹ According to Peter Chalk, the Tigers acquired U.S. Stinger-class missiles from the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in 1996 and used these weapons to shoot down a Sri Lankan civilian Lionair jet in 1998.¹⁰⁹²

Between 1995 and 1996, Sri Lankan defense spending increased by nearly one-third.¹⁰⁹³ It purchased F-7M Airguards from China, Kfir fighters from Israel, and Mi-24 Hind-D helicopter gunships from Ukraine. By 1998, the defense budget had ballooned to \$880 million, elevating the direct cost of the war to an estimated \$5.2 billion.¹⁰⁹⁴ Although the insurgents had used guerrilla tactics to devastating effect against the COIN force, the LTTE realized that, to stave off defeat, it had to counter Colombo's moves by enhancing its capabilities and upgrading its infrastructure. As part of its efforts to innovate in the area of weapon technology to blunt COIN force countermeasures, the LTTE diverted resources to its two operational wings that functioned as suicide strike teams, the Black Tigers and the Sea Tigers.

Phase V: "Karuna's Defection and the Death of Prabhakaran" (2002–2009)

Phase Outcome: COIN Win

Key Factors: COIN force and government employed an integrated political and military strategy; COIN force of sufficient strength to

¹⁰⁹¹ "Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, November 2, 2012.

¹⁰⁹² Chalk, 2003, p. 144.

¹⁰⁹³ Chris Smith, "South Asia's Enduring War," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *Creating Peace in Sri Lanka: Civil War and Reconciliation*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005, p. 34.

¹⁰⁹⁴ C. Smith, 2005, p. 34.

force insurgents to fight as guerrillas (or to prevail in the preponderance of conventional engagements, should overmatched insurgents choose to give battle); Insurgents switched from guerrilla to conventional tactics; Insurgents' switch to conventional tactics unsustainable (COIN forces able to prevail in vast majority of engagements)

The fifth and final phase of the conflict in Sri Lanka remains widely debated in the academic literature. While many scholars point to the use of overwhelming Sri Lankan force to crush the insurgents, this is only part of the story. Indeed, to gain a true understanding of how and why the LTTE was eventually defeated, it is important to examine the context.

In early March 2004, Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan, known as Colonel Karuna, defected from the LTTE. Karuna took his autonomous, geographically concentrated Eastern Province army with him. The eastern faction became the Tamil People's Liberation Tigers (TMVP) and subsequently joined the counterinsurgents in their fight against the LTTE, now mostly a Northern Province organization. Karuna's defection struck a blow to the LTTE's command and control.¹⁰⁹⁵ The split sapped the morale of the LTTE and limited its operational effectiveness, particularly in conducting conventional operations. Sri Lankan COIN forces benefited tremendously from TMVP intelligence and manpower in the Eastern Province.¹⁰⁹⁶ Karuna led his fighters against LTTE insurgents in the coastal areas of Batticaloa-Ampara in the east. Throughout 2006, the TMVP killed 82 LTTE insurgents, while the insurgents managed to kill 27 TMVP fighters.¹⁰⁹⁷

Even for a group with traditionally high levels of fratricide like the LTTE, few could have predicted Karuna's split, and even fewer could have predicted the impact it would have on the Tamil Tigers. A purely

¹⁰⁹⁵ Niel A. Smith, "Understanding Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers," *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 59, 4th Quarter, 2010, pp. 40–44.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Paul Staniland, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Insurgent Fratricide, Ethnic Defection, and the Rise of Pro-State Paramilitaries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 56, No. 1, February 2012, p. 30.

¹⁰⁹⁷ "Liberation Tigers Tamil Eelam," 2012.

kinetic analysis of Karuna's defection reveals that once his force of 500–600 fighters switched sides, the LTTE began to operate as more of a conventional military rather than an insurgent force.¹⁰⁹⁸ This strategic miscalculation played directly into the hands of the Sri Lankan COIN force, which had spent much of the past decade upgrading its conventional capabilities with the help of China.

With the breakdown of the Norwegian-led peace process in 2006, and Colonel Karuna now siding with the Sri Lankan government, the COIN force and the LTTE went back to war in late July. After the insurgents cut off water to the paddy fields surrounding Mavil Aru, COIN force jets attacked LTTE camps in the area. Bitter fighting ensued and continued to ebb and flow over the next two years. In March 2007, the LTTE's Air Tigers struck a COIN force air base in Katunayake. This was the first recorded insurgent air strike without the assistance of an external state supporter in history.

Karuna's defection provided the Sri Lankan government and military with a treasure trove of intelligence while serving the dual purpose of attenuating the strength of the LTTE. With Karuna and his troops no longer defending the east but instead helping to overtake it, the COIN forces captured Sampur, Vakarai, and other parts of the Eastern Province. Between 2008 and 2009, the COIN forces launched an offensive in the northern part of the island and won the Battle of Kilinochchi in the eastern theater, effectively tightening the noose on the LTTE's top leadership.¹⁰⁹⁹ The Tigers' demise was cemented on May 18, 2009, when Prabhakaran was killed in fighting near Nandikadal Lagoon in northeastern Sri Lanka.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Christian Chung, "The Killer Tiger Roared: A Strategic Analysis of Sri Lankan 'Kinetic' Counterinsurgency and Its Theoretical Implications," *Small Wars Journal*, December 2010, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹⁹ In an interesting study, Albert Wesley Harris used prospect theory to analyze the LTTE's decision to mount a stand at Kilinochchi. He concludes that the insurgents preferred to accept the risk of losing the battle, incurring significant casualties, and potentially losing the war in return for the chance that they could win the battle and turn the tide of the war. See Albert Wesley Harris, "Insurgency Decision-making Under Conditions of Risk," *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, September 2012.

Conventional Explanations

Conventional explanations regarding the defeat of the LTTE vary widely. From the inception of the conflict, Sri Lankan COIN forces followed a “crush them” COIN approach, with the exception of the second phase, during which the IPKF was the primary COIN force. During this phase, the Tamils and Sinhalese temporarily stopped fighting each other to focus on ousting the Indian “occupiers” from Sri Lanka. Phases III and IV were characterized by extreme brutality on both sides, ultimately resulting in a military stalemate. Throughout the 1990s, the COIN force and insurgents slaughtered each other while also destroying Sri Lanka’s infrastructure and displacing much of its civilian population. The fifth and decisive phase of the insurgency saw the LTTE’s financial architecture come under increasing scrutiny, limiting the amount of funding the group received for weapons and sustainment. Furthermore, Karuna’s defection constrained the Tigers geographically, relegating the insurgents to the northern part of the country. With an improved army and navy, due in large part to military assistance from China, the Sri Lankan COIN forces directed one final and successful push to overtake Prabhakaran and the LTTE.

Distinctive Characteristics

- In April 1995, the LTTE shot down two Avro transport aircraft of the Sri Lankan air force, killing everyone on board. This was the first known use of missiles by the insurgents, and observers argue that the introduction of missiles changed the dynamics of the conflict from that point forward.¹¹⁰⁰
- Each time the insurgents suffered major losses, in terms of personnel, territory, or resources, they were able to regroup and continue fighting. The LTTE never viewed negotiations as necessary for victory. Prabhakaran and his leadership cadre always believed that victory could be achieved through military means.
- In all, negotiations failed in 1957, 1965, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1995, and, finally, during the Norwegian-sponsored peace talks

¹¹⁰⁰ Joshi, 1996, p. 37.

of 2002–2008. These repeated unsuccessful talks “acted as a negative force on the settlement of the conflict by pushing the parties to abandon negotiations out of disinterest or exhaustion.”¹¹⁰¹

- Throughout various stages of the conflict, the LTTE fought against the Sri Lankan state and also against other antigovernment insurgent groups. The most prominent of these groups was the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, a Marxist-Leninist group that blended violence and right-wing politics before ultimately laying down its arms in the mid- to late 1990s.

Figure 41
Map of Sri Lanka



SOURCE: CIA, 2013.

RAND RR29112-41

¹¹⁰¹ Sonia Bouffard and David Carment, “The Sri Lanka Peace Process: A Critical Review,” *Journal of South Asian Development*, Vol. 1, No. 2, October 2006, p. 166.

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