

SMALL WARS, BIG STAKES:
COERCION, PERSUASION, AND AIRPOWER
IN COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY WAR

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Preface

Major Norman J. Brozenick, Jr., was commissioned through the United States Air Force Academy in 1983. Major Brozenick is a senior pilot with over 3200 flying hours. After graduating from Undergraduate Pilot Training in 1984, he progressed from copilot to evaluator aircraft commander flying the C-130H Hercules. Maj Brozenick was subsequently selected for special operations duty flying the MC-130E Combat Talon I, and served as an instructor and evaluator aircraft commander. His staff assignments include duty at the Air Force Special Operations Command as a long-range strategist, and a tour at the Air Staff as a joint air operations planner in the Checkmate Division. Maj Brozenick earned a bachelor's degree in International Relations from the U.S. Air Force Academy, a master's degree in International Relations from Troy State University, and a master's degree in National Security and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Naval War College. In July 1998 Major Brozenick was assigned to the 15 Special Operations Squadron at Hurlburt Field, FL, to fly the MC-130H Combat Talon II.

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Abstract

The United States has vital interests to defend in many foreign countries. The strategist must understand the relationship between counterrevolutionary strategy, the military instrument, and airpower if called upon to help a friendly government defeat a revolutionary threat. Four questions can help the strategist explore the nature of this relationship. What is the role of the military instrument in counterrevolutionary warfare? What is the role of airpower in counterrevolutionary warfare? Can airpower achieve strategic effects in counterrevolutionary warfare? Can airpower make major contributions toward the success of counterrevolutionary forces?

The strategy development process is a tool that can guide the strategist through a review of revolutionary theory and an analysis of counterrevolutionary strategy. The revolutionary environment must be examined to determine the actors, motivations, aims, and strategies of the revolutionary battlefield. Next, a national counterrevolutionary strategy is formulated that identifies the roles that each instrument of power must play to achieve the desired end-state. Military leaders formulate a subordinate strategy based on the assigned role(s), which includes determining how airpower can best support the national strategy. Strategy execution implies monitoring the instruments of power, reassessing the environment, and modifying ends, ways, and means as appropriate.

Theory suggests the government must correctly identify the nature of the revolutionary threat before developing its counterrevolutionary strategy. After

determining whether it is facing a partisan or insurgent threat (or something in between), the government tries to identify the correct mixture of persuasive and coercive operations that is needed to win over the people and neutralize the revolutionary threat. Persuasive strategies seek to gain, bolster, or otherwise amass the popular support required for legitimacy. Coercive strategies attempt to neutralize the adversary by making him irrelevant to the political process prior to total military defeat. The military instrument and its airpower tool conduct operations in pursuit of both persuasive and coercive tasks.

Three historical cases are analyzed to gain experienced based insights to answer the thesis questions. The cases were the Greek Civil War, 1946-1949; the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960; and the Insurrection in El Salvador, 1981-1992. In each of these cases the governments struggled to develop a counterrevolutionary strategy. In Greece and Malaya the government successfully neutralized the revolutionary threat. Although the Salvadoran government technically defeated the rebels, they remained an important part of El Salvador's political process.

This thesis offers four conclusions. First, the roles of the military instrument in counterrevolutionary warfare are persuasion and coercion. Next, airpower normally assumes the role assigned to the military instrument, although airpower's unique versatility often permits the simultaneous accomplishment of both persuasive and coercive operations. Third, airpower can create both positive and negative strategic effects. Finally, airpower makes its most important contribution toward the success of counterrevolutionary forces when it is employed in support of ground operations

Chapter 1

Introduction

You can't blow away an idea with a 500-pound bomb . . . but ideas and bombs can help you blow away an adversary.

--Jerome Klingaman

During the Cold War, revolutionary warfare was often a phenomenon of superpower confrontation. Throughout this period, the United States and the Soviet Union supported armed factions that vied for political control of less developed nations. Yet the end of the Cold War did not spell the end of revolutionary violence. At the time of this writing, revolutionary movements are challenging the legitimately constituted governments of several countries that enjoy friendly relations with the U.S., including Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Turkey, and the Philippines. The United States has vital interests to protect in each of these countries. Prolonged instability in Mexico could severely tax the U.S. sponsored attempt to bail out the country's foundering economy. The U.S. expends numerous resources in Colombia and Peru to counter the flow of illicit drugs into North America. Turkey is a North Atlantic Treaty Organization member whose territory guards access to the Black Sea and the Caucasus. The Philippines is a traditional ally whose bases would likely be utilized if a peer competitor arises in Asia. If called upon to help a friendly government, what does the strategist need to know about the relationship between counterrevolutionary strategy, the military instrument, and airpower?

Literature Review

Contemporary works on the theory and conduct of counterrevolutionary war have both rejected and supported the employment of airpower in counterrevolutionary warfare. Yet missing from literature is a detailed discussion of how strategists employ the military instrument and airpower in support of counterrevolutionary strategies. The overarching roles of the military instrument and airpower are unclear. There is little discussion of airpower's ability to achieve strategic effects in support of a national strategy. And finally, it is unclear whether airpower makes a significant contribution toward the defeat of revolutionary actors. A brief survey of contemporary literature offers evidence of such omission and confusion.

Two scholars gaining notoriety within military strategy circles suggest that airpower is of limited value in counterrevolutionary war. In *Bombing to Win*, Robert Pape states, "Guerrillas should be largely immune to coercion; coercers should expect to pay the full costs of military success to extract political concessions."¹ In *The Limits of Air Power*, Mark Clodfelter concludes that airpower is "unlikely to provide either "cheapness" or "victory" in a guerrilla war—and that success in such a conflict may well equate to stalemate."² A second glance at these propositions indicates both authors sought to evaluate airpower's coercive ability to achieve strategic effects, and their methodologies are specifically tuned to ignore the effects of non-coercive applications of airpower. Additionally, the conclusions are based on the analysis of a single revolutionary

¹ Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 74. This work is a serious attempt to characterize airpower's utility as a coercive military instrument.

environment: Vietnam. Though potentially serious findings, these general propositions cannot be accepted until a broader investigation can assess their validity.

Counterinsurgency strategist John D. Waghelstein argues airpower is generally ineffective at winning the key terrain of revolutionary warfare: the hearts and minds of the people. To this end, Waghelstein argues that military forces should be “out among the population, on patrol, in small numbers, showing the flag and talking to the villagers, not flying over them at 5,000 feet.”³ Waghelstein finds airpower’s inherent propensity to cause collateral damage particularly counterproductive. Paradoxically, he praises airpower’s ability to infiltrate small units deep into insurgent territory and provide them with effective firepower support when desired.⁴

Tech-strategist Jeffrey R. Barnett staunchly supports the use of airpower in the counterrevolutionary setting. Barnett argues that “insurgents must eventually adopt a conventional posture in order to finally ‘win’ . . . To replace an existing government, insurgents must eventually shed their guerrilla tactics and fight as a conventional force . . . Contrary to many impressions, insurgents can’t remain guerrillas and expect to win.”⁵

Barnett claims that emerging systems will enable airmen to pinpoint insurgent forces and infrastructure and destroy them with precision guided munitions. Such weapons will

² Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 210. This work is a serious attempt to explain the failure of American policy and strategy during the Vietnam War.

³ John D. Waghelstein, “Ruminations of a Pachyderm or What I Learned in the Counter-Insurgency Business,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 5, no. 3 (Winter 1994): 367. Colonel Waghelstein was the commander of the U.S. Military Group, El Salvador, from 1982-1983.

⁴ Waghelstein, “Ruminations,” 363-367. Readers should be aware that a citation falling near the end of a paragraph normally indicates that multiple ideas were borrowed from the cited author(s) in the construction of the argument.

avert counterproductive collateral damage, prevent insurgent victory by denying them the ability to mass, and expose airmen to minimal risk. If friendly governments are unable to field such high-tech weaponry, Barnett endorses the use of U.S. airpower against insurgents that expose themselves as lucrative targets. Since Vietnam, the executive branch, Congress, and the American public have tended to oppose direct, large-scale involvement in counterrevolutionary warfare. Furthermore, it may prove prohibitively expensive to organize, train, and equip sponsored governments with high-tech airpower. Finally, such heavy-handed use of force is not warranted in many situations.

Air Force doctrine proposes that airpower can be a vital instrument in the prosecution of counterrevolutionary warfare. Air Force Doctrine Document 36, *Foreign Internal Defense*, claims that airpower plays a critical role in supporting strategies of internal defense and development. As will be discussed later, this strategy endorses the objectives of balanced development, mobilization, security, and neutralization. Achievement of these objectives purportedly helps governments protect people and resources from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. Key air missions include fusing intelligence collection and dissemination operations; physically extending the reach of government policy and information programs; providing aerial firepower; rapidly transporting security forces and supplies; and conducting psychological operations. Unfortunately, *Foreign Internal Defense* fails to provide a single historical example of

⁵ Jeffrey R. Barnett, "Defeating Insurgents With Technology," *Airpower Journal* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 70-71.

how airpower achieved strategic effects or contributed to the successful prosecution of counterrevolutionary warfare.⁶

This brief review of contemporary literature suggests there is currently little guidance available to study the relationship between counterrevolutionary strategy, the military instrument, and airpower. This paper intends to partially fill that gap by investigating four fundamental questions of concern to the military strategist. *What is the role of the military instrument in counterrevolutionary warfare? What is the role of airpower in counterrevolutionary warfare? Can airpower achieve strategic effects in counterrevolutionary warfare? Can airpower make major contributions toward the success of counterrevolutionary forces?*

Methodology

Answers to these questions may be found within the theory and history of revolutionary warfare. Scholars warn students of revolutionary theory not to give “undue emphasis to theory at the expense of actual experience.”⁷ Yet doctrine warns that historical study can be equally perilous, and advises against constructing a universal model because revolutionary wars vary greatly in “form, scope, and intensity.”⁸ The task, then, is to develop a framework of analysis and conduct a balanced investigation of both revolutionary theory and historical experience.

⁶ Air Force Doctrine Document 36, *Foreign Internal Defense* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1995), 13-14.

⁷ John Shy and Thomas W. Collier, “Revolutionary War” in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 818.

⁸ AFDD 36, *Foreign Internal Defense*, 45.

Developing a Framework

Perhaps no one is required to have a more pragmatic understanding of revolutionary theory and experience than the senior military strategist. During contingency planning, the strategist employs a strategy development process to encourage “politicians and commanders . . . to identify where in the overall spectrum of government activity the military contribution lies, what its relationship to the other aspects of policy is, and its relative importance at any particular stage.”⁹ Once the role of the military instrument is determined, it is possible to identify what role the airpower tool should play in the execution of policy. Outside of the contingency planning environment, the strategy development process can serve as a useful framework to guide both a theoretical and experience-based study of counterrevolutionary warfare. Toward this end, a snapshot of the strategy development process in the counterrevolutionary context follows.¹⁰

The strategy development process begins with an analysis of the revolutionary environment.¹¹ The overarching task is to “get the diagnosis done right first, then look

⁹ G. Bulloch, “The Application of Military Doctrine to Counter Insurgency (COIN) Operations,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 7, no. 2 (Autumn 1996): 168.

¹⁰ Klingaman interview, Hurlburt Field, FL, 16 Mar 98. This approach was suggested by Jerome Klingaman as a basic framework for comprehending the theoretical and practical aspects of formulating counterinsurgency strategy. The strategy development process presented here roughly parallels the strategy-to-task approach endorsed by both unconventional and conventional airpower planning communities. Proponents within unconventional circles include the 6th Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, FL, where Klingaman is assigned. The 6th Special Operations Squadron is the only USAF unit dedicated to helping friendly governments plan counterinsurgency efforts. Perhaps the leading proponent of strategy-to-task methodologies within conventional Air Force planning circles is the Checkmate Division, Headquarters United States Air Force, Washington, D.C. Checkmate is responsible for supporting contingency planning efforts as directed by the Chief of Staff, United States Air Force.

¹¹ This simplistic, notional design of the strategy development process was presented for several reasons. First, it will help underscore the unity of effort required from all

for treatment options.”¹² Various elements within the revolutionary environment can be analyzed to determine the underlying causes of revolutionary violence.¹³ The goal here is to identify actors, motivations, and aims. The second step is to identify the revolutionary strategy. The goal is to determine the revolutionary actor’s strategy and its probable phases. This is a prerequisite for the third step: the formulation of a national counterrevolutionary strategy.

The national counterrevolutionary strategy defines the conditions required to achieve a desired end-state. Identification of an end-state is critically important because it keeps the government focused on treating the causes of revolutionary violence and not the symptoms.¹⁴ In many instances, required conditions can only be realized by some combination of social, economic, political, and military reform to redress valid grievances. The national strategy should define a role for the instruments of national power, and direct their energies toward the attainment of common objectives. Each instrument of power should develop a subordinate strategy to provide for the most effective expenditure of resources.¹⁵ For the military strategist, the fourth step is to develop a subordinate military strategy as an integral part of the national strategy. At this point a decision is made about how to wield airpower in support of the national strategy.

instruments of national power. Second, it can help reaffirm the subordinate nature of the military instrument in this politically charged environment. And third, it will illustrate how lethal and non-lethal applications of airpower can directly support the national strategy.

¹² Waghelstein, “Ruminations,” 368.

¹³ AFDD 36, *Foreign Internal Defense*, 46.

¹⁴ Waghelstein, “Ruminations,” 369.

¹⁵ Fred F. Woerner, cited in *El Salvador at War: An Oral History of Conflict*, eds. Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1988), 115. As will be seen, General Woerner was intimately involved with the

Fifth, the strategy is executed. Execution includes three implied tasks. The government must monitor its forces to ensure the strategy is executed as planned; progress assessments must be made relative to the desired end-state and changes in the revolutionary environment; and appropriate revisions to the current strategy should be promptly made and executed.

In summary, the strategy development process can serve as a framework to guide the study of counterrevolutionary warfare. The major steps of this framework include: detailed analysis of the revolutionary environment; identification of the revolutionary strategy; formulation of a national counterrevolutionary strategy; formulation of a subordinate military strategy that determines how airpower will support the national strategy; and execution of the strategy. The process can be extremely challenging. Various considerations affect the development of strategy and the employment of airpower, to include restrictions that limit the use of military force to ensure achievement of the overall political objective.¹⁶ A firm grasp of revolutionary theory and the careful study of counterrevolutionary experience can help the strategist optimize the contribution of airpower in support of the national strategy.

Review of Theory

A brief survey of relevant theory is offered here to facilitate a broad understanding of counterrevolutionary warfare. This survey will categorize and define revolutionary

development of counterrevolutionary strategy during the insurrection in El Salvador, 1979-1992.

¹⁶ Bulloch, "The Application of Military Doctrine," 168.

warfare; the actors, motivations, and aims of the revolutionary environment; and the basic strategies employed on the revolutionary battlefield.¹⁷

Perhaps the most effective way to begin is by describing what revolutionary warfare is not.¹⁸ Revolutionary warfare is not necessarily *guerrilla warfare*, though revolutionary actors often employ guerrilla tactics. Revolutionary warfare is not necessarily *protracted warfare*, though many such conflicts are waged over lengthy periods. Revolutionary war does not normally occur between nation states, though actors may attempt to prosecute it using methods common to wars of annihilation or exhaustion.

Revolutionary war is *not a war of annihilation*. Such warfare normally occurs between nation states where national survival is at stake. Brute force strategies are employed to destroy the opponent's capability and will to resist. Resources are prioritized to support military efforts to destroy instruments of national power, occupy territory, and reconstitute the institutions of a defeated state. For example, during and after World War II, the Allies waged a war of annihilation to first defeat, then occupy, and finally rebuild Germany. Revolutionary actors seldom possess the resources to fight a brute force contest unless they are near total victory.

Revolutionary war is *not a war of exhaustion*. Such warfare normally occurs between nation states, often where territorial stakes are at issue. Coercive strategies are employed to compel an adversary to submit prior to military defeat. Methods include negative and positive inducements that manipulate the values an adversary assigns to its

¹⁷ For further discussion of revolutionary theory see Julian Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967); A.S. Cohen, *Theories of Revolution: An Introduction* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975); and D. Michael Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

alternative courses of action. Negative inducements, such as diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, and military force, work to increase the cost of the object beyond that which the adversary is prepared to pay. Positive inducements, such as recognition of disputed boundaries, debt relief, and waivers for war crimes, work to increase the benefits associated with submission. The Gulf War was an example of a war of exhaustion. After Iraq invaded Kuwait, its leadership refused to accept an ultimatum to leave Kuwait freely before being subjected to eviction by military force. The liberation of Kuwait began with a coercive use of airpower that focused on reducing Iraq's military capability. Before commencing ground operations, coalition forces gave Iraq one last opportunity to escape military defeat. They demanded Iraq leave its heavy weapons behind and abandon Kuwait. When Iraq refused, coalition forces evicted the Iraqi military from Kuwait. Because of the potential for enormous loss, revolutionary actors seldom fight a contest of attrition until they have an adequate balance against government forces.

Revolutionary war *is an attempt to seize political power by armed force.*¹⁹ Revolutionary war is predominately an intrastate phenomena. The stakes are legitimacy and political control. Actors employ a wide variety of strategies employed within the revolutionary environment. It is beyond the scope of this study to identify every possible actor and review the tenets of every strategy. However, strategists must be very familiar with the actors and strategies in a given case to “focus on defining and analyzing the problem before making decisions regarding the application of military force.”²⁰

¹⁸ See Shy and Collier, “Revolutionary War,” 817.

¹⁹ Shy and Collier, “Revolutionary War,” 817.

²⁰ Waghelstein, “Ruminations,” 367.

Actors, Motivations, and Aims

There are three general categories of actors in the revolutionary environment. Revolutionary forces include insurgent and partisan actors. Government forces are the primary counterrevolutionary actors. Finally, sponsors may provide external support for both revolutionary and government forces.

There is significant confusion over the terminology used to describe actors within the category of *revolutionary forces*. In order to analyze the revolutionary environment, the strategist must grasp the meanings associated with terms like terrorist, mercenary, guerrilla, insurgent, and partisan.²¹ By themselves, these terms offer only partial insight into the conduct of revolutionary actors. The strategist must understand motivations, aims, and strategies for these actors to have meaning in the revolutionary environment.²²

A *terrorist* employs fear and intimidation to achieve his objectives. Terror, then, is a type of tactic used in revolutionary war. Acts of terror include indiscriminate bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, torture, and other actions designed to intimidate an individual or a group of people. Terrorists attempt to discredit the government by disrupting public security. By claiming such acts are reprisals, revolutionaries sometimes hope to gain some degree of international support for their cause. Government forces sometimes use terror to silence political opponents or punish those suspected of supporting revolutionary activities. Terrorists are normally prosecuted under civil law to prevent them from attaining status as legal combatants under the laws of war. The

²¹ Rod Paschall, *LIC 2010: Special Operations & Unconventional Warfare in the Next Century* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's (US), Inc., 1990), 9; and Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 5.

²² *Conflict of Myths*, 5.

government normally loses some degree of legitimacy if fails to punish terrorists who act on its behalf. Because the term terrorist has universal application, it does not signify any particular motivation, aim, or strategy.²³

Likewise, the term *guerilla* does not necessarily imply a particular motivation, aim, or strategy. Guerrilla refers to a type of military tactics popularized by revolutionary actors and elite government forces. These tactics include conducting hit and run operations, avoiding costly pitched battles, and eluding opposition forces by hiding in terrain or among the populace.²⁴ Correctly used, *guerrilla warfare* implies employment of these tactics as a way of achieving an objective. Guerrilla and guerrilla warfare can describe both revolutionary and government actors and actions.

Revolutionary actors can generally be categorized as insurgents or partisans.²⁵ Each term signifies a specific motivation, aim, and strategy.²⁶ The *insurgent* is an armed political dissident whose aim is to overthrow a legitimately constituted government through revolutionary social and political change.²⁷ The insurgent is motivated to fight for political, social, or economic power that he lacks within his society. An insurgent movement may also receive inspiration from international ideologies. The insurgent depends upon the people to provide resources to sustain his movement. A successful

²³ Paschall, *LIC 2010*, 9.

²⁴ Collier and Shy, "Revolutionary War," 817.

²⁵ Larry Cable is credited with this distinction. See *Conflict of Myths*, 5-6.

²⁶ See Paschall, *LIC 2010*, 9. Both revolutionary actors are legally recognized combatants who are "due prisoner of war status if captured." To merit such status, insurgents and partisans must openly bear arms, wear an easily identifiable symbol, and conform to the laws of war. Technically, guerrillas are offered the same protection under the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949. Their mention here is omitted in the interest of clarity. See also Paschall's note 4 on page 18.

²⁷ Cable, *Conflict of Myths*, 5.

program of indoctrination motivates the people to provide popular support. The insurgent employs subversion and armed force to discredit the government.

Partisans are political dissidents whose aim is to overthrow a legitimately constituted government through revolutionary military power. One way to distinguish between partisans and insurgents is to examine their means of support. Sponsor states provide the balance of resources required to sustain partisan operations. Partisans may be internally motivated, inspired by international ideology, or act as an auxiliary force of a sponsor state. Partisans rely on force to overthrow the government and command popular support for the revolutionary cause. Indoctrination is generally used to inculcate ideology. When countering a partisan threat, government forces must recognize the potential for sponsor participation in combat operations.²⁸

Government forces are those agencies, departments, and branches responsible for employing the instruments of national power. The aim of government forces is to win popular support and neutralize the revolutionary threat. Of particular concern here is how military strategists plan to employ airpower in support of the national strategy. Government forces are motivated by a variety of factors including political prestige, financial welfare, social status, and patriotism. Additionally, defeat by revolutionary forces is likely to mean imprisonment or exile if not death for government leaders.

Sponsors provide government and revolutionary actors with foreign assistance to defeat the opposition. Various state and non-state actors seeking to influence the design and outcome of the war can offer foreign assistance. To date, the majority of foreign assistance comes from *sponsor states*, although aid provided by non-state actors is of

²⁸ Ibid., 5-6.

growing concern.²⁹ A sponsor state typically fashions a foreign assistance strategy to provide indirect or direct assistance to a government. In extreme cases, sponsor states may introduce military force to assist in the conduct of combat operations.³⁰ Assistance provided to revolutionary actors is often cloaked in secrecy to avoid political repercussions.

Strategies

Simply put, strategy is nothing more than a statement of “here’s how we’re going to win.” Persuasion and coercion are the primary means of gaining success in revolutionary warfare. The objective of *persuasion* is to gain, bolster, or otherwise amass the popular support required for legitimacy. Generally speaking, the people must either be persuaded or forced to rise up against the government.³¹ The best way to counter such efforts is for the government to maintain popular support through various inducements. Positive inducements often secure popular support in exchange for reform and security. Negative inducements dissuade support for the opposition using means that include civil prosecution and extortion. While extortion commands popular support through harassment, fear, and intimidation, prosecution enlists such support by providing for the

²⁹ For example, international drug cartels are currently providing assistance to revolutionary movements in Colombia. Such assistance is a major concern to both the Colombian government and its U.S. sponsor.

³⁰ The three ensuing paragraphs on indirect support, direct support, and combat operations were derived from Joint Pub 3-07.1, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense (FID)* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing House, 1996,) I-5–I-14. Note Joint Pub 3-07.1 only considers assistance relative to helping a government defend itself against an *insurgent* threat. For the purposes of this study, categorization as indirect support, direct support, and combat operations was deemed appropriate to support counter-partisan as well as counterinsurgency efforts.

³¹ Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, and Peace-keeping* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971; repr., London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 4.

protection of the people and national resources. The objective of *coercion* is to neutralize the adversary to make him irrelevant to the political process prior to total military defeat. Positive inducements include amnesty, participation in popular reform, and the offer of a negotiated settlement. Negative inducements include military force and terrorism. Both revolutionary and government forces craft strategies with differing emphases on persuasive and coercive components.

Insurgent strategy tends to be more persuasive than coercive. The insurgent aim is legitimacy derived from mobilization of the population. A variety of means may be used to persuade the people to join an insurgency and neutralize the government. Insurgents rely on popular support to achieve their objectives. Popular support fuels the political mobilization required to generate “workers, fighters, money, weapons, and intelligence” while denying the same to the government.³² Indoctrination connects the people with the “central ideas and goals of the revolutionary movement. Ideology defines the economic and political future of the revolutionary state and provides the inspirational basis for revolt.”³³ What is the role of coercion? Insurgents normally attempt to persuade people to support their cause, and only use violence if necessary. However, insurgents make mistakes by “using force at the wrong time because of errors of judgement, bad temper or an inability to control their followers.”³⁴ If the government enjoys popular support, military force is normally employed to sever the bond between the people and the government. This is accomplished by discrediting the facilities, services, and personnel

³² AFDD 36, *Foreign Internal Defense*, 46.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, 4.

who administer to public needs. The ultimate insurgent strategy would quickly topple the government without military force.³⁵

Strategy provides another way to distinguish between insurgents and partisans. Partisan strategy tends to be more coercive than persuasive. The partisan aim is to overthrow the government by means of military force. Partisans may attempt to defeat government forces without widespread popular support—especially if a resource rich sponsor state backs the movement. Sponsor states can supplant the immediate need for popular support by providing partisans with workers, money, weapons, intelligence, and combat troops. If sponsor state troops become involved, the conflict may take on characteristics similar to conventional war.³⁶ Partisans generally use persuasion in support of coercive military force.³⁷ Such persuasion often uses negative inducements to extort popular support. The ultimate partisan strategy would employ military force to quickly coerce the government into submission.

Revolutionary strategies are generally comprised of multiple phases. A generic, three-phase model is adopted to enable a broad-based discussion of revolutionary strategy. The aims of the *pre-hostilities phase* include developing an infrastructure and expanding the revolutionary cadre. Associated activities include organizing, training, and

³⁵ Interview with Jerome Klingaman, 16 Mar 98, Hurlburt Field, FL; and AFDD 36, *Foreign Internal Defense*, 46.

³⁶ However, it is possible for partisan, insurgent, and conventional conflict to simultaneously occur within the same state, exemplified by the recent civil war in Bosnia. Muslim insurgents, Serb partisans, Bosnian government forces, NATO airmen, and UN peacekeepers all became involved in fighting that eventually approached the level of conventional confrontation.

³⁷ Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, 4. Kitson draws an important distinction between the primacy of force over persuasion in more orthodox forms of war. The inference that this applies to partisan movements in terms of the primacy of coercion over persuasion is my own synthesis of Kitson and Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths*, 5-6.

equipping political and military elements. Both insurgents and partisans focus on the ideological indoctrination of cadre members and engage in political confrontation such as demonstrations, strikes, and work stoppages. Violence is normally kept to a minimal level. The *guerrilla warfare phase* begins with small unit attacks against government forces and resources. These activities include attacking government communications and logistics facilities, assassinating officials, and engaging government security forces when conditions permit. A priority objective is to expand secure base areas by linking them to form autonomous enclaves. Insurgents and partisans may conduct guerrilla warfare for a protracted period of time. As resources permit, partisans build combat strength as quickly as possible to enable the conduct of conventional operations if desired. The *conventional warfare phase* commits significantly sized units against government security forces. The goal is twofold. Revolutionary forces seek to destroy remaining security forces to facilitate the unification of occupied territory. A new revolutionary state is declared as soon as possible to facilitate diplomatic recognition and subsequent support from sympathetic states.³⁸

Counterrevolutionary strategies are also comprised of persuasive and coercive components. The nature of the revolutionary threat will largely determine how the government formulates and executes its strategy. As could be expected, counterinsurgency strategies emphasize persuasive operations over coercive operations;

³⁸ Discussion of counterrevolutionary strategy is based on AFDD 36, *Foreign Internal Defense*, 2-39; and Joint Pub 3-07.1, *Foreign Internal Defense*, vii-G-2. Although similar to the phases of the Maoist model, the phasing presented herein lends itself to a more universal discussion of revolutionary strategies. AFDD 36 terminology was modified to permit the discussion of partisan as well as insurgent operations. For an in-depth explanation of the Maoist model, see Mao TseTung, *Six Essays on Military Affairs* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972).

the opposite is true for countering partisan operations. The government's persuasive strategy pursues the objective of preserving and bolstering popular support. Three tasks support attainment of this objective: balanced development, mobilization, and security.³⁹

Balanced development often involves implementing broad-based reforms to alleviate valid grievances that are generally the fundamental sources of conflict. The goal is to create a social, economic, and political environment that can resist assault by revolutionary forces. Mobilization seeks to maximize human and physical resources, political support, and intelligence activities while denying the same to revolutionary actors. The goal is to "out administer" the revolutionary movement.⁴⁰ Security includes a variety of activities to protect the people, national resources, and infrastructure from revolutionary attack. Security forms the shield that enables balanced development to occur. Military units may operate with police units to enforce law and order; gather, process and disseminate intelligence; and train local civil defense forces.⁴¹

The government's coercive strategy pursues the objective of neutralizing revolutionary forces. Neutralization renders revolutionary forces irrelevant to the political process prior to military defeat. There are at least five tasks that support this objective: (1) physically and psychologically separating revolutionary elements from the population; (2) legally disrupting, disorganizing, and defeating the revolutionary organization; (3) publicly exposing and discrediting its leaders; (4) arresting and

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., AFDD 36, *Foreign Internal Defense*, 2-39; and Joint Pub 3-07.1, *Foreign Internal Defense*, vii-G-2.

⁴¹ Ibid.

prosecuting those who disregard law and order; and (5) conducting combat operations against revolutionary forces.⁴²

The government must tailor its national counterrevolutionary strategy to counter the specific revolutionary threat it opposes. For example, suppose the government correctly analyzes and identifies the threat as an insurgency in the pre-hostilities phase. The government should counter with a predominately persuasive strategy. If feasible, coercive activities should be limited to non-combat operations to avoid a loss of legitimacy resulting from the heavy-handed use of military force. Now, assume the government incorrectly analyzes and identifies the threat as a partisan threat in the conventional warfare phase when it is actually an incipient insurgency. The government erroneously counters with a coercive strategy that seeks to neutralize through combat operations. The best case scenario suggests this strategy will lead to the unnecessary expenditure of human and physical resources. The worst case scenario suggests the government will kill a significant number of innocent people and accuse external actors of complicity with a revolutionary movement. This outcome will no doubt discredit the government, bolster the legitimacy of a budding revolutionary movement, and perhaps rally international support behind the insurgents.

Sponsor strategies are comprised of indirect support, direct support, and combat operations. Indirect support activities employ the sponsor state's military forces to provide indirect assistance to the people and military forces of a state. These activities include security assistance, exercises, and exchange programs. Direct support activities involve the use of the sponsor state's military forces to provide direct assistance to the

⁴² Joint Pub 3-07.1, *Foreign Internal Defense*, C-2.

people and military forces of a state or revolutionary faction. Direct support activities are usually conducted when the government “has not attained self-sufficiency and is faced with social, economic, or military threats beyond its capability to handle.”⁴³ Civil-military operations, logistics, and intelligence and communications sharing comprise direct support activities.⁴⁴ Civil-military operations include civil affairs, psychological operations, humanitarian assistance, and military civic action.⁴⁵

Sponsor states sometimes authorize their military forces to conduct combat operations. The primary combat role of sponsor state forces is to “support, advise, and assist” the government through “logistics, intelligence, or other combat support, and service support means.”⁴⁶ This is normally a defensive expediency that lasts until host government forces are capable of providing security for their population and key resources. In other situations, sponsor forces may be directed to engage revolutionary forces to protect the political, economic, and social institutions of the host nation. Care

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Additionally, civil-military operations help strengthen the relationship between civil authorities, military forces, and the people. These operations also focus on “the development of favorable emotions, attitudes, or behavior in neutral, friendly, or hostile groups.” See Joint Pub 3-07.1, *Foreign Internal Defense*, I-11 for more on civil military operations.

⁴⁵ The following definitions are based on Joint Pub 3-07.1, *Foreign Internal Defense*, I-12-I-13. *Civil affairs* “facilitates the integration” of the sponsor state into the targeted government’s strategy. *Psychological operations* ensure clear communication of the sponsor state’s and targeted government’s intentions and objectives and “take the offensive against deception initiated by adversaries.” *Humanitarian assistance* is conducted by sponsor state military forces to “alleviate the urgent non-military needs” of the targeted government’s people. *Military civic action* is the “use of predominantly indigenous military personnel to conduct construction projects, support missions, and services useful to the local population.”

⁴⁶ Joint Pub 3-07.1, *Foreign Internal Defense*, I-13.

must be taken to ensure the host government retains both the strategic initiative and the specific responsibility for military operations.⁴⁷

States sometimes sponsor revolutionary movements with indirect support, direct support, and combat operations. Such support is often covert. Unfortunately, an in-depth analysis of revolutionary support is beyond the reasonable scope of this study.⁴⁸ However, there are a few general considerations worthy of mention. By supporting revolutionary movements, state sponsors directly challenge the government's legitimacy. In essence, sponsors that provide assistance to revolutionary actors are committing an act of undeclared war. Revolutionary movements often seek various forms of external assistance to sustain their operations. Therefore, governments often seek to defeat revolutionary movements by denying them sponsor support.

Some Theoretical Insights

This review of theory provides some insights to the four questions driving this study. *What is the role of military instrument in counterrevolutionary warfare?* The strategy development process details how the government develops a national counterrevolutionary strategy based on proper analysis of the revolutionary environment and the revolutionary threat. The counterrevolutionary strategy is comprised of persuasion and coercion. Some combination of these components will be formulated to

⁴⁷ Ibid., I-13.

⁴⁸ For more on state sponsored support of revolutionary actors, see the following: Michael T. Klare and Peter Kornbluh, eds., *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988); Richard Secord, *Honored and Betrayed: Irangate, Covert Affairs, and the Secret War in Laos* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1992); and Steven J. Cox, "Role of SOF in Paramilitary Operations" (M.A. diss., U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, 1995).

bolster legitimacy and neutralize the revolutionary threat. The government will assign persuasive and coercive roles to the instruments of national power. Each instrument will formulate a subordinate strategy—including the military. The military, then, will likely be asked to play persuasive and coercive roles. Airpower will be tasked to support these roles.

What is the role of airpower in counterrevolutionary warfare? As a tool of the military instrument, airpower may be directed to assume persuasive and coercive roles. Could airpower be tasked to simultaneously assume both roles? Airpower's versatility enables such roles through the conduct of standard missions. For example, airlift can deliver food supplies to fight the effects of malnutrition or transport rapid reaction forces to engage partisan bands. Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance can predict harvest yields or discover the location of insurgent headquarters. Close air support can provide security by attacking insurgent patrols near populated areas or neutralizing insurgents withdrawing from an attack on government forces. Psychological operations can disseminate leaflets encouraging popular support or broadcast the confession of a captured partisan political leader. Finally, interdiction can destroy radio stations that undermine popular support or deny the movement of supplies from secure rear bases.

Can airpower achieve strategic effects in counterrevolutionary warfare? Theory suggests that airpower will be tasked to achieve strategic effects as a persuasive or coercive instrument. However, having the potential to create strategic effects and accomplishing them are two different things. History should be consulted for relevant evidence.

Can airpower make major contributions toward the victory of counterrevolutionary forces? Theory suggests any capability that can help win popular

support or neutralize the revolutionary threat can make a major contribution towards government victory. However, governments with the appropriate tools have fallen because they lacked an effective strategy. Once again, historical data should be consulted to provide such evidence.

Historical Analysis

Theory affords the opportunity to learn about categories, definitions, and causal relationships. Yet when actors, motivations, aims, and strategies are discussed outside of historical context, they tend to take on absolute meaning because they are viewed in isolation. Historical analysis helps the strategist see variety within categories, recognize the limits of definitions, and explore relationships within the revolutionary environment. Historical analysis also helps the strategist envision employment of airpower within specific cultural and topographical environments. In brief, historical analysis helps the strategist operationalize theory by illustrating the interaction between key elements. Along with theory, historical analysis can help answer the questions driving this study. Historical analysis can also help the strategist identify some considerations for the planning and execution of counterrevolutionary strategy.

Three cases of counterrevolutionary warfare are analyzed in the following chapters: the Greek Civil War, 1946-1949; the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960; and the insurrection in El Salvador, 1981-1992. These cases were selected for several important reasons. First, each government faced a different type of revolutionary threat. Second, each government found the development of a viable national strategy a challenging task. Third, each strategy was formulated with a different mixture of persuasive and coercive elements. Fourth, airpower was called upon to create strategic effects in support of the counterrevolutionary strategy. Finally, each government triumphed over its revolutionary threat.

This historical analysis is intended to be a structured and focused comparison.⁴⁹ An individual chapter is devoted to each case in accordance with the previously developed framework. First, I will analyze the revolutionary environment to identify the major actors, motives, and aims. Next, I will analyze the formulation and execution of the revolutionary strategy. Third, I will analyze the formulation and execution of the national counterrevolutionary strategy. Fourth, I will analyze how airpower supported execution of the counterrevolutionary strategy. Fifth, I will characterize the outcome of the war. Following the case studies, I will summarize the findings to answer the questions driving this study and propose considerations for the development of strategy and the employment of airpower in counterrevolutionary warfare.

This work should be viewed as an effort to assist those who must determine the appropriate mixture of persuasion and coercion, assess the chance for victory, and plan for the employment of airpower in counterrevolutionary war. It is also an effort to help the strategist remain oriented in the fog of the revolutionary environment. For it is normally the strategist who is first asked to make sense of the revolutionary violence, draft a cohesive course of action, and determine the prospect for success.

⁴⁹ Alexander George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: the Method of Structured, Focused Comparison," *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy* ed. Paul Gordon Lauren (New York: Free Press, 1979), 44-73.

Chapter 2

The Greek Civil War, 1946-1949

The situation in Greece was exceedingly complex . . . was the struggle internecine in nature and fueled by outside help? Or, was it an internal matter that threatened to become regional in scope because of the fierce, longtime hostilities felt by the Balkan states for one another? Or, was it a localized conflict that threatened to grow into something larger because of the major powers' geopolitical and strategic interests?

-- Howard Jones, *A New Kind of War*

The case of the Greek Civil War highlights a national counterrevolutionary strategy that was more coercive than persuasive. The military instrument and airpower primarily played a coercive role in support of the national strategy. The revolutionary threat came from communist partisans. During World War II, Greek partisans fought two smaller civil wars in a failed attempt to dominate the political structure. In 1946 the communists fought a third civil war after the government resumed a traditional campaign of repressive measures against communist party members. The revolutionary aim was to overthrow the government and install a Marxist regime. Greece relied upon a tremendous amount of direct support from the United States to avoid economic collapse and military defeat. Airpower achieved strategic effects through combat operations. Although this revolutionary war could be termed a victory for government forces, it better illustrates another point. Sometimes the Soviet satellite states sustained the partisans with massive indirect support. The Greek government would have government

achieves its own success—and sometimes partisan blunders help the government to succeed.

The Revolutionary Environment

In 1946, a variety of actors, motivations, and aims brought the Greek people to the crossroads of revolution. The land and its people, the historical background, the social system, economic conditions, the political setting, and the military situation all help to explain this dark intersection in Greek history. Although the people had many valid grievances against the government, most Greeks found communism to be incompatible with the national character.

The Land and its People

Greece flanks the Aegean Sea to the east and is bordered by Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria to the north. The island of Crete rests 200 miles off the African coast, making it a strategically important position in the Mediterranean Sea. The Greek borders enclose over 50,000 square miles of land. In 1947 less than 13,000 square miles were arable, which forced Greece to rely upon foreign trade to feed its people.⁵⁰

Nearly 40 percent of the Greek people lived in the mountains. Villages and towns were linked together by a poor road network that was often impassable to vehicular traffic. The roads on the plains were equally unfit for travel. This made for poor communications between the rural areas and population centers. Most Greeks lived in

⁵⁰ Edward R. Wainhouse, "Guerrilla War in Greece, 1946-49: A Case Study," *Military Review* 37 (June 1957): 17.

urban areas; almost one-seventh of the population resided in the Athens-Piraeus region. The city of Salonika was the country's second leading population center.⁵¹

Most of the 7.5 million Greeks belonged to one of three class divisions: the upper class, the lower middle class, and the peasantry. The upper class was quite small and consisted of only a few hundred families. Though most made their wealth outside of Greece, the people viewed some of these families as national benefactors. Public benefactors "founded many important institutions, schools, prisons, libraries and hospitals; these made an even greater impression on the people as the country was so poor."⁵² Much of the working class labored in the country's small industrial base. Workers lived a lower middle class existence—other divisions of the middle class were practically non-existent. Government land reforms restricted the amount of property any single person could hold to 50 hectares. By preventing the growth of a large landed class, the government ensured there was plenty of land available for peasant use.⁵³

Historical Background

In 1921 Greece invaded Turkey to enlarge Greek holdings in Asia Minor. Turkish forces under the command of Mustafa Kemal responded with a devastating counterattack. Ultimately, the "2,500 year Greek presence on the western littoral of Asia Minor had been abruptly terminated in conditions of total disaster."⁵⁴ The end of the war ushered in a period of tremendous social and economic change. Treaty terms mandated an exchange

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Evangelos Averoff-Tossizza, *By Fire and Axe: The Communist Party and the Civil War in Greece, 1944-1949*, trans. Sarah Arnold Riggs (New Rochelle, NY: Caratzas Brothers Publishers, 1978), 4-6.

⁵³ Ibid., 4-6.

of ethnically displaced populations. Over one million ethnic Greeks were forcibly repatriated to a land of only 5.5 million people. Many of the refugees were “destitute, bearing with them little more than their holy icons and other religious relics, a significant number of them indeed knowing no other language than Turkish.”⁵⁵ The population of Greece’s three largest cities doubled; urban areas were soon surrounded by a large number of impoverished villages. A significant number of refugees shunned urban life and resettled in Macedonia.⁵⁶

The social upheaval created tremendous political upheaval. The royalist government was overthrown by a coup in 1923; the monarchy was abolished by plebiscite in 1924. A series of failed republican governments and dictatorships followed. Thousands were purged from the ranks of the military, the civil service, and the universities. The Great Depression wreaked considerable damage on the Greek economy because it was based on the export of luxury products like tobacco, currants, and olive oil. By 1934 the value of Greek imports was more than double the value of exports.⁵⁷

The Greek Communist Party planned to grow in size by exploiting the refugees who possessed agricultural or industrial skills. Feelings of class consciousness and inequality grew as the refugee flow increased the size of the working class. Yet most Greeks refused to accept the tenets of communist ideology. Greeks tended to be very loyal, emotional, religious, and patriotic. The common Greek possessed an individual sense of self-

⁵⁴ Richard Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, 2d ed. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 118.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ In 1912 ethnic Greeks comprised only 43 percent of the population. By 1926 approximately 89 percent of Macedonians were of Greek nationality. See Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, 121.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 126-129.

respect, supported ownership of private property, and greatly preferred democracy over any other form of government. The Greeks also believed in their right to vote governments out of power. Hoping for change, the people returned an exiled monarch to power in 1935.⁵⁸

The unequal distribution of wealth was a particular irritant among the poor. “Islands of ostentatious luxury, especially in Athens, remained amid a sea of extreme poverty and suffering fueling feelings of hatred toward the numerically small upper class among the destitute masses and the refugees.”⁵⁹ The government administered to its people through a bureaucratic system that was overly centralized and rife with nepotism and corruption. The further the distance from Athens, the more the people felt a sense of “impotence and alienation” that created a “deep divide between the capital and the rest of the country.”⁶⁰

The Social System

By 1947 most Greeks harbored justifiable grievances against the government regarding its decrepit social system. The Greek government had been unwilling or unable to offer basic services for decades prior to the occupation. The Greek social system was in need of reconstruction following the Axis occupation. The postwar government depended upon the United Nations, the United Kingdom, and United States to provide the balance of humanitarian assistance. Medical and health care, education,

⁵⁸ D. George Kousoulas, *Revolution and Defeat: The Story of the Greek Communist Party*, with a foreword by C.M. Woodhouse (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 4-6.

⁵⁹ John O. Iatrides, “Greece at the Crossroads, 1944-1950,” *Greece at the Crossroads: The Civil War and Its Legacy* eds. John O Iatrides and Linda Wrigley (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 7.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

housing, and welfare services were in a deplorable state by the onset of the revolutionary war.

Medical and health care. Generally speaking, Greek medicine lagged thirty years behind that of the United States. The medical and health care system collapsed during the Axis occupation. Many thousands of Greeks died from starvation. Abysmal sanitation standards in urban areas resulted in a great rise in the number of malaria and tuberculosis cases. Hospital beds and nurses were in great demand. The Greek Public Health Division was overwhelmed and in desperate need of American assistance.⁶¹

Education. The education system was in major need of reconstruction. Nearly 40 percent of the Greek people were illiterate. Student recitations were scheduled in shifts because there was a critically short supply of classrooms, teachers, and textbooks.⁶²

Housing. After the occupation, a flood of refugees to urban areas overwhelmed available housing facilities. New construction efforts were hampered by a lack of building materials and adequately skilled laborers. The outbreak of revolutionary violence worsened an already critical situation. Between 1946 and 1947 approximately 420,000 refugees abandoned their rural homes and saturated emergency housing facilities in urban areas throughout northern Greece.⁶³

⁶¹ For a more thorough summary on the status of Greek medical and health care in 1947 see *1st Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, Publication 2957, Near Eastern Series 11 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, November 1947), 10; and *Second Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, Publication 3035, Economic Cooperation Series 3 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, February 1948), 31-32.

⁶² For more insight into how the Greeks perceived their education system during the postwar years see Floyd A. Spencer, *War and Postwar Greece: An Analysis Based on Greek Writings*. (Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress, European Affairs Division, 1952), 163.

⁶³ *Second Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 5.

Social welfare. Relief supplies were the government's primary means of administering public welfare. Because nearly 20 percent of the people were indigent, the partisan rebellion intensified the need for relief while making distribution difficult. Foreign assistance empowered the Greek government to distribute goods directly to the people or to sell them as part of a ration system expenditure of relief profits generated by the Greek government.⁶⁴

Economic Conditions

The postwar economic situation was another source of valid grievances. Wartime damage to the transportation system had not been repaired. Industrial output was minimal. "Foreign trade, on which Greece depended for purchases of essential food, was at a standstill."⁶⁵ To make matters worse, a drought ruined the cereal grain crop. Operations against the Communist partisans required a large expenditure of resources. Without external assistance, runaway inflation was certain to collapse the economy. The status of agricultural production, industrial output, and labor relations offers some insight into the economic problems beleaguering the government at the onset of civil war.

Agriculture. Traditional shortcomings and revolutionary violence prevented the rapid recovery of the agricultural sector. New methods to stimulate the production of foodstuffs were impeded by the lack of arable land, farm equipment, seeds, fertilizer, processing plants, and passable roads. Chronic food shortages developed because dairy, meat, and fish production fell far short of that required to maintain an adequate diet. The

⁶⁴ *1st Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 8; and *Second Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 33.

⁶⁵ C. M. Woodhouse, *Modern Greece: A Short History*, 5th rev. ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 255.

drought cut grain production by two thirds. Additionally, the hostilities displaced tens of thousands of rural workers.⁶⁶

Industry. Greek industry was small and backward by western standards. Though it suffered only modest damage during World War II, industry barely realized 75 percent of its pre-war output in 1947. Plans to attract capital investment in mines and factories were thwarted by the instability associated with the civil war. Without investment, Greek industry was unable to modernize its antiquated equipment.⁶⁷

Labor. During the 1930s the Greek labor movement had fallen under communist control. Memories of violent strikes and work stoppages undermined the confidence between the government, management, and Greek laborers. Although each party agreed to honor fair wages in the interest of national security and reconstruction, runaway inflation sparked a recurring series of wage disputes. By late 1947 labor unrest was growing.⁶⁸ The government responded by passing legislation “providing extreme penalties for strikes and lockouts during the period of civil strife.”⁶⁹

Political setting

Political activities during the prewar years, the occupation period, and the postwar environment were largely responsible for the outbreak of revolutionary violence. Successive Greek governments repressed left-wing opposition during the prewar years. During the occupation period communist partisans fought against its Axis conquerors and rival resistance groups in a failed bid to establish political control over Greece. The

⁶⁶ *1st Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 9.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 6; and Wainhouse, “Guerrilla War in Greece, 1946-49,” 17.

⁶⁸ *Second Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 34-35.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

government's aim in the postwar period was to make the Communist Party irrelevant to the political process.

Prewar years. The Greek Socialist Labor Party was the forerunner of the Greek communist party. In March 1920 the Labor Party sent representatives to the Second World Congress of the Comintern in Moscow. The Soviets officially recognized the Greek socialist movement as the Communist Party of Greece in September. The Soviets soon provided the Greeks with money and prestige as the “local projection of a mighty international force.”⁷⁰ So began a relationship between the KKE and Moscow that would eventually contribute to the defeat of the Greek communist army some thirty years later.⁷¹

Throughout its early history the Greek Communist Party was divided over how much control Moscow should exercise over KKE objectives and strategies.⁷² In the 1920s and 1930s the Comintern wanted to establish a communist-controlled Balkan Federation. Moscow directed the KKE to support this objective by employing revolutionary violence to separate Macedonia from Greece. Macedonia would then be integrated within the proposed Balkan Federation.⁷³ Moderate Greek communists rejected the use of force and

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Kousoulas, *Revolution and Defeat*, 4-5.

⁷² Ibid., 7-8.

⁷³ Macedonia became the poverty-stricken home for nearly one and a half million refugees following Turkey's defeat of Greece along the Asia Minor front in 1922. Part of the KKE leadership favored establishing a separate state of Macedonia to begin the “sovietization of Greece.” Such a state would be created from Albanian, Yugoslavian, Bulgarian, and Greek territory. However, this idea greatly angered other KKE leaders who wanted to maintain Greek sovereign territory at all costs. The KKE leadership was unable to agree on a compromise that party members would support; apparently, no decision was made. For an in-depth explanation of the Macedonian question, see D. George Kousoulas, *Revolution and Defeat*, 54-72. See also Evangelos Kofos, “The

Macedonian autonomy. Moderates believed the party should work within the existing political system to create social and economic change. They did not want to surrender sovereignty over any part of Greece. The KKE's hawkish faction thought otherwise. These hard-liners believed the KKE should employ strikes, demonstrations, and attack non-communist elements of the labor movement to achieve Moscow's will. Most significantly, the Hawks wanted Macedonia to join the proposed Balkan federation.

In the end, something of a compromise platform was established. The KKE's declared objective was to "seize revolutionary power on behalf of the proletariat when the time was ripe."⁷⁴ However, the public *raison d'être* was to agitate against political repression and economic stagnation. Macedonian independence remained a divisive issue within the party, but the communist leadership eventually decided to the proposed inclusion of Macedonia as part of a communist-controlled Balkan Federation. Perhaps no other decision was more responsible for isolating the KKE from the Greek people.⁷⁵

Communist dogma and doctrine prevented the KKE from attracting a wide base of popular support. The democratically minded Greeks shunned the idea of subordinating themselves to party discipline. Most people also refused to entertain any notion that would cede sovereign Greek territory to another country. "Of all the doctrinaire follies which communism has imposed on the KKE, none was more fatal than the 'national question', that is to say, the proposition that Greek Macedonia should be detached to form part of an independent Macedonia or a unit in a Slav federation." Simply put, the

Impact of the Macedonian Question on Civil Conflict in Greece, 1943-1949," *Greece at the Crossroads*, 274-318.

⁷⁴ David H. Close, *Origins of the Greek Civil War*, (London: Longman, 1995), 18.

⁷⁵ Kousoulas, *Revolution and Defeat*, vi.

Greek people did not identify with the ideology and objectives espoused by the communists.

The Greek politicians knew little about the KKE until communist newspapers began openly calling for the independence of Macedonia during the middle 1920s. The politicians soon discovered that Moscow was the driving force behind the independence movement. This made KKE activity appear “even more ‘traitorous’ and ‘monstrous’ in the eyes of Greek leaders, and, it must be said, of the great majority of the people.”⁷⁶ The government acted upon these findings by outlawing the KKE and arresting numerous party leaders. The KKE responded by establishing an underground organization that would suit them well in the decades ahead.

Hard core communists filled the leadership vacuum created by the arrests and they purged the moderates from the party. In line with Comintern directives, the KKE adopted the aim of “*civil war for the establishment of a workers’ and peasants’ government*” in 1929 [emphasis original].⁷⁷ The party worked feverishly to gain ground in the labor movement. As the global depression set in, the Communists found more than enough popular dissatisfaction to engineer a campaign of small strikes and work stoppages that soon “occasioned a considerable amount of labour unrest.”⁷⁸

Constant political instability and economic despair moved the people to vote for the return of the monarchy in late 1935. When the incumbent prime minister died in office, King George II appointed General John Metaxas to the position. After the KKE conducted a number of violent strikes and work stoppages, the king suspended key

⁷⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁸ Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, 131.

articles of the constitution that gave Metaxas free reign over security forces. Greece quickly became a police state. Evidence from both communist and liberal sources indicates that the government arrested anyone who disagreed with the Metaxas regime. Political debate was silenced and opponents were exiled. Metaxas mobilized workers to maintain key government services, censored the press, and formally dissolved parliament without establishing a date for recall.⁷⁹ The people soon began to despise anyone or anything associated with Metaxas's tyrannical rule. This included a growing dissatisfaction with the British presence in Greece. As perennial providers of economic and military aid, Britain possessed the required leverage to moderate the Metaxas dictatorship. When London remained silent on the issue, the people interpreted the silence as tacit approval of Metaxas's methods.

Metaxas forced the KKE to go underground after he initiated a campaign to make the Communist Party irrelevant to the political process. The secret police ceaselessly attacked the KKE's infrastructure. Thousands of people who were suspected of being communist party members were arrested. The accused remained imprisoned until they signed public declarations admitting their involvement in party activities and denouncing communist ideology. This simple ploy devastated the party by arousing mistrust among its members. By 1940, the Metaxas government had paralyzed the political effectiveness of the KKE.⁸⁰

Occupation. Greece entered World War II in October 1940 when the Italians launched a badly planned attack on Greek positions from Albania. The Greek Army

⁷⁹ Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, 130-132; "Greece at the Crossroads, 1944-1950," 6; and *War and Postwar Greece*, 4.

⁸⁰ Averoff-Tossizza, *By Fire and Axe*, 130-131.

suffered heavy losses while trying to repel the invasion. “Greek supplies of food, clothing, and ammunition had often run out at the most critical periods of the campaign, making it necessary for the Greek soldier to use rocks instead of bullets and to fight half-naked in the snow-covered mountains of Albania.”⁸¹ However difficult the conditions, the Greek Army was on the verge of victory when Germany invaded in April 1941. The *Wehrmacht* quickly subdued the exhausted Greek Army, and the Metaxas government entered exile in Egypt.

The Axis occupation of Greece had two lasting effects. First, it shook the traditional foundations of power and enabled new societal forces to enter the political process through violent means. Secondly, it indoctrinated the Greeks in the ways and means of partisan warfare. Shortly after the occupation began, the KKE began fomenting resistance against Axis forces through the National Liberation Front (EAM). The EAM was a communist-controlled political mechanism with a simple aim: to unite the Greek people and their political parties. The EAM formed a resistance group and vowed to restore a democratic form of government to Greece after Axis forces were swept from the country. The EAM was primarily a non-Communist organization that claimed 1½ million members by 1944. “Thousands of republican officers, large numbers of women and peasants, virtually the entire labor movement, and a surprising array of clergymen and intellectuals took up the cause.”⁸² The KKE greatly influenced the EAM’s strategy.

⁸¹ *War and Postwar Greece*, 2.

⁸² Lawrence S. Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece, 1939-1949* (New York: Columbia Press, 1982), 3. and

Although the publicly stated objective was national liberation, EAM's communist members used every available opportunity to advance their postwar political interests.⁸³

The exiled monarchists made several attempts to establish a government of national unity between February 1944 and the liberation of Greece in October 1944. When these efforts failed, the communists established a mountain government known as the Political Committee of National Liberation (PEEA). The committee exercised control of the ELAS and administered to nearly three-fourths of the mountainous regions in Greece. The PEEA introduced, "The benefits of civilization into the mountains for the first time. Schools, local government, law-courts and public utilities, which the war had ended, worked again. Theaters, factories, parliamentary assemblies began for the first time."⁸⁴ For the moment, the communists were firmly entrenched in the mountains, and looked to dominate the postwar political scene.⁸⁵

Postwar period. British liberation forces arrived in December 1944 after German forces withdrew from Greece. After securing the major cities, the British commander installed an interim government that swore allegiance to King George. This act infuriated the communists, whose partisan army still controlled the countryside. EAM/ELAS vowed never to recognize King George's political authority. Armed hostilities erupted between ELAS and government forces. The fighting lasted from December 1944 until February 1945. Churchill ordered British forces to crush the ELAS, which escaped total

⁸³ *Origins of the Greek Civil War*, 68; and Richard J. Barnet, *Intervention and Revolution: The United States in the Third World* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1968), 107; and *War and Postwar Greece*, 49.

⁸⁴ C. M. Woodhouse, quoted in Hagen Fleischer, "EAM, 1941-1947: A Reassessment," *Greece at the Crossroads: The Civil War and Its Legacy* eds. John O Iatrides and Linda Wrigley (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 65.

⁸⁵ *War and Postwar Greece*, 66; and Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece*, 3.

military defeat by agreeing to a cease-fire. The cease-fire brokered an agreement between all remaining resistance forces and the interim government. The partisan groups were required to surrender their arms. In exchange, the government agreed to an immediate plebiscite on the return of the king, which was to be followed by free elections.⁸⁶

With ELAS disarmed, the government once again initiated a repressive campaign of terror against EAM's communist membership. EAM took its story to the public, charging the government with murdering five hundred communists and arresting another twenty thousand in the first five months after the cease-fire.⁸⁷ The KKE leadership decided the best way to defend themselves was to seize political power. However, the decision to seize power generated the traditional debate on the proper role of violence in the revolutionary context. Moderate EAM leaders favored a political route to power while former ELAS leaders preferred armed rebellion. In accordance with KKE guidance, EAM asked its non-communist members to seek redress through political means. When the repression continued unabated, communist members began to question the utility of the EAM in postwar politics. In the meantime, the Greek people voted to return King George to the throne and subsequently elected a monarchist government in 1946. Before long, many ex-ELAS leaders took to the hills to avoid arrest . . . and began building a new communist army.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Barnet, *Intervention and Revolution*, 108.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

Military situation

In the fall of 1942, a small British cadre parachuted into Greece to coordinate Allied support for resistance movements. The British found two resistance groups worthy of support. The first was the Republican National League (EDES) which was comprised of conservative army officers. The other group was ELAS. Contrary to communist claims, ELAS was supplied by the British with “military materiel and money to the tune of many millions of dollars.”⁸⁹ British support dwindled as the war continued, but the ELAS continued to grow and became the best-organized and most competent resistance group in the field.

As previously discussed, in 1944 ELAS attempted to overthrow the interim government appointed by the British commander of the Allied liberation forces. After suffering defeat, ELAS demobilized and surrendered a large quantity of weapons to the British. However, the partisans also hid their best small arms and automatic weapons in mountain caches. The ELAS leadership wanted to be prepared in case they were called out of retirement. Some hard core partisans refused to surrender and retired to secret mountain redoubts with their weapons. They did not remain in retirement for long.⁹⁰

By October 1946 DAS was conducting raids in earnest throughout northern Greece. When the government’s 30,000-man police force proved ineffective at halting DAS operations, the 100,000 man Greek National Army (GNA) was called upon to crush the communist forces. In response, the DAS commander asked for and received increased aid from Yugoslavia, Albania, and Bulgaria. By March 1947 DAS numbers ballooned to a fighting force of 17,000 personnel. Support ranks included a political and intelligence

⁸⁹ *War and Postwar Greece*, 52.

⁹⁰ *Barnet, Intervention and Revolution*, 108-110.

network of 50,000 personnel who collected information and supplies, sabotaged government facilities, and committed acts of terrorism. Two hundred and fifty thousand sympathizers also gave the rebels periodic assistance.⁹¹

Foreign assistance

The partisans depended upon external assistance throughout the civil war. When the war began in 1946, the once-powerful communist army was comprised of only 2,500 fighting personnel and government forces had discovered most of the weapons caches in the mountains.⁹² Bulgaria, Albania, and Yugoslavia assisted the partisans with various types of direct support. The Bulgarian and Albanian armed forces helped the Greek communist officers reorganize as the Democratic Army of Greece (DAS). Though Albania offered little military aid, it did permit DAS to build and operate from base camps along the Greek border. Albania also permitted 'Radio Free Greece' to operate from its soil. Tito was less cooperative because of the KKE's ties to Moscow. Tito wanted the proposed Balkan Federation to be under Yugoslav control conflicted with Soviet interests in the region. Nonetheless, Tito eventually provided the DAS with food, shelter, and a few vehicles.⁹³

In April 1947 the Balkan communists formed a joint staff that was dominated by Yugoslav officers. Stalin sent Soviet liaison officers to monitor the arrangements between the Yugoslavs and the DAS. Tito agreed to provide more weapons and supplies in exchange for the right of veto over changes in the DAS high command. The Greek communists were "unhappy about the arrangement and distrustful of the Slavs, but they

⁹¹ Ibid., 110-111.

⁹² Close, *Origins of the Greek Civil War*, 180; and Robert Taber, *The War of the Flea: A Study of Guerrilla Warfare Theory and Practice* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1965), 145.

had nowhere else to turn.”⁹⁴ By the summer of 1947, the Yugoslavs “were sending large shipments of arms to Greece, faster and more generously than the Soviet Union and the rest of its East European allies.”⁹⁵ Meanwhile, DAS leaders had worked out a preliminary strategy to overthrow the Greek government.

The Greek government immediately requested foreign assistance after Axis forces withdrew from Greece. The Greek economy was “unable to bear alone the financial burdens of reconstruction, of providing supplies for the civil population, even on a subsistence level, and of supporting the armed forces essential for the maintenance of security.”⁹⁶ The commander of British liberation forces signaled London that significant aid was required to prevent the communists from gaining influence over the Mediterranean region. London responded by funneling direct support to Greece as well as Turkey. The U.S. contributed with a small amount of economic assistance. The United Nations, overwhelmed by global needs, provided what little assistance it could for a very few months before announcing the termination of its assistance.

On February 21, 1947, the British first secretary presented a note to the U.S. State Department. The note indicated that Britain would soon withdraw her forces from

⁹³ Barnett, *Intervention and Revolution*, 110.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁹⁵ Ivo Banac, “The Tito-Stalin Split and the Greek Civil War,” *Greece at the Crossroads: The Civil War and Its Legacy* eds. John O Iatrides and Linda Wrigley (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 266. The extent of Yugoslav military aid during the war was massive: 35,000 rifles, 3,500 machine guns, 2,000 German bazooka, 7,000 antitank guns, 10,000 field mines, clothing for 12,000 men, 30 wagons of food, 3 field hospitals, and 500 horses. See pages 258-273 for a well-documented assessment of the role of Yugoslavia in the Greek Civil War.

⁹⁶ Harry S. Truman quoted in *1st Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, III.

Greece and terminate most economic support.⁹⁷ London was overwhelmed by the wartime damage inflicted upon the British Empire. Britain could no longer afford to be the guarantor of democracy in the Mediterranean. In response, the Greek government officially requested American economic and military assistance on March 3, 1947.

State Department and Pentagon officials were already preparing for such a request. Planning for economic and military assistance to Greece and Turkey began in October 1946, after the United States began to realize the gravity of post-war need in the Mediterranean region.⁹⁸ U.S. interests were simply to forestall a Soviet incursion into the Mediterranean.⁹⁹ By March 1947, the Truman administration needed only congressional approval to provide direct support to Greece and Turkey. Such approval was not assured until after an historic bipartisan meeting of congressional leaders. Secretary of State George Marshall attempted to rally support by linking American interests to Greek aid. Congressional leaders were irritated at the idea, which they characterized as an effort to “pull Britain’s chestnuts out of the fire.”¹⁰⁰ With Marshall’s concurrence, Dean Acheson joined the discussion, transcending the matter by justifying it as a moral crusade.

Only two great powers remained in the world . . . the United States and the Soviet Union. We had arrived at a situation unparalleled since ancient times. Not since Rome and Carthage had there been such a polarization of power on this earth . . . For the United States to strengthen countries threatened with Soviet aggression or Communist subversion . . . was to protect the security of the United States—it was to protect freedom itself.¹⁰¹

Congressional leaders were won over; the House and Senate approved the aid shortly thereafter. The president described what was to be called the Truman Doctrine as “the

⁹⁷ Barnet, *Intervention and Revolution*, 111.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁹⁹ Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 452.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 451-52.

policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”¹⁰²

The Truman doctrine characterized the American view of the post-war revolutionary challenge. Partisan forces operating as auxiliaries of the Soviet Union would seek to overthrow legitimately constituted governments. DAS was one such partisan force, though its indirect support came from Soviet satellites instead of the Soviet Union. The Greek government rejoiced in securing assistance from the world’s most powerful democratic sponsor state. However, the government’s work had just begun. It was time to develop an effective counterrevolutionary strategy.

The Revolutionary Strategy

DAS employed a coercive strategy in its bid to overthrow the Greek government. Military force was employed in a coercive role to pursue this objective. There was little evidence of persuasive activity. Communist countries along Greece’s borders sustained DAS efforts. The people supported the government and generally were not supportive of DAS operations. DAS employed terror to control occupied territory and recruit new fighters. The DAS strategy will be reviewed in three phases. The pre-hostilities phase began two decades prior to the outbreak of war in 1946. The goal of this phase was to build a revolutionary infrastructure and train cadre members. The guerrilla warfare phase lasted from 1946 to late 1948. This phase was designed to slowly coerce the government into submission. The conventional warfare phase began in December 1948 and lasted until September 1949. In a bid for external legitimacy, the communists sought to

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 452.

¹⁰² Ibid., 453.

establish a communist-controlled “Free Greece” in Macedonia. The change in objectives was ill advised because the communists did not have the resources to seize and hold “Free Greece.”

Pre-hostilities. The events of the 1930s and early 1940s enabled the communists to become experts in underground political operations and guerrilla tactics. The relevant activities of this phase were previously covered above. However, it is important to emphasize that tasks associated with raising an army and growing the infrastructure continued until the end of the civil war. As will be seen, the DAS’s inability to expand the army was a major reason why the final partisan strategy could not be executed as formulated.

Guerrilla warfare. From 1946 through 1948, DAS employed guerrilla warfare to discredit the government. Military operations were planned to achieve political goals. “By cutting communications, sowing civil disorder, increasing the tax burden enormously, disrupting the economic life of the country, the Communists reasonably hoped to undermine the Athens regime and to create social, economic, and political pressures that would, in time, bring about its collapse.”¹⁰³ The strategy proved to be quite effective.

The partisans fought in small, highly mobile units that were “capable of dispersing and hiding or even mingling with the civil population when in trouble, yet able to concentrate locally superior forces swiftly for attacks on village police posts and small patrols.”¹⁰⁴ DAS soon intimidated police forces into abandoning small outposts for the

¹⁰³ Taber, *War of the Flea*, 146.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

security of larger towns.¹⁰⁵ These tactics eventually enabled DAS to control “an even larger extent of Greece than the resistance had held at its peak during the occupation.”¹⁰⁶

Because it lacked popular support, DAS relied on fear and intimidation to control occupied areas. Special emphasis was placed on gathering intelligence from the people and denying the same to government forces. Anyone suspected of being a government informant was executed. Recruiting efforts received top priority. Terror tactics were used to extort recruits from the peasantry at the price of life or limb. Thousands of people were kidnapped, indoctrinated, and forced to fight for DAS. Before long, the peasants began leaving their villages for the security of larger towns. Such activities cost the communists the support of people throughout the country. Ultimately, more than 700,000 people became refugees after abandoning their farms and villages for the security of larger cities. The government quickly became overwhelmed by the responsibility associated with sheltering and feeding the refugees.¹⁰⁷

When hostilities began in 1946, there was disagreement within the KKE as to whether political activity or military force should be the primary means of achieving party aims. Many hoped to resolve the conflict through a negotiated settlement that guaranteed communist participation in the political process. Some KKE elements believed that only cowards joined the DAS in the mountains. Other factions dissuaded former ELAS members from joining DAS ranks. Domestically, the KKE largely failed to marshal popular support for the communist agenda. Internationally, the KKE was

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Woodhouse, *Modern Greece*, 259.

¹⁰⁷ Taber, *War of the Flea*, 147; and Theodossios Papathanasiades, “The Bandit’s Last Stand in Greece,” *Military Review*, 30 (February 1951): 22. Colonel Papathanasiades was a member of the Greek General Staff during the Third Greek Civil War.

unable to muster support among the Great Powers to create a neutral Greece and avoid a full-blown civil war. In February 1947 the KKE finally decided that armed conflict would take priority over all other activities, and crafted a new strategy to defeat the Greek government.¹⁰⁸

In June 1947 the KKE revealed the strategy by way of an ultimatum. If the government did not accept a negotiated settlement in exchange for certain conditions that included free elections, the communists would establish an autonomous region in Macedonia. The partisans called the area Free Greece and promised to set up their own government and supporting institutions. After controlling a defensible region in Macedonia, DAS would form a provisional government and seek diplomatic recognition and resources from socialist states. To support the strategy, the DAS would need an army of 50,000 personnel. Although still debated, it appears as though Moscow and Belgrade agreed to provide the physical resources if DAS provided the manpower.¹⁰⁹

The change in strategy appears sound if it was predicated on the British decision to terminate assistance to the Greek government. However, the decision appears questionable in light of the massive support promised to the government by the United States. The KKE seemingly disregarded the risks associated with conventional warfare. Perhaps the communists believed that only an American military invasion could save Greece. Up to this point economic assistance had failed to stabilize the Greek economy,

¹⁰⁸ Smith, "Communist Perceptions, Strategies, and Tactics, 1945-1949," 94-102; and Dominique Eudes, *The Kapetanos: Partisans and Civil War in Greece, 1943-1949* trans. John Howe (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 296.

¹⁰⁹ Averoff-Tossizza, *By Fire and Axe*, 214; and Smith, "Communist Perceptions, Strategies, and Tactics, 1945-1949," 102-104.

and the potential for total economic collapse remained.¹¹⁰ Alternatively, perhaps the KKE decided that American aid would strengthen the government to the point where it could marginalize the effectiveness of DAS guerrilla tactics. If the DAS could “*dominate a small region and form a provisional government there, this government could be recognized by all the socialist countries*. Then, commercial agreements could be signed with this government and the socialist countries would be able officially to offer all the material assistance needed [emphasis original].”¹¹¹ Perhaps the KKE thought such a strategy could help the DAS match the growing strength of the GNA.

Whatever the cause, the DAS commander disagreed with the change in strategy.¹¹² He preferred to wage guerrilla warfare instead of the conventional combat required to seize and hold territory. The new strategy would require the DAS to be transformed into a regular army. No matter how skilled, the DAS could not hope to match the firepower of the GNA without massive support from external sponsors. By restricting its operations to Macedonia, the DAS would also forfeit the opportunity to recruit resources from other areas of Greece.¹¹³

However reluctantly, the DAS commander attempted to support the strategy. The DAS tried to seize a “provisional capital of Democratic Greece” from among the northern border towns in December 1947, but these efforts failed.¹¹⁴ Although DAS had neither territory nor a capital, the DAS commander announced the establishment of the

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 101.

¹¹¹ Averoff-Tossizza, *By Fire and Axe*, 214.

¹¹² Eudes, *The Kapetanios*, 303.

¹¹³ Ibid., 305.

¹¹⁴ Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, 161.

provisional government of Free Greece on Christmas Eve. Not a single foreign government—socialist or otherwise—recognized its existence.

In the meantime, the Soviets began to have misgivings about Free Greece. Stalin was concerned that Tito would attempt to control the Balkan Federation, and “saw Tito’s support for the Greek communists as a bid to consolidate Yugoslav hegemony in the area.”¹¹⁵ In early 1948 Stalin reportedly told Yugoslav and Bulgarian diplomats that the civil war in Greece should be ended.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, direct support from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania continued for some time.

By the end of 1948, the DAS was a formidable force comprised of 23,000 fighters.¹¹⁷ The DAS changed its organizational structure to prepare for conventional combat. Small groups of 50 to 100 men were reorganized into brigades and divisions. “A guerrilla brigade numbered 600-800 men, with the division generally consisting of from two to three brigades.”¹¹⁸ DAS strength was still far short of the 50,000 required to seize and defend Free Greece. However, at the urging of the KKE, DAS tested its conventional strength with a “town campaign” that began in December 1948.¹¹⁹

Conventional warfare phase. This phase began with a series of attacks in the vicinity of DAS redoubts near the Grammos and Vitsi Mountains.¹²⁰ The intention was to extend DAS control over medium size towns in northern Macedonia. However, DAS did not possess the resources to hold the towns for any extended period. The GNA leapt at the chance to engage the DAS in conventional combat. The partisan fixed positions

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 162.

¹¹⁶ Eudes, *The Kapetanos*, 310.

¹¹⁷ Papathanasiades, “The Bandit’s Last Stand in Greece,” 22.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Cable, *Conflict of Myths*, 24.

were extremely vulnerable to GNA artillery and aircraft.¹²¹ The town campaign was terminated after the DAS suffered heavy losses.

The DAS commander sensed the partisan army would be defeated if it continued set-piece battles against the ever-improving GNA.¹²² For its part, the KKE leadership thought that fighting as a regular army would help build external legitimacy. After a struggle for power, the DAS commander “was purged as a purported defeatist in February 1949.”¹²³ A former KKE leader with little military experience assumed command of the DAS.

Meanwhile, military and political conditions were rapidly changing outside of northern Macedonia. First, GNA units defeated DAS partisans and their intelligence infrastructure in south and central Greece. Secondly, Tito split with Stalin following a dispute over who would exercise political control of the proposed Balkan Federation. When the KKE supported Soviet control of the federation, Tito closed Yugoslavia’s border with Greece. Finally, the DAS now faced a new commander of the Greek national armed forces. General Papagos doggedly pursued the DAS with an army that was considerably improved thanks to American training, equipment, and advice.

By the summer of 1949, DAS was outnumbered, outgunned, out-led, and lacked intelligence and resource support. “Laboring against such difficulties, the Democratic Army proved unable long to resist better armed, better trained and organized regular troops in vastly superior numbers and with full artillery and air support.”¹²⁴ By September, the GNA defeated the DAS strongholds in the Vitsi and Grammos Mountains. Without external support, the DAS never again mustered enough force to challenge the Greek government.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, 163.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Taber, *The War of the Flea*, 149.

The Counterrevolutionary Strategy

The Greek government developed a strategy that was much more coercive than persuasive. With the support of the people and its American sponsor, the government concentrated on the employment of military force to defeat the DAS. However coercive, the government attempted—and was sometimes compelled by events—to conduct persuasive operations in support of its strategy. American economic and military assistance enabled the government to triumph over the DAS. The government virtually transferred sovereignty over its economic and social instruments to the American mission. In exchange for military assistance, the government agreed to a combined Greek and American command arrangement. American advisers wielded direct influence if not operational control over the GNA through the Joint U.S. Military and Advisory Planning Group (JUSMAPG).

Persuasion

Although valid grievances remained, the Greek people believed the government offered them more of a future than life under communist rule. What many did not know was that the American mission directed government efforts to improve balanced development, mobilization, and security.¹²⁵

Balanced development. The fundamental objective of the American mission was to prevent the economic collapse of Greece. American economic assistance initially focused on providing “food, fuel, steel, medical supplies, other consumer goods and

¹²⁵ Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece*, 171.

materials for agriculture and industry, and a number of heavy reconstruction projects.”¹²⁶ However, the mounting numbers of refugees required funds to be frequently diverted to support emergency humanitarian operations. Still other funds were used for military-related construction projects. To fight inflation, emphasis was placed on budgetary reform; improvement of transportation and communication facilities; import control and export stimulation; long-term agricultural projects; advancing public health care; labor relations; tax reform; and generating revenue from industry. Unfortunately, American efforts had little lasting effect on the Greek economy. Reconstruction efforts could not keep pace with the destruction wrought by the civil war. Although it prevented economic collapse, “American aid and supervision did little to reconstruct the shaky underpinnings of the Greek economy, to foster substantial economic growth, or to promote the general welfare.”¹²⁷ It was impossible to recover the economy while the DAS was busy blowing up the Greek infrastructure.

Mobilization. The refugee situation created the most serious social and economic problems for the Greek government.¹²⁸ Continued attempts were made to mobilize the refugee population to return to their villages and involve themselves in productive work. “The Greek Government realized the early restoration of the livelihood of the people is essential to economic and political stability.”¹²⁹ This assisted the government by not only relieving “congestion in urban areas where they [refugees] live on a marginal basis, but will also contribute materially to economic recovery by reducing government

¹²⁶ By March 1949 economic services and deliveries were valued at \$119,500,000. See *Seventh Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, Publication 3594, Economic Cooperation Series 21 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, August 1949), 15.

¹²⁷ Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece*, 190.

¹²⁸ *Seventh Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 11-12.

expenditures for maintenance and by restoring these people to productive fields."¹³⁰ Welfare programs provided the refugees with free seed, food rations, farm tools, and money.

Security. In 1948 a government program was initiated to arm civilians for defense of villages in isolated areas.¹³¹ Rifles were issued to trustworthy civilians to provide refugees with an added sense of security after they returned to their villages. The program proved successful and was expanded under GNA supervision. Eventually “the security of towns and villages was turned over to the National Defense Corps—a force of 50,000 men.”¹³² By standing up the National Defense Corps, the government demonstrated its concern for the people and freed up the 147,000-man GNA to conduct mobile operations.¹³³

Coercion

The government’s counterrevolutionary strategy was coercive in nature, although analysis revealed significant evidence of persuasive operations. Unsurprisingly, the military was assigned a coercive role and conducted combat operations in support of the national strategy. Coercive tasks included attempts to isolate DAS from the people; lawful efforts to disrupt, disorganize, and defeat DAS; publicly discrediting communist leadership; the arrest and prosecution of communist elements; and the conduct of combat operations.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹³¹ *Seventh Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 11.

¹³² Theodossios Papathanasiades, “The Bandit’s Last Stand in Greece,” *Military Review* 30, no. 11, February 1951, 22.

¹³³ Papathanasiades, “The Bandit’s Last Stand in Greece,” 23.

Isolation of DAS from the people. DAS terror tactics did more to isolate the partisans from the people than any government operation. Between 1946 and 1950 the partisans kidnapped approximately 30,000 people.¹³⁴ Most of DAS's 76,000 civilian 'recruits' were forced to join the partisan ranks.¹³⁵ Ultimately some 700,000 people abandoned their homes for the security of larger towns to protect themselves from the DAS.¹³⁶

Lawful efforts to disrupt, disorganize, and defeat DAS. A plethora of legal means was employed to help the government combat the communist threat. In 1948 the security situation was so poor that the government declared martial law.¹³⁷ The government passed an anti-strike law in December 1947 to prevent laborers from work stoppages due to wage disputes. The eventual repeal of that law "indicated to public opinion in Greece and elsewhere that the Greek government, despite the perils it faces, is determined to maintain essential democratic liberties to the fullest measure compatible with national safety."¹³⁸

The government also used external legal mechanisms to fight the DAS. The government sought Security Council assistance to stem the flow of supplies from Yugoslavia, Albania, and Bulgaria. The Security Council appointed a commission to investigate the charges, and they supported the Greek government's claims. In response, "the General Assembly created a United Nations Special Commission on the Balkans . . . [which] in numerous reports drew attention to the various kinds of support afforded to the

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹³⁵ *Seventh Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 10.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, 162.

¹³⁸ *Third Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, Publication 3149, Economic Cooperation Series 9 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, June 1948), 18.

Democratic Army by Greece's communist neighbors."¹³⁹ These reports improved the international legitimacy of the Greek government.

Yet the government suffered some loss of legitimacy by condoning illegal activities. The KKE reaped propaganda value from the activities of the government's minister of public order who carried out an "extensive program of political murder."¹⁴⁰ Right wing factions within the GNA waged their own campaign of terror. These activities, which included exchanging severed heads for bounty money, were reported in the 11 November 1947 edition of the *Daily Mirror* in London and were confirmed by the British ambassador in Athens.¹⁴¹

Publicly discrediting communist leadership. The Greek government was quick to exploit unsound strategic moves by the communist leadership. The December 1947 announcement of a "Free Greece" by the DAS commander played into the government hands. The traditional communist attempt to create an independent state of Macedonia was extremely unpopular with the people. The government used the opportunity to characterize the DAS leaders as traitors who cared more about communist ideology than Greek sovereignty. The DAS terror campaign was another strategic blunder. The Greek government quickly denounced the communist leaders for kidnapping Greek children:

"... the KKE had also received a great deal of adverse publicity over its policy of evacuating, for protection against 'monarcho-fascist' reprisals, children aged between three and fourteen from the areas it controlled."¹⁴² The Red Cross estimated that 25,000 children were resettled in eastern bloc countries.¹⁴³ This practice brought swift condemnation from the West.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 161.

¹⁴⁰ Barnet, *Intervention and Revolution*, 111.

¹⁴¹ Eudes, *The Kapetanios*, 306.

¹⁴² Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, 165.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

Arresting and prosecuting communist elements. The Greeks used these activities in their favor and to their detriment. The government responded to the KKE ultimatum concerning Free Greece with several days of mass arrests that netted much of the communist political leadership in Athens. The army and the police began working together to deny DAS pre-battle intelligence. KKE sympathizers and informants were arrested prior to government operations in a specific area. Such police sweeps made it increasingly difficult for the DAS to avoid surprise attacks by the GNA.¹⁴⁴

By the end of the war, the government had arrested and charged many Greeks with subversive activity. Approximately 20,000 Greeks received sentences for state crimes, and some 5,000 receive life sentences or were condemned to death.¹⁴⁵ When the government was accused of meting out excessively harsh penalties, the Minister of Justice replied it was an old custom for bandits to be decapitated and have their heads put on public display.¹⁴⁶

Combat operations. The GNA, along with its air and naval counterparts, ceased to exist during the Axis occupation. When the civil war began, Greek soldiers suffered from a lack of training and poor leadership.¹⁴⁷ The DAS maintained the upper hand during the first three years of fighting by conducting guerrilla warfare against a less-than-capable conventional foe.

During 1946-1947, the police were unable to defend against the DAS raids against villages and towns. The GNA began a series of sweep operations to attack DAS in

¹⁴⁴ Smith, "Communist Perceptions, Strategies, and Tactics," 105; and Wainhouse, "Guerrilla War in Greece," 24.

¹⁴⁵ Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, 164.

¹⁴⁶ Eudes, *The Kapetanios*, 306.

¹⁴⁷ Papathanasiades, "The Bandit's Last Stand in Greece," 22.

“central Greece then sweep northward to the border, destroying the guerrillas along the way.”¹⁴⁸ The DAS easily countered sweep operations with superior mobility that enabled the partisans to escape to safe sanctuary in Albania and Yugoslavia. The first battles of strategic significance occurred in December 1947. During one such battle, the DAS tried to take the town of Konitsa on the Albanian border. The intent was to make Konitsa the provisional capital of Free Greece. In a preview of things to come, the DAS attempted to fight the GNA in a set-piece battle.¹⁴⁹ The GNA’s firepower and numerical strength proved superior; DAS escaped destruction by slipping away via the frontier.

The government enjoyed few initial successes because the GNA was “deficient in training and, to some extent, in equipment, and the organization of its combat units, even those of the mountain type, was not entirely suitable for combat against the comparatively small guerrilla bands of that period.”¹⁵⁰ While the army began an intense period of retraining, commando units were used to buy time and provide the people with incremental victories. Ultimately, the commando mission was to conduct deep penetration operations, night raids, attacks against the enemy’s rear, and to function as a type of air-mobile reserve. By the end of the war five commando groups were operational.¹⁵¹

In 1948 a sense of optimism began to creep into the GNA. Several units had undergone training under the watchful eye of the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Planning Group (JUSMAGP). Two squadrons of Royal Hellenic Air Force (RHAF) Spitfire

¹⁴⁸ J. C. Murray, “The Anti-Bandit War,” *The Guerrilla—and How to Fight Him*, ed. T. N. Greene (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 72.

¹⁴⁹ Kousoulas, *Revolution and Defeat*, 249.

¹⁵⁰ Murray, “The Anti-Bandit War,” 82.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 83. The commando groups were each comprised of approximately 625 soldiers.

fighters and a growing number of artillery pieces supported the 182,000 personnel of the GNA.¹⁵² DAS fielded approximately 23,000 troops and did not possess adequate heavy artillery or any aircraft. Yet the GNA's huge numerical advantage was of little avail in 1948.

In the spring of 1948 the GNA began a series of major operations to encircle and destroy partisan camps in south-central and northern Greece. The southern campaign was largely a failure. Most DAS units eluded capture and returned to the northern strongholds of Vitsi and Grammos Mountains. As the campaign entered the summer months, fighting erupted near Grammos Mountain. Even though the GNA outnumbered the DAS nearly five to one, the partisans avoided destruction by slipping away into Albania. Shortly thereafter, DAS units reappeared in the vicinity of nearby Vitsi Mountain. Despite the GNA's superior numbers and firepower, the DAS defeated the Greek Army in fighting that lasted from August to October. Greek field commanders were criticized for lacking the will to fight. The Grammos and Vitsi losses drastically lowered the morale of the GNA and the government—which almost fell due to public dissatisfaction with the conduct of the war.¹⁵³

To rectify the situation, the government appointed General Papagos as supreme commander of the land forces. He refused to take the post until the government affirmed his absolute authority over military matters. Upon taking command, Papagos restored discipline, replaced several commanding officers, and stressed the importance of seizing the initiative from the DAS. During his command, there were no appreciable increases in

¹⁵² Wainhouse, "Guerrilla War in Greece," 22.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 22; Taber, *War of the Flea*, 148-149; and Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece*, 242-244.

equipment, training, or manpower. The GNA “was simply made to do what it was capable of doing.”¹⁵⁴

In the spring of 1949 Papagos directed GNA operations that successfully destroyed the DAS intelligence network in southern and central Greece. In June the GNA returned to the Grammos and Vitsi mountains. With its intelligence network disrupted, the DAS had no idea of the trap that was about to be sprung in northern Greece.

Wary of the DAS’s propensity to outmaneuver the GNA, Papagos began government operations with a diversionary attack near Grammos Mountain. After fixing the DAS, the GNA quickly blocked Albanian border crossings and assaulted Vitsi Mountain. The stronghold fell after three days of heavy fighting that included numerous RHAF air strikes, artillery barrages, and hand-to-hand combat. Nevertheless, approximately 5,000 of the 7,000 DAS defenders withdrew into Albanian sanctuaries. The GNA assault on the Grammos mountain area was launched on 24 August. Once again, artillery and RHAF airpower supported GNA operations by blasting the DAS’s fixed positions. Grammos fell after five days of fighting and some 4,000 guerrillas withdrew into Albania.¹⁵⁵

A succession of key events during the summer of 1949 coerced the DAS partisans into submission. Changes in the international environment caused Yugoslavia to withdraw its support for the DAS and close its border with Greece. Loss of the Vitsi and Grammos complexes forced the DAS to operate from Albania. Finally, it became clear there would be no direct Soviet support for the DAS. In October the provisional government of Free Greece announced it terminated operations to “save Greece from

¹⁵⁴ Murray, “The Anti-Bandit War,” 97-8.

destruction.”¹⁵⁶ The civil war came to an end seven months after Papagos was appointed as Commander-in-Chief.

Airpower and Execution of the Counterrevolutionary Strategy

The Royal Hellenic Air Force (RHAF) did not exist until mid-1946.¹⁵⁷ Significant aid from the U.S. and Britain helped the RHAF become a small but credible air force capable of achieving both persuasive and coercive effects. However, the RHAF’s primary role was to coerce the DAS through combat operations. Generally speaking, airpower enabled the government to maintain continuous pressure on the DAS despite poor weather conditions, mountainous terrain, and a poor road network that often prevented cohesive ground operations.¹⁵⁸ At the end of the war, the RHAF made a vital contribution to the defeat of the DAS on Vitsi and Grammos Mountains.

Persuasive operations

Although primarily assigned a coercive role, foreign assistance helped the RHAF conduct persuasive operations in support of mobilization and security tasks.

Mobilization. American military assistance helped improve Greek airfields and provided the RHAF with training opportunities. The U.S. Army improved RHAF airfields to permit inclement weather operations.¹⁵⁹ American army engineers helped to refurbish “nine major airports, and numerous strategically placed airfields and landing

¹⁵⁵ Murray, “The Anti-Bandit War,” 72.

¹⁵⁶ Wainhouse, “Guerrilla War in Greece,” 25.

¹⁵⁷ Prior to this time, Greek squadrons operated under the tutelage of the British RAF. See Victor Flinham, *Air Wars and Aircraft* (New York: Facts on File, 1990), 9-10.

¹⁵⁸ *Sixth Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, Publication 3467, Economic Cooperation Series 17 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, April 1949), 6.

¹⁵⁹ *Third Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 6.

strips.”¹⁶⁰ Airfield improvements not only extended the range and striking power of the RHAF, but they also increased the efficiency of civilian and military air transportation operations. American aid also trained additional mechanics and expanded maintenance facilities at the Greek aircraft factory.¹⁶¹ JUSMAPG helped manage the pilot shortage by training Greek cadets in the United States. The RHAF also helped boost morale by airdropping mail and supplies to the GNA and rapidly evacuating the wounded from forward areas.¹⁶²

Reconnaissance aircraft operating out of improved airfields at Salonika, Larissa, and Elefsis provided full coverage of Greece. Air reconnaissance provided Greek commanders with an overhead view of the battlefield—something that the DAS never had—in a responsive manner. RHAF reconnaissance of DAS troop formations and rear base facilities were of special interest to the GNA.¹⁶³

Security. The RHAF offered direct and indirect means to help the government improve security for the people. Classical employment included the use of airpower to help defeat DAS attacks against towns and villages. In December 1947, airpower supported GNA counterattacks against DAS units attempting to seize the town of Konitsa near the Albanian border. The attack failed—and so did the DAS bid for a provincial capital. A more unique example of direct means occurred in June 1949. DAS units attacked the village of Naousa and took 300 hostages. While attempting to retreat, DAS

¹⁶⁰ “Greece,” *Military Review* 29 (December 1949): 70.

¹⁶¹ *Sixth Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 7.

¹⁶² *Eighth Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, Publication 3674, Economic Cooperation Series 22 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, April 1949), 6.

¹⁶³ *Seventh Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 7; and *Fifth Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, Publication 3371, Economic Cooperation Series 13 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, April 1949), 6.

elements came under attack by Spitfire fighters. The ensuing dive-bombing operations forced the DAS to abandon their hostages while they fled for cover within the nearby mountains.¹⁶⁴

Indirect means of improving security included the wide variety of reconnaissance, supply, and strike operations flown by the RHAF. Every DAS member located by reconnaissance operations and killed by air strikes or ground operations was one less partisan available to raid villages or torture government informants.

Coercive operations

The balance of RHAF coercive operations were flown in support of ground forces engaged in combat operations.

Legal efforts to disrupt, disorganize, or defeat DAS. Numerous psychological operations were flown in support of GNA operations throughout the war. The GNA's April 1947 offensive in the Pindus Mountains began with "a wave of aircraft, long before any troops were in sight. Tons of leaflets showered from the sky, calling on the andartes [DAS guerrillas] to surrender to regular forces. Almost at once a second wave arrived carrying more convincing arguments in the form of volleys of rockets . . ."¹⁶⁵ In May 1947 the government extended an offer of amnesty to DAS soldiers in exchange for their surrender. RHAF leaflet drops communicated the news to DAS units in the mountains.¹⁶⁶ Dakota aircraft conducted similar leaflet drops supporting Operation Dawn near the Gulf of Corinth in April 1948.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Details are from Flintham, *Air Wars and Aircraft*, 13.

¹⁶⁵ Eudes, *The Kapetanos*, 291.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹⁶⁷ Flintham, *Air Wars and Aircraft*, 11.

Combat operations. The RHAF's combat operations supported the government strategy with independent operations and direct support activities. Independent air operations consisted of interdiction against lines of communication and DAS troop concentrations. Three techniques were employed. First, preplanned strikes were flown against targets identified by ground intelligence or aerial imagery. Next, armed reconnaissance missions were flown when lucrative targets such as enemy formations were known to be in the vicinity of a given location. Third, airborne observation aircraft were used to locate targets, remain on station, and then direct strike aircraft onto the targets. The observer-striker team was the most popular technique used for independent air operations. This technique was employed for strikes against mobile targets such as troop concentrations and headquarters in the field. Observer-strike tactics were also employed against static targets such as supply depots, rebel-held towns, and defensive positions.¹⁶⁸

The RHAF was unable to sever the lines of communication between DAS and its sponsor states. Rules of engagement and aircraft limitations hampered interdiction efforts. Political restrictions prohibited aerial interdiction operations within five miles of the Albanian, Yugoslav, or Bulgarian border.¹⁶⁹ This rule of engagement was designed to prevent international incidents that could justify the Albanian, Yugoslav, or Bulgarian support for the DAS. Most importantly, the RHAF's force structure was inadequate to accomplish the interdiction mission. RHAF aircraft lacked both the range and payload (Supermarine Spitfires with fragmentation bombs and napalm) or adequate means of delivery (Douglas C-47s with improvised bomb racks) required for the mission. Though interdiction efforts helped maintain pressure on DAS rear areas, they were not an important contribution to the DAS defeat.

¹⁶⁸ This paragraph based on Murray, "The Anti-Bandit War," 106-108; and "Greek Air Force Small But Able," *Air Intelligence Digest* 2, no. 9 (September 1949): 35-36.

¹⁶⁹ Flintham, *Air Wars and Aircraft*, 11.

Close air support operations against troop concentrations were much more effective than interdiction.¹⁷⁰ During the first years of the war, guerrilla tactics helped DAS units avoid pitched battles. The RHAF rectified the situation by providing flying artillery to attack DAS troop formations and punish withdrawing partisan units. Air to ground communication and coordination was poor. Nonetheless, the mountainous terrain and lack of a suitable road network forced the GNA to rely on the RHAF as its flying artillery.¹⁷¹ Other direct support operations included reconnaissance, observation, spotting for artillery, photography, and aerial resupply.¹⁷² Of all the direct support missions, close air support operations proved the most effective for supporting the GNA.

There was little doubt that the GNA's operations were closely allied with, and depended upon, the RHAF's ability to impede DAS movement and strike at their installations.¹⁷³ For much of the war, the RHAF's general effect was to restrict DAS movement by daylight. However, the closing days of the war in the summer of 1949 indicated the RHAF was capable of much more.

After eliminating DAS resistance elsewhere in Greece, the GNA turned toward the two remaining communist fortresses on Vitsi and Grammos Mountains. The battle began with a feinting attack on Grammos Mountain on 5 August, followed by an abrupt assault on the nearby Vitsi complex on 10 August. RHAF firepower smashed the DAS's outer security ring and penetrated the primary line of defense. Many partisans abandoned their weapons and equipment to beat a hasty retreat. Although Vitsi was overrun by the GNA on 16 August, some 4,000 partisans escaped to Grammos Mountain. As the GNA

¹⁷⁰ This paragraph based on Murray, "The Anti-Bandit War," 106-108.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 106.

regrouped to attack Grammos, DAS positions along the Bulgarian border came under attack by the entire RHAF on 19 August. A follow-on assault by additional GNA units evicted the partisans from their positions; 1,000 escaped into Bulgaria. By late August, Grammos was the only remaining DAS stronghold. Although the GNA planned to initiate battle on 22 August, operations were postponed for three days. Greece had just taken delivery of fifty Curtiss SB2C Helldivers from the United States, which were armed with machine-guns, cannon, and approximately two tons of bombs.¹⁷⁴ Because the Helldivers “had the ability to dive down on the enemy and rake him with machine-gun fire, as well as sweep in for accurate low-level bombing attacks, the Commander-in-Chief wanted these planes to be put into action.”¹⁷⁵

On 24 August Helldivers and Spitfires began pounding DAS positions. Heavy air operations would last for an entire week. At first the bombings appeared to be somewhat ineffective, but the GNA soon learned that the DAS morale had been seriously effected.¹⁷⁶ The DAS soldiers were shocked and paralyzed by the intensive firepower generated by the RHAF’s fighter-bombers and the GNA’s artillery. When ground operations began the DAS partisans “defended their universe of chaos . . . fighting artillery with booby traps, firing their Bren guns at aeroplanes and dying by the hundreds.”¹⁷⁷ DAS prisoners testified that RHAF napalm attacks terrorized the

¹⁷³ “Greek Air Force Small But Able,” 44.

¹⁷⁴ Howard Jones, *A New Kind of War: America’s Global Strategy and the Truman Doctrine in Greece* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 218-219; and Eudes, *The Kapetanios*, 353.

¹⁷⁵ Averoff-Tossizza, *By Fire and Axe*, 345-346.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 346.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 354.

partisans.¹⁷⁸ Shocked and immobilized, the DAS soldiers were unable to mount effective counterattacks.

The RHAF continued providing a heavy stream of aerial firepower until the DAS abandoned their positions and escaped into Albania. By 1000 hours on 30 August, “Grammos was silent as the grave.”¹⁷⁹ Reported statistics for the Grammos operations indicated the RHAF flew 826 sorties in six days, employing an estimated 250 tons of bombs, rockets, and napalm.¹⁸⁰ During the remainder of the year the RHAF continued to search for DAS units. Over 300 armed reconnaissance missions confirmed what the JUSMAPG and the Greek government suspected: the DAS had indeed been neutralized. Though there would be no Free Greece, Greece was free.

The wartime record on RHAF operations suggests “that the return from the air effort immeasurably exceeded the return from any comparable effort on the ground Moreover, casualties sustained in the air were infinitesimal as compared with those sustained on the ground.”¹⁸¹ Monetarily, airpower cost 90 percent less to employ than ground forces.¹⁸² From a casualty perspective, the RHAF’s loss rate was extremely low. As an example, in 1948 only twelve RHAF crewmembers were killed although 8,907 combat and 9,891 transport sorties were flown.¹⁸³ However, it should be noted that the DAS lacked the means to challenge the RHAF’s command of the air. Nonetheless, a tiny

¹⁷⁸ Jones, *A New Kind of War*, 217.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece*, 251.

¹⁸¹ Murray, “Anti-Bandit War,” 107.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Flintham, *Air Wars and Aircraft*, 12.

air force comprised of three ground attack squadrons and three reconnaissance flights made a disproportionately large contribution to the outcome of the war.¹⁸⁴

The Outcome of the War

Did the partisans lose the war or did the government neutralize the DAS? There are several perspectives. Perhaps the government won the war because the Greek people understood the stakes and were determined to fight and win.¹⁸⁵ The tenacity of partisan forces during the Axis occupation conditioned the people to believe that the communists were tough, disciplined fighters. By the time the civil war began the people also understood that loyalty to communist dogma meant swearing allegiance to an external power. Most Greeks could not imagine ceding sovereign Greek territory to another country under any circumstances. Perhaps the most compelling reason why the government maintained popular support was that communism was not compatible with the national character.

Another perspective suggests Tito's slow closure of the Yugoslav border resulted in the DAS's defeat. In the summer of 1949 the GNA inflicted horrendous losses on DAS because it chose to fight with conventional tactics. Without Yugoslav food and weapons, the DAS was forced to submit. But what really caused Tito to terminate support for the DAS? The KKE was ultimately responsible for Tito's decision. After the Tito-Stalin split, the KKE knowingly risked Yugoslav support by supporting Stalin's vision for the Balkan Federation. Perhaps what the KKE did not know was Stalin had already decided the Greek Civil War should come to an end.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 12.

¹⁸⁵ Averoff-Tossizza, *By Fire and Axe*, 357.

A third perspective is the government won the war because of the massive amount of American economic and military assistance. The government did not have a national strategy until it permitted American experts to control the economic and military instruments of power. This decision resulted in more than just a better expenditure of resources. The evidence suggests that without U.S. assistance the Greek economy would have collapsed and the military would have floundered. Although American advisors did little to improve the GNA's counter-guerrilla capability, vast improvements in the GNA's conventional capability spelled victory on Grammos Mountain.

A fourth perspective is the communists lost the war in 1947 when communist leaders decided to establish Free Greece. Why was this decision made if the DAS did not have the resources to seize and hold territory? Did the communists really think they could overcome the GNA's firepower advantage and defeat the DAS in pitched battle? Perhaps the communists were betting on diplomatic recognition from socialist nations. Such recognition could have provided the degree of external legitimacy required to attract support from additional sponsors. Perhaps the partisans thought diplomatic recognition might afford DAS the opportunity to sue for peace. Whatever the reason, neither recognition nor sufficient resources ever materialized.

A final perspective suggests DAS lost the war because its terror campaign alienated the people from the communists. DAS created two problems by terrorizing the peasantry. Such activity had the psychological effect of driving the people into the government's camp. Terrorism also created the physical effect of an enormous refugee flow that drastically reduced the number of potential recruits. To pursue its material

objective of a 50,000-man army, DAS forfeited its opportunity to achieve an intangible objective: legitimacy.

The evidence suggests that DAS blunders were primarily responsible for the government's victory. By transitioning into the conventional warfare phase, DAS bared itself to the GNA's firepower advantage. By siding with Stalin, the KKE doomed the opportunity for continued aid from Yugoslavia. And finally, by terrorizing the population, DAS negated any chance the KKE had to become a legitimate actor within the Greek political process.

Some Historical Insights

Historical analysis of the Greek Civil War provided insights to the four questions driving this study. *What is the role of the military instrument in counterrevolutionary warfare?* This case suggests the military instrument can assume both coercive and persuasive roles. Although the GNA was assigned a coercive role, the evidence suggested it also accomplished persuasive tasks. For example, both security and combat objectives were realized by the destruction of partisans attacking the town of Konitsa in December 1947. The townspeople were successfully protected from the DAS, and the partisans were swept from the battlefield.

What is the role of airpower in counterrevolutionary warfare? The RHAF assumed the same coercive role as that assigned to the GNA. Like the GNA, the RHAF was also able to accomplish persuasive tasks. The airfield reconstruction program provided the RHAF inclement weather options for combat operations. Upgrades to the airfields also facilitated civil transport operations. Finally, psychological operations supported both persuasive and coercive efforts by communicating terms of surrender and amnesty to the DAS.

Can airpower achieve strategic effects in counterrevolutionary warfare? The Greek Commander in Chief delayed the final assault on Grammos Mountain for three days so the Helldivers could participate in the battle. This delay strongly suggests the Greek Commander-in-Chief placed tremendous confidence in the RHAF's ability to achieve strategic effects through close air support operations. DAS prisoners of war testified that were terrorized and immobilized by RHAF attacks.

Can airpower make major contributions toward the victory of counterrevolutionary forces? Evidence suggests airpower can make major contributions toward government success through combat operations. The RHAF made important persuasive and coercive contributions to the war by impeding DAS movement during the guerilla warfare phase. However, the RHAF's coercive effectiveness was greatly increased when the DAS adopted conventional tactics. The RHAF inflicted severe physical and moral losses on the DAS's conventional formations.¹⁸⁶ Although training and equipping an air arm can be an expensive proposition, this case suggests that an investment in coercive airpower sometimes may be worth the payoff.

These preliminary insights were predicated on a partisan threat. Other actors, aims, motivations, and strategies must be studied to gain additional insights into the role of military force and airpower in counterrevolutionary warfare. To this end, the case of the Malayan Emergency is presented in the following chapter.

¹⁸⁶ Cable, *Conflict of Myths*, 24.

Chapter 3

The Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960

I repeat, perhaps to the point of boredom, that we won because the political aim was right, because the Malayan people were won over.

--Air Commodore P. E. Warcup, Royal Air Force

The Malayan Emergency highlights a counterrevolutionary strategy that was much more persuasive than coercive.¹⁸⁷ The Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) employed a classic insurgent strategy in its bid to overthrow government forces and install a Marxist regime.¹⁸⁸ The Malayan communists received only minimal ideological support from the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, while the British Commonwealth was almost totally responsible for engineering Malaya's national

¹⁸⁷ This study does not address many of the activities that occurred in Singapore. From its early administration as a Straits Settlement, Singapore was treated somewhat differently from the peninsula. Prior to World War II, the colony became a cornerstone of British economic and defense policy in Asia. After the war, Singapore remained a separate colony after the formation of the Malayan Union. For a detailed discussion of Singapore's role in the Emergency, see Richard Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985).

¹⁸⁸ Several types of Malayan governments were seated during the Malayan Emergency. The study will refer to a specific type of government when appropriate. The distinction is sometimes particularly relevant to draw attention to a specific phase in Malaya's journey toward independence. The "British colonial government" refers to the seated government prior to World War II. The "British Military Administration" governed postwar Malaya from September 1945 until the formation of the Malayan Union in 1946. The "Union government" administered to Malaya from August 1946 until the formation of the Federation of Malaya in 1948. The "Federation government" administered from February 1948 until the first general election in 1955. The "Rahman government" was seated after the first general election and led Malaya to independence in 1957.

strategy. Although assigned coercive tasks, the military instrument and airpower were much more effective in a persuasive role. In fact, airpower was the key enabler for persuasive operations. The MRLA's defeat offers important insights into the prosecution of counterrevolutionary warfare. Sometimes a government can gain success by outlasting the insurgents.

The Revolutionary Environment

Malaya suffered significant social, economic, and political upheaval in the aftermath of Japanese occupation during World War II. Malaya's military capability was rendered impotent—the Japanese disbanded Malaya's two infantry battalions and ordered the personnel to return to their villages. The British Military Administration governed in the immediate aftermath of the war but was quickly succeeded by the Malayan Union. The Union remained under Commonwealth control, but numerous initiatives were undertaken to prepare Malayan society for self-governance. These programs, coupled with the promise of future independence, persuaded the people to maintain their support for the government. Yet there were legitimate grievances for the Malayan Communist Party to exploit. The economically powerful Chinese were tired of being treated as second class citizens.¹⁸⁹ The Malay people were dissatisfied with their prospect for economic advancement.¹⁹⁰ The workers wanted increased wages and termination of the food shortage.¹⁹¹ And finally, the educated people of Malaya were demanding a larger voice in the political process regardless of their ethnic affiliation.¹⁹² The challenge for the

¹⁸⁹ W. C. S. Corry, *Malaya To-Day* (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1955), 9.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

MCP was to develop a strategy to transform grievances into action. The land and its people, historical background, social system, economic conditions, political setting, and military situation all help to explain the actors, motivations, and aims of the Emergency.

The Land and its People

Malaya was a British colonial possession that comprised an area of approximately 51,000 square miles.¹⁹³ Malaya and northern Borneo comprise modern day Malaysia. The land is best described as a mountainous and jungle-laden peninsula that forms the southernmost tip of the Asian continent. Thailand runs along the northern border; the South China Sea is to the east; and the Straits of Malacca are to the west. Mountain ranges running north to south divide the peninsula into lowlands and coastal plains. The central region is dominated by two parallel ridges that are separated by low country. Coastal plains are located to the east and west of the mountain ranges. The southern region is dominated by lowland. During the period of the Emergency, the arable land was dedicated to rubber production (14 percent), rice farming (2.2 percent), and coconut and palm oil production (2.1 percent).¹⁹⁴ The remaining 80 percent of the land was classified as jungle, mountain or swamp.¹⁹⁵ As will be seen, the physical characteristics offered the Malayan Communists both advantages and disadvantages during the Emergency.

¹⁹³ Paragraph based on United Kingdom Colonial Office, *Annual Report on the Malayan Union 1947* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949), 1.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

Approximately 4.9 million people lived in Malaya during the Emergency.¹⁹⁶ Although the Malay people represented the largest single race, the majority of the population was of non-Malay descent. In fact, the Malay people were the majority ethnic community in only three states: Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu. National census projections from 1947 showed indicated 2.1 million people classified as Malays; 1.9 million people were ethnic Chinese; over 500,000 people were from Indian descent; and about 25,000 people were categorized as nomadic aborigines. Fewer than 10,000 Europeans lived in Malaya.

The British described the Malays as people who disliked “exceptional effort, mental or physical . . .”¹⁹⁷ Malays preferred to fish or grow rice instead of working in industry. The Malay people seemed to prize contentment over wealth and were generally uninterested in commerce and trade. Therefore the British encouraged Chinese immigration to develop the rubber and tin industries.¹⁹⁸ The ethnic Chinese immigrants were generally businessmen, laborers, or land-less squatters. A number of Chinese businessmen on the peninsula became wealthy by investing in Malaya’s rubber and tin industries. Their profits created significant tax revenue for the government. Most of the Chinese labor force worked in the tin mines or on rubber estates. Chinese workers had a strong work ethic and generally enjoyed a higher standard of living than workers of other races. Land-less squatters were poverty-stricken people who lived in isolated areas and raised subsistence and cash crops. The squatters were

¹⁹⁶ Population and demographics in this paragraph were taken from projections of a 1947 census discussed in *Annual Report on the Malayan Union 1947*, 1-2.

¹⁹⁷ Victor Purcell, *Malaysia* (New York: Walker and Company, 1965), 43.

¹⁹⁸ Corry, *Malaya To-Day*, 9; and Purcell, *Malaysia*, 42-43.

independently minded and preferred to live beyond the reach of the government.¹⁹⁹

The ethnic Indian and aborigine peoples comprised two smaller groups of the population. Because there was only a small number of Indians in Malaya, they did not significantly influence political or economic matters.²⁰⁰ A handful of Indians were active in commerce, practiced law, or were skilled in medicine, but most worked on rubber estates. The Malays called the aborigines “*Sakais*” meaning ‘subject’ or ‘dependent’.²⁰¹ The *Sakais* were nomads that were normally found in the central highlands of the jungle, along the east coast, and in Johore.²⁰² *Sakais* were comprised of two racial groups: the Negritoes or *Semang* and “proto-Malays” or *Jakun*.²⁰³ The *Semang* depended upon the jungle for food and shelter. The *Jakun* built temporary homes and planted “millet, sugar, tobacco, plantains, and bill and rice.”²⁰⁴ The surpluses generated by the *Sakais* became an important source of food for the communist insurgents during the Emergency.

Historical Background

During the late eighteenth century Britain sought a new naval station to repair and provision its ships during monsoon months in India. In 1786 Penang Island was leased from a Malay Sultan, but its native wood soon proved unsuitable for ship repair. In 1818 the British built another naval station at Singapore, which was also leased from the

¹⁹⁹ Federation of Malaya and the Colony of Singapore, *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency* (Singapore: Department of Information, Federation of Malaya; Public Relations Office, Singapore; and the Regional Information Office for the United Kingdom in South East Asia, July 1954), 4; Corry, *Malaya To-day*, 8; and *Annual Report on the Malayan Union 1947*, 7.

²⁰⁰ Purcell, *Malaysia*, 44.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² Victor Purcell, *Malaya: Outline of a Colony* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1946), 21.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Purcell, *Malaysia*, 44; Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence*, 35.

Malays. The British gained the settlement of Malacca by the terms of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824. The British administered Malacca as a ‘Straits Settlement’—a status already bestowed on Singapore and Penang. The Straits Settlements became a Crown Colony in 1867.²⁰⁵

By the mid nineteenth century affairs within Malaya’s internal states approached anarchy.²⁰⁶ Fighting erupted between Malays and ethnic Chinese over rights to newly discovered deposits of tin. In 1870 Chinese businessmen asked for British intervention to help the Sultans reestablish law and order in their states. The British eventually asked the sultans to accept a full time representative of the Crown or “resident” to restore the conditions required for economic growth. Three sultans accepted Residents, and the British gradually reestablished peaceful conditions.²⁰⁷ Before long, a series of agreements enabled the residents to establish *de facto* control of both the interior and southern Malay states. The states of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang agreed to federalization in 1895.²⁰⁸ In 1909 the British gained control of the northern states by treaty with Siam.²⁰⁹ Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Trengganu rejected federalization; hence, they became known as the “unfederated states.” However, they accepted British advisors in exchange for security guarantees. In 1914 Johore became the final Malay state to accept British protection.

²⁰⁵ This paragraph based on Purcell, *Malaysia*, 66-67.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁰⁷ *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 6.

²⁰⁸ Paragraph based on Corry, *Malaya To-day*, 8-9.

²⁰⁹ *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 6.

The policies enacted by the residents soon created legitimate grievances within the Chinese community.²¹⁰ As members of the sultans' courts, residents and advisors felt a responsibility to "protect the Malays from the more commercially-minded immigrants."²¹¹

While the Malays saw themselves as "privileged sons of the soil," the ethnic Chinese were treated as second class citizens.²¹²

The Social System

As might be expected, the Malays were the primary benefactors of the social system. After World War II, the Union government made important strides toward administering a full portfolio of social services. Progress was steady but slow due to the high cost of repairing the infrastructure damaged by the Japanese. Generally speaking, the Malays believed the Union government was committed to improving their daily existence. The Chinese had yet to be convinced. A snapshot view of the medical and health, education, housing, and welfare services follows for 1947, the year before the Emergency was declared.

Medical and health care. Considerable progress was being made to improve medical and health services. Health measures for estate wage laborers were of special concern. Sixty-five hospitals and a number of special institutions maintained an average of 3,000 more beds than were required on a daily basis. However, a lack of training and

²¹⁰ Purcell, *Malaysia*, 94-95.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 94.

equipment slowed improvement in areas such as anti-malarial efforts, school hygiene, and typhus inoculations.²¹³

Education. Although many classrooms were in need of equipment, the Union government made great progress in rehabilitating the educational system. Education was free for Malay children ages 6 to 12. Government grants were extended to Chinese schools for the first time in 1946, even though there were more ethnic Chinese enrolled in primary schools than Malays. Plans were made to educate more teachers and build new classrooms.²¹⁴

Housing. Housing conditions steadily improved, with electricity and piped water available in most locations.²¹⁵ Urban housing was generally well below acceptable standards. Lower income homes were particularly crowded and scarce. The Malay peasant had the “most practical and hygienic type of housing in the East, having regard to the climate and his financial resources.”²¹⁶ On the other hand, the “Chinese rural dwelling . . . is generally speaking as bad as can be from the point of view of light, ventilation and drainage.”²¹⁷

Social welfare. The Department of Social Welfare administered a wide variety of programs that favored the Malays but assisted all races. Orphanages, aborigine assistance, homes for the aged and permanently ill, malnutrition relief, and grant programs are just a few examples of the welfare programs in 1947.²¹⁸

²¹³ *Annual Report on the Malayan Union 1947*, 66-75.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 49-66.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 75-78.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 78-87.

Economic conditions

The Chinese contributed a great deal toward the economic development of Malaya. By 1947, the tax revenue generated from the Chinese was “head for head and in all, almost as much as the British.”²¹⁹ The Chinese businessmen were extremely concerned about protecting their interests in Malayan agriculture, industry, and labor relations during the Emergency. Most wealthy Chinese happily supported government efforts during the Emergency. However, in 1947 they were greatly outnumbered by those who were dissatisfied with economic status. Following World War II, the government’s immediate aim was to reinvigorate foreign trade to provide an ample supply of food for the Malayan people.

Agriculture. Rice was the staple of the Malayan diet, but supplies were so low that a rationing system was implemented after the occupation. Many Malaysians did not have enough to eat. Damage from the war and the lack of farm machinery forced Malaya to import one-half of its annual rice requirements. The Union government established a Food Production Board within the Department of Agriculture to boost the amount of rice and other subsistence crops grown on the peninsula.²²⁰

Industry. Tin and rubber were Malaya’s leading exports. By 1937 Malaya was the world’s leading producer of rubber as well as tin. The Japanese occupation had significantly damaged the industrial infrastructure on which Malaya depended upon for food. The demand created by the Korean War greatly aided government efforts to jump-

²¹⁹ Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence*, 35.

²²⁰ Robert Thompson, *Make for the Hills: Memories of Far Eastern Wars* (London: Leo Cooper, 1989), 79; and *Annual Report on the Malayan Union 1947*, 35-39.

start the economy through rubber and tin production. By 1951 Malaya produced over 30 percent of the world's natural rubber and tin.²²¹

Labor. During the prewar years the MCP's "greatest successes were achieved in the labor field."²²² After the war, the MCP once again established control over the labor movement. In 1947 the MCP controlled the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions (PMFTU), which was Malaya's largest union. The PMFTU instigated strikes and work stoppages that severely strained the postwar economy. The government responded by instituting a registration process that required the labor organizations to disclose their financial matters reveal details about their membership. The PMFTU was banned after refusing to comply with the process.²²³ Communist labor leaders and hard core union members disappeared into the jungle, joined their MPAJA comrades, and initiated open rebellion against the Union government.

Political setting

Communist elements agitated against the British for decades prior to the Emergency. In the prewar years the MCP became a significant threat to the government. During the occupation and liberation period, the communists controlled a popular resistance group that fought both Japanese forces and rival political factions. The postwar environment briefly covers events that immediately preceded the outbreak of revolutionary violence.

²²¹ U.S. Department of State, "Malaya: Trouble Spot in Southeast Asia," Department of State Publication 5061, Far Eastern Series 57 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, July 1953), 2; and *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 4-5.

²²² U.S. Department of State, "Malaya: A New Independent Nation," Department of State Publication 6714, Far Eastern Series 77 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, December 1958), 11.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

Prewar years. The Chinese communists infiltrated the Malayan Peninsula in the early 1920s. The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was established in 1929. The MCP's creed was similar to Mao's interpretation of Marxist doctrine.²²⁴ The MCP's objective was to overthrow the colonial British colonial and establish a communist-controlled republic.²²⁵ The MCP found favor with Chinese immigrants who opposed Peking's Kuomintang government. However, the communists failed to attract much support from the non-Malay population.

In 1937 the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang nationalists of mainland China created a united front to fight against Japanese occupation forces. Events in Malaya paralleled those in China. The MCP formed "anti-Japanese groups which attracted Chinese—and Malays—who were not interested in Communism but who later might be persuaded to join the movement."²²⁶ The ethnic Chinese were generally supportive of the British when war erupted in Europe. The communist Chinese supported the non-aggression pact between Moscow and Berlin. The MCP fomented labor unrest to embarrass the British war effort. When Germany attacked the Soviet Union, Moscow reversed its policy and directed the Malayan communists to support British war efforts. Ultimately, Britain proved unable to defend the home isles and its Pacific colonies. Malaya fell to Japanese invasion forces in December 1941. Deep in the jungles, a

²²⁴ Corry, *Malaya To-day*, 23.

²²⁵ Robert Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency: The Commonwealth's Wars 1948-1966* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 7.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

British-supplied communist partisan group known as the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army prepared to wage guerrilla warfare against the conquerors.²²⁷

Occupation and liberation. Many Malays were bitter because the British did not mount an all-out defense of their homeland.²²⁸ A good number of Malays greeted the Japanese with optimism, but the cruelty and corruption of the occupation negated Tokyo's promise of prosperity.²²⁹ Most of the MPAJA resistance fighters were ethnic Chinese.²³⁰ The ethnic Chinese community had a special motive for resisting the conquerors: the Japanese were in their ninth year of sacking mainland China.

The MPAJA carried out several successful operations against the Japanese during World War II. In 1944 British commandos learned the MPAJA had another enemy: a Kuomintang-sponsored resistance group known as the Overseas Chinese Anti-Japanese Army (OCAJA). In 1944 the MPAJA began a campaign against the OCAJA that lasted until the spring of 1945. To preserve its strength for postwar challenges, the MCP leadership approved only a few operations against the Japanese during the summer of 1945. However, the abrupt end of the war in August caught the MCP as well as the British by surprise.

By August 1945 Malaya was economically and socially ruined. Malnutrition, disease, and unemployment were rampant. "A wave of crime and disorder swept the peninsula, especially in the countryside, where the predominately Malay police force had

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 7-10; *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 6-9; and Corry, *Malaya To-day*, 11-12.

²²⁸ *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 6-8; Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 8-9; and Corry, *Malaya To-Day*, 11-12.

²²⁹ Corry, *Malaya To-Day*, 11.

²³⁰ Thompson, *Make for the Hills*, 79.

been used by the Japanese to support their operations against the MPAJA.”²³¹ The MPAJA stockpiled Japanese weapons and took control of the countryside. The communists set up “People’s Committees” that employed fear and intimidation to exercise political authority over villages and towns. “Traitor killing squads” were frequently eliminated Malays suspected of collaboration with the Japanese.²³² The Malays responded with reprisals in kind. When the British returned in September 1945, they found both the communist political infrastructure firmly entrenched in the countryside.

The British Military Administration (BMA) began functioning in September 1945 to restore the Crown’s authority on the peninsula. After reorganizing the police force, the BMA clamped down on communist military and political activities.²³³ The BMA adamantly “refused to recognize the People’s Committees, imposed restrictions on left-wing propaganda, disregarded the MCP’s demands for political concessions and began the progressive dismemberment of the MPAJA.”²³⁴ By January 1946 the MPAJA was disbanded; however, the former partisans hid a significant quantity of arms and ammunition in the jungle.²³⁵

Postwar environment. In 1946 the British established the Malayan Union to better prepare its colonial possession for eventual independence. The Union comprised the Settlements of Penang and Malacca as well as the four federated and five unfederated states. The Union’s constitution sought to prepare for independence by emphasizing

²³¹ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 9.

²³² *Ibid.*, 8.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 10.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ Thompson, *Make for the Hills*, 79.

popular participation in political and cultural institutions. The constitution granted political concessions to non-Malay peoples and enacted a new administrative structure.

²³⁶ The Union government was comprised of Crown nominees and led by a British governor. The Crown controlled all land interests, the judiciary, and the federal legislature. The states were generally powerless and the Rulers lost much of their political authority. The residents were the real decision-makers, and they were responsible only to the Federation government.²³⁷

British diplomats convinced the sultans to accept the Union, but the people firmly withheld their support. The two primary obstacles were sovereignty and citizenship. After the Japanese occupation, the Malays were particularly keen on the issue of sovereignty. The Malays viewed the Union constitution as a means of ending sultan authority and state sovereignty. Many Malays felt deceived, claiming they were freed from Japanese aggression only to lose hope of realizing sovereignty from the British. The constitution also provided for common citizenship based on birthright or length of residence. The Malays viewed common citizenship as a threat to their political future. The Chinese were wary of the “quality of the citizenship they might be granted in a Sultanate and were uneasy at the prospect of divesting themselves of their status as

²³⁶ U.S. State Department, “Malaya: Trouble Spot in Southeast Asia,” 3.

²³⁷ Corry, *Malaya To-Day*, 14, and 81. Approximately 85 percent of Singapore’s population were Chinese. If Singapore was included in the Union, the ethnic Chinese would have become the majority race in the Union. Additionally, the Commonwealth depended upon revenue generated in Singapore for postwar reconstruction.

Chinese or British subjects only to find themselves worse off.”²³⁸ In brief, the British never fully implemented the Union plan because it was very unpopular.²³⁹

New political parties sprang up to oppose the Union. The United Malay National Organization (UMNO) was the leading party of the Malays. UMNO was initially comprised of conservative and moderate members who peacefully demonstrated against the new constitution. The leader of UMNO refused to attend the installation ceremony of the first Governor of the Malayan Union in April 1946.²⁴⁰ The MCP returned to its prewar tactic of political confrontation. After thirty former MPAJA members were arrested on criminal charges, the MCP sponsored a general strike in January 1946 that nearly shutdown the peninsula.²⁴¹ The MCP’s popular support grew among workers who were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with food shortages and the lack of a voice in government.²⁴²

The Union government was quite concerned about the lack of popular support. To restore its legitimacy, the Union government sought to redress Malay concerns to balance the “great and growing dangers from the extreme Left.”²⁴³ To this end, the British established a joint constitutional committee “composed of delegates from the Rulers, from U.M.N.O. and from the British Administration.” Eventually these talks resulted in a plan for a new Federation of Malaya. A British High Commissioner would head the Federation. A Malay chief executive would run each state. The state cabinet included a

²³⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Malaya: A New Independent Nation,” 8; and *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 15.

²³⁹ U.S. Department of State, “Malaya: A New Independent Nation,” 8. and *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 15.

²⁴⁰ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 11.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

British Advisor who had no executive powers.²⁴⁴ The High Commissioner would preside over a strong Federal Government.²⁴⁵

By constitution, the federal government was responsible for national defense, police operations, customs, the rail system, labor relations, telecommunications, and the postal system. The Malays dominated civil servant positions within the federal government.²⁴⁶

A Malay ruler remained in control of the state government. The state government included a prime minister, a British advisor, and an executive council. The ruler was required to accept the guidance of the advisor in all but religious and customs matters. Resident commissioners governed the Straits Settlements. The vast majority of state civil servants were Malays.

The new constitution was not popular among the Chinese and Indian people because of its favorable bias toward the Malays.²⁴⁷ The MCP exploited the situation by fomenting strikes and work stoppages to protest the proposed constitution. There were over 300 major industrial strikes in 1947, including a massive effort in Singapore where 173,000 workers walked off the job.²⁴⁸ Though now a significant political actor, the MCP could not muster enough popular support to derail the Federation plan. The Federation of Malaya was proclaimed on February 1, 1948.

Later that same month, the MCP consulted with international communist leaders during a World Youth Festival in Calcutta. The Soviet delegation purportedly encouraged communist leaders to rebel against their colonial masters to divert attention away from Europe. Within six months, revolutionary war erupted in Indonesia, the

²⁴³ Corry, *Malaya To-day*, 16.

²⁴⁴ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 11.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Paragraph based on Corry, *Malaya To-Day*, 17-19.

²⁴⁷ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 12.

²⁴⁸ Julian Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 46.

Philippines, Burma and Malaya. The MCP complied by ordering its members to go on the offensive. By the end of February, the number of strikes, work stoppages, and incidents of violence had skyrocketed. The international Communist press reported the violence as “a spontaneous expression of the suppressed peoples of Malaya rising from the yoke of British Imperialism.”²⁴⁹ The federal government had other ideas. Police and intelligence forces determined that a planned campaign of subversion was underway. By the beginning of June, there was general agreement that harsh action should be taken against the MCP. Shortly thereafter, three European rubber plantation managers were murdered in Perak. The government declared a statewide emergency in Perak that was soon extended throughout the peninsula. The Malayan Emergency had begun.²⁵⁰

Military Situation

The events of the occupation and liberation period had a dramatic impact on the development of communist strategy for the Emergency. After Pearl Harbor the British knew that a Japanese invasion of Malaya was imminent. With the war in Europe and the Mediterranean going badly, London could not afford to provide for an in-depth defense of Malaya. Instead, the British colonial government established a stay-behind-partisan force to fight against the Japanese. The British soon determined the MCP was the only organization capable of such activity. After the Japanese attacked Singapore, over 150 members of the MCP withdrew into the jungle to be trained in guerrilla tactics by British soldiers.²⁵¹ Although the British had some misgivings about arming the communists, the

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Paragraph based on *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 11-12; Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 46; and Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 12-13.

²⁵¹ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 8.

risk was deemed worth the expenditure of resources. The British were aware of the MPAJA's ultimate political aims, but felt it necessary to first defeat Japan and then deal with the communists.²⁵²

By early 1943, the MPAJA reduced operations against the Japanese due to a lack of weapons and ammunition. In February the British infiltrated a commando unit to prepare for allied liberation operations. Force 136 was to establish communications with the MPAJA, open air and sea channels to facilitate partisan resupply operations, and take control of MPAJA military operations prior to liberation to ensure partisan activities supported the Allied plan.²⁵³ Upon arrival in Malaya, Force 136 found the MPAJA to be a well-organized force of 6,000 Chinese partisans.²⁵⁴ After the partisans were resupplied with automatic weapons, ammunition, and other military equipment, the MPAJA refused to operate in accordance with Force 136 guidance.²⁵⁵ The communist partisans had other objectives in mind.

During the last two years of the war, the MPAJA fought a rival resistance group for political control of postwar Malaya. After defeating the Kuomintang-sponsored Overseas Chinese Anti-Japanese Army, the MPAJA once again participated in limited combat operations against the Japanese. However, the MPAJA leadership held the balance of the partisan army in reserve to conduct post-liberation activities.

The Japanese surrender in August took all parties by surprise. The historical record is unclear about the MCP's political objectives for the immediate postwar period. One perspective suggests the MCP wanted to set up a Communist regime before the Britain

²⁵² *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 8.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 43.

could re-establish authority over its colonial possession.²⁵⁶ Another perspective suggests the MCP's failure to seize political power after the war was the result of divisions within the communist leadership.²⁵⁷

Several weeks passed before Commonwealth forces arrived from India to reestablish the Crown's authority. In the interim, the "Japanese were expected to maintain order in the main urban centres, while the MPAJA, the only other organized force, was given responsibility for the small towns and the rural areas."²⁵⁸ The MPAJA tried to convince the people that the Communist Party—and not the British Crown—was the legitimate political authority. The MPAJA claimed responsibility for the victory and took control of villages and towns throughout the countryside.²⁵⁹

The MPAJA's ruthless administration of the countryside ran counter to the communist bid for legitimacy. The activities of the MPAJA's "people's courts' and proletarian petty commissars in those few short weeks burned itself deep into the consciousness of all non-Communists; and to many returning British officers it seemed this interlude had made a greater impression on people's minds than the Japanese occupation itself."²⁶⁰ The communists forfeited any hope for popular support by using terror in a misguided attempt to control the rural population.

The MPAJA used 'people's courts' to convict policemen, local officials, and civilians suspected of collaborating with the Japanese. The sentence was a slow and

²⁵⁵ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 8.

²⁵⁶ Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 45.

²⁵⁷ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 9.

²⁵⁸ Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare, The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 45.

²⁵⁹ *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 8.

²⁶⁰ Corry, *Malay To-day*, 24.

torturous death.²⁶¹ After the Malays began conducting reprisals against Chinese villages, the whole peninsula teetered on the edge of civil war. This turn of events proved disastrous for the communists because it ruined any hope for gaining popular support among the non-Chinese population.²⁶² The Malays would never forget the MPAJA's barbaric attempt to rule Malaya.²⁶³

The British Military Administration's effort to dislodge the MPAJA was seriously hampered by the lack of a credible police force. The BMA withdrew the entire police force for re-screening and retraining because it had collaborated with the Japanese. Regular Commonwealth troops found the task of restoring law and order extremely difficult because they lacked the intelligence and local area familiarity required for effective law enforcement operations. The return of the police force largely paralleled the return of law and order.²⁶⁴

Most of the MPAJA's force structure was demobilized by December 1945. To entice the resistance fighters to lay down their arms and rejoin civilian life, the BMA offered the partisans two campaign medals, money, rice, and a job.²⁶⁵ Approximately 6,800 partisans surrendered, handing over nearly 5,500 small arms.²⁶⁶ The communist partisans theoretically "returned to civilian life, but in fact they promptly joined the officially recognized MPAJA Ex-Services Comrades Association, which was a thinly disguised 'front' for what was virtually a Communist Reserve Army in Malaya."²⁶⁷

²⁶¹ Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 45.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

²⁶⁴ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 9.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 10; and Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 44.

²⁶⁶ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 10.

²⁶⁷ Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 44.

Some 4,000 ex-MPAJA members went underground to provide the MCP with a secret army-in-being.²⁶⁸

The Revolutionary Strategy

The MCP's objective was to overthrow the government and install a Marxist regime. The strategy was to be executed in three phases. During the *pre-hostilities phase*, the aim was to develop a revolutionary cadre and infrastructure. The primary way to achieve the aims was through political confrontation. Labor unrest was the most popular means employed. In the *guerrilla warfare phase* the objective was to extend political control throughout the countryside. Key tasks included efforts to expand the revolutionary army, strangle the economy, gain control of rural areas, and link rural areas to create liberated zones. Final victory would be secured through a *conventional warfare phase*. The key tasks were designed to defeat British forces, merge the liberated zones into autonomous regions, and unite the regions to consolidate political control throughout Malaya. The communists did not have the resources to accomplish their tasks. The MRLA's roster never exceeded 6,000 to 8,000 men throughout the Emergency.²⁶⁹

Pre-hostilities

The roots of the insurgency can be traced back prior to World War II. In the 1920s and 1930s the MCP developed its organizational skills by penetrating the labor movement and conducting a campaign of subversion against the British colonial government. During the Japanese occupation, the MPAJA became highly skilled in the practice of guerrilla warfare. Other events of the prewar and occupation and liberation

²⁶⁸ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 10.

period were previously analyzed above. The discussion now turns toward key decisions and occurrences of the postwar period that immediately precipitated the Emergency.

When the MCP opted for armed revolt in 1947, the primary task was to rebuild the army. The MPAJA Ex-Comrades Association was recalled to join the 4,000 soldiers who remained in the field after liberation. Mindful of the new mission, the MCP renamed its military arm the Malayan People's Anti-British Army. In early 1949 the name was changed to the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) to seek broadened support from the non-Chinese population. For simplicity, the designation MRLA will be used to describe communist army activities throughout the Emergency.

The MRLA had immediate needs for security, weapons and ammunition, food, intelligence, and new recruits. Not a single state actor volunteered to fill these requirements. The Chinese Red Army was busy waging revolutionary war against Kuomintang forces. The Soviet Union was consolidating political control over Eastern Europe. The Korean War further dashed any hope of external support from China or the Soviet Union. Malaya's land and its people would have to provide the resources required for strategy execution. The one-time partisan movement was now forced to operate as an insurgent organization.²⁷⁰

Without external assistance or popular support, the insurgents decided to establish their bases in the jungle. Jungle basing offered several advantages. The jungle provided security by concealing the location of MRLA bases. The MRLA was likely to hear approaching Federation forces because movement by foot slowed to "an exhausting 200

²⁶⁹ Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 50.

yards in an hour.”²⁷¹ The Chinese squatters living near the jungle fringe were generally supportive of the communists. The jungle also contained weapons and ammunition caches hidden by communist fighters during the liberation period. There were also disadvantages associated with jungle basing. The MRLA could not easily gather its own intelligence. Rations were consumed transiting to operational areas. Command and control was difficult. Months sometimes passed before party directives to reach field units.²⁷² Finally, the slow pace of travel made it difficult to project power far beyond the jungle.

The MRLA relied upon its support infrastructure to offset these disadvantages. Unarmed Chinese villagers who were sympathetic to the MRLA supplied the insurgents with weapons, ammunition, food, money, and intelligence. The Min Yuen also helped transport these items to jungle bases. The Chinese squatters were also an important part of the infrastructure. Many squatters were sympathetic to the MRLA’s cause while others were forced to support partisan operations. The squatters provided the insurgents with food and intelligence. Squatters were also voluntarily and forcibly inducted into the insurgent ranks.²⁷³

In the spring of 1948 the MRLA tested its strength by conducting a series of armed attacks against Federation officials and economic targets. The historical record is unclear as to whether the MCP deliberately transitioned to the guerrilla warfare phase—or if the

²⁷⁰ Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 73; and Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 75-76.

²⁷¹ Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 45.

²⁷² Corry, *Malay To-day*, 29.

²⁷³ Corry, *Malay To-day*, 29; and Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 50.

declaration of the Emergency in 1948 required such a move. As will be seen, the MRLA did not have the resources to execute its revolutionary strategy.

Guerrilla Warfare

This phase began with the declaration of the Emergency in June 1948 and lasted until the end of the war. During this time the insurgents created effects that were counterproductive to their efforts. MRLA operations revealed key vulnerabilities that enabled Federation security forces to drive it further into the jungle. After twelve long years of fighting, the MRLA failed to accomplish a single task in this phase and was defeated.

Expand the revolutionary army. The insurgent leadership needed to follow three simple guidelines to support and grow the communist army. The first was to avoid casualties. Secondly, the MRLA needed a steady supply of food. Finally, the insurgents needed to attract new recruits and weapons. The MRLA was unable to avoid heavy casualties during the first eight years of the war. With an army of approximately 8,000 personnel, the MRLA suffered an alarming loss rate of 15 percent per year based on an average loss rate of 1,200 casualties per year.²⁷⁴ The first full year of the war was a typical example of insurgent losses. In 1949, 619 MRLA personnel were killed, 337 were captured, and 251 insurgents surrendered.²⁷⁵ The high casualties initially were due to organization and tactics. The MRLA organized its forces into eleven regiments that had specific areas of responsibility that blanketed the peninsula. Federation intelligence estimates from 1951 reveal the regiments were comprised of 100 to 600 fighting

²⁷⁴ See “Annex H” in Malcom Postgate, *Operation Firedog: Air Support in the Malayan Emergency 1948-1960* (London: Ministry of Defense Air Historical Branch (RAF), 1992), 163.

personnel that were organized into a handful of companies.²⁷⁶ Until 1950, regimental tactics called for employment *en masse*.²⁷⁷ This reduced the mobility required to deny the Federation forces their firepower advantage. After sustaining unacceptable losses, the MRLA began to operate in smaller groups that were much more difficult for Federation security forces to locate and engage.

The insurgents needed a supply of food to expand the size of their army. The MRLA's initial plan was to establish a secure rear base near an agricultural area.²⁷⁸ However, most agricultural areas were patrolled by security forces that possessed a huge firepower advantage. Although these areas could be raided, the MRLA could not mass the firepower and troop strength to challenge Commonwealth forces in pitched battle. Instead, the MRLA depended upon the Min Yuen for food supplies. After government measures restricted the flow of food from the villages, the MRLA was forced to rely on the squatter community for sustainment.

Many of the squatters lived along the jungle fringes beyond the protective reach of the government. Many of the squatters were generally supportive of the MRLA. Those who were not supportive were subjected to terror attacks. Federation security forces soon began resettling the squatters away from the jungle fringes to isolate them from the MRLA. The MRLA was finally forced to withdraw deep into the jungle to seek support from the aborigines. "These primitive, simple-minded people lived a life so divorced from reality that some of them thought the Japanese were still in occupation of Malaya

²⁷⁵ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 31.

²⁷⁶ Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, 157-158.

²⁷⁷ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 31.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

and they welcomed the Communists as resistance fighters against the invaders!”²⁷⁹ The move deep within the jungle further isolated the MRLA from the people. When the government established forts deep in the jungle, the MRLA had nowhere to turn for support, and the movement collapsed.

The MRLA’s failure to recruit large numbers of personnel was largely attributed to its terror campaign. Typical MRLA terror attacks included machine-gunning women and children to death in a Selangor cinema; slashing a family to death with knives in Pahang; and killing five *Sakai* men and kidnapping their women in Perak.²⁸⁰ The people equated the insurgent use of terror with the MPAJA’s brutal attempt to administer to the people in 1945. The brutality of those weeks in the summer and fall of 1945 left an indelible mark on the non-communist people of Malaya. Most people believed that a Chinese communist regime would bring nothing but harm to Malaya. By 1950 the MCP leadership recognized the unbridled use of terror was a mistake and ordered MPAJA units to refrain from indiscriminate killing.²⁸¹ A directive was issued to ensure future operations targeted only Europeans, Kuomintang members, and security forces.²⁸² The directive was never fully implemented. The damage was already done.

Strangle the Malayan economy. The MRLA attempted to accomplish this task by interdicting the production of rubber and tin. Tactics included armed attacks on production facilities as well as European supervisors and native laborers. The MRLA tried to destroy the European’s personal sense of security by murdering personnel working on rubber estates and in tin mines. The insurgents “killed as many estate and

²⁷⁹ Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 72.

²⁸⁰ *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 19.

²⁸¹ Corry, *Malaya To-day*, 29.

mine managers possible, Europeans in particular, together with all persons of all races who opposed the Communist attack.”²⁸³ Infiltrators working on the estates and in the mines encouraged laborers to abandon industrial jobs and to grow food for the insurgent forces.²⁸⁴

Terrorism had a demoralizing effect on the European community during the early years of the war. Many Europeans lost confidence in the government and thought the Federation should be fighting a war rather than policing an Emergency. Some felt the Federation did not admit that a state of war existed because London did not want to provide additional resources. In a slightly different vein, other Europeans argued that martial law should be invoked to transfer security operations from civilian to military authorities.²⁸⁵ This discontent suggests the MRLA’s terror tactics did help to discredit the Federation government.²⁸⁶

Perhaps no act of terror tested the Europeans’ nerve more than the events surrounding October 6, 1951. While en route from Kuala Lumpur to a resort sixty miles north of the city, the High Commissioner was assassinated by the MRLA. Sir Henry Gurney’s death plummeted the morale of the European community.²⁸⁷ The assassination angered many Europeans, who urgently demanded the Federation draft a new plan for the defeat of the MRLA.²⁸⁸ As will be seen, Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs had just begun to execute such a strategy.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 16.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 16.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 133.

²⁸⁸ Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 61.

The Korean War also worked against the MRLA's attempt to strangle the economy. The U.S. military's demand for rubber and tin fueled a boom cycle during the early years of the Emergency. The increased income not only helped satisfy the workers' demand for higher wages, but it enabled the Union government to pay for the war effort.²⁸⁹ The growing economy also impacted MRLA operations. Higher wages enabled the insurgents to collect more taxes from the people. However, increased wages also discredited the MCP's cause. "Too many rubber tappers, complained one MCP propaganda pamphlet, were spending their money in cinemas, and drinking and gambling, and participating in other forms of the 'corrupted life' of capitalism."²⁹⁰ The strong economy also persuaded many Europeans to endure the revolutionary threat.

Gain control of rural areas. The MRLA hoped to consolidate political control over Malaya in an expeditious manner. The insurgents hoped to control a small area within one or two months after hostilities began. The area was to be linked to larger towns and villages shortly thereafter. If all proceeded as originally envisioned, the MRLA hoped to consolidate control over Malayan territory in one year's time. The insurgents never came close to achieving this task because they concentrated on terrorizing the population by murdering people and destroying property. There were only two small instances when the MRLA 'liberated' territory. A village in Pahang was held for a few hours then abandoned after the police station was sacked and burned. Another village in Kelantan

²⁸⁹ Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 127.

²⁹⁰ 'Extracts from the Minutes of the 29th Meeting of the Joint Information and Propaganda Meeting held at Kuala Lumpur on June 1, 1951,' quoted in Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 132.

remained under MRLA control for two days. Otherwise, the MRLA proved unable to control any territory outside of their jungle camps.²⁹¹

The insurgent strategy crumbled when the MRLA proved unable to liberate rural areas. The rural areas were critical to maintaining a food supply to sustain a large army. Without the food supply, the army found it difficult to sustain itself—let alone grow. Without a larger army, there was no opportunity to create liberated zones or transition to the conventional war phase. Without liberated zones, the communists could not begin to establish control throughout the peninsula. Although the insurgency dragged on for twelve years, the MRLA elected not to modify its strategy. Without a strategy, the insurgents sentenced themselves to a protracted death.

The Counterrevolutionary Strategy

The Federation's first national strategy called for the attainment of two objectives. The first was to "win the people of Malaya over to the anti-Communist cause."²⁹² The second objective was to fight the insurgents on two fronts: "on the first with weapons of social, economic, and political progress, and on the second by the Security Forces."²⁹³ Until 1950, the government used a two-pronged approach to pursue these objectives. The civil administration was mostly concerned with persuasive efforts to protect the people and maintain popular support for the Federation government. The military was employed in a coercive role to search out and eliminate the MRLA. This approach proved effective until the MRLA learned to elude security forces with small unit tactics. The number of

²⁹¹ Corry, *Malaya To-day*, 28-29.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

armed attacks increased but security force patrols made fewer contacts. The Federation needed a new game plan.

Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs recognized the need to modify the strategy when he became the Director of Operations in April 1950. Briggs understood that Malaya needed an integrated civil and military plan to defeat the MRLA.²⁹⁴ His concepts for winning over the people and defeating the MRLA were collectively known as the Briggs Plan. This plan was the cornerstone of Federation strategy for the remainder of the war.²⁹⁵ The Briggs Plan had four basic objectives. The first was to control the populated areas and inspire a public sense of safety and security. Once the people felt secure they would not be afraid to provide information concerning MRLA activities. The second objective was to dismantle insurgent organizations within and near populated areas. Next, the insurgents were to be isolated from sources of food and supply near populated areas. Finally, security forces would destroy the insurgents when they searched for food and supplies on government-controlled ground.²⁹⁶

General Sir Gerald Templar embraced the Briggs Plan after he replaced Sir Henry Gurney as the High Commissioner. Templar was given extraordinary powers to prosecute the Emergency as the Director of Operations as well as the head of the Federation government. Perhaps Templar's biggest contribution was his steady, unrelenting pursuit of the MRLA. He also increased civil liberties in areas where the MRLA had been evicted, which offered the population some incremental reward along the way to independence.

²⁹⁴ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 32.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

²⁹⁶ Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 56-57.

Execution of the Briggs Plan can be analyzed from both the persuasive and coercive perspective. The persuasive efforts included balanced development, mobilization, and security. Coercive efforts included isolating the people from the MRLA; legal efforts to disrupt, disorganize, and defeat the MRLA; publicly discrediting the communist leadership; arresting and prosecuting those who violate law and order; and conducting combat operations.

Persuasion

The government knew it had to win the support of the people to maintain legitimacy. The promise of independence was the critical motivational factor that maintained popular support for twelve long years. After April 1950, civil and military forces conducted a wide range of persuasive operations that provided the population with incremental successes.

Balanced development. In August 1950 the Federation government published a Six-Year Development Plan that guided social, economic, and political progress through 1955. A variety of supporting plans were also developed. The new Rural and Industrial Development Agency unveiled a far-reaching plan to improve the processing and marketing of crops by small farmers. In 1952 the government enacted a social security scheme to provide coverage for poor workers who became unfit for work. In that same year the Federal Legislative Council approved a new education policy. The objective was to construct a united nation by providing facilities for free, compulsory education for children between the ages of 6 and 12 years. Finally, trade societies were encouraged to flourish as long as they remained free from the usurpation of communist leadership.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁷ Paragraph based on *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 33.

Mobilization. The Federation government placed a huge emphasis on generating political support, maximizing the use of human and physical resources, and improving intelligence collection, processing, and dissemination. The single most important factor in maintaining popular support was the promise of independence. Early in the Emergency, the High Commissioner linked independence with the neutralization of the MRLA. Britain would not grant independence until the Emergency was won. This policy, supported by memories of the brutal MPAJA administration in 1945, motivated many Malaysians to support the Federation government.

Incremental improvements in the political process kept the people focused on the perceived benefits of independence. In 1952 the Federal Legislative Council passed a law providing for popularly elected Local Councils. This ordinance offered the people “widespread training grounds in rural areas for the practice of the basic principles of democratic government, in the use of electoral machinery and in the exercise of personal and corporate responsibility.”²⁹⁸ The Federation constitution promised popular elections would be held at all levels of government as soon as practicable. Elections for local town councils began in 1952, with elections for state and settlement councils following in 1954. Malaya’s first general election was held in July 1955. Approximately 80 percent of the people voted during the national elections in 1955.²⁹⁹ In February 1956 the new Rahman government secured an agreement for full independence from Britain that was realized in August 1957.

An integrated civil and military command and control arrangement was the single most important contribution toward efficient and effective use of resources. Prior to

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 35.

April 1950, the campaign against the MRLA was directed by the Commissioner of Police. The senior leaders of the air, land, and sea services supported his efforts, but the commissioner lacked sufficient power to coordinate effective activity between the police and military forces. To solve the problem, Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs was appointed to the new post of Director of Operations. Briggs was given the authority and responsibility to co-ordinate and control the activities of all security forces. Briggs controlled the security forces through the Federal War Council, “whose members included the Chief Secretary of the Federation, the General and Air Officers Commanding in Malaya, the Commissioner of Police and the Secretary for Defense.”³⁰⁰ The High Commissioner exercised control of Malaya through the War Council, which was empowered to override any matter affecting the security of Malaya. Similar bodies were established at the state and district levels.³⁰¹

Great improvements in intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination were realized by combining civil and military capabilities. In 1950 Briggs created the office of the Director of Intelligence Services to coordinate work between the police, the military, and the civil administration.³⁰² Jack B. Morton, second in command of Britain’s MI5, finished the reorganization of intelligence forces.³⁰³ Secret training schools were established to provide intelligence personnel training on communist objectives and tactics. Communication links were established with friendly intelligence services in

²⁹⁹ U.S. Department of State, “Malaya: A New Independent Nation,” 13.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.; and Thompson, *Make for the Hills*, 93.

³⁰² Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, 11.

³⁰³ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 25.

neighboring countries.³⁰⁴ The decision to make the police the center of intelligence activities paid enormous dividends. Early in the Emergency the names, identities, and operating locations of all MRLA members were known to Federation authorities.³⁰⁵ Lists of suspected communist supporters and sympathizers were also compiled.³⁰⁶

Security. The Federation's first task was to protect the population from armed attack. The security forces were divided into military, police, constabulary, and civil defense forces. At the beginning of the Emergency, the security forces were comprised of 9,000 Malay police officers and ten infantry battalions.³⁰⁷ The main task of the military was to pursue and destroy the MRLA. The number of infantry battalions peaked at 23 in 1953. The Federal Police were assigned the more difficult task of protecting the people from intimidation. By 1953, the Federal Police employed nearly 37,000 personnel in its effort to thwart MRLA aggression. The Malay Special Constabulary's task was to guard the rubber estates, tin mines, and other vital installations. They also enforce food-control regulations, and conducted active patrolling missions later in the war.³⁰⁸

In 1950 a civil defense force was formed to guard Malay and Chinese villages from attack. The size of this force peaked at 300,000 personnel during the mid 1950s.³⁰⁹ Initially, there communist sympathizers penetrated the force to funnel intelligence, shotguns, and ammunition to the MRLA. The civil defense force was re-screened and cut in half in 1955 after security force operations greatly reduced the insurgent threat. The measure of effectiveness for the security program was the reduction in the loss of life and

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, 11.

³⁰⁶ *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 25.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 17.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 17-19.

property. Nearly 100 lives were lost each month in 1951. By Independence Day in 1957, the number was reduced to three per month.³¹⁰

Coercion

Isolation of the MRLA from the people. The Federation resettled entire rural villages away from known MRLA operating locations to isolate the insurgents from their sources of food, supply, and intelligence. Squatter communities were particularly effected by this program. The people were moved to new villages that offered new schools, medical services, water and electricity, and agricultural training. Many of the squatters were induced to abandon their support for the MRLA through these facilities and services. By the end of the Emergency, nearly 300,000 people had been resettled in 400 new villages.³¹¹

Legal efforts to disrupt, disorganize, and defeat the MRLA. Upon declaration of the Emergency, the Federation government adopted special powers with the approval of the Legislative Council. These special powers gave the police the authority to impose curfews, search people and property without a warrant, seize subversive documents, confiscate weapons, and close roads. After approval from the High Commissioner, the security forces could surround an area, arrest everyone in it, and either prosecute or deport them. This law was only invoked twice to rid the country of particularly seditious

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 18; and Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, 27

³¹¹ *Handbook to Malaya and the Emergency*, 25-27; and Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, 9-10; and Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 20-21.

communities. Anyone caught carrying arms, ammunition or explosives without a license was doomed to death by hanging if convicted.³¹²

The special powers legalized other stringent measures. The food control program made a major contribution toward the defeat of the MRLA. The communist food and supply infrastructure was their chief vulnerability. Food control was designed to starve the MRLA out of the jungle by making it difficult for the Min Yuen and the Chinese squatters to supply food. Ration cards were put into service, and restrictions were placed on where food could be prepared, purchased, transported, and consumed. The program was strictly enforced. Rice had to be cooked before it was sold, and food tins were punctured immediately after they were sold. Some MRLA members who surrendered “admitted that their rations were at times reduced to a cigarette tin of rice a day, a story which was confirmed by their emaciated condition.”³¹³ Such efforts also increased the Federation intelligence community’s chance to identify MRLA food suppliers who could be pressured to become informants. The program had the extra benefit of directly involving the people in the fight against the MRLA.³¹⁴

The Federation also offered the people sizable rewards for the capture of MRLA members ‘dead or alive.’ This program was greatly facilitated by the intelligence service because the identities of most MRLA and MCP members were known. “The size of the awards ranged from \$250,000 . . . for the Secretary General of the MCP down to \$2,500

³¹² Thompson, *Make for the Hills*, 93; and U.S. Department of State, *Malaya: A New Independent Nation*,” 12.

³¹³ Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 68.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, 10; and Thompson, *Make for the Hills*, 93.

for a rank and file terrorist.”³¹⁵ Collective punishments were also meted out to towns and villages that were suspected of harboring knowledge about MRLA activities.

Publicly discrediting communist leadership. The government made numerous attempts to influence the people and the insurgents by discrediting the communist leadership. Two of the most interesting and fruitful attempts came late in the war. Although the war was going badly for the MRLA, hard core insurgents in Perak and Johore refused to surrender. Special psychological operations in these states helped the government discredit communist leaders who remained in the field. In October 1957 a regional political commissar surrendered in Perak. The government seized on this opportunity to lure other MCP and MRLA members to surrender. The commissar agreed to return to the jungle and encourage insurgents to surrender. Over the next six months, the commissar convinced 118 insurgents to abandon the fight. This cleared the MRLA threat from most of southern Perak. In April 1958 a very senior ranking MCP leader by the name of Hor Lung surrendered to a Police post in Johore. Hor Lung spent the next several months in the employ of the Special Branch of the Police. He voluntarily returned to the jungle, and, pleading that the war was lost, convinced 160 insurgents to surrender. Among those who surrendered were three of the most capable insurgent leaders in Johore.³¹⁶

Arresting and prosecuting communist elements. The government took advantage of its emergency powers to lawfully incarcerate thousands of MRLA and MCP members and sympathizers. Two examples are offered. In December 1950, an alert policeman in Singapore arrested two men after observing them exchanging newspapers as if they

³¹⁵ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 26.

contained messages—which they did. One individual turned out to be the Secretary of the MCP in Singapore. The documents in his possession enabled police to arrest every leader of the MCP organization in Singapore.³¹⁷

One of the best weapons against the Min Yuen support group was emergency powers of arrest granted to the Police Special Branch. People suspected of supporting the insurgents could be arrested and detained for up to two years without trial. The government could also punish entire villages suspected of supporting insurgent operations. In March 1952 the High Commissioner used this power to punish a rural town 50 miles north of the capital. The area surrounding the town was a hotbed of MRLA activity, but none of the townspeople would provide authorities with information about insurgent activities. After two days of reduced food rations and a strict curfew the townspeople began to cooperate. Within two weeks the information provided by the people led to the arrest of forty insurgents. The High Commissioner traveled to the town to personally offer his thanks and lift the punishment.³¹⁸

Combat operations. The main task of the military forces was to “carry out offensive operations against the guerrilla gangs in the jungle.”³¹⁹ Early in the war the MRLA employed in large numbers, which normally gave Federation forces, the upper hand due to their superior firepower. The MRLA learned to fight in smaller units that were much more difficult to detect and engage. By early 1950, jungle patrols made increasingly

³¹⁶ For more details on both operations, see Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence*, 252-25.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

³¹⁸ Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 70-71; and Thompson, *Make for the Hills*, 93.

³¹⁹ Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 68.

fewer contacts with the insurgents. Most of the security forces were withdrawn from the jungle to guard towns, villages, and lines of communication.³²⁰

Because the MRLA was critically dependent upon supply from the Min Yuen and squatters, security forces knew where to look to find the insurgents. Supply points between populated areas and the jungle fringes were the most productive grounds for security force operations. After 1953 the food control program was reinforced with military action that destroyed agricultural fields in the jungle. This forced the MRLA split into even smaller groups for survival, which deprived the MRLA of much of its combat power. Such food denial operations became the centerpiece of security force operations for the remainder of the Emergency.³²¹

Security forces also penetrated the jungle on lengthy patrols to search out MRLA base camps. By 1952 the MRLA relied upon aborigine labor to grow food, carry supplies, act as messenger, and serve as an early warning network to warn of approaching security forces. A plan to counter MRLA efforts to control the *Sakais* was put into effect in 1953. The Federation built eleven jungle forts to administer medical assistance, serve as trading posts, provide bases for offensive operations against the insurgents.³²² The ultimate aim was to bring the aborigines under government control. By 1956, only 300 to 400 of the 25,000 *Sakais* remained under MRLA control.³²³

By Independence Day on 31 August 1957, security forces had killed or captured 7,643 insurgents and caused another 1,938 to surrender.³²⁴ Security force casualties

³²⁰ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency*, 32.

³²¹ Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, 10.

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

numbered 1,851 killed and 2,526 wounded.³²⁵ At the end of 1958 Federation intelligence reported that less than 900 MRLA fighters remained in the jungle. Psychological operations were dramatically increased in an attempt to terminate the Emergency through mass surrender. By 1960 the MRLA had largely been evicted from Malaya. Some 500 insurgents clung to a feeble existence in a remote section of Thailand, located just across the border from the intersection of Kedah and Northern Perak.³²⁶ The end of the Emergency was declared on 31 July 1960.

Airpower and Execution of the Counterrevolutionary Strategy

Malaya's mountainous and jungle-heavy terrain made airpower essential to the conduct of daily operations during the Emergency. Although traditional bombing operations met with little apparent success, a variety of other operations successfully extended the government's influence and control throughout the peninsula. Persuasive air operations made major contributions toward winning the "hearts and minds" of the people. The RAF was tasked through the Joint Operations Center in Kuala Lumpur. In addition to the RAF, the British Air Officer Commanding had Royal Australian Air Force and Royal New Zealand Air Force units at his disposal. The units were normally stationed at Kuala Lumpur, Butterworth, and Tengah (Singapore) air bases.³²⁷

³²⁵ Ibid., 26- 27.

³²⁶ Ibid., 26.

³²⁷ Bruce Hoffman, *British Airpower in Peripheral Conflict, 1919-1976* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1989), 40.

Persuasion

The communist insurgency in Malaya was the first modern revolutionary war where airpower was used extensively for persuasive operations. RAF operations proved to be a critical means of accomplishing mobilization and security objectives.

Mobilization. Airpower was often a key enabler or force multiplier for police, army, and civil government operations. Reconnaissance, airlift, and psychological operations helped the government get the most efficient and effective use of its resources. RAF reconnaissance activities were critical to improving the quality of available maps. Air and ground operations were severely hindered by the lack of accurate maps at the beginning of the war. Aerial reconnaissance missions rectified the problem by photographing all of Malaya. Reconnaissance missions provided vital support for ground operations conducted throughout the countryside. Visual reconnaissance efforts were also critically important, and will be described below.³²⁸

The RAF's airlift operations were its most important contribution to the Emergency. Various types of missions were flown, including aerial resupply, helicopter transport, casualty evacuation, paratroop airdrops, and air-land delivery. Of all missions, "tactical air supply of food, medicine, clothing, ammunition and equipment was the most important, and by enabling the ground forces to carry out deep penetration of the jungle and remain on patrol for extended periods, it proved to be indispensable to ultimate

³²⁸ Air Commodore P. E. Warcup, quoted in A. H. Peterson, G. C. Reinhardt, and E. E. Conger, eds., *Symposium on the Role of Airpower in Counterinsurgency and Unconventional Warfare: The Malayan Emergency* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1963), 67-68; and Rowland S. N. Mans, "Victory in Malaya," *The Guerrilla and How to Fight Him* ed. T. N. Greene (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 130.

victory.”³²⁹ Over 98 percent of the supplies delivered by airdrop were recovered by security forces.³³⁰

Beginning in 1953, medium helicopter transport operations added much needed flexibility to security force operations.³³¹ Heli-borne assault operations were largely responsible for the “systematic elimination of the terrorist threat during the later stages of the campaign.”³³² Light helicopters performed casualty evacuation duties which greatly boosted the morale of ground force personnel operating deep within the jungle. A limited number of paratroop operations were conducted by medium transports to insert troops into known insurgent operating areas. When carefully planned, airborne insertions denied escape routes to the insurgents fleeing from ground and air attacks.³³³ It was quickly learned that helicopters offered a more accurate and less costly (albeit slower) means of jungle insertion.

A network of major, minor, and remote airstrips was constructed to enable airpower extend the reach of government administration and security forces through air-land delivery. These operations were primarily conducted by medium transports. Security forces, cargo, casualties, and civil officials were airlifted between major airfields when “rapid deployment was considered important, especially over areas where ambushes were likely to occur.”³³⁴ A network of small airfields was established to afford commanders rapid mobility within operational zones. Helicopters were used in this role when light aircraft proved to be inadequate for transporting required payloads. However, the

³²⁹ Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, 150.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 150-151; and Mans, “Victory in Malaya,” 130.

³³¹ Mans, “Victory in Malaya,” 126.

³³² Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, 151.

³³³ *Ibid.*

helicopter fleet was often too busy lifting assault forces and casualties to support air-land delivery operations.

In 1954 a small fleet of Pioneer short takeoff and landing aircraft were introduced to conduct airlift within operational zones. These aircraft performed an “invaluable service in ferrying troops, freight, police reinforcements and civil administrators into and out of grass airstrips in remote operational areas.”³³⁵ The Pioneer aircraft were the primary means of operating into the tiny airstrips located near the jungle forts. The average length of these strips was 200 yards, so short takeoff and landing capabilities were a necessity. In many cases these forts could only be supplied by air.³³⁶

Psychological operations were “one of the most useful weapons” employed against the MRLA.³³⁷ These operations were directed by civil authorities and their effectiveness primarily depended upon the ground situation. Transport aircraft were heavily relied upon to disseminate materials designed to inspire public confidence in the government and to demoralize the insurgents.³³⁸ Two types of aerial dissemination methods were employed. Many millions of leaflets were dropped in support of various government objectives. Between 1955 and 1957, approximately 50,000 leaflets were delivered for every insurgent in the field.³³⁹ Many messages communicated amnesty terms and imminent independence; surrender rates improved markedly.³⁴⁰

³³⁴ Ibid., 152.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Air Commodore P. E. Warcup, quoted in *Symposium on the Role of Airpower*, 44.

³³⁷ Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, 152.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Paget, *Counter-insurgency Campaigning*, 73.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., and Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 238.

The second method employed the use of voice aircraft to broadcast messages to the MRLA. This method had particular value since some of the MRLA members were illiterate.

Specially modified transport aircraft broadcast messages from wives and family members urging a specific insurgent to surrender.³⁴¹ Although the effects were often difficult to quantify, the RAF considered psychological operations to be worth the effort.³⁴² Psychological operations were directly linked to the large number of surrenders during the final years of the Emergency.³⁴³ The psychological weapon “made a major contribution to the slow erosion and ultimate collapse of the insurgent’s morale that presaged their final defeat.”³⁴⁴

Security. From the beginning of the Emergency, the RAF was tasked to help increase the security of the people and the nation’s resources. Although airpower was sometimes called upon during ambushes and other attacks, it was often not responsive enough to strike the insurgents before they retired. Perhaps its most important contribution to security was maintaining a vigilant watch over designated population areas, resources, and known locations of the insurgents. Visual reconnaissance missions were flown to this end. Army pilots flew light Austere aircraft to accomplish this mission. “Each pilot was given an area that he literally had to know like the back of his hand. It was his task to spot any change in the scenery, any new clearings in the jungle, signs of movement, signs of habitation, and so on.”³⁴⁵ The pilots debriefed intelligence

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, 152.

³⁴³ Air Commodore P. E. Warcup, quoted in *Symposium on the Role of Airpower*, 68.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 68.

officers on the results of their missions, and ground patrols were sent to investigate suspicious activity. When such indications occurred in the vicinity of the jungle, patrol aircraft were used to vector ground forces to the area of concern. Such activity proved extremely effective in monitoring and investigating suspected MRLA activity in rural locations.³⁴⁶

Coercion

The communist insurgency in Malaya was the first modern revolutionary war where airpower was used extensively for coercive operations. The RAF was most actively pursued three tasks: isolating the MRLA from the people, discrediting the leadership, and conducting combat operations.

Isolation of the MRLA from the people. The government's food control program was instituted to reduce the number of contacts between the people and the MRLA. As the insurgents found their food supply increasingly scarce, they withdrew deeper and deeper into the jungle. The MRLA engaged the support of aborigines to grow subsistence crops and help provide for their security needs. Security forces soon followed the MRLA into the jungle and began driving a wedge between the MRLA and the aborigines. The RAF supported these efforts with resupply and crop spraying operations. Resupply efforts were described above—a brief overview of crop spraying operations follows. In the early 1950s tests proved it was possible to destroy agricultural plots in the jungle by spraying them with chemicals delivered from aircraft. In 1953 and 1954 operations were mounted against suspected MRLA growing fields. Although effective, these operations had the unintended consequence of angering law-abiding

³⁴⁶ Mans, "Victory in Malaya," 127.

Sakais. It was often impossible to differentiate between legitimate Sakai fields and plots cultivated to support the MRLA. Therefore, crop-spraying activities became increasingly unheard of in the second half of the Emergency.³⁴⁷

Publicly discrediting the communist leadership. The RAF supported this objective through the dissemination of psychological materials. Airborne broadcasts and leaflets proved to be a popular means of destroying myths propagated by the MRLA leadership.

“This was particularly important when a surrendered CT [insurgent] could be induced to record a message to his erstwhile comrades that he was alive and well. That provided an effective answer to Communist propaganda that anybody who surrendered would be tortured and killed.”³⁴⁸

Combat operations. The RAF was extensively employed in air strike operations during the first years of the Emergency. From 1950 to 1957, Lincoln bombers flew nearly 750 missions and dropped approximately 33 million pounds of bombs on the insurgents.³⁴⁹ Bomb damage assessment revealed few positive results due to questionable intelligence, inaccurate maps, trouble with delivery systems, difficult terrain, and lousy weather conditions were contributing factors. Interdiction and close air support missions were frustratingly difficult to execute because the jungle hid MRLA base camps and provided excellent cover that enabled them to slip away immediately after contacting security forces. Overall, strike operations provided a dismal return on the investment.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, 152.

³⁴⁸ Air Commodore P. E. Warcup, quoted in *Symposium on the Role of Airpower*, 68. .

³⁴⁹ Hoffman, *British Airpower in Peripheral Conflict*, 42.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; Taber, *War of the Flea*, 144.

An example of a typically frustrating strike operation occurred during Operation Termite, which lasted between July and November 1954.³⁵¹ This operation was a joint air and ground effort designed to channel the insurgents toward waiting security forces. “After four months of heavy bombing and ground sweeps, the net result of the operation was only 15 guerrillas killed.”³⁵² In many circumstances, the lack of intelligence and challenging operational conditions limited the RAF to bombing suspected withdrawal routes.³⁵³

The most successful joint air and ground operation of the Emergency occurred in 1956.³⁵⁴ An army patrol discovered a large base camp that turned out to be the headquarters for a key leader of the MRLA. The camp was located in the middle of a swamp, defended by six guard posts, and surrounded by “an interlocking wall of impenetrable thorn trees and hedges which had been painstakingly constructed by the guerrillas.”³⁵⁵ An independent ground assault was ruled out as too risky. Because the camp was extremely small (approximately 700 by 400 yards), the target would be extremely challenging for bombers to strike with accuracy. A plan was quickly developed for air strikes followed by a heli-borne assault of ground forces. On the morning of 20 February, a single light aircraft marked the camp with red balloons. Two squadrons of Canberra light bombers attacked and nearly obliterated the camp. The heli-

³⁵¹ Hoffman, *British Airpower in Peripheral Conflict*, 44.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁵⁴ Hoffman, *British Airpower in Peripheral Conflict*, 45-46.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

borne assault force counted 14 of 21 suspected guerrillas dead—“including the unit’s leader.”³⁵⁶

The Outcome of the War

The Malayan Emergency lasted for 12 years before the government formally declared victory. The MRLA contributed to its own defeat because the insurgents failed to properly analyze the revolutionary environment. The government defeated the MRLA with an effective counterrevolutionary strategy that was designed to win over the people and neutralize the MRLA.

The MRLA failed to achieve its aim because the insurgents misunderstood the revolutionary environment. Specifically, the insurgents lacked the internal and external support required to defeat the Federation government. The insurgents fought an uphill battle for popular support throughout the Emergency. The communists hoped to persuade the people that its legitimacy came from strong partisan opposition to Japanese occupation forces during World War II. The insurgents failed to recall how much the people hated the MPAJA’s brutal reign of terror after the Japanese occupation. Once the Emergency began, the communists rekindled that memory by using intimidation and fear in a misguided attempt to secure food, supplies, and intelligence. The use of terror was incompatible with the MRLA’s operational goal of expanding its army. It also negated insurgent attempts to rally popular support. Without external support, the MRLA’s strategy was doomed to fail.

The lack of external support also prevented the MRLA from achieving its aims. The Soviet Union was dissuaded from offering assistance because its resources were needed

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 46.

in Europe. China defeated the Kuomintang government and then became embroiled in Korea. Even if such support was offered, Malaya's physical features and the Royal Navy would have limited access to the peninsula.

The government achieved its aim because it eventually executed a highly effective counterrevolutionary strategy. There were at least three reasons why the government's strategy succeeded. First, the government successfully maintained popular support by linking termination of the Emergency to independence. Secondly, the Commonwealth committed an extensive amount of resources to achieve persuasive and coercive tasks. Finally, government resolve in the face of adversity and public humiliation was remarkable. The steady hand played by the Federation government following Sir Henry Gurney's death proved critical to maintaining popular support among the European and Malay communities.

Some Historical Insights

Historical analysis of the Malayan Emergency provided insights to the four questions driving this study. *What is the role of the military instrument in counterrevolutionary warfare?* The initial role of the military instrument was to provide coercive force. Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs modified the strategy and assigning the military both persuasive and coercive roles. Briggs integrated civil and military capabilities to better mobilize resources, improve security conditions, and relentlessly pursue the MRLA through combat operations.

What is the role of airpower in counterrevolutionary warfare? Airpower initially assumed a coercive role to conduct combat operations. When the military instrument was assigned persuasive tasks, airpower was directed to achieve them. The RAF's airlift

operations proved indispensable to the accomplishment of mobilization and security tasks.

Can airpower achieve strategic effects in counterrevolutionary warfare? The Emergency indicated that airpower can achieve important effects with non-lethal applications of force. The helicopter fleet was critical to the timely insertion of assault forces deep within the jungle. The Pioneer fleet helped the government break the MRLA's hold over the *Sakai* population. Psychological operations continued to wear down the morale of the MRLA members throughout the war. Although area bombing was largely ineffective, it was often the government's only means of harassing the insurgents during the early years of the Emergency.

Can airpower make major contributions toward the victory of counterrevolutionary forces? The Malayan Emergency suggests airpower can play a significant role in helping government forces achieve victory. This contribution appears to be in a supporting vice supported role. Much of airpower's mission in Malaya was to support the efforts of the civil police and security forces.

The theories presented in the first chapter suggested that the requirements of aerial coercion against partisans and insurgents should differ substantially. The Greek Civil War and the Malayan Emergency illustrate some of those differences. Yet what if the revolutionary actor displays characteristics of a hybrid type somewhere between a partisan and insurgent? The Insurrection in El Salvador is presented in the following chapter to illustrate this phenomenon.

army, and civil government operations. Reconnaissance, airlift, and psychological operations helped the government get the most efficient and effective use of its resources. RAF reconnaissance activities were critical to improving the quality of

Chapter 4

The Insurrection in El Salvador, 1981-1992

I acknowledge that the revolutionaries may have good reason for taking up arms when there was no hope of economic reform, social justice, or free elections. But revolution is not the act of taking power. The process of revolution may begin with a change of government, but the revolution takes place only when there has been a transformation of the economy, the social patterns, the armed forces, the education, and the culture of a country.

-- Jose Napoleon Duarte

The case of the Insurrection in El Salvador illustrates a counterrevolutionary strategy that was more coercive than persuasive. The *Farabundo Marti* National Liberation Front's (FMLN's) aim was to overthrow the Salvadoran government and install a Marxist regime. The FMLN was a hybrid threat that exhibited traits of partisan and insurgent movements.³⁵⁷ Both the Several states within the international communist movement provided direct support to the FMLN. The Salvadorans viewed Nicaragua as the FMLN's primary sponsor. The United States looked beyond Nicaragua's participation and saw the FMLN as an auxiliary force of the Cuban and Soviet regimes. The Salvadoran government relied upon direct support from the U.S. to formulate and execute its counterrevolutionary strategy. Although the military instrument was eventually assigned coercive and persuasive roles, the Salvadoran armed forces greatly preferred to

³⁵⁷ The strategy and tactics of the FMLN movement was a unique blend of both partisan and insurgent tenets and techniques. FMLN personnel will be referred to as 'rebels' vice partisans or insurgents to note the hybrid nature of their revolutionary movement.

'kill rebels' than to win over the people. Airpower was tasked to assume coercive and persuasive roles. As might be expected, the Salvadoran air force concentrated on combat operations to the detriment of other tasks. Yet both the military instrument and airpower proved quite capable of accomplishing persuasive tasks when given guidance and resources. The FMLN's defeat offers an important lesson in the termination of counterrevolutionary warfare. Sometimes a government can gain success by dominating the terms of a negotiated settlement.

The Revolutionary Environment

El Salvador's heritage of authoritarian rule and an unequal distribution of national resources made the country ripe for revolution. The moment came in 1981 when a variety of conflicting actors, motivations, and aims sparked a popular revolt that lasted for over a decade. The land and its people, the social system, economic conditions, the political setting, and the military situation all help to characterize the nature of the insurrection.

The Land and its People

The Republic of El Salvador is a small country comprised of only 8,124 square miles. El Salvador is only 160 miles long if measured from east to west; 60 miles if measured from the Pacific Ocean to Honduras. Two east to west running mountain ranges divide the country into the northern mountains and central plateau region and the Pacific lowlands. El Salvador is earthquake-prone because it lies near the conjunction of three geologic plates. There are over twenty volcanoes in the southern mountains; the interior highlands contain numerous crater lakes. Mountainous terrain guards Salvadoran

borders with Honduras (east and north) and Guatemala (west and north). Nicaragua is located in a southeasterly direction across the Gulf of Fonesca. The tropical climate is more moderate in the mountains than in the Hot Pacific lowlands. The weather patterns are predictable: a winter rainy season and a dry summer season. Unlike other countries in the region, there is no jungle in El Salvador.³⁵⁸

El Salvador's population was estimated at just less than 4.7 million in 1983. Approximately 89 percent of the people were Mestizo (of both Spanish and Indian descent); 10 percent were Indian; and 1 percent was Caucasian. By 1988 the population grew to 5.4 million people. The high rate of population growth worsened problems associated with an unequal distribution of national resources.³⁵⁹ In 1983 El Salvador had a population density of nearly 570 people per square mile, which was the highest figure in all of Central America.³⁶⁰ The least populated areas of El Salvador were in the mountainous northern departments of Chalatenango, Morazan, and Cabanas. The most populated areas were found in the rural central zone and the major urban areas of San Salvador, Santa Ana, and San Miguel. San Salvador was the most populated city, with more than five times the people as the second largest city of Santa Ana.

The Salvadoran society was divided into elite, middle, and lower classes. El Salvador's class system was formed when the country became an independent republic in the early nineteenth century. The new republic's wealthy landowners organized an

³⁵⁸ Marvin E. Gettleman and others, eds. "El Salvador in Brief," in Marvin E. Gettleman and others, eds. *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War*, revised and updated (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 3; and Army Pamphlet 55-150, *El Salvador: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1990), xiii-xiv, and 54.

³⁵⁹ Gettleman et al., "El Salvador in Brief," 3; and *El Salvador: A Country Study*, 54.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 54. Density figures for 1983 were 570 people per square mile. See Gettleman et al., "El Salvador in Brief," 3.

oligarchic government and raised an army and a national guard to protect their interests. Despite occasional rebellions by the peasantry, the elite dominated events in Salvadoran society for over 150 years. In 1980 the elite comprised only 2 percent of the population, but owned more than half of the arable land, controlled all the important economic sectors, and generated one-third of the nation's annual income.³⁶¹

The Salvadoran middle class comprised about 8 percent of the population by the early 1980s. Most of the skilled laborers, government employees, university teachers, and owners of small land holdings were middle class members. The military officer corps provided the best chance for upward mobility. Middle class officers could wield significant power by allying themselves with oligarchic families. In return, these families expected their interests from being challenged by the lower classes. Such activity was often at odds with reform-minded members of the middle class. During the 1960s and 1970s, reformers sought to decrease societal instability by raising the lower class standard of living and opening the political process to the Salvadoran people.³⁶²³⁶³

The lower class comprised the vast majority of El Salvador's population.³⁶⁴ Most lived in rural areas, were without land, and toiled as seasonal wage laborers. More fortunate peasants were employed as full time estate workers owned or rented small plots of marginal land. In the late nineteenth century, the government permitted the elite to consolidate most of the arable land into huge coffee estates. Without land of their own, many peasants were forced to work for pitifully low wages on the estates just to survive.

³⁶¹ *El Salvador: A Country Study*, 60.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 64-66.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

As social unrest grew in the 1960s, the elite feared that permanent, landed workers would organize a reform movement amongst the land-less peasantry. To negate this potentiality, the elite class began decreasing the number of peasant land holdings and replacing permanent workers with seasonal hires. Between 1961 and 1971, the number of elite landowners who employed full-time workers dropped from 55,000 to 17,000. By 1975, over 41 percent of the rural population were land-less, and only 37 percent worked on a full-time basis. When the civil war began in 1980, nearly 65 percent of the rural population was without land and depended upon seasonal wage labor for its subsistence.³⁶⁵

Historical Background

El Salvador declared independence from Spain in 1821 and became a republic in 1841 after the demise of the United Provinces of Central American States. From that time on, the El Salvador's development paralleled that of other Central American countries. Socioeconomic inequality, authoritarian political leadership, and the repressive use of military force interacted to shape a chronically unstable environment.³⁶⁶ The most powerful political force in El Salvador involved combinations of military officers and wealthy families.³⁶⁷ These partnerships resulted in an unbroken chain of authoritarian rule that lasted from 1932 to 1979. Right-wing military officers served as titular 'heads of state' while the elite manipulated the national legislature, the judicial system, and public infrastructure to protect their interests. Subordinate officers ran the national infrastructure through hands-on management of "banks, the social security

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 60-64.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., xix.

institute, the national airline, and the census bureau, as well as owning large estates and becoming involved in export agriculture.”³⁶⁸

In the late 1960s Jose Napoleon Duarte’s Christian Democratic Party opposed the oligarchy. Duarte adopted a platform of reform and ran against the oligarchy candidate in the 1972 national elections. Duarte won the election and was to become the first government leader in 40 years who did not represent the interests of the oligarchy or the military. Shortly after the results of the election were announced, the ruling authoritarian government declared a news blackout. Three days later the oligarchy’s National Coalition Party and its military candidate, Colonel Arturo Molina, were declared the victors. True to form, the government quickly implicated Duarte as the mastermind of an aborted coup attempt. Found hiding in the Venezuela embassy, Duarte was forcibly removed, beaten, and flown to Guatemala. Shortly thereafter, Duarte entered exile in Venezuela while Molina and his subordinate officers ruled El Salvador.³⁶⁹ In 1979 Molina’s handpicked successor was overthrown in a military coup that ushered in the decade of violence that became known as the insurrection.³⁷⁰

Years of authoritarian rule instilled a sense of hopelessness within the Salvadoran people. The people were convinced they could not change their society by peaceful means. The oligarchy controlled the judiciary, legislature, and the military, leaving the people without a voice for their future. Those who opposed the system had two options:

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 62.

³⁶⁸ *El Salvador: A Country Study*, 62.

³⁶⁹ Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, eds. *El Salvador at War: An Oral History of Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1988), 13.

³⁷⁰ Edwin G. Corr and Courtney E. Prisk, “El Salvador: Transforming Society to Win the Peace,” *Low Intensity Conflict: Old Threats in a New World*, eds. Edwin G. Corr and Stephen Sloan (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 224.

“You could emigrate or you could become part of the fertilizer program. There wasn’t any mechanism for grievances that worked. You were at the mercy of the landowner and the military in cahoots.”³⁷¹

Social System

Successive authoritarian regimes largely ignored the plight of the rural worker and impoverished urban dwellers. After the 1979 coup, efforts to improve social services were hindered by the lack of resources due to the increased amount of military expenditures. The poor had valid grievances about the lack of available medical and health care, education, housing, and welfare services.

Medical and health care. The lack of sufficient personal income and government fiscal resources made medical and health care beyond the reach of many Salvadorans.³⁷² Malnutrition was rampant among the poor throughout the 1970s. In 1980 a lack of funding forced the closure of the Medical School of the National University. This dramatically limited the number of trained medical personnel available for duty in rural areas. Rural areas lacked hospitals or other medical facilities that offered even the most basic health care.

Education. In 1980 approximately 30 percent of the population was illiterate. Rural schools accommodated less than half of school-aged children. Only 15 percent of the country’s teachers worked in rural schools. Elite landowners opposed primary school reform because they feared that educated workers would organize the peasants and push for agrarian reform. During the 1970s the National University became the intellectual home of left wing dissidents. The FMLN and other revolutionary groups maintained

³⁷¹ John D. Waghelstein, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 8.

offices at the university, and used the school as a forum to debate policy and enlist recruits. In 1980 the army closed the main university campus in San Salvador, claiming it was used as an underground operating location for rebel forces.³⁷³

Housing. The majority of Salvadorans lived in housing that was generally far below acceptable standards.³⁷⁴ Rural and urban communities were often squatter settlements constructed on public land near riverbeds and along highways. Rural homes typically had one or two rooms, dirt floors, adobe or straw walls, with thatched or tiled roofs. The vast majority of rural homes were built without sanitation facilities or electricity. The urban poor endured equally pathetic housing conditions. There were approximately 100 shantytowns in San Salvador alone, which collectively housed 643,000 of the city's 858,000 people.³⁷⁵ The cities were also the haven of the elite, who lived in majestic homes surrounded by fences that were patrolled by armed guards. The contrast between the urban poor and elite living in close proximity was a stark reminder of the country's unequal division of land and wealth.

Welfare services. Social security benefits were available through the Salvadoran Social Security Institute.³⁷⁶ The institute oversaw the extension of medical and pension benefits to workers in commerce and industry. Most other workers were not eligible to receive these benefits. The elite refused to support such services for agricultural laborers because the system was primarily funded by government and employer contributions.

³⁷² *El Salvador: A Country Study*, 70-72.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 73-84.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 69-72, and 82-83.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

Economic Conditions

El Salvador's economy was heavily reliant on the agricultural sector. Coffee alone accounted for more than half of the country's foreign trade earnings. In the 1950s and 1960s, revenue from coffee exports helped to expand cotton and sugar production and financed the start-up of light industry. Between 1965 and 1978 the GDP increased 4.3 percent per year. After the outbreak of violence in 1979, the economy entered a tailspin that lasted for several years. Between 1979 and 1983, the average per capita income decreased by 29 percent in El Salvador. The unemployment rate ballooned from 6.7 percent in 1979 to 30 percent in 1983. The Duarte government instituted price controls and exchange rate policies in a simultaneous attempt to stabilize the economy, fight the war, and institute a series of broad based reforms.³⁷⁷

Between March and April 1980, the government instituted measures for agrarian, banking, and trade reform. The agrarian reform was fundamentally about giving the peasant a stake in the land. A primary measure involved the confiscation of all properties over 500 hectares. The previous owner was allotted 150 hectares; the remainder was transformed into a cooperative and turned over to the people. Generally speaking, lesser size holdings in the 200 to 500 hectare range also became cooperatives. Small holdings were left "with that person who was going to work the land."³⁷⁸

The Duarte government also nationalized the Central Bank and the coffee industry.³⁷⁹ The Central Bank was nationalized to enable the government to control the money supply. This prevented corrupt businessmen from borrowing huge amounts at 2

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 102-103; and *El Salvador: Central America in the Cold War*, 4.

³⁷⁸ Carlos Reynaldo Lopez Nuila, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 170-172. Colonel Nuila was the Vice-Minister of Public Security for El Salvador during most of the insurrection.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 173-175.

or 3 percent and then loaning the money to others at greatly increased interest rates.³⁸⁰ The government also nationalized the coffee industry to improve its export revenue. This action broke up an underhanded trade ring that was monopolizing export prices, generating huge profits, and investing gains in foreign countries. Government controls, the war, and the world market had a major impact on coffee production during the insurrection. The 20 percent drop in production between 1979 and 1986 was a major reason why the economy floundered.

The U.S. government and private organizations provided massive assistance to help the Salvadoran government stay afloat. “In 1987 net private transfers, or transfer receipts, accounted for over 4 percent of GDP, while grants or official transfers from the United States government represented 5 percent.”³⁸¹ Although this assistance prevented the economy’s collapse, it was not nearly enough to institute the government’s intended reforms.

Political Setting

General Romero, President Molina’s hand picked successor, was the last authoritarian ruler in the long line of oligarchy and military partnerships. Romero condoned the use of political violence to stifle left wing groups that clamored for reform. Various Marxist-based groups responded with an increasing number of subversive activities and armed attacks designed to propel the Salvadoran society toward political anarchy. Before long the leftist violence could no longer be controlled through repression. Concerned civil and military actors knew the oligarchy had to go, but they

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 173.

³⁸¹ This paragraph based on *El Salvador: A Country Study*, 103-104.

did not want the Marxists to fill the power vacuum. A loose coalition of young military officers, moderate politicians, and progressive industrialists formed the Popular Forum to pressure the Romero government for reform.³⁸²

The Popular Forum was established in August 1979. The organization's objectives were to end repression, establish an environment of political pluralism, institute economic reform, and increase popular participation in the government's affairs. The military became increasingly concerned about the last objective. In July, a popular uprising brought down the Somoza regime in Nicaragua, and the National Guard was dissolved in the process. The Salvadoran military did not relish the chance of suffering a similar fate if violence engulfed El Salvador. Though a growing number of Salvadoran officers supported reform, the Popular Forum's agenda seemed much too similar to the platform that brought the Sandinistas to power in Nicaragua. The Salvadoran military was divided over how to handle the situation.³⁸³

Reform-minded military officers of junior ranks wanted to depose Romero. Their objective was to lead the country toward a Constitutional Assembly, national elections, and agrarian reform. Many senior officers wanted to maintain ties to the oligarchy. The junior officers finally succeeded in gaining the support of a few moderate senior officers, who overthrew Romero in a bloodless coup. The coup leaders broke with tradition by refusing to ally with the oligarchy. Instead, they formed an alliance with moderate

³⁸² Ibid., 33-34; and Alvaro Magana, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 29. Dr. Magana was the provisional President of the Republic of El Salvador from 1982-1984.

³⁸³ *El Salvador: A Country Study*, 33-34.

political forces. Jose Napoleon Duarte, the leader of the centrist Christian Democrats, reappeared on the political scene as a key member of the new civil-military junta.³⁸⁴

The civil-military junta quickly proclaimed agrarian, banking, and trade reforms. This platform was opposed by right and left wing elements. The oligarchy opposed reform because it challenged their hold on Salvadoran society. Left wing opponents, now united as the political Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) and the military Farabundo Marti National Liberation Movement (FMLN), opposed on different grounds. The FDR and FMLN were afraid that junta reforms would co-opt the political and social rationale of their Marxist-based revolutionary movement. In December, most civilian moderates left the government and joined the FDR when ESAF proved unable to control right wing death squad attacks. When the promised reforms failed to materialize, the junta became isolated from the people.³⁸⁵ The junta collapsed and was succeeded by a series of interim governments that also had reform-based agendas.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ Ibid.; Magana, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 29-30; and General Jose Guillermo Garcia, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 30-32. General Garcia was the Minister of Defense in El Salvador from 1979 to 1984.

³⁸⁵ Colonel John D. Waghelstein, Commander, United States Military Group in El Salvador, 1982-1983, offered succinct insight into the civil-military junta's failed attempt to enact agrarian reform. "The biggest single problem stemming from the '79 coup was that the Junta had initiated banking, land, and commodity reform. They had viewed these problems as being the keys. The problem with the land reform is only about 10 percent of the landowners have ever been compensated. You have this festering sore because the landowners think they are going to come back one of these days to turn back history . . . The banking reform had to be—there's not only land reform, but you also have to be able to make loans available for seed and fertilizer. The land reform will come along, but if there's no backup—there are no small business loans, no extension services, they cannot market their products, and they can't get the agricultural services if you will—then the reformers haven't done all the things that land reformers are supposed to do that cost money." See John D. Waghelstein, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 36.

³⁸⁶ Fred Woerner, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 34. Brigadier General Fred Woerner led the first U.S. team to participate in strategy discussions with the Salvadoran government

Throughout the period of insurrection, the political strategy of right and left wing elements was to oppose moderate governments and any political faction that called for broad-based reform.³⁸⁷ The objective of the right was to restore the oligarchy to power; the left sought to install a Marxist government. The oligarchic right supported its political strategy by using terror as a coercive weapon to suppress the Marxist left. Because the terror campaign employed off-duty military officers, it also discredited the legitimacy of moderate governments that proved unable to control the death squads. The Marxist left supported its political strategy with a variety of military operations. These operations fell under the purview of the FMLN, which emerged as the primary revolutionary threat to the Salvadoran government.

The FMLN's primary objective was to overthrow the Salvadoran government and install a Marxist regime. The FMLN defied characterization as a simple partisan or insurgent organization. Like partisan movements, the FMLN was heavily supported by sponsor states. The Soviet Union, Cuba, Nicaragua, and other socialist nations provided the FMLN with indirect support.³⁸⁸ The Soviets generated assistance through a surprisingly diverse network of socialist states. The political headquarters of the FMLN was located in Havana, Cuba. Vietnam assisted the FMLN by sending arms shipments of

in 1981. General Woerner later became the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Southern Command.

³⁸⁷ The terms "right," "left," and "moderate" should be considered in a relative sense and are used to describe the contours within the Salvadoran political scene.

³⁸⁸ Steven Metz, *Counterinsurgency: Strategy and the Phoenix of American Capability* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1995), 11. See also Benjamin Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991), 8.

surplus American arms stockpiled after the fall of Saigon by way of Nicaragua.³⁸⁹ Mexico and France officially recognized the revolutionary movement as a representative political force within El Salvador.³⁹⁰ Nicaragua provided the FMLN with direct support by acquiring and transporting military equipment for the FMLN.³⁹¹ The FMLN also enjoyed safe sanctuary within Nicaragua's borders.

The FMLN also reflected many attributes of an insurgent movement. The movement claimed its mission was to redress the grievances of El Salvador's disaffected masses. By emphasizing democratic objectives, the FMLN hoped to attract popular support for its recruiting and intelligence needs. The FMLN also demonstrated a willingness to administer to the needs of the people. By late 1980, the FMLN controlled and administered significant portions of three provinces. With solid external and internal support, the FMLN became respected as a very effective combat organization. The FMLN's ultimate desire was to duplicate the popular insurrection that brought the Sandinistas to power in Nicaragua.³⁹²

Military Situation

In 1980 the Armed Forces of El Salvador were structured for limited conventional warfare. The ESAF lacked the proper equipment, training, and know-how to deal with an internal rebellion. The ESAF was comprised of the army, navy, and air force as well as internal security forces. The army fielded 16 maneuver battalions; there were 4 surface

³⁸⁹ Waghelstein, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 92; and Metz, *Counterinsurgency: Strategy and the Phoenix of American Capability*, 11.

³⁹⁰ Jose Napoleon Duarte, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 96. Duarte was the President of El Salvador from 1984 to 1988 and an original member of the civil-military junta that replaced General Romero in October 1979.

³⁹¹ Waghelstein, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 92.

naval units. The air force consisted of a mere 28 aircraft and 5 helicopters. The security forces included the National Guard, National Police, and the Treasury Police. The National Police were responsible for urban security; the National Guard was in charge of rural security; and the Treasury Police mission was border control. The total number of military and security personnel in uniform was 17,000. There were few mechanisms in place that permitted these units to work together.³⁹³

The ESAF did not have the leadership, motivation, and discipline required of an effective fighting force. A middle-class officer corps that was more interested in social mobility than fighting led the military. Most Salvadoran military officers were graduates of the Captain General Gerardo Barrios Military Academy. Each graduating class formed a *tanda*, a special group whose members were promoted through the ranks together regardless of ability. The *tanda* was a “good-old-boy” system that inculcated unprofessional behavior through widespread corruption and toleration of human rights abuses.³⁹⁴

Typical officer activities included collecting “salaries of non-existent ‘ghost soldiers,’ selling goods at inflated prices to their men, siphoning funds from food and clothing budgets, and leasing their troops as guards and laborers.”³⁹⁵ The officers spent little time training the conscript enlisted force, which functioned without a

³⁹² Metz, *Counterinsurgency: Strategy and the Phoenix of American Capability*, 11.

³⁹³ *El Salvador at War*, xvii; and A. J. Bacevich, and others, “American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador.” Unpublished paper. United States Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA. March 1988, 11; and Jaime Abdul Gutierrez, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 60. General Gutierrez was a member of the civil-military junta after he helped depose General Romero in the October 1979 coup.

³⁹⁴ James J. Steele, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 58. Colonel Steele was the Commander, U.S. Military Group in El Salvador, from 1984 to 1986. Description of the *tanda* system is from Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 18-19.

noncommissioned officer corps. Therefore, most enlisted personnel were untrained and had no sense of purpose.³⁹⁶ The ESAF's lack of discipline manifested itself in human rights abuses. Officers led conscripts in acts of political violence that targeted civilians as well as political opponents of the government.³⁹⁷ In 1981 death squads linked to the ESAF committed over 10,000 political murders.³⁹⁸

The FMLN leadership began preparing for revolutionary war after the government overturned the election results in 1972. Government repression of the left steadily increased under the Molina and Romero governments. Five leftist groups fielded paramilitary forces for self-defense and to conduct subversive operations. These groups shared the common aim of overthrowing the Salvadoran government and installing a Marxist regime.³⁹⁹ Although they did not always agree on how to achieve the objective, these groups merged under the banner of the FMLN in late 1980. By the beginning of the insurrection, the rebels were able to field approximately 12,000-armed personnel against the 13,000-man ESAF.⁴⁰⁰

Foreign Assistance

In late 1979, the Salvadoran government asked the Carter administration for assistance to revive its sputtering economy, dampen social unrest, and enact credible

³⁹⁵ Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, vi.

³⁹⁶ Some enlisted personnel joined to "enjoy three meals a day and a warm place to sleep." See *El Salvador: A Country Study*, 64.

³⁹⁷ Bacevich, "American Military Policy in Small Wars," 43.

³⁹⁸ Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 23.

³⁹⁹ Joaquin Villalobos, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 17-18. Villalobos was the Commander-in-Chief of the People's Revolutionary Army, an organizational element of the FMLN.

⁴⁰⁰ Orlando Zepeda, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 368-369. Colonel Zepeda was the C-2 of the ESAF from 1985 to 1987.

reform.⁴⁰¹ With the Vietnam War still fresh in the minds of the American public, the United States government was in no mood to become embroiled in another revolutionary war. The underdeveloped world was specifically excluded from President Jimmy Carter's strategy of containment. Instead, the Carter administration sought to achieve objectives by emphasizing human rights using non-military instruments of power. The administration's policy for the under-developed world was clear. The risk of supporting "corrupt, illegitimate, and repressive regimes" outweighed the risk of revolutionary victory.⁴⁰²

The mounting success of Soviet-backed revolutionaries in Central America changed the boundaries of President Carter's containment policy.⁴⁰³ By supporting the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, the Soviet Union directly challenged American interests and influence in the region. After considerable debate, the Carter administration decided the risk of revolutionary victory in El Salvador outweighed the risk of strengthening the civil-military junta. With the aim of containing the Sandinistas, President Carter authorized a moderate amount of indirect support for the Salvadoran government. Economic and military assistance ended after right wing death squads murdered American citizens in late 1980 and early 1981. United States assistance resumed in force after the FMLN's "final offensive" began on January 10, 1981. Upon taking office days later, President Ronald Reagan formulated a strategy for Marxism in Central America

⁴⁰¹ Metz, *Counterinsurgency: Strategy and the Phoenix of American Capability*, 8.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁰³ Bacevich, "American Military Policy in Small Wars," 4.

that went beyond containment. Reagan aimed to defeat Marxism by overthrowing the Sandinista regime and democratizing the region.⁴⁰⁴

The Revolutionary Strategy

The FMLN's initial revolutionary aim was to overthrow the government and install a Marxist regime. As the insurrection progressed they became increasingly attuned to popular grievances. The revolutionary strategy shared characteristics of both partisan and insurgent warfare. The resultant 'hybrid' strategy proved difficult to subdivide into the generic phases of pre-hostilities, guerrilla warfare, and conventional warfare. Therefore, the generic phasing was modified to fit the situation at hand. The FMLN's revolutionary strategy will be analyzed in four phases. The pre-hostilities phase began with the nullification of the national elections in 1972 and lasted until the eve of war in 1981. The

⁴⁰⁴ Although this case study largely focuses on activities and events within El Salvador, it would be inappropriate to view them detached from a broader regional perspective. Maj Gen Richard Secord, a central figure in what became known as the Iran-Contra affair, emphasized that United States assistance to El Salvador was part of a multi-pronged strategy formulated to bring down the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. By supporting the FMLN, the Sandinistas provided the Reagan administration with justification for overt and covert action against the Nicaraguan regime. Overt American efforts included direct support for the governments of El Salvador and Honduras. Covert efforts included indirect support for the government of Guatemala and direct support for the *Contras*. The *Contras* were a Nicaraguan insurgent group (with partisan characteristics) whose aim was to topple the Sandinista government and install a democratic government. During 1985, the United States government secretly established an aerial resupply system for the *Contras*. Ilopango air base in El Salvador functioned as the main operating base and staging area. The Salvadoran air force commander, General Bustillo, became personally involved supporting *Contra* air operations that transited El Salvador. These air operations specialized in the covert delivery of military supplies to *Contras* operating inside of Nicaragua or staging from Honduras. During one such mission in October 1986, a C-123K Provider was shot down by a surface to air missile over Nicaragua. The *Contras* disbanded after Violeta Chamorro's electoral victory over Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua's 1990 presidential elections. Secord interview, 21 Mar 98; and Richard Secord, *Honored and Betrayed: Irangate, Covert Affairs, and the Secret War in Laos* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1992), 213, 272-273.

popular insurrection phase lasted from 1981 until 1984. The protracted war phase lasted from 1984 until 1989. The final subversive phase lasted from 1989 until the end of the insurrection in 1992.

Prehostilities

The FMLN focused on accomplishing three important tasks during this phase. The first task was to train personnel to be future leaders of the revolutionary army.⁴⁰⁵ The second task was to organize a powerful revolutionary mass movement which led to the military confrontation with the enemy.”⁴⁰⁶ The third task was to consolidate power among the revolutionary groups. Such unity was achieved between October and December 1980, when the military arms of five popular liberation organizations were united under a single political front and military arm: the FMLN. The merger enabled the rebels to field approximately 12,000 personnel when they initiated open hostilities in January 1981.

Popular Insurrection

This phase began in January 1981 when the FMLN launched its so-called “final offensive” to topple the Salvadoran government. The intent of the offensive was to inspire a mass uprising that would overthrow the government the same way the Somoza regime was toppled in Nicaragua.⁴⁰⁷ The rebels focused their attacks against government positions in several cities, including the capital of San Salvador. The FMLN supported

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁰⁷ Nuila, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 72-73.

its effort with 600 tons of weapons smuggled into the country from Soviet client states.⁴⁰⁸ Although the fighting lasted for several days, the people failed to support the rebels. The FMLN was forced to beat a hasty retreat into the mountains and reconsidered their strategy.⁴⁰⁹

Stinging from its first defeat, the FMLN spent the next six months securing its base in rural areas and increasing its combat capability.⁴¹⁰ In March 1981 the FMLN successfully launched attacks to destabilize eastern El Salvador during national elections. In December 1981 the FMLN struck at urban centers for the second time. Of exceptional note was the commando raid against the Ilopango air force base on January 27, 1982. Approximately 75 percent of the Salvadoran air force's aircraft inventory was destroyed.⁴¹¹

By the summer of 1982, FMLN operations began to evidence a change in strategy. The FMLN decided to gain support for a popular insurrection by wearing down the ESAF and destabilizing the economy. Key towns were seized to entice the ESAF into battle on disadvantageous terms. The disciplined rebels easily defeated the poorly-led government units. This tactic brought great success through much of 1983. The second objective was to destabilize the Salvadoran economy by making it difficult to transport coffee and other goods to processing and distribution centers. Beginning in July 1982, the rebels targeted major highways, fuel stores, and vehicles. The FMLN estimated it reduced the traffic flow by 75 percent along the Pan American and coastal highways in the north and east.

⁴⁰⁸ Gutierrez, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 91; and Waghelstein, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 92.

⁴⁰⁹ Juan Rafael Bustillo, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 75-76. General Bustillo was Chief of the Salvadoran Air Force during the insurrection.

⁴¹⁰ Villalobos, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 132-141.

These operations also enabled the rebels to ambush ESAF units that responded to the attacks.⁴¹²

By the fall of 1982 the FMLN clearly held the initiative. The hapless ESAF was dispersed, frustrated, and forced to remain on the defensive. Sensing this, the FMLN decided to increase their operations against the ESAF and the economy. The FMLN boldly attempted to annihilate government forces by attacking major positions. New economic target sets were added, to include power, communications, and fuel facilities. By demonstrating the ESAF's inability to protect the nation's people and resources, the FMLN hoped to further de-legitimize the Salvadoran government.⁴¹³ The results were impressive. The eastern part of El Salvador was deprived of electricity, fuel, and rail transportation. Electrical power and highways were disrupted in central El Salvador. Oil facilities were damaged in the western part of the country in an area supposedly under government control. The FMLN fielded large units, operated in a conventional style, and confronted the army whenever it desired. For its part, the ESAF remained on the defensive.⁴¹⁴

As the war evolved between 1981 and 1984, it seemed that the FMLN became increasingly focused on using military force to overthrow the Salvadoran government. Perhaps this was because the government had undercut the FMLN's popular platform by initiating a program of broad-based reform. In fact, rebel operations were becoming counterproductive to the FMLN's popular cause because they interfered with the

⁴¹¹ *El Salvador: A Country Study*, 216.

⁴¹² Villalobos, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 132-141.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 141-144.

⁴¹⁴ Steele, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 145; and Villalobos, *El Salvador at War*, 143-144.

government's reform programs. An angry populace defied FMLN orders to boycott the 1982 national election. The first freely elected government in decades came to power on a reformist agenda.

As popular support deteriorated, the FMLN found it difficult to sustain what was becoming an internal war of exhaustion. Although generally successful in the field, the ESAF maintained a significant firepower advantage that began to take its toll on the rebels during 1983. The lack of popular support made it more difficult to find recruits. By 1984, conventional combat cost the FMLN nearly half of its armed personnel.⁴¹⁵ United States assistance prevented the economy from collapsing and was beginning to markedly improve ESAF capabilities. The FMLN leadership reassessed the situation, and discarded hopes for a quick victory.

Protracted War

The FMLN entered into a *protracted war phase* by the spring of 1984. The new strategy was to wear down the government by prolonging the war.⁴¹⁶ The three basic objectives of this phase were to transition to guerrilla warfare, gain control of rural areas, and discredit the government by attacking people and resources. By transitioning to guerrilla warfare, the FMLN hoped to offset the firepower advantage of the ESAF. Rebel forces were restructured into small, highly mobile units that employed classic hit and run tactics.

⁴¹⁵ Colonel James J. Steele estimated the FMLN began the war with 10,000 personnel under arms, which the ESAF reduced to 5,000 personnel by 1986. The *masas*, or active FMLN supporters, still numbered 20,000 to 30,000. See Steele, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 362.

The second objective was to gain control of rural areas. The FMLN seized villages, removed any semblance of government authority, and installed its own local administration. Political officers indoctrinated the people, and put them to work growing food, gathering intelligence, or soldiering for the Marxist cause. The third objective was to discredit the government by demonstrating its inability to protect the nation's people and key resources. By continuing attacks against the government infrastructure, the FMLN hoped to create a general sense of insecurity among the population. Key targets included power facilities, railroads, telephone lines, the coffee and cotton infrastructure, and small towns. Prominent political and societal figures, including President Duarte's daughter, were kidnapped and exchanged for rebels captured by the government. By attacking ESAF patrols and unit headquarters, the FMLN sought to convince the army that the FMLN would continue the war indefinitely.⁴¹⁷

Though effective at discrediting the government, the protracted war phase failed to dramatically increase popular support, paralyze the economy, or destroy ESAF morale. There were three contributory factors. First, the people recognized that the government was attempting to make good on its promises of reform. Although the pace of economic reform was slow, the people were given a stake in the political process. Second, the FMLN was now opposing a government that was freely elected by the Salvadoran people. The 1984 election of Jose Napoleon Duarte secured much of the popular support the FMLN was unable to co-opt. And third, the basic needs of the Salvadoran people were met through the massive economic assistance provided by the United States. U.S.

⁴¹⁶ Description of FMLN strategy throughout this section is from a captured FMLN document, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 357-360; and Juan Rafael Bustillo, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 356.

military assistance had greatly increased the ESAF's ability to launch deadly attacks against rebel camps. With no end in sight to the protracted war phase, the FMLN began to wonder whether time was on its side.

By 1989, the FMLN realized they could not win a military victory as long as the United States continued its support of the Salvadoran government. Events in the international environment suggested support from communist nations might be withdrawn. Once again, a change in strategy seemed appropriate.

Subversion

The objective of the *subversion phase* was to achieve a favorably negotiated settlement. The phase began in 1989 when the FMLN extended a bold peace initiative that included communist participation in the national elections. The FMLN agreed to respect the outcome of the elections if certain preconditions were met. The Duarte government would have to postpone the elections for six months, ensure the safety of FMLN forces in the interim, and negotiate peace arrangements in good faith. The revolutionaries wanted a power sharing arrangement with the government, to downsize the ESAF from 56,000 to 12,000 personnel, and to incorporate FMLN members into the army and police force. Negotiations broke down when the National Republican Alliance party (ARENA), which was leading the polls, forced the legislature to postpone the peace talks until after the scheduled election date of 19 March. ARENA won the elections, and President Alfredo Cristiani came to power. Having lost the political and military

⁴¹⁷ Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 88-91.

initiative, the FMLN launched a major offensive in November 1989 to rejuvenate its revolutionary fervor and regain the government's respect.⁴¹⁸

The November offensive was the biggest in the history of the war. The objective was to prove to the government and people that the FMLN was still a powerful actor and wanted a stake in the political process. The strength of the offensive caught the ARENA government by surprise. Heavy fighting was reported in several urban areas, including San Salvador, where combat lasted for twenty days. The ARENA government called the offensive a despicable act of terrorism, while the FMLN termed it a great victory for the Salvadoran people. The FMLN withdrew from the urban areas after being unable to rally popular support.⁴¹⁹

By May 1990, the FMLN returned to negotiations to avoid losing a war it could not win. The FMLN seemed to indicate they were serious about laying down their arms in exchange for participation in the electoral process. However, the bargaining was not going to be easy. The FMLN "made it clear that they would negotiate with consummate skill on a playing field that they had largely shaped themselves and were not about to surrender."⁴²⁰

The Counterrevolutionary Strategy

The Salvadoran national strategy was slow in developing and not always executed according to plan. After the outbreak of war, the government adopted a mailed fist strategy to defeat the FMLN. Generally speaking, there was no effort to integrate military operations and reform programs as part of a single strategy. With the war going

⁴¹⁸ Jose Z. Garcia, "Tragedy in El Salvador," *Current History* 89, no. 543, February 1990, 9; and Enrique Baloyra-Herp, "The Persistent Conflict in El Salvador," *Current History* 90, no. 554, March 1991, 121.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁰ Jose Z. Garcia, "Tragedy in El Salvador," 10.

badly and the pace of reform painfully slow, President Duarte asked for U.S. assistance in formulating a national strategy. In 1981 Brigadier General Fred Woerner led a team of civilian and military experts to El Salvador to assist the strategy development process. Upon arrival, Woerner's team assessed that immediate need was to formulate a military strategy to prevent the government from falling. Two precious years would pass before a national strategy was developed.

By 1983 American advisors, diplomats, and policymakers recognized the need for a coercive and a persuasive strategy. The ESAF's capability had to be increased to protect the people and the national resources. Additionally, democratic institutions needed to be constructed to bolster the government's legitimacy. The Salvadoran government embraced this concept as their national strategy. Execution of the strategy proved difficult. The government encountered numerous obstacles that resulted in the inefficient and ineffective expenditure of resources. During twelve years of fighting, the government failed to complete many of its persuasive and coercive tasks.⁴²¹

Persuasion

Although not an integral part of the national strategy until 1983, the foundation for persuasive operations was laid in 1979. The promise of reform was the first step in winning over the people. Delivering on the promise proved challenging at best.

Balanced development. Government efforts to deliver promised reforms were hampered by a number of events. First and foremost, the FMLN caused over two billion dollars damage to the economy during the insurrection.⁴²² An earthquake jolted the country in October 1986 that was responsible for another billion dollars worth of

⁴²¹ Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, v.

damage.⁴²³ Additional revenue was lost due to “droughts, flood, capital flight, and deteriorating prices for El Salvador’s principal exports.”⁴²⁴ These events soaked up much of the economic assistance provided by the United States.

The economic crisis of the 1980s forced the Duarte government to prioritize its objectives. The first goal was to stabilize the economy and tend to the most important social needs. Price control and exchange rate mechanisms were put into place. Next, the government began a program of long-term structural reform.⁴²⁵ Duarte was able to stabilize the economy by 1984 with massive economic assistance from the U.S. playing a major role. Three years later, the economy experienced a 2.6 percent growth rate. However, the picture was far from bright. In 1987 the per capita income was 27 percent lower than it was in 1978. Economic growth continued to slide through the end of the decade. When the Cristiani government came to power in 1989, it relaxed price controls to force to give market forces and the private sector greater control of the economy. Efforts to liberalize the economy did not immediately restore investor confidence. However, improved political conditions and new economic initiatives rekindled the hope for eventual recovery. There was an increase in total exports, the fiscal deficit was lowered, and inflation was brought under control. The GDP increased between 3 to 5 percent each year between 1990 and 1993.⁴²⁶

U.S. economic assistance was instrumental in preventing the collapse of the Salvadoran economy. The Reagan administration provided the government with massive

⁴²² Corr and Prisk, “El Salvador: Transforming Society,” 242.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 243.

amounts of aid, but it came with restrictions. Congress quickly grew tired of the human rights violations in El Salvador, and threatened to cut off assistance unless death squad activities were terminated. The threat of losing the aid encouraged the Salvadorans to adopt a short-term planning horizon that undermined programs of long-term economic and social reform. U.S. legislative restraints on the distribution of economic assistance by foreign armed forces helped prevent the ESAF from effectively participating in development programs.⁴²⁷ This was a serious limitation, because the ESAF was the only effective infrastructure in the country for much of the war. As a result, the government often lacked the administrative skill to provide effective oversight of the \$2 billion economic development program provided by the U.S.⁴²⁸

The overall picture for balanced development was perhaps not as bleak as it appeared. Many lower and middle class members indirectly benefited from psychological changes associated with the planned reforms. The people gradually came to appreciate the fact that they were given a stake in the future of Salvadoran society.

⁴²⁶ Economic statistics in this paragraph are from Corr and Prisk, "El Salvador: Transforming Society," 225-226 and 243-244

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 20. Bacevich is extremely pessimistic about the applicability of this well-intentioned law in the counterinsurgency environment: "In El Salvador . . . congressional mandate requires that military policy and US-supported development programs remain separate. The law states explicitly that funds appropriated for development 'shall be available for economic programs only and may not be used for military purposes.' In organizational terms, this means that in an insurgency-wracked country where the military represents the closest thing to an effective national institution, the Agency for International Development (AID) is expected to carry on as if neither the war nor the military existed. All of the philosophizing about popular support and praise for civic action as a counterinsurgent tactic count for little when the Congress enjoins American officials fighting a small war from using the local military force to help implement US development programs."

⁴²⁸ Bacevich, "American Military Policy in Small Wars," 21.

The old oligarchy could no longer manipulate the instruments of power solely for their gain.⁴²⁹

Mobilization. The lack of a coordinated strategy slowed efforts to mobilize the institutional support, physical resources, and intelligence required to defeat the FMLN. A former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador observed, “We found an enormous incapacity in the government at all levels to deal with this, both conceptually and practically. The issue broke down constantly because government priorities tended to go in other directions. They tended to see a large share of the activities in a purely military sense on the one hand, or purely political on the other.”⁴³⁰

Societal institutions were slow to support government reform.⁴³¹ The wealthy families despised Duarte for initiating promised reforms. They were particularly angry when the coffee industry was nationalized. The climate between business and the Duarte government was so bad that many businessmen refused to reinvest their capital within El Salvador.⁴³² The Cristiani government’s efforts to liberalize the economy eventually improved private sector relations. However, that government’s efforts to return the coffee industry to private control angered lower class workers. The Catholic Church harbored a significant cadre of religious that sympathized with the FMLN for much of the

⁴²⁹ Corr and Prisk, “El Salvador: Transforming Society,” 243. The authors tell a story to illustrate the impact of the psychological change associated with the reforms: “Wealthy businessmen remark that in their stores one must exercise care in treating people who enter. A decade ago farmers from the ‘lower classes’ were sometimes asked to leave, the proprietors knowing they had no funds. Today that apparently poor farmer might very well pull out cash from a bank loan to purchase additional agricultural equipment and supplies he could not have afforded before.”

⁴³⁰ Thomas Pickering, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 224. Ambassador Pickering was the U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador from 1983 to 1985.

⁴³¹ Corr and Prisk, “El Salvador: Transforming Society to Win the Peace,” 245-246.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 245.

war. It took a decade of slow but steady progress to woo some elements of the clergy away from the FMLN.

Without a national strategy, there were no clearly defined roles for the instruments of national power. Without defined roles, it was difficult to determine resource priorities among the competing instruments of national power. The lack of centralized control continued to plague resource allocation decisions even after the national campaign plan was embraced in 1983. There was constant infighting over resources because there was little agreement on national priorities.⁴³³

The intelligence community had mixed success against the FMLN. The intelligence system did not readily support both civil and military efforts. The Salvadorans lacked the ability to gather, process, and disseminate information in a timely manner.⁴³⁴ Government agencies kept information from each other and often made no attempt to corroborate data.⁴³⁵ Although various efforts were made to improve the system, few had a significant impact on the day-to-day conduct of the war.⁴³⁶ The lack of effective intelligence greatly contributed to the ESAF's inability to deliver a knockout blow to the FMLN late in the war.

Security. Important efforts were made to improve the security of the people and national resources. The government guaranteed the security of national elections, raised a civil defense force, and developed a rapid reaction capability. In 1982 the vast majority of Salvadoran people turned out to vote in the first free national elections in nearly 50

⁴³³ Thomas Pickering, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 224.

⁴³⁴ Corr and Prisk, "El Salvador: Transforming Society," 235.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

years. These elections, which ultimately brought Alvaro Magana to power as a provisional President, ended the country's rule by civil-military juntas.⁴³⁷ In a large demonstration of force, the Salvadoran army guaranteed the safety of the people heading to and from the polls.

The FDR and FMLN refused to participate in the elections. The communists claimed the candidates were illegitimate contenders because none of them could guarantee the security of the people. To disrupt voter turnout, the FMLN issued a morbid threat: "Vote in the morning and die in the afternoon."⁴³⁸ The ESAF leadership knew the police would be unable to provide the level of security required to safeguard the elections. Only the army could provide security—but it could not do that and vote at the same time. The ESAF leadership decided security was more important. The army did not vote.⁴³⁹ There was a massive voter turnout on election day, and few incidents of violence were reported.

New civil defense forces and special rapid reaction units also improved security. By 1987 over 200 civil defense units were in existence. These units were comprised of fifty volunteers who were subdivided into five man teams. The teams helped authorities monitor activity in rural population centers. Although the teams were unable to prevent FMLN attacks, they directly engaged the public in the war effort. The ESAF also created

⁴³⁶ Ibid. The authors suggest the most determined effort occurred when the National Directorate of Intelligence was split off from the Ministry of Defense and placed under the control of the President. No great improvement was realized.

⁴³⁷ Jose Guillermo Garcia, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 184; and Nuila, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 184.

⁴³⁸ Nuila, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 184.

⁴³⁹ By opting out of the voting process, the ESAF also avoided creating internal divisions like those that haunted it after the 1979 coup. See Nuila, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 184.

specialized forces to respond to FMLN attacks. This capability became extremely important after the FMLN adopted small unit tactics. These units included rapid reaction battalions, anti-terrorist groups, and special reconnaissance units. After significant command and control issues were settled, these units greatly improved the ESAF's ability to reinforce local security forces or track and pursue rebel units.⁴⁴⁰

Coercion

Isolating the FMLN from the people. The ESAF's primary means of isolating the FMLN from the people was through the defensive deployment of troops. During the early years of the war, this did little to prevent the FMLN from operating in most areas of the country in formations consisting of several hundred personnel. After the FMLN adopted small unit tactics, the government responded by building a small civil defense capability to psychologically "isolate the guerrilla from the population."⁴⁴¹ Civil defense units also helped dissuade FMLN members from openly mingling with the people. Other measures included efforts to resettle peasants who lived in areas controlled by the FMLN.⁴⁴² These peasants were often forced to provide the FMLN with intelligence, supplies, farm labor, and other types of support. In 1985 approximately 500 peasants were removed from an FMLN stronghold in a small mountain village just 35 miles north

⁴⁴⁰ Rene Emilio Ponce, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 61; and John C. Ellerson, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 337. Colonel Ponce was the C-3 of the Salvadoran armed forces and Commander of the Army's Third Brigade. Colonel Ellerson was the U.S. Military Group Commander in El Salvador during 1986 and 1987.

⁴⁴¹ Ellerson, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 337.

⁴⁴² Leopoldo Antonio Hernandez, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 334-335. Colonel Hernandez was the Vice Chief of the Salvadoran General Staff during the latter part of the insurrection.

of the capitol. A similar operation occurred in January 1986 during Operation Phoenix. Approximately 600 peasants were relocated beyond the reach of rebel forces.⁴⁴³

Legally disrupting, denying, and defeating the FMLN. Strategy execution was beleaguered by recurring incidents of political violence. Throughout the war, right wing elements engaged in acts of terror and abuse. Off-duty military and police personnel formed “death squads” that murdered thousands of suspected FMLN supporters in cities and villages throughout the countryside. Favorite targets included FMLN military and political officials as well as informants. The death squads discredited the government by creating the impression that such activity was condoned at the highest levels, which was often not the case. Because the right-wing judiciary was unwilling to prosecute human rights offenders, right wing elements made the entire military appear as if it was operating above the law of the land. Unfortunately, the government had a difficult time removing these personnel from the military ranks. In many instances, the *tanda* system prevailed over justice.

The U.S. government attempted to terminate death squad activity by using its own ‘legal means.’ In December 1983, the United States resolved that it would no longer tolerate human rights abuses by government-controlled forces. President Reagan was required to certify the willingness of the Salvadoran government to limit human rights abuses before Congress could vote to continue providing assistance to the Salvadoran government. Vice President Bush traveled to El Salvador to warn the government that President Reagan would not re-certify the government unless the death squads were disbanded. The Salvadoran military was also instructed that any interference or

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

fraudulent activity during the 1984 national elections, or failure to abide by its results, would result in the withdrawal of all United States aid for El Salvador.⁴⁴⁴

Publicly discrediting the FMLN leadership. The single most important effort that discredited the FMLN leadership was the series of reforms instituted by President Duarte. The reforms did not occur overnight—they were long-term ventures that were attacked from the political left and right. The key point is the reforms were promised and initiated. Perhaps no other policy had more of a debilitating effect on the FMLN. The agrarian, banking, and trade reforms undercut the Marxist platform. Simply put, the rebels could no longer claim they were fighting against an oligarchy or military dictatorship that was unwilling to provide for a more equal distribution of national resources.

Psychological operations also helped the government discredit the communist leadership. One of the greatest efforts to do so employed the services of Miguel Castellanos, who was a high ranking rebel commander from 1973 to 1985. After his surrender, the government ran a psychological operation that glorified Castellanos's decision to abandon the revolutionaries. President Duarte became personally involved in an effort to reap the maximum propaganda value out of the Castellanos surrender. "What we are trying to do is use Miguel Castellanos . . . to discredit the guerrilla organizations internally."⁴⁴⁵ Similar operations to discredit rebel leaders lasted throughout the war. The government disseminated its messages to the FMLN via radio broadcast, public posters, and leaflet delivery.

⁴⁴⁴ Bacevich, "American Military Policy in Small Wars," 45.

⁴⁴⁵ Duarte, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 322.

Arresting and prosecuting those who violate the law. Throughout the insurrection, the government's inability to arrest and prosecute those suspected of human rights abuses greatly affected domestic and international legitimacy. Popular support for the government suffered because the people had no means of legal redress against perpetrators of political violence. The right-wing judiciary refused to prosecute death squad members for much of the war. The FMLN gained a windfall of propaganda value from the government's inability to make the courts protect the people. Right wing protection of suspected human rights abusers jeopardized the support of the U.S. Congress, which came very close to withdrawing economic and military aid on a number of occasions throughout the 1980s. A faint light of hope appeared late in the war when ESAF Colonel Guillermo Alfredo Benavides and an army lieutenant were prosecuted and sentenced for their role in the November 1989 murder of six Jesuit priests.⁴⁴⁶

Combat operations. The ESAF's military strategy can be analyzed in two phases. The defensive phase lasted from the implementation of the national military strategy until 1983. During the defensive phase, ESAF operations were governed by a military strategy that was not part of an integrated national counterrevolutionary strategy—none existed until 1983. The combined offensive phase lasted from 1983 until the end of the war. During this phase the ESAF was directed to support the other instruments of power in addition to combating the FMLN. A lack of resources and the desire to prioritize 'killing the FMLN' above all else greatly restricted the effectiveness of this phase.

During the *defensive phase*, the ESAF was ill prepared to execute combat operations due to internal divisions and the lack of resources. By the winter of 1980, the ESAF was

⁴⁴⁶ Corr and Prisk, "Transforming Society to Win the Peace," 237.

internally divided and largely without effective external support. Officer corps loyalties were split between those who favored radical reform, moderate reform, or the status quo. The United States, fuming over the death squad murders of four American nuns and two American labor leaders, suspended its modest military and economic assistance in December 1980 and early January 1981. The FMLN viewed the ESAF's internal division and lack of external support as indicators that the moment was ripe for revolution.⁴⁴⁷

The FMLN's "final offensive" was launched on January 10, 1981. Though the ESAF quelled the offensive within a matter of days, the Salvadoran military was stretched to the breaking point. The ESAF lacked the vehicles, air transportation, communications, intelligence, and leadership to conduct sustained operations against the rebels. After the offensive was over, the Salvadorans were forced to piece together hybrid units to accomplish key tasks. Many personnel did not know each other; tactical employment usually resulted in defeats. Early tactics consisted of battalion sweeps through FMLN controlled territory. The ESAF quickly found itself out-manuevered by a disciplined rebel army. The ESAF soon learned it was unable to protect urban areas and project power into the interior strongholds of the FMLN at the same time. The result was the ESAF was forced to remain on the defensive, which ceded the initiative to the FMLN.

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⁴⁴⁷ Ponce, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 61; and Alvaro Magana, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 57. Dr. Magana was the provisional President of the Republic of El Salvador from 1982-1984.

⁴⁴⁸ Ponce, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 61; and Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, *A Strategic View of Insurgencies: Insights from El Salvador*, McNair Papers, no. 8, (Washington, D.C.: The Institute for National Strategic Studies, 1990), 16.

It was at this point that Jose Napoleon Duarte, as a member of the civil-military junta, requested United States assistance to develop a military strategy. In short order, a team led by United States Army Brigadier General Fred Woerner arrived in El Salvador. According to General Woerner, this effort was originally intended to produce a comprehensive national strategy for El Salvador. However, “On consideration of the scope, the effort was reduced to a national military strategy. The intent was that there would be a national strategy developed later, but I would agree with the argument that the process is the reverse of how it should be done.”⁴⁴⁹ General Woerner also helped the Salvadorans identify force structure requirements. To develop an assessment for the United States government, Woerner followed a classic approach, identifying United States and Salvadoran interests, the threat, and how the threat impacted the interests. His team considered policy, action programs, and resource commitments.⁴⁵⁰

In the end, the so-called “Woerner Report” developed a national military strategy for El Salvador, an overall military assessment for the United States, and a security assistance program suggesting how the United States could assist the Salvadoran military strategy.⁴⁵¹ In essence, the military strategy called for the ESAF to protect the Salvadoran people and resources for several years from a defensive crouch. Offensive operations could begin only after the ESAF increased the number of personnel, outfitted units with modern American equipment, and trained its personnel in counterinsurgency operations. The report’s candid description of ESAF capabilities shocked the Reagan

⁴⁴⁹ Woerner, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 114-116.

⁴⁵⁰ This paragraph is based on the following citations from *El Salvador at War*: Duarte, 112; Wallace H. Nutting, 113; and Woerner, 114-116.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*; and Charles B. Stone IV, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 116. Colonel Stone was a member of the team that wrote the “Woerner Report.”

administration, as did the price tag (\$300 million) and the amount of time required to win (estimated at 5 years). The severity of the situation began to sink in. For Duarte, the report suggested the ESAF could not win without assistance and advice from the United States.

By early 1983 the FMLN still controlled large amounts of territory, but the ESAF was steadily improving its capabilities. New commanders, improved unit training, and increased cooperation between the services improved ESAF morale.⁴⁵² U.S. support was slowly transforming the ESAF into a force capable of fighting the rebels in their own element.⁴⁵³ However, the ESAF leadership still did not understand that the primary objective was to win popular support and not to destroy the FMLN. Senior commanders placed killing rebels ahead of winning over the people. The number of incidents related to collateral damage was mounting. Few ESAF leaders understood the importance of popular support. Senior U.S. advisors knew what the ESAF needed most was a national strategy to guide military operations.⁴⁵⁴ Senior U.S. officials broached the idea to the Salvadoran political leadership and gained their support.

A discussion of national campaign plan options was held on 2 February 1983 at the ESAF high command. President Magana, Ambassador Hinton, General Woerner, General Garcia (Minister of Defense), United States country team and military group personnel, and Salvadoran military leaders were in attendance. The discussion picked up where the Woerner Report left off. The talks ended with a presidential directive for civil

⁴⁵² Waghelstein, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 223.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

and military authorities to formulate and execute a plan to improve security and economic conditions in the departments of San Vicente and Usulután.⁴⁵⁵

The *combined offensive phase* began with the birth of the national campaign plan. Perhaps the plan can best be described as a combination of persuasive and coercive operations to win over the people and neutralize the FMLN. The plan called for the ESAF to assume a persuasive role. After establishing a security screen, security forces were to participate in civic action and developmental projects.⁴⁵⁶ There were several associated tasks. Once initial security tasks were completed, civil and military experts would enter a town or village to restore public services, reinvigorate the local economy, and train a local defense force. The ESAF would move on to another FMLN-controlled area and re-accomplish the same. Contact would be maintained with security forces to provide for a rapid response should the FMLN return. Although the plan achieved excellent results in San Vicente, a lack of resources prevented similar operations to occur in Usulután. The national plan was at a standstill, and the ESAF returned to its preferred mission of killing rebels.⁴⁵⁷

The turning point in the war came when Jose Napoleon Duarte was elected president. The 1984 elections were the cleanest in Salvadoran history. The people once again defied FMLN threats and flocked to the polls, electing Duarte on a popular platform of reform. Duarte pledged his government would strengthen efforts to execute the national campaign plan. U.S. advisors were cautiously optimistic that the government would conduct developmental operations under a national version of the plan called *Unidos*

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 223-224.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 224.

⁴⁵⁷ Nuila, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 225.

Para Reconstruir (United to Reconstruct). However, economic austerity measures, the 1986 earthquake, the kidnapping of Duarte's daughter, and the reluctance of businessmen to support the venture all prevented the plan from being executed on a national basis during Duarte's presidency.⁴⁵⁸

The combination of American advice and assistance slowly began to turn the tide of war against the rebels. By 1984, the FMLN abandoned conventional operations after ESAF operations reduced its strength to approximately 7,000 personnel.⁴⁵⁹ Fortunately for the government, the national campaign plan was also getting underway. While the FMLN was attempting to consolidate control of rural areas, the ESAF was pushing to reclaim FMLN-controlled territory. As the FMLN tried to indoctrinate the populace with Marxist ideology, civic action programs restored popular faith in the government by reestablishing public services. While the FMLN experienced a recruiting drought, the Salvadoran armed forces were growing. By 1987 ESAF numbers reached 56,000 personnel, and fielded 41 maneuver battalions, 63 fixed wing aircraft, 72 helicopters, and 33 surface naval units.⁴⁶⁰

With such numbers and firepower, the ESAF was generally unbeatable on the battlefield from 1984 until the end of the war.⁴⁶¹

However, ESAF members were still prone to conducting operations in a manner that was counterproductive to the government's cause. Two grave errors made during the

⁴⁵⁸ John R. Galvin, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 227-228. General Galvin was the Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command from 1985 to 1987.

⁴⁵⁹ Bacevich, "American Military Policy in Small Wars," 7.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁶¹ Interviews with General Adolfo O. Blandon, former chief of staff of the Salvadoran Armed Forces, in San Salvador, July 1987, September 1987, and October 1989, cited in Manwaring and Prisk, "A Strategic View of Insurgencies," 16.

FMLN's November offensive serve as examples. On November 16, elements of the elite, American-trained Atlacatl Battalion murdered six Jesuit priests and their two servants on the grounds of the Simeon Canas Central American University in San Salvador.⁴⁶² The Jesuits were vocal opponents of widespread poverty and the death squad activity that claimed their lives. The Salvadoran air force was publicly criticized for indiscriminately bombing working class neighborhoods while supporting the government counterattack.⁴⁶³ These and other events indicated that elements within the armed forces still executed missions as they saw fit, regardless of the impact on domestic and international support.

For the remainder of the war, the ESAF primarily pursued objectives through the conduct of combat operations. What the ESAF failed to internalize was the FMLN had changed its strategy. The rebels realized they could not win against superior firepower and numbers, so they sought to win popular support. The ESAF had a national strategy to counter the FMLN's plan, but failed to execute it. ESAF battalions continued to "expend their energy on 'sweep' and 'search and destroy' missions supported by fixed-wing aircraft, attack helicopters, artillery, and anti-tank weapons."⁴⁶⁴ These operations were mostly for naught because the "force established between 1981 and 1986 had become largely irrelevant to the present war of legitimacy, subversion, and external support."⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶² Baloyera-Herp, "The Persistent Conflict in El Salvador," 124.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 121.

⁴⁶⁴ Manwaring and Prisk, "A Strategic View of Insurgencies," 16.

⁴⁶⁵ Interviews with Colonel Lyman C. Duryea, former U.S. Defense attache in El Salvador, at Carlisle barracks, PA, March 1986 and January 1989, cited in Manwaring and Prisk, "A Strategic View of Insurgencies," 17.

Airpower and Execution of the Counterrevolutionary Strategy

The Salvadoran air force, properly referred to as the Fuerza Area Salvadorense (FAS), owned all fixed and rotary wing aircraft, air defense assets, an airborne infantry battalion, and its own Ilopango air base located at San Salvador.⁴⁶⁶ U.S. sponsorship enabled the FAS to quickly expand its force structure. When the war began, the FAS owned 20 aircraft that were acquired from Israel, France, Brazil, and the United States. By the late 1980's, the FAS operated 63 fixed wing aircraft of 13 different types that were manufactured by three different countries. It also possessed 72 helicopters of six different types, which were manufactured by two countries. By the mid 1980s, the primary aircraft in the FAS fleet were of the attack and airlift variety. The primary rotary wing attack assets were the Hughes 500 and Bell UH-1H helicopter gunships. Fixed wing attack aircraft included the Cessna A-37B Dragonfly and the Douglas AC-47 gunship. Airlift aircraft included the Lockheed C-123 Provider, the Douglas C-47 Skytrain, and the Bell UH-1H Huey. A special counterinsurgency squadron was formed around the AC-47 and O-2A aircraft.⁴⁶⁷

Assistance from the United States helped the FAS build the largest air force in Central America. However, the FAS's operational execution was clearly that of a small air force. Missions were usually undertaken with a single objective: kill the FMLN. The FAS was primarily employed as a coercive instrument to bomb and strafe suspected FMLN positions. Airpower also made a minor contribution toward the achievement of persuasive tasks. Although American advisors refrained from combat missions, U.S.

⁴⁶⁶ Paragraph based on Bacevich, "American Military Policy in Small Wars," 58; and *El Salvador: A Country Study*, 216.

airpower provided direct support through intelligence sharing and airlift activities. Perhaps a former commander of the U.S. Military Group in El Salvador made the best assessment of the FAS contribution to ESAF activities. “They got an Air Force that is an insurance policy. The ESAF can’t win with it, but they can’t lose with it either.”⁴⁶⁸

Persuasion

The FAS made only minor contributions toward mobilization and security.

Mobilization. Critics of the FAS question the amount of fiscal resources required to maintain the air arm. “In terms of dollars, FAS has absorbed an enormous part of the US effort in El Salvador. Has the air force’s contribution to the war effort justified that investment . . . The answer is yes—and no—depending on the phase of the conflict under consideration.”⁴⁶⁹ During the early years of the war, the ESAF was quite effective in engaging and destroying the FMLN when it operated in large units. However, when the FMLN adopted small unit tactics, the FAS’s striking power became much less relevant to the overall war effort. However, “This fact has not discouraged the buoyant aviators of Ilopango from petitioning the US for more capable and vastly more sophisticated F-5 fighters and AH-1S Cobra attack helicopters.”⁴⁷⁰ As will be seen, the FAS should have been petitioning the U.S. for more help training and maintaining the aircraft it owned instead of asking for new capabilities.

Though perhaps expensive to maintain, airpower proved to be a force multiplier when used in an appropriate manner. One such usage was the support of small long-

⁴⁶⁷ *Jane’s Sentinel: Central America and the Caribbean.* (Alexandria, VA: Jane’s Information Group, 1997), 9.12.5.

⁴⁶⁸ Ellerson, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 306.

⁴⁶⁹ Bacevich, “American Military Policy in Small Wars,” 59.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

range reconnaissance patrol (LRRPS) units. These units were established early in the war to provide the Salvadoran government the means to strike deep inside of FMLN-controlled territory. The LRRPs units were normally comprised of six lightly equipped, lightly armed personnel whose mission was to track and harass the FMLN. Because LRRPs units operated far from friendly support, they frequently depended upon airpower to “really make it uncomfortable for them [the FMLN]” when engagement was desirable or unavoidable.⁴⁷¹

Non-lethal applications of airpower were important to mobilization efforts. One such effort helped the government to increase its legitimacy by enabling and safeguarding the massive voter turnout in the 1984 national elections. Airlift assets were employed to support the government’s guarantee of honest and fair elections by transporting voting units, government officials, and election monitors throughout the countryside.⁴⁷² Transport aircraft also lifted ESAF units that helped provide security in key population centers. Though it did so in a quiet manner, airpower helped people to cast their ballots—and do so in a secure environment.

Perhaps the most effective use of helicopters was in support of medevac operations. The morale of the ground forces was significantly improved by the FAS’s capability to transport wounded soldiers to rear area facilities. However, helicopters like the UH-1H aircraft were not always available for these missions due to maintenance problems and over-tasking.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ Waghelstein, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 279.

⁴⁷² Interview with Jerome Klingaman, 16 Mar 98, Hurlburt Field, FL.

⁴⁷³ James S. Corum, “The Air War in El Salvador.” Unpublished paper. (School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 1997), 22.

The government also depended upon airpower to improve its reconnaissance and intelligence capability. The FAS flew O-2A aircraft to perform visual reconnaissance of known FMLN operational areas. The O-2s primary effect was to disperse FMLN troop concentrations, and generally proved inadequate for developing an intelligence picture of the battlefield. U.S. airpower substituted for this lack of capability by flying a variety of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions. U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army aircraft monitored suspected supply routes between Nicaragua and El Salvador. Flying out of Howard Air Base in Panama, AC-130H Spectre aircraft used sophisticated infrared and visual sensors to monitor FMLN lines of communication during the hours of darkness. Specially modified U.S. Army OV-10 Mohawk aircraft, flying out of Palmerola Air Base in Honduras, supported ESAF efforts by conducting electronic reconnaissance activities within El Salvador and along its border with Nicaragua. Yet “despite the employment of various sophisticated and costly ‘platforms’ designed to detect possible means and routes of entry into El Salvador, the effort never did establish the credibility of the ‘smoking gun’ argument.”⁴⁷⁴

U.S. airlift aircraft also made important contributions to mobilization efforts. Perhaps the best example occurred in the aftermath of the FMLN attack on Ilopango air base in 1982, which destroyed nine aircraft and damaged at least five more. Within one week, the U.S. Air Force helped transport “twelve more UH-1Hs, eight A-37B light attack aircraft, four O-2s” and maintenance supplies to make good the losses.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴ Manwaring and Prisk, “A Strategic View of Insurgencies,” 10.

⁴⁷⁵ Quantities of aircraft are from Victor Flinham, *Air Wars and Aircraft: A Detailed Record of Air Combat, 1945 to the Present* (New York: Facts on File, 1990), 365.

Security. Airpower helped the government increase the people's sense of security by providing transportation for rapid reaction forces. Helicopter lift assets enabled ESAF rapid reaction forces to be transported anywhere in the country. At the beginning of the war, the FAS could only transport 20 people in helicopters. By 1987, the FAS could transport 500 people simultaneously when the maintenance status permitted.⁴⁷⁶

The helicopters were used effectively and in ways that were counterproductive to the war effort. An example of productive use occurred on 29 June 1983. UH-1H helicopters transported elements of the rapid reaction Atlacatl Battalion to recover the Caroon Grande dam, which had been seized by the rebels the day prior.⁴⁷⁷ Negative effects were normally generated when crewmembers were unable to distinguish between rebels and civilians. In August 1984, a heli-borne assault "opened fire on hundreds of unarmed peasants and a small number of armed rebels in Chalatenango province."⁴⁷⁸

Coercion

Isolating the FMLN from the people. Strike and reconnaissance aircraft missions supported government efforts to drive the FMLN away from rural population centers. Such activity was especially apparent early in the war when the FMLN concentrated its forces in sizable units among sympathetic elements of the population. It is difficult to ascertain if the objective was to drive the FMLN away from the people, or to encourage the people to migrate away from areas under FMLN control. The U.S. role in formulating the plan is also unclear depending upon the ultimate objective. Congressional probes reported that, "U.S. officials categorically deny that U.S. personnel

⁴⁷⁶ Eugenio Vides Casanova, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 283.

⁴⁷⁷ Flintham, *Air Wars and Aircraft*, 366.

have in any way advised or encouraged the Salvadoran Air Force to bomb rebel zones to disrupt life there and drive out the civilians.”⁴⁷⁹ Although the operations were successful against large rebel units early in the way, they also created significant controversy over the supposed practice of indiscriminate bombing.

The FAS conducted both independent strikes and combined operations to isolate the FMLN from the people. Many independent strikes were conducted against FMLN-controlled territory during the first few years of the war. Government ground forces were often not strong enough to penetrate FMLN strongholds, and airpower was sometimes the only means by which the ESAF could drive the rebels away from government territory. The FMLN initially endured such strikes with optimism. However, these operations began to extract an increasing toll from rebel base areas.⁴⁸⁰ The constant pressure from the air forced the FMLN to disperse into increasingly smaller units, which hindered their ability to mass forces.

These FAS missions regularly caused collateral damage that proved detrimental to the government’s cause. Although the FAS certainly killed FMLN personnel, the bombings also killed peasants and destroyed private property. Loose rules of engagement encouraged such an outcome. In 1985, a government spokesman in San Salvador admitted that rules of engagement in sparsely populated areas such as eastern Chalatenango “not exact.”⁴⁸¹ Ultimately, President Duarte responded to increased media and international pressure to stop the indiscriminate bombing by tightening the rules of

⁴⁷⁸ Jim Leach, George Miller, and Mark O. Hatfield, “The Escalation of the Air War: A Congressional View,” *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War*, 233.

⁴⁷⁹ Leach, “The Escalation of the Air War: A Congressional View,” 233.

⁴⁸⁰ Robert J. McCartney, “Rebels Optimistic Despite Army Attacks,” *Washington Post*, 7 November 1985.

engagement. However, the damage had already been done. The bombings directly contributed to the swell of some 300,000 refugees that moved to government controlled areas by May 1984.⁴⁸²

Legally disrupting, denying, and defeating the FMLN. Airpower supported government psychological operations designed to undermine FMLN confidence and boost popular support of the government war effort. Transport aircraft dropped millions of leaflets to lower the FMLN's morale and encourage popular support. Helicopters lifted government officials to remote areas to inspect the progress of civil affairs projects. Though increasingly effective at encouraging surrenders toward the end of the war, leaflets did not have much of an impact on the rural peasants. The FAS was not responsible for the leaflet content. However, the FAS could not support other activities when it was dedicated to supporting ill-conceived applications of non-lethal force.

Combat operations. Both independent and ground support missions were flown during the insurrection. Although most missions were in direct support of ground operations, a number of independent FAS operations were flown in the beginning of the war when the FMLN was organized in units of 300 to 600 personnel. The FAS's primary mission during this period was to attack FMLN strongholds in northern and eastern El Salvador. The FAS sometimes targeted villages and towns that were 'suspected' of supporting the FMLN.⁴⁸³ Generally speaking, the only lasting effect from these air strikes was a loss of popular support.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Leach, "The Escalation of the Air War: A Congressional View," 233.

⁴⁸³ Daniel Segel and Joy Hackel, "El Salvador: Counterinsurgency Revisited," in *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties*, eds. Michael T. Klare and Peter Kornbluh (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 118.

Airpower attempted to support ESAF ground operations with responsive, lethal firepower. In fact, the ESAF became quite dependent upon the FAS due to the responsiveness and lethality of its aerial firepower. There were a number of reasons for this development. Although the ESAF had a well-trained artillery arm, it lacked the required number of artillery pieces to support ground forces throughout the country. Additionally, El Salvador's mountainous terrain made it very difficult to transport artillery via the country's circumspect road network. Because El Salvador was a small country, airpower could quickly range from one end of the country to the other in minimum time. The FAS learned to station its helicopter gunship assets near suspected concentrations of FMLN forces. This enabled the FAS to respond to any trouble in north and east El Salvador within 15 minutes.⁴⁸⁴

Airpower also increased the mobility and responsiveness of ground forces. However, parochial interests prevented this capability from making an even greater contribution. The FAS's fleet of UH-1H helicopters was primarily responsible for the transporting and resupplying ESAF's ground forces. These helicopters should have greatly increased the ESAF's mobility and responsiveness—yet command and control arrangements prevented them from being utilized to their full potential. The FAS commander exercised operational control of the nation's only airborne battalion, which gave the FAS a rapid reaction capability of its own. The helicopter fleet was often held in reserve to support transportation of airborne units should the need arise. Other times the FAS commander instructed his units to deny support to the army in the interest of preserving flying hours or conserving fuel for more important operations. This infuriated

⁴⁸⁴ Mark Hamilton, *El Salvador Oral History Project Interview Transcript*, U.S. Southern

ground commanders, who greatly preferred flying over FMLN-controlled territory than walking through it. Although they were fairly successful at convincing the FAS to support insertion operations, the air force helicopters had a tendency not to participate in resupply operations.⁴⁸⁵

U.S. advisors played an important role in the execution of Salvadoran air operations. The advisors focused on trying to improve maintenance, training, and tactics. FAS combat operations were greatly impaired by the lack of effective maintenance and training. Improper maintenance procedures and improperly trained pilots were responsible for a poor safety record. Although U.S. military assistance built the FAS an excellent maintenance facility at Ilopango, most Salvadorans did not possess the requisite skills to maintain the Salvadoran air fleet. To keep pace with the rapid force structure growth, the FAS was forced to rely upon conscript laborers who were generally overwhelmed by the tasks associated with aviation maintenance. Required maintenance inspections were often incorrectly performed or not accomplished at all.⁴⁸⁶

Pilot proficiency training was another huge problem for the ESAF. By the end of 1987, there were only 70 active pilots for 135 aircraft. Because of the many different makes of aircraft in the fleet, each pilot attempted to remain proficient in several different aircraft. Due to a shortage of instructors, this proved to be a nearly impossible task. The many different makes of aircraft were also responsible for a high rate of flight mishaps.⁴⁸⁷

Beginning in 1990, FAS combat operations were impacted by the FMLN's acquisition of shoulder fired, infrared surface-to-air missiles. U.S. support proved

Command, 22 April 1992, 16.

⁴⁸⁵ Lyman C. Duryea, cited in *El Salvador at War*, 343.

⁴⁸⁶ Bacevich, "American Military Policy in Small Wars," 58.

invaluable to restoring the confidence of FAS pilots. Soviet-made SA-7 missiles first entered the country in 1989; the SA-14 systems followed in 1990. The FMLN employed these missiles to shoot down an A-37 aircraft in November 1990 and an AC-47 gunship the following month. These shootdowns greatly undermined the confidence of the FAS. The U.S. Southern Command sent a special tactics team to brief the Salvadorans on counter-threat maneuvers and tactics. The FAS paid serious attention to the team, and immediately employed the proscribed tactics. When Salvadoran pilots successfully defeated the next two missiles fired at them, they became much more responsive to advice posed by U.S. advisors.⁴⁸⁸

The Outcome of the War

The FMLN was unable to sustain its military arm due to factors both within and beyond its control. Domestically, the FMLN's inability to persuade the people made a poorly executed national campaign plan appear to be the better alternative in the eyes of the people. Changes in the international environment left the FMLN without an effective sponsor state. By the end of 1991, the FMLN was unable to achieve military or political victory.

The Salvadoran government's commitment to improving the lives of its people bolstered government legitimacy and neutralized the FMLN. The agrarian, banking, and trade reforms instituted by the Duarte government sent a message that the government was concerned about its people—even if it lacked the resources to implement the reforms in an expeditious manner. By continuing efforts to redress grievances, the government

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ Hamilton, *El Salvador Oral History Project*, 28.

extinguished the FMLN's revolutionary appeal to the war-weary population. ESAF's growing capability to protect the population and key resources reduced the number of targets accessible to the FMLN. Finally, the Salvadoran judicial system began to investigate human rights offenders, which offered the promise of legal protection and compensation.

The rapidly changing international environment effectively isolated the FMLN from its sponsor states. The widespread collapse of communist regimes between 1989 and 1992 ended any hope for continued support from socialist states. A 1990 visit to El Salvador by the Soviet Deputy Chief of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, Latin America Department, further dashed FMLN prospects. The Deputy Chief made it clear that Moscow wanted the war to end through peaceful negotiations.⁴⁸⁹ The February 1990 Nicaraguan elections ended Sandinista rule and dealt the FMLN a harsh psychological blow. After the final collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba was unable to sustain the rebels. The course of history, and the clock, was against the FMLN.

Cut off from meaningful indigenous and external support, the FMLN had an important decision to make. The rebels could choose to keep small military units in the field and continue its campaign of harassment for an indefinite period of time. However, revolutionary fervor was likely to wane without new means of supply, ideological support, or fomenting grievances. The rebels could also elect to lay down its arms in exchange for a negotiated settlement. The terms of such an agreement were quite likely to favor the government's strong political and military position. However, the FMLN

⁴⁸⁹ Baloyra-Herp, "The Persistent Conflict in El Salvador," 124.

could emerge from the conflict with some legitimacy intact if it successfully negotiated for recognition as a lawful political party.

On January 2, 1992, the war ended with a negotiated settlement. The FMLN agreed to disarmament and recognition as a lawful political party in exchange for amnesty and a promise that former rebels were welcome to join the new national police force. The Salvadoran government agreed to demobilize half of its effective strength, close the state's central intelligence office, disband internal security forces, and retire over 100 senior officers. The historical debate continues as to which side won the war. Admittedly, negotiated settlements rarely produce a clear victor. Yet in the final analysis, the FMLN failed to overthrow the government and install a Marxist regime. The Salvadoran government maintained control over the governmental apparatus, silenced armed opposition from the left and right, bolstered its legitimacy, and arguably achieved a better state of peace. However, they failed to make the FMLN irrelevant to the political process.

Some Historical Insights

Analysis of the insurrection in El Salvador provided insights to the four questions driving this study. *What is the role of the military instrument in counterrevolutionary warfare?* The ESAF assumed a coercive role in the years prior to the development of a national strategy. Even after it was assigned persuasive activities, the ESAF preferred and did pursue combat operations above all other tasks. The military was slow to recognize that the FMLN made a fundamental change to its strategy, and incorrectly emphasized the coercive role after the FMLN adopted insurgent tactics. The military

instrument must continue to reassess the environment and its role to conduct effective operations against the revolutionary threat.

What is the role of airpower in counterrevolutionary war? The FAS was primarily employed as a coercive instrument and conducted both independent and ground support combat operations. In its persuasive role, the FAS demonstrated its ability to support mobilization and security tasks. Airmen must overcome parochial interests to ensure they fully embrace their assigned role.

Can airpower achieve strategic effects in counterrevolutionary warfare? This case argues that airpower can create both positive and negative strategic effects. The FAS conducted independent bombing operations early in the war that helped to disperse the FMLN into small units. These same operations were responsible for creating negative effects. The government suffered a loss of legitimacy due to the number of civilians that were killed or driven from their homes by the bombings.

Can airpower make major contributions toward the victory of counterrevolutionary forces? This case indicates airpower can make major contributions through aerial firepower when revolutionary forces are employed in large units. When they are not, airpower seems best employed in persuasive operations. This case also demonstrates how difficult effective air operations can be against a dedicated revolutionary actor. The FMLN remained on the field until the end of the insurrection despite the FAS's huge firepower advantage. The rebels also introduced surface to air missile systems that threatened the FAS's command of the air. Finally, airpower cannot make major contributions when platforms are grounded for maintenance difficulties or improperly employed due to a lack of trained crewmembers.

The close of this case study marks the end of historical analysis. The following chapter will fuse the findings from each case study and offer some considerations for the development of strategy and the employment of airpower in counterrevolutionary war.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Considerations

This thesis called for strategists to study the relationships between counterrevolutionary warfare, the military instrument, and airpower. Four questions guided the study of those relationships. Historical analysis of three case studies provided experienced-based insight into this study's questions. This chapter offers some conclusions as a way of answering this study's questions and proposes some considerations for the development of strategy and the employment of airpower in counterrevolutionary warfare.

Some Conclusions

The three historical cases offered complementary findings on counterrevolutionary warfare, the military instrument, and airpower.

What is the role of the military instrument in counterrevolutionary warfare?

The evidence indicates the military instrument attempts to assume persuasive and coercive roles as assigned by the national counterrevolutionary strategy. However, such assignment is without meaning unless the government ensures the military is capable of executing its role. Inadequate equipment, training, and organization can prevent the military from developing a coherent subordinate strategy. As the cases indicate, execution of an incoherent military strategy can jeopardize the government's war effort.

The Greek government's analysis of the revolutionary environment in 1946 was on the mark. The government correctly discerned that the Democratic Army of Greece (DAS) posed a partisan threat and understood the partisans were in a guerrilla warfare phase of operations. The government's desired-end state was to maintain the political, economic, and territorial integrity of Greece. The condition required to achieve this end-state was neutralization of the DAS threat. The government assigned the fledgling Greek Army (GNA) a coercive role to force the DAS into submission, which it primarily pursued through combat operations.

In reality, the GNA lacked the equipment, training, and organization required to conduct successful combat operations against the DAS. Guerrilla tactics enabled the DAS to use superior mobility and cross-border sanctuaries to counter the GNA's numerical and firepower advantages. The GNA proved unable to encircle and defeat the DAS even after American advisors and military assistance greatly improved its capability to conduct conventional warfare. The GNA's failure to neutralize the DAS on Grammos and Vitsi Mountains nearly caused the government to collapse in the summer of 1948. Fortunately for the GNA, an ill-conceived change in political objectives forced the DAS to enter a conventional warfare phase. The DAS was coerced into submission only after suffering extreme losses during fixed battles on Grammos and Vitsi Mountains in the summer of 1949. The closing of the Yugoslav border prevented the reconstitution of the partisan army. Perhaps history would have recorded a different outcome if the DAS had continued to employ guerrilla tactics and had received unbridled support from Yugoslavia.

When the Malayan Emergency was declared in 1948, the government correctly analyzed the revolutionary environment and understood that the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) posed an insurgent threat. The government also understood that the MRLA entered a guerrilla warfare phase shortly after the onset of hostilities. The government's desired end-state for Malaya was independence. Neutralization of the MRLA was a condition required for independence. From the onset of the Emergency, Malaya's national counterrevolutionary strategy clearly consisted of both persuasive and coercive components. The Federation government employed a strategy designed to win the people of Malaya and defeat the MRLA. The objective of winning the Malayan people was given priority over the fighting the MRLA.

Commonwealth military forces were initially assigned a coercive role while civil forces were directed to accomplish persuasive tasks. The pursuit of government aims proved difficult. Without unity of effort, the government found it lacked the intelligence and mobility to simultaneously improve security and conduct combat operations. Secondly, the Commonwealth's conventional forces proved increasingly unable to engage the MRLA on favorable terms. After some initial successes against large MRLA units, the insurgents adopted small unit tactics to avoid pitched battles. Incidents of subversion and armed attack increased. In 1951 the Briggs plan called for a unified civil and military strategy to win the people and defeat the MRLA. Key organizational changes were made in command and control and the intelligence community. The military was also directed to assume a persuasive role to accomplish development, mobilization, and security tasks. The combined civil and military efforts to deny food to the insurgents proved critical to the outcome of the war. Although combat operations

continued until the end of the Emergency, the balance of military efforts was in support of persuasive operations. The MRLA became increasingly isolated due to its mistreatment of the population and the lack of an external sponsor. By the time Malaya achieved independence in 1957, the communist insurgents were no longer relevant to the political process. The Emergency officially ended in 1960. Perhaps history would have recorded an earlier end to hostilities if the government had assigned the military a persuasive role at the beginning of the war.

The Salvadoran government had a difficult time analyzing the revolutionary environment. The government lacked the civil and military infrastructure to properly identify the FMLN as a hybrid of insurgent and partisan nature. The government failed to officially assign the Armed Forces of El Salvador (ESAF) a role in the war until U.S. assistance helped create a military strategy. In the interim, the ESAF assumed a coercive role and attempted offensive sweep operations against the FMLN. After suffering some heavy losses, the FMLN adopted guerrilla tactics and used superior mobility to counter the ESAF's firepower advantage.

In 1983 the government finally created a national counterrevolutionary strategy after American advisors sold the government on the benefits of a unified effort. Although directed to assume both persuasive and coercive roles, the ESAF's fixation on 'killing the FMLN' and a lack of government resources largely prevented the accomplishment of persuasive tasks. The protection of the people during the 1984 national elections was the highlight of ESAF persuasive operations during the war. Meanwhile, the FMLN's use of terror destroyed any hope of widespread popular support. The ESAF's large firepower and numerical advantage proved too much for the FMLN to overcome after the collapse

of the international communist movement. Without socialist sponsors or indigenous support, the FMLN sued for peace. A negotiated settlement ended the war in 1992 before the ESAF could make the FMLN irrelevant to the political process. Perhaps history would have recorded a different outcome if the FMLN had not employed terror tactics and continued to receive unbridled support from the international communist movement.

What is the role of airpower in counterrevolutionary warfare?

The evidence indicates that airpower's versatility and flexibility often enabled it to pursue persuasive and coercive tasks at the same time. During the Greek Civil War, the RHAF required infrastructure improvements to support the conduct of combat operations. Entire airfields were refurbished to permit the conduct of inclement weather operations. Maintenance facilities were greatly expanded at Greek factories. When viewed from a larger perspective, these activities supported the persuasive task of mobilization as much as coercive combat operations.

RAF leaders skillfully utilized airpower to create bonus effects during the Malayan Emergency. Helicopter and medium transport missions were flown to resupply security force patrols operating in known MRLA locations. Airdrops of food, clothes, weapons and ammunition enabled the patrols to remain on station for extended periods of time. Helicopter evacuation missions greatly decreased the time interval between sustaining a wound and receiving treatment. By directly increasing capability, airlift helped achieve persuasive tasks associated with mobilization and coercive tasks involving combat operations.

During the FMLN insurrection, Salvadoran intelligence capabilities were unable to generate a complete picture of the revolutionary battlefield. U.S. Air Force aircraft based

in Panama and Honduras were employed to gather, process, and disseminate intelligence information. These assets were especially concerned with determining the location of FMLN units and monitoring El Salvador's borders with Nicaragua. Overhead satellites also assisted this endeavor. American airpower played a persuasive role by supporting the intelligence tasks associated with mobilization. U.S. assets and intelligence systems simultaneously supported the coercive task of discrediting the leadership of the FMLN's Nicaraguan sponsors.

Can airpower achieve strategic effects in counterrevolutionary warfare?

The evidence suggests that airpower can achieve strategic effects as a persuasive or coercive instrument. However, these cases indicate that the airpower tool must be adequately organized, trained, and equipped to achieve such effects. Even then local conditions and enemy tactics largely dictate the magnitude of the effects. Furthermore, it must be understood that misapplications of airpower can create strategic effects that are counter to the government's war effort.

During the Greek Civil War airpower was assigned a predominantly coercive role to defeat the DAS. Although inadequately structured for interdiction efforts, the Royal Hellenic Air Force (RHAF) was better prepared for close air support operations. A key objective throughout the war was to interdict the flow of supplies from Yugoslavia and Albania into the DAS strongholds at Vitsi and Grammos Mountains. The tiny Royal Hellenic Air Force was ill prepared for this mission because RHAF aircraft lacked the range and payload for interdiction operations. Additionally, rules of engagement prevented air strikes within five miles of Greece's northern borders. The mountainous terrain and cover of night also helped to shield DAS resupply columns from aerial attack.

For all of these reasons the RHAF was unable to significantly stem the flow of men and materiel entering Greece from Yugoslavia and Albania.

The RHAF was far better trained and equipped to create effects in support of ground operations. Perhaps the two most important strategic effects were created early and late in the war when the DAS was caught employing conventional tactics. In December 1947 the RHAF provided close air support for ground forces conducting security operations against the DAS near the town of Konitsa. RHAF operations proved critical to terminating the DAS bid to make Konitsa the capital of "Free Greece." Only days later, the DAS commander announced that the government of "Free Greece" had been established. The DAS might have attracted increased international attention and support had Konitsa fallen and been named the communist capital. Finally, RHAF close air support was critically important to combat operations that mortally wounded the DAS in the summer of 1949. To prevent reinforcements from reaching the Vitsi and Grammos mountains, the entire RHAF attacked DAS forces along the Bulgarian border. When the final assault on Grammos Mountain commenced, newly acquired Curtiss SB2C dive-bombers were employed to shock and immobilize the partisans. The partisans were so badly shaken that they were unable to mount a counterattack against the GNA. The DAS terminated combat operations only weeks later.

During the Malayan Emergency, the Royal Air Force (RAF) was assigned both persuasive and coercive roles. The RAF achieved two noteworthy strategic effects in support of persuasive operations. The Federation government depended upon the RAF to deliver psychological operations material in support of various policy objectives. Transport aircraft served as voices in the sky and leaflet delivery platforms to disseminate

messages to encourage MRLA members to surrender under favorable terms to include amnesty. The high rates of surrender toward the end of the war suggest non-lethal applications of airpower played directly contributed to the termination of the Emergency. The RAF's fleet of light transport aircraft helped extend the reach of government services far into the jungle. As the food control program became effective, the MRLA was forced to retire deep into the jungle and depend upon the aborigines for food and intelligence. The government built a series of deep jungle forts to win over the aborigine population by out-administering the MRLA. The forts could only be supplied from the RAF's short takeoff and landing aircraft. Operating out of tiny airstrips adjacent to the forts, these aircraft delivered the medicine, supplies, and civil administrators that convinced the aborigines that the government cared about them more than the MRLA did.

The RAF proved unable to create coercive strategic effects due to equipment limitations, poor weather, jungle terrain, and the enemy's use of guerrilla tactics. During the first half of the war, the RAF was extensively employed in bombing operations designed to attack remote MRLA camps. The Lincoln bombers were hard-pressed to deliver the accuracy required hitting these tiny camps. Vegetation, precipitation, or radar limitations often masked the precise location of the camps. The RAF tried to overcome this obstacle by employing area-bombing techniques. There were few positive effects realized from such operations because bomb damage assessment was largely impossible. The MRLA countered the bombings by remaining on the move, but such activity did require the insurgents to consume scarce rations. The bombings also created a negative effect by killing aborigines and destroying their property. For all these reasons, area-bombing operations were greatly reduced in the final years of the war.

During the FMLN Insurrection in El Salvador, the Salvadoran air force (FAS) primarily assumed a coercive role. FAS operations only accomplished two strategic effects—both occurred early in the war. The first effect was of negative value. During the first few years of the war, FAS reconnaissance and ground attack aircraft were employed in attempts to isolate large FMLN units from the people. Although a valid objective, the FAS apparently carried out bombing operations with little regard for the lives and property of the peasants. In fact, FAS operations suggest free-fire zones were created in the northern department of Chalatenango. The FAS targeted FMLN concentrations as well as villages known to sympathize with the communists. These operations caused the government to lose some measure of internal and external legitimacy. The bombings contributed to a refugee flow of over 300,000 people. They also created a fury of media attention and diplomatic efforts that called for the grounding of the air weapon. President Duarte finally intervened and established tighter rules of engagement for the FAS.

The second strategic effect was much more positive. The FAS firepower and responsiveness reduced the strategic flexibility of the FMLN. The FMLN honored the threat posed by FAS helicopter and fixed wing gunships by dispersing its forces until immediately prior to attack. This burdened the FMLN logistics system by requiring personnel to spend countless man-hours secretly stockpiling munitions and supplies prior to major battles and engagements.

The FAS's ability to create additional strategic effects was greatly limited by shortcomings in qualified personnel and organizational bias. FAS aircraft had frequent maintenance problems because the conscript labor force proved largely unable to perform

routine procedures. A lack of trained pilots forced the small number of FAS aviators to employ numerous types of aircraft in wide-ranging types of missions. Finally, the FAS sought to preserve its autonomy as an independent force. Among others, the FAS commander was not a joint-minded leader. He frequently withheld elements of the helicopter fleet from operations to sit alert for the air force's rapid reaction airborne battalion. This practice created an internal power struggle between air and ground commanders over the proper use of scarce resources in support of ground forces.

Can airpower make major contributions toward the success of counterrevolutionary forces?

Theory suggests any capability that can help win popular support or neutralize the revolutionary threat can make a major contribution towards government victory. From such a perspective, the evidence suggests airpower made major contributions toward success in each of the cases. In Greece the RHAF's aerial firepower was a vital factor in the DAS defeat at Vitsi and Grammos Mountains in 1949. In the Malayan Emergency the RAF's major contribution was the provision of aerial transport. Helicopters lifted security force patrols deep into the jungle and evacuated wounded personnel. Short takeoff and landing aircraft enabled government forces to administer to aborigines deep within the jungle. Early in the When FMLN strongholds proved too risky for ground force assault. In El Salvador the FAS's bombing campaign against FMLN strongholds strongly contributed to the rebels' decision to adopt small unit tactics. These operations were of most consequence early in the war when the government needed time to expand the size of its ground forces.

History offers another perspective on the contribution of the airpower tool in counterrevolutionary warfare. Airpower was best employed in support of ground force operations. In each case study the foot soldier and policeman decided the outcome of the war. Independent air operations failed to achieve objectives against partisan, insurgent, and hybrid actors. The RHAF's interdiction operations against DAS partisans were of little consequence to the outcome of the Greek Civil War. Inadequate equipment was largely to blame. In Malaya the RAF's area bombing of MRLA camps was nullified by the insurgents' deft use of guerrilla tactics. The FAS bombing campaign against the FMLN failed to isolate the rebels from the Salvadoran people. Once again, the clever use of guerrilla tactics enabled the revolutionaries to endure the bombings.

RAF operations during the Malayan Emergency offered the most evidence that airpower can make a powerful contribution toward the success of counterrevolutionary forces. There seems to be one fundamental reason why this occurred. In 1951 the Federation government formulated a national counterrevolutionary strategy that was predicated on the correct analysis of the revolutionary environment. The military instrument was assigned both persuasive and coercive roles. The military strategy clearly indicated airpower was to assume both roles in support of national objectives. With a clear sense of purpose, the RAF focused on supporting civil and military tasks. The versatility of airpower enabled Commonwealth airmen to help bolster government legitimacy and make the MRLA irrelevant to the political process. Malaya achieved its promised independence, and the rest is history.

Some Considerations

This study will close by offering strategists some thoughts on the relationships between counterrevolutionary war, the military instrument, and airpower.

Considerations for the formulation and execution of counterrevolutionary strategy

Proper analysis of the revolutionary environment is the sine qua non of a successful counterrevolutionary strategy. Actors, motivations, aims, and strategies should be understood prior to formulating counterrevolutionary strategy. Otherwise, significant obstacles will likely be encountered during strategy execution. Such analysis must include the capabilities of the government's own security forces. Little is accomplished if the military instrument cannot fulfill its role or is unable to execute its subordinate strategy.

The formulation of a national counterrevolutionary strategy is vital to cohesive operations. If the military instrument is not assigned a specific role, it will accomplish those tasks it knows best: killing people and breaking things. Depending upon the type of adversary and the phase of counterrevolutionary strategy, such activity can cause the government to lose some degree of internal and external legitimacy.

The government must continually reassess its strategy to maintain a proper balance between persuasion and coercion. A hybrid rebel may prove particularly adept at modifying strategy based on changes in the revolutionary environment. If the counterrevolutionary strategy is not continually reassessed, the government runs the risk of wasting valuable resources on counterproductive activities.

Sponsor state participation is often vital to the survival of the targeted government.

The government simultaneously fights two campaigns during counterrevolutionary war. The hearts and minds of the people are the objects of the first campaign. It is difficult for any government to remain in power without legitimacy that is derived from popular support. The second campaign is waged against the revolutionary actor. It is difficult for any government to maintain legitimacy if it does not make progress against the revolutionary threat. External assistance is often required to generate the resources the government needs to win both campaigns.

Considerations for the employment of airpower

Airpower is normally best employed in support of ground operations. Missing from history are examples of how the independent use of airpower defeated revolutionary actors. This point should be pondered before resources are allocated to support air operations designed to force the enemy to capitulate.

Independent air operations can buy time for government forces. Certain situations arise when government forces need to be re-trained and re-equipped. An independent bombing operation may buy the government time by disrupting the operations of revolutionary forces.

Air superiority is no longer a valid assumption. Revolutionary forces can and will challenge government air forces for local command of the air. Government air arms must be psychologically and physically prepared to counter the employment of advanced surface to air systems.

Stray bombs can have strategic effects. Revolutionary forces often depend upon or extort support from the people or live and hide among them. The military necessity of

striking a target is not likely to outweigh the loss of legitimacy caused by collateral damage.

Intelligence will generally be lacking. Revolutionary forces depend on camouflage, concealment, and deception to defend against airpower. Plans for lethal and non-lethal applications of air operations should be executable without precision targeting information.

Airpower can bolster the morale of the troops. Airpower can help the government demonstrate concern for its security forces. Examples include lifting wounded soldiers from the field to urban medical facilities, delivering food and mail to remote facilities, infiltrating reinforcements in a timely manner, and exfiltrating patrols compromised deep within enemy territory.

Airpower is flexible and versatile. Airpower offers the government the ability to employ a wide variety of persuasive and coercive operations. Airlift can help support the electoral process or transport rapid reaction forces to engage partisan bands. Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance can support local security operations or track insurgent in remote locations. Close air support assets can escort security forces through insurgent-controlled territory or attack partisans positions in mountain redoubts. Leaflet-dropping or voice platforms can disseminate psychological operations material encouraging voter turnout or promising amnesty to partisan forces. Airpower can conduct interdiction operations against insurgent camps that are inaccessible by foot or indigenous cultivations that produce food for rebel forces. In the end, it is this versatility and flexibility that can make airpower an indispensable tool of the military instrument in the conduct of counterrevolutionary war.

Airpower is flexible and versatile. The cases highlighted airpower's ability to conduct a wide variety of missions in support of persuasive and coercive roles. Airlift can help support the electoral process or transport rapid reaction forces to engage partisan bands. Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance can support local security operations or locate insurgent forces deep within the jungle. Close air support assists security efforts by dissuading insurgent attacks against security forces or by attacking partisans dug into mountain redoubts. Leaflet-dropping or voice aircraft can disseminate psychological operations material encouraging voter turnout or promising amnesty to partisan forces. Airpower can conduct interdiction operations against insurgent camps that are inaccessible by foot or indigenous cultivations that produce food for revolutionary forces.

Airpower is normally best employed in support of ground operations. Missing from history are examples of how the independent use of airpower defeated revolutionary actors. This point should be pondered before resources are dedicated to the prosecution of independent efforts—especially if they normally support ground operations.

Airpower can be used independently to buy time for government forces. Certain situations arise when government forces need to be re-trained and re-equipped to better combat the adversary. An independent bombing operation can be used to disrupt revolutionary force operations to buy the government time to restructure its security forces.

Stray bombs have strategic effects. Revolutionary forces often depend upon or extort support from the indigenous population. Insurgents and partisans often live or hide

in the midst of the people. The military necessity of a planned air strike will not often outweigh the loss of internal and external legitimacy caused by collateral damage.

Intelligence on the whereabouts of revolutionary forces will normally be incomplete. Revolutionary forces seek safe haven among the people and safe sanctuary in sponsor countries. They also employ camouflage, concealment, and deception to defend against airpower. Intelligence organizations may not be able to provide the exacting coordinates that precision guided weapons require for accurate delivery.

Targeting is not necessarily the essence of airpower in the counterrevolutionary setting. The strategist must be prepared to employ airpower in support of both traditional and non-traditional missions. Depending upon the actors, motivations, aims, and strategies of the revolutionary environment, airpower may make its biggest contribution by persuasively helping to win over the people rather than coercing the revolutionaries into submission.



11097 Map Branch, CIA, 11-48

Figure 1. Map of Greece

Source: U.S. Department of State, *Fifth Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, Publication 3371, Economic Cooperation Series 17, January 1949.



Figure 2. Map of Malaya

Source: U.S. Department of State, "Malaya: A New Independent Nation," Department of State Publication 6714, Far Eastern Series 77, December 1958.



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Figure 3. Map of El Salvador

Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, August 1980.

POLICY AND SECURITY REVIEW MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM FOR 42 ABW/PA

17 Jun 98

FROM: ACSC/AS

SUBJECT: Policy and Security Review

1. Request policy and security for the public release on the attached paper *Small Wars, Big Stakes: Coercion, Persuasion, and Airpower in Counterrevolutionary War*, by Maj Norm Brozenick.
2. The information is to be released for academic use at Air University and will also be disseminated throughout DOD.
3. The manuscript has been reviewed by competent authority, comments in this regard are attached. The manuscript is unclassified and meets the requirements of both the SAAS internal review process, and AFI 35-205. The reviewing authority is the undersigned.

ROBERT C. OWEN, Colonel, USAF
Dean, School of Advanced Airpower Studies

2 Attachments

1. Authors comments regarding security issues
2. Subject manuscript

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