

**THE POLITICAL CONTEXT BEHIND  
SUCCESSFUL REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS,  
THREE CASE STUDIES:  
VIETNAM (1955-63), ALGERIA (1945-62),  
AND NICARAGUA (1967-79)**

**Raymond Millen**

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## FOREWORD

Guerrilla warfare is nothing but a tactical appendage of a far vaster political contest, and ... no matter how expertly it is fought by competent and dedicated professionals, it cannot possibly make up for the absence of a political rationale.

Bernard Fall

Contrary to the wave of euphoria following the collapse of the Soviet Empire, the new world order did not bring about a closure of revolutionary warfare. In fact, the Soviet-inspired wars of liberation against imperialism have been eclipsed by reactionary, jihadist wars. By all indications in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Somalia, and Iraq, Islamic militants have embraced revolutionary warfare, although not Mao's People's War model. In view of this assumption, a study of revolutionary warfare is apt because the conflict between the West and radical jihadism will continue to take place in dysfunctional, collapsing, or failed states.

Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Millen examines the extent to which some states create the conditions for revolutionary movements to flourish. Employing Jeff Goodwin's analytical framework for exploring the political context behind revolutionary movements, Lieutenant Colonel Millen explores how the governments in Vietnam (1955-63), Algeria (1945-62), and Nicaragua (1967-79) unintentionally empowered revolutionary movements, resulting in these governments' demise. He supplements Goodwin's framework by including an examination of the insurgent leadership's political-military acumen.

Lieutenant Colonel Millen extrapolates the political-military lessons from these conflicts to suggest that the

United States should minimize the level and type of assistance to states fighting in an insurgency because these states possess greater advantages than previously supposed. The reader will find his analysis compelling. Often, examining failure provides greater enlightenment than examining success. The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this insightful monograph as a topic of debate among counterinsurgency specialists and the Department of Defense.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr." in a cursive script.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.  
Director  
Strategic Studies Institute

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Colonel Raymond A. Millen is currently assigned as the Director of European Security Studies at the Strategic Studies Institute. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1982, was commissioned as an infantry officer, and has held a variety of command and staff assignments in Germany and Continental United States. He has also served as the U.S. Army Infantry School Liaison Officer to the German Infantry School at Hammelburg, Germany; Battalion Executive Officer, 3-502d Infantry, Fort Campbell, Kentucky; and Chief of Intelligence Section and Balkans Team Chief, Survey Section, SHAPE, Belgium. He served in Kabul from July through November 2003 on the staff of the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan, focusing on the Afghan National Army and the General Staff. Lieutenant Colonel Millen is a Foreign Area Officer for Western Europe. He has published articles in a number of scholarly and professional journals to include *Comparative Strategy Journal*, *Infantry Magazine*, and the *Swiss Military Journal*. His book, *Command Legacy*, was published by Brassey's in April 2002. Lieutenant Colonel Millen is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and holds an M.A. degree in National Security Studies from Georgetown University. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in World Politics at Catholic University of America.



## SUMMARY

The challenge with writing about revolutionary movements is that they are largely regarded as Cold War or decolonization phenomena, and hence largely irrelevant today. Rhetoric aside, revolutionary warfare is a struggle for political power over some defined geographic area regardless of the backdrop. With this in mind, winning the hearts and minds of the population is not necessarily an objective of the insurgents (as the current wars with Islamic extremists adduce). Although technically a subset of insurgency warfare, “revolutionary warfare” was often used interchangeably during the Cold War, perhaps under the belief that every struggle was somehow part of the overarching communist wars of national liberation. Seen in this light, it is not surprising that much of the literature on insurgency warfare was hyperbolized to alert Western leaders of the insidious threat to the Third World. The most noteworthy hindsight is that few Cold War revolutionary movements actually conformed to Mao’s People’s War strategy.

Insurgent strategic approaches, as Bard O’Neill explains in *Insurgency and Terrorism*, are influenced by the physical and human environment, popular support, organization and unity, external support, and government response. Hence, the end of the Cold War did not signal the end of revolutionary warfare, as contemporary Islamic extremist organizations have demonstrated. Still, as O’Neill points out, even though an insurgency can present a virulent threat to the government, there is no guarantee the insurgents will prevail. In fact, most fail. This fact can serve the United States regarding counterinsurgency approaches to client states beleaguered by revolutionary insurgents.

Understandably, the United States should remain vigilant to extremist groups which prey on failed states for a base of operations, but it should also consider the tremendous advantages even weak states have over insurgent threats. Foreknowledge of these advantages can help the United States gauge the level and type of assistance with confidence rather than the inclination for direct intervention.

In his book, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991*, Jeff Goodwin developed an excellent analytical framework for examining the political context behind revolutionary movements and how dysfunctional governance provides the opportunity for these movements to flourish and sometimes succeed in overthrowing the state. This framework can serve as an excellent reference for U.S. statesmen and government advisors when assessing the state of affairs of a state engaged in an insurgency.

Goodwin's political context analysis comprises five government practices: 1) State sponsorship or protection of unpopular economic and social arrangements or cultural institutions; 2) Repression and/or exclusion of mobilized groups from state power or resources; 3) Indiscriminate, but not overwhelming, state violence against mobilized groups and oppositional political figures; 4) Weak policing capacities and infrastructural power; and 5) Corrupt and arbitrary personalistic rule that alienates, weakens, or divides counterrevolutionary elites. It must be stressed that each of these government practices must exist for a revolutionary movement to have a chance. Goodwin adds that the political context is not the only factor that leads to revolutionary movements, but he contends it is the most important factor. To add greater depth to Goodwin's framework, this monograph also examines the competency of the

insurgent leadership in prosecuting its strategy.

This monograph also examines how governments can squander their advantages vis-à-vis insurgents using Goodwin's framework for the political context behind revolutionary wars. Accordingly, the author applies this framework to three case studies: Vietnam (1955-63), Algeria (1945-62), and Nicaragua (1967-79) to gain a greater appreciation of how government pathologies, and not insurgent strategy, are the major determinant of insurgent success.

In each of these cases, the regimes alienated virtually every sector of society to such an extent that moderate opposition and eventually popular support fell into the orbit of extremist organizations out of desperation. The vast majority of the populace and political elites may have viewed the revolutionaries with suspicion or disdain, but fear of and debilitation by government practices left them no other political alternatives. In the end, the regimes found themselves isolated, without the necessary domestic allies and resources to prevail.

The political-military consequences of these insurgencies were profound. With the exception of Nicaragua, the insurgencies devastated the political, social, and economic institutions of their host countries. In Vietnam, the unnecessary Viet Cong escalation to guerilla war against the Diem regime in 1963 forced the United States to intervene incrementally, changing the nature and the spectrum of the conflict. In the end, the Viet Cong were destroyed, forcing North Vietnam to shoulder the main burden. In Algeria, by the time Charles de Gaulle assumed the presidency of France in 1958, a return to the status quo ante was impossible due to the power bloc of the French colonialists. Breaking their power and putting the military back in its place eclipsed defeating the insurgency. Only in Nicaragua

did the revolutionary movement prosecute a swift coup de main against Somoza's regime. Isolating the regime through defections of government allies and severed relations from the United States and the international community created the momentum needed to challenge the regime in a short, violent campaign.

## **Recommendations.**

U.S. National Security Strategy must take into account the unique circumstances behind every insurgency and be circumspect when considering the level and type of involvement in a counterinsurgency. The insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq are likely anomalies because regime change preceded the insurgency. The most likely national security scenario will be the rendering of assistance to an established government. Hence, political-military engagement with dysfunctional governments should focus on the following:

- Using the political context framework as a reference, U.S. political and military advisors must take every diplomatic opportunity with their counterparts to underscore the deleterious effects of dysfunctional governance and the danger of inaction or half measures against inchoate insurgencies.
- In preparation for their mission, advisors must understand the demographics, social structures and values, the real economic system, the political culture, and the structure and performance of the political system. This preparation not only helps the advisor understand the roots of the insurgency and anticipate government intransigence, but also provides awareness of

- counterproductive or inflammatory reforms.
- The U.S. Government must remain cognizant of the substantive advantages an established government has over insurgents and not rush to intervene. The introduction of coalition ground forces carries ramifications above the rendering of security. The client government may relax its counterinsurgency efforts, a burden the coalition soon shoulders. With the immediate threat abated, the government may see no need to reform government practices, and the larger the military contingent, the more difficult it is to extract the political commitment without the stigma of failure. Hence, a minimum assistance package provides maximum political flexibility.
  - The centerpiece of any counterinsurgency strategy is separating the insurgents from the population. How that is accomplished is a matter of strategy, but the historical record suggests military operations targeting insurgents alone are rarely successful. Allowing the establishment of local police and militia, either through local authorities or coalition cadre trainers, is the most effective way to establish security for the population centers. Thereafter, construction and development initiatives can begin in those areas where security is established.
  - Like security, construction and development initiatives have the greatest effect at the local level. Construction projects, which build what the local townspeople want, use local labor, and provide training and salaries, are the best way to spur the local economy and to ensure the people defend the completed projects.
  - The establishment of a UN reconstruction

and development coordination center could serve to harmonize, coordinate, and monitor construction and development projects among the international organizations, nongovernment organizations, government organizations, provincial reconstruction teams, and various engineer units in country. A national coordination center serves as a clearing center for legitimate organizations and prevents fraud, conflicts, redundancies, and waste, which inevitably result when separate organizations are left on their own.

- The use of sophisticated information operations to inform, persuade, and inspire the affected population and rebut insurgent propaganda is a prerequisite to counterinsurgency success. It is not a wise idea, however, for a U.S. administration to target the American people, including Congress, with information operations. It is much better to give the domestic audience a sober appraisal of the unfolding situation rather than try to bolster confidence with exuberant optimism. To do so risks creating a credibility gap and possible backlash if a setback occurs.

Most experts agree that the War on Terror will last for years. To meet this challenge without emptying the national coffers and placing severe strains on military readiness, the United States should adopt a circumspect national security policy. States involved in an insurgency rarely need military intervention on a large scale. A bit of political-military finesse will serve U.S. interests far more than viewing every insurgency as a zero-sum game.

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**Introduction.**

The challenge with writing about revolutionary movements is that they are largely regarded as Cold War or decolonization phenomena and hence largely irrelevant today. With this in mind, winning the hearts and minds of the population is not necessarily an objective of the insurgents (as the current wars with Islamic extremists adduce). Rhetoric aside, revolutionary warfare is a struggle for political power over some defined geographic area regardless of the backdrop. Although technically a subset of insurgency warfare, “revolutionary warfare” was often used interchangeably during the Cold War, perhaps under the belief that every struggle was somehow part of the overarching communist wars of national liberation. Seen in this light, it is not surprising that much of the literature on insurgency warfare was hyperbolized to alert Western leaders of the insidious threat to the Third World. The most noteworthy hindsight is that few Cold War revolutionary movements actually conformed to Mao’s protracted war strategy.

Insurgent strategic approaches, as Bard O’Neill explains in *Insurgency and Terrorism*, are influenced by the physical and human environment, popular support, organization and unity, external support, and government response.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the end of the Cold War did not signal the end of revolutionary warfare, as contemporary Islamic extremist organizations have

demonstrated. Still, as O'Neill points out, even though an insurgency can present a virulent threat to the government, there is no guarantee the insurgents will prevail. In fact, most fail.<sup>2</sup> This fact can serve the United States regarding counterinsurgency approaches to client states beleaguered by revolutionary insurgents. Understandably, the United States should remain vigilant to extremist groups which prey on failed states for a base of operations, but it should also consider the tremendous advantages even weak states have over insurgent threats. Foreknowledge of these advantages can help the United States gauge the level and type of assistance with confidence rather than indulge the inclination for direct intervention.

This monograph examines how governments can squander away their advantages vis-à-vis insurgents using Jeff Goodwin's framework for the political context behind revolutionary wars. Accordingly, it applies this framework to three case studies – Vietnam (1955-63), Algeria (1945-62), and Nicaragua (1967-79) – in order to gain a greater appreciation of how government pathologies, and not insurgent strategy, are the major determinants of insurgent success.

### **Political Context Framework.**

For a revolutionary movement to take root and flourish, certain essential ingredients must exist, creating what Jeff Goodwin calls the political context behind a revolution. Goodwin defines political context as the manner in which a country governs and regulates its society, as well as the degree of political participation it permits society.<sup>3</sup> As a tool for analysis, Goodwin's state-centric approach provides a substantive and compelling analytical framework for explaining the

expansion of revolutionary movements. Furthermore, this framework helps explain the revolutionary movement's reliance on violence over popular support to gain political control.

Goodwin's framework comprises five government malpractices, which foster revolutionary movements: (1) State sponsorship or protection of unpopular economic and social arrangements or cultural institutions; (2) Repression and/or exclusion of mobilized groups from state power or resources; (3) Indiscriminate, but not overwhelming, state violence against mobilized groups and oppositional political figures; (4) Weak policing capacities and infrastructural power; and (5) Corrupt and arbitrary personalistic rule that alienates, weakens, or divides the elites of society.<sup>4</sup> Any of these practices alone is insufficient to empower a revolutionary movement, but as Goodwin argues, in aggregate, they are explosive. To paraphrase Goodwin:

*State sponsorship or protection of unpopular economic and social arrangements or cultural institutions.* Revolutionary movements are more likely to form whenever the population views the governing leadership as intimately responsible for economic and social injustices or protecting unjust cultural institutions. Once this idea takes hold, the population may perceive even subsequent government reforms as a sign of weakness, further bolstering the revolutionary movement. The existence of economic and social inequities is not enough to alienate the people if they believe other individuals or lower-level agencies are to blame rather than the central government.<sup>5</sup> Generally, the majority of people will avoid joining or supporting an insurgency (unless coerced) if they believe the government is not connected to their plight, no matter how severe it is.<sup>6</sup>

*Repression and/or exclusion of mobilized groups from state power or resources.* Government exclusion of political and activist groups from the political process, especially through repression, serves to radicalize them to such an extent that they eventually turn against the regime. Repressive and exclusionary authoritarian regimes are particularly susceptible to revolutionary movements because they push even moderate organizations into radical camps. Revolutionary movements in turn radicalize new members by marginalizing their moderate elements.<sup>7</sup>

The process of alienation is often gradual and, in some cases, irreversible. People join insurgency movements when they perceive the futility of redressing grievances through political activity and dissent. The government exacerbates alienation when it uses “violent and indiscriminant” repression against all groups—both radical and moderate. These factors suffice to provide antigovernment groups the opportunity to initiate open warfare.<sup>8</sup>

*Indiscriminate, but not overwhelming, state violence against mobilized groups and oppositional political figures.* According to Goodwin, “Indiscriminate state violence against mobilized groups and oppositional figures is likely to reinforce the plausibility, justifiability, and (hence) diffusion of the idea that the state needs to be violently ‘smashed’ and radically reorganized.”<sup>9</sup> If government forces cannot extirpate the burgeoning insurgency and begin to use indiscriminate violence against the populace, insurgent recruitment is likely to increase as the people seek protection through the insurgents. Moreover, indiscriminate state violence tends to undergird radical ideologies of state and social revolution. In short, radical movements thrive in this environment of intolerance, which causes the evanescence of the moderates.<sup>10</sup>

*Weak policing capacities and infrastructural power.* Anything less than overwhelming force will endanger the regime's capability to repress enemies of the state. Insurgencies can grow unabated if the government lacks the forces or the infrastructure to establish its authority over insurgent enclaves. Remote regions on the periphery of the state, especially with mountains or jungles, often serve as superb insurgent sanctuaries. Corrupt or politically compartmentalized government and security forces undercut the ability to wage a coherent counterinsurgency. Accordingly, insurgents resort to open conflict and economic crises to accelerate the fall of the regime.<sup>11</sup>

Goodwin's assessment here is a bit narrow and needs some refinement. Insurgency specialists John J. McCuen, David Galula, and Roger Trinquier assert that the primary task of the insurgency and counterinsurgency is to gain control of the population so as to garner its support.<sup>12</sup> The amount and type of force as well as the geographic conditions are merely variables that shape the conflict. Galula elaborates on the mechanisms of control in terms of the political structure, the administrative bureaucracy, law enforcement, and the armed forces.<sup>13</sup> This monograph will highlight how deficiencies in these mechanisms result in a loss of control over the population.

*Corrupt and arbitrary personalistic rule that alienates, weakens, or divides counterrevolutionary elites.* Goodwin believes that despotic and "neopatrimonial" dictatorships are particularly susceptible to revolutions because they facilitate the formation and persistence of revolutionary movements. Because dictators often view economic and military elites as threats, they continually seek to weaken and divide them. As a result, the autocratic regime may lose its loyal base in

times of revolutionary crisis by driving these elites into the revolutionary camp.<sup>14</sup>

Neither Goodwin nor this monograph claims that political context “is the only factor that explains the formation and fate of revolutionary movements, but it is generally the most important factor.”<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the reader may find the state-centric approach lacking the essential flavor to complement the analysis. The competence of the insurgent leadership most certainly requires at least some examination if only to serve as a contrast to the government’s competence.

*The competence of the insurgent leadership to develop and execute a successful strategy.* Although a government may create the conditions for the formation of revolutionary movements, the insurgency can still fail if the leadership is unable to conduct a successful campaign. The primary task of the insurgency is convincing the population that it is winning the conflict and enjoys a wave of popular support. The political effect dominates military considerations to such a degree that insurgents must focus on propaganda to gain the initiative. The insurgent propaganda campaign seeks to isolate the government from the populace. It also seeks to internationalize the conflict so insurgents can garner external support as well as increasing international criticism, diplomatic isolation, and even economic sanctions on the government. Under these conditions, military operations become increasingly irrelevant to the outcome of the conflict.

Before addressing the crux of this monograph, a small digression is necessary to avoid a basic misunderstanding of a complex subject. The term “revolutionary warfare” is misleading because it implies an almost exclusive reliance on military force to achieve political ends. Bernard Fall’s definition

of revolutionary warfare as “guerrilla warfare plus political action” furnishes a good conceptual definition.<sup>16</sup> But to ensure there was no confusion regarding the dominant ingredient, Fall added that “it is so important to understand that guerrilla warfare is nothing but a tactical appendage of a far vaster political contest and that, no matter how expertly it is fought by competent and dedicated professionals, it cannot possibly make up for the absence of a political rationale.”<sup>17</sup> Truong Chinh, former secretary general of the Vietnamese Communist Party and former president of the North Vietnamese legislature, drives home this very point:

[There are] those who have a tendency only to rely on military action. . . . They tend to believe that everything can be settled by armed force; they do not apply political mobilization, are unwilling to give explanations and to convince people; . . . fighting spiritedly, they neglect political work; they do not . . . act in such a way that the army and the people can wholeheartedly help one another.<sup>18</sup>

As this monograph will underscore, government subordination of political effect to military expediency is a frequent cause of counterinsurgency failure.

One critical aspect of revolutionary warfare is the degree the conflict polarizes the combatants, making compromise or even diplomacy extremely difficult. Once a revolutionary insurgency reaches a tipping point, as Bernard Fall noted, “it is difficult to suppress with the help of military specialists alone – particularly foreign specialists. And those anti-insurrectional systems that eventually prevailed over the revolutionaries simply did so by accepting large parts of the program advocated by the latter. . . .”<sup>19</sup> As each of the following cases suggest, failure to remain

cognizant of the political nature of the conflict can place severe strains on the government.

### **Republic of Vietnam, 1955-63.**

*State sponsorship or protection of unpopular economic and social arrangements or cultural institutions.* Contrary to much of the literature on the origins of the Vietnam War, the Viet Cong insurgency was not preordained or even inevitable. Bernard Fall, the renowned expert on the Indochina and Vietnam conflicts, observed that revolutionaries cannot start an insurgency without a basis because they will founder for lack of popular support. Writing in 1966, Fall reflected that:

All Communist movements have a hard core of trained military or guerilla cadres. Some of them may never have a chance to use their military or organizational skills; others do. It all depends on the *local circumstances*, and rarely vice-versa. Such Communist cadres will exploit occasions when they arise, but they are incapable of “creating” a revolution from scratch. It is Diem who created the movement of discontent in South Vietnam. North Vietnam and the Viet Cong fed on it.<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, President Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu were the central figures in creating the conditions for the vitalization of the Viet Minh revolutionary movement, which formally became the National Liberation Front (NLF) on December 20, 1960.<sup>21</sup> Diem’s abrogation of the village-as-an-institution created the grievances which the Viet Minh cadres could exploit among the peasantry.

In June 1956, Diem annulled the local elections of village chiefs and village councils, replacing them with his own political appointees. While Diem probably

took this step to extend his personal control over the rural areas, few of these appointees were native to the villages and preferred to live in the nearby district towns.<sup>22</sup> By personally appointing village officials, Diem ended a 500-year tradition of local elections. Villagers viewed these interlopers with animosity, particularly since many of the appointees were corrupt.<sup>23</sup> Frances Fitzgerald abstracts the commonly held view among villagers of Diem's officials:

The government-appointed village chief; the "haughty," "arrogant" official who took bribes from the local landlords and forced the villagers to work for him; the village security officer – a relative, perhaps of the district chief – who used his position to take revenge on old enemies or to extort money from the villagers; the government soldiers who, like juvenile delinquents, drank too much, stole food, and raped the village girls; the village defense guards, who huddled in their earthwork forts each night and fled when the Liberation Front came in force to the village; [and] district and provincial officials who, like Kafka's bureaucrats, seemed to inhabit a world impossibly remote from the village.<sup>24</sup>

Whenever the Viet Cong assassinated, kidnapped, or drove out these officials, the villagers regarded the Viet Cong as benefactors rather than terrorists.<sup>25</sup> By replacing the village officials with their own "elected" cadre leaders, the NLF was able to subvert Diem's regime, village by village.<sup>26</sup> One infers that villagers likely did not accept the cadre leaders any more than they did Diem's appointees, but the NLF held the monopoly of force once the government left a void.

Diem's resettlement program proved disastrous because it ignored the spiritual attachment peasants held towards their villages. Moreover, inadequate planning, poor settlement design, and inattention to crop requirements created wretched conditions in the

new villages. Not surprisingly, at the first opportunity, the inhabitants returned to their original homes.<sup>27</sup> Fitzgerald noted that the peasant formed a fervent attachment to the village, believing that abandonment of it would result in the abandonment of the soul as well. Hence, the village represented an integral part of the peasant's being.<sup>28</sup> Under these circumstances, the concept of resettlement would tend to alienate the peasantry even if the new villages increased the quality of life (which they did not).

Diem's land reform program was equally mismanaged and not pursued seriously, alienating both the landlords and tenants.<sup>29</sup> Incidentally, the deluge of American food imports and financial assistance to the cities impoverished peasant rice farmers, but the Americans did not consider the economic consequences of their assistance at the micro-economic level.<sup>30</sup> Nor did they seem to consider the seriousness of an insurgency generated at the grassroots level.

In 1962, the American and British advisors devised the Strategic Hamlet program, which had proven decisive in Malaya.<sup>31</sup> But the program had some inherent difficulties not present in Malaya. First, it involved some resettlement in order to concentrate the inhabitants in fortified villages. Unlike the squalid settlements of the Chinese squatters in Malaya, the new Vietnamese villages might not necessarily lead to an improvement in living conditions, and the villagers would have to walk farther to tend their fields. Second, Nhu personally took charge of the program and mismanaged it to ruin. He senselessly pursued a rapid, haphazard construction program (trying to fortify two-thirds of the 16,000 hamlets in just 14 months), which resulted in a replay of the earlier, squalid resettlement villages, and with less than 10 percent of the hamlets

having any defensible capability.<sup>32</sup> Had the government followed the advice of Sir Robert Thompson (the architect of the Malayan “new villages” program), the planning, provision of resources, and execution of the program would have been much more methodical and organized. If Fitzgerald is correct, however, then the issue of the peasant’s identity with the village would have made the Strategic Hamlet program very problematic as well. It could only be sold to the peasantry as a temporary measure until the insurgency was defeated. The government could have made it clear to the peasants that they retained the choice of staying or returning to their villages once hostilities had ended.

In short, Diem alienated the peasantry by adopting programs that ignored village institutions and culture. Diem’s intractable stance permitted the Viet Minh cadres to gain a footing in the villages because the traditional local leadership was absent to garner village resistance. More significantly, his policies led to the loss of government control in the rural areas.

*Repression and/or exclusion of mobilized groups from state power or resources.* Diem’s first act, with the assistance of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) chief of station Colonel Edward Lansdale, was to gain control of the military by replacing General Nguyen Van Hinh, the military chief of staff, after he challenged Diem’s legitimacy. Next, Diem defeated in detail the three most powerful sects in South Vietnam: the Hoa Hao, the Cao Dai, and the Binh Xuyen. According to Bernard Fall, the success of this campaign, in large measure, was due to the popular support the Diem regime enjoyed in ridding the country of these criminal and subversive sects, and not to any tactical prowess of the military.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, the 1955 Anti-Communist Denunciation

Campaign successfully eliminated the Viet Minh cadres as a threat to the regime.<sup>34</sup> These victories were a propitious start for Diem internationally. He had, within a year of assuming power, secured the regime from internal threats, paving the way for economic reforms (almost totally through U.S. assistance) and political reforms (or so the Americans had hoped).<sup>35</sup> The defeat of the sects reassured the Eisenhower administration and some influential senators that Diem was the type of leader that would bolster America's containment strategy in South East Asia.<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately, Diem did not temper his achievements with a subsequent policy of reconciliation. On the contrary, his cleansing campaign turned increasingly repressive, spreading to all sectors of society, with the exception of the Catholics.<sup>37</sup> In January 1956, Diem issued Ordinance No. 6 which gave him *carte blanche* against *perceived* national security threats, imposing the arrest and detention of state enemies, establishing concentration camps, suspending habeas corpus, creating military tribunals without the right of defense and appeal, and abolishing the right of assembly.<sup>38</sup> The concentration camps included not only communists, but also members of various sects, political parties, the media, and the trade unions.<sup>39</sup>

Repression, exclusion, and favoritism epitomized the Diem regime. Diem and Nhu blatantly barred opposition parties from the electoral process and habitually suppressed newspapers critical of the regime.<sup>40</sup> The regime viewed all political groups, not just the communists, as threats and suppressed them.<sup>41</sup> Conversely, Catholics received favorable positions in the administration, and Catholic villages received the lion's share of economic assistance and other aid.<sup>42</sup> Within this political milieu, the Diem regime needlessly

polarized the country into two camps, and Diem's camp grew smaller as his campaign of repression became more expansive.

*Indiscriminate, but not overwhelming state violence against mobilized groups and oppositional political figures.* Diem's campaign against all enemies, real or imagined, was pervasive. Without a doubt, many Viet Minh were arrested, but so were leaders of other political parties, and even nationalists whose only crime was to have earlier opposed the French. Other officials, without Diem's knowledge, used the anti-treason laws to settle old scores with enemies, increase their economic position, and gain a political advantage.<sup>43</sup>

The South Vietnamese army (ARVN) earned the reputation of rapaciousness concerning its treatment of villagers.<sup>44</sup> As Bernard Fall recorded, American advisors in Vietnam continually reproached the ARVN for "stealing, raping, burning down villages, [and] generally kicking people around."<sup>45</sup> Fitzgerald believes this contempt from soldiers and government officials created an atmosphere of paranoia among the villagers to the extent "they ceased to trust each other to the point where they could not organize to defend themselves."<sup>46</sup> The crucial consequence of these acts became manifest during the later counterinsurgency. Conceptually, the villagers were the integral component of the self-defense forces (local militias). If the regime ill-treated the peasantry, then the peasants would not fight for the regime.

The tipping point against the regime came in the spring of 1963. The government's use of deadly force against Buddhist demonstrators in Hue on May 8 resulted in an unprecedented but powerful anti-Diem opposition movement among the Vietnamese. Buddhist activism—exemplified by mass protests, hunger strikes, and several self-immolations—resonated

with the populace in a way the NLF could not.<sup>47</sup> Committed openly to the overthrow of the regime, the Buddhist sects acted through the media to demand the end of Diem's tyranny, using self-immolations as a propaganda device more powerful than any NLF terrorist act.<sup>48</sup> In a show of solidarity, students from Saigon and Hue staged protests.<sup>49</sup> Uncompromisingly, Nhu ordered the security forces on August 21 to repress the Buddhists with a wave of executions and arrests in Saigon, Hue, and other prominent cities.<sup>50</sup> Thereafter, Nhu had thousands of college and high school students arrested for protesting the August 21 atrocities. This last act appeared suicidal since it meant the alienation of prominent families and the Catholic clergy – virtually the last supporters of the regime. One of Nhu's subordinates believed his addiction to drugs may have contributed to his irrational and paranoid behavior, which eventually manifested in accusations of a U.S. conspiracy against the Diem regime.<sup>51</sup>

For 8 years, the Diem regime had managed to push a number of powerful sects and a sizable portion of the peasantry into the arms of the Viet Minh cadres. Furthermore, it had alienated the army, the Buddhists, and the urban elites to such an extent that it lost its source of support. Finally, the Kennedy administration concluded that only regime change could salvage its containment strategy in Southeast Asia.

*Weak policing capacities and infrastructural power.* Diem's haphazard and ineffective centralization of the government resulted in several vacancies at the provincial level, and in some parts of the country no government presence existed.<sup>52</sup> Wherever permanent authority was absent, the government was sure to lose control of the populace. Analyzing the meaning of control during the Indochina conflict and the NLF

insurgency in South Vietnam, Bernard Fall assessed that using military occupation as a measurement of control is illusory. The real indicators of control are the number of villages paying taxes, the presence of teachers in villages, and the political activities of village chiefs and councils. A decline in tax collection, an increase in teacher absenteeism in villages, and the loss of village authority in fact indicate a government loss of administrative control. By 1962, the insurgents had killed upwards of 10,000 village chiefs out of 16,000 villages. By mid-1963, Communist tax collections were prevalent in 42 out of 45 provinces. Fall concluded that body counts and captured equipment are irrelevant in insurgency warfare.<sup>53</sup> *“When a country is being subverted it is not being outfought; it is being outadministered.”*<sup>54</sup> (Emphasis in the original.) Fall believed that the fallout from government-appointed village chiefs resulted in the severance of 80 percent of the population from the central government.<sup>55</sup>

As early as 1955, the United States had taken an active role in Vietnam’s security. It reorganized the ARVN into seven divisions equipped with American weapons and equipment. As the insurgency grew, the United States created the Popular Forces to patrol villages and Regional Forces (50,000 total) to provide provincial defense. In short, it had created an American-style military bureaucracy and organization.<sup>56</sup> By 1963, the United States deployed 16,000 American advisors for the ARVN.<sup>57</sup> The 300,000-man ARVN may have dominated geographic terrain most of the time, but this fact was irrelevant because the NLF dominated most of the population centers. This terrain is where insurgencies are won.<sup>58</sup>

*Corrupt and arbitrary personalistic rule that alienates, weakens, or divides counterrevolutionary elites. In*

many ways, Diem was a cipher, an embodiment of contradictions. He was personally an ascetic, but his regime was extremely corrupt. Appointed by Emperor Bao Dai as the premier for South Vietnam during the summer of 1954, Diem had tenuous political support to draw from initially. Vietnamese military and civil authorities regarded him as an interloper since he had not lived in Vietnam for the previous 4 years, and the Cochinese landlords distrusted him because he was Catholic and from central Vietnam. Fortunately for Diem's political future, Colonel Lansdale convinced the Eisenhower administration to support him as a matter of foreign policy, which in turn convinced Diem's rivals not to challenge him.<sup>59</sup> Diem's anti-Japanese and anti-communist credentials, as well as his reputation for integrity and executive skills, certainly bolstered his international standing.<sup>60</sup> Diem's defeat of the most powerful sects convinced the Eisenhower administration that Diem had the moxie to resist the communist threat, and it thereafter proceeded to provide substantial financial, military, and advisory support.<sup>61</sup>

Despite these credentials, Diem was not the champion of democratic institutions as supposed. Evidence suggests he saw himself literally as a Confucian emperor, who ruled as a paternal and moral sovereign. As such, only he could determine what was best for the people, and hence regarded voting and elections as a means to establish the unanimity of his decisions. To Diem, permitting the uninformed and uneducated masses to have a voice in important political matters would be an abrogation of his sovereign responsibilities.<sup>62</sup> In view of his political outlook, Diem's excessive voter fraud in the presidential and legislative elections of 1957, 1961, and 1963 is understandable; it

was designed to ordain his reign and install officials who would prosecute his edicts.<sup>63</sup>

Without a doubt, the catalyst for the Viet Minh revolutionary movement was Diem's obsession for centralized control, even though he lacked the requisite organizational and managerial skills to ensure it. Fall claims that until Diem began alienating the populace, the 6000-strong Viet Minh cadre in South Vietnam commanded no popular support.<sup>64</sup> The survivors of the Hoa-Hao, Cao-Dai, and the Binh Xuyen sects threw their support behind the Viet Minh almost immediately due to Diem's relentless persecution.<sup>65</sup> If properly cultivated, these sects could have been valuable allies in combating the Viet Minh cadres, since they had no particular affinity with the communists.

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 oversight to curb corruption.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, corruption abounded in all forms. In spite of Diem's personal revulsion of corruption, the Ngo family was the biggest practitioner of nepotism. His close relatives filled the top ambassadorial, cabinet, and civil service posts. Most significant, his brother Nhu served as his personal advisor and chief of central intelligence, making him the most powerful man in Vietnam.<sup>67</sup>

Cracks in the regime appeared frequently, which must have emboldened the NLF and North Vietnamese, while at the same time alarming the Americans. In 1960, the *Groupe Caravelliste*, comprising 18 senior Vietnamese politicians, publicly condemned regime oppression and corruption in detail. Weeks later, a poorly planned military coup provided the regime with the opportunity to crack down even more, including

the imprisonment of the *Groupe Caravelliste*.<sup>68</sup> At this point, Diem began to withdraw into himself, reducing his circle of confidants, and isolating himself even further from the public view.<sup>69</sup> Nhu began to step up his persecution of “subversives,” as well as factionalizing the officer corps through corruption, extortion, and espionage. This environment not only created a climate of mistrust in the officer corps (making the formulation of a coup problematic), but it also undermined military prosecution of an effective counterinsurgency.<sup>70</sup>

The spontaneous demonstrations in the late spring and summer of 1963 finally alerted the United States of the rot within the Diem regime. In August 1963, the Kennedy administration quietly hinted to the top ARVN generals that a change in government might be in order. Further dissociation of the Diem regime by the Kennedy administration in October convinced the paranoid generals that they could count on U.S. acquiescence if a coup occurred. So it was on November 1 that the general’s coup toppled the regime, resulting in the execution of Diem and Nhu without fanfare.<sup>71</sup>

*The competence of the insurgent leadership to develop and execute a successful strategy.* In the aftermath of the French Indochina War, the Viet Minh cadre in South Vietnam reverted to a political struggle in anticipation of forming a new government in the aftermath of the proposed 1956 national elections. As a hedge, the cadre would maintain its revolutionary organization in case the elections were not held.<sup>72</sup> Even though the Viet Minh cadre depended on North Vietnam for resources and strategic guidance, it would be an overstatement to say it was a mere appendage of North Vietnam.<sup>73</sup> Often the agendas of each clashed with major debates regarding whether the cadre should start the military struggle as its leadership desired, or continue with political

subversion as the northern leadership desired.<sup>74</sup> The goal of unification was never in question; rather the dispute revolved around the strategy. But the main point is that the North Vietnamese government did not have such control over the cadres that it could direct all of their activities. The relationship was much looser than that.

In 1957, the Viet Minh cadre began a two-pronged campaign to sever the government's control from the rural population. One prong focused on propaganda while the other involved "a campaign of assassinations aimed at government officials, teachers, and members of the Cong An (the Diemist secret police) in an effort to eliminate government institutions in the countryside."<sup>75</sup> Although North Vietnam was predominantly engaged in consolidating its domestic economic and political position, Ho Chi Minh increasingly viewed the cadres' struggle favorably, appointing the principal cadre leaders, Le Duan and Pham Hung, to substantive leadership positions in the Communist party, as well as having them accompany him to Moscow in order to lobby for Soviet aid and diplomatic support of their revolutionary struggle.<sup>76</sup> By the end of 1958, the revolutionary movement (now called the Viet Cong) had begun to recover from Diem's Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign, and Le Duan began lobbying North Vietnam to support the Viet Cong's escalation to an armed struggle, a decision North Vietnam's leadership declined to make at this juncture.<sup>77</sup> North Vietnam favored a continuation of the subversion campaign, fearing an armed struggle would lead to the intervention of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and increase the probability of American military intervention.<sup>78</sup> Increased involvement would need to wait until North Vietnam finished the consolidation

of its socialist programs and the reorganization and modernization of the NVA in accordance with its 5-year plan (1955-59).<sup>79</sup>

The last half of 1959 became the defining period for the insurgency. Diem's unrelenting counterinsurgency campaign against the Viet Cong (and everyone else) pressured the North Vietnamese leadership to agree to some intensification of the campaign into an armed struggle.<sup>80</sup> During this period, North Vietnam began reorganizing and rearming the cadre units, as well as revitalizing former base areas in South Vietnam. In January 1960, the Viet Cong armed struggle began with a series of attacks on the ARVN and government officials in villages.<sup>81</sup> In December 1960, the cadre formed the National Liberation of South Vietnam (NLFSV or NLF) to provide a political identity for the struggle and for international assistance.<sup>82</sup>

Still, the debate raged within the Vietnamese Communist party (Lao Dong) between advocates of an armed struggle and those in favor of continuing the political struggle. Powerful party members Truong Chinh and General Vo Nguyen Giap urged caution, believing that active resistance and continual expansion of the movement would ultimately achieve the overthrow of Diem's regime without risking increased American involvement.<sup>83</sup> In the end, the Viet Cong leadership swayed the majority for an escalation to guerrilla warfare. As Giap had feared, the American military assistance and intervention increased in kind, eventually escalating the conflict beyond what the North Vietnamese had planned.<sup>84</sup>

Objectively, the opponents of an accelerated timetable for armed conflict were probably correct. Despite years of Diem's cleansing operations, the Viet Cong still numbered 5,000 members in the 1958-59

time frame. Admittedly, a substantial percentage of cadre leadership positions had been eliminated in the conflict, but so long as the Viet Cong infrastructure remained in place, losses alone were not decisive.<sup>85</sup>

The cadre's strategy of political struggle was essentially sound, effective, and adaptive. The NLF discovered that the peasants did not automatically transfer allegiance with the elimination of the village chiefs or landlords. Rather, they remained reserved, not wanting to get involved in a conflict between "outsiders." Interestingly, the NLF land reform program did benefit the peasants, and the affected peasants were appreciative but not enough to throw their support behind the NLF.<sup>86</sup> Fitzgerald proposes that the greatest factor in gaining the support of the peasantry was an enduring NLF presence in the villages and treating the villagers with politeness and kindness. In contrast to the abhorrent behavior of the ARVN, the NLF presence may have been more tolerable. Fitzgerald concludes that the Government of Vietnam (GVN) "did not care for them [villagers]. The GVN wanted not to win them over, but merely to rule them."<sup>87</sup> Reinforcing the rapport between the cadre cells and the peasants, the NLF emphasized its policy of respecting the centrality of the village with the peasantry.<sup>88</sup>

The well-documented history of Viet Cong terrorism, murder, intimidation, and atrocities against the population contradicts Fitzgerald's harmony of mutual affections between the NLF and peasant. Viet Cong subversion depended on coercion. As the Viet Minh had demonstrated during the Indochina War, only through the establishment of a permanent presence in each village could the NLF gain control of the peasantry. The cadres lived among the villagers and depended on

them for sustenance, security, and intelligence. They also meted out punishment and rewards as a means of establishing their authority. By recruiting among the villagers, fortifying the village, and creating weapons and food caches, the politico-military cadres drew the peasants into the conflict. The ARVN only ran patrols through villages and never established a permanent presence. If the ARVN launched an operation against a known/suspected Viet Cong-controlled village, it was the villagers who suffered from the attack. The Viet Cong calculated the villagers would channel their anger towards the government rather than the NLF.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, these attitudes, if they truly existed, seemed to have changed once the American military became engaged, with villagers lambasting the Viet Cong for bringing the wrath of America firepower down upon them.

Using each controlled village as a base, the NLF devised the “growth and split” technique for expanding its control. The cadre would form a military unit (e.g., a platoon) from the local villages, train it, and give it experience through combat. Later, the surviving members would split into three cadres to serve as the basis for three new platoons, and so forth.<sup>90</sup> This technique tended to churn out competent units relatively quickly, especially when one considers that the evolving cadre consisted of survivors, who could pass their proven skills to new recruits. In this manner, the NLF grew to 15,000 insurgents by 1961.<sup>91</sup>

This approach not only enhanced the movement’s growth, it also demonstrated the dominant position political subversion plays in revolutionary warfare. The government can win hundreds, even thousands, of military engagements, but if it loses control and the support of the people in the process, it will lose

its source of recruitment, labor, fiscal support (taxes), and ultimately perceived legitimacy as the sovereign. As Thomas Hobbes observed, self-preservation is the primary motivation of the individual caught in an insurgency, so he will support whichever side can provide him that security.<sup>92</sup> It is not surprising, then, that through its political-military organization, the NLF was able to extend its control of 80 percent of the rural population by 1963.<sup>93</sup> Bernard Fall's assessment appears valid: The Viet Cong did not outfight the Diem regime, it out-administered it. But the critical lesson is that the Viet Cong movement would not have reached critical mass had the Diem regime not pursued such self-defeating practices.

On the other hand, the Viet Cong leadership made the strategic error of escalating the struggle into armed conflict and in such an unrestrained manner that the United States was compelled to intervene, changing the complexion of the conflict. As insurgency expert John J. McCuen concluded, the Viet Cong leadership overreached, causing its own demise:

This massive U.S. intervention and the new South Vietnamese Government which followed Diem successfully reorganized the pacification program and radically changed the military and political strategies to reestablish the control, security, and support of the South Vietnamese population. This success was culminated during the 1968 North Vietnamese Tet Offensive, when not only the offensive was bloodily repulsed, but almost all of the remaining Viet Cong cadres who surfaced, expecting a general uprising of the population, were either killed or arrested. The North Vietnamese tried unsuccessfully to replace these Viet Cong cadres with North Vietnamese, but the population would not accept them. In any event, the Viet Cong were never again a significant force during the war . . . [primarily due to] the U.S. and South Vietnamese pacification program and the military/po-

litical strategies in the field, which did reestablish the control, security, and support of the population. This is in itself a key lesson.<sup>94</sup>

In short, the Diem regime created the conditions which fed the NLF movement. The fact that the NLF overreached suggests the leadership lacked strategic patience. In the end, the NLF brought in the United States, which possessed the power to destroy the NLF – and it did.

### **Algeria, 1945-62.**

*State sponsorship or protection of unpopular economic and social arrangements or cultural institutions.* Although Algeria had been a French province since 1870, affording it ideally all the privileges and obligations of metropolitan France, the Algerian people did not enjoy the same status as Frenchmen, especially under the European colonists ( *pied noir* or  *colons*) in Algeria. So many bureaucratic obstacles existed for Algerians seeking citizenship that official policies of assimilation became absurd notions.<sup>95</sup> Throughout their tenancy in Algeria, the  *pied noir* (particularly the arch conservative  *ultras*) consistently thwarted any government reforms or reciprocation of Algerian wartime service.<sup>96</sup>

In Alistair Horne's view, paltry Algerian representation in the local government, an unjust social system ( *commune mixtes*), and discriminatory political policies were always at the heart of Algerian discontent. Racism, the unequal distribution of wealth (especially arable land), and economic hardships, as well as poor vocational training and education, exacerbated grievances. Since its occupation of Algeria in 1830, France had treated Algerian nationalism with imperial

contempt and arrogance. Even basic respect for the average Algerian was callously disregarded. *Pied noir* voter fraud in the Algerian Assembly elections in 1948 convinced a small number of Algerian conspirators that independence through violence was the only recourse.<sup>97</sup>

Still, a revolutionary movement may not have emerged had World War II and the Indochina War not occurred. The German defeat of France in 1940 damaged French prestige and *baraka* (honored position) among Algerians. The Viet Minh defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954 broke the aura of French invincibility.<sup>98</sup> Horne laments that despite all this, the tragedy of the Algerian insurgency might have been averted had the French shown "a little more magnanimity, [and] a little more trust, moderation and compassion. . . ."<sup>99</sup>

*Repression and/or exclusion of mobilized groups from state power or resources.* In contrast to the British colonial practice, the French excluded all but a handful of Algerians from administrative posts. The paltry number of French administrators, overworked and understaffed, had little contact with the populace. Frequently, they relied on Muslim intermediaries, the vast majority of whom were corrupt and hated by the inhabitants.<sup>100</sup> Imperceptibly, resistance movements emerged in the 1930s, cloaked in nationalism, but following distinct approaches. The deeply influential *Ulema* religious movement of Ben Badis sought a return to Islamic principles. The *Étoile Nord-Africaine* (forerunner to the MTLD)<sup>101</sup> revolutionary movement of Messali Hadj sought the redistribution of property among the Algerian people. Finally, the liberal movement of Ferhat Abbas initially embraced assimilation with France but on terms of equality. The *Ulema* and *Étoile* leaders

were inveterate firebrands, calling for the expulsion of the Europeans from Algeria. The liberal movement reluctantly moved towards that position in 1936 when *piéd noir* lobbies defeated the Blum-Viollette Bill which sought assimilation of Algerians as bona fide French citizens. The collapse of the bill not only marginalized Algerian moderates, but it also convinced the *piéd noir* that they were the ultimate arbiters of French policy in Algeria.<sup>102</sup> The French authorities exacerbated tensions by arresting Messali and Abbas during World War II for publishing nationalist tracts. Thereafter, Algerian nationalists regarded French promises of reforms as platitudes, particularly if the *piéd noir* remained a political force.<sup>103</sup>

The first real shots of the insurgency rang out on May 8, 1945, when an Algerian pro-independence demonstration took place in Sétif during the “Victory over Europe” (V.E.) Day celebrations. Violence broke-out and rapidly spread to the surrounding areas, resulting in the massacre of 103 Europeans, the wounding of 100, and the raping of several women. Many corpses were intentionally mutilated. In traditional fashion, the French garrisons responded with the *ratissage*—the indiscriminate raking over of villages—to pacify the affected areas. Estimates of Algerian dead ranged from 1,300 to 50,000, depending on French or Algerian accounts. The uprising struck fear into the European *piéd noir*, who not only supported the brutal methods of the French authorities but also used the uprising to filibuster for reforms. As an illustration of unintended effects, many Algerians were more repulsed than intimidated by the military reprisals and hardened their resolve for eventual liberation from the French order.<sup>104</sup>

After Sétif, Messali was exiled to French Congo, and Abbas again arrested. Predictably, Abbas became estranged from Messali for his role in the Sétif massacres, and upon release pursued his moderate course once more as a member of the Algerian Assembly. Unknown to the French government, Sétif only brought a respite, not preemption of the insurgency. Worse, it gave the *piéd noir* a sense of arrogant complacency. As mentioned, their arrogance was best exemplified by the blatant voting fraud during the 1948 Algerian Assembly elections in which the *piéd noir* and their coterie retained their majority.<sup>105</sup> Writing on the repercussions of the election, French professor Charles-André Juilen warned in 1953, "It is by closing the normal paths of legality to a mass of eight million people that one risks driving it back into the arms of the declared adversaries of *la présence française*, who aim to solve the Algerian problem by violence."<sup>106</sup> In short, while French insouciance towards the Algerian people created tensions, *piéd noir* political intrigue accounted for the virulence of the insurgency when it erupted on November 1, 1954.

*Indiscriminate, but not overwhelming state violence against mobilized groups and oppositional political figures.* In response to the inequities under French rule, the chicanery of the *piéd noir*, and weakened position of France following the Indochina War, the founders of the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) determined in July 1954 that the time was ripe for a popular uprising.<sup>107</sup>

Starting off with no more than 400 miscellaneous small arms, the *Armée de Libération Nationale* (ALN, the military component of the FLN) launched its "massive" uprising on November 1, 1954.<sup>108</sup> Small groups of insurgents conducted 70 attacks, all of which miscarried, resulting in few captured arms and little

damage.<sup>109</sup> Militarily, the operation was a complete failure. Worse, the expected popular uprising also failed to materialize.<sup>110</sup> In fact, the French authorities initially thought it was just another “tribal uprising” since most of the attacks were confined to the remote Aurès mountain region (Wilaya 1 or Administrative Zone 1).<sup>111</sup> Unfortunately for the French government, ALN military ineptitude belied the superb FLN political groundwork that created formidable enclaves in the Aurès and Kabylia (Wilaya 3) regions.

This misreading of the situation helps explain the French incremental, expedient, and short-sighted response. But  *pied noir* political pressure on the French government also played a major part in the conflict, and its political power in all matters concerning Algeria cannot be overstated.<sup>112</sup> Its political clout was such that it determined the rise and demise of several metropolitan French governments during the war. Hence, there was tremendous political pressure within the government to appease  *pied noir* interests to the detriment of the Algerians—even if this meant an escalation of the insurgency.<sup>113</sup>

Governor General Roger Léonard did not appreciate the gravity of the threat unfolding in the first weeks of the conflict. France had just 3,500 combat troops in Algeria, but the governor general requested only the deployment of the 25th Airborne Division to deal with the problem—a force much too small for the threat.<sup>114</sup> However, even as troop strengths increased from 80,000 in January 1955, to 120,000 in August 1955, and to 200,000 in December 1955, the authorities (incited by the  *ultras*) continued to respond with inappropriate methods to the insurgent threat.<sup>115</sup> FLN provocations and atrocities were met with French repression, mass arrests, false imprisonment, collective punishments,

torture, atrocities, and other pernicious acts associated with *ratissages* that drove ordinary Algerians into the FLN ranks.<sup>116</sup> The over-reaction was symptomatic of the schizophrenia infecting the various French governments. Domestically, they wanted to appear strong against the insurgents, yet repeatedly forbade any military action that might result in collateral damage. Regardless, the governing authorities in Algeria either ignored the official rules of engagement or failed to implement them in a timely manner. Meanwhile, *piéd noir* paramilitary squads created their own reign of terror.<sup>117</sup>

Inexplicably, the FLN never tried to compete for the hearts and minds of the Algerians. Insurgents used racketeering to obtain funds and food and terrorist acts to intimidate the inhabitants into silence. Jacques Soustelle, the governor general in 1955, observed that the FLN “never sought to attach the rural populations to their cause by promising them a better life, a happier and freer future; no, it was through terror threat they submitted them to their tyranny.”<sup>118</sup> Of FLN victims, 86 percent were fellow Muslims during the first 2 1/2 years of the conflict. Part of an FLN recruit’s final initiation was to assassinate a government officer or informant in order to solidify his status as a committed FLN insurgent. Mutilation of French loyalists was part of the ritual so as to belittle the victim, but also to set an example for others. Muslim moderates were singled out for immediate elimination because the FLN did not want any moderate interlocutors available for the French to negotiate the peace (a prominent exception was Abbas, who joined the FLN in 1956 out of exasperation with the French).<sup>119</sup> Lastly, attacks on Europeans were designed to sever contact with the Muslims.<sup>120</sup> Ironically, the French were partly responsible for turning the population into veritable

hostages because they had disarmed them out of fear of weapons falling into insurgent hands.

The insurgency appeared to be waning until the summer of 1955, when the FLN in the Constantine region (Wilaya 2), after suffering tremendous losses and outraged by French *ratissages* and policies of “collective responsibility,” raised the level of the conflict by committing atrocities against European civilians and the French military. On August 20, the FLN attacked 26 localities around Philippeville, committing such horrible mutilations on men, women, and children that the massacre left a lasting imprint on the subsequent course of the war. The French military and *pied noir* reprisals were immediate, indiscriminate, and bloody. At this point, the war changed character. The French government placed the crushing of the rebels above any compromise or negotiations, and now considered the conflict as total war.<sup>121</sup> Most significant, the French government ceded its political authority to the military leadership in Algeria to end the insurgency by any means.<sup>122</sup> This weakening of political direction and constraints on military strategy virtually undercut any political settlement of the insurgency—short of the complete subjugation of the Algerians. In this context, the pro-Algerian reform initiatives of Governor General Jacques Soustelle and later Robert Lacoste remained moribund as long as the *ultras* retained their dominant political position in Algerian matters.<sup>123</sup> Lastly, any “hearts and minds” benefits accrued by Soustelle’s civic action teams (*Sections Administratives Spécialisées*) were offset by the *ratissages*, collective responsibility, and inhabitant relocation policies.<sup>124</sup>

*Weak policing capacities and infrastructural power.* In view of the troubles elsewhere in the French empire (i.e., Indochina and Madagascar), the initial paltry number of French troops and policemen available to

handle a major insurgency was unavoidable. Moreover, the FLN started out with a tremendous advantage because it was able to create formidable enclaves in the mountainous regions. The extreme terrain and climate were daunting, but the French military performed well under the circumstances. Because the mountainous tracks were too poor for mechanized vehicles, the task of rooting out the guerrillas fell on the light infantrymen. The harsh climate, unforgiving terrain, and constant danger of ambush created experienced and hardened units. This not only applied to the elite paratroopers and foreign legionnaires but also to the conscripts that later flowed into theater.<sup>125</sup>

The Philippeville massacres in August 1955 prompted Mollet's government to use conscripts to provide the military with sufficient strength to crush the insurgency. Troop levels jumped from 200,000 to 402,000 by August 1956, in addition to 180,000 Algerian auxiliaries.<sup>126</sup> By comparison, FLN guerrillas numbered between 15,000 and 20,000.<sup>127</sup> Unfortunately for the French effort, the conscripts suffered inordinate casualties until they became battle savvy, and hence the French public became acutely aware of the war in Algeria.<sup>128</sup> On the plus side, the French adoption of the very effective *quadrillage* system enabled the French forces to clear areas of insurgents meticulously, consequently inflicting 13,899 casualties on the FLN from April 1 to December 1956.<sup>129</sup> This might have proven decisive had the French not withdrawn forces in October for the Suez War in November, the failure of which greatly deflated French morale while simultaneously bolstering FLN morale.<sup>130</sup>

The FLN decided the time was ripe for gaining international attention by announcing a national strike centered in Algiers for January 28, 1957.<sup>131</sup> Since the summer of 1956, the FLN had been conducting a series

of bombings and shootings in Algiers in retaliation for the execution of two FLN insurgents in June.<sup>132</sup> The French struck back with a vengeance. The military reaction might not have been so extreme had recent events not sent them over the edge. The humiliation of Indochina was still fresh, and many of the officers and paratroopers sent in to establish order in Algiers were veterans of Indochina, specifically Dien Bien Phu. Now smarting from the Suez debacle, the paratroopers were in no mood for intellectualizing over the nuances and contradictions of urban insurgencies. Worse, and probably the most incendiary, the *piéd noir* decried the new commander-in-chief of Algeria, General Raoul Salan. Associating him with the defeat in Indochina, the *piéd noir* accused Salan of wanting to sell out Algeria as well. To make their stance absolutely clear, the *piéd noir* attempted to assassinate Salan with a bazooka attack on his office. This act seemed to spur Salan and his senior subordinate, General Jacques Massu, into crushing the insurgency completely as a means of appeasing the *piéd noir*.<sup>133</sup> From February through October 1957, a combination of intelligence, much of it gained through torture, and relentless military and police actions broke the back of the FLN in Algiers and continued throughout Algeria until the core FLN leadership was driven into FLN-friendly Morocco and Tunisia.<sup>134</sup> To prevent FLN infiltrations back into Algeria, the French completed the Morice Line along the Tunisian border in September 1957, a 200-mile electrified fence augmented by minefields and electronic sensors.<sup>135</sup> Manning the Morice Line, 80,000 French troops successfully insulated Algeria from insurgent infiltrations.<sup>136</sup> Next, the French interior forces focused their efforts on eradicating the remaining FLN units and politico-military cells.

When Charles de Gaulle assumed power in June 1958, France was no closer to a political settlement in Algeria than before. Despite the tremendous initial support from the *pied noir* and the military for de Gaulle, he appears rightfully to have regarded both as part of the problem rather than the solution to the Algerian insurgency. His initial focus was on domestic concerns in France, particularly the new constitution. Hence, he empowered the new commander-in-chief of Algeria, General Maurice Challe, to launch a conclusive campaign on the FLN so as to create the conditions for a political settlement, in which France would retain de facto authority over Algeria.<sup>137</sup> Challe conducted a series of offensives to crush the ALN, reducing their operative numbers from 30,000 in 1958 to 15,000 by the end of 1959. Moreover, FLN sanctuaries were now confined to the Aurès region.<sup>138</sup>

Satisfied with these results, de Gaulle offered the Algerians an opportunity to achieve self-determination with the implication that he expected a moderate government with close ties to France.<sup>139</sup> What he did not expect, but should have, was a revolt by the *pied noir* in Algiers (Barricades Week, January 1960) and by some senior military officers. Even General Challe turned on de Gaulle, perceiving the offer of self-determination as a betrayal of the military's sacrifices.<sup>140</sup> In turn, De Gaulle asserted his authority over the military and the *pied noir*, removing several leaders from both camps. In April 1960, General Crépin replaced Challe and resumed military operations against the FLN in the Aurès region, but with the clear understanding that a political settlement was integral to the counterinsurgency strategy.<sup>141</sup>

By the end of 1960, the FLN was reduced to around 8,000 insurgents, operating in small, ineffective bands,

isolated from the population and from the FLN leadership abroad; most of their 6,500 weapons had to be buried for lack of ammunition. Internal FLN purges and combat with French forces had devastated the FLN leadership, and some leaders had even begun to surrender.<sup>142</sup> Nevertheless, de Gaulle spent the remaining 2 years of the conflict trying to police the *pied noir* and the military mavericks, all the while finishing off the FLN and finding a moderate political entity to form an Algerian government.<sup>143</sup> Not only did this infighting detract from fighting the insurgents, it also gave hope to the FLN to hold out until de Gaulle negotiated terms more favorable to and only with the FLN.

Consequently, the FLN's ability simply to survive contributed more to its success than any other factor. *Pied noir* political intrigue plagued every French government, severely complicating the effective prosecution of the counterinsurgency. Hence, the French government was unable to translate military successes into the desired political settlement.

*Corrupt and arbitrary personalistic rule that alienates, weakens, or divides counterrevolutionary elites.* The *pied noir* (especially the hard-line *ultras*) bear the lion's share of the blame for fomenting the FLN revolutionary movement and ultimately contributing to its success. Since 1870, they had dominated French policy in Algeria and maintained a stranglehold on its legislation.<sup>144</sup> Arguably, the average Algerian regarded them as the embodiment of French rule in Algeria. The *pied noir* regarded Algerians as an inferior race and thought of them, when conscious of them at all, as merely a source of cheap labor. As a political bloc, the *pied noir* filibustered reforms for assimilation and equality – up to the very end of the war. More than any other factor, the *pied noir* entangled the French military in political

affairs, which eventually led to the *Organisation Armée Secrète* (OAS) coup against President de Gaulle.<sup>145</sup>

Clearly, the rapid succession of seven French governments during the war contributed to the political prominence of the  *pied noir*.<sup>146</sup> Moreover, the frequent shuffling of government officials undercut a coherent and consistent policy towards Algeria. The French army in Algeria increasingly filled the policy void incrementally and found itself totally politicized by the conflict. The  *pied noir* actively opposed government programs and co-opted the army into supporting their cause. In contrast to the  *pied noir*, however, the military ardently pursued programs of assimilation and reforms among the Algerian populace, but it became zealous in part because the French government abrogated its political authority regarding the prosecution of the war and in part because the military saw Algeria as the means to redeem France's honor and to stem the empire's decline.<sup>147</sup> Alongside the  *pied noir*, the army in Algeria actively sought the promotion of de Gaulle to power, expecting he would provide the political impetus for final victory (even though each held a different definition of victory). When de Gaulle decided to offer Algeria self-determination, the  *pied noir* and powerful military leaders revolted with some (i.e., the OAS) engaging in a campaign of domestic terrorism and an attempted coup d'état.<sup>148</sup> Hence, the autocratic and corrupt grip on power by the  *pied noir* caused severe rifts between themselves and the French government, between themselves and the Algerian people, and between the army in Algeria and the French government. Only a leader of de Gaulle's stature could have broken the political stranglehold of the  *pied noir* and their military accomplices. As much as he probably deplored the idea, de Gaulle had no

choice but to negotiate an end to the insurgency with the FLN. With everyone alienated and no moderate individuals or groups available for negotiation, only the FLN was in a position to form a government.<sup>149</sup>

*The competence of the insurgent leadership to develop and execute a successful strategy.* Of the nine original FLN leaders (the *neuf historiques*), many had fought as French soldiers in World War II.<sup>150</sup> For example, Ben Bella, the principal founder of the FLN and later the first president of Algeria, fought for France in 1940 and later in Italy with the Free French. For his heroism, he was awarded the Croix de Guerre, and General de Gaulle had personally pinned on his Médaille Militaire. Similarly, Ben Boulaid was a highly decorated warrant officer from the Italian campaign (1943-45). The notorious Belkacem Krim had also served in the military but upon discharge had become a political activist and then full-fledged guerrilla in 1947. Krim's lieutenant, Omar Ouamrane, also served in the army before becoming a guerrilla.<sup>151</sup> The point is that although they were familiar with Mao Tse-tung's works on guerrilla warfare, they were not formally trained as communist revolutionaries, but rather as French soldiers who understood intimately the strengths and weaknesses of the French military.

Because the FLN represented an amalgam of differing ethnic groups and ideologies, the organization opted for a collective leadership. The inability for the FLN to choose a prominent leader for the struggle was both a weakness and strength.<sup>152</sup> Without a leader of stature to reconcile differences and conflicts within the FLN, internecine struggles inevitably emerged.<sup>153</sup> Additionally, French diplomatic efforts remained problematic without an FLN central authority (until 1959), particularly after the French had successfully

scattered the FLN collective leadership into various countries. The primary strength of relying on a leadership committee was that it was much more difficult for the French to isolate and destroy the FLN leadership.<sup>154</sup> The *neuf historiques* divided command responsibility as follows:

CRUA* Interior		
Wilaya I	Aures Mountains	Ben Boulaid
Wilaya II	North Constantine	Mohamed Didouche
Wilaya III	Kabylia	Belacem Krim
Wilaya IV	Algiers and surrounding areas	Rabah Bitat
Wilaya V	Oran and the western areas	Ben M'hidi
Wilaya VI	Desert region south of Atlas Mountains	No assignment
CRUA Exterior		
Paris Cairo	Mohamed Boudiaf Ben Bella, Ait Ahmed, Mohamed Khider <sup>155</sup>	
*Comité Révolutionnaire d'Unité et d'Action, the operational headquarters for the FLN.		

Operationally, the FLN adopted a triangular organization of cells for the subversion of French authority.<sup>156</sup> The cellular approach permitted the FLN to generate and regenerate new cells rapidly and presented no organizational center of gravity for the French military to attack. As early as 1951, Belkacem Krim had experimented with this clandestine political-administrative system to gain control of 2,000 villages in Wilaya III, and this infrastructure served as the FLN model for revolutionary warfare.<sup>157</sup> Like the Viet Minh cadres, a lightly armed cell would move into a village; establish its authority by intimidation and terrorist acts; and then use the village for tax collection,

recruitment, and maintaining administrative control of the population.<sup>158</sup> The revolutionary groundwork was so well set that once hostilities broke out on November 1, 1954, the ALN was able to expand from 400 to 2,000 insurgents within 6 days in the Aurès region alone, turning it into a fortified enclave.<sup>159</sup> In the following weeks, FLN infestation became prolific throughout Algeria.

For the FLN, the primary step in controlling the local populace was isolating it from government authority. Any resistance from the inhabitants was met with immediate execution so as to intimidate the rest. Above all, school teachers were singled out for expulsion. Lastly, the insurgent cell would burn all identification cards and civil records in order to complicate French efforts for regaining administrative control. Whenever the police or the military came through a village on patrol, it was met with silence, reflecting the plight of the villagers. As in Indochina and later South Vietnam, the presence of government security forces was only momentary, while the insurgent presence was permanent. Any cooperation with the French would result in quick insurgent retaliation.<sup>160</sup> That the FLN was able to survive the first winter despite French efforts was likely the greatest boon to recruitment.<sup>161</sup> As the war progressed, betrayals by Algerian soldiers serving in the French forces increased, causing a sense of paranoia in the ranks.<sup>162</sup> With the exception of the Aurès region, the situation during 1955 continued to deteriorate throughout Algeria, escalating into guerrilla warfare. The Aurès exception is attributed to Brigadier General Gaston Palange's "novel" pacification strategy, which completely regained control of the population by 1956.<sup>163</sup> Unfortunately, the rest of the military was slow to embrace Palange's strategy, or at least it was applied unevenly.

As the war progressed, the FLN leadership continually adapted its strategy and organization to counter the French strategy. For instance, as a result of a series of recent defeats, the CRUA leadership met to reassess its strategy and reorganize its command and control structure in the spring of 1956 – the Soummam Summit. Although the summit standardized the military organization and centralized command and control by reorganizing CRUA into a new supreme body, the *Comité de Coordination et d'Exécution* (CCE), the summit was also a power play by Ramdane Abane, who shared power in the CCE with Krim and M'hidi.<sup>164</sup> Incidentally, his principal rival, Ben Bella, was intercepted by the French a few months later while on the way to Morocco and spent the rest of the war in prison.<sup>165</sup> When the French successfully scattered the FLN leadership in 1957, the remaining leadership met in Cairo to reorganize the CCE into a political-military body with an inner council of five military representatives and one political representative, Abane.<sup>166</sup>

It would appear that Abane had maneuvered successfully to assume supreme power, but his ambition and caustic criticisms of his colleagues led to his assassination in December 1957.<sup>167</sup> Abane's death was neither beneficial nor deleterious to the FLN – his was just another death among dozens of key leaders, who either died in combat with the French or through internal purges. Of the original *neuf historiques*, only Krim, who had escaped to Tunisia, remained (later murdered by FLN chief Boumedienne in 1964).<sup>168</sup> In September 1959, the FLN formed a government in exile, the *Gouvernement Provisoire de la République* (GPRA), which would serve as a body for negotiation and immediate governance with the ending of hostilities.<sup>169</sup>

One of the most effective and enduring FLN stratagems was internationalizing the conflict. Ben Bella, operating primarily out of Cairo, solicited various countries for financial support and arms, as well as for broadcasting propaganda. When Tunisia and Morocco gained independence from France in March 1956, they provided sanctuary, and Tunisia later served as an interlocutor for negotiations. Successful lobbying secured an invitation in April 1955 for FLN delegates to attend the Bandung Conference, which included 29 Third World countries. The conference not only provided the opportunity for greater financial aid, but also opened the way for the FLN to have its case brought before the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in September 1955.<sup>170</sup> The FLN gained world attention during the Battle of Algiers from January through October 1957. During this time, the brutality of French operations, including the use of torture, became well-known, which in turn led to worldwide condemnation of France and constant international pressure to end the conflict.<sup>171</sup> The FLN also dispatched two eloquent spokesmen, Abdelkader Chanderli and M'hamed Yazid, to New York in order to garner support from the United States and the UN. Cosmopolitan in appearance and well-mannered, they courted American academics and politicians. One of their greatest coups was enlisting Senator John Kennedy to the FLN cause. Senator Kennedy's influential statements slowly turned U.S. official policy against the French policy in Algeria. Incredibly, France refused to publicize the extent of FLN atrocities (complete with photos) to the United States and the UN because it felt this was beneath its diplomatic stature.<sup>172</sup> The French did not appreciate the power of the media, particularly film footage and photos, in defending its policies, and lost an important

front in the war. Paradoxically, even when FLN atrocities were revealed, the public tended to blame France for its inability to provide sufficient security. Incidents, such as the French bombing of an FLN base in the Tunisian village of Sakiet in 1957, created more political backlash than military value because it killed 80 people, many of whom were women and children. In response, Tunisian President Bourguiba demanded the withdrawal of all French forces from Tunisia and accused France of aggression before the UN Security Council – another diplomatic disaster.<sup>173</sup> Anti-French sentiment in the international arena probably weighed more heavily on de Gaulle than he would admit as he assumed power in June 1958. Algeria had made France one of the most reviled members in the UN, prompting de Gaulle to seek an end to the war, even if under less than ideal conditions.<sup>174</sup>

In sum, France's greatest mistake was decoupling political control from military strategy. The French military successfully defanged the insurgency, but the government was unable to translate that into political effect. The  *pied noir*  served as a rogue state within the state, toppling French governments that threatened their position in Algeria. They acted as subjugators and disdained any type of compromise with the Algerians. Only de Gaulle had the political clout to engage them successfully in a power struggle, and it nearly cost him his life. In a Machiavellian manner, the FLN eliminated all rival organizations and moderates with whom the French might negotiate. With more pressing domestic and foreign matters to deal with, de Gaulle finally negotiated an end to the war in 1962 with the FLN as the recognized government in exchange for beneficial oil and nuclear testing treaties. In so many ways, the FLN victory defied all logic of warfare, but

its abilities to survive against all rivals, internationalize the conflict, and exhaust French national will were its trump cards. No doubt, these lessons were not lost among subsequent Arab extremists.

### **Nicaragua, 1967-79.**

*State sponsorship or protection of unpopular economic and social arrangements or cultural institutions.* Nicaragua's Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) was the only revolutionary movement in Central America that successfully seized power, primarily due to the "personalistic, 'neopatrimonial' dictatorship" under Anastasio Somoza Debayle, who virtually alienated all sectors of society.<sup>175</sup>

The Somoza style of governance was not novel to Nicaragua though. James Mahoney premised that its political character was largely shaped by past U.S. interventions that interrupted socioeconomic development in what he terms "aborted liberalism."<sup>176</sup> The Nicaraguan Liberal Party's politicization of the National Guard in the late 1920s, however, created the system of patronage that permitted the Somoza dynasty to rule directly or indirectly through puppet governments from 1936 to 1979.<sup>177</sup>

The Somoza family used the National Guard to distribute patronage to loyalists as well as preventing the possibility of a military coup.<sup>178</sup> When Anastasio Somoza Debayle graduated from chief of the National Guard to the presidency in 1967, he radicalized the patronage system into a neopatrimonial or "sultanistic" dictatorship.<sup>179</sup> Unlike his father and older brother, Somoza personalized his rule, using the National Guard as an instrument of fear and repression in addition to its traditional role of patronage.<sup>180</sup> This

change in governance greatly weakened the resilience of the state to revolutionary challengers. Goodwin suggests that Somoza's rule marginalized moderate political and social groups as well as co-opting and weakening the political and economic elites. Loyalty, affiliation, and nepotism (rather than merit, expertise, and training) determined official appointments, promotions, and business contracts. Consequently, the elites had virtually no influence on the government and were incapable of mobilizing coalitions in response to revolutionary threats.<sup>181</sup>

Similarly, the Somoza government valued loyalty over professionalism, and it prevented the formation of military cliques by frequent rotations of officers in positions of authority, early retirements or purges, and the segregation of officers from social and political circles.<sup>182</sup> Predictably, the lack of military autonomy not only prevented the National Guard from staging a coup, but also prevented it from effectively countering revolutionary movements.<sup>183</sup>

Any popular support Somoza enjoyed dropped precipitously when he raked international aid earmarked for victims of the 1972 earthquake in Nicaragua. Hereafter, Somoza's regime became progressively more repressive as opposition groups began demanding political change.<sup>184</sup> Somoza appeared unfazed by public reaction as he blatantly conspired with the Conservative Party (i.e., the loyal opposition) to have the Constitution revised to permit his reelection as president in 1974.<sup>185</sup> The brittleness of Somoza's political system became more pronounced as political pressure mounted. In essence, no political, economic, and military elites were in positions of power to avert the FSLN revolution once the regime began to crumble.

*Repression and/or exclusion of mobilized groups from state power or resources.* The Somoza regime made no distinction between reformists and revolutionaries. The National Guard indiscriminately attacked or arrested suspected guerrillas and their alleged sympathizers, "rural and urban unions, student groups, Christian 'based communities', priests and catechists, and moderate political parties and opposition figures. . . ."186 Whenever labor or social groups staged protests, the National Guard reacted immediately to crush them and arrest their leaders. Thousands were literally slaughtered, leading not only to the elimination of moderate reformist groups, but also the migration of the people into the ranks of the FSLN for self-preservation.<sup>187</sup> By eliminating all other political alternatives, Somoza unintentionally forced Nicaraguan society to choose between his repressive regime and the revolutionary FSLN. Given no other recourse, the FSLN became the popular choice by default.

*Indiscriminate, but not overwhelming state violence against mobilized groups and oppositional political figures.* The exclusionary and repressive practices of the Somoza regime drove its citizens into the FSLN, which created enclaves in Nicaragua's isolated north central region. Founded by three political activists in 1961, the FSLN never numbered more than a few hundred members until the insurgency gained momentum in 1978. Thereafter, FSLN guerrillas grew from 500 in 1978 to over 5,000 in July 1979. Politically, the Sandinistas expanded their basis of legitimacy by the incorporation of diverse groups from society into their ranks, forming a broad-based political coalition. In a matter of 2 years, the revolutionary movement expanded from the "Group of Twelve," to the Broad Opposition Front, to the United People's Movement, and finally to

the National Patriotic Front, encompassing dozens of organizations.<sup>188</sup>

Goodwin suggests that the FSLN would not have commanded such a broad-based coalition under normal circumstances. However, the citizens increasingly viewed the Somoza government as complicit in corruption and an obstacle to reforms. The various groups coalesced against a common enemy under the umbrella of the FSLN, especially since no single political or social opposition group could effect change alone. Unlike his father and brother, Somoza did not even try to rule indirectly, which flagrantly flaunted the illegitimacy of his regime. Lastly, the Sandinistas provided security and some public goods, which the Somoza regime neglected.<sup>189</sup> Few dictatorships have displayed such self-destructive behavior.

*Weak policing capacities and infrastructural power.* The FSLN enclave in the remote north-central region of Nicaragua was provided sufficient succor from National Guard incursions.<sup>190</sup> Certainly the mountainous terrain contributed to the Sandinista movement's security, but more importantly, the network of Sandinista-allied peasants prevented the National Guard from collecting intelligence on Sandinista camps and leadership.<sup>191</sup> Earlier, the peasant informers had provided such intelligence, which the National Guard used with great effect in hunting down and killing Sandinista leaders.<sup>192</sup> However, in the interim, the regime policy of expelling peasants from their homeland to make room for large cattle ranches embittered the peasants, who, in turn, gave assistance to the Sandinistas.<sup>193</sup> Gaining the support of the peasants was certainly a coup that could not have come about without regime hubris. Previously, the peasants had no reason to trust the light-skinned, college educated, urban revolutionaries.<sup>194</sup> Hence, the National Guard lost its means of intelligence collection,

which was crucial for its counterinsurgency missions. Secure training camps in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Nicaragua permitted the Sandinistas to train guerrilla forces unmolested, which permitted the number of guerrillas to reach 5,000 for the final offensive in 1979. Still, the National Guard numbered 14,000 from 1978 onwards, and, given its superior training and equipment, should have been able to dominate the guerrillas. The number of militants is deceptive, however, since they were often supplemented with auxiliaries not only for combat operations but also for organization and logistics.<sup>195</sup> The FSLN strategy of over-extending the National Guard by launching simultaneous insurrections in several cities and towns in early July 1979 was effective. Faced with the expanded ranks of the Sandinistas, the National Guard quickly exhausted its ammunition stocks through combat and loss of arsenals. Replenishment of ammunition was not possible, given the U.S. arms embargo. It became apparent by mid-July that the combat power of the National Guard was diminishing as the Sandinista's was growing. Inexorably, the Sandinistas closed on Managua until it fell on July 20. Nevertheless, 50,000 Nicaraguan deaths attest to the brutality of the conflict, reflecting the degree the regime clung to power.<sup>196</sup>

*Corrupt and arbitrary personalistic rule that alienates, weakens, or divides counterrevolutionary elites.* Somoza's neopatrimonial rule created the conditions for revolutionary change. He used patronage and corruption to control subordinate authorities as well as to enrich himself.<sup>197</sup> Somoza used the state mechanisms to monopolize business dealings, thereby alienating the economic elites. His skimming of aid for the earthquake relief, as well as his awarding reconstruction contracts to his own companies, is the most oft-cited example of his personalized corruption. The assassination of

Pedro Chamorro in January 1978 galvanized business and intellectual elites to form the “Group of Twelve” as a political opposition group.<sup>198</sup> Somoza’s obduracy during negotiations with the Broad Opposition Front (FAO) and the assassination of FAO member Luis Flores in January 1979 ended any hopes among moderates of a peaceful settlement.<sup>199</sup>

Somoza may have felt his rule was unassailable. The National Guard was unquestionably loyal and *his* instrument of repression. He undoubtedly felt the United States would ultimately not risk losing Nicaragua to the communist Sandinistas. However, the end of the negotiations convinced uncommitted elites to ally with the FSLN and support the FAO general strike in May 1979, which virtually shut down the country.<sup>200</sup>

The regime was increasingly isolated from the international arena, especially from the United States which had already cut off military aid. Moreover, various Latin American countries began to infiltrate weapons to the Sandinistas through Panama and Costa Rica. Meanwhile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, and Brazil had already severed relations with the regime. International isolation became pronounced when the Central American Defense Council severed its support of Somoza on June 13, 1979. The Organization of America States demanded Somoza’s resignation on June 21, blocking a U.S. Secretary of State initiative to deploy an inter-American peacekeeping force into Nicaragua.<sup>201</sup> In light of the groundswell of political and popular opposition as well as Somoza’s neopatrimonial rule, the departure of Somoza on July 17, 1979, caused the disintegration of the National Guard as well as his Liberal National Party. As the vanguard of the revolutionary movement, the FSLN assumed uncontested control of the government.<sup>202</sup>

*The competence of the insurgent leadership to develop and execute a successful strategy.* The 1972 earthquake relief corruption scandal provided the greatest opportunity for the FSLN to gain adherents, especially among the intellectuals and wealthy elites. Yet, despite some minor guerrilla successes, the National Guard was still able to crush Sandinista groups at will, as the ambush and killing of key leader Carlos Fonseca underscored on November 8, 1976.<sup>203</sup>

Humberto Ortega recognized that the beloved “foco” theory of insurgency, with its center in urban areas, had a poor chance of succeeding in Nicaragua.<sup>204</sup> Ortega reasoned that Somoza’s arbitrary and pervasive repression offered an excellent opportunity to overthrow the regime, using a carefully nurtured popular coalition. Nonetheless, attracting the disparate organizations and groups to the FSLN would not result simply because they shared a common enemy. The FSLN had to be seen as a progressive organization that mollified fears. Ortega’s May 4, 1977, FSLN strategy paper outlined the following guidelines: First, omit all leftist rhetoric from the program; second, include non-Marxist opposition groups in the anti-Somoza coalition; third, create mass organizations to support the FSLN; fourth, radicalize opposition moderates through agitation activities; fifth, weaken the National Guard by military action; and sixth, unify the FSLN under a joint leadership.<sup>205</sup>

Ortega’s broad coalition tack produced the desired results. The Sandinistas gained substantive political power in 1977 upon forming the “Group of Twelve,” which comprised “prominent anti-Somoza businesspeople, academics, and intellectuals. . . .”<sup>206</sup> Although forced to flee Nicaragua, the group still organized opposition groups within Nicaragua, as

well as lobbying for international pressure on the regime.<sup>207</sup> The Sandinistas skillfully formed various labor and political organizations into political fronts, creating a “broad ‘multi-class populist coalition’ that included workers and peasants, students and youth, middle-class folk, and part of Nicaragua’s elite.”<sup>208</sup> Co-opting these opposition groups also ensured that the FSLN would take the lead in negotiations, as well as controlling the instruments of power.<sup>209</sup>

Perhaps one of the Sandinistas greatest accomplishments was the international isolation of the Somoza regime diplomatically. The Carter administration was certainly disenchanted with Somoza’s human rights record but was nonetheless committed to the Cold War Containment Strategy. Accordingly, the Sandinistas strove to portray themselves to the United States as a “democratic and popular opposition to the corrupt and brutal Somoza regime.”<sup>210</sup> Their key international spokesmen were respected moderates and leaders in the coalition, who used the Western media, select clergymen, and peace groups in the United States to propagate the message that the Somoza regime must be replaced with a moderate, representative government. The Sandinistas maintained offices in Washington, DC, and New York, providing information to Congress, the White House, the UN, and international organizations. Once on the scent, the Western media brought to light National Guard atrocities and excesses to the world. In November 1978, the International Monetary Fund, as well as other international organizations and banks, cut its loan packages with Nicaragua.<sup>211</sup>

These efforts set the conditions for the April 1979 uprisings, some instigated by the Sandinistas and others self-generated by the locals. Somoza’s obstinacy during negotiations certainly fed into Ortega’s

plans. The coup de grace against the regime in April comprised three fronts: a general strike throughout the country to shut down the cities; popular uprisings in six major cities; and a series of guerrilla attacks in the north and west, converging on Managua. The National Guard, spread thin attempting to defend everywhere, proved unable to defend anything. Consequently, the Sandinistas were able to end the armed struggle of the campaign in less than 60 days.<sup>212</sup>

In short, compared to most revolutionary movements, the FSLN resorted more to subversion by coalition than violence against the regime. Furthermore, once the conflict began, the isolation of the Somoza regime was so complete, its collapse was rapid if albeit sanguinary.

## **Conclusions.**

The revolutionary movements and associated wars in South Vietnam, Algeria, and Nicaragua were fundamentally different in terms of their approach to overthrowing the established governments. Nonetheless, the political context behind the formation of the revolutionary movements provides the common thread. What is remarkable is the degree to which all three governments contributed to the alienation of their societies, providing the opportunity for revolutionary movements to challenge the regime through the people. Goodwin reminds us that in ordinary circumstances, the citizenry would not seek such an association, but when it sees no other way out of a predicament which the government has instigated, it will join whoever provides greater security.

The degree of competency displayed by the revolutionary leadership cannot be divorced from its ultimate success. If the leadership lacks the organizational and political skills to capitalize on or create government mistakes, the insurgency may collapse or just smolder for years. In all three cases, the regimes fought back ruthlessly over a prolonged period.

Of the three revolutionary movements, the FSLN appears to have exercised the greatest political-military acuity. It was able to isolate the Somoza regime and garner a popular movement, more through political subversion and propaganda than through a protracted war of violence. The international isolation of the Somoza regime deprived the National Guard of its critical external military assistance needed for a prolonged struggle. Certainly, the final months of armed conflict were costly for the FSLN, but without its stockpiles, the National Guard likely could not prevail militarily.

The Viet Cong leadership rashly and recklessly pursued armed conflict to such an extent that U.S. intervention became a certainty. The historical record of the Diem regime suggests it was well on its way to self-destruction even without the NLF needing to escalate the conflict to a guerrilla war. This strategic error not only led to the destruction of the Viet Cong guerrillas and cadre in 1968, but also to the elimination of the NLF infrastructure and the peace treaty with North Vietnam by 1972. That North Vietnam resorted to a conventional invasion of South Vietnam in 1975 attests to the degree of the NLF's defeat.

The Algerian FLN leadership deserves neither grudging respect nor emulation. Its wanton brutality to civilians, both European and Algerian, alone

deserves condemnation. The war's descent into barbarity must be laid squarely on the FLN regardless of the circumstances leading up to the conflict. The FLN prosecuted an inferior strategy to the French, resulting in the elimination of its infrastructure and dispersion of its leadership. Arguably, the insurgency became a tertiary issue compared to threat posed by the  *pied noir*  and the military to the authority of the French government. De Gaulle's subsequent actions imply a change in priorities: first, to break the power of the  *pied noir* ; second, to put the military back in its place. De Gaulle's recognition of the FLN government in exchange for lucrative agreements became the unavoidable consequence of asserting government authority over these internal challenges. Hence, the FLN assumed the reigns of power by default and not by triumph.

### **Strategic Insights.**

The three case studies reveal the substantive degree to which a government creates the conditions and the opportunities for an insurgency to flourish. As the United States considers rendering counterinsurgency assistance to a beleaguered state, it must debate the roots of the insurgency. Government malpractice will not dissipate with the infusion of substantial military and financial assistance. These are merely metaphorical pain killers for a chronically ill patient. In such cases, the United States should not be drawn into a conflict for fear that the revolutionary government will pose a dire threat to U.S. national security. If the new government does become a threat, then the United States can take concrete steps to deal with it. Otherwise, the United States will find itself propping up dubious governments

(as it practiced during the Cold War) in a replay of the zero-sum game.

If the United States decides to render counterinsurgency assistance, Goodwin's framework for government practices is a good tool for analyzing the client state's political system. Bard O'Neill warns that government advisors should understand the human milieu as part of their job preparation. "A careful and unbiased assessment of demography, social structures and values, economic trends, the political culture, and the structure and performance of the political system" will assist the advisor in identifying the roots of the insurgency and policy obstacles.<sup>213</sup> He also warns not to rely on the client government's understanding of its own people. If the government were attuned to the grievances of the people, there would be no insurgency.<sup>214</sup>

In the realm of security assistance, the government must address the immediate threat of the insurgency, which is a bottom-up approach. Building national security forces, as well as focusing on the national government and economic development, yields benefits in the long term, but they will not resolve the immediate insurgent threat. Ignoring the burgeoning insurgency in the hope that national security forces, political reform, and economic benefits will trickle down and eventually smother the insurgency entails great risks and generally results in a protracted insurgency.

The supreme task of the counterinsurgency effort is to gain positive control of the population by providing every population center with a permanent security force. The front line in a counterinsurgency is where the people live. Whether the local authorities raise their own police and/or militia forces or rely on coalition

cadres to do the same, such permanent security forces are the sine qua non for a counterinsurgency strategy. Without this solid foundation, all other development and construction efforts will be for naught.

The comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy focuses on renewing the ties between the central government and the local authorities. In light of the significant damage insurgencies inflict on local societies, initiating immediate construction and development projects for villages and towns allows the local population to enjoy the benefits of the established government. The establishment of a UN reconstruction and development coordination center could serve to harmonize, coordinate, and monitor construction and development projects among the international organizations, nongovernment organizations, government organizations, provincial reconstruction teams, and various engineer units in country. A national coordination center serves as a clearing center for legitimate organizations and prevents fraud, conflicts, redundancies, and waste, which inevitably result when separate organizations are left on their own.

The United States must remain attentive to the messages it sends to the client government. Surfeiting the government with million of dollars in aid and assistance, along with a large military contingent, not only feeds corruption and waste, it also cues the government that the United States will remain in the country indefinitely. In such cases, client states create a mutual dependence relationship with their patron states, feeding on the latter's fear of failure. Hence, when developing the right counterinsurgency balance, the United States should err on the side of a minimum footprint because the opposite tack seems to retard government reforms and assumption of the counterinsurgency burden.<sup>215</sup>

Because it is initially weak, an insurgency relies a great deal on propaganda in order to increase recruitment, financing, and international assistance. Additionally, propaganda serves to fetter the efforts of the government by using its existing laws, legal system, and political process as well as domestic and world opinion to insurgent advantage. Insurgents have long regarded cities as the most effective venue for propaganda. Any event—whether a terrorist act, excessive use of government force, or demonstrations—which takes place in a city receives immediate and extensive (even overblown) media attention. The cold reality is insurgents need only to ply some propaganda and sit back as a host of forces begin lambasting the government combating the insurgency.

The United States must have an agency dedicated to information operations for the international community and the beleaguered state. Winning the war of ideas must be integral to the counterinsurgency strategy. It is not a wise idea, however, for a U.S. administration to target the American people, including Congress, with information operations. It is much better to give the domestic audience a sober appraisal of the unfolding situation rather than try to bolster confidence with exuberant optimism. As the Johnson administration learned, such operations create a credibility gap and an inevitable backlash if a setback occurs (i.e., the 1968 Tet Offensive).

## **Recommendations.**

U.S. National Security Strategy must take into account the unique circumstances behind every insurgency and be circumspect when considering the level and type of involvement in a counterinsurgency.

The insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq are likely anomalies because regime change preceded the insurgency. The most likely national security scenario will be rendering assistance to an established government. Hence, political-military engagement with dysfunctional governments should focus on the following:

- Using the political context framework as a reference, U.S. political and military advisors must take every diplomatic opportunity with their counterparts to underscore the deleterious effects of dysfunctional governance and the danger of inaction or half-measures against inchoate insurgencies.
- In preparation for their mission, advisors must understand the demographics, social structures and values, the real economic system, the political culture, and the structure and performance of the political system. This preparation not only assists the advisor understand the roots of the insurgency and anticipate government intransigence, but also provides awareness of counterproductive or inflammatory reforms.
- The U.S. Government must remain cognizant of the substantive advantages an established government has over insurgents and not rush to intervene. The introduction of coalition ground forces carries ramifications above the rendering of security. The client government may relax its counterinsurgency efforts, a burden the coalition soon shoulders. With the immediate threat abates, the government may see no need to reform government practices; and the larger the military contingent, the more difficult it is to extract the political commitment without

the stigma of failure. Hence, a minimum assistance package provides maximum political flexibility.

- The centerpiece of any counterinsurgency strategy is separating the insurgents from the population. How that is accomplished is a matter of strategy, but the historical record suggests military operations targeting insurgents alone are rarely successful. Allowing the establishment of local police and militia, either through local authorities or coalition cadre trainers, is the most effective way to provide security for the population centers. Thereafter, construction and development initiatives can begin in those areas where security is established.
- Like security, construction and development initiatives have the greatest effect at the local level. Construction projects which build what the townspeople want, use local labor, and provide training and salaries, are the best way to spur the local economy and to ensure the people defend the completed projects.
- The establishment of a UN reconstruction and development coordination center could serve to harmonize, coordinate, and monitor construction and development projects among the international organizations, nongovernment organizations, government organizations, provincial reconstruction teams, and various engineer units in country. A national coordination center serves as a clearing center for legitimate organizations and prevents fraud, conflicts, redundancies, and waste, which inevitably result when separate organizations are left on their own.

- The use of a sophisticated information operations to inform, persuade, and inspire the affected population and rebut insurgent propaganda is a prerequisite to counterinsurgency success. On the other hand, it is not a wise idea, and perhaps illegal, for a U.S. administration to target the American people, including Congress, with information operations and even expansive strategic communications. It is much better to give the domestic audience a sober appraisal of the unfolding situation rather than try to bolster confidence with exuberant optimism. To do so risks creating a credibility gap and possible political backlash if a setback occurs.

Most experts agree that the war on terror will last years. To meet this challenge without emptying the national coffers and placing severe strains on military readiness, the United States should adopt a circumspect national security policy. States involved in an insurgency rarely need military intervention on a large scale. A bit of political-military finesse will serve U.S. interests far more than viewing every insurgency as a zero-sum game.

## ENDNOTES

1. Not all insurgents seek the overthrow of a government as well, though these represent the most virulent threat and hence elicit the most interest. Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd Ed., revised, Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

3. Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 14.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-49.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
12. John J. McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Insurgency War*, St. Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 2005, p. 57; Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, Daniel Lee, trans., New York: Praeger Publisher, 1964, pp. 16-17; David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1964, pp. 9, 115-116.
13. Galula, pp. 27-33.
14. Goodwin, pp. 49-50.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
16. Bernard Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000, p. 210.
17. Bernard Fall, *Street Without Joy*, Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1964, p. 375.
18. Extracted from his 1947 book, *La Résistance Vaincra*, in *Street Without Joy*, pp. 372-373.
19. Fall, *Street Without Joy*, p. 374.
20. Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, p. 198.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 184, pp. 197-199.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 233-234.
24. Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*, New York: Vintage Books, 1972, p. 142.
25. Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, pp. 233-234.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
27. Fitzgerald, p. 137.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193.
29. Ordinances 2 and 57, for instance, ordered the return of land to landlords, which was given to the peasants after the war with France. Wallace J. Thies, *When Governments Collide: Coercion and Diplomacy in the Vietnam Conflict, 1964-1968*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, p. 229. Nevertheless, few landlords actually received their land back. Fitzgerald, p. 137.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
31. McCuen provides a precise description of the British “new village” program in Malaya. McCuen, pp. 153-160.
32. Fitzgerald, pp. 166-167.
33. Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, p. 197.
34. Thies, p. 224; Fitzgerald, pp. 119, 197-198.
35. Fitzgerald, pp. 114-115.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-107, 110-111, 121.
37. American experts viewed the continued persecution of the Hoa-Hao and Cao-Dai sects as “tantamount to genocide.” Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, p. 178.

38. Fall, p. 184; Fitzgerald, pp. 119-120.

39. Law 10/59 passed on May 6, 1959, gave the regime the power to issue death sentences for minor offenses after a brief trial. Fall, p. 201; Fitzgerald, p. 120.

40. Fitzgerald, p. 118.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

44. The officer corps was exceedingly corrupt from top to bottom and treated the rank and file poorly. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

45. Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, p. 233.

46. Fitzgerald, p. 156.

47. The Buddhist sects had been persecuted by the Catholics in rural areas since 1954. But when the repression surfaced against the urban Buddhist sects, then a sense of outrage swept the community. *Ibid.*, pp. 173-175.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 175, 178-179.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 179-181.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

53. Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, pp. 217-220.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

56. Fitzgerald, pp. 162-163.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

58. The ARVN even expanded to 600,000 as American involvement grew, but the focus remained misdirected. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-105.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

61. On October 23, 1955, a special plebiscite ejected former emperor Bao-Dai and elected Ngo Dinh Diem as its first president. Unlike the image of Bao-Dai as a Japanese collaborator and puppet of the French, Diem at least had a clean past. Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, p. 134; Fitzgerald, pp. 114-115.

62. Diem's mantra to his American advisors was "I know what is best for the people." Fitzgerald, pp. 116-117, 158.

63. Diem received 98 percent of the vote in 1957, and the legislature was widely viewed as a mere rubber stamp for his edicts. His opponents in the 1961 presidential election were token candidates. Lastly, the 1963 legislative election resulted in Diem's candidates garnering 92 percent of the vote despite half of Vietnam being under NLF control. Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, pp. 167-168.

64. Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, p. 198.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

66. Fall was perplexed by the decision to replace the highly effective decentralized administrative system with a centralized system that overwhelmed the central government and "left village life to its own devices." *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178.

67. Nhu operated 10 secret intelligence agencies which he used for personal gain. Fitzgerald, pp. 124-126, 130.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 160; Fall, p. 203.

69. *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183.
72. Thies estimates 8,000-10,000 cadres were left in South Vietnam, of which 5,000 were combatants. Thies, pp. 223-224.
73. Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, pp. 187-188.
74. Thies, pp. 225-227.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 230.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 230-231.
77. *Ibid.*, pp. 231-233.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
79. The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam: The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam*, Merle L. Pribbenow, trans., Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002, pp. 22-23.
80. The decision to begin the armed struggle was made in May 1959 but it did not begin operation until January 1960. Thies, pp. 236-238.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
83. *Ibid.*, pp. 242-243.
84. *Ibid.*, pp. 244-245.
85. The Military History Institute of Vietnam, p. 44.
86. Fitzgerald, pp. 209-211.

87. This approach paralleled Mao's "Three Main Rules of Discipline" and "Eight Points for Attention." See Mao Tsetung, *Mao's Little Red Book: Quotations of Chairman Mao Tsetung*, Chapter 3: "Discipline," available from Internet at [freedom.orlingrabbe.com/lfetimes/red\\_book.htm](http://freedom.orlingrabbe.com/lfetimes/red_book.htm); Fitzgerald, p. 213-214.

88. Fitzgerald, p. 194.

89. *Ibid.*, pp. 189, 191, 193-194

90. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

91. *Ibid.*

92. "The passions that incline men to peace are fear of death, desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living, and a hope by their industry to obtain them." Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Edwin Curley, ed., Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994, p. 78.

93. The Americans recognized the need for a permanent presence in the village. However, the initiative was undermined by GVN cadres' inability to change their officious attitude with the peasants. Moreover, replacing village chiefs added to the list of assassinations. Fitzgerald, pp. 168, 217.

94. Email to the author, August 8, 2006.

95. It is noteworthy that 75 years after assimilation had become French policy, only 2,500 Algerians had been granted citizenship. Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*, Revised Ed., New York: Penguin Books, 1987, pp. 32-35.

96. Out of a force of 173,000 men fighting for France during World War I, 25,000 Algerian soldiers were killed. Fighting along the Free French in Italy during World War II, the Algerians requested the implementation of reforms as compensation for their loyal service, but again were rebuffed. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37, 42.

97. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-43, 54-55, 60-64, 69-73.

98. *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 78-79.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 34-35.

101. Later changed to the *Parti Progressiste Algérien* (PPA) in 1937 and again changed to the *Mouvement pour le Triomphe de Liberté Démocratiques* (MTLD) when the PPA was banned.

102. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-41.

103. This act drove Abbas into a temporary alliance with Messali with the minimum goal of Algerian autonomy. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-28.

105. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-73.

106. Quoted in Horne, p. 73.

107. The FLN traces its roots from Ben Bella's Organization Spécial (OS), a splinter group of Messali's MTLD. French intelligence and police forces quashed the OS in 1949, but in April 1954, Ben Bella and eight members of the MTLD formed *Comité Révolutionnaire d'Unité et d'Action* (CRUA) as the operational headquarters for the movement. The *Armée de Libération Nationale* (ALN) became the armed component. In October 1954, the FLN came into being as the overarching organization in anticipation of the armed revolt on November 1, 1954. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-79.

108. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

109. McCuen, p. 129; Horne, pp. 90-96.

110. Horne, p. 94.

111. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

112. Because of the powerful  *pied noir* political clout, the Mendès-France government took a hard-line stance against the Algerian nationalists despite its desire to enact a number of substantive reforms for the Algerian people. The government

survived a November 12, 1954, vote of confidence by parliament because of the  *pied noir*  lobby. Hereafter, successive governments feared the  *pied noir*  lobby and followed the same policy towards Algeria as Mendès-France. De Gaulle's government finally broke the back of the  *pied noir*  clout.  *Ibid.* , p. 99.

113. The  *pied noir*  lobby was instrumental in the no-confidence vote in February 1955 when Mendès-France appointed reform-minded Jacques Soustelle as the new governor general. Edgar Faure's government fell by his resignation when the January 1956 elections brought in 52 pro- *pied noir*  seats. Guy Mollet's socialist government replaced Soustelle (now a  *pied noir*  advocate) with Robert Lacoste after the  *ultras*  rejected General Catroux, the first choice. Mollet's government fell in May 1957 over economic policy, but the inability to resolve the Algerian war contributed in a loss of confidence. Its successor, the Bourguès-Maunoury government, only lasted to September 30, 1957, due to the  *pied noir*  strike in Algeria in response to Lacoste's  *loi-cadre* , an initiative to grant autonomy to Algeria. The Gaillard government fell on April 15, 1958, when it accepted the U.S. and British offer to mediate the dispute with Tunisia over the French bombing of Sakiet. The right, army, and the  *pied noir*  excoriated the government, demanding Gaillard's resignation. A weak government under Pierre Pflimlin lasted only as long as de Gaulle agreed to form a government on June 1, 1958. Although responsible for de Gaulle's return, the  *pied noir*  and its military allies did not reckon on de Gaulle breaking their hold on French policy forever. Horne, pp. 99, 107, 126, 148-151, 238-239, 240-241; Michael Carver,  *War Since 1945* , New Jersey: The Ashfield Press, 1990, pp. 137, 139.

114. Although there was an aggregate of 57,000 troops in Algeria, most were garrison troops and troops in transit to Indochina. The combat readiness of garrison troops is too poor to risk using against insurgents since a tactical reversal would greatly encourage the revolutionaries. The use of troops in transit would be beyond the jurisdiction of the governor general. Horne, p. 96.

115. Gil Merom,  *How Democracies Lose Small Wars* , Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 100.

116. Meeting with a French emissary (Vincent Monteil) in early 1955, Ben Boulaid, one of the founders of the CRUA, explained,

"The French *ratissages* operations were 'our best recruiting agent'." Horne, p. 110.

117. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-100.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

119. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

120. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-135.

121. *Ibid.*, pp. 118-123.

122. Merom, pp. 93-94.

123. Lacoste's reforms were much more extensive than Soustelle's integration reforms. His proposal raised the minimum wage, improved credit and sharecropping, and increased the number of hectares for land redistribution for Muslims. The amount of \$200 million was allocated to the Algerian budget for 1957, a 40 percent increase, improving the standard of living. It lowered the minimum age for school entry by 5 years. Fifty percent of vacancies in public service were reserved for Muslims. The *communes mixtes*, European administration governing through *caïds* (Arab local governors) was abolished. Three obstacles denuded the reforms of any effectiveness: First, the ultras were opposed to any political initiative that rewarded the FLN; second, even though half of the *caïds* were corrupt and inefficient, the good and loyal *caïds* felt betrayed and alienated; and third, the FLN targeted for execution any Arab peasants who accepted the land deal. Rather than giving land to individuals, Lacoste should have provided it to the communities, which would have forced the FLN to wipe out entire villages. Horne, pp. 155-156; Carver, p. 136.

124. Horne, pp. 108-109.

125. *Ibid.*, pp. 100-103.

126. McCuen, p. 139; Horne, p. 151; Carver, p. 131.

127. Despite the overwhelming numbers, the French had killed only 3,000 insurgents, with their own losses amounting to 550. Horne, p. 141.

128. *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

129. Carver, p. 131.

130. Horne, pp. 161-164.

131. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

132. *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

133. *Ibid.*, pp. 167-182.

134. *Ibid.*, pp. 183-220.

135. *Ibid.*, pp. 230, 263; Carver, p. 136.

136. Horne, p. 264.

137. Carver, pp. 139-140.

138. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

139. *Ibid.*

140. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

141. Despite Crépin's loyalty, the pressures on him were so great that de Gaulle had to replace him with General Gambiez in early 1961. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

142. Galula, pp. 98-99.

143. Carver, pp. 144-148.

144. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

145. Horne, pp. 54-55; McCuen, pp. 105-106.

146. By French standards, seven changes in government were relatively stable, especially when compared to the 20 governments between 1945 and 1954. Horne, pp. 66, 570-571.

147. Merom, pp. 89, 91-92.

148. Horne, Chapters 8 through 23; McCuen, p. 106.

149. Official FLN policy was to eliminate all moderates who might serve a mediating role in the conflict. In this manner, the FLN would remain the sole actor to negotiation. Horne, p. 135.

150. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

151. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-78.

152. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

153. One of the most gruesome instances of internecine conflict was the FLN massacres of 500 *Mouvement Nationaliste Algérien* (MNA) guerrillas, the armed faction of Messali's MTLD, and the Algerian Communist Party's *maquis rouge*. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-138.

154. Two main camps did emerge within the FLN, though: Ben Bella's "exteriors" group, which conducted affairs internationally; and Ramdane Abane's "interiors" group, which fought the war within Algeria. Although a powerful figure in the FLN, Abane was still one of many contending leaders. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.

155. Carver, p. 126; Horne, pp. 76-77.

156. Roger Trinquier provides a detailed description of the FLN organization from the bottom to the top. Trinquier, pp. 11-13.

157. Horne, p. 89; McCuen, p. 130.

158. Cells comprised a political officer, a tax collector, a recruiter, and an arbitrator for administering justice. McCuen, p. 130.

159. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

160. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

161. Horne, p. 129.

162. *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

163. The pacification strategy may have been novel to the French, but not to the British in Malaya and the Philippine government against the Huk Rebellion, who were applying the strategy with remarkable success. McCuen, pp. 134, 136.

164. The summit also created a parliament composed of 34 Wilaya delegates—*Conseil National de la Révolution Algérien* (CNRA); Horne, pp. 143-146.

165. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-160.

166. The new CCE leadership was as follows: the military representation comprised Krim, Boussouf, Ben Tobbal, Ouamrane and Mahmoud Chérif; the political representation was Ferhat Abbas, Lamine Debaghine, Abdelhamid Mahri, and Abane. Carver, p. 135.

167. Krim and Chérif killed him in Morocco on orders from Boussouf. Carver, pp. 135-136.

168. *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 147.

169. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

170. Horne, pp. 129-131.

171. *Ibid.*, Chapter 9.

172. *Ibid.*, pp. 244-247.

173. President Bourguiba was playing a double game between France and Algeria. He wanted to avoid trouble with France for fear of being invaded and likely used the incident to make the French consider the ramifications of such a military adventure in the future. France was fully justified in striking back at the insurgents in Sakiet, but could have used a more nuanced method. Carver, p. 137; Horne, pp. 247-250.

174. Fall, *Last Reflections on a War*, p. 221.

175. Goodwin, pp. 143-144.

176. James Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependence and Political Regimes in Central America*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, pp. 187-193.

177. *Ibid.*, pp. 232-233, 251-252; Goodwin, pp. 183-184.

178. Mahoney, p. 254.

179. *Ibid.*, p. 254; Goodwin, p. 183.

180. Goodwin.

181. *Ibid.*, p. 183-184.

182. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

183. Mahoney, p. 255.

184. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

185. Goodwin, p. 156.

186. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

187. *Ibid.*, p. 159-160, 162.

188. The Broad Opposition Front (FAO), formed in March 1978, represented an amalgamation of the Democratic Union of Liberation (UDEL), the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement (MDN), and the Group of Twelve. In the summer of 1978, the Sandinistas formed the United People's Movement (MPU) which comprised approximately 22 labor and political organizations. In February 1979, the MPU formed the National Patriotic Front after the Independent Liberal Party (PLI), the People's Social Christian Party (PPSC), and several other groups joined the MPU coalition. The Nicaraguan Communist Party (PSN) and Association of Rural Workers (ATC) also joined the coalition in the summer of 1979. *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164, 167, 186-187.

189. *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178.

190. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

191. *Ibid.*

192. Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century*, St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004, p. 79.

193. Goodwin, p. 163.

194. Hammes, p. 79.

195. Goodwin, p. 191.

196. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

197. *Ibid.*, pp. 184-185.

198. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

199. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

200. *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

201. *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.

202. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

203. Hammes, p. 81.

204. In essence, the “foco” theory of insurgency surmised that a small cadre of armed guerrillas could spark a spontaneous popular uprising and overthrow the government before it could react to the threat. *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 81.

205. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

206. Goodwin, p. 167.

207. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

208. *Ibid.*

209. Hammes, p. 83.

210. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

211. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-86.

212. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

213. O'Neill, p. 166.

214. O'Neill refers to the abysmal misreading of the communist Afghan government and its society in the late 1970s. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

215. Examples of mutual dependence are the United States and the Diem regime, France and the  *pied noirs*, the Soviet Union and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, and the Soviet Union and East Germany. Each client state fed on the fear of collapse to keep their patron states engaged.