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WAR ON THE CHEAP: U.S. MILITARY ADVISORS IN GREECE, KOREA, THE PHILIPPINES, AND VIETNAM

by

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Dissertation Supervisor Daniel Moran

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An analysis of the U.S. advisory missions in Greece, Korea, and the Philippines shows a pattern of perceived success that overshadowed the operational and strategic environments in which these missions took place. This pattern contributed to a misguided belief that advisors would be sufficient to fix South Vietnam's fundamental flaws. Unable to persuade South Vietnam to implement changes that would make it more effective, but unwilling to walk away, Washington stayed the advisory course in Vietnam when all signs were pointing toward its inability to affect the internal situation's most critical elements. In Vietnam, the United States discovered that the model it had previously tested—and perhaps thought perfected—failed in the face of the most motivated anti-colonialist communist foe it faced during the Cold War. This paper challenges the contemporary mythology of America's early advisory efforts and the true efficacy of advisors in general.

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WAR ON THE CHEAP: U.S. MILITARY ADVISORS IN GREECE, KOREA, THE PHILIPPINES, AND VIETNAM

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADCOM	Advance Command and Liaison Group in Korea
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AMAG	American Mission for Aid to Greece
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
BCT	Battalion Combat Team
CATO	Combat Arms Training Organization
CG	Civil Guard
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDG	Civilian Irregular Defense Group
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
DA	Democratic Army of Greece
DOD	Department of Defense
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
EAM	Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo (Greek National Liberation Front)
EDCOR	Economic Development Corps
EUSAK	Eighth United States Army in Korea
FM	Field Manual
FY	Fiscal Year
GNA	Greek National Army
GVN	Government of (South) Vietnam
HMB	Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (Philippine People's Liberation Army)
Huk	Hukbalahap or Hukbong Bayan Laban sa mga Hapon (The Nation's Army Against the Japanese)
ICC	International Control Commission
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JUSMAGG	Joint United States Military Aid Group, Greece

JUSMAGP	Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group to the Republic of the Philippines
JUSMAPG	Joint United States Military Advisory and Planning Group
KKE	Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas (Communist Party of Greece)
KMAG	United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea
KNP	Korean National Police
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAP	Military Assistance Program
MDAA	Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949
MDAP	Mutual Defense Assistance Program
MSUG	Michigan State University Group
NDC	Greek National Defense Corps
NKPA	North Korean People's Army
NSC	National Security Council
NSC 64	National Security Council Report 64
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
PA	Philippine Army
PAF	Philippine Air Force
PAVN	People's Army of Vietnam
PC	Philippine Constabulary
PMAG	Provisional Military Advisory Group
PN	Philippine Navy
POW	Prisoner of War
PRC	People's Republic of China
RECO	Regional Command
RHAF	Royal Hellenic Air Force
RHN	Royal Hellenic Navy
ROK	Republic of Korea
ROKA	Republic of Korea Army
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
SDC	Self-Defense Corps

SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SNDC	Greek Supreme National Defense Council
SoV	State of Vietnam
TERM	Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission
TRIM	Training Relations Instruction Mission
UN	United Nations
USAFFE	United States Armed Forces, Far East
USAGG	United States Army Group, Greece
USAMGIK	United States Army Military Government in Korea
VC	Viet Cong
VM	Viet Minh
VNA	Vietnamese National Army
VNSF	Vietnamese Special Forces

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I. INTRODUCTION

Following the Second World War, two major influences resulted in a dramatic reshaping of the international order that affected governments on every continent: the struggle between communism and democracy and the dismantling of the pre-war colonial world. Frequently, these two phenomena occurred simultaneously. Colonialism tended to reinforce or create internal elitism resulting in a disenfranchised population that was more sympathetic to communism and its idealistic promise of equality. The global upheaval of The Second World War weakened the colonial powers' grip on their subjects, resulting in a dramatic shift in the world order that also saw the United States replace Britain as the world's police.

In addition to this new role, the United States faced myriad international crises that conflicted with domestic pressure to reduce defense spending. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's death left a U.S. foreign policy vacuum that President Harry Truman struggled to fill. Truman relied heavily on Roosevelt's national security team and inherited an adversarial relationship with the Soviet Union that had existed before the war and had only been set aside in order to fight it. His most influential advisors insisted that the Soviets were bent on world domination and that a deterrent response was necessary.[1] Initially, the deterrent thought to be most appropriate was economic assistance to prevent the conditions that contributed to increased communist influence. As the communists became more politically and militarily aggressive, however, Truman and his advisors realized that military assistance would be necessary, as economic improvement could not be realized in the face of insurgency.[2] The United States employed military advisors to provide technical, training, planning, and operational advice to avoid committing expensive and potentially escalatory combat formations.

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[1] John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 60–61. This dissertation uses the less common "advisor" (rather than "adviser") for consistency's sake, since the former is the standard military spelling.

[2] Howard Jones, *"A New Kind of War": America's Global Strategy and the Truman Doctrine in Greece* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 6.

This dissertation examines the expansion of U.S. military advisory programs in the early Cold War from 1945 to 1964, focusing on U.S. efforts in Greece, Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam. It seeks to answer the following question: How do the major U.S. military advisory efforts from 1945 to 1964 inform the potential and limitations of military advising as a foreign policy tool? These four advisory efforts began within the same five-year period. The first three ended rather quickly while the Vietnam War dragged on until 1975, with direct U.S. involvement there ending in 1973. Many of the same descriptions could apply to these cases; they were all politically and socially complex, and three of them were largely the result of a long history of colonial occupation. Even though each case was unique, it was not unprecedented and was readily comparable to the others. Finally, they were all viewed by at least one of the main Cold War adversaries as a battleground of competing ideologies. This perception meant that the Cold War international framework provided the background for U.S., Chinese, or Soviet involvement.

U.S. foreign policy before the Second World War had normally eschewed significant foreign commitments—its intervention against Spain in the War of 1898 and the First World War were exceptions that, in the eyes of many contemporaries, proved the wisdom of the rule. This paradigm shifted rapidly after 1945, giving rise to a foreign policy that promised worldwide military and economic support for the ostensible goal of preventing global communist expansion. Military advisory efforts in Greece, Korea, and the Philippines reflected this new and compelling priority. These efforts produced mixed but generally positive results and contributed to favorable outcomes. The belief in government and military circles was that advisors were effective in containing communism and thus contributed to the realization of basic U.S. policy goals. Subsequently, the United States devoted even greater resources, effort, and personnel, including some who had served in the previous advisory missions, to assist the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). Yet, this effort failed to avoid serious military escalation and ultimately ended in absolute disaster. The reasons behind this defeat divide scholars even today, and the Vietnam experience continues to echo in debates preceding nearly every foreign intervention.

A. ADVISOR OVERVIEW

Military advisors are officers and enlisted personnel deployed in a host nation to assist leaders from the tactical level up to the civilian head of the country. They are typically organized under military assistance advisory groups, defined in *Joint Publication (JP) 1–02* as "a joint Service group . . . which primarily administers the U.S. military assistance planning and programming in the host country."[3] This dissertation focuses on the activities of advisory groups present in foreign countries and the evolution of the advisory program as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy. The focus is not on the interaction between senior military advisors, such as the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and their civilian counterparts, although those relationships determine the environment in which more grass-roots military advising took place.

In addition to providing advice and assistance to their hosts, military advisors collect information and intelligence on the disposition and capability of the units they are advising. While this additional function may seem obvious, it is not the focus of most advisory checklists, guidance, or handbooks. This intelligence collection presents a host of analytical challenges that should not be neglected in judging advisory efforts. The first challenge is to evaluate the accuracy of the initial assessments. Advisors might believe their units have made significant progress, only to discover that they cannot execute in the field. Advisors might also feel compelled to report progress since failure reflects on their own performance evaluations. The second challenge is to account for the effect of compiling and filtering advisory reports by those who receive them. Although the reports themselves may provide a complete picture of the host nation army's situation, there is always the risk of losing fidelity or key points as they move further up the information chain. Finally, there is the challenge of evaluating decisions made based on advisor reports, or despite them. In Vietnam, for example, one wonders if any amount of negative reporting would have changed the U.S. position toward the South Vietnamese government. Since President John F. Kennedy had declared in his inaugural address that Americans were willing to "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support

[3] U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (JP 1-02) (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014), 170.

any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty," it is reasonable to expect that Washington would meet setbacks with greater commitment.[4]

The United States has a long history of employing military advisors to foreign governments. In the 1800s, advisors frequently trained foreign armies on the technical aspects of U.S. materiel to promote arms sales. During The Second World War, U.S. advisors supported resistance groups fighting the Axis powers. In the postwar environment, advisory efforts assisted friendly governments against their own homegrown insurgencies. These insurgencies came to be associated with a global Soviet-backed communist ideological struggle as outlined in George Kennan's famous article, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct."[5]

In 1947, the Truman administration solidified its anti-communist position, and in a 12 March speech to Congress, President Truman vowed to "support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."[6] His words referred specifically to the Greek Civil War, which pitted nationalist forces of the pre-war government against the Greek Communist Party (KKE) that had gained strength while resisting the Nazi occupation. With U.S. advisory support led by General James Van Fleet and millions in aid, the nationalist Greeks fought and defeated the insurgency between February 1948 and August 1949. By all appearances, advice and materiel support seemed to be viable mechanisms for containing communism at a much lower cost than committing large formations of U.S. forces.[7]

The Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949 codified the broad Military Assistance Program (MAP) and gave the president enormous leeway to assist other

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[4] John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address," Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project,* University of California Santa Barbara, January 20, 1961, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8032.

[5] George Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (July 1, 1947): 572, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20030065.

[6] Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, National Archives and Records Administration, March 12, 1947, http://trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=2189&st=&st1=.

[7] The Greek experience was oft-referred to in subsequent advisory efforts as a success in the attempt to contain communist expansion. Jones, *New Kind of War*, 232-34.

nations in "promot[ing] the foreign policy and provid[ing] for the defense and welfare of the United States by furnishing military assistance to foreign nations."[8] During his administration, President Dwight Eisenhower established a committee to study the military assistance program's applicability and effectiveness. Led by retired General William H. Draper Jr., it concluded in 1959 that military assistance was necessary "to preserve and strengthen the capacity of other free world nations to resist communist pressures and participate in the common defense."[9] Ironically, the report's timing corresponded with a significant escalation of the insurgency in South Vietnam.

Military advisors offer policymakers a seemingly inexpensive, low-risk means to achieve foreign policy in which the application of military force, or the development of military capability, is part of the picture, but not the whole picture. As such, they inhabit the space between the helping hand of typical international humanitarian aid and the mailed fist of armed intervention. In ideal cases, they effectively limit U.S. involvement in potential conflict areas. In the worst case, they risk over-militarizing the situation, provide overly optimistic assessments, or deliver advice to their host country counterparts that may make things worse. This study examines what advisory efforts did and did not accomplish across a variety of situations.

Following the successful conclusion of the Greek Civil War in 1949, for example, newspapers implied that U.S. assistance to Greece had produced a Russian defeat.[10] In a review of U.S. aid to Greece, however, historian Howard Jones takes a more moderate position, arguing that "One observation seems certain: American military aid alone had not brought victory [over the Communists]."[11] He asserts that many other factors led to the Greek Communists' defeat, perhaps most importantly their own mistakes in how they

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[8] Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949, HR 5895, 81st Cong., 1st sess. (1949), http://www.jstor.org/stable/2213859.

[9] William H. Draper, Jr. et al., *Composite Report of the President's Committee to Study the United States Military Assistance Program*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1959), 26.

[10] Paul F. Braim, *The Will to Win: The Life of General James A. Van Fleet* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 221.

[11] Jones, *"New Kind of War,"* 223.

prosecuted their war effort.[12] Jones does note, however, that Washington's commitment to Greece may have influenced Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin's attitude toward the prospect of exporting revolution there.[13] Unwilling to confront the United States directly, Stalin removed support to Greek Communists and pressured Yugoslavia to do the same. Exactly how much weight the advisory mission carried in influencing Stalin's judgment and in assisting the Greek national forces is debatable, but it certainly was not negligible.

The true extent of the U.S. commitment to Korea was less apparent. When the United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea (KMAG) began its training of the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA), it found that it had inherited a mission akin to building the American Army at the outset of the American Revolution.[14] A skeleton advisory effort achieved modest results but was hampered by indecision and paltry funding from Washington. The U.S. military withdrawal from South Korea followed shortly afterward by the outbreak of war to reunite the peninsula by force, inevitably cast doubt on the value of the advisor mission and the policy that produced it. Only the unprecedented U.S. response to the North's invasion staved off disaster. Based on President Kim Il Sung's aggressiveness, a better-resourced advisory mission from the beginning might have mitigated the initial North Korean onslaught but probably would not have deterred it entirely. Some of the circumstances in Korea were similar to those in Vietnam. Like Vietnam, Korea was divided arbitrarily and was a nation governing itself for the first time in many decades. Furthermore, like Vietnam, its government began under a divisive nationalist leader assuming power as the nation transitioned to independence.

The Hukbalahap (Huk) Rebellion in the Philippines was an outlier among advisory missions during the Cold War because the Soviet influence there was relatively insignificant. Largely due to geography, the Huk Communists were on isolated islands without a sympathetic communist neighbor. Nevertheless, the Philippines case is a classic

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[12] Jones, *"New Kind of War,"* 223.

[13] Ibid., 224.

[14] Robert K. Sawyer and Walter G. Hermes, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1988), 69.

example of a disenfranchised communist-leaning population that chose rebellion and insurgency to achieve its political goals. U.S. advisory efforts were largely credited for the ultimate Philippine victory, and the celebrated U.S. advisor, Colonel Edward Lansdale, emerged from the event to carry his brand of advisory success to Vietnam.

Vietnam endures as the ultimate case study of a U.S. policy and strategy mismatch.[15] This dissertation does not intend to examine the reasons behind America's commitment to Vietnam, but rather the advisors' inability to build an army that could defend the country against either an insurgent threat or conventional invasion. The reasons for this failure are many, and this dissertation examines the four cases to draw some conclusions about why some were more successful than others. If leadership is a critical element, then Vietnam presents a conundrum. In the summer of 1960, Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam commander, General Samuel Williams, received confidential evaluations of many of the most important Vietnamese military officers. The majority received significant praise from their U.S. advisor counterparts.[16] Yet, these were the same officers who failed to combat the growing insurgency, eventually overthrew the nation's president, clashed with each other, and ultimately lost to the North Vietnamese Army. The ultimate goal of this dissertation is a better understanding of the evolution of the advisory program and process from 1945 to 1964 and the significance of the advisory efforts in shaping the outcome of the conflicts in Greece, Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

This dissertation postulates three basic truths as reflected in all four cases. First, the ability of advisors to alter the character or culture of the recipient force was limited. No matter how much the advisors wanted to instill their counterparts with a willingness to fight and die for the purpose of victory, it was up to the leaders of the recipient nation's civilian and military leaders to accomplish this task. Second, recipients became

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[15] David Kaiser begins his study of the origins of the Vietnam War by declaring it "the greatest policy miscalculation in the history of American foreign relations," an unusually forthright statement of what is certainly the mainstream view among scholars. David E. Kaiser, *American Tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson, and the Origins of the Vietnam War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 1.

[16] "Evaluations of Vietnamese Officers," June 1960, Box 15, Folder 5, Samuel T. Williams Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA.

dependent on resources that advisors provided. Reducing or abandoning those resources due to U.S. fiscal constraints risked the recipient nation's stability and ability to fight. Third, the idea that military advisors offer a cheap, low-risk, limited-intervention alternative to full-scale intervention may occur under ideal conditions but is a hopeful fantasy in more complex environments that risks serious miscalculations in the real-world environments in which advisors operate. Despite continuous pressure to reduce the amount of funding to them, all four situations required significant resources and commitment but still did not always deliver the results desired.

B. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

As this dissertation follows the chronology of the four conflicts, the conclusion contrasts the results of the advisory efforts in Greece, Korea, and the Philippines with the one in Vietnam. Accordingly, three prominent themes emerge that will be explored in detail. These themes ultimately cast doubt on T. E. Lawrence's famous advice to those who would study his exploits:

> Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them. Actually, also, under the very odd conditions of Arabia, your practical work will not be as good as, perhaps, you think it is.[17]

Advisory manuals often refer to Lawrence's "Twenty Seven Articles" when promoting best practices. Ironically, Lawrence carefully prefaced his articles with the warning that they were specific to the Bedouin tribesmen with whom he lived and fought, and that they should not be blindly applied to other environments or situations.[18]

The first notable theme is the identification of leadership problems in the different armies. Frequently advisors pressured their superiors to replace senior officers with many years of service and sometimes with extensive political connections. Replacing foreign military leaders was a sensitive issue in all four cases. In Greece, for example, General

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[17] Thomas E. Lawrence, "Twenty Seven Articles," T. E. Lawrence Studies, Castle Hill Press, August 20, 1917, http://www.telstudies.org/writings/works/articles_essays/1917_twenty-seven_articles.shtml.

[18] Ibid.

Van Fleet was an imposing diplomatic and military figure who possessed an excellent rapport with Greek leaders, yet he faced resistance when he identified poor commanders who needed to be relieved. In contrast, President Ngo Dinh Diem in Vietnam maintained an iron grip over the placement of his commanders, valuing loyalty above all else. Diem's attitude was not surprising because of the numerous coup plots against his government but made removing detrimental leadership even more politicized than in the other cases.

The second recurring theme centers on the issues of advisor selection, preparation, and tour length. The after-action reports from nearly every advisory effort include criticism of these factors. A common complaint was that advisory duty was understood to be more difficult than service with regular military units, yet advisory duty was not career enhancing. Therefore, advisors frequently went to their positions unwillingly. Until the early 1960s, advisors underwent little, if any, preparation in advising. The most that one could expect as an advisor in Korea, for example, was a copy of the "Ten Commandments for KMAG advisors," which was a one-and-a-half page list of best advisory practices.[19] Additionally, advisors faced language and cultural challenges that typically were solved only by the efforts of host nation soldiers who learned English. It was rare for U.S. advisors to communicate with their counterparts in their native language other than through interpreters.

The final recurring theme is dependency on U.S. equipment, expertise, resources, and technology. Throughout his time in Greece, General Van Fleet noted this dependency, which also characterized the other three cases. Van Fleet generally rebuffed Greek requests for more equipment, such as airplanes and artillery. He claimed that the Greeks had all they needed to fight; what they lacked was aggressiveness and good leadership.[20] Likewise, as commander of the Eighth Army in Korea, Van Fleet responded to President Syngman Rhee's pleas to increase the size of the ROKA with a blunt rebuttal: "Until competent leadership is secured and it demonstrates its worth, there

[19] Robert D. Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 143–44.

[20] Lawrence S. Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece, 1943–1949* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 242–45.

should be no further talk of the U.S. furnishing arms and equipment for additional forces."[21] This theme carried forward to Vietnam, during which Vietnamese commanders and units often became dependent on their advisors' planning and liaison abilities.[22] Dependency was detrimental to the development of an independently capable host nation force and was an almost insurmountable problem for advisors.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

The volume of literature on these subjects is vast, yet few studies have tied together operational level advisors across this span of time. This literature review begins with readings on the origins of the Cold War, followed by readings on the individual cases. Given the enormity of the potentially relevant literature, the discussion is not intended to be comprehensive, but simply to highlight key issues that bear upon the research presented in the chapters that follow. It must be noted, however, that the case study of the Philippines is an exception to the general rule of scholarly abundance. Both primary and secondary sources relating to that conflict are sparse.

1. Cold War

The Cold War provides the overarching historical context for these four cases. Literature on the origins of the Cold War is extensive but generally falls into one of three schools of thought. Chronologically, these are the orthodox, revisionist, and post-revisionist views. In *From Trust to Terror,* historian, former government official, and purveyor of the orthodox view, Herbert Feis, presents the post–1945 split between the wartime allies as rooted in conflicting ideological accounts of the war.[23] Feis argues that the West celebrated capitalism's ability to manufacture more than the fascist Germans

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[21] "The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State," telegram, May 6, 1951, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951*, vol. 7, pt. 1, *Korea and China* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983), 419, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1951v07p1 (hereafter U.S. Department of State cited as DOS, *Foreign Relations of the United States* cited as FRUS, and Government Printing Office cited as GPO).

[22] Cao Van Vien et al., *The U.S. Adviser, Indochina Monographs* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1980), 58–61.

[23] Herbert Feis, *From Trust to Terror: The Onset of the Cold War, 1945–1950* (New York: Norton, 1970).

and simultaneously supply the Soviets, while free men and women fought valiantly for the rights of others to enjoy the same liberties.[24] In contrast, the Soviets, still bitter from bearing the brunt of the fighting against the German Army, saw the bravery of their people as proof of communism's superiority.[25] Feis's orthodox view generally blames the Soviets for their belligerent actions and rhetoric as they expanded their geographic control to prevent a repeat of what they had just suffered.[26] Thus, the orthodox viewpoint saw the aggressive response of the West as justified based on the real and present threat posed by the Soviet Union and its communist allies.

The revisionist perspective emerged in the 1960s and coincided with the expanding war in Vietnam. Revisionists were more critical of U.S. behavior than those of the orthodox school and blamed this behavior for creating an unnecessary conflict. In *Another Such Victory,* Arnold Offner, a prominent revisionist, summarizes his central theme in this comment: "Throughout his presidency, Truman remained a parochial nationalist who lacked the leadership to move the U.S. away from conflict and toward détente."[27] Offner points to numerous confrontations throughout the Truman administration during which the United States could have taken steps to reduce tensions with the Soviet Union—yet chose not to—instead establishing an adversarial relationship that lasted for nearly fifty years.[28] Offner's narrative describes Truman as a simple, naïve, unworldly country boy who blustered his way through foreign policy due to his consistent "parochial nationalism" during his two terms.[29]

Another revisionist, Melvyn Leffler, concurs with the argument that the Truman administration was responsible for much of the antagonism of the Soviet Union, but Leffler is not as critical of Truman's personality. In *Preponderance of Power*, Leffler

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[24] Feis, *Trust to Terror,* 5.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Michael F. Hopkins, "Continuing Debate and New Approaches in Cold War History," *Historical Journal* 50, no. 4 (December 2007): 914.

[27] Arnold A. Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945–1953* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 470.

[28] Ibid., 458.

[29] Ibid., xii, 100.

presents Washington's policy as pragmatic and focused on maintaining predominant power vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.[30] Leffler characterized this strategy's goals as creating "a world environment hospitable to U.S. interests and values . . . [and to establish] a configuration of power and a military posture so that if war erupted, the United States would prevail."[31] The Truman Doctrine and containment reflected this preponderance of power that shaped the U.S. response to communist aggression in Greece, Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

Finally, the post-revisionists swung partly back toward the orthodox school, as they were more willing to recognize that Soviet motives were unclear and that a cautious U.S. response was justified in this environment. In this approach, post-revisionists were more balanced at placing the decisions made in the context of the international environment, state actions, and leadership personalities of the time-period. This school of thought is more sympathetic to the realization that the world had catastrophically underestimated the danger posed by Germany and Japan prior to the Second World War. The natural response was to take steps to prevent a future similar situation. This conclusion meant meeting force with force, presuming aggressive intentions when signals were unclear, and maintaining larger standing armies than was typical for a postwar period. Scholars in this school include John Lewis Gaddis. In his words, "the American interest was not to dominate other power centers, but to see that no one else did either."[32]

The truth about Soviet intentions and ideology will never be known without the full release of Soviet records. Clearly, the United States and other democratic countries were deeply concerned about the spread of communism long before Truman, and this apprehension likely colored his judgment. Additionally, Roosevelt's death shortly after his fourth inauguration thrust Truman into the foreign policy decision-making process after less than three months as Vice President. Truman's tendency to take the position most advantageous for the United States when the motivations of Joseph Stalin were

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[30] Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 18–19.

[31] Ibid., 19.

[32] Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 63.

unclear seemed to create conditions that escalated tensions. Offner presents Truman as intimating frequently "that the Soviets had broken every agreement made at Yalta and Potsdam."[33] Yet, as Offner points out, Soviet misbehavior often centered on Truman's push to reestablish West Germany as an independent state.[34] Additionally, Truman ignored his own provocative actions that further intensified Moscow's distrust of Washington's intentions.

In hindsight, Stalin's behavior was understandable considering the disagreement between the East and West on the partition of Germany and the wholesale destruction of much of Russia. Likewise, it was reasonable that the Western powers were vigilant toward anyone displaying expansionist and bellicose behavior, having so recently concluded the war against Hitler. Additionally, since one of the hallmarks of U.S. foreign policy is its continuing emphasis on free global markets, Leffler's hypothesis on the Cold War's origins seems more appropriate than blaming it entirely on either side. Regardless of fault, however, the result was a simmering belligerent relationship that would be tested on proxy battlefields for the next forty years.

2. Military Advising and Counterinsurgency

Historian Douglas Porch's *Counterinsurgency* addresses the contemporary myth that counterinsurgency (COIN) as a set of doctrinal tactics was responsible for turning defeat into victory in Iraq under General David Petraeus. Porch's book informs the framework of this dissertation in that it presents a question, albeit about a mislabeled strategy rather than the means on which this study focuses, to determine its efficacy and evolution. Porch ultimately debunks the supposition that COIN is a replacement for "a viable policy and strategy"; rather, COIN is simply the "lineal descendant" of "colonial warfare" and relies "on coercion rather than persuasion."[35]

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[33] Offner, *Another Such Victory*, 253.

[34] Ibid., 249.

[35] Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xii, 318.

In *Arming the Free World*, Chester Pach lays out the broader evolution of military assistance from its inception to its codification in national strategy with the Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949. He contends that military assistance began in a haphazard fashion often with poorly or even undefined objectives and resulted in "America's arming of almost the entire 'free world'" throughout the history of these programs.[36] He concludes that this mindset persisted and by the end of the 1940s had installed a global commitment with no clear end.[37]

Many Army field manuals (FMs) and other official publications address military advising from a tactical perspective and read as a list of best practices. These include *Security Force Assistance* (FM 3–07.1), which could be considered the primary current military handbook on advising. Its chapter on advising states that the advisor's major objective is "inspiring and influencing a counterpart to effective action" primarily by gaining "their counterparts' trust and confidence."[38] The field manual then lays out advisors' ideal personality traits and considerations, which read as a graduate course in warfare executed by a select group of perfect soldier-statesmen. Reality was far different. The prevailing mindset among the higher leadership at the time was that any good soldier could advise effectively. Advisors at the lower levels, however, faced duty that was frustrating, lonely, and detrimental to one's career. Robert Ramsey's excellent study of advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador highlights a common theme in critiques of advisory efforts. He notes many studies and after action reports stating that advisors would be more effective with better training, longer tours, or both.[39] What these studies ignore, however, is a critique of the conditions under which the advisors were expected to succeed. There is a tendency to prescribe better language skills and more cultural training as solutions to challenges advisors face, rather than conduct a realistic appraisal of

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[36] Chester J. Pach, *Arming the Free World: The Origins of the United States Military Assistance Program, 1945–1950* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 6.

[37] Ibid., 232.

[38] U.S. Department of the Army, *Security Force Assistance* (FM 3-07.1) (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2009), 7–1.

[39] Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces*, 71–72.

advisors' abilities to accomplish U.S. foreign policy goals. This dissertation hopes to clarify the conditions that led to the success or failure of advisors across the four cases.

Andrew J. Birtle's *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1942–1976* traces the Army's counterinsurgency evolution as it addressed the many challenges of the small wars in which the United States engaged after The Second World War, culminating with Vietnam. He follows the evolution of counterinsurgency doctrine and practice and the nexus of civil and military programs and stabilization operations including the advisory groups in Greece, Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam.[40] Although similar in content, this dissertation focuses on how Washington viewed advisors and the contributions advisors made to the conflicts in which they were involved, rather than their role in the establishment of counterinsurgency doctrine.

3. Greek Civil War

As Truman's administration grappled with its response to the perceived Soviet maneuvers to expand its global power, Washington ultimately settled on a policy of containment. Fearing a deeper communist conspiracy and a strategic threat against the Bosporus Strait, Truman made his famous 1947 address to Congress promulgating what became known as the Truman Doctrine, which included a promise of military aid to governments threatened by communist subversion. Greece was one such government. In *A New Kind of War,* Howard Jones traces the events leading up to this new paradigm and its immediate impact on Greece and the debate surrounding the establishment and implementation of the Truman Doctrine there. He observes that Truman omitted mentioning the Soviet Union in his speech, a decision made with an eye toward avoiding escalation, but one that did not obscure that he had established a global commitment.[41]

Scholars differ over the decisive factors that led to the Greek nationalist victory. Their arguments span from focusing on the U.S. contribution almost entirely to laying blame squarely at the Communists' feet. In *The Greek Civil War*, Edgar O'Ballance

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[40] Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1942–1976* (CMH Pub 70-98) (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2006).

[41] Jones, *"New Kind of War,"* 45–49.

attributes Greek nationalist success to the improved performance of the GNA, reduction in support from the communist bloc, and Yugoslavia closing its border to the insurgents.[42] Lawrence Wittner's *American Intervention in Greece* is another excellent comprehensive examination of the factors contributing to the Greek nationalist victory. He downplays the U.S. contribution, noting that the decisive factors to the Communists' defeat depended on breaks in the internal and external communist ranks.[43] Charles R. Shrader's *The Withered Vine* examines the war from the Communists' perspective, focusing primarily on their decisions and relationships with other communist states at the onset of the Cold War. He argues that the Communists lost because of "inadequate logistics" based on their decision to fight a conventional war against a numerically and technologically superior enemy without the external support they required to win.[44]

This initial aid effort in Greece was significant because it set the stage for subsequent advisory missions. In *The Will to Win*, a biography of General James Van Fleet, the commander of the military aid and advisory program in Greece, Paul Braim argues that Van Fleet and American aid were critical to the Greek victory over communist forces. He writes, "That the U.S. aid program had been vital to that [Greece's] victory was also recognized worldwide. Allies of the United States also appreciated that the United States would stand behind friendly nations threatened by Stalin's aggression."[45] Offner concurs, stating that "the president [Truman] and his associates always held that U.S. aid saved Greece, and perhaps Europe, from both communism and Soviet domination."[46] The main problem with this assessment is that it assumes that Stalin saw Greece as a critical battleground for communist expansion. In reality, Stalin was quick to abandon the Greek Communists based on their poor prospects for success and the likelihood of drawing the United States deeper into Balkan affairs. The prevailing

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[42] Edgar O'Ballance, *The Greek Civil War: 1944–1949* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 179.

[43] Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece*, 253.

[44] Charles R. Shrader, *The Withered Vine: Logistics and the Communist Insurgency in Greece, 1945–1949* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), 253.

[45] Braim, *Will to Win*, 220.

[46] Offner, *Another Such Victory*, 207.

mindset in U.S. circles about Washington's contribution to the favorable outcome in Greece remained the same, however.[47]

William Harris further promotes the U.S.-centric Greek victory narrative in his thesis, *Instilling Aggressiveness*. Both Braim and Harris claim that the Greek National Army (GNA) was at a low point of morale and effectiveness and that the U.S. advisors managed to reverse this situation and thus propel it to victory over the Communists. Quite bluntly, Harris states, "The advisors' ceaseless training, mentorship, direction, and influence led to the aggressive Greek operations that destroyed the communist threat."[48]

In contrast, Christopher Woodhouse, in *The Struggle for Greece*, downplays the U.S. role. He points out that most of the military equipment ordered by the United States did not arrive until hostilities ended.[49] Furthermore, he directly contradicts the notion that U.S. advice was critical to effecting change in Greek Army organization and tactics. He writes, "It was the Greek high command itself which eventually, at the eleventh hour, achieved its own regeneration; and the new tactics which came near to complete success in 1948 were devised by Greek initiative."[50] Woodhouse had extensive personal experience of the Greek Civil War, first as a soldier assisting the Greek resistance, then as a diplomat, and finally as a historian of the events. Although he may have been biased, his observations call into question the prevalent mindset of the Americans at the time. Since this review focuses on U.S. military advisory efforts, it is important to understand how U.S. leaders perceived the effectiveness of U.S. efforts in Greece. Many in Truman's administration believed that U.S. efforts were largely responsible for nationalist victory in Greece. This belief inevitably informed future policy.

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[47] "Memorandum by the Under Secretary of State (Webb), to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Lay)," memorandum, March 6, 1950, DOS, *FRUS, 1950*, vol. 5, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1978), 343, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1950v05.

[48] William D. Harris, "Instilling Aggressiveness: U.S. Advisors and Greek Combat Leadership in the Greek Civil War, 1947–1949" (master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2012), 154.

[49] Christopher M. Woodhouse, *The Struggle for Greece, 1941–1949* (Chicago: Dee, 2003), 237.

[50] Ibid., 238.

4. Korean Conflict

Concurrently, Korea faced its own confrontation with communism following the Second World War, although its situation differed significantly from that of Greece. Korea emerged from years of foreign domination and was arbitrarily split at the 38th Parallel by the United States and the Soviet Union. U.S. forces occupied Korea as the Japanese withdrew and native Koreans established their new government. With the nationalists Kim Il Sung in the north and Syngman Rhee in the south, the stage was set for a conflict over reunification of the peninsula. Despite the Soviet-supported buildup in the North and a moderate insurgency that totaled 7,235 deaths of government forces and 30,000 guerrillas and noncombatants, the United States withdrew its forces except for the KMAG.[51] Millett's history of the Korean War provides excellent overall context and includes important information about the advisory effort, particularly during the period before the North Korean invasion.

From 1946 to 1950, U.S. advisors assisted the South Koreans in building a professional, well-trained army. Major Robert K. Sawyer's *KMAG In Peace and War* serves as the U.S. Army's official history of the KMAG effort. Sawyer's study details a Korean Army in a readiness crisis when U.S. advisors began providing assistance.[52] Sawyer argues that U.S. advisors were critical to the creation and professionalization of the Republic of Korea Army. This conclusion contrasts with his description of the early advisory period, during which the Korean advisory effort was severely understaffed with individual advisors often overseeing training for multiple units spread out across the country.[53]

Another KMAG history, Bryan R. Gibby's *Will to Win*, complements Sawyer's book by expanding on the post-invasion KMAG efforts to reconstruct a Korean army capable of holding its own against North Korean and Chinese attacks once the front stabilized in 1951 until the cease fire was signed in 1953. In Gibby's words, "the KMAG

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[51] Allan Reed Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945–1950: A House Burning* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 142.

[52] Sawyer and Hermes, *KMAG in Peace and War*, 69.

[53] Ibid.

partnership infused the ROKA with the motivation to fight and win."[54] Throughout the course of his narrative, however, he describes an advisory relationship unlike all others, particularly when U.S. forces arrived to defend South Korea. With this situation, the advisory effort had far more control over ROKA forces than any advisors before or since. This factor made a huge difference in the outcome of that conflict. Gibby's history is the most comprehensive and contemporary account of KMAG's contribution to the ROKA from inception to 1953.

In contrast to Sawyer, Allan Millett argues that KMAG failed to provide adequate warning of the severe inequality in arms that the ROKA possessed vis-à-vis the north. This lapse resulted in a defense plan, as Millett describes, based more on "matters of hope, not strategy."[55] Millett notes that Brigadier General William L. Roberts, the KMAG commander from August 1948 to June 1950, provided upbeat verbal assessments of the ROKA to his superiors that belied KMAG's written assessments.[56] These latter assessments stated that the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) was rapidly increasing its offensive capability and soon could overpower the ROKA.[57] Had Roberts been more direct in personal meetings with senior U.S. personnel, the ROKA and U.S. military might have been able to rectify some of the imbalance. By June 1950, however, it was too late to overcome this disparity before the NKPA invasion. The ROKA had to survive with the planning, training, and weapons it already had.

5. Philippine Hukbalahap Insurrection

Much like the Greek Civil War, the Hukbalahap, or Huk, Insurrection was an internal class struggle that existed before The Second World War, resulting from the gross inequality between rural peasants and wealthy landowners. Postwar independence and an independent Filipino government that promised to continue past policies simply

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[54] Bryan R. Gibby, *The Will to Win: American Military Advisors in Korea, 1946–1953* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 2.

[55] Allan Reed Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950–1951: They Came from the North* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 34.

[56] Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 250.

[57] Ibid., 249.

provided the catalyst that accelerated this inequality conflict. In his autobiography, *In the Midst of Wars*, legendary Cold War military advisor and Air Force Colonel Edward Lansdale describes his role as the advisor to Ramon Magsaysay, the Philippine Minister of Defense.[58] As Lansdale recounts, he contributed to the successful counterinsurgency by providing suggestions to Magsaysay, specifically in the area of psychological operations, and helping to coordinate the various aid programs in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State mission.[59] Additionally, he served as a neutral sounding board for Magsaysay's ideas. Ultimately, his influence and friendship with Magsaysay were important and probably outweighed his influence on the structure and day-to-day operations of the Philippine army.

Two personalities from the Huk side shed light on the enemy perspective: Luis Taruc and William Pomeroy. Taruc was a Socialist in the 1930s but became a Communist following years of indoctrination and fighting in support of the cause. He was also a senior Huk military leader, was elected to the Philippine Congress after the Second World War, and was one of the last Huk leaders to surrender. Naturally, his memoirs risk being terribly one-sided, which is apparent as he largely overlooks Huk atrocities while accusing the government of disproportionate responses.[60] He readily admits, however, that he was lulled into the false belief that the leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), who ran the Huk Rebellion, had the best interests of the Filipinos in mind when they advocated full-scale rebellion.[61] He saw his objective, which was greater democratic representation for the interests of the vast majority of Filipinos, superseded by the whims of the Party leaders in true Orwellian fashion.[62] He blames much of the movement's failure to find greater appeal among the masses on this shift in party ideology. The other Huk personality was William Pomeroy, a U.S. Army deserter turned

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[58] Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991).

[59] Ibid., 70–71.

[60] Luis Taruc, *Born of the People* (New York: International Publishers, 1953), 263.

[61] Luis Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger: The Story of an Asian Guerrilla Leader* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 154–55.

[62] Ibid., 156–57.

Huk. Unlike Taruc, his narrative, *The Forest*, reads as that of a dedicated communist with little reflection on the abuses that his side committed during the struggle.[63] His is more a tale of one-sided honorable struggle against an insidious and evil foe, but it is nevertheless useful for understanding the highs and lows of the Huk side of the campaign.

On the Philippine government side, Colonel Napoleon Valeriano, a successful Philippine battalion combat team (BCT) commander and U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Charles Bohannan, one of Lansdale's team members, collaborated in their book *Counter-Guerrilla Operations*.[64] Their study is broken down by subjects such as "Know Thine Enemy" and "The Mission," then uses examples from the Huk Rebellion and the government's response to illustrate the points. In general, their method follows the narrative that the Philippine government failed to subdue the Huks due to inadequate organization of its forces, abuse of the population it was supposed to protect, and uninspired leadership.[65] Once it corrected these grave shortcomings, the Rebellion turned around in the government's favor.

Benedict Kerkvliet's *The Huk Rebellion* is perhaps the most scholarly work that allowed enough time to pass that the subject could be viewed more objectively. Writing in 1977, he focuses on the origins of the Huk Rebellion but very little on the conduct of the campaign that ended it. He argues that the Huks finally quit fighting due to "general weariness," government economic reforms, and improved Philippine Army performance.[66] In contrast to nearly every other author of this period, he downplays the role of the hardcore communists in the movement, preferring to argue that the Rebellion was a spontaneous reaction to rapidly changing economic conditions.[67] With this

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[63] William J. Pomeroy, *The Forest: A Personal Record of the Huk Guerrilla Struggle in the Philippines* (New York: International Publishers, 1963).

[64] Napoleon D. Valeriano and Charles T. R. Bohannan, *Counterguerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 31.

[65] Ibid., 96-97, 114-19, 123, 139-41.

[66] Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 236–40.

[67] Ibid., 250–66.

assessment, he establishes a strong position that fails to appreciate the significant anti-communist U.S. reaction that began during the Second World War when the Huks began displaying hostile behavior toward U.S. personnel and their Filipino guerrilla forces despite ostensibly fighting for the same cause. This behavior simply continued into the postwar period.

The official U.S. military history of the insurrection is outlined in the Lawrence M. Greenberg's *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*. Greenberg assesses that, by 1950, the Philippine government was losing the war against the Huks.[68] His study credits U.S. aid and Magsaysay's personal efforts for leading to the eventual Philippine government victory.[69] A careful reading of both Lansdale's and Greenberg's accounts leaves the reader with the impression that Magsaysay's charisma was the critical factor leading to Philippine Army reform and winning the average Filipino's support while U.S. aid and advice played a supporting role. Thus, greater U.S. support to a lesser personality would not have achieved similar results.

In U.S. circles, however, Edward Lansdale garnered significant credit for preventing a Huk victory. While he was probably one of the most effective advisors of this time, his true impact likely was less than believed. Nevertheless, Washington decision makers, such as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, appeared to think Lansdale could accomplish similar results in Vietnam, which had just negotiated a settlement to its war with the French.[70] There, Lansdale met Ngo Dinh Diem, a Vietnamese nationalist, who had his own strong convictions about what his country needed to be successful.

6. Vietnam Conflict

Of the four conflicts, Vietnam presents the most interesting and rich advisory puzzle. The United States was in Vietnam and was committed to its defense. The

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[68] Lawrence M. Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Insurgency Operation in the Philippines, 1946–1955* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1986), 77.

[69] Ibid., 145.

[70] Lansdale, *Midst of Wars*, 126.

advisors' role in Vietnam could be broken down into five phases. The first, from 1950 to 1954, primarily consisted of overseeing the delivery of military equipment to support France's war against the Viet Minh (VM) led by the legendary Ho Chi Minh. The second, from 1954 to 1961, consisted of fewer than one thousand advisors supporting President Ngo Dinh Diem's effort to build a nationalist army, consolidate power, and defend against increased North Vietnamese efforts to destabilize and overthrow the South. This second period was marked by a period of relative calm from 1955 to 1959 that was similar to Korea ten years earlier. As guerrilla attacks resumed, the U.S.-trained South Vietnamese security forces struggled to combat them.

President John F. Kennedy's reassessment of Vietnam led to the third phase, 1961 to 1965, that saw an increase in the number of advisors and the amount of materiel support to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in its escalating campaign to defeat the Viet Cong (VC). President Lyndon B. Johnson ushered in the fourth phase, 1965 to 1969, in which the United States assumed the primary role of combatting the VC while relegating village security operations to the ARVN. Finally, President Richard Nixon's administration oversaw the fifth phase, 1969 to 1973, which was characterized by the Vietnamization of the war as U.S. forces withdrew completely. This dissertation focuses primarily on the first three phases since the introduction of large numbers of U.S. troops in 1965 meant that one of the main goals of advisors, minimizing the number of U.S. forces needed to achieve foreign policy goals, was not realized.

In Edward Miller's *Misalliance* and Ellen J. Hammer's *A Death in November*, the authors focus specifically on Diem and his attempts to implement his ideas of Vietnamese nationalism. Miller dispels the contemporary myth that Diem was a U.S. appointed puppet who failed because he would not listen to his American benefactors. As Miller argues, Diem was a fierce nationalist and anti-communist whose ideas for nation building were similar to those of the United States, but he frequently differed in his methods of execution.[71] Miller also holds the U.S. administration accountable for not being able to agree on its own methods of nation building, thus making the Vietnam

[71] Edward Garvey Miller, *Misalliance: Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 15-16.

effort more difficult.[72] He concludes that the alliance with Diem "was unmade in the same place and manner in which it was created: within the crucible of South Vietnam's revolutionary politics."[73] Hammer laments the shortsighted U.S. decision to overthrow Diem as it led to years of political instability and an "American presence [that] corroded the social fabric, and corruption was all-pervasive."[74] These factors never permitted the South Vietnamese government to establish the same level of fanatical support that its northern counterparts enjoyed. The insight into the relationship between Diem and his U.S. military advisors that both authors provide is particularly noteworthy because it shows the difficulties advisors face in addressing fundamental grievances through the recognized government.

Rufus Phillips was one of Lansdale's early lieutenants, and his time spent focused on Vietnam was rivaled only by that of Lansdale and John Paul Vann. He maintains two themes in his memoir, *Why Vietnam Matters*. First, he criticizes the Washington decision-making that was made "in a vacuum" and "doomed the enterprise to failure."[75] Although Phillips refers mostly to decisions made by the Kennedy administration and later, these politicians were not radically different from their predecessors. Phillips's second main theme revolves around the "right" types of advisors, such as Edward Lansdale, who understood what Vietnam needed from the United States. He laments the final days of the Diem presidency when Lansdale might have been able to salvage the deteriorating U.S. support to Diem, implying that his presence might have changed the entire outcome of the conflict.[76] Even in retrospect, this assessment seems overly optimistic, but based on Phillips's experience in Vietnam, it has merit and reinforces the notion that advisory duty is not something for which every military member is well suited.

In *Trapped by Success*, David Anderson examines the U.S. relationship with Diem and U.S. policy toward Vietnam during the Eisenhower era. His main argument is

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[72] Miller, *Misalliance,* 325.

[73] Ibid., 326.

[74] Ellen J. Hammer, *A Death in November: America in Vietnam, 1963* (New York: Dutton, 1987), 317.

[75] Rufus Phillips, *Why Vietnam Matters: An Eyewitness Account of Lessons Not Learned* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2014), 305.

[76] Ibid., 157–60.

that "ignorance and confidence bred an illusion of success that trapped Eisenhower and subsequent U.S. presidents in a frustrating and futile effort to define and defend U.S. interests."[77] Anderson addresses the irony in Eisenhower's decision not to assist the French at Dien Bien Phu. Eisenhower made this decision despite believing, like Truman, in the need to contain communism everywhere. Subsequently, the Eisenhower administration halfheartedly supported Diem's government with large amounts of aid but never with the conviction that reflected the importance it placed on Vietnam in public and private discourse. As Anderson chronicles, Diem experienced a small degree of success in creating a stable nation, but the administration convinced itself that the success was nothing short of a miracle.[78] Anderson concludes that the United States built this miracle on sand and "fostered dependence, not independence, in South Vietnam."[79] Following Diem's assassination in 1963, the state that Eisenhower supported for most of his administration could only be preserved with an unsustainable U.S. military commitment.[80] This reality further trapped the United States into yet another decade of sacrifice. Although Anderson focuses on Eisenhower's mistaken assessment of the situation in Vietnam, advisors at lower levels also suffered from similar misconceptions and misguided efforts.

John Paul Vann, the subject of Neil Sheehan's book *A Bright Shining Lie*, experienced the consequences of well-intentioned aggrandizement firsthand while working with his Vietnamese counterpart, Colonel Huynh Van Cao. Vann believed he could transform Cao into an aggressive commander by building his reputation through battlefield successes.[81] Vann was the catalyst behind these successes, which ultimately backfired. Vann never transferred his aggressive spirit to Cao, but the battlefield successes buoyed Cao's credibility to the extent that he did not need to take more risks.

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[77] David L. Anderson, *Trapped by Success: The Eisenhower Administration and Vietnam, 1953–1961* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), ix.

[78] Ibid., 203.

[79] Ibid., 208.

[80] Ibid., 209.

[81] Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 78.

Moreover, at times Cao countermanded Vann's attempts to achieve even greater tactical successes while blaming these events on subordinates.[82] Vann finally realized that President Diem had ordered his commanders to avoid casualties.[83] As Sheehan points out, however, what Vann failed to recognize was the political reality of Vietnam and the Diem regime.[84] The ARVN represented the primary tool for the regime's political survival, and the insurgency was a real and dangerous threat. Therefore, the ARVN's existence could not be placed at risk through overly aggressive battlefield maneuvers. At least this scenario is how the Diem regime appeared to see it, which was incomprehensible to Vann.[85]

Vann's story served as a vehicle around which to tell the larger Vietnam story. In this vein, it shared characteristics with first-person accounts such as Daniel Fitzgibbon's *To Bear Any Burden.* As a Special Forces officer in Vietnam living with and fighting alongside a Vietnamese Special Forces (VNSF) team that in turn commanded a Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) battalion, Fitzgibbon witnessed the various hurdles in Vietnamese and American bureaucracies. For example, one of the battalion's companies consisted of Montagnards, who were considered a lesser ethnic class in Vietnamese society. The VNSF team leader feared treating them the same as his Vietnamese companies lest he be reported to his superiors and presumably punished.[86] Likewise, Fitzgibbon faced his own frustrations dealing with his higher headquarters. He was routinely chastised, for example, when the irregular Vietnamese forces he advised were not as operationally active as standard U.S. Army maneuver units.[87] This criticism illustrated one of the challenges for advisors, particularly when the scope of U.S. involvement in a nation expanded beyond a small advisory role. Since advisors typically worked in small teams and often ended up coming from different units formed in an ad

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[82] Sheehan, *Bright Shining Lie, 87*.

[83] Ibid., 122.

[84] Ibid., 198.

[85] Ibid., 122.

[86] Daniel H. FitzGibbon, *To Bear Any Burden: A Hoosier Green Beret's Letters from Vietnam* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2005), 22.

[87] Ibid., 76.

hoc fashion, they were frequently ignored in logistics planning and even harassed by the regular line formations for any number of reasons. These factors often made it more difficult for advisors to accomplish their missions.

Finally, Ronald Spector's *U.S. Army in Vietnam, Advice and Support: The Early Years 1941–1960* is perhaps the most important work on the topic of military advisors in Vietnam through 1960. Spector chronicles the difficulties faced by the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) under the French when its only mission was delivery of materiel to French forces.[88] Subsequently, the Eisenhower administration was unwilling to expand the advisory mission to a more appropriate number needed to train the ARVN adequately. Although citing the Geneva Accords as justification for the limitations, the administration willingly ignored other provisions and even surreptitiously increased the advisory mission. Spector's arguments are in line with Anderson's in that there was a policy and strategy mismatch under Eisenhower that, once realized, was not easily rectified.[89] In his conclusion, Spector attributes the advisors' failure to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals of a strong anti-communist Republic of Vietnam government to over-politicization of the military, short tours that limited the advisors' effectiveness, a failure to recognize the communist insurgency as the primary danger, and the intractability of Diem.[90]

The influence that advisors had across these four case studies was greater than one would expect from their small numbers. This influence gave them enormous potential if the right person was serving; contrarily, any damage had the potential to be enormous and irreversible if the wrong person was selected or too many conflicting viewpoints were involved in a situation. Additionally, the longer an advisory mission continued, the less likely it was to succeed. This observation was even more true if the purpose of an advisory mission was to prop up a nation's security forces to handle their

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[88] Ronald H. Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years, 1941–1960* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1983), 118-20.

[89] Ibid., 375.

[90] Ibid., 378-79.

own security requirements. This last point seems blatantly obvious, but it did not prevent Washington from beginning and ending its support to Vietnam with advisors.

D. OVERVIEW

This dissertation consists of a comparative, qualitative analysis of the four cases. It draws for inspiration on Douglas Porch's recent analysis of counterinsurgency, William H. Mott's case study analysis of military assistance, and Alexander George and Andrew Bennett's book on case study methodology.[91] Porch's work provides a contemporary example of historical case study analysis on a similar topic.[92] Mott's book aids in the development of a framework relating specifically to military advisors.[93] Finally, George and Bennett's work establishes guidelines for developing the set of common questions to apply to all of the cases.[94] The sources available varied per case. This dissertation relied on secondary sources for a broad perspective on the different cases but drew from primary sources on specific aspects to compare the historical record with advisor first-hand reports.

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[91] Porch, *Counterinsurgency*; William H. Mott IV, *Military Assistance: An Operational Perspective*, Contributions in Military Studies 170 (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999); Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Belfer Center Studies in International Security (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

[92] Ibid.

[93] Mott, *Military Assistance*.

[94] George, *Case Studies*.

II. U.S. MILITARY ADVISORS IN GREECE: THE BIRTH OF CONTAINMENT

In 1947, the United States intervened in the Greek Civil War on the side of Greek nationalists under King George II against the Greek Communists under Nicholas Zachariades to prevent Greece's falling under the Soviet umbrella. U.S. leaders did not take this decision lightly. The perceived enormity of the communist threat led some to call for large U.S. combat units to intervene. Despite this pressure, the Truman administration settled on a program consisting of economic and military aid and advice to improve the conditions in Greece and bolster its armed forces to defeat the communist guerrillas. A combination of British and U.S. economic and military assistance, training, and advice contributed to the Greek National Army's eventual victory under General Alexander Papagos over the Greek Communists. Contemporary accounts of the U.S. advisors in Greece laud their actions to transform the GNA from a dispirited force into an effective fighting machine in a short time and to ensure an important early victory for the West over communist expansion.[1] This self-congratulating narrative overstates the advisors' real contribution, however. Greek nationalists won because their U.S.-funded army outnumbered the Communists by a large margin, and the Communists made serious strategic, operational, and tactical mistakes. Despite eighteen months of concentrated effort, the advisory program made little progress instilling the GNA with an aggressive combat spirit or training regimen.

Throughout the advisors' time in Greece, they faced many challenges in addition to the Greek Communists. These challenges stemmed from the Greek political and military establishment that the advisors were invited to assist. First, U.S. personnel needed to establish rapport and credibility to begin a constructive dialogue to reverse

[1] Braim, *Will to Win*; Harris, "Instilling Aggressiveness"; U.S. Army, "JUSMAGG History 25 Mar 1949–31 June 1950," 1950, Entry 155, Box 146, Joint United States Military Aid Group Greece, United States Army Section Group, Adjutant General Section, Central Files Unit, Historical File, 1947–50, Record Group 334, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD (hereafter Joint United States Military Aid Group Greece cited as JUSMAGG, United States Army Section Group cited as USAG, Adjutant General Section cited as AGS, Central Files Unit cited as CFU, Record Group cited as RG, and National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD cited as NACP).

Greek misfortunes. The first senior U.S. military advisor, Major General William Livesay, did not perform effectively in this role and was replaced. Second, the advisors sought to overcome entrenched cultures in institutions such as the GNA. This challenge proved insurmountable at many levels and on many topics of basic military principles. Third, the advisors faced a GNA that became increasingly dependent on U.S. largesse for its existence, operational capability, and tactical style. The technology thought to give the GNA an edge over its enemy often meant that the GNA would not fight without it nor cease requesting more. Finally, the advisors worked to establish a sense of urgency and pride in their counterparts to motivate them to solve their own problem quickly. Advisors met with some success on this issue, but motivation was a matter for Greek leadership to address.

A. FROM BRITISH OCCUPATION TO THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE

To trace the path to U.S. involvement in Greece, one must start with Britain. Although not strictly part of the British Empire, Greece had long been part of Britain's strategic calculus since the Greek War of Independence due to its position in the eastern Mediterranean. Despite an unsavory dictatorial government in Greece as The Second World War opened, Great Britain stood by its ally and fought to defend against the German invasion that resulted in three years of occupation, economic devastation, and famine that claimed as many as 250,000 lives.[2] From 1941 to 1944, London supported Greek resistance groups to disrupt the Axis occupation, cut supply lines to North Africa, and divert reinforcements from other fronts.[3] Although these activities were only moderately successful, Greek Communists nevertheless became a powerful political entity and a threat to the Greek government in exile and British postwar plans since they controlled the largest resistance group. The phenomenon of increased communist power due to wartime resistance efforts was common in many Axis-occupied states. In October 1944, Prime Minister Winston Churchill made his famous "percentages agreement" with

[2] Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941–44* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 41.

[3] Ernest Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1971), 388.

Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin that determined the share of postwar influence the great powers would have in the individual Balkan states. This agreement guaranteed the West a 90 percent share of influence in Greece's affairs.[4] Following the German withdrawal from Greece, British forces assumed responsibility for maintaining order among the same resistance groups they had supported during the war and for reestablishing the constitutional monarchy. The communist resistance group, EAM, chose this opportunity to launch an armed revolt that the British crushed.[5] The communist resistance did not fade away, however.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the mantle of world leadership shifted decisively from Great Britain to the United States. Great Britain responded to this shift with a policy of retrenchment, including its position in Greece. Despite Greece's economic and political struggles, London maintained a particular regard for Greece's position in its strategic landscape. Conversely, Washington debated internally its new leadership role, desiring that London would maintain much of its capability. This difference in views caused some consternation between the United States and Britain in Greece. The British hoped to extricate themselves from any responsibility there to concentrate on other pieces of their crumbling empire, while the Americans expected to supply some money and materiel, but little else. A deteriorating political and military situation in Greece, Britain's 1947 ultimatum, and a Greek Army largely dependent on outside support for its very existence ultimately forced America's hand.[6]

Reflecting the tenuous economic and military situation in Greece, the British laid out their position in a 21 February 1947 message to the U.S. Department of State. The message predicted that Greece would realize "widespread starvation and consequent political disturbance during the present year [1947]" without outside support.[7] The

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[4] For more, see Albert Resis, "The Churchill-Stalin Secret 'Percentages' Agreement on the Balkans, Moscow, October 1944," *American Historical Review* 83, no. 2 (April 1, 1978): 368–87, doi:10.2307/1862322.

[5] EAM was the KKE's political resistance movement during the war. In English, EAM means National Liberation Front. In Greek, it stands for Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo.

[6] Jones, *New Kind of War*, 4-7.

[7] "The British Embassy to the Department of State," DOS, *FRUS, 1947*, vol. 5, *The Near East and Africa* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1971), 32–35, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1947v05.

British called for U.S. assistance to support the 100,000-man Greek army and stated that the GNA was ready to conduct an "all-out assault on the bandits in the Spring."[8] This statement implied that the Communists were on the verge of defeat.[9] This assessment was optimistic.

By early 1947, U.S. reports from Greece were increasingly dire. Journalist Mark F. Ethridge, serving as the U.S. delegate to the United Nations (UN) Commission examining the Greek border disputes, reported that the "[Greek] army morale [was] at lowest possible" with "two detachments going over to the guerrillas in last three days."[10] Although Washington was reluctant to be forced into a situation it did not choose, its assumption that the Soviets were bent on world domination left it little choice. Secretary Marshall's statement to the UN on 26 June 1947 clearly articulated the U.S. opinion that the Soviet Union was responsible for fostering communist revolution in Greece to reinforce Soviet dominance of the Balkan Peninsula.[11]

Despite these fears—however justifiable in 1947—Stalin generally respected the percentages agreement with respect to Greece. Although he supported an established communist party that could bide its time while awaiting events to unfold, the entry of the United States into the conflict and his disagreements with Tito rendered serious Soviet

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[8] The communist guerrillas were commonly referred to as "bandits" by U.S. and Greek leaders throughout the war. "British Embassy to the Department of State," DOS, *FRUS 1947, Near East and Africa*, 5:33.

[9] Ibid., 5:33–34.

[10] "Mr. Mark F. Ethridge to the Secretary of State," telegram, February 17, 1947, DOS, *FRUS 1947, Near East and Africa*, 5:820.

[11] Marshall stated: "The case is one of peculiar difficulty for the Security Council because the acts complained of by Greece and substantiated by the report of the Commission of Investigation are a part of a world-wide Communist effort to subvert governments and institutions not subservient to the Soviet Union. The Government and Communist Party of Yugoslavia, and to a lesser extent those of Bulgaria and Albania, have been carrying on activities under the direction of the USSR the purpose of which is (1) to separate Macedonia from the remainder of Greece in order to make Grecian Macedonia a part of a new Macedonian state, and (2) to set up eventually in the remainder of Greece a Communist-controlled government which would force Greece into a Soviet-dominated Balkan bloc. These activities have included the dispatch of arms and military equipment to Greek guerrillas, the training and sending to Greece of reinforcements for the Greek guerrillas and the extension of aid through many other means to the Greek subversive Communist movement." Ibid., 867.

involvement a moot point.[12] Since Stalin feared a direct confrontation with the United States so close to home, he was willing to abandon the questionable Greek Communist movement to its fate.[13] Washington policymakers nevertheless extrapolated the internal Greek threat to the larger international picture and postulated future threats to Iran, Italy, Turkey, and France, who were undergoing either external Soviet threat or seeds of conflict with their own communist movements. The fear was that communist success in Greece would motivate communist organizations elsewhere. This mindset would continue for decades.

The Truman Doctrine, embodied in President Truman's address to Congress on 12 March 1947 and codified in Public Law 75 of 22 May 1947, provided the president with the authority to offer up to $400 million in aid to Greece and military personnel to serve "in an advisory capacity only."[14] This last stipulation inspired much hand wringing as the military situation in Greece waxed and waned. Some, like career diplomat George Kennan, believed that economic means were the primary tool against communist expansion, and that they were probably sufficient to solve the problems in Greece.[15] Congressional and State Department hawks, however, called for American combat units to address the Greek problem.

Cooler heads prevailed, however, as Secretary of State Marshall, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) concluded that U.S. forces beyond an advisory element were unnecessary.[16] Additionally, the objective of advice and assistance was to multiply the number of anti-communist forces around the world, rather than require the commitment of U.S. forces. By limiting itself exclusively to an advisory mission, however, Washington transferred virtually all control over the outcome of the

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[12] Peter J. Stavrakis, "Soviet Policy in Areas of Limited Control: The Case of Greece, 1944–1949," in *Greece at the Crossroads: The Civil War and Its Legacy*, ed. John O. Iatrides and Linda Wrigley (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 228.

[13] Jones, *"New Kind of War,"* 224.

[14] Act to Provide Assistance to Greece and Turkey, HR 2616, 80th Cong., 1st sess. (1947).

[15] Jones, *"New Kind of War"* 45.

[16] Kenneth W. Condit, *1947–1949*, vol. 2 of *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1996), 27.

conflict to the Greek government and armed forces. The White House made this decision primarily due to fear of escalation. The unintended consequence was that the desired result—the elimination of communists in Greece—proved elusive since it relied on coercing the Greeks into taking aggressive action that they were not inclined to take.

B. BELLIGERENTS

The two parties to the conflict were the Greek Communist Party, or KKE, and the Greek nationalists.[17] Since the KKE's establishment in 1918, these two entities had bitterly opposed each other with the Communists biding their time, despite being frequently targeted by right-wing groups. The Second World War and its aftermath delivered the conditions the Communists required to renew their struggle to overthrow the existing government.

1. Greek Communists

The KKE was founded on 4 November 1918 on strict Marxist principles of urban-based revolution. The Russian Revolution heavily influenced the KKE's early leadership, which viewed the subsequently established Soviet Union as its ideological leader. In 1931, Stalin appointed Nikos Zachariades to head the KKE, and under his leadership, it grew in membership and political power.[18] The result was that King George II, newly restored to the monarchy in 1935, perceived the Communists to be an imminent threat to Greece. The king subsequently dissolved parliament, appointed General Ioannis Metaxas as prime minister, and granted him dictatorial powers to secure the state against communism. Metaxas ably neutralized the communist threat but alienated many who were previously government supporters. The communists who escaped persecution were, as Christopher Woodhouse describes, "tough, disciplined, secretive, [and] hardened by harsh experience."[19] From the KKE's remnants emerged the strongest and largest resistance group during the German occupation, the National Liberation Front (EAM).

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[17] KKE in Greek stands for Kommounistiko Komma Elladas.

[18] Stalin appointed Zachariades to lead the KKE in 1931 to revive the waning KKE. David Close, *The Origins of the Greek Civil War* (London: Longman Group, 1995), 20.

[19] Woodhouse, *Struggle for Greece*, 20.

From 1942 to 1944, the British supported EAM and other resistance groups against the Nazis, but the results were unimpressive. As the largest group, EAM used its superior position to intimidate non-Communists and posture itself for postwar dominance. Ultimately, this meant that the guerrillas spent at least as much time fighting each other as they did the Germans.[20] With the unpopular Greek government in exile in Cairo, it was left to those who remained behind to fight it out for postwar spoils.

The Communists had failed to win the right to rule among the wartime resistance groups. The Communists failed again—fighting in vain against the British—in the turmoil that followed the German withdrawal.[21] Following King George's return to the throne in 1946, the remaining Communists formed the Democratic Army (DA) under longtime Communist and respected resistance leader General Markos Vafiades. Meanwhile, Zachariades resumed his position as the organization's most influential political leader. Under these personalities, the Communists made their third, and ultimately final, attempt to usurp the Greek government by force. The KKE had four factors in its favor: political disunity among Greek nationalists, support from other communist states, a poor Greek economy, and a dilapidated GNA that Greece could not field without foreign assistance.[22]

2. Greek Nationalists

King George II's return to the throne was short lived, as he died on 1 April 1947. George's death turned out to be favorable for the nationalists since his younger brother Paul I—a far more personable figure—succeeded him.[23] Complicating the political situation, however, was that the Greek Parliament had been in constant upheaval since the German departure. U.S. and British diplomats helped mediate a coalition government that remained intact, although barely, throughout the civil war. These fortunate incidents

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[20] Doris M. Condit, *Case Study in Guerrilla War: Greece during World War II* (Washington, DC: American University, 1961), 74–6.

[21] O'Ballance, *Greek Civil War*, 95.

[22] Robert W. Selton, "Communist Errors in the Anti-Bandit War," *Military Review* 45 (September 1965): 77.

[23] O'Ballance, *Greek Civil War*, 137.

at least provided the impression of inclusion, democratic processes, and stability, which were factors unknown in Greek politics of the day.

Greek nationalist goals centered on ridding the country of the armed communist menace and, ideally, of all communist influence. To this end, the advisory effort was closely aligned with these goals. Political infighting nevertheless continued between government factions throughout the war, and the Greeks consistently complained of insufficient U.S. aid while emphasizing their own sacrifices in the great power struggle between the western democracies and the eastern communist states.[24] The nature of the conflict helps explain this attitude. Although the conflict was a national crisis that consumed enormous resources, it lacked the life and death struggle that might have forced the Greeks to unite themselves more completely. To this end, the advisors—whose mission it was to prevent a worsening situation—were incapable of unifying the political factions in a lasting way.

Early indications of nationalist chances for victory were disappointing. In July 1946, a Communist attack on an army camp in Macedonia resulted in seven GNA soldiers killed and 25 captured.[25] In October, fighting expanded throughout northern Greece and into the Peloponnese, with at least 60 killed and 53 wounded.[26] In November, under pressure from the rebels, the Greek gendarmerie abandoned 55 outposts in northern Greece, which left over 800 square miles of territory bordering Albania and Yugoslavia out of government control.[27] By December 1946, DA forces began operating in battalion and regiment sized formations when only six months before they had operated in merely platoon size.[28] The tide was shifting in the DA's favor. The GNA facing them was, as

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[24] Jones, *New Kind of War*, 187-88, 197-98.

[25] DOS, "Greece and Turkey Background Material Political, Economic, Military, Budget Presentation Fiscal Year 1949," 1948, Entry 136, Box 6, JUSMAGG, Office of the Comptroller, Budget and Fiscal File, 1948–52, RG 334, NACP, 19.

[26] Ibid., 23.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 26.

historian Howard Jones describes it, "poorly led, ill-trained, undisciplined, inadequately provisioned, low in morale, and reluctant to take the offensive."[29]

Although Greeks traced their warfighting roots back to antiquity, even the relatively young GNA had seen better times. Under the leadership of General Alexander Papagos, it had valiantly punished an attempted Italian invasion that subsequently necessitated Germany's invasion in 1941.[30] During the occupation, it became a mix of resistance fighters, collaborators, and survivors. Following the war, however, the GNA fell prey to the multiple factions vying for Greece in the ensuing power struggle. By late 1946, the GNA consisted of approximately 115,000 soldiers and another 35,000 gendarmerie.[31] Many units were assigned to static defense duties throughout the country, however, which made them easy prey for larger DA units, while handicapping their ability to conduct offensive operations.

A bright note for the GNA throughout the war was its chain of command architecture and force structure. Although its senior leadership faced political interference and meddling, the GNA was not diluted by the creation of large numbers of specialized units reporting to parallel chains of command. It did create elite commando units of handpicked volunteers, but these commandoes worked closely with the conventional units they supported and traced their command and control to the battalions and brigades to which they were assigned. Figure 1 shows a military structure conducive to effective command and control with the proper leadership.

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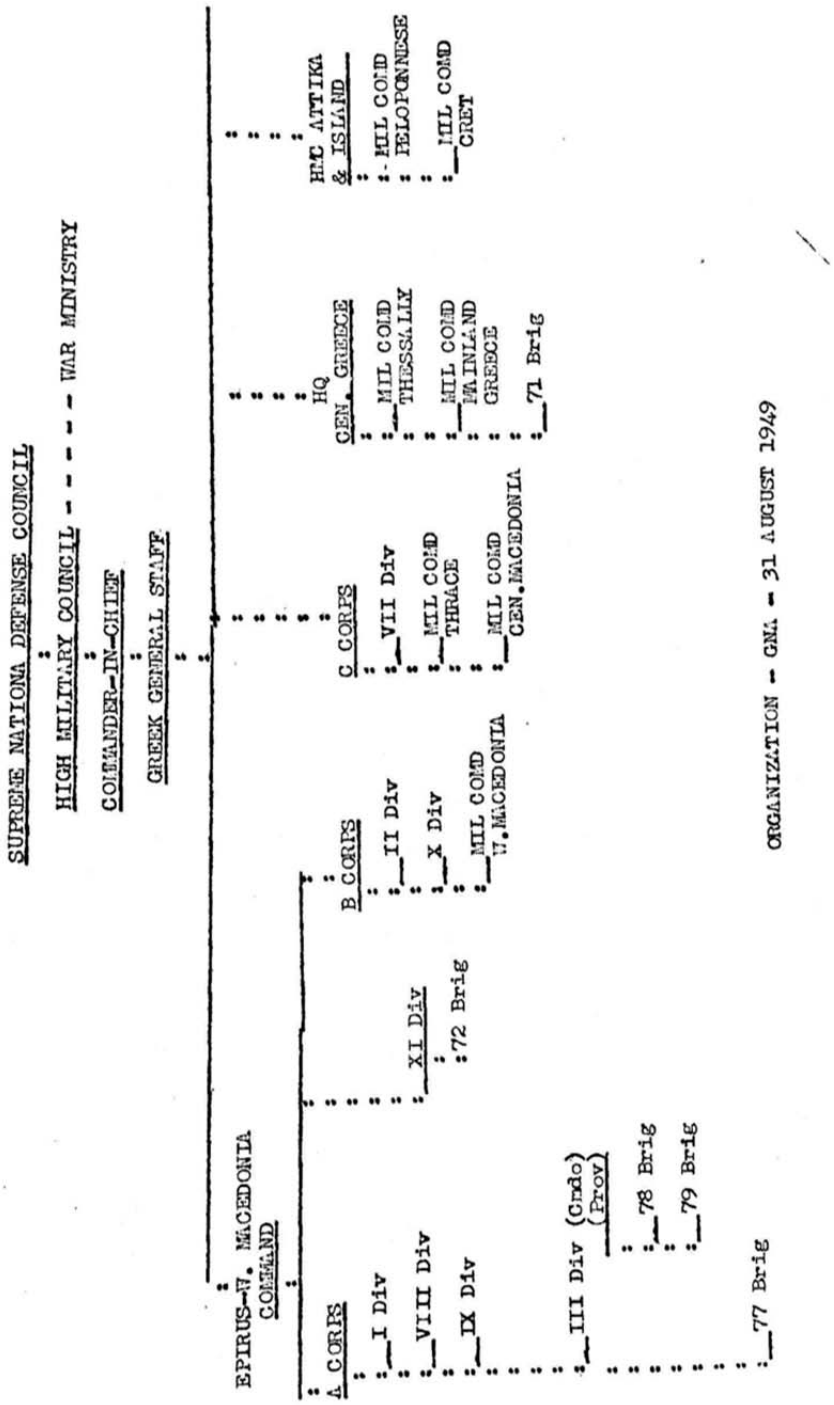
[29] Jones, *"New Kind of War*," 24.

[30] O'Ballance, 34-37.

[31] Jones, *"New Kind of War*," 24. The gendarmerie is a national militarized police force common throughout Europe.

Figure 1. Greek Military Organization



Source: Joint United States Military Advisory and Planning Group, "JUSMAPG: Brief History 1 January 1948 to 31 August 1949," September 15, 1949, Entry 155, Box 146, 31, JUSMAGG, USAG, AGS, CFU, Historical File, 1947–50, RG 334, NACP.

C. BATTLEGROUND

Greece's borders in 1947 were nearly identical to those of today. Greece consisted of numerous islands and a mainland with an inordinately long coastline in comparison to its landmass. Its northern border with Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria measured more than 600 miles and was impossible to secure. These three countries provided arms and supplies to the Greek Communists and served as safe havens where Communists could rest, rearm, and refit in safety. Approximately 25 percent of Greece's land was available for farming, but poor soil conditions, mismanagement, and primitive farming methods resulted in insufficient agricultural productivity and thus a net import requirement for Greece.[32] The other 75 percent of Greece was mountainous, sparsely populated, and poorly connected by roads. The Communists established their main base areas in the northern mountains, although they launched attacks throughout the country.

Demographically, Greece had become more homogeneous in the decades leading up to the civil war. A war with Turkey in the 1920s and the subsequent population exchange resulted in an ethnic Greek population as high as 96 percent.[33] This homogeneity removed ethnic division as a significant factor in the conflict and made it more difficult for the communists to recruit support among the Greek population. Despite these factors, the Greek economy was underdeveloped, its people were poorly educated, and many were surviving on subsistence farming with little hope for a better future.[34] Thus, Greece was still a fertile territory for a populist revolutionary movement.

D. ACT I: U.S. INVOLVEMENT—DOLLARS AND SENSE

Vigorous U.S. involvement in Greece under the newly minted Truman Doctrine began in a haphazard fashion with questions surrounding the military mission's role. The State Department created the American Mission for Aid to Greece (AMAG), which operated independently of the ambassador under former Nebraska Governor and close

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[32] O'Ballance, *Greek Civil War*, 20.

[33] Condit, *Case Study in Guerrilla War*, 33.

[34] Larry Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 11; Jones, *New Kind of War*, 27-28.

friend of President Harry Truman, Dwight Griswold. Likewise, the War Department established the United States Army Group Greece (USAGG) subordinate to AMAG on 14 April 1947. The department envisioned this organization as one whose primary mission was to assess the GNA's materiel requirements and transmit those to the appropriate authorities for procurement.[35] Even though Public Law 75, which codified the Truman Doctrine in Greece, allowed for advisory functions, the War Department restricted USAGG's authorities to supply.[36] It would require further reflection on the deteriorating situation in Greece for U.S. leaders to accept the need for a more expansive and aggressive mission.

Major General Livesay assumed command of USAGG shortly after its establishment. Livesay had served as a lieutenant in World War I and as a division commander in The Second World War. Even though the War Department projected his command would consist of fewer than 100 personnel, the scope of his responsibilities and the gravity of the situation required a senior officer—a common pattern in U.S. advisory programs throughout the Cold War. Although the operational and tactical level advisors working for Livesay were typically junior in rank to their counterparts, there was value in the senior advisor being of a near-equivalent grade to the senior military commander in the host nation force.

Upon arrival in Greece, Griswold and Livesay energetically began coordinating U.S. aid across the gamut of assistance sectors, including infrastructure, communications, and the military. In his initial report of May 1948, Griswold assessed the situation in Greece as particularly dire and "rapidly deteriorating" due to "guerrilla warfare" and the "heightened public fear" it produced.[37] He further observed that economic reconstruction was impossible without addressing the guerrilla problem, since it disrupted nearly all aspects of daily life, including creating a refugee problem that placed an even greater

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[35] U.S. Army, "USAGG Brief History, Procurement, 24 May 47–31 Aug 49," 1949, Entry 155, Box 146, Records of Interservice Agencies, JUSMAGG, USAG, AGS, CFU, RG 334, NACP, 5.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Dwight Griswold, "AMAG Initial Report," September 5, 1947, Entry 24, Box 21, General Records of the Department of State, Records of the Office of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs, 1947–1950, Quarterly Reports—AMAG-May 1948, RG 59, NACP (hereafter General Records of the Department of State cited as GRDOS and Records of the Office of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs cited as ROGTIA.

strain on a very weak economy.[38] This observation simply confirmed the challenge of battling an insurgency due to the interrelated nature of political, military, and economic spheres to the roots of the conflict.

Livesay set out to determine GNA shortcomings and began addressing them through Greek and U.S. channels. In one of his initial assessments of the GNA, he evaluated it as having an "excellent combat record," with its main shortcoming being infiltration by communist sympathizers; he also noted the improved GNA morale that appeared to accompany the public U.S. announcement of assistance to Greece.[39] This assessment was overly optimistic based on the GNA's unimpressive record. Livesay also began receiving requests from Greek leadership to increase the size of the GNA. The issue of Greek leaders viewing the GNA's size as insufficient would plague him and his successor throughout the war. In part, these requests had merit despite the significant advantage in manpower the GNA possessed. Many GNA units were deployed in static positions guarding towns and villages, and thus were unavailable for offensive action against an elusive guerrilla enemy that numbered approximately 22,000 at this point in the war.[40] Figure 2 shows the disposition of communist forces in January 1948. Despite this argument, the GNA's poor performance against the Communists was more the result of incompetent command and control, insufficiently aggressive leaders, political meddling, and poor morale than imbalance in forces.[41] Considering a small British force had crushed the 1944 rebellion and struck fear into the hearts of the communists, it seemed entirely reasonable that a well-led, motivated, and much larger GNA could do the same. Livesay and Griswold set about to assist as they could while addressing the elephant in the room—the willingness to fight hard—which U.S. dollars could not buy for Greece.

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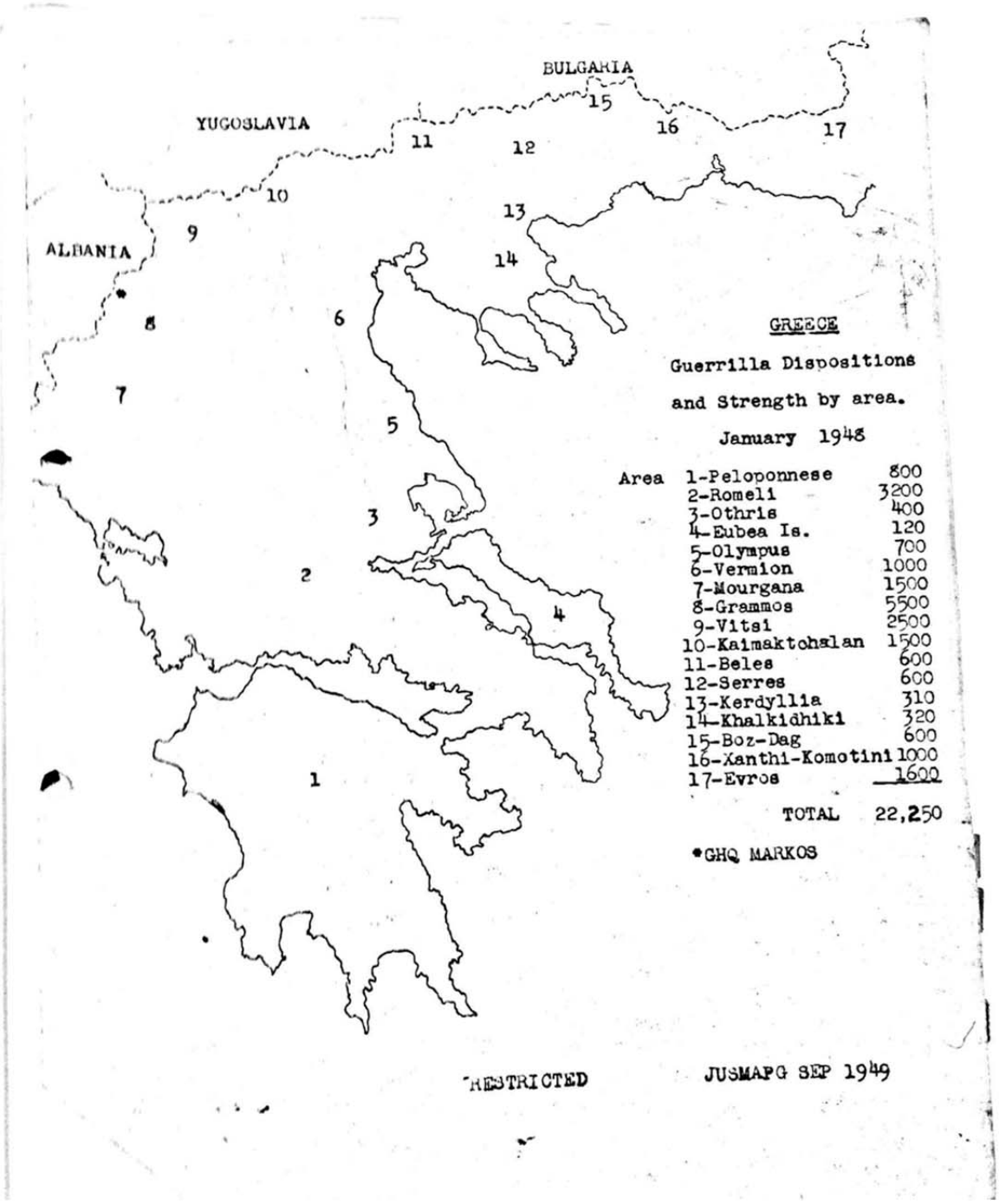
[38] Griswold, "AMAG Initial Report," September 5, 1947.

[39] William Livesay, "Personal WDGPO for Norstad," August 15, 1947, Entry 147, Box 112, Records of Interservice Agencies, JUSMAGG, USAG, AGS, CFU, Incoming and Outgoing Messages, RG 334, NACP, 3.

[40] JUSMAPG, "Brief History," 26.

[41] Ibid., 5-6; Jones, *New Kind of War*, 63.

Figure 2. Disposition of Communist Forces in Greece, January 1948



Source: Joint United States Military Advisory and Planning Group, "JUSMAPG: Brief History 1 January 1948 to 31 August 1949," September 15, 1949, Entry 155, Box 146, 8, JUSMAGG, USAG, AGS, CFU, Historical File, 1947–50, RG 334, NACP.

Despite the élan of the Truman Doctrine speech and subsequent legislative action, there was nevertheless pressure to be reasonable in the recommended size of the GNA; any increases needed to be justified with strong arguments. Livesay resisted initial Greek demands for increasing the GNA's size, but eventually supported a growth of 10,000 to eliminate insufficient forces as an excuse for GNA lethargy.[42] Livesay and Griswold also sought to rectify the defensive mindset of the GNA by supporting the creation of a National Defense Corps (NDC) of lightly armed soldiers that could fill the routine, but necessary static security role and relieve the GNA units to pursue the DA.[43] Additionally, they pushed the Greeks to dismiss ineffective leaders—calling for the relief of the Greek First Army Commander and two of the three corps commanders—citing their lack of aggressiveness.[44] These recommendations, backed primarily by Griswold's forceful personality and deep pockets, began to force some necessary reforms in the Greek government and military.

By the end of 1947, however, the military situation in Greece had deteriorated to the point that it threatened the effectiveness of the larger aid program, which was the cornerstone of U.S. Cold War strategy. On Christmas Day 1947, 3,500 DA guerrillas attacked the 900-man garrison in Konitsa in northern Greece to establish a communist capital, which they hoped would lead to greater credibility, foreign recognition, and most importantly, greater aid.[45] Fighting for their lives, the GNA troops held off the attackers until reinforcements could break through and relieve them. Although this defensive victory served to rally deflated Greek army and civilian spirits, it still highlighted inadequacies in GNA combat performance. As AMAG Chief Dwight Griswold reported

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[42] Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece*, 227.

[43] "Governor Dwight P. Griswold to the Secretary of State," telegram, November 4, 1947, DOS, *FRUS 1947, Near East and Africa*, 5:396-98; Dwight Griswold, "AMAG Monthly Report," November 15, 1947, Entry 24, Box 21, 6-7, GRDOS, ROGTIA, 1947–1950, Quarterly Reports—AMAG-May 1948, RG 59, NACP; Jones, *New Kind of War*, 105.

[44] William Livesay, "Confidential Memorandum for the Prime Minister from General Livesay and General Rawlins Concerning Possible Changes in High Command of the Greek Army," memorandum, October 21, 1947, Entry 146, Box 49, JUSMAGG, USAG, AGS, CFU, General Decimal File, 1947–48, 322–331.3, RG 334, NACP; Jones, *New Kind of War*, 71.

[45] Dwight Griswold, "AMAG Monthly Report," January 15, 1948, Entry 24, Box 21, 2-3, GRDOS, ROGTIA, 1947–1950, Quarterly Reports—AMAG-May 1948, RG 59, NACP; Jones, *New Kind of War*, 118.

afterward, the GNA "infantry troops still do not close with the enemy."[46] U.S. advisors spent the next twenty months addressing this problem.

Washington and its representatives in Greece subsequently concluded that military and economic aid alone was insufficient for Greece to defeat the communists. They determined that Greece needed direct U.S. military advice and directed the establishment of the Joint U.S. Military Advisory and Planning Group (JUSMAPG) under General Livesay. JUSMAPG's mission statement was "to assist the Greek Armed Forces in achieving internal security in Greece at the earliest possible date, by providing to GNA (including NDC), Royal Hellenic Navy (RHN), and Royal Hellenic Air Force (RHAF), stimulating and aggressive assistance in the form of operational and logistical advice."[47] Marshall emphasized this change in focus to Griswold noting that the "destruction [of] guerrilla forces and establishment internal security now have assumed paramount importance as necessary preliminary for American aid to Greece."[48]

USAGG remained as a logistics hub for receiving equipment and supplies, but the JUSMAPG commander assumed responsibility for all military recommendations to the U.S. senior civilian representative, JCS, and the Greek Armed Forces. The creation of this new entity also required a reexamination of its chain of command. Since military operations assumed the central role, the military leadership in the United States recommended that strictly military matters rest in JCS channels versus flowing through the Department of State. Thus, JUSMAPG reported to JCS on all military matters, while maintaining open communication with embassy and AMAG leaders.[49]

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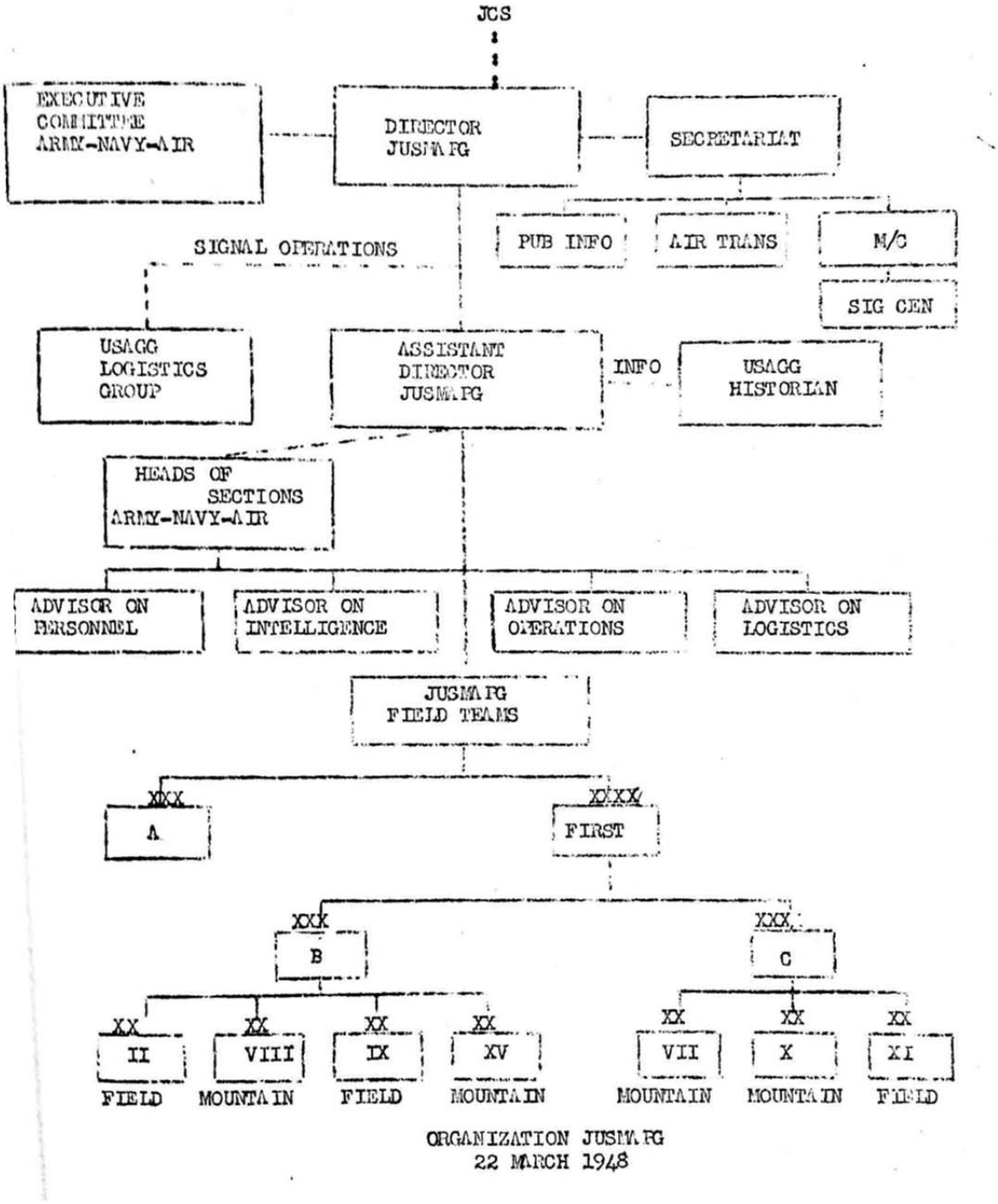
[46] Griswold, "AMAG Monthly Report," January 15, 1948, 3.

[47] William Livesay, "JUSMAPG Establishment Order," January 15, 1948, Entry 146, Box 49, JUSMAGG, USAG, AGS, CFU, General Decimal File 1947–48, RG 334, NACP, 1.

[48] "Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan)," memorandum, January 13, 1948, DOS, *FRUS, 1948*, vol. 4, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1974), 27, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1948v04.

[49] See Figure 3 for the JUSMAPG chain of command.

Figure 3. JUSMAPG Chain of Command



Source: Joint United States Military Advisory and Planning Group, "JUSMAPG: Brief History 1 January 1948 to 31 August 1949," September 15, 1949, Entry 155, Box 146, 8, JUSMAGG, USAG, AGS, CFU, Historical File, 1947–50, RG 334, NACP.

The proximity of The Second World War to the Greek Civil War meant that Livesay could draw from a pool of officers and enlisted who had experience in combat and training forces for combat. In January 1948, Livesay briefed the arriving U.S. officers on their duties as operational advisors. His speech to them set the tone for the difficult political and military environment they would operate in and echoed contemporary guidance and best practices on advising foreign armies. He presented the mission as "quell[ing] the riots and establish[ing] a stable Greece," with JUSMAPG personnel "advis[ing] them [Greeks] and assist[ing] them in every way that we can."[50] He cautioned against trying to "make an American Army out of the Greek Army" because the Greeks had their own customs and way of doing things.[51] American methods might not work for them. Finally, he rightly pointed out that advisor success was measured in the counterpart's performance. Throughout his speech, he emphasized the overriding theme of instilling aggressiveness due to the GNA's defensive attitude. Despite this theme, Livesay directed the advisors to avoid directly participating in combat. For this reason, they were unarmed. Nevertheless, they were still expected to conduct themselves in a fashion that would not discredit the bravery of the American soldier. Thus, Livesay's instruction to his advisors was to "observe combat but don't get involved in it."[52]

This ambiguous directive belied the urgency of the U.S. position in the Greek Civil War and seemed to place a higher value on remaining unobserved than on winning or advising effectively. Furthermore, it presented significant difficulties for advisors who were asked to instill aggressiveness in their counterparts, yet had to remain inconspicuous during times when aggressive action was needed most. During times of indecisiveness or timidity on the part of the Greeks, advisors could not play the vital role of setting a bold example that might transfer to their counterparts. Instead, they were expected to reshape

[50] William Livesay, "Livesay Guidance to Advisers," January 1948, Entry 146, Folder 49, JUSMAGG, USAG, AGS, CFU, General Decimal File, 1947–48, RG 334, NACP, 1.

[51] Ibid., 2.

[52] Ibid., 7.

the culture through critique and subtle suggestion. Judging from the advisors' reports, this approach did not always achieve the results desired.

E. ACT II: GENERAL JAMES VAN FLEET TAKES OVER

In early 1948, the military situation in Greece was showing little improvement, and the expectations for rapid success from Washington were far too high. Consequently, Secretary of State Marshall recommended the need for a more "impressive personality at the head of the military contingent [in Greece]."[53] Greek government officials also had made disparaging remarks about Livesay.[54] Any negative assessment of Livesay's performance, however, was primarily a result of the War Department's initial structure of the military's role in the aid mission. For his first six months, Livesay was Griswold's subordinate and merely supervised the military supply effort, which meant his role was naturally subdued. Seeking a replacement also may have been a Greek political play to find someone more sympathetic to their constant requests for more aid. Whatever the deciding factors, Marshall supported the nomination of Major General James A. Van Fleet to replace Livesay as commander of the expanded military mission. Van Fleet, newly promoted to Lieutenant General, assumed command of JUSMAPG on 24 February 1948.

General Van Fleet was a member of the famed West Point class of 1915, which also included Dwight Eisenhower and Omar Bradley. His career was marked by his notable efforts to turn around underperforming commands in Europe during The Second World War at the division and corps level. By war's end, Van Fleet had distinguished himself as an aggressive commander who was adept at taking over delicate situations marked by forced leadership changes and immediately improving morale and combat effectiveness.[55] His leadership traits would be tested in the even more delicate

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[53] "The Secretary of State to the American Mission for Aid to Greece," telegram, January 26, 1948, DOS, *FRUS, 1948, Eastern Europe; Soviet Union*, 4:36.

[54] For example, Marshall had met Greek Queen Frederika while at a wedding in England, who made disparaging remarks about Livesay's aggressiveness. Braim, *Will to Win*, 156.

[55] Braim, *Will to Win*, 99-101, 137-38.

international environment in Greece where he and his team would have only moral authority with which to exert influence over others.

By Van Fleet's arrival, the GNA had increased in size to 132,000 troops, and the NDC had grown steadily to 66 battalions on its way to 96 for a final strength of 48,000 troops.[56] His first realized achievement was reducing the amount of political interference and security leaks in GNA operational plans. In a meeting of the Supreme National Defense Council (SNDC) on 26 February 1948, its members decided to remove themselves from the review process for military plans, instead granting full authority to the commander of the Greek General Staff to plan and execute military operations without interference.[57] Thus, the fruits of Livesay and Griswold's efforts began to be put into practice, although the results would not be immediate.

Under Van Fleet, JUSMAPG focused on three key areas of improvement for the Greek military: training, operational and tactical advice, and the replacement of ineffective leaders. Beginning in 1948, JUSMAPG attempted to improve the GNA training standards and mentality.[58] The advisors addressed training deficiencies by introducing U.S. methods and doctrines as the basis for instruction. Additionally, they established schools mirroring the U.S. training pipeline. This U.S.-centric model was a common theme in other U.S.-led advisory missions throughout the world and may have needlessly disrupted the system the Greeks had in place up to that point. Realizing that it would be difficult for Greek units to come off line from fighting the ongoing war, JUSMAPG instituted demonstration training teams consisting of a platoon from a larger element, which would be trained and then returned to its unit to provide instruction.[59] This concept had merit, but Greek failure to follow through on training was a source of consternation for JUSMAPG leadership that was never adequately rectified.

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[56] Dwight, Griswold, "AMAG Monthly Report," March 15, 1948, Entry 24, Box 21, GRDOS, ROGTIA, 1947–50, Quarterly Reports—AMAG-May 1948, RG 59, NACP, 2.

[57] The SNDC was the equivalent of the U.S. National Security Council. Ibid.

[58] JUSMAPG, "Brief History," 8–9.

[59] Ibid., 8.

In January and April 1949, General Reuben Jenkins, Van Fleet's deputy, admonished the respective American advisor chiefs of the Greek B and C Corps for their corps' failure to emphasize training at every opportunity, even when some of the unit was engaged in operations.[60] Jenkins referred to the U.S. experience when he wrote, "every American Division regimental and battalion commander soon learned in WWII that a unit can conduct offensive or defensive battle and at the same time carry on some vitally needed tactical or technical training with its supports and reserves at the same time. They also learned that this combination paid large dividends."[61] Greek leaders nevertheless largely ignored advisors' recommendations on training during or outside of combat.

As late as September 1949, the senior U.S. advisor to B Corps was still urging that "a vigorous training program be instituted by the GNA without delay" in the areas of "leadership and initiative on all levels," combined arms operations, and basic infantry skills such as organizing "in preparation for possible counterattacks."[62] This report came from one of the two corps primarily involved in the final operations against the Communists and after all major combat operations in Greece had ceased, thus calling into question how much impact advisors had on the training standards of Greek forces. Moreover, the JUSMAPG reports did not truthfully reflect the reporting from the subordinate echelon advisors. In the 30 June 1949 quarterly JUSMAPG report, for example, the training section reads, "response to acceptance of the JUSMAPG recommendations on various training projects has been excellent during the quarter and reflects an improved general attitude among GNA commanders as to the appreciated value of actual training for their troops."[63] This statement directly contradicted the B Corps senior advisor, who wrote in May 1949, "'Lip service' is rendered by the GNA

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[60] Reuben Jenkins, "Message, Love 2386, JUSMAPG to Chief JUSMAPG Dets X Division B Corps," January 6, 1949, Entry 147, Box 115, JUSMAGG, USAG, AGS, CFU, Incoming and Outgoing Messages, 1947–52, RG 334, NACP.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Jesse L. Gibney, "Monthly Report as of 2400 Hrs 31 Aug 49, Headquarters JUSMAPG Det, 'B' Corps, Kozani Greece," September 6, 1949, Entry 146, Box 55, JUSMAGG, USAG, AGS, CFU, General Decimal File 1949, 311–319.1, RG 334, NACP.

[63] James Van Fleet, "JUSMAPG—USAGG Quarterly Report for Period Ending 30 June 1949," July 14, 1949, Entry 24, Box 21, GRDOS, ROGTIA, 1947–1950, Quarterly Reports—AMAG-May 1948, RG 59, NACP, 9.

but, by our standards, training conducted and being conducted is negligible. The thought of training troops on position continues to fall on unfertile ground."[64] Even the more positive C Corps senior advisor implied that little training had taken place due to operations and the lack of suitable training areas, although he noted "an honest effort made at all levels to carry out training directives."[65]

In March and April 1948, the GNA launched operations with U.S. advisor support in central Greece to clear out two enemy pockets totaling 3,800 Communists.[66] The Greeks displayed significant tactical acumen during these operations, accounting for 3,140 communists killed, captured, or surrendered.[67] From these successes, it appeared that the GNA had recovered its fighting spirit and that further offensives might decisively conclude the conflict by the end of 1948.[68] In other areas of the country such as the Peloponnese, however, the guerrillas inflicted heavy losses against NDC units.[69] Despite a solid foundation in theory, the NDC turned out to be largely a failure. Its forces lacked the training and equipment to challenge communist attacks adequately, its numbers counted against overall GNA numbers, and its units did not replace as many GNA battalions as originally promised.[70] As seen in its performance in the Peloponnese, the idea that the NDC could secure areas cleared by the GNA remained in doubt. The effectiveness of the government's campaign, however, relied on each to perform its role. Meanwhile, despite the DA's heavy losses in direct confrontations with the GNA, it still

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[64] Jesse L. Gibney, "Monthly Report as of 2400 Hrs 31 May 49, Headquarters JUSMAPG Det, 'B' Corps, Kozani Greece," June 1, 1949, Entry 146, Box 55, JUSMAGG, USAG, AGS, CFU, General Decimal File 1949, 311–319.1, RG 334, NACP, 11.

[65] Temple G. Holland, "Addendum to Monthly C Corps Report, May 1949," June 16, 1949, Entry 146, Box 55, JUSMAGG, USAG, AGS, CFU, General Decimal File 1949, 311–319.1, RG 334, NACP, 2.

[66] Dwight Griswold, "AMAG Monthly Report," April 15, 1948, Entry 24, Box 21, GRDOS, ROGTIA, 1947–1950, Quarterly Reports—AMAG-May 1948, RG 59, NACP; Dwight Griswold, "AMAG Monthly Report," May 15, 1948, Entry 24, Box 21, GRDOS, ROGTIA, 1947–1950, Quarterly Reports—AMAG-May 1948, RG 59, NACP, MD.

[67] Ibid.; Griswold, "AMAG Monthly Report," April 15, 1948.

[68] James Van Fleet, "Message Love 844 USAGG Athens Greece to Director, P & O, Washington, DC," March 24, 1948, Entry 148, Box 113, JUSMAGG, USAG, AGS, CFU, Incoming and Outgoing Messages 1947–52, RG 334, NACP.

[69] Griswold, "AMAG Monthly Report," May 15, 1948.

[70] "Governor Dwight P. Griswold to the Secretary of State," telegram, DOS, *FRUS 1947, Near East and Africa*, 5:428.

managed to find either willing or forced replacements in the northern mountain areas it controlled with populations more sympathetic to the movement.[71] March 1948 also saw the replacement of nearly the entire Greek military leadership as ten lieutenant generals were retired and replaced with newly promoted corps commanders. Other critical positions in the War Ministry, NDC, and Army were also reshuffled or replaced.[72] These personnel replacements at least showed a willingness on the part of the Greek government to address decisively the politicization of its military.

In July and August, the GNA attacked the strongest concentration of DA forces in Greece in the Grammos Mountains near the border with Albania. This area was particularly challenging since it was isolated logistically from Greece but could be supplied from across the border.[73] A successful attack on the communist stronghold would appear to be an important symbol of GNA superiority and the Greek government's ultimate victory. The terrain favored the defenders, however, and the lack of infrastructure meant envelopment by the GNA would depend on skill, leadership, and aggressiveness, three traits generally lacking in that organization. The operation commenced in a disorganized fashion against a well-fortified and determined enemy led by General Markos.

Beginning 16 June 1948, the GNA attacked approximately 11,400–12,500 DA guerrillas with the Greek A and B Corps totaling at least 40,000 troops plus air and artillery support.[74] Despite the mismatch in forces, the Communists fought well from their strong positions, and the GNA was unable to make significant headway during the early phases of the operation.[75] Moreover, the B Corps commander frustrated his senior U.S. advisor, which quickly elevated to Van Fleet's level.[76] JUSMAPG provided specific

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[71] Griswold, "AMAG Monthly Report," May 15, 1948.

[72] Griswold, "AMAG Monthly Report," April 15, 1948.

[73] Shrader, *Withered Vine*, 226.

[74] Ibid., 227; Dwight Griswold, "AMAG Monthly Report," July 15, 1948, Entry 24, Box 21, GRDOS, ROGTIA, 1947–1950, Quarterly Reports—AMAG-May 1948, RG 59, NACP.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Reuben Jenkins, "Message Love 1446, JUSMAPG to Chief JUSMAPG Det B Corps," July 21, 1948, Entry 147, Box 114, JUSMAGG, USASG, AGS, CFU, Incoming and Outgoing Messages 1947–52, RG 334, NACP.

direction to the senior advisor, but he was unable to compel his Greek counterpart into action.[77] This threat to the operation's successful outcome caused Van Fleet to intervene personally and request the corps commander's relief.[78] The corps responded with a renewed effort, but the communists fought tenaciously—despite mounting casualties—until Markos ordered the remaining forces to escape across the border into Albania or east to another DA stronghold in Vitsi.

The fighting had been costly for both sides. The DA lost approximately 3,600 killed, captured, and surrendered, and the GNA, 800 killed, 5,000 wounded, and 60 missing.[79] With its victory, the GNA gained mostly insignificant land to which it had to devote troops to prevent communist recapture. Additionally, since the borders were porous, the guerrillas maintained freedom of movement that the GNA could not affect. Nevertheless, the victory displayed the value of advisors in planning and incorporating supporting arms such as artillery and airpower. Unfortunately, it also illustrated their continued inability to compel into action Greek leaders otherwise disposed to inaction and defensive measures. Only the relief of these leaders seemed to improve the situation, but this was an unwieldy method that took weeks to accomplish.[80] The GNA could not afford to waste time squabbling over personnel matters while concurrently trying to maintain the initiative during offensive operations.

In a clear attempt to encourage future aggressive action through positive reinforcement, Van Fleet lauded commanders he identified as having performed well in the Grammos operation with personal congratulatory letters invoking visions of

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[77] JUSMAPG, "Message Love 1386 JUSMAPG HQS to Chief of B Corps JUSMAPG," July 13, 1948, Entry 147, Box 114, JUSMAGG, USASG, AGS, CFU, Incoming and Outgoing Messages 1947–52, RG 334, NACP;

[78] Shrader, *Withered Vine*, 227; James Van Fleet, "Message Love 1461, USAGG to CSGPO," July 23, 1948, Entry 147, Box 114, JUSMAGG, USASG, AGS, CFU, Incoming and Outgoing Messages 1947–52, RG 334, NACP.

[79] JUSMAPG, "Brief History," 21.

[80] Van Fleet initiated the relief request on 23 July 1948, and it was not acted upon until 4 August 1948. Thus, from the initial problems outlined in the 13 July message, it took until 4 August for a relief. James Van Fleet, "Message Love 1536 JUSMAPG to CSGPO," August 4, 1948, Entry 147, Box 114, Folder 24 PM, JUSMAGG, USASG, AGS, CFU, Incoming and Outgoing Messages, 1947–52, RG 334, NACP.

"inspiring leadership," heroism, and epic "Greek military history."[81] Additionally, his reports to this point implied significant progress in the GNA's morale and leadership. These reports and the succession of relatively successful GNA operations had inspired such optimism in U.S. circles that officials in Washington began inquiring whether assistance to Greece could be reduced by the end of 1948.[82] Since the Grammos operation did not destroy the defending DA force, however, Van Fleet and the new ambassador to Greece, Henry F. Grady, were forced to backpedal from earlier optimistic reports.[83] Moreover, the GNA's performance in the months following Grammos would lay bare weaknesses that advisors had been unable to fix.

Contemporary and official accounts of the advisory program generally give the impression that advisors had great impact on their Greek counterparts, and successfully instilled a spirit of aggressiveness, which was the overall intent of JUSMAPG since its inception.[84] Primary accounts of the time, however, contradict this assertion. The GNA had many methods to avoid aggressive action and responsibility by its individual commanders. One of these methods was the "double company," in which a commander would assign an objective to multiple battalions that would then cobble together a makeshift element under a commander from yet another battalion.[85] This phenomenon undermined unit integrity, unity of command, and unit interoperability training. Additionally, it allowed the commanders to shirk responsibility since they could blame each other for any ensuing confusion in planning or execution. Clearly, the GNA improved its operational and tactical execution compared to the beginning of the war. In contrast to the spirited defense of Greece against the Italian invasion in 1940, however, the performance of the GNA was frustratingly apathetic, and the advisors were limited in

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[81] James Van Fleet, "Message Love 1657 JUSMAPG to Chief JUSMAPG DET B CORPS KOZANI for Lt General Kitrilakis," August 21, 1948, Entry 147, Box 114, Folder 24 PM, JUSMAGG, USASG, AGS, CFU, Incoming and Outgoing Messages, 1947–52, RG 334, NACP.

[82] "Memorandum by the Coordinator for Aid to Greece and Turkey (McGhee) to the Under Secretary of State (Lovett)," memorandum, August 11, 1948, DOS, *FRUS, 1948, Eastern Europe; Soviet Union*, 4:126.

[83] "Memorandum by the Coordinator for Aid to Greece and Turkey (McGhee) to the Under Secretary of State (Lovett)," memorandum, DOS, *FRUS, 1948, Eastern Europe; Soviet Union*, 4:133.

[84] Harris, "Instilling Aggressiveness"; JUSMAPG, "Brief History."

[85] Holland, "Addendum to Monthly C Corps Report, May 1949," 2.

their ability to impart significant change due to entrenched culture and differences of opinion.[86]

Frustration with the Greek conundrum was not limited to U.S. advisors in country. The State Department's Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs held the same view toward the Greek government and its lack of dedication to solving its own internal problems. In a memo from its chief, Joseph Satterthwaite, to the Under Secretary of State, he noted the important message that the United States sent to other nations through the assistance it provided Greece and Turkey. Despite this assistance, however, he lamented the "Greek political leaders [who] frequently seem more concerned with their own narrow party ambitions than with the urgent necessity of working together. . .[to advance] the welfare of the Greek people as a whole."[87] The crisis did not unite Greek political rivals as closely as one might have hoped.

Another difficult problem was Greece's dependency on the United States to solve its economic and military woes. As noted by previous observers such as Griswold, the abundance of U.S. aid led "Greek political leaders to expend all their energies on attempts to increase the amount of aid from the United States, instead of on concentrated efforts to make the most effective use of available resources."[88] Moreover, the tendency of Greek leaders to blame the United States for providing insufficient aid risked making the Greek people believe that they could not overcome the Communists.[89] Washington reflected this sentiment in National Security Council (NSC) 5 in January 1948, stating, "the armed forces of Greece, both military and police units are hampered in their effort to eliminate Communist guerrilla forces by lack of offensive spirit, by political interference, by disposition of units as static guard forces and by poor leadership, particularly in the

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[86] Under General Alexander Papagos, the Greek Army had humiliated an Italian invasion force in 1940. This victory necessitated the German invasion to rescue the pride of their Italian allies.

[87] "Memorandum by the Director, Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Satterthwaite) to the Under Secretary of State (Lovett)," memorandum, January 3, 1949, DOS, *FRUS, 1949*, vol. 6, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1977), 228, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1949v06.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

lower echelons."[90] Later, the NSC recommended insisting that the Greek government address its shortfalls "as a condition for the continuance of the assistance program."[91] Yet, in the next paragraphs it recommended that additional funds be appropriated for addressing the Greek problem.[92] This contradiction exposed the seemingly unavoidable conflict of interest wherein it was to the Greek nationalists' advantage to maintain at least a smoldering security problem if that meant continued U.S. support. The only way for the United States to address this problem was with a GNA victory. While this factor does not fully explain the GNA sluggishness, it was clear that GNA leaders in 1948 bore greater resemblance to the overly cautious General George B. McClellan than the audacious General Ulysses S. Grant.[93]

In an attempt to conclude the civil war before December 1948, the GNA maintained its pressure on the DA, whose forces had shifted to Vitsi. On 30 August 1948, the GNA launched a clearing operation against a force of 6,000 to 7,500 guerrillas, many of whom had moved through Albania and Yugoslavia back into Greece.[94] The same systemic problems plagued the GNA in addition to general fatigue following two and a half months of sustained operations. The result was a lackluster effort on the part of the GNA that saw whatever small gains it made reversed by guerrilla counterattacks.[95] Van Fleet lamented the GNA's poor performance in a message to Army G-3, citing "leadership, poor morale, and Communist influence in ranks."[96] The morale boost and lessons learned that the GNA should have gained from the Grammos operation did not

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[90] "Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary of the Council (Souers), NSC 5," January 6, 1948, DOS, *FRUS, 1948, Eastern Europe; Soviet Union*, 4:3.

[91] Ibid., 4:6.

[92] Ibid.

[93] General McClellan was of course relieved by President Abraham Lincoln in no small part for his reluctance to employ the Army of the Potomac aggressively and continuously requested more troops despite outnumbering the Confederate armies.

[94] James Van Fleet, "Message Love 1827 JUSMAPG to CSGPO," September 20, 1948, Entry 147, Box 114, JUSMAGG, USASG, AGS, CFU, Incoming and Outgoing Messages 1947–52, RG 334, NACP.

[95] Ibid.

[96] James Van Fleet, "Message Love 2000, Van Fleet to CSGPO," October 15, 1948, Entry 147, Box 114, JUSMAGG, USASG, AGS, CFU, Incoming and Outgoing Messages 1947–52, RG 334, NACP.

equate to success in the Vitsi operation. Moreover, the concentration of GNA forces in northern Greece had left opportunities for DA violence elsewhere.

As fall dragged on, the Vitsi operation stalled. The longer it remained static, the greater the likelihood that the war would not be decided until spring 1949 at the earliest. This delay led Van Fleet to reassess what Greece required to prevail in its struggle against communist takeover. His recommendations belied his previous arguments that the Greeks did not need more men and firepower and brought him into conflict with the newly appointed U.S. ambassador to Greece.

After nearly a year that had seen Greece without an official U.S. ambassador, Henry F. Grady took up the post and assumed complete control over all aid and diplomatic functions. Griswold thereafter resigned after more than a year of service as the head of AMAG. In Paul Braim's account of Van Fleet's relationship with Ambassador Grady, he presents Grady as disrespectful of Van Fleet and of the military in general.[97] Grady, in his memoirs, indicates no ill feeling toward Van Fleet besides disagreement on two significant issues.[98] The first was the Greek political crisis at the end of 1948.

The coalition government that the United States and Great Britain had helped establish in 1947 was coming apart, and the king was considering appointing General Papagos as emergency dictator much like his brother did with Metaxas in 1936. Papagos' name was already under consideration by the U.S. and British missions to replace General Yiadzis as chief of the Greek General Staff because it was becoming increasingly obvious that the country required a more forceful senior military commander. On this issue, opinions among senior U.S. civilian and military personnel in Greece differed.[99]

Van Fleet had established strong rapport with the royal family, and he already saw Papagos as the Greek leader most capable of leading the country through the current

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[97] Braim, *Will to Win*, 164.

[98] In Grady's memoirs, Van Fleet is only mentioned on two pages. Henry Francis Grady, *The Memoirs of Ambassador Henry F. Grady: From the Great War to the Cold War*, ed. John T. McNay (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 143, 147.

[99] Ibid., 142-44. Jones, *New Kind of War*, 194-96.

crisis. Grady, acting from a position of lesser influence with the king, argued that a dictatorship under Papagos would have "dire consequences" for the war effort and would not be keeping with the democratic principles that U.S. support to Greece was intended to promote.[100] Not only would there have been a loss of popular support, but it also would have prevented Papagos from assuming the role of commander-in-chief, which ended up being vital to reversing the stalled military effort. With the help of British diplomatic pressure, the risk of another dictatorship fortunately was averted. Preserving an elected Greek government helped maintain popular support throughout 1949. General Papagos was subsequently named Commander-in-Chief of the Greek Armed Forces and given broad powers to prosecute the war effort fully free from political interference. Van Fleet's promotion of Papagos as a possible dictator nevertheless undermined the diplomatic process and, in retrospect, calls into question his disposition to provide impartial military (as distinct from political) advice to the recipient government.[101]

News of Papagos's return to active duty and assumption of command was greeted positively by all friendly parties, including Van Fleet, who lauded his commitment to "successfully terminate operations this year [1949]."[102] Upon Papagos's request, however, Van Fleet provided his advice on the GNA's needs in a form that cast doubt on his show of enthusiasm. Van Fleet's five-page response laid out some of the most basic military advice imaginable, scarcely appropriate to someone who had spent nearly forty years in military service.[103] If Van Fleet truly felt this level of instruction was necessary, it indicated his lack of confidence that the Greeks had any sound military minds in their ranks.

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[100] "The Ambassador in Greece (Grady) to the Acting Secretary of State," telegram, January 5, 1949, , *FRUS, 1949,* 6:234–35; Grady, *Memoirs,* 144.

[101] Jones, *New Kind of War*, 194-96.

[102] James Van Fleet, "Letter, Congratulations on Appointment from General Van Fleet to General Papagos," January 29, 1949, Entry 146, Box 55, JUSMAGG, USASG, AGS, CFU, General Decimal File, 1949, RG 334, NACP.

[103] Van Fleet's advice included: "1. The first demand in war is decisive action, 2. The ultimate object of all military operations is the destruction of the enemy's armed forces in battle, 3. The combat value of a unit is determined in great measure by the soldierly qualities of it leaders and members and its will to fight." James Van Fleet, "Letter, Recommendations from General Van Fleet to General Papagos," February 2, 1949, Entry 146, Box 55, JUSMAGG, USASG, AGS, CFU, General Decimal File, 1949, RG 334, NACP, 1.

General Papagos's promotion to commander-in-chief was the culmination of a long and arduous process to find someone with the charisma and ability to accomplish the mutual objectives of the United States and Greece. America's search for a strong, legitimate leader who could unify the country against communism would become a common theme in other conflict areas like China, Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam with varying degrees of success. In Greece, U.S. investment in Papagos appears to have been successful, and if the United States had pushed for his appointment earlier, perhaps the GNA would have defeated the DA sooner. It was only in the aftermath of the political and military crisis in early 1949, however, that the Greek leadership could unite and grant the type of unfettered control of military operations that Papagos finally wielded. Moreover, Papagos's main value was not in his operational or tactical acumen, but in his ability to push his leaders to act and to identify and relieve incapable commanders. With his authority, Papagos could act quickly on personnel matters that Van Fleet had previously had to painstakingly push through a byzantine approval process.[104]

Even the removal of ineffective officers was no panacea, however. For example, following the replacement of the B Corps commander in early 1949, the senior advisor reported, "really, from an operational standpoint, except for planning, there is less going on now than there was before the change in command, if that is possible. A lot is said of patrolling, but results do not show that it is aggressive or accomplishing a great deal."[105] Unfortunately for the GNA and its leadership, they faced a spirited, resourceful, and cunning enemy in the DA forces. Fortunately, however, this motivation could only carry the communists so far as the odds were stacked against them from the outset and only became worse due to decisions made by their own leadership.

F. DEMOCRATIC ARMY MISTAKES

Successful insurgent movements often follow a recognizable pattern of military escalation. This escalation begins with small-scale attacks that bring support either

[104] Jones, *New Kind of War*, 194-97.

[105] Jesse L. Gibney, "Memorandum, Gibney to Jenkins, Status of B Corps," memorandum, June 30, 1949, Entry 146, Box 55, JUSMAGG, USASG, AGS, CFU, General Decimal File, 1949, RG 334, NACP.

through their success or the disproportionate government response. Increased guerrilla strength results in the ability to attack larger groups of government forces. The final, decisive phase of guerrilla operations occurs when large battlefield formations of guerrilla soldiers are able to win conventionally against government forces. The decision to shift to this final phase is of the utmost importance and the most care must be taken to ensure the time is right for its implementation. If the shift is made too early, the risk to the revolutionary force is significant since it exposes itself for set-piece battles that could seriously deplete its forces and crush its morale.[106]

Throughout 1946, the DA expanded its guerrilla operations to great effect. The GNA, while increasing steadily under British tutelage, remained ill equipped to react effectively to the increase in enemy activity. It responded with a mix of short-term clearing operations and static outposts. The latter were easily isolated and attacked while the former allowed the guerrilla forces to melt away until the GNA left the area then return and resume their activities.[107]

The impending British withdrawal and American assumption of support to Greece in 1947 signaled a new chapter in the conflict. Despite the uncertainty this change brought, the Communists decided in September 1947 to shift to conventional confrontation with the GNA in a final effort to establish their goal of a communist Greece.[108] Shortly thereafter, the KKE aligned itself publicly with the DA and championed a communist Greek breakaway state in the northern areas it controlled.[109] Neither the neighboring communist states nor the Soviet Union recognized these claims, however. The KKE's decision to seek a decisive confrontation prematurely doomed them to failure.

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[106] For more on guerrilla warfare, particularly from Mao Tse Tung's perspective, see U.S. Marine Corps, *Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare* (FMFRP 12-18) (Washington, DC: GPO 1989). It goes without saying that Mao's conceptualization of insurgency is not the only one possible, nor the only one to have succeeded historically. Its influence among both insurgents and those who opposed them in our period was considerable, however.

[107] Dimitrios George Kousoulas, *Revolution and Defeat: The Story of the Greek Communist Party* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 241.

[108] Shrader, *Withered Vine*, 261.

[109] Kousoulas, *Revolution and Defeat*, 248.

The KKE also fell victim to internal squabbling among the communist nations to whom they looked for support. In June 1948, Stalin ejected Marshal Josip Tito's Yugoslavia from the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) because Tito did not want to subjugate his country to Moscow.[110] Within the KKE, Markos, the military commander, was pro-Yugoslavia, if only from the pragmatic standpoint that nearly all his materiel aid came from Yugoslavia. Zachariades, the KKE political leader, remained staunchly pro-Soviet. When Tito and Stalin parted ways, Zachariades used his influence to oust Markos and takeover the KKE.[111] At the time, Markos was considering returning the DA to guerrilla warfare to reduce the number of casualties it was suffering. With his ouster at the end of 1948, the KKE's military strategy remained unchanged. This factor, combined with the GNA's ten-to-one advantage in manpower and its supporting arms capabilities that the DA did not have meant that the Communists' fate was sealed. Moreover, Zachariades's pro-Soviet stance alienated the only significant source of support, Marshal Tito, who parted ways with the Greek Communists and sealed the Yugoslavian border with Greece in July 1949.[112]

The KKE's decision to transition to conventional operations prematurely drained the communist forces at a rapid rate, especially in attacks on fortified GNA positions. The Communists also suffered from recruiting problems, and often forced into service Greek peasants. Serving against their will, these Greeks were often ineffective or would desert, thus requiring additional effort spent recruiting and training. From January 1948 to August 1949, DA casualties were 61,985, compared to GNA casualties of 34,200.[113] Considering that the GNA had approximately 265,000 personnel under arms, plus a

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[110] The Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) was the Soviet-dominated alliance of communist parties following The Second World War intended to unite all Communist countries under the same ideology and goals. Selton, "Communist Errors," 73.

[111] *FRUS 1949*, 6, 250-53.

[112] Shrader, *Withered Vine*, 260; "Position Paper Prepared in the Department of State for the United States Delegation to the United Nations,", *FRUS 1949,* 6:408; Jones, *New Kind of War,* 198-200; Selton, "Communist Errors," 72-76.

[113] JUSMAPG, "Brief History," 24-25.

sizeable reserve, compared to the DA's peak strength of 25,000, meant the DA could not sustain these losses.[114]

Finally, the Communists were never able to gather large numbers of the Greek population to their cause. Any marriage of convenience or support the Communists enjoyed during The Second World War quickly evaporated in the postwar period. Additionally, the KKE promised certain contested parts of Greece to Yugoslavia, Albania, and Bulgaria in exchange for their support. Even the Greek peasants were proud of their nationality and did not support their country's sale for the communist cause. The Greek government also benefitted from a Greek polity that, while politically divided among various parties, was relatively free of ethnic divisions. The peasants of the mountain areas were just as likely to be anti-communist as anti-nationalist government. Thus, the Communists found themselves hard pressed to find any true support among the population.[115]

G. ACT III: THE FINAL PUSH

The U.S. honeymoon over Papagos's appointment was short lived. Despite his promise for aggressive action and the U.S. hope that he would quickly put the already sizeable and well-equipped GNA to good use, one of Papagos's first actions was to issue a political curveball to Ambassador Grady, albeit one perfectly familiar from prior American experience in Greece. At a Greek War Minister meeting on 5 February 1949 billed as "announcements by the Commander-in-Chief," General Papagos used the forum to present a dire picture of the fight against the Communists and insist on a GNA increase of over 100,000 troops to a grand total of 250,000.[116] Papagos also threatened to resign if his request was not met. Grady and Van Fleet had already clashed over the issue of providing even greater support to the Greeks, with Van Fleet presiding over a volte-face from his previous stance on the needs of the Greek Army.

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[114] JUSMAPG, "Brief History," 23-26.

[115] Selton, "Communist Errors," 76-77; O'Ballance, *Greek Civil War*, 210-20; Shrader, *Withered Vine,* 256-63.

[116] "The Ambassador in Greece (Grady) to the Secretary of State," telegram, February 7, 1949, *FRUS 1949,* 6:246.

As 1948 waned, JUSMAPG drafted the Fiscal Year 1950 proposal for the estimated needs of the Greek armed forces. It called for between $450 and $541 million dollars compared to a Fiscal Year 1949 budget of $150 million.[117] Despite the optimistic reports that JUSMAPG submitted throughout 1948, its budget submission implied that victory was not forthcoming. Grady criticized JUSMAPG's proposal, stating "the key to success according to JUSMAPG [whenever the GNA experienced a setback] is always more: more men, more money and more equipment. In this the thinking of JUSMAPG is in line with that of Greek political leaders."[118] He noted that the United States already supported "an armed forces organization of 263,000 men" supported by "heavy artillery, an air force and navy" that faced a "bandit organization of some 25,000 men fed with what they could steal or buy locally" and "not backed by a single airplane, heavy gun or naval vessel."[119] He surmised that since previous army increases had failed to result in any appreciable success against the DA, further increases were not the solution. The State Department and JCS largely concurred with Grady and supported only a modest increase to $200 million, less than half of JUSMAPG's lowest figure.[120]

JUSMAPG's proposal was a marked departure for Van Fleet, who consistently pressed the Greeks to improve leadership, training, and aggressive combat action versus requesting further increases in the size of the armed forces. Perhaps Van Fleet had a moment of empathy for the Greek position on the armed forces to which he was constantly subjected since his assumption of command. If so, it again calls into question to whom he was providing his best military advice. While it is common for military leaders to provide a worst-case estimate of a military's needs, a recommended tripling of

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[117] "The Ambassador in Greece (Grady) to the Secretary of State," telegram, November 22, 1948, , *FRUS 1948,* 4:188.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

[120] "Memorandum by the Coordinator for Aid to Greece and Turkey (McGhee) to the Under Secretary of State (Lovett)," memorandum, November 24, 1948, DOS, *FRUS, 1948, Eastern Europe; Soviet Union*, 4:193.

the previous year's budget can only be regarded as exceptional. Whatever the cause for Van Fleet's deviation, he did not insist on his proposal and accepted the outcome.[121]

By early 1949, JUSMAPG had in place virtually everything one might have hoped for in an advisory effort. The GNA had overwhelming force structure and technological advantages over its adversary. Van Fleet had established training plans and schools to improve the overall quality of the GNA. Advisors were present in the field and assisted in the development of operational plans. The assignment of General Papagos to the post of commander in chief had solved the problem of excessive political meddling in military matters. The parliamentary procedures insisted upon by U.S. and British diplomatic representatives resulted in elections that reflected the will of the Greek citizenry and improved public morale and the government's legitimacy.[122] Finally, U.S. economic assistance efforts were slowly improving life for the average Greek citizen. U.S. civilian and military efforts had addressed nearly all the friendly impediments to the war's successful prosecution. Additionally, the GNA faced an enemy that lacked significant external support and had chosen to abandon its guerrilla campaign and focus on pitched battles against a numerically and technologically superior enemy. It seemed reasonable that even a modest effort by GNA field commanders to execute the plans Americans helped draft would spell the end of the communist insurgency in 1949.

Nevertheless, the year 1949, began with disappointing failures by the GNA and NDC in defense of villages subject to DA attacks. Specifically, guerrillas occupied Naoussa for three days, killed the mayor and other government officials, destroyed businesses and infrastructure, and forcibly recruited members of the town.[123] The situation in Karpenision was even more disheartening because the GNA failed to adequately prepare for the attack despite forewarning.[124] The DA occupied the town for

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[121] As Paul Braim recounts, Van Fleet later pushed for some additional equipment to support the summer and fall 1949 offensives. Braim, *Will to Win*, 210-13.

[122] "The Ambassador in Greece (Grady) to the Secretary of State," telegram, February, 21 1949, DOS, *FRUS, 1949, Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 6:256.

[123] James Van Fleet, "Quarterly Report, United States Army Group, American Mission to Greece, for Period Ending 31 March 1949," April 15, 1949, Entry 24, Box 21, GRDOS, ROGTIA, 1947–1950, Quarterly Reports—AMAG-May 1948, RG 59, NACP, 3.

[124] Ibid., 4.

over two weeks, likewise recruited every military age male, destroyed much of the town, and looted supplies to support further operations.[125] These two attacks and occupations occurred in central Greece, an area reported cleared the summer prior. Both were characterized by slow, piecemeal, and ineffective GNA responses.

These setbacks were mitigated only by the GNA's spirited defense of Florina in northern Greece. Disputed from 12–14 February 1949, this action saw the GNA adequately prepare for and hold the town against a force of approximately 4,000 guerrillas.[126] The GNA beat back the Communists, who retreated after suffering heavy casualties, approximately 1,122 killed and captured with perhaps as many as 800 wounded against only 309 friendly casualties.[127] Additionally, the Royal Hellenic Air Force provided critical close air support during the battle and interdiction as the DA forces retreated to the safety of Vitsi. While the GNA soldiers successfully fought for their lives against considerable odds, the after-action report illustrated the continuing problems that plagued GNA units. It stated,

> Beyond the defensive phase, into the phase where the GNA had a superb opportunity to pursue aggressively and completely eliminate the bandits of Vitsi, the GNA presented all the previous falts [sic] of vacillation, lack of aggressiveness, indecisiveness, willingness to let the initiative evaporate through time, reluctance of subordinate commanders actively to abide by and to pursue the superior commander's decision, reluctance of the superior commander to force his will upon his subordinates and untimely and exaggerated sympathy of all echelons to the rigors of nature and warfare endured by the soldier.[128]

Since one of the main principles in an insurgency is that the insurgent wins by not losing, the Greek failure to pursue and harass the defeated enemy was a lost opportunity that underscored the serious weaknesses that the advisory effort still had been unable to correct.

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[125] Van Fleet, "Quarterly Report , 31 Mar1949."

[126] Jesse L. Gibney, "SITREP, JUSMAPG DET, 'B' CORPS, Special Operations Report, Florina Operation," February 21, 1949, Entry 146, Box 55, JUSMAGG, USASG, AGS, CFU, General Decimal File 1949, 311–319.1, RG 334, NACP.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Gibney, "SITREP, JUSMAPG DET, 'B' CORPS."

Fortunately for the GNA, Zachariades's emphasis on conventional operations, Markos's relief, and a reduction in external support made the communist situation that much more untenable. To its credit, the GNA also began a systematic clearing of communist pockets in southern and central Greece with the intent of pushing all enemy forces into one location in the north where they could finally be destroyed. For the first quarter of 1949, the GNA was winning the war of attrition as DA casualties reached 12,240 compared to the GNA's 4,086.[129] Although the DA had been capable of replacing casualties throughout 1948, continuing casualties and desertions and the slowly shrinking area it controlled were beginning to affect its ability to maintain its strength. From a height of 26,000 in 1948, the DA had declined to 19,450 and was trending downward.[130]

The Royal Hellenic Air Force also had been playing an increasing role in combat operations. Having begun as a fledgling force of a few leftover Spitfires, it had added transport planes and Navy Helldivers before the final offensives of summer 1949. These platforms allowed the RHAF to air resupply remote units and conduct close air support, medical evacuation, interdiction, and observation. In contrast, the DA had none of these capabilities, which put it at an even greater disadvantage.[131] Additionally, the GNA had added howitzers, which were particularly useful in the mountain terrain, and 75 mm recoilless rifles, although the proper use of these weapons too often were disregarded by the Greeks, who preferred to use them however they saw fit, regardless of their effectiveness or the recommendations from their advisors.[132]

Beginning in May 1949, the GNA launched the first of two operations to rid Greece finally of the communist menace. The first operation, codenamed Rocket, set about to re-clear central Greece of communists, thus leaving only the Grammos and Vitsi areas with significant numbers of communist forces. Launched on 2 May 1949, this operation resulted in 5,448 guerrillas killed, captured, or surrendered and the

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[129] Van Fleet, "Quarterly Report, 31 Mar 1949," 7.

[130] JUSMAPG, "Brief History," 26.

[131] Van Fleet, "Quarterly Report, 30 June 1949," 8.

[132] Jesse L. Gibney, "Monthly Report as of 2400 Hrs 31 Jul 49, Headquarters JUSMAPG Det, 'B' Corps, Kozani Greece," August 1, 1949, Entry 146, Box 55, JUSMAGG, USASG, AGS, CFU, General Decimal File 1949, 311–319.1, RG 334, NACP; Braim, *Will to Win*, 209–210.

neutralization of the guerrilla threat in central Greece.[133] The only real weaknesses highlighted during the operation were corps level operational management, which the GNA rectified by reorganizing while undergoing operations, and an ongoing failure to completely surround guerrilla forces.[134] The former mistake might have been foreseeable, but the latter mistake occurred "despite constant warnings by JUSMAPG advisors," highlighted the advisors' limitations, and resulted in some guerrillas escaping to Albania.[135] Despite these setbacks, Operation Rocket set the conditions the GNA required for what turned out to be the final major operation of the war, Operation Torch.

The GNA, with JUSMAPG planning and advisory support, prepared Operation Torch to clear the guerrilla strongholds of Grammos and Vitsi in northern Greece that it failed to eradicate in 1948. The GNA arrayed four divisions numbering approximately 50,000 troops possessing close air support and two mountain artillery batteries against approximately 7,750 communist troops.[136] The DA forces, according to the official history, were "composed of a great percentage of women and abductees," and their fighting ability "was estimated to be poor."[137] Despite the element of surprise the GNA held and the uncharacteristically effective movement of forces, as much as 60 percent of the guerrillas escaped the envelopment and retreated into the neighboring communist countries.[138] The official history held that "the operations of the GNA Infantry Divisions during the Vitsi campaign were on the whole below the standards expected of infantry troops. . .too much dependence on air and artillery was displayed by infantry."[139]

General Papagos, for his part, recognized that his army still needed much improvement in the same areas that Livesay and Griswold identified in 1947.[140] Fortunately, the communists had been decisively broken and scattered among the

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[133] U.S. Army, "JUSMAGG History," 35-36.

[134] Ibid., 36.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Ibid., 70,-72; Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece*, 251.

[137] U.S. Army, "JUSMAGG History," 71.

[138] Ibid., 85.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Ibid., 108.

neighboring communist countries, which were quick to publicly distance themselves from the Greek Communist movement.[141] Absent any significant source of support from their communist allies in the region and suffering from forced recruitment to replace losses, DA morale had plummeted in the summer of 1949.[142] These facts, combined with the loss of most of their war making materiel, resulted in a significant drop in communist activity in Greece.[143] The war was essentially over.

In the months following Torch, fear of a renewed communist guerrilla campaign subsided to the point where Ambassador Grady and JUSMAPG recommended a steady GNA demobilization to a more appropriate size for the remaining threat and a corresponding reduction in aid. The United States remained dedicated to intervention in Greece, however, with Van Fleet extolling its position in the eastern Mediterranean as "the keystone of the defense line from Western Europe to [the] Middle East."[144] This mindset took hold in Washington, and the United States found itself in a long-term commitment with Greece. During his last months there, Van Fleet toured the many battlefields and received praise for his contribution to the Greek victory.[145] Although the victory did not come as quickly as many would have liked, the impression seemed to be that adequate resources combined with the right U.S. personnel could assist other nations threatened by communism to achieve outcomes similar to those in Greece.

H. CONCLUSION

The U.S. advisory mission in Greece was meant to be a visible display of U.S. resolve without the expense and escalation risk that U.S. ground forces would have

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[141] Shrader, *Withered Vine*, 240.

[142] J.C. Murray estimates that "by July (of 1949), probably the majority of the 18,500 guerrillas would have surrendered if given a chance." Murray, "The Anti-Bandit War," *Marine Corps Gazette*, 38, no. 3 (March 1954): 53.

[143] James Van Fleet, "JUSMAPG—USAGG Quarterly Report for Period Ending 30 September 1949," October 15, 1949, Entry 24, Box 21, GRDOS, ROGTIA, 1947–50, Quarterly Reports—AMAG-May 1948, RG 59, NACP, 5.

[144] "The Director of the Joint United States Military Advisory and Planning Group, Greece (Van Fleet) to the Department of the Army," telegram, November 7, 1949, DOS, *FRUS, 1949, Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 6:455.

[145] Braim, *Will to Win*, 224.

entailed. From its inception, the advisory effort was attractive because it conveyed a U.S. commitment to Greece that was unbounded in principle by virtue of being rooted in a policy of global anti-communism, but circumscribed in practice. Even so, the U.S. investment required to defeat the communists in Greece far exceeded that of the communist nations to keep the resistance alive.[146] Without the large U.S. military assistance effort, the GNA would certainly have been less effective against the DA in all of its encounters. Lacking airpower and heavy artillery, and even accounting for the Communists' decision to conduct a more conventional campaign, the GNA would have suffered more casualties to achieve the same results. The Greek economy was incapable of maintaining an army of the GNA's size without U.S. assistance. Thus, the GNA would have fought the DA at much closer odds, which may not have been sufficient for outright victory. Furthermore, U.S. economic assistance helped improve the lives of average Greek peasants, thus improving overall loyalty to the elected government.

What, however, can the advisory effort claim specifically to have accomplished? If a successful advisor is able to bend others' will to his way of doing business, then the advisory mission to Greece had a mixed record. U.S. advisors were in Greece to instill aggressiveness and improve training and execution in the Greek Army. Yet, at war's end, the JUSMAPG advisors concluded they had failed to significantly alter their counterparts' actions based on their advice. The advisors should have been motivated to show GNA improvement as a reflection of their own performance in reports. The inverse actually happened.

Greece offered favorable conditions for advisors. The Greek government was relatively stable, the language barrier was easily overcome, the opposing force made costly errors, and financial aid was readily available. To their credit, the Greeks requested and accepted the advisors at all levels, but whether commanders accepted their advice was more sporadic in practice. On a grand scale, the GNA relied heavily on operational

[146] The JUSMAGG official expenditure at war's end was approximately $324 million, or $3.3 billion in today's dollars. It is impossible to know the amount of support given by communist states, but it was likely far less. At the time, Van Fleet estimated that the total U.S. expenditure was over a billion dollars, and that of the Soviets as not more than ten million. U.S. Army, "JUSMAGG History," 8; "Van Fleet to Department of the Army," DOS, *FRUS, 1949, Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 6:454.

plans drafted jointly by JUSMAPG and GNA planners. Further down the echelons, however, advisors were stymied by lack of initiative and failure to carry out even the most obvious of necessary tactical operations such as simple patrolling, blocking maneuvers, or interdiction operations. Moreover, the Greeks were rewarded for failure with increased operational capability. By the end of the war, the U.S. supported Greek armed forces numbered 263,000, almost 4 percent of the population.[147] This bloat was paid for with American dollars, to which must be added the additional cost arising from the fact that these men could not participate in the livelihood of their families or the economy of the country for two years. In the final analysis, it is obvious that American aid created forms of dependency that American advisors could not overcome.

Secretary Marshall ostensibly replaced Livesay with Van Fleet because Livesay lacked forcefulness when dealing with the GNA. The lackluster effort in Grammos in 1948, the subsequent stalemate in Vitsi, and the failed defenses of Naoussa and Karpenision nevertheless belied Van Fleet's reports of improved GNA performance. Finally, the corps level advisory reports at the end of the war also contradicted much of the positive impact of the advisors' presence on the tactical and operational decision-making or execution of their counterparts. Ultimately, GNA numbers, equipment, training, and slightly improved battlefield performance proved sufficient to defeat the Communists and their panoply of errors. But even so, and despite the accolades that Van Fleet and his subordinates showered on any hint of assertive battlefield leadership, it appears the GNA fell far short of what its advisors might reasonably have expected and surely hoped for.

[147] Van Fleet, "Quarterly Report, 30 September 1949," 2.

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III. U.S. MILITARY ADVISORS IN KOREA: BACKING INTO CONTAINING COMMUNISM

With Japan's defeat in August 1945, Koreans rejoiced because that meant the departure of the despised Japanese who had occupied and colonized their land for forty years. This departure did not mean an end to Korean occupation, however, as Soviet and American forces replaced the Japanese, each with its own vision for Korea's future. Although negotiations began toward a unified Korea, Moscow immediately began promoting Marxist Socialism north of the 38th parallel—the mutually agreed dividing line for Korea—while Washington governed the South under the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK).[1] Beginning in January 1946, an ad hoc U.S. advisory effort assisted in the formation of the Korean Constabulary that became the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) in 1948, defeated a Communist insurgency in the South in 1949, and then found itself severely outmatched by the Soviet-armed North Korea People's Army (NKPA) in 1950.[2]

The ROKA's near disintegration following the NKPA's 25 June 1950 invasion gave the impression that it lacked the will to fight and that the advisors failed in their mission to build a competent partner nation force. The reality is more complex. From 1945 to 1950, Washington's ambivalent foreign policy toward Korea—caught between the competing desires to avoid provocation, sustain deterrence, promote national unity, and contain communism—resulted in a minimally resourced advisory effort in terms of human and materiel resources. Although these advisors assisted the ROKA to defeat a small communist-inspired insurgency, they were unable to overcome the vast materiel superiority of the North simply with advice and training. The conventional war that followed in 1950—while perhaps inevitable—ultimately required a greater U.S. investment in lives lost and financial expenditure than if Washington had resourced the

[1] Although the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) were not established until 1948, this chapter will generally refer to the two halves as South and North Korea, respectively.

[2] For a short synopsis of Korea prior to the 1950 invasion, see U.S. Army, *Korea: 1950* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1996), 1-11.

ROKA from inception to defend against a Northern invasion. Since the threat of invasion became increasingly apparent up until the North actually attacked, Washington's dismissive attitude toward the ROKA appears even more imprudent. When the United States finally committed to a powerful ROKA, it proved capable of facing the best the Chinese and North Koreans could throw at it. The ROKA's stalwart performance in July 1953 directly preceded the armistice ending the war. Throughout the period 1945–1953, U.S. advisors provided important administrative and operational advice to their Korean counterparts, yet it was the South Koreans' inherent will to fight that ultimately led to the ROKA's success.[3]

A. FROM JAPANESE OCCUPATION TO COLD WAR DIVISION

As the war in the Pacific wound down, Korea was a low priority in U.S. strategic planning.[4] The Allies had already addressed the larger postwar questions concerning Korea at the 1943 Cairo Conference, stating that "at the proper moment after the downfall of Japan, [Korea] shall become a free and independent country."[5] For the Koreans, this declaration meant independence would come immediately following Korea's liberation. For the United States and Soviet Union, however, the details remained undecided. When the Soviets unleashed their offensive against the Japanese in Manchuria and Korea on 8 August 1945 as promised at Yalta, the United States was unprepared to address Korean occupation.[6] Fear that the Soviets would seize all of Korea led the United States to propose the 38th parallel as a boundary separating a northern Soviet zone from a southern U.S. zone of occupation to facilitate the Japanese surrender and withdrawal

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[3] Gibby, *Will to Win*, 1-13.

[4] E. Grant Meade, *American Military Government in Korea* (New York: King's Crown Press, Columbia University, 1951), 47.

[5] "Revised American Draft of the Communique," DOS, *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1943, The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1961), 403, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1943CairoTehran.

[6] At the 1945 Yalta Conference, Stalin promised to declare war against Japan within three months of Germany's defeat.

from Korea.[7] The U.S. Army hurriedly moved three divisions from Okinawa to Korea and established a military government, USAMGIK, under Lieutenant General John R. Hodge who arrived at the port of Inchon on 8 September 1945.

General Hodge was a proven combat commander during The Second World War, but he was unprepared for the complex political environment of post-liberation Korea.[8] Arriving in Korea one month behind the Soviets, Hodge began executing his orders based on the little guidance he had received. Historian Allen Millett writes that Hodge was to "disarm the Japanese, enforce the anticipated surrender terms, keep order, and await instructions on how to pass power to the Koreans."[9] A self-organized prospective Korean government in the U.S. zone, the People's Republic of Korea, presented itself to Hodge upon his arrival with the hope that he would accept it as the legitimate government. To its members' dismay, Hodge dismissed them since his mandate made his organization the sole executor of Korea's sovereignty. Since Koreans had not governed themselves in forty years, Hodge initially maintained Japanese administrators in their positions to allow time to train Korean replacements.[10] While pragmatic, this action was an affront to the Koreans and added to the postwar animosity toward the new American occupiers, whom the Koreans increasingly viewed as simply having replaced the Japanese.

While Hodge's troops worked to maintain law and order in a country whose language they did not speak and whose culture they did not understand—nor particularly

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[7] The 38th parallel was not entirely a U.S. invention. The Russians and Japanese had discussed splitting Korea at this line before the Russo-Japanese War. "Memorandum by Lieutenant General John R. Hodge to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur at Tokyo," memorandum, September 24, 1945, DOS, *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1945*, vol. 6, *The British Commonwealth, the Far East* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1969), 1054, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1945v06.

[8] Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950–1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 38; Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 57–58.

[9] Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 58.

[10] Korea Institute of Military History, *The Korean War*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 19.

respect—joint U.S. and Soviet negotiations followed to determine Korea's future.[11] At the Moscow Conference in December 1945, the United States and Soviet Union agreed to a joint trusteeship of Korea lasting up to five years whose goal was to form a "provisional Korean democratic government . . . for developing the industry, transport and agriculture of Korea and the national culture of the Korean people."[12] The agreement depended on both the Soviets and Americans approving the composition of the provisional government, which was unlikely since neither would agree to the other's preferred form of government. In the North, the Soviets supported Kim Il Sung and a totalitarian Marxist agenda characterized by forced land reform, immediate expulsion of the Japanese, and a crackdown on any dissidents to Communist rule.[13] The Americans in the South slowly transitioned the functions of government to Koreans but showed little sign of preparing to turn over sovereignty to an elected or appointed Korean government until they could reach an agreement with Moscow. For the southern Koreans who had expected independence immediately following the Japanese surrender, the thought of five more years of foreign occupation was unpopular and resulted in angry anti-American demonstrations. General Hodge tried to assuage the Koreans, but this issue would dominate the remainder of his time in Korea. As 1945 ended, the Allies had liberated Korea only to occupy it and cut it in half. The Soviet masters in the North had a vision and were executing it. American policy in the South remained ad hoc and extemporized, aiming mainly at administrative efficiency.

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[11] While writing an article for the *Chicago Tribune*, journalist Walter Simmons rode on a boat carrying officers and enlisted soldiers from leave in Japan back to duty in Korea. Highlighting the attitude some Americans had toward their Korean counterparts, the returning soldiers lamented the conditions in Korea, noting its primitive conditions and its hostile, untrustworthy citizens. One said he wished the Soviets would take it over so the Americans could leave. Walter Simmons, "GIs Haven't a Kind Word to Say for Korea; Compared to It, Japan's Heaven, They Assert" (*Chicago Tribune* Press Service, December 13, 1945); Entry 1370, Box 1, Records of General Headquarters, Far East Command, Supreme Commander Allied Powers, and United Nations Command, U.S. Armed Forced in Korea, General Correspondence 1943–1946, RG 554, NACP (hereafter Records of General Headquarters cited as RGH, Far East Command cited as FEC, Supreme Commander Allied Powers cited as SCAP, United Nations Command cited as UNC and U.S. Armed Forced in Korea cited as USFIK).

[12] "The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State," telegram, Dec 27, 1945, DOS, *FRUS 1945, British Commonwealth, Far East*, 6:1150.

[13] Edgar S. Kennedy, *Mission to Korea* (London: Verschoyle, 1952), 23–24.

B. BELLIGERENTS

Conveniently divided by the 38th parallel, the two initial parties to the conflict were the North Korean Communists and the South Korean Nationalists. Both groups had emerged during the Japanese occupation, returned following the war, and established themselves in their respective zones. Coming to the rescue of their Korean Communist counterparts in November 1950 were the Chinese Communists fresh from their victory over Chiang Kai Shek's Chinese Nationalists.

1. North Korean Communists

The North Korean Communists came to power due to the direct intervention of the occupying Soviet forces. Although the Japanese had mostly dismantled the Korean communist movement during their occupation, the Soviets nurtured its reemergence following the Second World War and supported Kim Il Sung's rise to power. Kim's personal history is obscured by aggrandized state-directed biographical accounts of his heroism, wartime leadership, and devotion to country fabricated to justify his position as supreme ruler over the North Korean people.[14] Kim's actual story is that he spent much of his life in Manchuria and Russia, fought the Japanese before and during the Second World War, and ended the war as a captain in the Soviet Army.[15] The Soviets supported Kim's emerging totalitarian regime with advice and materiel that far outweighed what the United States provided to the South. As Allan Millett writes, the Soviets sent "as many as eight hundred advisers and administrative personnel" and supplied the NKPA with weapons to replace those seized from the Japanese.[16] As James Minnich writes, the NKPA "adopted much of the Soviets' military doctrine and tactics, incorporating combined arms operations and depending upon conventional lines of communication for

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[14] One among an ocean of blatant examples of state propaganda is an official DPRK history, *Twenty-Year-Long Anti-Japanese Revolution Under the Red Sunrays,* written by Kim Il-Sung and other North Korean leaders, in which Kim is continually referred to as "The Great Leader." The book describes what may have been a company-sized ambush led by Kim against the Japanese, for which Kim is melodramatically feted as "respected leader Comrade Kim Il Sung, great military strategist and ever-victorious, iron-willed brilliant commander." Il-Sung Kim et al., *Twenty-Year-Long Anti-Japanese Revolution Under the Red Sunrays*, vol. 4. (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1986), 309.

[15] A. N. Lan′kov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945–1960* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 52–57.

[16] Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 77.

resupply."[17] NKPA leaders attended Soviet military schools in Siberia to learn Soviet armored doctrine.[18] Additionally, North Korea sent 30,000 to 40,000 troops to aid the Chinese Communists in their war against the Nationalists. These troops began returning in 1949 and provided the NKPA with the veteran army it needed for success over their countrymen in the South.[19] The Koreans who served in China gained experience and strengthened the ties with Mao's new regime, which would play a critical role in the Korean War.[20]

2. South Korean Nationalists

Unlike the Soviet occupation, American forces quashed attempts at Korean self-governance until the appropriate parties could settle the Korea question. The South faced a more diverse group of potential leaders across the political spectrum, but Syngman Rhee emerged as the dominant figure during the period of U.S. military rule. In contrast to the thirty-three year old Kim, Rhee was in his seventies and had spent much of his life in the United States. Politically, he was an autocratic nationalist who was often compared to Chiang Kai Shek, a figure of similarly autocratic bent whose personal corruption did not disqualify him as an American client. Rhee also was a constant irritant for U.S. leaders at all levels.[21] Throughout the U.S. trusteeship, he campaigned against the U.S. occupation of Korea and never hesitated to profit politically from USAMGIK's unpopularity.[22] When the United States began withdrawing troops from Korea in 1948,

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[17] James M. Minnich, *The North Korean People's Army: Origins and Current Tactics* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 42.

[18] Ibid., 60.

[19] T. R. Fehrenbach estimates that 30 percent of the NKPA consisted of these veterans. T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: The Classic Korean War History* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1998), 4.

[20] Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: Norton, 1997), 239.

[21] Ambassador John Muccio describes Rhee as a singularly-focused Korean nationalist who trusted no one. Rhee was undoubtedly a source of constant grief for U.S. leaders at all levels throughout USAMGIK's administration of southern Korea. John J. Muccio, "Transcript of Oral History Interview with Ambassador John J. Muccio," *Harry S. Truman Library and Museum*, February 10, 1971, 13–14, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/muccio1.htm; Gibby, *Will to Win*, 122.

[22] James F. Schnabel, *Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1992), 26.

however, Rhee's attitude shifted toward insisting that the forces remain in Korea to support his weak regime.[23]

3. Chinese Communists

China's relationship with the United States evolved alongside that of Korea's and ultimately ended in a costly war for both sides. Under such notable generals as Joseph Stilwell, Albert Wedemeyer, and George Marshall, the United States provided advice and $1 billion in military aid to Nationalist China to maintain anti-communist Chiang Kai Shek's government in power.[24] The result was a case study in frustration for U.S. advisors as Chiang's intransigence, poor decision making, and rampant government corruption negated any positive impact the advisors might have hoped for. Despite U.S. efforts to appear neutral and negotiate a mutual power-sharing agreement, these efforts failed, and the United States appeared instead to be the benefactors of the corrupt, unpopular, losing side. The subsequent establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) ultimately was a greater blow to the Truman administration and U.S. Far East policy than some estimates had presumed. In addition to the wasted investment in Chiang's lost cause, aid to the Nationalists alienated Mao's government to the point that the United States would be fighting it directly only a year after the PRC's founding. Domestically, the perception that the United States had lost China to communism plagued future administrations and called into question the effectiveness of military aid alone as a tool of containment.

C. BATTLEGROUND

The Korean peninsula occupies an unfortunate crossroads of the great power struggles between China, Japan, and Russia with the United States inheriting Japan's role

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[23] "Lieutenant General John R. Hodge to the Secretary of State," August 11, 1947, DOS, *FRUS 1947*, vol. 6, *The Far East* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 747–48, 819. http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1947v06; John J. Muccio, "Transcript of Oral History Interview with Ambassador John J. Muccio," *Harry S. Truman Library and Museum*, February 18, 1971, 87, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/muccio2.htm.

[24] DOS, *United States Relations with China with Special Reference to the Period 1944–1949* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1949), 354, http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112065996651;view=1up;seq=5.

in 1945. Korea's terrain is rugged and mountainous, particularly in the North, which led the Japanese to concentrate industrial and hydroelectric productivity there while agriculture dominated in the South. The ostensibly temporary split at the 38th parallel, described by Edgar Kennedy "as one of the worst ever devised . . . often divid[ing] dwelling houses from their wells and their outdoor privies, and rice paddies from their source of irrigation," hobbled the postwar Korean economic recovery by separating Korea's interdependent halves.[25]

From west to east, the defensive planning for the South was challenging.[26] On the far western edge was the isolated Ongjin Peninsula that was nearly impossible to defend against a coordinated attack. Continuing east, the peninsula consisted of multiple natural north-south invasion corridors suitable for mechanized units with high ground on either side that favored an adequately armed defense.[27] The capital, Seoul, sits on the northern bank of the wide Han River and only about 30 kilometers south of the parallel, making its defense operationally precarious as defending units would find themselves backed up to the river. Since Korea is a relatively narrow peninsula—averaging 150 miles across—it is susceptible to the effects of naval power, which both sides exploited at various times during the eventual war.[28]

The Korean population was ethnically homogeneous, but there were divisions between peoples of the far north and the rest of the country.[29] As Charles Armstrong writes, northern Koreans had been left out of the political process throughout much of

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[25] Kennedy, *Mission to Korea*, 27; Blair, *Forgotten War*, 38.

[26] See Figure 4 for reference.

[27] United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, "United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea Semi Annual Report, Period 1 Jan–30 June 1950," June 15, 1950, Entry 1355, Box 29, RGH, FEC, SCAP, and UNC, United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, 8202nd Army Unit AG Section, Semi Annual Historical Report, RG 554, NACP, 1–6 (hereafter United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea cited as KMAG).

[28] The North Koreans exploited the peninsula geography to infiltrate guerrillas during the 1949–50 insurgency and then to outflank ROKA forces on the east coast in the June 1950 invasion. The U.S. intervention brought a naval blockade of nearly the entire coast and naval supremacy for Allied actions throughout the war, which allowed the Inchon invasion and follow-on actions.

[29] Grant Meade estimates there were only 300 family names in all of Korea. Meade, *American Military*, 18.

Korea's history.[30] This factor, combined with the North's geographical proximity to Chinese Communists, gave rise to a sense of independence and self-reliance among this population and explains why the Japanese found this area the most difficult to control during its occupation.[31] Out of a total population of 30 million, two-thirds lived in South Korea, thus giving it an advantage in a prolonged conflict.[32]

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[30] Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 13.

[31] Armstrong, *North Korean Revolution*, 14.

[32] Schnabel, *Policy and Direction,* 11.

Figure 4. Map of Korea

Source: Billy C. Mossman, E*bb and Flow: November 1950–July 1951, United States Army in the Korean War* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1990), 6.

D. CREATING A KOREAN SECURITY APPARATUS

Since the Koreans had not been responsible for policing themselves during the Japanese occupation, U.S. leaders identified a national police force as the first critical security need for the U.S. zone. Thus, the Korean National Police (KNP) was created in advance of the ROKA. USAMGIK was responsible for recruiting, organizing, and

training these initial peace officers, but the effort received only a handful of advisors. Washington had little interest in bankrolling a Korean security apparatus. When General Douglas MacArthur requested permission to transfer surplus armaments and equipment to the 25,000 man KNP, the War Department approved the request only if the Koreans returned them after use, purchased them, or transferred them in some way once the issue of Korean unification was settled.[33] While the United States was readily assisting other countries to rebuild and rearm to resist communism, this treatment of the Koreans stood in stark contrast. Despite his support in securing the armament for the Koreans, MacArthur quickly soured on Korea, however. In a December 1945 memo to the JCS, he recommended mutually withdrawing forces with the Russians and leaving Korea "to its own devices and an inevitable internal upheaval for its self-purification."[34]

Even though some in Washington suspected as early as October 1945 that the 38th parallel was likely to become a permanent line of separation, American leaders hoped that a unified Korea and a national army could be established.[35] A separate army for the South would only further divide the Koreans, but three factors contributed to the need for the immediate establishment of an additional security force in the U.S. zone. First, civil unrest was increasing due to the deteriorating economic and uncertain political situation. Second, General Hodge's combat forces were ill-suited for maintaining the peace in a foreign land that could not be treated as if it were a defeated enemy. Third, intelligence indicated that the Soviets had already begun establishing armed forces in their zone.[36]

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[33] "The Joint Chiefs of Staff to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, at Tokyo," telegram, January 9, 1946, DOS, *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1945, British Commonwealth, Far East*, 6:1156.

[34] "General of the Army Douglas MacArthur to the Joint Chiefs of Staff," December 16, 1945, DOS, *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1945, British Commonwealth, Far East*, 6:1148.

[35] "Report by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Subcommittee for the Far East, SWNCC 79/1," October 22, 1945, DOS, *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1945, British Commonwealth, Far East*, 6:1095–96.

[36] "Lieutenant General John R. Hodge to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, at Tokyo," telegram, November 2, 1945, DOS, *FRUS, Diplomatic Papers, 1945, British Commonwealth, Far East*, 6:1106.

Acting on his own initiative, General Hodge directed the establishment of the Office of the Director of National Defense on 13 November 1945. Its mission was threefold:

1. Provide an organized and reserve force capable of maintaining the internal security of Korea
2. Provide an organized force capable of patrolling Korean coastal waters
3. Provide adequate means at the disposal of the Head of the Korean Government to assist the existing Bureau of Police in Maintenance of Law, Order and internal security.[37]

Hodge's staff determined that the South needed a 45,000-man army to maintain its security. The idea of distinct military services for the U.S. zone met with resistance in Washington, however, and the War Department only approved a 25,000-man force. Furthermore, the Koreans received neither U.S. military aid nor surplus equipment for this new organization. This limitation would have drastic consequences on the speed at which the ROKA would come to exist and the measures its members took to provide for their families on the meager salary the Korean economy could provide. Political sensitivity toward the Soviets also prevented naming this organization a defense force; USAMGIK instead designated it the Korean Constabulary.[38]

USAMGIK planned to recruit and train nine regiments, one for each of the South's eight provinces and Cheju Do, a large island off Korea's southwest coast. The first class of recruits made up the crucial initial leadership of what would become the ROKA. The Americans charged with the screening process naturally gravitated toward Koreans who had already served with other militaries during the Second World War. Seventy-eight members of the first class become generals, and thirteen became the ROKA Chief of Staff.[39] Subsequent classes saw the standards of recruitment decrease,

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[37] Headquarters, Provisional Military Advisory Group, "History of Department of Internal Security (D. I. S.) to 1 July 1948," n.d., Entry 181, Box 2, Records of the Army Staff, Office of the Chief of Military History, Background-Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War, 1951–1965, RG 319, NACP, 3.

[38] Soviet objections to terms such as "Department of National Defense" led General Hodge to change the name to "Department of Internal Security." The South Koreans objected to this name change and called it the "Department of National Security." Korea Institute of Military History, *Korean War*, 1:68–69.

[39] Allan Reed Millett, *Their War for Korea: American, Asian, and European Combatants and Civilians, 1945–1953* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2002), 82.

however, resulting in the selection of greater numbers of communist sympathizers who would create problems for the constabulary going forward.[40]

Perhaps the most important figure throughout the advisory effort in Korea was Captain James Hausman, who arrived in Korea in July 1946. A veteran of the Second World War, Hausman had experience forming the Women's Army Corps before leaving for the European Theater in 1944, where he was wounded in the Battle of the Bulge.[41] Originally assigned to advise the South Korean 8th Regiment, he demonstrated the ability to organize and advise his unit effectively and was moved to constabulary headquarters where his acumen would have an even greater impact.[42] Considering the dearth of personnel the United States assigned to the advisory effort, Hausman's arrival was particularly fortuitous.

Support to the advisory effort began inauspiciously. USAMGIK assigned 18 lieutenants in January 1946 to the constabulary training mission, but by September, this number had dropped precipitously.[43] Hausman recounts that there was an average of six advisors from September 1946 to April 1948, which was hardly enough to oversee training for even one regiment apiece.[44] Advisors had to shuttle between regiments, sometimes driving hundreds of kilometers, limiting their effectiveness. With this limitation, Korean officers with prior military service stepped into the void and proved to be effective trainers, albeit while often training to Japanese tactics such as banzai charges.[45] With the lack of attention the United States paid to the efforts to build a bulwark against the increasingly communist North, at least these homegrown methods provided a martial spirit to the nascent ROKA.

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[40] Gibby, *Will to Win*, 33.

[41] Peter Clemens, "Captain James Hausman, U.S. Army Military Advisor to Korea, 1946–48: The Intelligent Man on the Spot," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no. 1 (2002), 170.

[42] Ibid., 172.

[43] Sawyer and Hermes, *KMAG in Peace and War*, 15.

[44] James H. Hausman, interview, June 16, 1952, in Robert K. Sawyer, "KMAG Interviews," Entry 181, Box 3, Records of the Army Staff, Office of the Chief of Military History, Background-Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War, 1951–1965, Interviews, RG 319, NACP.

[45] Sawyer and Hermes, *KMAG in Peace and War*, 25.

Hausman and the other advisors grappled with many challenges throughout their time working with the Koreans. The first was the language barrier. Few Americans who served in Korea during the advisory period ever learned the language but relied instead on Korean interpreters. Although interpreters were generally available to fill this void before June 1950, afterward they were in short supply since the requirement increased exponentially with the arrival of thousands of UN troops. More importantly, however, the Korean language lacked military and industrial-age terminology. This shortcoming meant that advisors could not make themselves understood when explaining military concepts like "squad," "phase line," or "movement by bounds."[46] Even words like "machine gun" and "headlight" would be translated as "gun that shoots very fast" and "the rice bowl with a candle on a truck."[47] A different interpreter might invent a different phrase for the same thing. It was not until 1950 that a group of Korean military officers and translators completed a Korean dictionary of U.S. military terms. Most, if not all, copies of this dictionary were lost during the NKPA invasion.[48]

Korean culture proved even more difficult to overcome. Despite Korean animosity toward the Japanese, Korean military leaders nevertheless adopted their harsh treatment toward subordinates and civilians. U.S. advisors recommended less brutal methods, but this behavior continued throughout the advisory mission and resulted in at least one mutiny.[49] The advisors also had to deal with the delicate aspect of "face" in Korean culture.[50] The ignorant or uncaring American might evoke an unwanted negative response from a counterpart or Korean civilians because of a failure to understand or respect public honor. Relationships thus violated were virtually impossible to repair. The quality of individuals assigned to Korea duty likely exacerbated this problem. General Hodge struggled with his soldiers' conduct throughout his three-year tour as seen in a 3 June 1946 missive admonishing certain members of his command who contributed

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[46] Sawyer and Hermes, *KMAG in Peace and War*, 63.

[47] Ibid.; Eighth U.S. Army Korea, *Special Problems in the Korean Conflict* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Office of the Chief of Military History, September 24, 1952), 23.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 79.

[50] Sawyer and Hermes, *KMAG in Peace and War*, 65-66.

negatively to the already unpopular occupation.[51] Unfortunately, duty in Korea was considered unpopular at best and punishment at worst.

The advisors also faced the miniscule funding the constabulary received. Since the weak Korean economy provided the constabulary's entire budget, food and wages were insufficient to support its members. As a result, pilferage, personal business use of military equipment, and black marketeering were important sources of income for the soldiers and a serious concern for the Americans. This behavior—a feature of many postwar occupations before and since—became embedded in the fabric of daily life and created a rift with the Americans, who naturally began to look down on the men they were to train, advise, and work alongside. Unfortunately, to maintain a reasonable working relationship and a force that did not splinter because of a lack of ability to support itself, advisors did not have much choice but to tolerate these activities.

Growth of the constabulary was anemic. By the end of 1946, it numbered only 5,000 personnel, yet it was employed immediately.[52] The division of Korea continued to fall harder on the South as the North had a more balanced economy.[53] In August 1946 General Hodge directed the KNP to collect rice from farmers to prevent a shortage and widespread hunger. This act angered the farmers, since it reminded them of Japanese behavior, and resulted in the Autumn Harvest Uprising of September and October 1946 that was in protest against the U.S. actions and occupation. In response to these events, USAMGIK relied on a patchwork of KNP, constabulary, and U.S. forces that proved inadequate for the task. Korean security forces suffered as many as 300 casualties while killing or wounding over 600 demonstrators and arresting over 5,000.[54] Further uprisings

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[51] John R. Hodge, "Message from the Commanding General United States Armed Forces in Korea," June 3, 1946, Entry 1370, Box 1, RGH, FEC, SCAP, and UNC, USAFIK, General Correspondence 1943–1946, RG 554, NACP.

[52] KMAG, "United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea Historical Report, Period 1 July–31 December 1949," December 31, 1949, Entry 1355, Box 29, 2-3, RGH, FEC, SCAP, and UNC, KMAG 8202nd Army Unit AG Section, Semi Annual Historical Report, 1 July 1949–30 June 1950, RG 554, NACP.

[53] Central Intelligence Agency, *The Situation in Korea* (ORE 5/1) (N.p.: Author, January 3, 1947), 4, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/44/1947-01-03.pdf (hereafter Central Intelligence Agency cited as CIA).

[54] Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 86.

in November were less severe but continued to reflect the need for a rapid resolution of what was becoming de facto partition. The negative blowback from these events fell on USAMGIK, which was unable to address effectively the Korean anger. South Korean political factions used these events to benefit from USAMGIK's unpopularity and to maneuver for the eventual power struggle sure to occur once the trusteeship ended. These events also gave the first indications of Soviet-inspired subversive activities in the South.[55]

Although resolute U.S. action toward communist subversion in Greece and Turkey dominated the headlines in the spring of 1947, Korea remained a subject of foreign policy apathy for U.S. military and diplomatic leaders. Syngman Rhee continued to lobby for Korean independence, national elections, and the simultaneous departure of Soviet and U.S. forces.[56] Meanwhile, the Special Inter-Departmental Committee on Korea recommended a similar show of resolve toward Korea as that being considered for Greece, something in the realm of $600 million in aid over three years. Without it the committee opined "that the Korean situation will so deteriorate as to seriously impair the U.S. world position."[57] In February 1947 General Hodge and Syngman Rhee separately lobbied for increased support to Korea on Capitol Hill, but nothing significant came of these efforts. Having failed to reach an agreement with the Soviets on a unified Korea, the United States pushed the matter to the United Nations General Assembly in September 1947, calling for Soviet and U.S. forces to withdraw and the Koreans to decide their political future through elections in their respective zones in 1948.[58]

In September 1947 the Joint Chiefs of Staff were split on their feelings toward Korea. In a memo to the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense James Forrestal relayed

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[55] CIA, *Situation in Korea*, 8.

[56] "A Solution of the Korean Problem by Syngman Rhee," DOS, *FRUS, 1947*, vol. 6, *The Far East* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1972), 604–605, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1947v06.

[57] "Memorandum by the Special Inter-Departmental Committee on Korea," memorandum, February 25, 1947, DOS, *FRUS, 1947, Far East*, 6:609.

[58] There were at least 62 meetings of the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission from 1946–1947 with no agreement on the unification of Korea. The Soviets took a position on which parties would be allowed to present themselves for elections as part of a unified government, which basically excluded all political parties in the South. "The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary General of the United Nations (Lie)," DOS, *FRUS, 1947, Far East*, 6:832–35.

the JCS position that the "United States has little strategic interest in maintaining the present troops and bases in Korea" since the troops were geographically isolated and ostensibly easier for an enemy to attack than for the United States to reinforce.[59] Furthermore, they noted the great expense necessary to maintain the occupation force for "little, if any, lasting benefit to the security of the United States."[60] This position was all the more ironic since the money spent maintaining troops there would have gone much farther if applied toward the constabulary instead.

In March 1948 the Central Intelligence Agency stressed Korea's importance, stating that its loss to the Soviet sphere would "have a seriously adverse political and psychological impact throughout the already unstable Far East" and "furnish an important Soviet position threatening both Japan and the North China coast."[61] In April 1948 the National Security Council laid out its position on Korea in NSC 8 based on the principles of independence and self-determination while promising U.S. economic assistance toward Korean economic stability.[62] It assessed that the NKPA numbered 125,000 personnel and that the South Korean security establishment was incapable of defending itself against this force.[63] Despite this realization, the NSC recommended completely withdrawing U.S. forces from Korea and leaving only an advisory mission capable of preparing the South Koreans to protect "the security of South Korea against any but an overt act of aggression by North Korean or other forces."[64] The problem with this statement is that it did not address the U.S. reaction if North Korea did invade. Since Washington did not know the answer to this question, neither did the advisors who would be the only U.S. military personnel in Korea fourteen months later.

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[59] "Memorandum by the Secretary of Defense (Forrestal) to the Secretary of State," memorandum, September 26, 1947, DOS, *FRUS, 1947, Far East*, 6:817.

[60] Ibid., 818.

[61] CIA, *The Current Situation in Korea* (ORE 15-48) (N.p.: Author, March 18, 1948), 2, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000258335.pdf.

[62] "Report by the National Security Council on the Position of the United States with Respect to Korea, NSC 8," April 2, 1948, DOS, *FRUS, 1948*, vol. 6, *The Far East and Australasia* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1974), 1164, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1948v06.

[63] CIA, *Current Situation in Korea*, 4–6.

[64] "NSC 8," DOS, *FRUS, 1948, Far East and Australasia*, 6:1167.

In accordance with UN oversight of the Korean problem, South Korea held elections on 10 May 1948 to determine the Korean National Assembly. It subsequently elected Syngman Rhee as the first president of the Republic of Korea, and he took the oath of office on 24 July 1948. Meanwhile, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) declared itself established on 9 September 1948 with Kim Il Sung as its premier. By this point, the difference in the support given to each side by their respective benefactors was stark. In the North, the Soviets had established a strong, pro-Soviet totalitarian dictator; recruited, trained, and equipped an effective army capable of offensive operations; and left behind an advisory group of 550 personnel.[65] Meanwhile, the Americans had lost their way in the labyrinth of post-colonial South Korean politics and had become preoccupied with the problems of internal security and policing at the expense of arrangements to ward off external aggression against a country whose very existence the U.S. viewed with ambivalence. U.S. leaders recognized early that delaying a decision on Korean unification was putting the U.S. zone at a disadvantage and that the Soviets had been establishing and arming a satellite state from the very beginning. Despite this realization, the United States, fearful that an overt military buildup in the South would provoke a conflict, rather than deter one, did little besides try to maintain order and provide economic aid in the South. Meanwhile, one of the critical requirements for exit—an effective South Korean military—was left to a grossly inadequate advisory effort for three years.

1. Communist Insurgency

By early 1948 Washington finally had supported an increase in the constabulary to 50,000, but that number still fell short of what was required for Korea's defense. With this decision came the first general officer associated with the advisory effort, Brigadier General William L. Roberts, who assumed command on 20 May 1948. The assignment of a brigadier general as the chief advisor—versus a three-star general as in Greece and later in Vietnam—reflected Korea's low importance. Although this was Roberts's last post before retirement, he took to the job with alacrity. He established a stand-alone advisory

[65] Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 135.

command, the Provisional Military Advisory Group (PMAG), and increased its personnel to address the severe manpower shortfall the advisors had faced since inception. By the end of 1948, PMAG had 248 advisors, and Roberts's seniority permitted him to request officers with more experience, although Korean duty still was unpopular. PMAG created an Advisor's Handbook and standardized training plans to provide written guidance to its personnel on how to perform their duties and what training to instruct.[66] The constabulary also began receiving surplus American armament including small arms, light artillery, M-24 light tanks, and armored cars.[67] The additional materiel and manpower were still insufficient compared to the Soviet arming of the North. For example, each constabulary regiment of 2,000 personnel still only had an advisory detachment of one or two officers and three to four enlisted men headed by a captain or first lieutenant.[68] Nevertheless, enough progress had been made up to this point for the constabulary to successfully tackle its next test.

The first signs of open communist rebellion occurred on the island of Cheju Do off Korea's southern coast in April 1948.[69] The island's governor was corrupt, the KNP and constabulary units on the island were at odds, and Communists had infiltrated the constabulary regiment. When discontented islanders launched attacks on government and police facilities, the constabulary forces did not reinforce the government, and some even joined the rebels.[70] Constabulary reinforcements from the mainland restored order and scattered the rebels, but the event highlighted the tenuous nature of the constabulary's loyalty. This incident resulted in a concerted effort to purge the constabulary of leftist elements and provided valuable real-world experience to the constabulary troops and its advisors.

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[66] This handbook began under General Roberts. His successors continued to revise it. United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, *KMAG Advisor's Handbook* (Seoul: KMAG, 1951), http://www.cgsc.edu/carl/docrepository/korean_advisors_handbook1951.pdf.

[67] Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 132.

[68] Ibid., 164.

[69] Gibby, *Will to Win*, 51-52.

[70] Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 146.

The next test took place on the Yosu peninsula in southern Korea on 19 October 1948.[71] The enlisted leadership of the ROKA 14th Regiment contained many communist sympathizers. Believing they could ignite a Communist rebellion in the South, the Communist cell took over the regimental headquarters, armed up to two thousand insurgents who rallied to their cause, seized the towns of Yosu and Sunchon forty miles to the north, and initiated a reign of terror against government personnel.[72] This situation was the first major emergency for Rhee's government and had to be addressed immediately and decisively. General Roberts sent Captain Hausman to be the senior advisor to a collection of Korean colonels and lieutenant colonels overseeing the employment of eleven battalions drawn from six different regiments.[73] With Hausman and the advisors providing the planning and staff expertise, the constabulary managed to break the traitors' hold on the area.

The performance of the constabulary troops during these two uprisings displayed that individual soldiers were willing to fight. Millett recounts the story of Army Lieutenant Robert Shackleton, who was the advisor to the ROKA 1st Reconnaissance Troop. His unit led the decisive counterattack at Yosu, suffered twenty-five percent casualties, and, according to Shackleton, fought bravely.[74] Despite the individual bravery exhibited by the constabulary soldiers, their leaders exhibited significant shortcomings in tactical planning and execution. As historian Bryan Gibby points out, command and control, lateral communications, and lack of familiarity with supporting arms such as mortars and machine guns hampered the ROKA counterattack.[75] Additionally, the two sides were evenly matched in weaponry—possessing only individual small arms. It took the heavier armament of the reconnaissance troop, which was the only constabulary unit

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[71] The Yosu peninsula extends south with Sunchon at its northern terminus. See Figure 4 for reference.

[72] Bruce Cumings, *The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947–1950*, vol. 2 of *The Origins of the Korean War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 259–61; Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 166–72; John P. Reed, "The Truth About the Yosu Incident," n.d., Entry 181, Box 2, Yosu Incident Eyewitness Folder, Records of the Army Staff, Office of the Chief of Military History, Background-Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War, 1951–1965, RG 319, NACP.

[73] While hardly an ideal task force, these battalions were judged most loyal to the government.

[74] Millett, *Their War for Korea*, 159–60.

[75] Gibby, *Will to Win*, 57–58.

with armored vehicles, to finally break the resistance.[76] These deficiencies were directly attributable to the insufficient support provided to the South Korean security establishment since 1945. Fortunately, the incident highlighted these shortcomings, and the ROKA with its U.S. advisors could begin addressing them with greater alacrity.

2. Growing Threat

These uprisings highlighted the U.S. failure to appreciate that its position in Korea would not improve by continuing to neglect a security force consistent with the requirement of a permanently independent South, especially considering the imminent departure of all U.S. forces. Although General Hodge had requested a larger Korean army from the outset, the Department of State elevated the issue to a level that initiated action, pointing "out that while the Department of the Army was proceeding with plans for increasing the Korean constabulary to a strength of 50,000 men it was placing the equipping of such a force at such a low level of priority there was danger that an adequate force could not be trained and equipped in the time available [prior to the U.S. departure]."[77] Understandably, the United States had held out hope for an acceptable settlement leading to unification, but as this became increasingly unlikely through 1947, U.S. leaders failed to commit to Korea as a bastion against its communist neighbors.

The Mutual Defense Assistance Act (MDAA) of 1949 finally codified what had been a piecemeal effort to fund military aid but was a clear reminder of Korea's place in U.S. strategy. Prior to the MDAA, the U.S. assistance program dealt out aid on a piecemeal basis according to perceived threat and the recipient government's lobbying ability. The MDAA was an attempt to standardize this arrangement in a coordinated global strategy whose intent was to contain the global communist threat through the Military Assistance Program.[78] Domestic budgetary considerations played a larger role than the strategic communist threat, however, as an arbitrary cap determined how much

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[76] Gibby, *Will to Win*, 57.

[77] "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs (Allison)," memorandum, March 5, 1948, DOS, *FRUS 1948, Far East and Australasia*, 6:1139–41.

[78] Pach, *Arming the Free World*, 205–7.

MAP planners could propose for military assistance.[79] Congressional debate over the bill resulted in a $1.314 billion fund for military assistance, with nearly all of it assigned to European nations or Turkey; a mere $11 million was scheduled for Korea.[80] For Rhee's government and Roberts's U.S. command, there simply was no influential proponent for Korea in Washington's military or civilian leadership to lobby for greater support.

On 1 December 1948 the constabulary became the Republic of Korea Army. In January 1949 the United States extended recognition to the Republic of Korea, the last Soviet units left North Korea, and all but one U.S. regiment departed South Korea. In February 1949 the CIA estimated that communists in the South had been effectively neutralized to isolated instances of violence but warned that the planned removal of U.S. troops in 1949 would "probably in time be followed by an invasion" based on the increasingly aggressive actions of the North toward the South.[81] Anxious to recapitalize its remaining forces in Korea, the Department of the Army countered that invasion should be considered "a possibility rather than a probability" and continued to push for withdrawal, with all forces departing by July 1949 except Roberts's advisory mission.[82]

On 23 March 1949 President Truman signed NSC 8/2, which formally restated, and slightly revised, the U.S. position on Korea. It again recognized Korea's strategic importance but emphasized the removal of all remaining U.S. troops "as early as practicable."[83] It supported an increase of the ROKA to 65,000 but refused to make a strong statement of support to the "territorial integrity of South Korea."[84] Between March 1948 and January 1949, the ROKA had grown from 20,000 to 65,000 officers and

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[79] Pach, *Arming the Free World*, 207.

[80] Ibid., 218.

[81] CIA, *Communist Capabilities in South Korea* (ORE 32-48) (N.p.: Government Printing Office, February 21, 1949), 1, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/44/1949-02-21.pdf; CIA, *Consequences of U.S. Troop Withdrawal From Korea in Spring, 1949* (ORE 3-49) (N.p.: Government Printing Office, February 28, 1949), 1, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/44/1949-02-28.pdf.

[82] CIA, *Consequences Troop Withdrawal, 1949*, 7.

[83] "Report by the National Security Council to the President, NSC 8/2, Position of the United States with Respect to Korea," March 22, 1949, DOS, *FRUS, 1949*, vol. 7, pt. 2, *The Far East and Australasia* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1976), 970, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1949v07p2.

[84] "Report by the National Security Council to the President," DOS, *FRUS, 1949, Far East and Australasia*, 7:975–78.

enlisted.[85] This hasty growth had a negative effect on the training and readiness of the ROKA just as combat actions against the Communists were increasing. On an inspection tour of the ROKA units in the summer of 1949, General Roberts found equipment in poor states of repair, unit leadership that was ignorant of the fundamentals of infantry tactics, and units that had accomplished little training in the previous six months due to constant anti-insurgent operations.[86] Leaders at all levels advanced quickly through the ranks to assume positions for which they were unprepared. The ROKA was making regimental commanders out of officers commissioned as lieutenants only three years earlier.[87] General Roberts secured positions in U.S. military leadership training institutions in the United States and established schools in Korea based on the U.S. system to address this problem, but the ROKA was playing catch-up with the NKPA. This rapid expansion was necessary because U.S. leaders outside of Korea had ignored the growing threat and downplayed Korea's importance.

Beginning in spring 1949, the NKPA and ROKA began small-scale border incursions of the 38th parallel that escalated into battalion-sized battles focused on the isolated Ongjin peninsula and the natural invasion routes north of Seoul. These incidents were due as much to the South's aggressiveness as the North's: both sides violated the border. Even with these border skirmishes, however, by April 1950 the ROKA had eliminated the insurgent threat in South Korea and was maintaining itself well on the border. Despite the reports of growing North Korean capability and threat, the U.S. Ambassador to Korea, John Muccio, remarked as early as June 1949 that the ROKA "would give an excellent account of itself against the North Koreans."[88]

PMAG transitioned to the United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea, KMAG, on 1 July 1949. Its newly stated mission was "to develop the internal security forces of the Republic of Korea within the limitations of [the] Korean economy,

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[85] KMAG, "Historical Report, Period 1 July–31 December 1949," 3-5.

[86] Gibby, *Will to Win*, 72.

[87] Ibid., 310, n.102.

[88] "The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State," June 11, 1949, DOS, *FRUS, 1949, Far East and Australasia*, 7:1043.

by advising and assisting Republic of Korea in organization, administration, and training of such forces . . . and by insuring effective utilization any U.S. military assistance by these forces."[89] With this transition and the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces, KMAG's chain of command shifted from falling under General MacArthur via USAMGIK to falling under the JCS via Ambassador Muccio. This relationship was not unique and reflected the global nature of military assistance, but it also reflected a certain lack of interest in Korea on MacArthur's part before the outbreak of hostilities.[90]

Throughout 1949 and 1950, President Rhee continued to be a difficult U.S. partner. His government appeared unstable, he constantly pressured the United States for greater aid, and he made bellicose statements toward the North and disparaging comments about the United States. Rhee enlarged the ROKA beyond what the United States had approved to equip, and he was engaging in a limited border war that risked escalation.[91] Since Korea already was relegated already to the third tier of military aid, Rhee's personality did not increase the likelihood that his campaign for greater assistance would meet with success. If anything, his aggressive posture reinforced the American reluctance to arm his regime to a level that, while it might have sustained a more adequate defense, would also have supported more significant provocation. In contrast to the $100 million in economic aid money the Department of State requested for South Korea in Fiscal Year (FY) 1950, the military aid appropriated for FY 1950 was insufficient even for uniquely defensive armament like antitank weapons and mines to

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[89] KMAG, "United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea Semi Annual Report, Period 1 Jul–31 Dec 1949," January 1, 1950, Entry 1355, Box 29, 2, RGH, FEC, SCAP, and UNC, KMAG 8202nd Army Unit AG Section, Semi Annual Historical Report, 1 July 1949–30 June 1950, RG 554, NACP.

[90] MacArthur turned down a command relationship over KMAG when it was formed based on his experience with the advisory group in the Philippines. Sawyer and Hermes, *KMAG in Peace and War*, 46. Furthermore, he consistently downplayed Korea's strategic importance and recommended withdrawal of U.S. forces. James F. Schnabel and Robert J. Watson, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1950–1951, vol. 3, The Korean War, pt. 1* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1998), 11-13.

[91] Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 189–190; "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of the Army (Royall)," memorandum, February 8, 1949, *FRUS 1949,* 7:958.

meet the North Korean threat.[92] Furthermore, only $1,000 worth of equipment out of the $11 million appropriated for Korea in FY 1950 had arrived by June 1950.[93]

KMAG's semiannual report for July through December 1949 outlined the defensive plan in case of North Korean invasion. The concept emphasized a strong point defense on the corridors leading toward Seoul, abandonment of the Ongjin Peninsula, and the tactical use of border terrain to channelize and stop the invading army.[94] Meanwhile, the divisions in the southern provinces would be brought to bear as a reserve for a counterattack.[95] The report estimated that "if the Korean Army abides by the present plan, it can contain and repel the NKSF [NKPA] if no Chinese Communist troops are committed."[96] Only a few pages later in the logistics section of the report, however, KMAG estimated that the ROKA "is capable of maintaining internal security but, due to logistical restrictions, can offer only limited resistance to an invasion from the North."[97] Since the operations estimates failed to give enough weight to the materiel disparity between the two armies or appreciate the logistical shortfalls in the ROKA, the logisticians would be proven correct.

Kim Il Sung had been campaigning in Moscow and Beijing since at least 1949 for support to intensify offensive action against the South. Stalin rejected him in September 1949 because U.S. forces remained in the South, Mao and his Chinese Communists were still fighting their civil war, and the North's army could not defeat the South's rapidly.[98] By 1950, however, the geopolitical landscape had changed: U.S. forces had departed Korea, many of the battle-hardened North Koreans lent to Mao had returned and created new NKPA divisions, Mao's Communists were victorious and motivated, and the materiel disparity between North and South had only increased. Additionally, guerrilla

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[92] Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 220.

[93] Sawyer and Hermes, *KMAG in Peace and War*, 103.

[94] KMAG, "Semi Annual Report, 1 Jul–31 Dec 1949," 23-24.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid., 35.

[98] Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 196–97.

activities in the South, even if successfully contained, had prevented the ROKA from completing anything more than company-level training and forced it to use stockpiled equipment and ammunition. Kim promised Stalin a one-week war, but the latter was still unwilling to give his full support.[99] He required Kim to seek Mao's support for an invasion. Assuring Mao that the NKPA would win quickly and that the United States would not intervene, Mao gave his tacit approval to Kim's plan.[100]

When Roberts departed Korea on 15 June 1950, the ROKA was in a far better state than when he arrived. Building on the hard work of the initial handful of advisors, the fledgling constabulary was moving in the direction of becoming a capable, professional army that had already defeated a communist insurgency and was holding its own on the border with the North. Meanwhile, KMAG finally had the manpower it needed to address effectively the ROKA's deficiencies in combined arms operations, logistics, and staff planning. Roberts's public statements, meant to encourage and highlight the successes of the ROKA and KMAG, lauded the ROKA's patriotism and courage while still acknowledging the challenges ahead.[101] Although some have painted Roberts as being overly boastful of the ROKA, he tirelessly pushed for the equipment he believed it needed and was candid when discussing its weaknesses.[102] His final semi-annual report dated 15 June 1950 underscored the ROKA's condition after a turbulent two years of counterinsurgency operations and border skirmishes. Four of the eight ROKA divisions were deployed along the border. KMAG estimated the combat effectiveness of their thirty-three battalions at 51.7 percent while only six of these battalions had completed battalion training.[103] Three of the other four divisions were deployed in counterinsurgency operations further south and only consisted of two

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[99] Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 244.

[100] While Kim assured Mao that the United States would not intervene, Stalin was certain the United States would intervene, which would result in a Chinese-U.S. conflict and move China further into the Soviet camp. Ibid.; Richard C. Thornton, *Odd Man out: Truman, Stalin, Mao, and the Origins of the Korean War* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2001), 2.

[101] Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 250.

[102] Blair focuses on the upbeat messaging of General Roberts, while Millett and Fehrenbach note Roberts's cautionary language that typically followed any of his positive assessments. Blair, *Forgotten War*, 55–56; Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 250–52; Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 8.

[103] KMAG, "Semi Annual Report, 1 Jan–30 Jun 1950," Annex V.

regiments, instead of the standard three for a division.[104] The ROKA had grown and fought hard during his watch, but Washington's lack of interest in adequately outfitting the ROKA to repel a Northern invasion, despite Roberts's and Muccio's recommendations, left the ROKA in a dangerously unbalanced state compared to the NKPA.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had consistently viewed Korea as a liability since the effort needed to defend it against a concerted Chinese or Soviet attack would be out of proportion to the benefit gained. Despite the JCS's position toward Korea, however, Chairman Omar Bradley directed a staff study delivered in June 1949 that considered U.S. courses of action in the event of a North Korean invasion. Although it recommended the same course of action eventually taken by the administration—involving the UN Security Council—the JCS did not forward the study to the NSC since the military leaders had already conveyed their position on Korea's low strategic value.[105] What was more important than considering the options available to the United States in the event of invasion—withdraw or commit to the defense of South Korea—the JCS failed to provide guidance to the 500 members of KMAG who would potentially find themselves on the receiving end of a North Korean attack. Since the KMAG chain of command went directly to the JCS via the Chief of Staff of the Army, this guidance was critically important. KMAG's actions in the first seventy-two hours after the invasion had serious impact on the ROKA's decision-making.

On 19 June 1950 the CIA reversed its 1949 estimate on the threat of northern invasion. This reversal was particularly noteworthy considering North Korean aggression had only increased since the previous estimate.[106] The estimate noted the North's superiority in "armor, heavy artillery, and aircraft," and the return of forces that had been fighting with the Chinese Communists, but it failed to appreciate the effect this

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[104] KMAG, "Semi Annual Report, 1 Jan–30 Jun 1950," Annex V.

[105] Schnabel and Watson, *JCS History, vol 3., Korean War, pt 1,* 12.

[106] Allan Millett tallies 7,235 deaths of government forces and 30,000 guerrillas and noncombatants from April 1948 to June 1950. Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 142.

superiority would have in the event of invasion.[107] The CIA questioned the North's ability to conquer the South without Chinese or Soviet support based primarily on the South's anti-communism and the ROKA's will to fight.[108] North Korea's success would be as shocking as the United States' response.

The materiel disparity on the eve of war between North and South was heavily weighted in favor of the NKPA, although strictly speaking the numbers of security forces in the two halves of Korea were roughly equal, at about 100,000. KMAG estimated the NKPA possessed 65 heavy T-34 tanks and 296 pieces of towed and self-propelled artillery.[109] The real number of tanks was probably closer to 150, although the official South Korean history claims 242.[110] Additionally, the North Korean air force numbered between 100 and 200 propeller-driven attack planes while South Korea's air force was virtually nonexistent. Arrayed against the North's force, the ROKA had 27 light tanks, 91 short-range mountain howitzers, and 22 training aircraft.[111] Furthermore, the NKPA outranged the ROKA artillery by 4000 meters or more and had three times the artillery in their divisions.[112] Only one troop of the ROKA 1st Cavalry Regiment had armored vehicles—the other two troops had horses.[113]

E. WAR COMES TO SOUTH KOREA

The failure to appreciate the threat of North Korean invasion became starkly apparent in the early morning hours of 25 June 1950. At approximately 0400, the NKPA began attacking along the parallel in the Ongjin peninsula and around Kaesong and

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[107] CIA, *Current Capabilities of the Northern Korean Regime* (ORE 18-50) (N.p.: Government Printing Office, June 19, 1950), 1, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/44/1950-06-19.pdf.

[108] CIA, "Northern Korean Regime," 1.

[109] KMAG, "Semi Annual Report, 1 Jan–30 Jun 1950," Annex 7.

[110] American survey teams eventually found 239 Soviet T-34s destroyed or abandoned below the 38th parallel, but it is unlikely that all of these were committed in the initial attack. Korea Institute of Military History, *Korean War*, 1:51; Daniel Moran, *Wars of National Liberation* (London: Cassell, 2001), 56.

[111] Korea Institute of Military History, *Korean War*, 1:90.

[112] Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (June–November 1950)* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1992), 18.

[113] KMAG, "Semi Annual Report, 1 Jul–31 Dec 1949," Annex 7.

Uijongbu north of Seoul. KMAG Headquarters began receiving reports at approximately 0430, but the operational picture remained unclear for several hours since border skirmishes were common. Ambassador Muccio sent his official report to Washington at 1000 Seoul time assessing that the "nature of attack and manner in which it was launched . . .constitutes [an] all out offensive against ROK."[114] The invasion could not have come at a worse time for KMAG and the location of its leadership. Many of the unit advisors were in Seoul for the weekend. General Roberts had departed for the United States, and his replacement had not yet arrived. The acting commander, Colonel William H. S. Wright, was in Japan. Absent this leadership and having received little guidance outlining its role in this situation, KMAG headquarters was in a state of shock and uncertainty for the first twenty-four hours. With his military counterparts absent, Ambassador Muccio urgently requested a ten-day supply of ammunition for the ROKA but confidently assessed that "if adequately supplied, ROK security forces will fight bravely and with distinction."[115] While this statement turned out to be generally true at the individual soldier level, its optimism belied the ROKA's rapidly deteriorating ability to resist an enemy it had no means of stopping.

There simply had been little planning for an invasion apart from the general concept of operations that KMAG had worked out with the ROKA.[116] The only plan that had been fleshed out in detail was Operation CRULLER, which was the emergency evacuation plan for the American mission and KMAG. After some hesitation, Ambassador Muccio directed the evacuation of dependents and most of the staff, but KMAG's responsibilities remained unclear.[117] Advisors in the Ongjin peninsula, for example, were evacuated by air while their ROKA unit made its way to port facilities to

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[114] "The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Secretary of State," telegram, June 25, 1950, DOS, *FRUS, 1950*, vol. 7, *Korea* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1976), 125–26, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1950v07.

[115] Ibid., 7:129.

[116] Ironically, the Pentagon approved a plan, SL-17, on 19 Jun 1950, which outlined a defense of the Korean peninsula in much the same way as what actually occurred. KMAG appears to have been unaware of its existence, although MacArthur's plan was based on it. Blair, *Forgotten War*, 87.

[117] Sawyer and Hermes, *KMAG in Peace and War*, 121.

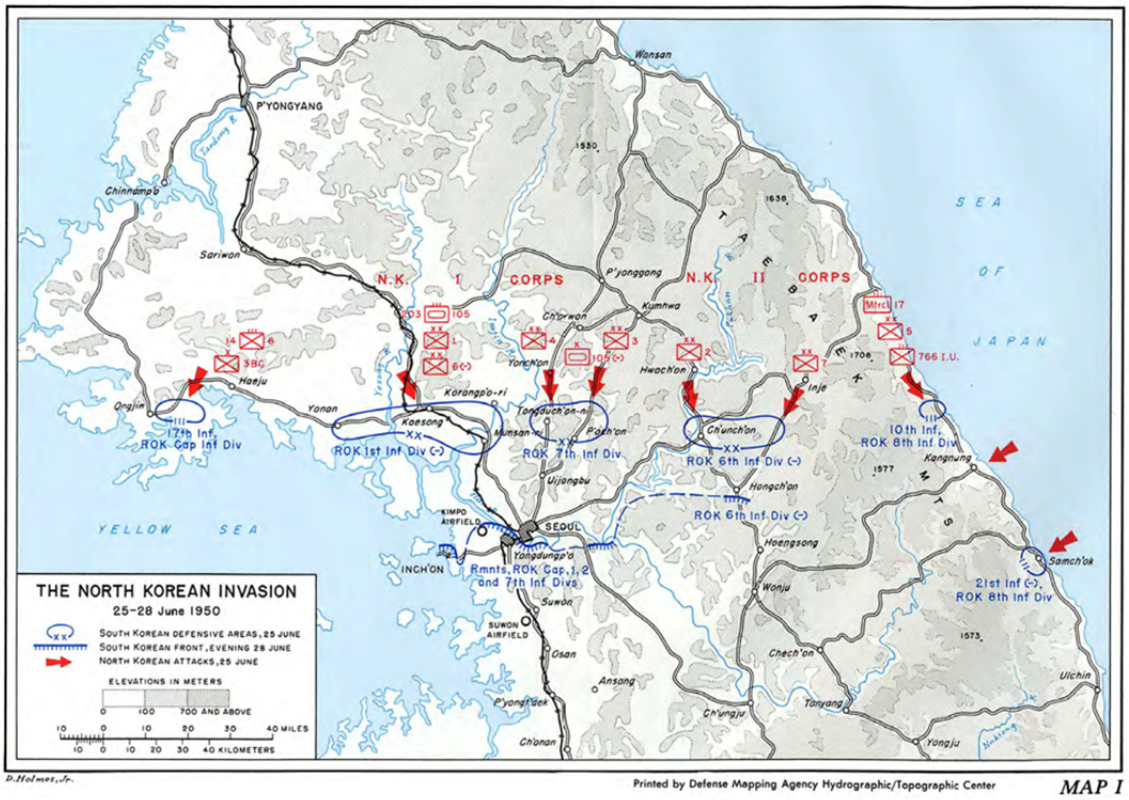
withdraw by sea.[118] The few advisors with or near their units conducted themselves as the tactical situation allowed.[119] Those at ROKA HQ passed information, and the rest awaited guidance.

As seen in Figure 5, the NKPA had massed its strongest forces north of Seoul: four infantry divisions, one armored brigade, and one armored regiment. Opposite them were two of the best ROKA divisions, the 1st and the 7th, each with two regiments on the parallel and one in reserve. As the NKPA began to gain ground despite significant casualties, the weaknesses in the lack of contingency planning became apparent. The strong point defense that the ROKA and KMAG had worked out did not make provisions for a planned withdrawal if the ROKA could not hold their assigned defensive positions. Moreover, NKPA advances in the 7th's sector risked cutting off the 1st from its line of retreat. Even though these two organizations fought bravely, their armaments simply could not stop the NKPA tanks.

[118] Sawyer and Hermes, *KMAG in Peace and War*, 114-15.

[119] Ibid., 115-16.

Figure 5. North Korean Invasion



Source: Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (June–November 1950)* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1992), Map 1, 20–21.

Roberts's untimely departure and Wright's absence only aggravated the harried decision making taking place at the highest ROKA levels, exactly where KMAG had judged the ROKA for years as being weakest. For example, Captain Hausman was the senior advisor to the ROKA Chief of Staff, General Chae Byong Duk. Despite the trust and expertise he had built over his long time in Korea, Hausman was still only a captain. Chae enacted the invasion contingency plan and ordered the divisions deployed in southern Korea to begin moving north for a counterattack. Elements of the 2nd Division began arriving on the evening of the twenty-fifth, and Chae ordered them to counterattack with the 7th Division the following morning on the roads north of Seoul. Hausman and the 2nd Division commander objected because only two of the division's six battalions had arrived, and there was insufficient time to coordinate and conduct reconnaissance. Chae ignored these warnings and ordered the counterattack. As might be expected, the

counterattack failed due to poor coordination and insufficient forces. A more senior U.S. personality might have been more persuasive and thus realized a more effective counterattack, although the ROKA still had no effective way of stopping NKPA armor.[120]

As observed by Major Richard Crawford, the assistant advisor to the Korean Army Corps of Engineers, "the sight of tanks advancing against South Korean troops threw them into a state of complete panic."[121] Crawford further notes his failure to provide any training in anti-tank engineering tactics to his unit before the invasion.[122] The ROKA engineers nevertheless demonstrated the ability to learn while displaying bravery and ingenuity in the days that followed. Crawford and his advisory team instructed the Korean engineers in improvised tank destruction methods, and the Koreans managed to destroy five NKPA tanks by the night of 26 June.[123] Further improvisation by the Koreans led to the idea of suicide bombers with the explosives attached to them versus on a pole or satchel charge.[124] Although there were some volunteers, this method did not appear to find widespread use among the ROKA soldiers. Had these brave soldiers been outfitted with non-suicidal means of destroying the enemy tanks, their effectiveness surely would have been greater.

When Colonel Wright made his way back to headquarters on the morning of the twenty-sixth, he had to decide what to do with his command. KMAG had heard virtually nothing from Washington in the first twenty-four hours other than a message inquiring whether its members required guidance.[125] As LTC Walter Greenwood, KMAG Deputy Chief of Staff recounts, "It appeared that the loss of Korea to Communism was to be

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[120] Appleman, *South to the Naktong*, 29-30.

[121] Richard I. Crawford, "Notes on Korea: 25 June 1950–5 December 1950," February 17, 1951, Entry 181, Box 2, Records of the Army Staff, Office of the Chief of Military History, Background-Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War, 1951–1965, RG 319, NACP, 6.

[122] Ibid., 6.

[123] Ibid., 7.

[124] Crawford, "Notes on Korea: 25 June 1950–5 December 1950.".

[125] Walter Greenwood, "Sequence of Events 0430, 25 June 1950 to 1200, 28 June 1950, for Capt Robert K. Sawyer, with Ltr to Sawyer," February 22, 1954, Entry 181, Box 2, Invasion Interview Folder, Records of the Army Staff, Office of the Chief of Military History, Background-Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War, 1951–1965, RG 319, NACP, 4.

accepted in much the same manner as the loss of China had been accepted eighteen months earlier. That line of thinking consequently played a very considerable role in the recommendations subsequently presented to Chief KMAG [Acting Chief, COL Wright]."[126] There were now elements of four ROKA divisions north of the Han River resisting the NKPA advance but, unable to stop the armor, they risked being bottled up with their backs to the river. The ROKA divisions in central and eastern Korea, the 6th and 8th respectively, were also fighting a delayed retreat in the face of armor and amphibious landings on the east coast. In light of the deteriorating tactical situation and assuming that Washington's position on Korea had not changed, Wright decided on 27 June to evacuate the bulk of the KMAG personnel, keeping only 33 as advisors to the ROKA HQ, the 3rd Division in the vicinity of Pusan, and the 8th Division on the East Coast.[127] As these personnel were in the process of departing, Roberts received a cryptic message from MacArthur stating that, "'Help is on the way. Return to your former location. Be of good cheer.'"[128] This message led Wright to recall the remainder of his personnel awaiting evacuation, approximately 150, and return to Seoul on the evening of 27 June after having already begun shifting HQ locations with the ROKA HQ south of the Han River. MacArthur's vague, ambiguous message simply added to KMAG's confusion, ineffectiveness, and near-capture.

Still unknown to KMAG, President Truman had called an emergency meeting to determine how to address the situation. Despite the apathy toward Korea that had characterized the U.S. military and civilian establishment, the administration committed to the country's defense almost immediately. The first actions were logistical to keep the ROKA supplied and able to fight. Airpower soon followed to protect evacuees but quickly expanded to interdict NKPA forces. The United States called an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council on 25 June. The Soviet Union's famous absence allowed the passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 82 calling for cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of North Korean forces from areas south of the

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[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid., 7.

[128] Ibid.

38th parallel.[129] The Security Council followed up with another resolution on 27 June recommending that "the Members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area."[130]

Having driven back toward the advancing enemy that was then on the outskirts of Seoul, Wright's group awaited instructions and learned that MacArthur was sending a survey team to facilitate U.S. intervention. In the early morning hours of 28 June, the ROKA decided to shift its HQ south of the Han River. KMAG learned of this move afterward and also of the ROKA decision to blow up all of the bridges across the Han, which ROKA engineers carried out while people and vehicles were still crossing. Aside from the 500–800 soldiers and civilians who perished in the blasts, this foolish tactical move was operationally devastating since the remains of four ROKA divisions were still making their way through Seoul to reestablish a defensive line south of the Han. The destruction of the bridges meant the ROKA had to abandon all of its heavy equipment and artillery, which of course fell into the NKPA's hands. Seoul fell to the NKPA on 28 June leaving ROKA survivors to straggle across the Han any way they could. Out of the 98,000 troops the ROKA began with on 25 June, it could account for only 54,000 at the beginning of July.[131]

The remaining 130 KMAG members also found themselves on the wrong side of the Han and had to search for a ferry crossing. They eventually walked much of the way to Suwon where they linked back up with the ROKA HQ. Once in Suwon, KMAG learned that it now worked for MacArthur's survey team, designated Advance Command and Liaison Group in Korea (ADCOM). Due to the circumstances and lack of guidance, KMAG's main effort during the initial critical hours became its own survival, not helping

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[129] The Soviet Union was boycotting the UN Security Council since China's member was from Nationalist, not Communist, China. Richard Thornton argues that Stalin preferred a collective defense action under the United Nations versus a declaration of war from the United States since the former gave him greater flexibility under his treaty obligations. Thornton, *Odd Man Out*, 82; "Resolution Adopted by the United Nations Security Council, June 25, 1950," DOS, *FRUS, 1950, Korea*, 7:155.

[130] "Resolution Adopted by the United Nations Security Council, June 27, 1950," DOS, *FRUS, 1950, Korea*, 7:211.

[131] Appleman, *South to the Naktong*, 35.

the ROKA survive. This confusion contributed to the premature destruction of the Han River bridge, an ill-advised counterattack against the enemy's strongest forces, and loss of situational awareness of ROKA forces. KMAG's requirement to focus the bulk of its effort on the evacuation, lack of direction in the event of invasion, and the absence of its commander hurt its ability to integrate into the ROKA decision-making and perhaps affect the outcome of these events.

In his memoirs, Army Chief of Staff General J. Lawton Collins speaks disparagingly of the ROKA's performance against the NKPA invasion, noting that the "failure of the ROK Army to stand and fight was a great disappointment to the officers of the advisory group."[132] General Collins lays the blame for the ROKA's critical military situation squarely at Roberts's feet, stating that "the Army staff, the Joint Chiefs, and the Economic Cooperation Administration had been led astray by the faulty estimates of General Roberts."[133] Collins admits, however, that "no member of the Chiefs of Staff nor its Joint Strategic Survey Committee had visited Korea from 1946 until I went there on July 14, 1950, shortly after the fighting began."[134] Blaming Roberts for misrepresenting the ROKA's ability to stop the NKPA makes him a convenient scapegoat considering the entire U.S. military and civilian establishment had regarded Korea as a third-tier interest since 1945. Despite the CIA reports and increasingly aggressive communist attacks on South Korea from 1948 to 1950, Korea's position remained unchanged in U.S. national security circles.

The war's first week also allows the ROKA's performance to be judged against U.S. performance under similar circumstances. Truman authorized the use of U.S. ground troops on 30 June to halt the North Korean advance since the ROKA continued to retreat south from Seoul. ROKA resistance followed the same pattern: NKPA armor—unhindered by ROKA weapons—penetrated the ROKA lines followed by NKPA

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[132] Joseph Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 17.

[133] Roberts did not receive a Distinguished Service Medal at his retirement in September 1950 likely as retribution for the ROKA's poor performance. Ibid., 42–43; Millett, *War for Korea, 1945–1950*, 308 n. 40.

[134] Collins, *War in Peacetime*, 42.

infantry, forcing the ROKA to retreat. U.S. forces from the 24th Infantry Division under Major General William Dean began arriving in Pusan on 1 July to delay the NKPA advance. The first two companies, under Lieutenant Colonel Charles Smith, met the advancing NKPA on 5 July near Osan. The results were similar to the ROKA experience: artillery shells and bazooka rounds failed to pierce the NKPA tanks, and a coordinated infantry attack followed that overran Smith's position. Although his small force gave a good accounting of itself, many of its combat-inexperienced members panicked at the sight of tanks and left the officers and non-commissioned officers to fight. Out of a force of 540 soldiers, Smith suffered 150 killed, wounded, or missing in the first U.S. firefight with the NKPA.[135] As Detzer writes, "the retreat from Osan became a helter-skelter flight. Men bolted like terrified creatures fleeing a forest fire. Some ran in packs, some alone. . . . They dropped weapons, helmets, utensils, belts, anything that might slow them down."[136] The newly arrived ADCOM staff was no better. Co-located with the ROKA HQ at Suwon, its members panicked on the night of 30 June due to mistaken reports of NKPA forces in the area. The U.S. members destroyed equipment and even burned down a command post building in their haste to flee a non-existent enemy, thus abandoning their ROKA counterparts who looked on in confusion.

On 7 July, the Security Council recommended placing the UN relief force under U.S. command, which meant MacArthur and his Korea command, the Eighth U.S. Army Korea (EUSAK) under Lieutenant General Walton Walker.[137] Subsequently, President Rhee issued an order placing all Korean forces under the combined command. The language barrier remained, but challenges associated with incorporating the ROKA into operational plans and directing it in the field were greatly reduced. Additionally, this shift gave General Walker the ability to relieve ineffective ROKA commanders and replace them with those recommended by KMAG.[138] This relationship would prove decisive to

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[135] Appleman, *South to the Naktong*, 68-75.

[136] David Detzer, *Thunder of the Captains: The Short Summer in 1950* (New York: Crowell, 1977), 189.

[137] "Resolution Adopted by the United Nations Security Council, July 7, 1950," DOS, *FRUS, 1950, Korea*, 7:329.

[138] Gibby, *Will to Win*, 138.

the advisory effort since it allowed MacArthur's experienced staff to make up for the ROKA that had shown a willingness to fight but lacked conventional war experience. On 25 July, Brigadier General Francis Farrell assumed command of KMAG, once again giving it the influence that a general officer could provide.

The first six weeks of the invasion saw the NKPA push aside U.S. forces in the same manner as the ROKA forces that many would later denigrate. The difference was that U.S. forces had the benefit of better coordination with their supporting arms and a clearer idea of the enemy conditions than the ROKA had on 25 June. By the end of its fifteenth day of fighting, General Dean's 24th Infantry Division could only account for 8,660 of its 15,965 assigned personnel; it had lost a division's worth of equipment, 100 miles of ground, and its division commander—who was captured—to the NKPA.[139] Fortunately for the UN command, attrition also was taking its toll on the NKPA, and its supply lines were stretching longer and longer and were susceptible to air attack. By August 1950, with reinforcements pouring in and frantic recruiting by the ROKA, Walker's command finally managed to halt the NKPA advance around Pusan.

F. REBUILDING THE ROKA

With the entry of U.S. forces into the war and both KMAG and the ROKA falling under U.S. command and control, KMAG could focus on its two most important missions: advising and rebuilding the ROKA. To accomplish the former, KMAG integrated advisors into each division staff to improve staff functions and communication with other units. Advisors in the field coordinated with U.S. supporting arms to provide close air support and artillery fires to ROKA units to help even the playing field against the NKPA units they faced. Equally as important, KMAG assisted in a massive, rapid ROKA expansion. This latter mission oversaw the creation of four new recruit training centers that were graduating 1,700 recruits per day by 31 August 1950 to replace ROKA losses and form new divisions.[140]

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[139] Appleman, *South to the Naktong*, 179–80.

[140] Gibby, *Will to Win*, 321, n. 59.

These recruits were critical to shoring up the five ROKA divisions that remained as they took up positions along the northern line of the Pusan Perimeter. Historian T. R. Fehrenbach credits the ROKA for having caused most of the NKPA's 60,000 casualties during its retreat toward Pusan. Kim's promise of a seven-day war had long since passed its mark.[141] With their backs to the sea and finally accompanied by adequate fire support and 3.5 inch rocket launchers that could destroy North Korean tanks, the ROKA held fast alongside the U.S. divisions against the NKPA's last ferocious gasp. Individual ROKA soldiers displayed their resiliency as survivors of the actions north of Seoul continued to straggle back to their units throughout July and August. Furthermore, the dogged ROKA defense around Pusan began to restore U.S. confidence in its combat ability. As the ROKA counterattacked northward in conjunction with the landing at Inchon, however, it again was being set up for failure. U.S. units entering the war consisted of soldiers possessing at least the minimum amount of training required for their specialties. In contrast, the ROKA began to be diluted by the heavy influx of raw recruits, many with less than a week of training. Furthermore, the United States never addressed the ROKA's shortfalls in artillery and tanks. This lack of heavy equipment allowed ROKA divisions to advance faster than their U.S. counterparts, but again left them vulnerable to a concentrated attack. The Chinese offensives of 1950 and 1951 exposed weaknesses that were due at least in part to the continued U.S. neglect of the ROKA.

Winter and spring of 1950–51 saw the Chinese push U.S. and ROKA forces south past the 38th parallel, but EUSAK, under General Matthew Ridgway, recovered and restored much of what was lost back up to the parallel.[142] MacArthur's relief in April 1951 brought General James Van Fleet to Korea in command of the Eighth Army and all ROKA forces.[143] Van Fleet's reputation had only increased with his service in Greece and its success against communism. As Clay Blair writes,

> Truman and others tended to view Greece and Korea as similar situations. . .
> . The ultimate long term "solution" to the Korean problem, like that of

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[141] Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 113.

[142] Ridgway took command after Walker's death in a jeep accident in December 1953.

[143] Van Fleet relieved Ridgway, who in turn relieved MacArthur.

> Greece, was the creation of a reliable indigenous army. Van Fleet had been almost miraculously successful in Greece. Even though he had never set foot in the Far East, perhaps he could repeat the near miracle in Korea.[144]

Although at least some of this praise was overblown given the Greek contribution to its own defense, Van Fleet did recognize the potential in the individual Korean soldier, and his efforts to bring this potential out would have an enormous impact on the ROKA's fighting ability.

Compared to their U.S. counterparts, the ROKA divisions were smaller, had only one battalion of artillery versus four, and were manned with a high percentage of inexperienced personnel, including officers.[145] Despite these knowable characteristics, the ROKA divisions were nevertheless assigned the same length of front as U.S. divisions. The Chinese excelled at infiltration and finding weak spots in the line. They knew from fighting American and ROKA divisions which one had greater firepower, so they chose to attack the latter.[146] It also did not help that ROKA soldiers seemed to have an inherent fear of Chinese forces.[147] These characteristics resulted in a series of disastrous retreats beginning with the Chinese offensive at the Yalu and continuing into 1951 until the front stabilized. This problem became a catch-22 since the ROKA would retreat in the face of concentrated Chinese attacks, abandoning equipment and vehicles along the way. When the Koreans would request more artillery to aid in defense, U.S. commanders would respond that the Koreans first needed to display better leadership and training.[148] Thus, in an act of ironic counter productiveness, U.S. commanders withheld artillery from ROKA units that might have helped it perform better against the Chinese until the ROKA could fight better without it.

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[144] Blair, *Forgotten War*, 807.

[145] Gibby, *Will to Win*, 157; Alfred H. Hausrath, *Problems in the Development of a Local National Army Based on Experience with the Republic of Korea Army* (Chevy Chase, MD: Operations Research Office, Johns Hopkins University, 1956), 17; Eighth U.S. Army Korea, *Special Problems,* 19.

[146] Bin Yu, "What China Learned from Its 'Forgotten War' in Korea," in *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, ed. Xiaobing Li, Allan Reed Millett, and Bin Yu (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 23–25.

[147] Gibby, *Will to Win*, 157.

[148] Ibid., 167.

Simply assigning the ROKA these tools would not guarantee success either since the officers had little experience employing equipment they normally did not have. Van Fleet's frustration culminated during a Chinese offensive on 16 May 1951. Expecting a Chinese attack around Seoul, Van Fleet had concentrated his strongest units there and placed the ROKA units stretching to the east through the center of Korea to the east coast. Unknown to Van Fleet, the Chinese had shifted their main attack to fall against the ROKA units who were known to possess less armament. Three Chinese armies fell upon six ROKA divisions, with the ROKA III Corps performing especially disgracefully and nearly risking the entire UN line. A rapid shift of forces shored up the defenses, but drastic changes clearly were needed to fix the underlying problems.[149]

The stalemate that began in the summer of 1951 gave KMAG the opportunity to rebuild the ROKA in a fundamental way, not simply patch it up as KMAG had done following the initial collapse in 1950. On 17 May 1951 the NSC recognized that the introduction of Chinese forces into the conflict made reunification of the peninsula impossible and finally committed to "the development of a strong ROK[A] military establishment for continuation of the struggle against communist forces (in case of a stalemate), and for the organization of a strong barrier to defend the ROK[A] against future aggression."[150] This new direction brought a new KMAG commander, Brigadier General Cornelius Ryan—a Van Fleet protégé—and an increase in KMAG manpower. KMAG already had grown from its pre-war strength of 500 to 1013 by March 1951 to meet the true needs of training and advising the ROKA.

As he had shown with the Greek Army, Van Fleet took great interest in the ROKA's improvement, which included increasing the quality of advisors in KMAG by sending successful battalion and regimental commanders to train ROKA officers. The pause in fighting allowed for a more focused and structured training curriculum at all levels of leadership that mirrored U.S. Army schools. With the resources on which he was able to draw and his operational control of the ROKA, Van Fleet put all of the ROKA divisions

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[149] Ibid., 169-72.

[150] "Memorandum Containing the Sections Dealing With Korea From NSC 48/5, Dated May 17, 1951," DOS, *FRUS, 1951, Korea and China*, 7:440–42.

through two months of division-level training, which was something the pre-war KMAG could only have dreamed of. KMAG also had significant leeway to identify poor leaders and remove them from their positions.[151] Within a year from the ROKA's failure in May 1951, Van Fleet went from denigrating it and disbanding a corps to publicly praising it.[152] Simply put, he recognized that an adequately resourced advisory mission coupled with a native partner that possessed an inherent willingness to fight could be prepared to stand against the Communists, but one without the other was a recipe for disappointment if not disaster. As Gibby writes, "American trainers were nearly unanimous in their admiration for the ROK soldier, who despite his lack of formal training showed great resolve and enthusiasm to learn and build confidence."[153]

In conjunction with the improved training, the ROKA also was equipped to the level of U.S. divisions. Less firepower invited more attacks, which increased the likelihood the ROKA divisions would not be able to hold their place in the line. By January 1953 the ROKA consisted of two corps, twelve divisions, and forty artillery battalions. It also held 59 percent of the line, inflicted 55 percent of the enemy casualties, conducted 61 percent of combat patrols, and received 87 percent of enemy attacks.[154] From the standpoint of keeping the ROKA in the war and creating a force that could keep the Chinese and North Koreans at bay, KMAG's job was complete. The only thing left was to prove it.

Stalemate at the truce negotiations over the treatment of prisoners of war (POWs) led to Chinese offensives in 1952 and 1953 to force a settlement by increasing the UN costs of continuing the conflict. The Chinese assembled their largest offensive to date in July 1953 with some of the heaviest fighting near Kumsong to reduce a salient held by the ROKA II Corps. Despite receiving nearly 400,000 rounds of artillery and suffering 30,000 casualties, the ROKA line cracked but ultimately held and inflicted over 70,000 casualties for the month.[155] A signed armistice soon followed.

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[151] Gibby, *Will to Win*, 185.

[152] Ibid., 196.

[153] Ibid., 200.

[154] Hausrath, *Problems,* 28.

[155] Walter G. Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front: United States Army in the Korean War* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1992), 477.

G. CONCLUSION

The United States did not cause the Korean War. Whether the Soviet Union did so is harder to say. As MacArthur rightly implied in 1945, the vying Korean factions would have resorted to force of arms in some fashion to decide their political future regardless of the policies that outside powers might have overlaid on the peninsula. It is hard to believe that anything short of an overwhelming military imbalance against the North would have deterred Kim Il Sung from attempting to reunite the peninsula by force, particularly given that Stalin's ultimate support for Kim's action did not require an outright Northern victory in order to accomplish its task, which was to divert American attention and resources and bind Communist China firmly to the Soviet Union.

U.S. actions from 1945–1950, however, made Kim's guarantees of success more believable, thus lowering the overall risk that Stalin would necessarily incur in supporting the war. The willingness of U.S. leaders to squander three years of occupation with anemic support to an anti-communist military establishment in the South implied that the United States was not committed to defending South Korea, which is what it had decided in secret NSC decisions. The Soviet and North Korean intelligence services surely were aware of the imbalance of forces between North and South and appeared to have a better appreciation of the true impact of that imbalance. Therefore, the United States deserves to conduct some self-reflection for the position in which it found itself in June 1950.

In 1947, General Hodge's political advisor, Joseph E. Jacobs, presented two possibilities for U.S. policy toward Korea. First, if Washington decided Korea was vital to containment, then the South should be appropriately supported and funded to reflect its importance.[156] Conversely, if Washington decided that Korea was not important, then it should be gracefully abandoned to whatever might become of the chaotic political situation that would surely follow a U.S. withdrawal.[157] Instead, the United States adopted a vague middle course that certainly ended up costing more in financial aid and above all in human and political terms than if it had made a firmer commitment earlier.

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[156] "The Political Adviser in Korea (Jacobs) to the Secretary of State," telegram, September 19, 1947, DOS, *FRUS, 1947, Far East*, 6:805–7.

[157] Ibid.

Allan Millett estimates U.S. costs for the Korean War came to $35 billion.[158] Furthermore, U.S. forces have remained in Korea ever since. In retrospect, the U.S. hesitancy to commit early to a fully-realized defense of an independent South Korea seems incredibly foolish. At the time, however, aid to China had failed to sustain U.S. policy goals there and thus portended a similar outcome in Korea. Additionally, General Roberts's optimism and intelligence reports that downplayed the likelihood of invasion gave the impression that South Korea was in a good position despite the minimal U.S. support it had received. An advisory effort should nevertheless have the complementary military aid to counter the most likely threat. In the Korean case, the United States deemed until too late that the threat resided in the realm of subversion, internal security, and insurgency. This basic strategic miscalculation limited funding and manpower throughout the majority of KMAG's pre-war effort, during which the ROKA showed it was indeed capable of winning an insurgency and defending itself against small-scale border skirmishes. Once large-scale conventional war came to Korea in 1950, however, the two main reasons for employing advisors—cost effectiveness and escalation management—were no longer relevant. Even so, KMAG helped to keep the Koreans in the initial fight during a period when the war might well have been lost outright and helped to build a South Korean Army that could hold its place alongside the UN forces that were required to defend against the huge Chinese armies that eventually intervened to save the North from its own defeat.

Particularly during the initial North advance, the Korean War was a close-run affair. In the final analysis, South Korea survived because its soldiers were willing to fight for their country in conditions more desperate than American policy was prepared to anticipate. Even so, it would be naïve to imagine that the knowledge, encouragement, and leadership by example afforded by American military advisors, however inadequate they may appear in relation to the ultimate challenge posed by the North, made no difference to the outcome.

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[158] Millett, *Their War for Korea*, 268.

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IV. U.S. MILITARY ADVISORS IN THE PHILIPPINE HUK INSURRECTION: THE POWER OF THE INDIVIDUAL

From 1946 to mid-1950, the Philippine government fought unsuccessfully against the Communist-inspired Huk Rebellion that, at one point in 1950, was a serious concern for U.S. decision makers in Washington and the Philippines.[1] A coup or other significant disruption of Philippine President Elpidio Quirino's U.S.-friendly government in Manila would have represented a victory for communism at a time when the United States saw itself locked in a death struggle with the Soviet Union. It also would have symbolized the failure of America's grand experiment to transform the Philippines into a successful, modern country founded on American ideals. Supported by U.S. aid and military advice, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) completely transformed themselves in 1950 and 1951 under the able leadership of Secretary of National Defense Ramon Magsaysay and crushed the Huks in one year's time. This Philippine achievement was the result of four key factors: the natural isolation of the Philippine archipelago, the close historical relationship between the United States and the Philippines, the radicalism of the Huk movement, and most importantly, the charismatic leadership of Ramon Magsaysay supported by his close American advisor, Colonel Edward Lansdale.

A. ROOTS OF HUK DISCONTENT

When Admiral George Dewey destroyed the Spanish Fleet in Manila Bay in 1898, the United States inherited a Philippines in upheaval. Three hundred years of a plantation-based economy under Spanish rule had given way to revolt beginning in 1896. The revolt continued under American rule, and the U.S. Army finally suppressed it in 1902. This victory gave the United States total control over the Philippines' domestic and foreign affairs. In an effort to bring American enlightenment to the islands, the United States established schools, public health services, and the foundation for a prosperous economy. Liberation by the United States unfortunately did not result in a better quality of life for most of the population. Landowners who were newly enlightened by capitalism

[1] "Hukbalahap" or "Huk" is an abbreviation for Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon, meaning "People's Army to Fight the Japanese."

tried to squeeze more and more of the crop out of their tenant farmers. As Huk revolutionary leader Luis Taruc writes, "when the Americans came they made boasts about having brought democracy to the Philippines, but the feudal agrarian system was preserved intact."[2] By the 1930s the average peasant was no better off thirty years after the end of Spanish rule than before, with many of the worst off concentrated in central Luzon near the capital of Manila.[3] It was under these conditions that Communist and Socialist parties began to organize in support of agrarian reform. Filipino Communists were more closely associated with Marxist-Leninist revolutionary doctrine while the Socialists were homegrown nationalists who generally wanted a greater share of their farming efforts.[4] Despite their differences in ideology, the two groups merged in November 1938 since their goals were ostensibly similar. The more radical Communists nevertheless exerted increasing influence over the combined group as time progressed and as the early, more moderate leaders were imprisoned or killed.[5]

In 1935 the Philippines became a U.S. Commonwealth as a transitional arrangement intended to lead to full independence in ten years' time.[6] Under this system, the Filipinos elected Manuel Quezon as President of the Commonwealth. He set about addressing peasant grievances, but little changed, and internal dissatisfaction continued to grow. While peasants generally protested nonviolently, the government reaction was often disproportionate. Nor were the authorities quick to recognize that the movement was spreading. As historian Benedict Kerkvliet writes, "a common belief among local

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[2] Taruc, *Born of the People*, 26. Under U.S. rule, the plight of many Filipinos worsened. According to historian Benedict Kerkvliet, the traditional landowner-peasant relationship during Spanish rule meant the landowners were responsible for the well-being of their tenants, which included free loans of rice and other assistance during the hard years. In return, the tenants were expected to reciprocate as the landowner might request. This relationship began to deteriorate with the introduction of U.S. capitalist "enlightenment," as landowners became more concerned with profit-making and less concerned with the welfare of their tenants. Kerkvliet, *Huk Rebellion*, 8.

[3] Robert Ross Smith, *The Hukbalahap Insurgency: Economic, Political, and Military Factors* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1963), 14, http://cgsc.cdmhost.com/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p4013coll11/id/1092/rec/1. The area around Luzon was particularly good for cash crops such as rice and sugar, which resulted in greater efforts to maximize profits and greater exploitation of workers than in other areas. Kerkvliet, *Huk Rebellion*, 23.

[4] Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger*, 16–18.

[5] Greenberg, *Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 11.

[6] This designation came as a result of the Philippine Independence Act, also known as the Tydings-McDuffie Act. Philippine Independence Act, HR 8573, 73rd Cong., 2nd sess. (1934).

and national government officials was that the peasant movement was subversive, communistic, and manipulated by a few clever leaders."[7] This belief ignored that the movement originated from general dissatisfaction with the economic system; only afterward did leaders emerge to give direction to the disgruntled masses. Both the peasants and landowners continued sparring for the government's favor, with the powerful landowners typically winning. Regardless, the Japanese invasion of 1941 nullified the immediacy of the government's need to take action and created the environment that allowed the Hukbalahaps to emerge as an armed resistance force.

B. BELLIGERENTS

The two sides to the eventual Huk Rebellion were the U.S.-recognized Philippine government and the Hukbalahaps of central Luzon. Key members of the former were the elite landowners, the small middle class, and peasants who were unwilling to take up arms against the government. Hukbalahap roots rested in the pre-war discontent with deteriorating conditions for a large percentage of the population. The Japanese occupation allowed them to become a formidable and motivated fighting force.

1. Hukbalahaps

In response to the Japanese aggression, Filipino Communists dedicated themselves to resisting the invaders. Their apparent commitment to country contrasted sharply with that of the Quezon government, which fled into exile, and with the senior American representative General Douglas MacArthur's relocation to Australia. Following some early small-scale successes against the Japanese, the Communists established the Hukbalahaps as their armed resistance wing and named Luis Taruc, a Socialist Party leader and staunch peasant supporter, as its commander.[8]

United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) formed other guerrilla efforts consisting of Filipinos and U.S. soldiers who had evaded Japanese capture. Their attempts to coordinate resistance efforts with the Huks were generally fruitless—and

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[7] Kerkvliet, *Huk Rebellion*, 56–57.

[8] Greenberg, *Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 13-16.

sometimes hostile—as the Huks hoped to use the period of occupation to enact long-term social change rather than cooperate under the American banner to maintain the status quo. As a result, the Huks received no U.S. equipment and instead captured most of their weapons from the Japanese. Like other communist resistance movements during the Second World War, the political aspect of the Huk movement was an important part of the organization Thus, each military detachment or district had a political officer in addition to its normal military chain of command. The Huks divided the countryside into ten regional commands (RECOs) that all reported to the Secretariat and Politburo. From the first five squadrons of one hundred men each, they grew to as many as one hundred by war's end.[9]

Since there was little U.S. doctrine for guerrilla warfare, the Huks turned to Communist Chinese writings to learn how to organize and fight. Without outside support, however, the Huks lacked the armament, numbers, training, and mobility to defeat the Japanese. Furthermore, MacArthur had ordered the U.S.-led guerrilla groups to avoid armed conflict and focus instead on gathering intelligence for an eventual U.S. operation to liberate the Philippines by conventional invasion rather than guerrilla tactics.[10] Thus, the Huks spent the majority of their time before 1945 consolidating their political position, which led to occasional armed clashes with USAFFE guerrilla forces that were wary of Philippine Communist ambitions.

2. Philippine Government Forces

The Armed Forces of the Philippines consisted of the Philippine Army (PA), Philippine Navy (PN), and the Philippine Air Force (PAF). Before 1949, the Philippine Constabulary (PC) stood apart from the AFP under the Department of the Interior as a paramilitary national police force.[11] The PC and PA entered the Second World War with distinct missions: the constabulary was responsible for state policing and the Army was

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[9] Smith, *Hukbalahap Insurgency*, 35; Greenberg, *Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 18-20.

[10] Smith, *Hukbalahap Insurgency*,., 42–43.

[11] The constabulary was called the Military Police Command (MPC) from 1945 to 1948, but for consistency, this chapter will call it the constabulary throughout. It was originally established in 1901 to complement the U.S. Army occupation force and then provided much of the Philippine Army's initial manpower when it was established in 1935.

responsible for national defense. Both organizations fought against the Japanese, and their members were killed, imprisoned, or scattered. The Japanese reestablished the PC under its puppet Philippine government to assist in maintaining order, but it was ineffectual since its members were poorly armed and generally avoided combat with other Filipinos.[12] Furthermore, as historian Robert A. Smith writes, "it was a common saying that the Japanese had emptied the jails to fill up the constabulary."[13] As a result, the PC entered the postwar environment in a rather pitiful state but found itself as the lead force fighting the Huks since the government considered quelling the rebellion an internal police function. In contrast, the Huks had a cadre of indoctrinated fighters, an established support base near the capital, and a history of evading forces sent to eliminate them.

C. BATTLEGROUND

The Philippines consists of over 7,100 individual islands of which Luzon and Mindanao make up two-thirds of its total landmass.[14] In 1950 the population was approximately twenty-one million, with 75 percent of Filipinos working on small farms.[15] The Philippine population was relatively homogeneous with the vast majority claiming Christianity as their religion, but the Philippines was home to at least eight major dialects that were not mutually intelligible. Thus, language differences and regionalism helped prevent the spread of communism that occurred in other countries after 1945.[16] Isolated as the Philippines was, it would have taken a concerted effort to provide the Huks with significant outside support of any kind, and they did not have a friendly, neighboring, sovereign state that could provide shelter if they met serious hardship. Their only significant advantage was their proximity to the capital.

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[12] David Joel Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration in World War II* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), 95.

[13] Robert Aura Smith, *Philippine Freedom: 1946–1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 144.

[14] Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, *Philippines: A Country Study* (Area Handbook Series 550-72), ed. Ronald E. Dolan, 4th ed. (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, 1993).

[15] Valeriano and Bohannan, *Counterguerrilla Operations*, 31.

[16] Eduardo Lachica, *The Huks: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt* (New York: Praeger, 1971), 38.

Although poor, abused tenant farmers comprised a large share of the Filipino population, only the area around Manila significantly cultivated the Huk movement. Mount Arayat dominated this low-lying region, and other mountains and swamplands provided refuge for guerrilla forces. The movement's proximity to Manila gave it distinct advantages including a large population base from which to recruit, relative ease in gaining intelligence on government activities, and tactical position to constantly threaten the capital. The Communists also rallied support by highlighting the contrast between the comparatively modern area of Manila and the extremely poor areas further afield, a visible symbol of the elites' exploitation of the poor. At the same time, however, proximity to the capital also ensured maximum attention from government forces.[17]

D. POSTWAR UNREST

The Philippines exited the Second World War in a poor socio-economic state. As historian Ray Hunt writes,

> Loyalty to America and resistance to the Japanese cost the Filipinos dearly: 5 percent of them were killed; millions were terrorized by unbridled Japanese torture and rape; and scores of thousands were crippled permanently. They were impoverished from wholesale theft and destruction of their resources, and their capital was laid waste more thoroughly than any cities on earth save Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Warsaw.[18]

Accordingly, Washington prioritized economic reconstruction and generally left the Huk problem to the Filipinos to sort out.

As Washington moved toward full Philippine independence by 4 July 1946, it secured two controversial agreements with the incoming government that served as targets of anti-colonial protest. The first was an expansion of the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act that allowed the United States to establish bases wherever it deemed necessary for mutual security. The second was the Philippine Trade Act of 1946 that guaranteed the United States preferential trade treatment, pegged the Filipino peso to the dollar, and

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[17] Greenberg, *Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 45-48, 53.

[18] Ray C. Hunt and Bernard Norling, *Behind Japanese Lines: An American Guerrilla in the Philippines* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 71.

granted U.S. entities equal rights alongside Filipinos to exploit the country's natural resources.[19] In exchange for these agreements, the United States promised hundreds of millions in aid, which provided ample fodder for anti-government elements whose message revolved around the government's sale of Filipino sovereignty.[20]

The Huks nevertheless made seemingly honest attempts to affect the political process legally by participating in the April 1946 national elections. The Huk candidates won seven seats in the House of Representatives, but the new president, Manuel Roxas, refused to allow the Huk candidates to take their seats. In May, Huk guerrillas ambushed a government patrol and killed ten, while Roxas's forces struck out at Huk leadership and followers in an intimidation campaign.[21] These events marked the beginning of the Huk Rebellion.

Following his inauguration, President Roxas initiated an uncompromising policy toward the Huks and directed the constabulary to eliminate them by force. Stating this objective turned out to be far easier than implementing it. The PC numbered only about 24,000 poorly-armed national police personnel while the Huks may have numbered as many as 10,000 to 15,000.[22] The result was a disorganized effort that failed to eliminate Huk forces or reduce popular support in the major Huk areas. As Taruc writes, "when the soldiers rounded up the barrio people, they would drive them at gun point to the nearest town"; meanwhile, government soldiers looted the barrios and blamed it on the Huks.[23] In contrast, the Huks made community outreach central to their strategy and slowly grew their base of support as their helping hand contrasted sharply with the government's mailed fist.[24] Poor operational security, clumsy maneuvers, and good Huk intelligence

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[19] *Philippine Trade (Bell Trade Act) Act of 1946*, Pub. L. No. 371, 60 Stat. 141 (1946).

[20] "The Secretary of State to President Truman," memorandum, April 18, 1946, *FRUS, 1946*, vol. 8, *The Far East* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1971), 873–75, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1946v08.

[21] Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 9; Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger*, 26; Greenberg, *Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 44.

[22] Greenberg, *Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 64, 67.

[23] Taruc, *Born of the People*, 39.

[24] The Huks preached respect toward those among whom they lived with such tenets as cleaning the homes of those who lodge them, paying for any damages, and helping the people in their general livelihood. Ibid., 68–69.

led to the Huks knowing about most large government offensives well in advance. A characteristic large operation frequently saw PC units move a few kilometers from their bases, engage in an inconclusive firefight, and claim large Huk body counts.[25] This practice made assessing the PC's effectiveness against the Huks difficult, especially since U.S. advisors did not accompany the PC into the field. Over the next year and a half, Roxas's government oscillated between this hard approach and occasional periods of negotiation in an attempt to resolve the continuing rebellion. Neither method brought about an effective conclusion.

In June 1947, the Huks adopted a new name for their army, Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (HMB), which translated to "People's Liberation Army" in recognition of its leaders' solidarity with the global communist community. They maintained their regional command structure and their political arm responsible for indoctrinating the peasants in communist teachings. This period marked the beginning of the movement's shift toward hardcore communist doctrine that even included the liquidation of members deemed to be bad Communists. Although this adherence to communism was meant to unite the peasants in common cause, Filipinos were slow to embrace its more radical tenets.

To maintain the relationship between the U.S. and Philippine militaries, the United States established the Joint United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of the Philippines (JUSMAGP) on 18 December 1947 under U.S. Army Major General Albert M. Jones. JUSMAGP's stated mission was to furnish advice, supplies and equipment, and training opportunities at U.S. military institutions.[26] With an authorized strength of only fifty-five officers and enlisted, it initially focused on technical training and the transfer of equipment but became increasingly involved in the assessment of the anti-Huk campaign

[25] Smith, *Philippine Freedom*, 145–46.

[26] "Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the United States of America on Military Assistance to the Philippines," March 21, 1947, Entry 213, Box 1, Records of the Army Staff, Center of Military History, History-U.S. MAG to the Repub. of Philippines, RG 319, NACP.

and advising the Philippine government of recommended changes.[27] In recognition of the continuing threats to Philippine security, Washington and Manila agreed on a continuation of the 1947 Military Assistance Agreement titled the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement that established the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP). The MDAP would be the new vehicle under which all military aid would flow to the AFP.

Roxas's government reported on numerous occasions that it was on the verge of victory, but it never managed to end the fighting, and Roxas's sudden death in April 1948 set up a new phase in the struggle for Filipino rule.[28] Upon taking office, Roxas's successor, Vice-President Elpidio Quirino, enacted an amnesty period to reconcile with the Huks and put the rebellion to rest. It allowed rebels to receive a pardon in exchange for registering their weapons, but it was littered with problems. Throughout the amnesty period (21 June to 15 August 1948), neither side completely stopped operations against the other. Furthermore, registration was self-incrimination and risked reprisal, which made the amnesty too risky for individuals already fighting the government. This effort turned out to be mostly futile for the government.

The end of the amnesty period and the continuation of hostilities coincided with the first indication that any senior U.S. official was taking serious note of the Hukbalahap problem. In August 1948 the U.S. chargé d'affaires inquired of President Quirino as to "the present and immediate future policy of [the] Philippine government toward the Hukbalahaps."[29] Quirino responded optimistically that the Huks would surrender their arms, although actually there was little incentive for them to do so.[30] Additionally, Quirino assured the U.S. mission that his forces were holding back to allow for a peaceful resolution to the situation, but less than a month later Quirino launched a major operation

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[27] JUSMAGP was preceded by United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of the Philippines (USMAGP), which was established on 25 October 1946. "History of United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of the Philippines, 1 July 1947 to 31 December 1947," December 31, 1947, Entry 213, Box 1, Records of the Army Staff, Center of Military History, History-U.S. MAG to the Repub. of Philippines, RG 319, NACP.

[28] Kerkvliet, *Huk Rebellion*, 194.

[29] "The Chargé in the Philippines (Lockett) to the Secretary of State," memorandum, August 18, 1948, *FRUS, 1948*, vol. 6, *The Far East and Australasia* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1974), 632, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1948v06.

[30] Ibid.

against the Huks centered on Taruc and his group. As Taruc recounts, "the terror immediately launched by Quirino exceeded by far the worst of the Roxas brutalities. Murder, torture, raping, looting and wholesale evacuations ensued across Central and Southern Luzon."[31]

In April 1949, the Huks assassinated President Quezon's widow in her car on the pretense that she symbolized the worst of the Philippine elite. Quezon was popular during his presidency—even while in exile—and had remained so in death.[32] The average Filipino citizen saw the targeting of his wife as a despicable act that symbolized Huk ruthlessness.[33] It even sowed discord in the Huk ranks as their members wrestled with their communist beliefs versus their Catholic upbringing and nationalist sentiments.[34] The Philippine government's response to this assassination also gave the first indications of what changes needed to be made to the Filipino security apparatus so it could effectively combat the Huk threat. Quirino ordered a reprisal operation involving four thousand Filipino troops who managed to destroy a Huk regional command after two weeks of combat operations.[35] This attack showed that larger units could realize measurable success against the Huks. In August 1949 Quirino reported to Truman that the Huk movement had been eliminated, in part to assuage concerns over U.S. personnel stationed at bases in the Philippines.[36]

Quirino's assertions proved to be exaggerated, however, and conditions in the Philippines continued to deteriorate. The Huk's high-water mark came in March 1950 with attacks on multiple towns and cities that netted vital arms and equipment while placing Philippine forces on their heels. The offensive culminated in August with an

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[31] Taruc, *Born of the People*, 263; Smith, *Huk Insurgency*, 78.

[32] Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration*, 55.

[33] A. H. Peterson, G.C. Reinhardt, and E. E. Conger, eds., *Symposium on the Role of Airpower in Counterinsurgency and Unconventional Warfare: The Philippine Huk Campaign* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1963), 21, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_memoranda/2006/RM3652.pdf.

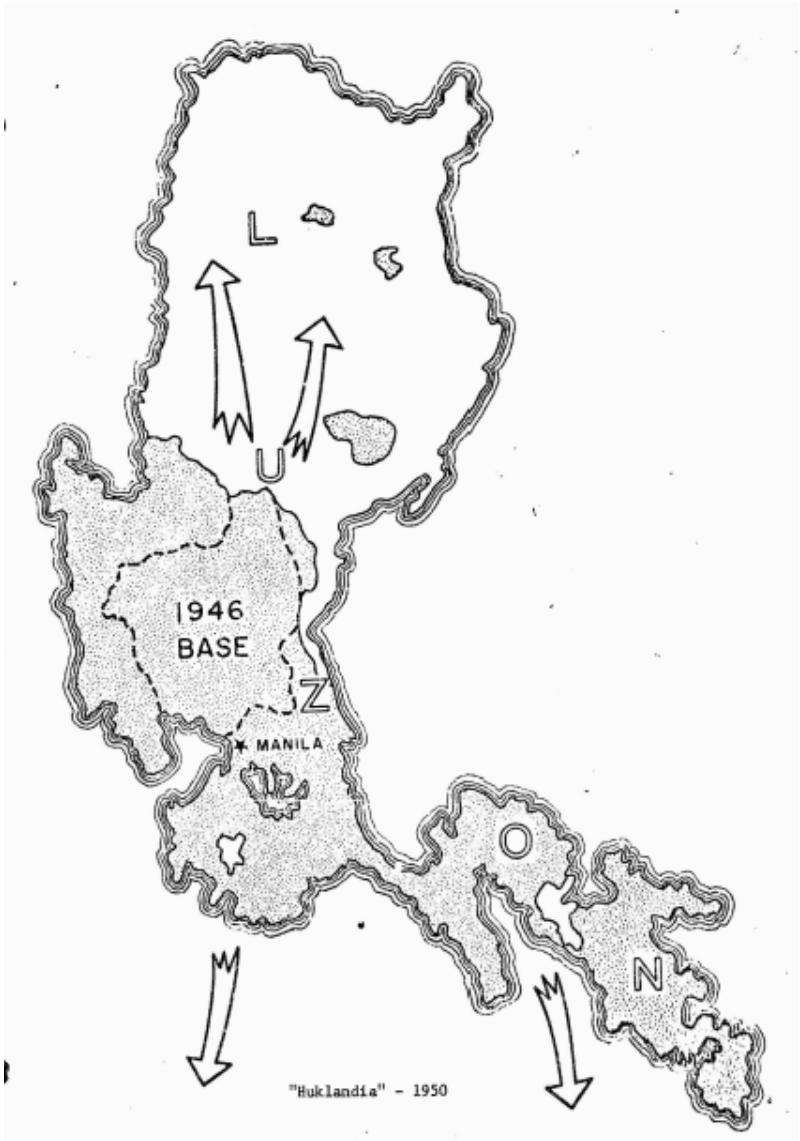
[34] Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger*, 75.

[35] Greenberg, *Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 75–76.

[36] "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of Philippine Affairs (Ely)," memorandum, August 9, 1949, *FRUS, 1949*, vol. 7, pt. 1, *The Far East and Australasia* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1975), 597, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1949v07p1.

attack on a PA base resulting in twenty-five soldiers killed and the massacre of patients and nurses in the base hospital. By this time, the Huk concentration around Manila was becoming so dense that it began to be called "Huklandia" as seen in Figure 6. The success of these raids and the Philippine government's inability to eliminate the Huk threat were reflected in a newfound sense of urgency on the part of the United States.

Figure 6. Huklandia, 1950



Source: William C. Moore, "The Hukbalahap Insurgency, 1948–1954: An Analysis of the Roles, Missions and Doctrine of the Philippine Military Forces" (Individual Study Project Report, U.S. Army War College, 1971), 25.

E. DEBATE OVER U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

Throughout the Huk Rebellion in the Philippines, Washington saw that the solution centered on improving the country's economic conditions. U.S. congressional outlays from 1945 to 1952 reflected this assessment, as economic aid was four times as great as military aid.[37] Nevertheless, the political-military position in 1950 was such that money spent rehabilitating the Philippine economy meant little if the security situation around the capital continued to deteriorate. Thus, from Washington's perspective, proactive measures to shore up Quirino's increasingly corrupt government were necessary even if distasteful. Additionally, the recent successful advisory effort in Greece shaped people's recommendations. U.S. leaders looked to General Van Fleet's successful mission in Greece for recommendations on JUSMAGP's force size and personnel with advisory expertise to achieve the same results in the Philippines.[38] Even though the strategic picture was significantly different, the idea that duplication of the input in Greece would achieve similar results elsewhere would persist in U.S. civilian and military leaders.

By February 1950 Secretary of State Dean Acheson was already souring on the Quirino government as a worthy recipient of U.S. aid. Despite $1.5 billion in aid since its liberation, he lamented that "Philippine ineptitude and wastefulness" resulted in a Filipino economic situation far short of what they should have attained.[39] Acheson's lack of confidence in Quirino was so grave that he even considered recommending his removal via unspecified means.[40] The U.S. Embassy further assessed in April 1950 that the Philippine armed forces' persistent inability to eliminate the Huk threat and its

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[37] Military aid totaled $220.9 million. Economic aid totaled $820.9 million. U.S. Agency for International Development, *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations July 1, 1945–September 30, 2009* (Washington, DC: USAID, September 30, 2009), 134, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADT555.pdf.

[38] "Memorandm from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Johnson)," September 6, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, 6: 1488.

[39] "Memorandum from the Secretary of State to the President," memorandum, February 2, 1950, *FRUS, 1950*, vol. 6, *East Asia and the Pacific* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1976), 1407, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1950v06.

[40] "Draft Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the President," memorandum, April 20, 1950, *FRUS, 1950*, 6:1442.

increasing alienation of the population could "prove fatal—unless . . . remedied."[41] The embassy recommended increasing the size of the JUSMAG to provide better instruction in anti-guerrilla operations and perhaps drawing on "officers having similar experience in the recent operations in Greece," and moving additional U.S. units into bases on Luzon to protect the installations.[42]

Major General Jonathan Anderson, JUSMAGP commander, had already been pushing the Philippine government to reform and reorganize its method for prosecuting the anti-Huk campaign. He identified two key objectives. First, Philippine security forces needed to concentrate on internal versus external security.[43] The lightly-armed constabulary was fighting the Huks, while the smaller but more capable Army focused on national defense. Since the United States had already committed itself to the Philippines' external defense, an outward focus was unnecessary; regardless, the PA had little capability to defend the country. Second, Anderson thought that the Philippine economy needed to be made capable of supporting the necessary forces on its own as quickly as possible.[44] This latter objective fit with overall U.S. goals to achieve a Philippines that was economically and militarily stable for the minimum U.S. investment. Failure to appreciate the Huk threat had led the United States mostly to ignore it and had led the Philippine government to delegate the defeat of the Huks to the constabulary, which had shown itself unsuited to the task.

At least as early as March 1950, JUSMAGP recognized that the PC was not the ideal force for combatting the Huks. It was organized in ninety-nine-man companies and focused on internal policing duties. These companies were further divided into platoon-

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[41] "The Chargé in the Philippines (Chapin) to the Secretary of State," memorandum, April 7, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, 6:1435.

[42] "The Chargé in the Philippines (Chapin) to the Secretary of State," memorandum, April 7, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, 6: 1437.

[43] JUSMAGP, "Semi-Annual Appraisal of the Joint United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of the Philippines," March 25, 1950, 1, Entry 241, Box 8, Joint United States Military Advisory Group Philippines, AGS, General Administrative File, 1949–53, 319.1, RG 334, NACP (hereafter Joint United States Military Advisory Group Philippines cited as JUSMAGP and General Administrative File cited as GAF).

[44] Ibid.

sized elements that were "scattered all over the Islands."[45] This dispersion allowed the Huks to avoid, harass, or cutoff PC units and attack them piecemeal, which often led to a "larger than life" fear of the Huks since they maintained the initiative.[46] Furthermore, the small PC units were often subject to executing the whims of the provincial officials where they were stationed, as opposed to aggressively seeking out the enemy. The PC also began its campaign armed as a police force with "billy clubs, side arms, and carbines."[47] Only later did it gain the weapons it needed to meet the Huks on an equal basis or to decisively outmatch them. Most importantly, however, the PC had earned a reputation for treating the citizenry poorly.[48] As a result, JUSMAGP recommended significant changes to the entire Philippine security construct. First, the constabulary needed to shift the bulk of its personnel to the army. These forces would assist in the establishment of battalion combat teams (BCTs) and provide the capability to engage and destroy Huk units, rather than simply exchange operationally insignificant retaliatory harassment. Second, it recommended shifting command of the PC from the Department of the Interior to the AFP to ensure a combined, coordinated effort against the Huks.[49]

The onset of the Korean War in June 1950 increased Washington's apprehension toward its position in the entire Far East and unlocked billions of dollars in military aid for a vast region that, up until that point, had received just a trickle. The JCS stressed the need to ensure the Philippines was not a point of weakness in America's Far East defensive perimeter.[50] It assessed that the 33,000 Filipino troops should be able to crush the 10,000 to 15,000 Huks in one year.[51] While it considered the present JUSMAGP size as adequate, its members considered "pattern[ing] it generally after the United States

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[45] Ibid., 4.

[46] Valeriano and Bohannan, *Counterguerrilla Operations*, 115.

[47] Ibid., 114.

[48] Kerkvliet, *Huk Rebellion*, 194–95.

[49] JUSMAGP, "Semi-Annual Appraisal," March 25, 1950, 5.

[50] "The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Johnson)," memorandum, September 6, 1950, *FRUS, 1950*, 6:1485.

[51] Ibid., 1487.

Mission in Greece during the recent large-scale guerrilla activities in that country" if the needs of the anti-Huk campaign so required it.[52]

U.S. Ambassador Myron Cowen went so far as to recommend stationing at least one U.S. division in the Philippines, "reestablishing the Philippine scouts on their pre-war basis with American officers," appropriating funds for "anti-Huk covert activities," and increasing the Philippine ground forces to two divisions.[53] In contrast, Major General Leland Hobbs, the JUSMAGP commander, in an October 1950 letter to General Graves Erskine, who had recently conducted a survey mission to the Philippines, referenced the "experience in Greece" to determine whether an increase in U.S. personnel beyond the thirty-two officers and twenty-six enlisted currently authorized was necessary.[54] Hobbs and his staff had determined that the Philippine Army was sufficiently effective on its own and any additional U.S. advisory strength would detract from its motivation.[55]

In November 1950 the NSC approved NSC 84/2, which recognized the "strategic importance of the Philippines to the United States" and the threat posed to it by the Huk rebellion.[56] Although it assessed that the "Huks lack[ed] the capability to acquire control of the Philippines," it recognized that the whole of the Philippines' problems required Washington to "provide such military guidance and assistance as may be deemed advisable by the United States and acceptable to the Philippine government" to address the military problem.[57] Coming as it did after June 1950 and the eruption of conflict in Korea, NSC 84/2 affirmed that the United States was "committed to the external defense

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[52] Ibid., 1488.

[53] "The Ambassador in the Philippines (Cowen) to the Secretary of State," September 29, 1950, Ibid., 1496.

[54] JUSMAGP, "Letter Major General Hobbs to Major General Erskine, Subj: MDAP Equipment—End-Use and Control of," October 20, 1950, Entry 241, Box 2, JUSMAGP, AGS, GAF, 1949–53, RG 334, NACP.

[55] Ibid.

[56] "NSC 84/2, The Position of the United States with respect to the Philippines," November 9, 1950, *FRUS 1950*, 6:1516.

[57] Ibid., 1520.

of the [Philippine] Islands and cannot permit them to be taken by aggression or internal subversion."[58]

In conjunction with the military efforts, the Truman-appointed Economic Survey Mission to the Philippines continued addressing the economic problems that were at the original root of the Huk Rebellion. Although these grievances, rooted in the historical condition of the Philippine peasantry, had been somewhat superseded by the communist takeover of the movement, addressing them could shore up the political situation and prevent the movement's growth. In October 1950 the Economic Survey Mission submitted its situation report and recommended $250 million in U.S. government assistance "to help in carrying out a five-year program of economic development and technical assistance."[59]

Ultimately, JUSMAGP resisted a significant increase in military involvement—a resistance that was fortuitous at a time when every available fighting man was needed to stave off a communist takeover of Korea. The military advisors ended up being the voice of reason during these months. They determined that the AFP's deficiencies were obvious to all parties and had already transmitted their corrective recommendations to the highest Philippine authorities. What was needed was an aggressive Filipino to implement the recommendations.

F. RAMON MAGSAYSAY

The succession of events that brought Ramon Magsaysay to the office of Secretary of National Defense is the stuff of legend in the Philippines. While some argue that he owed his success primarily to his friendly relations with the United States, it seems that most of his celebrated reputation was justified. As late as June 1952, retired Colonel Gyles Merrill was still extolling Magsaysay's virtues that he witnessed during the Second World War. Merrill credits his leadership with providing supplies to other USAFFE guerrilla forces during the Japanese occupation and assisting with the U.S.

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[58] Ibid., 1516.

[59] "Report to the President by the United States Economic Survey Mission to the Philippines," October 9, 1950, *FRUS, 1950*, 6:1502.

invasion by destroying twenty-eight Japanese aircraft, two bridges, and a radio installation; blocking roads that prevented Japanese reinforcements from U.S. beachheads; and clearing hundreds of mines.[60]

Magsaysay was born in 1907 and grew up in Luzon under modest conditions. He excelled in school, mechanical endeavors, and displayed early signs of leadership. His college years were mixed, but he eventually found success as a mechanic and became a shop superintendent in 1931.[61] During the war, he joined the resistance and ended the war as a renowned local commander. Following the war, he ran a populist campaign and won election to the Philippine House of Representatives in April 1946. From the beginning of his time in the Filipino Congress, he immersed himself in military affairs as a member of the House Committee on National Defense. One of his major early efforts was seeking recognition and benefits for Filipino guerrillas who fought against the Japanese during the occupation.[62]

Magsaysay was an outspoken critic of the methods that the constabulary used against the Huks and Filipino civilians. He used his position to hold accountable commanders whom he thought were abusive and were thus counteracting the goal of reducing Huk support.[63] He also saw a strong government as vital for helping the vast majority of poor Filipinos to earn a reasonable living and to have hope for a better future.[64] Magsaysay's altruism did not mean he was free of ambition, however. He quickly came to understand the workings of government and campaigned for appointment to head the House Committee on National Defense, which he won in early 1948.[65] His experience as a guerrilla leader and his perception of the poor effort being

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[60] "Colonel Gyles Merrill to General Frank Pace," June 10, 1952, Box 35, Folder 752, Edward Lansdale Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA.

[61] Jose V. Abueva, *Ramon Magsaysay: A Political Biography* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1971), 48.

[62] Ibid., 110.

[63] Ibid., 112.

[64] Ibid., 103, 113–14.

[65] Ibid., 115–18.

made by Filipino security forces against the Huks were two principal motivators for him to seek this post.[66]

Magsaysay saw the way that the government was addressing the Huk problem militarily as haphazard and in need of reform. Thus, he took on the entrenched Philippine Army hierarchy and pushed for the retirement of old officers well past their prime, which served a dual purpose since some of them still harbored the stigma of collaboration with the Japanese. In this role as head of the Committee on National Defense, he became the primary emissary for lobbying to the U.S. Congress. Magsaysay also began meeting with the JUSMAGP commander, Major General Albert Jones, to gather his organization's assessment of the security needs of the Philippines and feedback on the Huk situation.[67]

By this point, many in Washington had become familiar with Congressman Magsaysay and began seeing him as capable of righting what was a sinking Philippine ship. He was already a rising star in Filipino politics, and President Quirino was seriously considering him for the position of Secretary of National Defense.[68] Magsaysay's U.S. connections may have finally tipped the scales. Department of State and CIA officials pressured Quirino, who appointed Magsaysay to the post beginning 1 September 1950.[69] This decision would prove to be the turning point in what was still a frustratingly drawn out campaign.

Magsaysay's predecessor, Ruperto Kangleon, was by no means Quirino's incompetent lackey. Ambassador Cowen described him "as a man of unusual honesty and sense of duty" but saw that he was handicapped "by the fact that ranking officers of the Armed Forces frequently by-pass him, appealing direct to the President, and by the

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[66] Smith, *Philippine Freedom*, 151–55.

[67] Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance, 1950 to the Present* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 29; Abueva, *Ramon Magsaysay*, 118–20, 129.

[68] Abueva, *Ramon Magsaysay*, 152.

[69] Cecil B. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1998), 70–72; John F. Melby, interview by Robert Accinelli, November 14, 1986, Oral History Interview, Truman Library, 183–86, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/melby2.htm#183; Abueva, *Ramon Magsaysay*, 152–56.

circumstance that the President encourages them to do so."[70] Due to his relationships with his military cronies, Quirino had sidelined Kangleon to the point that he could not make the military reforms necessary to fight the Huks more effectively. Even as Kangleon left office, he remarked disparagingly about Quirino's failure to follow his advice and relieve ineffective officers. Magsaysay recognized this negative interference and demanded a free hand to do what was necessary to address the Huk threat effectively.[71]

Magsaysay wasted no time reforming the military. Within days of taking office, he recommended the retirement of thirteen older and underperforming officers including the Philippine Air Force commander.[72] He also began to clean up the military's reputation for abuse of the peasantry by addressing the past behavior of its members. For example, in February 1951, Magsaysay ordered a Filipino lieutenant colonel to return from the United States to face a court martial for his and his unit's behavior while he was in command.[73] He disciplined intelligence officers who had abused prisoners and warned his commanders that they would be held accountable for being afraid to go into the field.[74] He further oversaw the final reduction in PC forces to seven-thousand and assumed command of these forces from the Department of the Interior.[75] Napoleon Valeriano, one of Magsaysay's best BCT commanders, writes, "Magsaysay was new, dramatic, infinitely energetic, determined to overcome, by any means necessary, the obstacles to effective action against the Huk."[76] In his efforts to reform the military and the government, Magsaysay benefitted from his relationship with Colonel Edward Lansdale—the virtual face of U.S. advisory efforts during the Huk Rebellion.

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[70] JUSMAGP, "MDAP Monthly General Report, Initial Report, Period Ending July 31, 1950," September 11, 1950, 6, Entry 241, Box 2, JUSMAGP, AGS, GAF, 1949–53, RG 334, NACP.

[71] Smith, *Philippine Freedom*, 155. Lansdale conflicts with Smith's account, giving U.S. leaders more credit for pressuring Quirino into giving Magsaysay full authority to fire ineffective commanders and promote others based on merit. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 43–44.

[72] Ibid.; Lachica, *Huks*: *Philippine Agrarian Society*, 130.

[73] JUSMAGP, "MDAP Monthly General Report for the Period Ending February 28, 1951," February 28, 1951, 2, Entry 241, Box 1, JUSMAGP, AGS, GAF, 1949–53, RG 334, NACP.

[74] Ibid.

[75] JUSMAGP, "MDAP Monthly General Report," September 11, 1950.

[76] Valeriano and Bohannan, *Counterguerrilla Operations*, 139.

G. COLONEL EDWARD LANSDALE

It is impossible to describe the U.S. role in the anti-Huk campaign without discussing the contributions of Colonel Edward Lansdale, whose naturally outgoing personality, initiative, curiosity, and ability to relate to people were his signature strengths throughout his military career. Perhaps only T. E. Lawrence's reputation surpasses that of Lansdale in the chronicles of twentieth century military advisors. Lansdale appeared to have an above average ability to empathize with the cultures in which he lived and seemingly could make friends with virtually anybody. Even during the depression years before 1941, he was a successful advertising executive, implying an above average amount of talent. Commissioned in the U.S. Army, he served in the Office of Strategic Services during the Second World War, transitioned to the Air Force in 1947, and began working for the Central Intelligence Agency in 1949. In October 1945 he began a three-year tour in the Philippines as an intelligence officer. Not content to sit in the office and read reports, Lansdale spent much of his time among the people—including seeking out Huks who would speak to him—to better understand their motivations and, ultimately, their weaknesses.[77]

Writing in 1961, Lansdale painted the Huks in a much different light than simply as supporters of agrarian reform. In contrast to Taruc's writings, Lansdale emphasizes that the origins of the Huk Rebellion were part of the larger "international communism" movement and that its unstated goal was to "win a popular revolution which would put a handful of communists in power, to run the country afterwards as ruthless dictators."[78] Ironically, the Huks saw themselves as having battled a small group of ruthless Filipino landowning dictators for years with U.S. support.

After Lansdale left Manila in November 1948, he continued to follow events in the Philippines, especially when he began working for the CIA. In 1950, Lansdale met Magsaysay during the latter's trip to Washington, and advocated within the CIA for his

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[77] Currey, *Unquiet American*, 39–45.

[78] Edward Lansdale, "Counter-Guerrilla Operations in the Philippines, 1946–1953: A Seminar on the Huk Campaign Held at Ft. Bragg, N.C., 15 June 1961," June 15, 1961, 3–4, Box 73, Folder 240, Edward Lansdale Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, CA.

appointment to Secretary of National Defense.[79] Subsequently, Lansdale convinced his superiors at the CIA to let him return to the Philippines and assist its government in fighting the Huks.[80] Thus, the conditions were set for Lansdale's relationship with Magsaysay that would achieve legendary status in the U.S. version of the Huk Insurgency. Ironically, the anti-Huk campaign would show that the more successful the effort, the more credit the United States would attribute to its actions and personalities.

Biographies of Lansdale give the impression that he was an omniscient counterinsurgent who understood the relationship between government responsiveness and the needs of the people better than any of his peers.[81] As such, historians have credited him with being the genesis for economic reform in the Philippines as a way to combat the Huk message. This version of the story shortchanges the multitude of State Department and military personnel who had worked on U.S.-Filipino relations since 1945. There was no confusion among U.S. decision makers that economic recovery, fighting corruption, and civic action were the prescriptions for alleviating unrest and

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[79] Lansdale, *Midst of Wars*, 13-14.

[80] Currey, *Unquiet American*, 72.

[81] As Jonathan Nashel lays out, there is much debate over the significance of Lansdale's role in his relationship with Magsaysay to the numerous reforms and ideas that helped the Philippine government defeat the Huks. Jonathan Nashel, *Edward Lansdale's Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 227–28. As Jose Abueva chronicles, Magsaysay had been active on many reform issues during his first term in congress from 1946 to 1948. Abueva, *Ramon Magsaysay*, 110–14. Douglas Macdonald takes issue with a common legend that Lansdale "'invented' Magsaysay," calling it "an incorrect, ethnocentric, and rather arrogant interpretation" in contrast to Lansdale's own words and Magsaysay's consistent beliefs and actions. Douglas J. Macdonald, *Adventures in Chaos: American Intervention for Reform in the Third World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 145. Douglas Blaufarb reinforces Abueva and Macdonald, arguing that "the major initiatives and strategies were Magsaysay's, and various myths that made of Lansdale a puppet-master and Magsaysay his puppet were wide of the mark." Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era*, 39. Richard Slotkin argues that the Lansdale-Magsaysay relationship worked because it "was balanced; and Magsaysay, as both a native leader and an expert on his own political culture, shaped the objectives and overall course of policy." He further argues that "by interpreting the victory over the Huks as the product of Lansdale's professionalism and genius, American policy-makers blinded themselves to the real dynamics of that counterinsurgency operation." Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century Ameica* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 442–43. The final arbiter is Lansdale's inability to repeat the success with which he was credited in the Philippines when he went to Vietnam and worked with Ngo Dinh Diem. If creating a popular, charismatic, successful leader was so easy, there would probably be more than one example in America's history. See Currey and Phillips for a better appreciation of those who either served with or studied Lansdale for many years. Currey, *Unquiet American*; Rufus Phillips, *Why Vietnam Matters: An Eyewitness Account of Lessons Not Learned* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2014).

building the economy in the Philippines.[82] The problem was not a failure to understand Filipino problems, it was convincing President Quirino to address them effectively. It took a more patriotic, altruistic person like Magsaysay who would place country above self-interest to make serious changes.

What seems to be universally accepted is that Lansdale had an infectious personality that allowed him to quickly gain Magsaysay's trust. In his role as personal advisor and roommate to Magsaysay, Lansdale served as an objective source of advice that was untainted by Filipino politics.[83] The American was a committed anti-communist who believed in the American ideals of democracy and respect for civilians—ideals that also rang true with Magsaysay.[84] Lansdale biographer Cecil Currey overwhelmingly credits Lansdale for ideas that Magsaysay implemented or operations that he ordered like the October 1950 raid that captured nearly the entire Huk Politburo and for the improved treatment of civilians by the AFP.[85] Currey's version of the former has Lansdale "coordinating a plan with Magsaysay and the Philippine military intelligence people" to surprise and arrest over one-hundred senior Huk personnel. From what appears to be the more likely version, a Huk deserter gave the information to the government that allowed the operation to be so successful. The Lansdale-centric narrative even saw him referred to as "Ed Lansdale of Philippine fame" in 1954 state department correspondence between two high level diplomats.[86]

This narrative discounts Magsaysay's early successes in business, as a guerrilla leader, and as a freshman congressman, which all occurred due to his ability and well before his first trip to the United States in 1949. He knew his country's problems, and his service in congress taught him how to effect change, which he used to seek support for

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[82] "Memorandum from the Secretary of State to the President," February 2, 1950, FRUS 1950, 6: 1407-9.

[83] Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era*, 39.

[84] Edward Lansdale, "Panel Talk to the Military Government Association," 3, June 13, 1959, Box 75, Folder 255, Edward Lansdale Papers, Hoover Institution Archives.

[85] Currey, *Unquiet American*, 95–96.

[86] "The Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Ambassador at Saigon (Heath)," correspondence, February 12, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954*, vol. 13 pt. 1, *Indochina* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1982), 1041, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195254v13p1.

veterans and the armed forces.[87] Currey also writes, "one suggestion that Lansdale gave Magsaysay in those days was to ensure that those who were fighting the Huks remembered at the same time to respect the rights of their own countrymen. Magsaysay agreed and soon ordered a reorganization of the armed forces."[88] This narrative rings hollow since Magsaysay had campaigned against abusive leaders since his first days in the Philippine Congress and had been discussing necessary changes to the military structure with JUSMAGP before ever meeting Lansdale. A result of this experience would be the expectation that Lansdale could repeat it elsewhere. The Lansdale-Magsaysay relationship was a unique case based off of common ideals and goals. Van Fleet thought he had found his savior in Greece, General Papagos, who then promptly demanded nearly a doubling of the army before he would initiate offensive operations. Likewise, Syngman Rhee in Korea was particularly compliant when his country was in grave danger. When he was not happy with the deal being worked out in Kaesong, he took measures that threatened to reignite the conflict because his goals had diverged from U.S. goals. In the Philippines, the United States got lucky. Furthermore, if Lansdale had discovered the secret formula to turn anyone into a popular, charismatic leader, then his next assignment in Vietnam would have likely turned out differently.

Lansdale's real talent came in making friends, understanding the minds of the Huk enemy, and devising schemes to conduct psychological operations through various means that the less technologically advanced Filipinos might not have even considered. By the end of his tenure in the Philippines, Lansdale had displayed such valuable insight into all aspects of the Filipino political and military scene that he was one of the most qualified Americans to transmit thoughts on these subjects to U.S. decision makers. Lansdale displayed this expertise in a detailed five-page memo to Ambassador Raymond Spruance, outlining the political-military situation in the Philippines shortly before the 1953 elections that brought Magsaysay to the presidency.[89]

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[87] Abueva, *Ramon Magsaysay*, 121–25.

[88] Ibid., 88.

[89] "Memorandum Prepared for the Ambassador in the Philippines (Spruance)," October 3, 1953, *FRUS, 1952–1954*, vol. 12, pt. 2, *East Asia and the Pacific* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1987), 547–52, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195254v12p2.

H. HUK ERRORS

Despite their military successes in 1949 and 1950, the Huks made a series of decisions that significantly weakened their strategic position. The Huks had always consisted of a larger group of disenchanted peasants who simply wanted a fairer distribution of crop production from the land they worked. In contrast, the group's senior leaders were committed Communists who sought the type of revolution seen in China and Russia. For this Bolshevik side of the movement, there was no room for compromise with the government on concessions as an acceptable alternative for revolution. For them, the bourgeoisie were evil and had to be liquidated for the sake of the revolution, democracy, and freedom. In 1950 the Communists estimated that the unpopular Filipino government was ripe to fall, and that the United States was sure to undergo retrenchment due to an impending severe recession. Furthermore, the party assessed that their efforts to expand their influence had resulted in absolute revolutionary loyalty by the peasants of these areas versus grudging acceptance of the Huk presence and their communist ideology. Finally, the Communists chose to break away from other opposition parties whose goals were similar but who were not sworn to the Communist cause. All of these estimates were severe miscalculations.[90]

Additionally, Magsaysay's influence on the AFP's conduct resulted in better treatment of Filipinos compared to the Huks. As the government troops improved their behavior, the Huks often had to resort to coercion to maintain adequate supplies.[91] This shift caused the Huks to slowly lose support of the peasants. Furthermore, despite the U.S. belief that the Huk Rebellion was connected to the global Communist movement, Taruc writes, "no direct organizational link existed with either Russia or China during my years in the Party."[92] The Huks had labeled themselves communists but did not benefit from any connection to the global communist movement.

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[90] Kerkvliet, *Huk Rebellion*, 219-33; Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger,* 73, 169.

[91] Greenberg, *Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 145.

[92] Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger*, 33.

The Huks also never consolidated military command in one overall leader. Although Taruc was nominally the head of the Huk army, in practice, the Politburo retained overall control and moved influential commanders around to prevent them from consolidating power.[93] This strict Party control diluted Huk command and control and made massing Huk forces for a decisive operation virtually impossible.

Philippine Colonel Napoleon Valeriano and Charles Bohannon, one of Lansdale's lieutenants, nevertheless estimate that the Huks might have been capable of overthrowing the government, based simply on their proximity to Manila. Why they never organized and launched an effort to this effect remains somewhat of a mystery, although Valeriano and Bohannon hypothesize that the Huk leadership wedded itself to strict communist doctrine calling for establishing and growing a power base before launching the decisive effort.[94] This assessment conflicts with Taruc's narrative that the Communist leadership decided to undertake decisive operations in 1950. The scope of these operations never progressed beyond small-scale raids, however, and did not risk overthrowing the central government. Regardless, the changes Magsaysay implemented combined with a catastrophic Huk failure in operational security resulted in the rapid collapse of the Huk movement beginning in September 1950.

I. THE MAGSAYSAY MIRACLE

Magsaysay had two main challenges as Secretary of National Defense: improving the effectiveness of the security forces and reducing the Huk support base. Fortunately for him, he inherited changes that JUSMAGP had already convinced Quirino to begin implementing in April 1950. These changes involved a wholesale restructuring of the army and constabulary that recognized the Huk Rebellion as the most important and immediate security threat to a stable Philippines. JUSMAGP had advocated reducing the PC to seven-thousand personnel and shifting the remainder to the PA to establish fifteen BCTs of approximately 1200 soldiers each with all of the necessary supporting arms to

[93] Taruc's title was "Supremo," as in the supreme leader of Huk forces, but he never appeared to have the mandate or the communications ability to truly coordinate all the far flung Huk cells for an effective campaign. Valeriano and Bohannan, *Counterguerrilla Operations*, 62–63.

[94] Valeriano and Bohannan, *Counterguerrilla Operations*, 58.

locate, isolate, and destroy Huk concentrations.[95] Furthermore, these BCTs were assigned a sector to secure and reported to the Army Chief of Staff through military commanders versus to the provincial civilian leadership.[96] Finally, the PC retained its role of being responsible for law and order, but all forces fell under the Secretary of National Defense for prosecuting the anti-Huk campaign.[97] There was no dilution of effort; each BCT was a self-contained unit that was not dependent on cobbling together disparate elements that reported to a separate organization or provincial leader. Thus, the chain of command was clearly defined and uncluttered by other interfering parties like the PC had experienced throughout its time prosecuting the anti-Huk campaign before this reorganization when provincial leadership sometimes interfered with military operations for local reasons.

The BCTs also received intelligence capability because of JUSMAGP recommendations. Decentralized intelligence gathering and analysis were critical to the anti-Huk campaign. This addition significantly improved the BCT performance against the elusive Huks. This large reorganization did come at a cost, however. JUSMAGP reported that unit cohesion had been damaged by breaking up all of the PC units to form BCTs.[98] Nevertheless, in the months that followed, these changes proved their worth against the Huks. With the United States providing the equipment for these BCTs and the Huks receiving nothing but what they could scrounge or steal from depots, the Huks were outmatched from that point forward.

Fortune shone brightly on Magsaysay within a few weeks of his appointment as Secretary. Perhaps unbeknownst to him, the Huks had decided to strike Manila on

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[95] JUSMAGP, "Brief Resume of Dissident Situation and Status of Armed Forces of the Philippines," September 18, 1950, 7, Entry 241, Box 6, JUSMAGP, AGS, GAF 1949–53, RG 334, NACP. Additionally during this briefing, discussion revolved around the similarities between the Greek and Philippine Communist rebellions. The attendees note that Greece had 120,000 troops facing 20,000 guerrillas, the campaign lasted five years, "and they [the Communists] are apparently coming back again." The discussion implied that the Philippines might face the same dilemma, but an army the size of Greece's was impracticable.

[96] JUSMAGP, "Semi-Annual Report of the Joint United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of the Philippines, Period Covered: 1 January 1950 to 30 June 1951," July 18, 1951, 10–11, Entry 241, Box 8, JUSMAGP, AGS, GAF, 1949–53, 319.1, RG 334, NACP.

[97] Ibid., 9–10.

[98] Ibid., 13.

Christmas 1950.[99] Shortly after taking office in September, however, Magsaysay gained intelligence on a woman who was the courier to all of the communist leaders in Manila.[100] By following her delivery route, his forces marked suspect locations and arrested nearly the entire Huk Politburo, 105 personnel, in one lightning operation on 19 October 1950.[101] Although the Huks elected new membership shortly thereafter, the movement was never the same. William Pomeroy, an American deserter turned Huk, describes his feelings when he learned of his comrades' arrest: "ours is the feeling that divers have when their air hoses are cut deep down in the jagged caverned coral reefs, or that men have in mines when the tunnel behind them caves in and the choking dust rushes through the dark hole underground."[102] He further laments that "it is the worst possible news, for the whole direction of the struggle was in the hands of those arrested."[103] Ultimately, twenty-six were imprisoned for their crimes against the state, and the operation significantly disrupted Huk plans and organization.[104]

In January 1951 JUSMAGP reported its list of accomplishments over the previous six months, including the establishment of six new BCTs for a total of sixteen, streamlining the chain of command, and a "change in the entire philosophy of the dissident campaign from one of police-minded static defense to one of aggressive action against located HMB units."[105] At many points before the reorganization, the constabulary had attempted aggressive campaigns against the Huks only to fail. JUSMAGP's recommendations to reorganize, U.S. support in equipping the BCTs, and, most importantly, fresh leadership began to turn the tide in the stalemated effort.

In January 1951 Magsaysay launched Operation Saber. This operation had key characteristics with which the Huks previously had only limited experience. First, the

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[99] Smith, *Philippine Freedom*, 158.

[100] Ibid., 159.

[101] JUSMAGP, "Semi-Annual Appraisal," January 18, 1951, 9.

[102] Pomeroy, *Forest*, 88.

[103] Ibid.

[104] JUSMAGP, "Semi-Annual Appraisal," July 18, 1951, 16–17.

[105] JUSMAGP, "Semi-Annual Appraisal," January 18, 1951, 28.

BCT organization meant the government forces possessed sufficiently-sized units to conduct more than pinprick raids against Huk forces. While part of the force conducted clearing operations, the remainder could pursue or encircle the enemy. Second, improved armament and logistics, specifically rations, provided by the United States allowed the AFP to minimize the looting or seizure of property in the barrios. Third, Magsaysay aimed to change the culture of the government forces fighting against the Huks. As Valeriano writes, "Magsaysay issued a statement to the armed forces declaring that every soldier had two duties: first, to act as an ambassador of good will from the government to the people; second, to kill or capture the Huk. Nothing else, he said, really counted as far as he was concerned."[106] Magsaysay also changed the government's message toward the Huks to "All Out Friend or All Out Force." With this motto, he promised aggressive action against those who chose to continue fighting against the government and conciliatory action toward those who chose to give up the fighting and rejoin the law-abiding Filipinos.[107]

Providing written guidance to his troops and producing catchy slogans was one thing, but Magsaysay enforced his standards with an indefatigable work ethic that saw him visiting his troops in the field constantly. He was quick to praise those who maintained high standards and to criticize or relieve officers who took a lackadaisical approach toward their responsibilities. Magsaysay was not about to accept less than 100 percent from himself or his subordinates, and it began to show in the improved performance of the AFP. As Taruc writes, "the new discipline he [Magsaysay] imposed within the army, his good public relations, and his treatment of Huks who had surrendered or had been captured and who were willing to turn over a new leaf, seriously threatened the morale of our rank and file, which had, incidentally, been at its peak during the period of the 'mailed-fist' and terrorist policies."[108]

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[106] Valeriano and Bohannan, *Counterguerrilla Operations*, 207.

[107] Abueva, *Ramon Magsaysay*, 177-81; Greenberg, *Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 130-31.

[108] Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger*, 97.

With JUSMAGP and Lansdale's help, Magsaysay established the Civil Affairs Office to implement all non-warfighting activities.[109] These included many ancillary services that were meant to address grievances and reduce Huk influence in their strongest areas. Magsaysay made his military judicial system available to adjudicate land disputes. He established a direct line for everyday Filipinos to send messages directly to his office for a very small fee and medical care to civilians hurt during government operations against the Huks. Finally, and most controversially, he opened a land redistribution program to reformed Huks.[110]

While the military actions of attacking and eliminating Huk forces and safe areas were the decisive effort, civic actions played an important role in showing that the elected government could address many long-standing peasant frustrations. They gave the Huk rank and file a reason to quit the organization and return to a normal life, perhaps in an even better condition than they had been in before. Magsaysay took liberties as Secretary of National Defense to establish some of these programs even though he did not specifically have the authority to spend defense dollars on domestic programs. He saw them as necessary to counter Huk messages of agrarian reform and land redistribution. The most renowned of these efforts was the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR), which was a resettlement plan with land grants and pardons for Huk prisoners who promised to renounce fighting the government and become peaceful farmers. This plan consisted of land set aside on Mindanao and settled by retired Filipino soldiers into which the government introduced a small percentage of reformed ex-Huks. This program gave Huks the choice to achieve what they were ostensibly fighting for while offsetting the humiliation of surrender. Despite its promise, the EDCOR resettlement program was never an overwhelming success. Perhaps only two hundred Huks relocated to the farms, and fewer than half of those surveyed had even heard of it before surrendering.[111] Furthermore, it served as ammunition for Magsaysay's opponents in the 1953 presidential

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[109] Lansdale, *Midst of Wars*, 70-71.

[110] Blaufarb, *Counterinsurgency Era*, 31-34.

[111] Currey, *Unquiet American*, 99; Alvin H. Scaff, *The Philippine Answer to Communism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1955), 123; Kerkvliet, *Huk Rebellion*, 239.

election because of the questionable use of military funds for civic projects.[112] It nevertheless played an outsized propaganda role by making cooperation with the government look more attractive than armed insurrection, which appeared more likely to result in death or imprisonment as government forces continued to put pressure on the Huks.[113]

On the psychological operations side of the coin is where Lansdale's expertise and creativity truly flourished. He contributed to ideas and planning designed to sow discord among the Huks by making them question their equipment and each other's loyalty. These operations included seeding the battlefield with "exploding radios, flashlights, and doctored Huk weapons" that the Huks then used to their detriment.[114] One type of operation required well-developed intelligence on Huk formations. Huk members were addressed publicly over loudspeakers or in village gatherings and thanked as informers to make their comrades question their fealty.[115] Other operations aimed simply to draw support away from the Huks by appealing to their sense of humanity. For example, a Filipino government sector commander discovered a Huk commander's wife was expecting a baby. Upon delivery, the sector commander sent a doctor and nurse to the village and flew overhead offering his congratulations. This act of thoughtfulness contributed to the Huk commander's decision to surrender himself and the rest of his platoon.[116] Meanwhile, word of this treatment spread, which was certainly more valuable than the individual action.

On strictly military terms, however, Lansdale's advice was perhaps not as fruitful. He proposed the creation of an airborne BCT that he thought would be especially useful as a mobile force to help block retreating Huk formations. He managed to obtain the necessary equipment while in Washington and assisted in the BCT's formation and

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[112] "The Ambassador in the Philippines (Spruance) to the Department of State," March 6, 1953, *FRUS, 1952–1954,* 12, pt. 2:530.

[113] Greenberg writes that as many as 1,500 guerrillas utilized the program by 1955. Greenberg, *Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 89-92; Smith, *Philippine Freedom*, 172-75.

[114] Smith, *Philippine Freedom*, 119; Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 75.

[115] Greenberg, *Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 122; Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 74.

[116] Valeriano and Bohannan, *Counterguerrilla Operations*, 27–28.

training.[117] Despite this effort and a number of opportunities to employ it, however, JUSMAGP stymied his efforts and the BCT was deactivated on 15 August 1953.[118] Since the airborne BCT was never tested, it is impossible to definitively state whether it would have been effective. Based on U.S. experiences with airborne troops, however, it seems likely that dropping hundreds of inexperienced personnel into jungle areas would have resulted in mass confusion and injury, while still allowing Huks to escape through jumbled, disorganized lines.

By July 1951 Magsaysay had won over JUSMAGP, which was evident by its reporting that "the United States is fortunate in having, in the person of the Secretary of National Defense of the Philippines, the Hon. Ramon Magsaysay, whose forthright honesty, aggressiveness, and courage coupled with a genuine admiration and faith in the United States is continuing to correct many of the deficiencies which have lessened the efficiency of the AFP in the past."[119] Furthermore, his troops were displaying increased aggressiveness in the field. The days of constabulary companies shooting a few rounds in the air and submitting fictitious casualty reports were over.

The centralized command and control recommended by JUSMAGP and fully implemented under Magsaysay allowed for coordinated follow-on campaigns to Saber. These operations resulted in the Huks losing control of the populated areas they relied on for logistical support. Once the AFP was able to control the barrios, the Huks were left without reliable sources of food or supplies. Trapped as they were in the swamps and forests of Luzon, the Huks could not retreat to an area that offered them a long-term ability to sustain themselves. It was only a matter of time before they starved to death, fought a pitched battle out of desperation, or surrendered.[120]

By September 1951 even the safety of the forested mountains of Luzon was melting away for the Huks. U.S. Army deserter William Pomeroy recounts his attempts

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[117] Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 78.

[118] JUSMAGP, "Monthly Summary of Activities for July 1953," August 10, 1953, Entry 241, Box 7, JUSMAGP, AGS, GAF, 1949–53, RG 334, NACP.

[119] JUSMAGP, "Semi-Annual Report," July 18, 1951, 4.

[120] Peterson, et. al, *Symposium on the Role of Airpower*, 19–20.

to evade the ever-tightening noose of AFP BCTs as they sought to stomp out the remainder of the Huks. There was ultimately no escape from the island, and the isolated safe havens the Huks used to their advantage could not sustain them as food sources for very long. In less than a year, the Huks had gone from installing their leadership in the capital and dreaming of a grand armed revolt to being, as Pomeroy describes, "less than beggar[s]; we are the hunted."[121] Taruc, Pomeroy, and their followers escaped, half-starved, to northern Luzon in 1952, but little infrastructure awaited the last remnants of the Huk leadership. The AFP captured Pomeroy in April 1952.[122]

By November 1952, the PA had grown to twenty-six BCTs consisting of 39,400 soldiers, including 1500 who had attended U.S. service schools.[123] Another 450 were scheduled to attend in Fiscal Year 1953, which JUSMAGP commander Major General Albert Pierson assessed would "only result in an impressive improvement in all levels of operations in the Armed Forces."[124] He also reported that the Huks had diminished to a mere 4,000 armed troops and perhaps 40,000 sympathizers and supporters.[125] By July 1953, these numbers had dwindled to 33,576 sympathizers and 2,691 armed troops, and JUSMAGP had captured Huk documents that directed their forces to avoid armed conflict in an attempt to seek peaceful resolution in conjunction with the 1953 elections.[126] The AFP nevertheless maintained pressure on Taruc and his followers, and Taruc surrendered in May 1954. Writing from prison, he admits that "democracy and freedom can never be realized under Communism."[127] He nevertheless had fought against the AFP for nine years before realizing that Filipino Communists cared less about their fellow countrymen than the government he was fighting.

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[121] Pomeroy, *Forest*, 175.

[122] Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger*, 101–9.

[123] JUSMAGP, "Briefing for Mr. Tannenwald and Mr. Wood of the MSA," November 5, 1952, 5, Entry 241, Box 9, JUSMAGP, AGS, GAF, 1949–53, RG 334, NACP.

[124] JUSMAGP, "Tannenwald Briefing."

[125] Ibid., 3.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger*, 155.

As the anti-Huk campaign subsided, President Quirino began to begrudge Magsaysay's popularity among the people and U.S. officials. As the war concluded, the United States shifted support to Magsaysay in the 1953 elections since Quirino had failed to take the necessary steps to address the root causes of the country's problems. Despite Quirino's attempt to recruit Magsaysay as his vice president, Magsaysay resigned as Secretary of National Defense and handily won the election against Quirino due to his charisma, the respect he had won from the people, and perhaps some help from his U.S. advisor.[128]

J. CONCLUSION

The Huk Rebellion never seriously threatened Philippine security. It began as a small movement and flourished because the government proved inept at defeating it while simultaneously lending it additional legitimacy due to the constabulary's poor treatment of civilians and the Quirino administration's ongoing corruption. Whether the Philippine government would have formulated and enacted on its own the necessary changes that JUSMAGP recommended seems unlikely. Allowed to smolder indefinitely, the Huk problem had the potential to grow out of control. The natural position of the Philippines and Washington's assurance of its protection from external enemies allowed all security forces in the Philippines to concentrate on the Huks as the primary security threat. It also prevented the Huks from receiving any meaningful outside help apart from moral support. The only real possibility for Huk success might have been a surprise coup on the heels of North Korean aggression in June 1950. Timely action on the government's part under Magsaysay prevented any organized Huk action from accomplishing this feat, which illustrated the movement's fragmented nature and its isolation from the global communist movement.

[128] To what extent Lansdale was able to influence the elections that resulted in Magsaysay's presidency is a matter of real debate. As Jonathan Nashel recounts, Lansdale assisted Magsaysay in his campaign with slogans, songs, and buttons. It seems far-fetched that these gimmicks would have been enough to win the election unless Magsaysay was already popular. Nashel, *Edward Lansdale's Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 33–37. For more on Magsaysay's popularity during the election, see: Smith, *Philippine Freedom*, 168–69; Greenberg, *Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 137–38.

The series of decisions the Huks made in aligning themselves with extreme communist ideology during the late 1940s did little to endear them to the population that they depended on for support. The anti-religion communists were at odds with a population identifying itself as one of the most Catholic in the world. Furthermore, these decisions allowed the United States and other western nations to label the Huk movement as communist, which served as an immediate source of support from other established anti-communist movements. If the Huks had guarded their public persona as a poorly-treated peasant group, they would likely have faced less U.S. resistance and perhaps even support from some elements within the U.S. government more sympathetic to their plight. Following the 1950 arrest of the communist leadership, the newly elected replacements did not seriously consider retrenchment. Instead, they adopted an aggressive policy of armed struggle that doomed the Huks to virtual extinction against a reorganized and re-motivated AFP.

The United States resisted the temptation to intervene directly in the Philippines or even to significantly grow the size of JUSMAGP to provide field advice to individual battalions. This decision was understandably more difficult in the wake of the communist invasion of South Korea that was perceived as perhaps the beginning of a larger global communist expansion by force of arms. JUSMAGP recognized the Filipino soldier's potential and contributed adequate military aid to outfit the BCTs formed under U.S. advisors' guidance. A combination of proper military command and control by placing internal security under the Philippine Army, adequate-sized individual units for the mission, and a change in defense leadership that started with Magsaysay but filtered down to key subordinates combined produced success in the anti-Huk campaign. American advisors provided critical insight into the shortcomings of the military effort, and the Filipinos began acting on them even before Magsaysay arrived in the Secretary's office. His arrival provided a sense of urgency and energy to the endeavor that had not existed at any point since liberation. Since the United States would not allow its bases to be attacked or its long-standing position in the Philippines to be threatened, it was willing make an even larger investment than what was actually required. Like in Greece and Korea, the Philippine government shouldered a heavy load for supporting its army. Major

General Pierson reported in August 1952 that 43 percent of the Philippine national budget went to the Department of National Defense.[129]

The members of JUSMAGP identified the shortcomings of the AFP early and began taking action to implement the recommended changes in addition to serving as the vital conduit for the weapons that gave the AFP an advantage over the Huks. It took a charismatic personality like Magsaysay's to put the plan into action within a reasonable amount of time. His direct, personal involvement helped to improve his troops' behavior toward the population and to instill an aggressive spirit in the army that transformed the anti-Huk campaign in a matter of months. Furthermore, his altruistic public persona and the government programs he implemented to help those who swore off armed revolt implied an honest willingness to govern effectively, which had been largely absent since liberation.

Good fortune seemed to surround Magsaysay in nearly every endeavor. His rise to prominence in Filipino politics, including his rapid ascension to head of the Committee on National Defense despite possessing zero experience before 1946, was remarkable. Magsaysay, whose personal qualities included an ideal balance between ambition and benevolence, came to the attention of U.S. decision makers at the right time, which may have helped him advance to the post of Secretary of National Defense. Immediately following his appointment, at least some luck intervened to allow his forces to develop the intelligence and operation that netted nearly all of the Huk communist leadership in one masterful stroke. That he survived, despite an overwhelming desire among the Huks to assassinate him, was merely the final impossible act of his success against the Huk enemy. Valeriano and Bohannon assess the differences between the two most prominent leaders: "Luis Taruc, most influential of the Huk, achieved that position because of his love for his fellow men and his distorted view of a society in which he was unable to work his way through school. Ramon Magsaysay defeated him because of his love for his fellow men and his clear view of a political system that enabled him eventually to

[129] Pierson reports that of the 417M peso budget, 180M pesos went to national defense. "Letter, Major General Pierson to Dr. Renne," August 8, 1952, Entry 241, Box 1, JUSMAGP, AGS, GAF, 1949–53, RG 334, NACP.

become his country's best-loved President."[130] The greatest tragedy in the Philippine story is that Magsaysay died when he did. Otherwise, the corruption-wracked governments that followed might have been tempered.

The American experience in the Philippines represented an almost ideal environment in which advisors could be expected to succeed with reasonable certainty. From serious implementation of advice to the end of major resistance took about 18 months while scattered resistance lasted until 1956. Success depended heavily on the fortuitous coming to power of the right individual, Magsaysay, at the right time. With a lesser individual, the advisory mission likely would have had to grow so its members could spend more time in the field with their units. Attempting to overcome incompetence at the top by building competence at the bottom was unlikely to have had the same effect in such a short time. Fortunately, additional manpower was unnecessary, and the United States was able to realize its foreign policy goals in the Philippines with only a fraction of the advisors that other efforts required.

[130] Valeriano and Bohannan, *Counterguerrilla Operations*, 30–31.

V. U.S. MILITARY ADVISORS IN INDOCHINA: DRAGGED INTO THE FRENCH MORASS

In 1950 the United States, increasingly committed to preventing the spread of communism, above all in Europe but also more generally, began supporting France's effort in Vietnam to defeat the communist Viet Minh forces under Ho Chi Minh.[131] The purpose of this support was twofold: to prevent a communist expansion into Southeast Asia and to reinforce the U.S. position in Europe where France was one of the key pillars for resisting Soviet aggression.[132] Up to that point, Washington had remained generally detached from Southeast Asia, but it calculated that French failure there risked further losses in the region and even greater repercussions in Europe. Despite the precariousness of their position, however, the French were also wary of the generally anti-colonial coloration of American policy in Asia, and they were unwilling to countenance any significant outside involvement in what they considered their rightful sphere of influence. Thus, U.S. military advisors became an avenue for support that was both essential and grudgingly accepted. They were present from the very beginning of U.S. participation in Vietnam under the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Indochina.

From 1950 to 1954, U.S. advisors were obliged to support a French strategy that had little hope of success. France's objective—hegemony over Vietnam—ran headlong into burgeoning Vietnamese nationalism, which France's defeat in 1940 had allowed to flourish. The Viet Minh were the most significant and determined of Vietnam's postwar

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[131] Viet Minh is an abbreviation of Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi, or League for the Independence of Vietnam.

[132] As early as March 1945, General Charles de Gaulle argued that without U.S. support in Indochina, France risked "'falling into the Russian orbit.'" Quoted in "The Ambassador in France (Caffery) to the Secretary of State," telegram, March 13, 1945, *FRUS 1945*, 6:300. This warning continued in Franco-American discourse through at least 1950. See "The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Secretary of State," telegram, February 23, 1950, DOS, *FRUS, 1950, British Commonwealth, the Far East*, 6:744; Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954–1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 24. After 1950 Washington sought French support for German rearmament under the European Defense Community. Anderson, *Trapped by Success*, 23. The amount of Marshall Plan aid, 20 percent, and MDAP aid, 50 percent, reflects France's importance. Irwin M. Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945–1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 74, 131.

political parties, among which anti-Japanese and anti-French attitudes were the rule.[133] French and U.S foreign policy toward Vietnam relegated U.S. advisors to a supporting role consisting almost exclusively of filling French requisitions for U.S. equipment, but their role also ensured that they would become well informed about, and increasingly frustrated with, the French conduct of the war.

U.S. criticism of the French military effort centered on four general themes: a failure to aggressively pursue and destroy the Viet Minh, insufficient effort toward building a non-communist Vietnamese army, a failure to cultivate native Vietnamese army leadership, and adherence to a battalion-centric organization when faced with a division-centric enemy.[134] Despite identifying these weaknesses, and despite France's growing financial dependence on the United States, American advisors were never able to influence the French conduct of the war in a meaningful way.[135]

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[133] Independence or at least serious concessions from the French were key features of most Vietnamese political groups after 1945. Even groups that sided with the French against the Viet Minh chose sides based on their hatred of the communists or because the French bought their loyalty. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, vol. 1, *Vietnam and the U.S., 1940–1950*, National Archives, 1967, B-1-B-3, B-57-B-61, http://media.nara.gov/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-I.pdf (hereafter *United States-Vietnam Relations* cited as *U.S.-VN Relations*, and Office of the Secretary of Defense cited as OSD).

[134] On this latter point, MAAG personnel argued that the French lacked tactical flexibility because their failure to organize and train at any level higher than battalion meant that large operations necessary to destroy Viet Minh divisions were ad hoc and lacked "adequate striking forces for strong military effort." "Chief Military Assistance Advisory Group to Chief of Staff of the Army via Secretary of State," message, November 4, 1950, OSD, *U.S.-VN Relations, 1945–1967*, vol. 5.B.2, *Justification of the War, Internal Commitments, The Truman Administration, 1945–1952*, 408; Military Assistance Advisory Group-I, "Field Estimate of Current and Future Effectiveness of French Union Forces of Indo-China," February 6, 1952, 11, Entry 12, Box 1, U.S. Forces in Southeast Asia, 1950–1975, MAAG-V/Adjutant General Division, Security Classified General Records; 1950–1961, 400.1 Supplies, Services, and Equipment 1950 Thru 470 Ammunition, Armament, and Other Similar Stores 1953, RG 472, NACP (hereafter U.S. Forces in Southeast Asia cited as USFSEA, Military Assistance Advisory Group cited as MAAG, AGD cited as AGD, Security Classified General Records cited as SCGR); MAAG-I, "Field Estimate of Effectiveness of French Forces," January 23, 1953, 13, Entry 12, Box 1, USFSEA, 1950–1975, MAAG-V/AGD, SCGR; 1950–1961, 400.1 Supplies, Services, and Equipment 1950 Thru 470 Ammunition, Armament, and Other Similar Stores 1953, RG 472, NACP.

[135] By 1952 about three-quarters of the French war effort in Indochina was paid for by American aid. Anthony Clayton, *The War of French Decolonization* (London: Longman, 1994), 59.

A. FROM LIBERATION TO U.S. INVOLVEMENT

As the Second World War wound down, France moved to resume control of its pre-war colonies in Indochina.[136] President Roosevelt, rhetorically a staunch anti-colonialist, declined to take a definitive stance against this move, stating that a decision on Indochina's future was "a matter for post-war."[137] His death in April 1945 removed this potential external impediment to France's reassuming its position in Vietnam, and the following month Washington assured Paris that the U.S. government had no record of ever "questioning, even by implication, French sovereignty over Indo-China."[138] France had won the tacit approval of the most important postwar power to resume its station in Vietnam.

Following the Japanese surrender, Chinese Nationalist and British troops occupied north and south Vietnam, respectively. They encountered a well-established Viet Minh force under Ho Chi Minh and General Vo Nguyen Giap that already controlled much of the country, particularly in the north, and numbered approximately 50,000 armed fighters.[139] Ho established the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) on 2 September 1945 in hopes of finally achieving Vietnamese independence, a goal he had pursued for most of his life. The British actively assisted the French in regaining control in the south, but the Chinese demurred, which allowed the Viet Minh to expand its support base in the north. By mid-1946 these occupation troops had departed, leaving the French to face the growing Viet Minh nationalist movement. The Communists wanted

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[136] France had ruled over Vietnam since the late 1800s, but the Second World War brought Japanese occupation in September 1940. A French Vichy puppet government continued to administer Vietnam until March 1945 when the Japanese ousted it in the waning days of the war. France was not alone in its postwar re-colonization goals in the region. The Dutch would also try to reassert themselves in Indonesia, and the British in Malaysia and India. Karnow, *Vietnam*, 119-21, 158-59.

[137] "President Roosevelt for the Secretary of State," memorandum, January 1, 1945, DOS, *FRUS, 1945, British Commonwealth, the Far East*, 6:293. For a discussion on Roosevelt's views and the debate within the State Department concerning the French resumption of power in Indochina, see William J. Duiker, *U.S. Containment Policy and the Conflict in Indochina* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 10–16, 23–32.

[138] "The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in France (Caffery)," May 9, 1945, DOS, *FRUS 1945, British Commonwealth, the Far East*, 6:307.

[139] Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 2012), 127; Chester A. Bain, *Vietnam: The Roots of Conflict* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1967), 110–11.

full independence, but France wanted to resume the control over every aspect of Vietnamese affairs that it had enjoyed before the Japanese occupation. Negotiations on this issue were unsuccessful and resulted in a large-scale shooting war that erupted in November 1946 concentrated primarily in Tonkin.[140] By early 1947 the French had reestablished control over the large populated areas, an important series of fortifications along the Chinese border, and the main roads. Also, they could generally seize and hold any terrain they wished. Nevertheless, the Viet Minh was quickly eroding whatever French support existed in the countryside and was building up its forces.

[140] The French and Ho Chi Minh signed a number of agreements in 1946 that granted a vague independence to Vietnam, but the French did not live up to their end of the agreements.

Figure 7. Map of Vietnam

Source: Ronald H. Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years, 1941–1960* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1983), 6

In an attempt to find a pro-French counterbalance to Ho Chi Minh, Paris convinced self-exiled former emperor of Vietnam, Bao Dai, to become head of the new State of Vietnam (SoV), promising him "complete administrative autonomy."[141] This construct did little to build a popular anti-communist, pro-French coalition, however, and the French position became more precarious as time progressed. In September 1948 Washington assessed that France was "fighting a desperate and apparently losing struggle in Indochina."[142] This drag on the French military and economy meant they would be less able to recover from the effects of the Second World War and defend against Soviet aggression in Europe, which Washington saw as the critical theater. By this time France was even shipping U.S.-supplied weapons meant for European defense to its forces in Indochina.[143] Furthermore, French Communists were a strong force in their own government, and Western European countries falling to communism was a real fear after 1945.[144] Yet, the State Department had no solution to the Indochina situation since France could neither defeat the Viet Minh nor concede real independence for Vietnam. Overt U.S. support for France's effort risked alienating other Southeast Asian countries, who would view the United States as a new colonialist. Yet Washington also saw Ho Chi Minh as part of the global communist conspiracy it was confronting in Greece, Korea, and a blockaded Berlin.[145]

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[141] Bao Dai had been a figurehead emperor under the French and Japanese but abdicated in 1945 and supported Ho's DRV. Since then, he had spent much of his time outside of Vietnam, either in France or Hong Kong. The French, and Americans, hoped that the "Bao Dai solution" could be a popular, non-communist Vietnamese government alternative to Ho's DRV. This idea ended up being based more on hope than reality, although it remained prominent in U.S. NSC discourse through 1955. For more, see OSD, *U.S.-VN Relations, 1945–1967*, vol. 2, *U.S. Involvement in the Franco-Viet Minh War 1950–1954*, A5–A14, http://media.nara.gov/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-II.pdf; "The Ambassador in France (Caffery) to the Secretary of State," telegram, February 25, 1949, DOS, *FRUS, 1949, Far East and Australasia*, 7:9.

[142] "Department of State Policy Statement on Indochina," memorandum, September 27, 1948, DOS, *FRUS, 1948, Far East and Australasia*, 6:48.

[143] Ibid., 45.

[144] For example, the French Communists won the largest share of the French government in the 1945 elections, 26 percent, and communist parties had significant popular support throughout Western Europe. Leffler, *Preponderance of Power*, 70.

[145] "The Secretary of State to the Embassy in China," telegram, July 2, 1948, DOS, *FRUS, 1948, Far East and Australasia*, 6:28–29.

In September 1949 French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman notified Secretary of State Dean Acheson that the French "would need assistance to hold Indochina," since the war was consuming one-eighth of France's total budget.[146] Additionally, Communist China's victory over Chiang Kai Shek's Nationalists in 1949 allowed the Viet Minh access to arms and materiel that had previously been in short supply.[147] By December 1949, the French had 150,000 troops in Indochina and had suffered 30,000 casualties with the Viet Minh's position only strengthening.[148] By law, France could not send conscripted soldiers to Vietnam, so the drain on its professional manpower was severe. Further Viet Minh successes led Beijing and Moscow to recognize the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in January 1950, followed by U.S. recognition of the Bao Dai government in February. Unlike what the West faced in Greece and the Philippines, the communist bloc was willing and able to give moral and material support to the Vietnamese Communists.[149] The combination of negative factors—an unpopular colonialist occupying power, the lack of a Vietnamese alternative to the Communists, a large and motivated enemy force, and a shared border with another communist country—was more daunting than at the outset of any previous advisory effort.

The United States took action in April 1950 when President Truman signed National Security Council Report 64 (NSC 64). The report concluded that the fall of Indochina to communism would be followed by communist victories in Thailand and Burma and stated that the "Departments of State and Defense should prepare . . . a

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[146] "Memorandum by Mr. James L. O'Sullivan, of the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs, on Preliminary Talks as to Indochina," memorandum, September 28, 1949, DOS, *FRUS, 1949, Far East and Australasia*, 7, pt. 1:86.

[147] The first indications of contact between the Viet Minh and the Chinese Communists at the Sino-Vietnamese border came on 2 April 1949. "The Consul at Hanoi (Gibson) to the Secretary of State," telegram, April 2, 1949, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1949, Far East and Australasia*, 7, pt. 1:17–18; Ironically, as Hans Morgenthau puts it, U.S. policy toward Vietnam pushed the two historical enemies, China and Vietnam, together. Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Role of the United States in Indochina," in *The Role of External Powers in the Indochina Crisis*, ed. Gene T. Hsiao (Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 13.

[148] Spector, *Advice and Support*, 96; "The Ambassador in France (Bruce) to the Secretary of State," telegram, December 11, 1949, DOS, *FRUS, 1949, Far East and Australasia*, 7, pt. 1:106.

[149] Frederick Logevall recounts that although U.S. materiel to the French would outpace that of the Chinese to the Vietnamese, nevertheless, by autumn 1950, Giap's army was roughly equivalent in infantry and artillery firepower to its French counterpart. Logevall, *Embers of War*, 242–43.

program of all practicable measures designed to protect United States security interests in Indochina."[150] The Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred with the NSC findings, arguing in addition that the loss of Southeast Asia "would contribute to [the] probable eventual fall to the Communists" of the Philippines, Malaya, and Indonesia.[151] To prevent this loss, the JCS recommended a number of preventive measures including the creation of a "military aid group in Indochina," which led to the establishment of MAAG, Indochina, in September 1950 under the command of Brigadier General Francis Brink.[152] General Brink had served in East Asia since 1938, and there were few American officers more qualified to lead the mission.[153] In May, President Truman approved $10 million from the Military Assistance Program budget to aid Vietnam.

The outbreak of the Korean War in June reinforced the fear of a general communist ascendancy in Asia and led to the commitment of even greater resources for Indochina.[154] U.S. leaders initially debated providing aid directly to the Bao Dai government in recognition of its supposed independence, but French leaders protested vehemently. In the end, Washington capitulated and provided aid directly to the French. This decision meant that French politics would dominate Washington's foreign policy in Indochina through 1954.

B. AMERICAN FRUSTRATION AND FRENCH DISASTER

In the months prior to the MAAG's establishment, the Viet Minh had pushed the French out of their fortifications along the Sino-Vietnamese border, allowing unfettered infiltration of men and materiel from Communist China and crushing a large French force

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[150] "The Position of the United States with Respect to Indochina," report, February 27, 1950, DOS, *FRUS, 1950, East Asia and the Pacific*, 6:747.

[151] "The Secretary of Defense (Johnson) to the Secretary of State," April 14, 1950, DOS, *FRUS, 1950, East Asia and the Pacific*, 6:781.

[152] Ibid., 6:784.

[153] Spector, *Advice and Support*, 116; Russell C. Jacobs, "Francis Gerard Brink," Arlington National Cemetery , June 25, 2007, http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/fgbrink.htm.

[154] As the JCS history recounts, "by 31 October 1950, the total Fiscal Year 1951 program for military aid to Indochina was $133 million; this sum was in addition to the $31 million Fiscal Year 1950 funds." U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the First Indochina War, 1947–1954* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004), 54.

in the process.[155] This reversal of fortune contributed to Paris's decision to send one of its most able generals, Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, to assume command in Indochina. Described by Stanley Karnow as "a Gallic version of MacArthur," de Lattre reinvigorated his troops and, with the help of timely U.S. assistance, blunted a major Viet Minh offensive in early 1951.[156] At a minimum, de Lattre's arrival gave hope that American assistance would not be thrown away to no purpose.

The MAAG's mission was "to insure full coordination of military plans and efforts between the French and Vietnamese forces and to supervise the allocation of materiel."[157] In contrast to the advisory missions in Greece and Korea, the mission statement did not explicitly mention providing advice, yet U.S. leaders expected General Brink to make suggestions to the French if he had insights to offer and to report back to his superiors on the use or misuse of U.S. equipment. Although the French were eager for U.S. assistance, they had little interest in establishing a peer-level advisory relationship like that of previous U.S. advisory efforts.[158] They viewed the Americans chiefly as an equipment delivery service.

Even in this limited role, the MAAG still found the French to be extremely difficult allies. Equipment inspections required two months' advance notice and were only approved if the French determined that the amount of equipment was "sufficient to warrant a visit," and if the unit would be "free from tactical operations."[159] The result was mutual animosity that saw American MAAG personnel meticulously scrutinize French equipment requests, and, as Colonel Donald Dunn recounts, the MAAG members

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[155] In a series of battles along Route Coloniale 4 linking these forts, the French lost 6,000 troops and tons of equipment between 1 and 17 October 1950. Bernard B. Fall, *Street Without Joy: Insurgency in Indochina, 1946–1963* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1961), 29–30.

[156] Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Viking Press, 1997), 200.

[157] "The Secretary of Defense (Johnson) to the Secretary of State," April 14, 1950, DOS, *FRUS, 1950, East Asia and the Pacific*, 6:784.

[158] Spector, *Advice and Support*, 127.

[159] MAAG-I, "Country Statement for Presentation of the FY 1954 MDA Program," February 17, 1954, 22, Entry 12, Box 1, USFSEA, 1950–1975, MAAG-V/AGD, SCGR. 1950–1961, 400.1 Supplies, Services, and Equipment 1950 Thru 470 Ammunition, Armament, and Other Similar Stores 1953, RG 472, NACP; Howard R. Simpson, *Tiger in the Barbed Wire: An American in Vietnam, 1952–1991* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1992), 31–32.

would often cross out "the whole thing [the request] and say you're not allowed to have this, it's not . . . in the (perview) [sic] of the agreement, of the (MDAP)."[160] Despite these occasional disagreements over logistics, the French generally could be counted on to employ and care for the U.S.-supplied equipment properly. The same could not be said about their creation, the Vietnamese National Army (VNA).

The United States realized early that defeating the Viet Minh would require an effective native army that could one day take over the fighting from the French. Limited as it was to volunteers, the native French contribution to the French Expeditionary Corps in Vietnam was always fewer than 100,000, hardly enough to defeat the estimated 300,000 Viet Minh forces they would eventually face.[161] French and "Associated State" forces in Vietnam would eventually number over 400,000, but 88 percent were sourced from outside of France proper.[162] Furthermore, the two sides remained closely matched in numbers of forces facing each other in Tonkin throughout the war. Brink's assessment shortly after his arrival underscored the operational situation: "It must be assumed that, in general, [the] French are fighting in unfriendly territory in all their military efforts in Vietnam."[163] He further warned that the "formation of [the] Vietnamese Army is still under discussion, and [is] not likely to become [a] consolidated force within a year, and will not have any appreciable military value before 1952."[164] Thus, began a string of projections for a time when the VNA would be prepared to relieve the French from the bulk of the fighting, especially since it numbered only 16,000 in May 1950 and lacked the senior leadership, staffs, and institutions necessary for long-term independent

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[160] Donald Dunn, interview by Ronald Spector, May 27, 1980, 14, Entry 1089, Box 2, Records of the Army Staff, Center for Military History, Historian's Background Files for Advice and Support: The Early Years 1940–62 (hereafter cited as Spector Files), RG 319, NACP.

[161] CIA, *Probable Developments in Indochina Through Mid-1954* (NIE-91), CIA , June 4, 1953, Annex B, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0001166780.pdf.

[162] In June 1953 the CIA estimated that only 51,000 troops out of 482,200 in Indochina were French. Ibid., Annex A.

[163] "Chief MAAG to Chief of Staff of the Army via Secretary of State," message, November 4, 1950, OSD, *U.S.-VN Relations, Truman Administration*, 5.B.2, book 2:408.

[164] Ibid., 5.B.2, book 2:409.

sustainment.[165] French resistance in building a capable Vietnamese Army was an ever-increasing source of friction between the Americans and the French. At one point, General Brink proposed to General de Lattre the possibility of bringing U.S. personnel to assist in training the VNA. According to Brink's aide, de Lattre berated Brink for his suggestion, stating obstinately that the French would fight with and train the Vietnamese army and that the Americans should just fill French equipment requisitions.[166] Living up to his comparison to MacArthur, de Lattre had established the Franco-American relationship for the rest of the war.

A renewed French spirit and the timely arrival of U.S. supplies stabilized the situation in 1951, but the Viet Minh was undeterred. General Brink's February 1952 estimate confirmed that "[an] increase in firepower brought about largely by accelerated delivery of MDAP items" had contributed significantly to French success under de Lattre.[167] Most discouraging, however, was Brink's assessment of the French efforts toward building a Vietnamese Army. In September 1951, de Lattre claimed that Vietnamese forces consisted of 240,000 troops split evenly between the national army and the French army.[168] Yet, Brink reported that there were only 35,420 regular VNA troops and 27,000 National Guard in February 1952, and that they were incapable of defending themselves against the Viet Minh without French assistance.[169] French duplicity on this point simply contributed to the overall spirit of distrust between the two parties. Furthermore, the French allowed little contact between U.S. and Vietnamese troops. Thus, the MAAG could only give a rough estimate of 50 percent effectiveness across the board for "Associated States" military forces.[170] Brink also disparaged the lack

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[165] Spector, *Advice and Support*, 131.

[166] Dunn, interview, 11.

[167] MAAG-I, "Field Estimate of Current and Future Effectiveness of French Union Forces of Indo-China," 3.

[168] "Minutes of the First Meeting with General de Lattre de Tassigny at the Department of State," minutes, September 17, 1951, DOS, *FRUS, 1951*, vol. 6, pt. 1, *Asia and the Pacific* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1977), 511, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1951v06p1.

[169] MAAG-I, "Field Estimate of Current and Future Effectiveness of French," 15, 17.

[170] Associated States forces were from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Ibid., 5.

of effective Vietnamese leadership at anything higher than company level.[171] The creation of a capable Vietnamese army with native senior leadership threatened the French position in Indochina; thus, the French neglected to cultivate it even though it was necessary for victory.[172] Likewise, there was little incentive for Vietnamese with any sense of nationalism to serve in the VNA since victory meant the continuation of French rule.

The year 1952 saw new French and MAAG commanders in Indochina, but new personalities did not drastically alter the MAAG's role.[173] Brink's replacement, Brigadier General Thomas Trapnell, was a veteran of the Japanese invasion of the Philippines and an airborne regimental combat team commander in Korea. He brought new energy to the MAAG and assisted the French in obtaining additional airlift with the hope that the French would use the aircraft to increase their mobility and offensive action against the Viet Minh. He began by supporting French requests for additional C-47 cargo planes to increase the French airlift capability. With a large number of forces tied down in static defenses, the French sought the mobility, surprise, and flexibility that came with airborne forces. Trapnell delivered on the French requests and even managed to supply U.S. maintenance crews to handle the extra workload. His efforts supported the French ability to resupply isolated posts and reinforce those that were besieged, but this reliance on air operations eventually caught up with them.[174]

In June 1952 President Truman signed NSC 124/2, which signaled a role reversal between the French and Americans. The French were becoming war weary, but Washington was increasingly willing to ignore the colonialist aspect of France's effort in

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[171] MAAG-I, "Field Estimate of Current and Future Effectiveness of French," 5.

[172] "Memorandum of Discussion at the 179th Meeting of the National Security Council," memorandum, January 8, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954*, vol. 13, pt. 1, *Indochina* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1982), 950, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195254v13p1.

[173] De Lattre died from cancer in February 1952, and Brink committed suicide while on a trip to the Pentagon in June 1952.

[174] By 1954 the number of isolated French outposts required 80 to 130 airdrops per month, which placed a heavy strain on aircraft and logistics simply from a maintenance and usage standpoint. MAAG-I, "Indochina Intelligence Brief," 1954, 15, Entry 12, Box 2, USFSEA, 1950–1975, MAAG-V/AGD, SCGR 1950–1961, 092 Indo-China Country Statement 1954 thru 350.09 Redland Campaign Plan 1954, RG 472, NACP.

Indochina and had come to view the region strictly as a critical bulwark against the spread of communism in Asia. Thus, the NSC position paper stressed that Washington would "employ every feasible means to influence the French government and people against any conclusion of the struggle on terms inconsistent with basic U.S. objectives," which were dominated by the goal of "prevent[ing] the countries of Southeast Asia from passing into the communist orbit."[175] Without a fundamental change in the Franco-American relationship in Vietnam, however, U.S. influence there was minimal. Furthermore, the United States was not the only foreign power seeking to affect the outcome of France's war. Communist Chinese support also began to make itself felt. In 1952 the Viet Minh received an estimated 40,000 rifles, 45 anti-aircraft guns, and 30 field guns from China.[176] Additionally, Chinese advisors mentored Viet Minh commanders in the field and sponsored them in Chinese military schools.[177] This direct assistance stood in stark contrast to fruitless American attempts to coerce the French into improving the VNA.

General Trapnell recognized the continuing problem of the lack of a Vietnamese Army that could take over the bulk of the fighting and regain the initiative against the Viet Minh. In December 1952 he proposed to the Chief of Staff of the Army, General J. Lawton Collins, that the United States assume the cost and training responsibility for 40 additional light Vietnamese battalions meant to mirror Viet Minh skirmishers in armament and be capable of traveling over rough countryside like the enemy.[178] He predicted that the forces could be trained and operational by the end of 1953 and that they

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[175] "Statement of Policy by the National Security Council on United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Southeast Asia, NSC 124/2," policy statement, June 25, 1952, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 1:367.

[176] Edgar O'Ballance, *The Indo-China War: 1945–1954, A Study in Guerrilla Warfare* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), 171.

[177] Logevall, *Embers of War*, 321.

[178] "Letter from General Trapnell to General Collins," December 20, 1952, OSD, *U.S.-VN Relations, 1945*–1967 vol. 5.B.3, book 1, *Justification of the War, Internal Commitments, The Eisenhower Administration, 1953–1960* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1967), 2–3, http://media.nara.gov/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-V-B-3a.pdf. This "light battalion" proposal took many forms, totaling anywhere from the 40 battalions in Trapnell's message to 65 battalions outlined by French general Marcel Alessandri, Bao Dai's advisor. See also "The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State," telegram, January 19, 1953, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1952–1954*, 13, pt. 1:352–54.

would "most surely bring this war to a quicker end."[179] In March 1953 the Joint Chiefs recommended funding the additional battalions but also recommended maintaining the theater and responsibilities as decidedly French.[180] Furthermore, the JCS concluded that there was little incentive for the average Vietnamese to join the corrupt, pro-French government just to maintain the status quo and remarked that the French still had done little to develop Vietnamese army leadership.[181] This light battalion proposal never saw the level of French commitment required to develop a useful capability. In general, French commanders defended their turf against U.S. encroachment. That the French had been able to sustain their position in Vietnam only by virtue of massive U.S. aid only hardened their stubbornness.

In their constant search for influence, U.S. leaders saw their advisory mission in Korea as a possible model for the French to emulate in developing the VNA. Upon U.S. invitation, French Marshal Alphonse Juin visited Korea at the end of February 1953.[182] His reaction to this trip was politely appreciative but ultimately dismissive. He presented a myriad of reasons why U.S. training and organization methods from Korea would not work in Vietnam. He disparaged the Vietnamese soldier as being more difficult to train than South Koreans since "the Japanese had given a military tradition to Korea while there never had been such a tradition in Indochina."[183] This statement ignored that Ho Chi Minh's Vietnamese troops were fighting well and winning. The official French report from the trip was a somewhat incoherent set of reasons why the French could not adopt the KMAG model in Vietnam. These reasons centered on the difficulty of conducting training during an ongoing insurgency and of adapting to a division versus a battalion-

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[179] "Letter from General Trapnell to General Collins," December 20, 1952, OSD, *U.S.-VN Relations, Eisenhower Administration*, 5.B.3, book 1:2.

[180] "Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense from the Joint Chiefs of Staff," March 13, 1953, OSD, *U.S.-VN Relations, Eisenhower Administration*, 5.B.3, book 1:14.

[181] Ibid., 5.B.3, book 1:12.

[182] Juin was the Inspector General of the French Armed Forces.

[183] "The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State," telegram, March 21, 1953, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 1:419.

centric organization.[184] Trapnell was discouraged by the French dismissal of U.S. recommendations, calling them "fallacious arguments," and the conclusions, a "fabrication for U.S. consumption without any actual French commitment to adopt any U.S. method."[185]

Trapnell's rebuttal had merit. French forces consisted of hundreds of independent infantry, airborne, artillery, and armored battalions and companies.[186] Depending on the projected size of the operation, the operational commander cobbled together a collection of forces and a tactical commander of appropriate rank to lead the assembled force. This exercise added time and complexity for no apparent gain. A standardized regimental or divisional organization would have streamlined the planning phase and allowed for greater initiative against the enemy. Furthermore, the Viet Minh had fielded divisions since the beginning of 1951; thus, it made sense to adapt to the enemy.[187] In reflecting on the Korean model, however, Trapnell failed to note that the ROKA had fought as individual battalions or as a collection of battalions against Korea's communist insurgents due to the questionable loyalty of early ROKA units. Only when the North invaded did the ROKA fight as divisions, and it was not until the front lines stabilized that it could train adequately to fight that way.

It is nevertheless surprising that the French were either unable to see the tactical usefulness of or were simply too stubborn to try a larger tactical unit than the rather limited battalion. Despite what seemed like an inferior organizational structure, the MAAG considered the French to be effective fighters with high morale, but the benefit they would have gained from being organized in regiments or divisions still would not have turned defeat into victory in their war with the Viet Minh. The difference of opinion

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[184] French reasons were, "(a) No stability of front or security of rear areas exists in Indochina; (b) Indochina war is not 'classic' combat; (c) Basic combat unit is battalion rather than division; prohibitive cost of establishing 'soldier factory'; and (d) French and Vietnamese temperaments are not adaptable to specialization, regimentation and subordination since these methods do not consider the personality of the individual." "Telegram from the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group at Saigon (Trapnell) to the Department of the Army," telegram, April 15, 1953, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 1:474.

[185] Ibid.

[186] MAAG-I, "Field Estimate," January 23, 1953, 15.

[187] Fall, *Street Without Joy*, 30–31.

on this issue between the French and Americans did persist and was reflected in the subsequent U.S. plan for the Vietnamese Army. Furthermore, military commanders like Trapnell argued that the war in Vietnam had to be won politically as well as militarily, yet they seemed to overestimate the benefit that training and organizational changes might have on the French and VNA forces. In comparing Korea and Vietnam, the critical difference between the two scenarios was that the Koreans trained and fought against a foreign aggressor while the VNA trained and fought to maintain external rule. Improvements in advice or assistance that could be learned from America's KMAG experience would not change this critical difference.

January 1953 brought President Dwight Eisenhower to the White House. He had run on a party platform that lambasted President Truman's administration for abandoning Eastern Europe and China to communism and withdrawing forces from Korea "in the face of aggressive, poised for action, Communist military strength on its northern border."[188] Additionally, he pledged fiscal responsibility in foreign policy in contrast to Truman's large "sums [of money] incompetently spent for vague and endless purposes."[189] These conflicting aims met in NSC 148, which set as its goal "reducing the organized forces of the Viet Minh" through "increased aid to the French and Vietnamese."[190] Despite his campaign rhetoric, Eisenhower's foreign policy position toward Vietnam remained unchanged from that of his predecessor. In his first State of the Union Address in 1953, President Eisenhower called the war in Korea "the most painful phase of Communist aggression throughout the world" and assessed that it was "clearly a part of the same calculated assault that the aggressor is simultaneously pressing in Indochina and in Malaya."[191] This statement reinforced the idea that all communist and anti-colonialist movements were interconnected, both materially and ideologically.

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[188] U.S. Republican Party, "Republican Party Platform of 1952," The American Presidency Project, July 7, 1952, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25837.

[189] Ibid.

[190] "Note to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary (Lay)," memorandum, April 6, 1953, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954*, vol. 12, pt. 1, *East Asia and the Pacific* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1984), 288–89, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195254v12p1.

[191] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "1952 State of the Union," February 2, 1953, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=9829.

Eisenhower shared the sentiments of General Trapnell—the French had to be coerced into aggressively pursuing victory in Vietnam. As a result, he insisted on a plan for victory before he would send additional aid. For their part, the French had begun to question why the Americans refused to consider negotiations or partition with Ho Chi Minh while they were concurrently negotiating with the Chinese and North Koreans over the outcome of the Korean War.[192] Eisenhower's position nevertheless led the French to draft hastily a plan named after the French high commissioner for Indochina at the time, Jean Letourneau. Presented orally, it lacked detail and seemed more of an attempt to present something that would satisfy Eisenhower's requirement, rather than a plan that was likely to be enacted or that would feasibly accomplish its objectives.[193] In summary, it called for the VNA's expansion by approximately 100,000 recruits in 1953 and 1954. These new forces would secure the rear areas as the regular French and Vietnamese forces cleared the Viet Minh out of the country from south to north in three phases by the end of 1955.[194] General Trapnell expressed disappointment regarding the slow timeline but recommended the United States support the plan since there was no U.S.-centric option.[195]

May of 1953 saw the arrival of another French commander, General Henri Navarre, whose Navarre Plan promised to reverse French fortunes in Indochina.[196] The

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[192] Logevall, *Embers of War*, 316. Paradoxically, the French had used Indochina's position in the global communist menace to win U.S. bankrolling of their efforts there, but by July 1953 the neutralists in France were using the phrase "trading French blood for American dollars" to attack the French party that favored a continued effort in Indochina. This sentiment was similar to what JUSMAPG faced under Van Fleet. "The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Secretary of State," telegram, July 27, 1953, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 1: 700.

[193] "Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson)," memorandum, April 21, 1953, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 1:493–95. In summary, the plan called for an expansion of the Vietnamese National Army to relieve the French forces and allow them greater mobility. "Dulles to Amembassy Saigon," telegram, April 7, 1953, OSD, *U.S.-VN Relations, Eisenhower Administration*, 5.B.3, book 1:22.

[194] "Memorandum by the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Indochina (Trapnell)," memorandum, March 31, 1953, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 1:451.

[195] Ibid.

[196] For more information on the plan, see "Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Nash) to the Secretary of State," memorandum, September 2, 1953, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 1:743–44; and "Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson)," August 28, 1953, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 1:744–47.

plan was slightly more detailed than what Letourneau had provided but was mainly a list of broad objectives with few operational details. By this point, the French controlled only a small area of the Red River delta around Hanoi and Haiphong, a small coastal salient around Hué in Annam, and most of Cochin China in the south.[197] Regaining control in the north required more than lofty strategic objectives. Navarre's arrival corresponded with a special U.S. military mission under Lieutenant General Mike O'Daniel, Commander of U.S. Army Forces Pacific. Sent as an attempt to gain influence over the French, O'Daniel reviewed the Navarre plan and was optimistic about its chances for success.[198] O'Daniel's judgment proved to be unduly complacent since it did not appreciate either the strategic situation on the ground or U.S. Army doctrine.[199] Unlike the communist-backed movements in Greece, Korea, and the Philippines, the Viet Minh had built a far greater base of popular support and had sold its message more effectively. If success were simply a matter of pushing the Viet Minh out of the areas it controlled militarily, the French would have already accomplished that in the preceding eight years. Viewed in this light, the Navarre plan, which focused on the provision of local security by indigenous forces, was not a novel concept. Neither was it feasible, given the near parity between the two sides.[200] In any event, the change in French leadership did not fundamentally alter the MAAG relationship with the French in Vietnam. The French continued to shut the MAAG out of operational planning, as evidenced by their failure to

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[197] To illustrate the precariousness of the French position in Tonkin, under General de Lattre the French had constructed the De Lattre Line, which was a series of almost 1,000 forts around the Red River Delta to make it an impregnable barrier against infiltration. This barrier consumed 80,000 to 100,000 troops. Nevertheless, in 1953 Bernard Fall estimated that only 31.2 percent of the 5,780 villages inside the line were "under effective Franco-Vietnamese administration." The Viet Minh even controlled areas abutting the vital Hanoi to Haiphong road on either side. Bernard Fall, "Insurgency Indicators," *Military Review* 46, no. 4 (April 1966): 3; Fall, *Street Without Joy*, 344. For a large-scale map of areas the French and Viet Minh controlled, see CIA, *Probable Developments in Indochina Through Mid-1954*, page after Annex D.

[198] Spector, *Advice and Support*, 175.

[199] As Russell Volckmann writes in the Army manual on countering guerrilla operations, "the force assigned to combat guerrilla forces and to establish control over an area must be adequate. . . .To assign insufficient forces may later necessitate the employment of many times the original number." The French in 1953 were at the point where many times the original number was required. They did not have these. U.S. Army, *Operations Against Guerrilla Forces* (ST 31-20-1) (Fort Benning, GA: U.S. Army Infantry School, 1950), 42, https://archive.org/details/OperationsAgainstGuerrillaForces.

[200] Colonel Edward Lansdale accompanied General O'Daniel and reached the same conclusion: that the friendly to enemy ratio was insufficient. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 112.

notify General Trapnell in advance of the war's decisive operation, the occupation and defense of Dien Bien Phu.[201]

Reflecting the previous three years of ineffective advice and assistance, O'Daniel's team drew up plans for Operation Redland—the American version of the Navarre plan—to reverse the positions of the French and Viet Minh. It also advocated the rapid expansion of a capable Vietnamese National Army—what was by then a multi-year endeavor that always seemed to be on the cusp of being realized—and a vaguely outlined sweep from south to north of all Viet Minh forces. Presented as a realistic solution to win in Vietnam, it displayed a continued inability to appreciate the previous eight years of reality. Furthermore, it used the U.S. experience in Greece as a model for its proposed campaign plan, a comparison that was wholly inadequate for the current situation. Finally, it exposed American hubris with respect to training and advising the Vietnamese. The French had not done it right, so the Americans would show them how to do it.[202]

O'Daniel's plan called for U.S. advisors to reorganize the current VNA battalions into eight VNA divisions, establish an effective Vietnamese high command, and train 86 new light battalions in six month.[203] Using previous advisory efforts as a guide, O'Daniel would have done well just to have the manning and facilities in place to accomplish the task in under six months, much less have the training completed. He then expected these new units to begin operations against veteran Viet Minh forces beginning in Cochin Chin

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[201] Spector, *Advice and Support*, 182. Ambassador Heath also met with Navarre the day before the Dien Bien Phu operation began, and he made no mention of it. "The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State," telegram, November 19, 1953, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 1: 876–77. Navarre occupied Dien Bien Phu on 20 November 1953 and prepared to hold it at all costs. O'Daniel visited the site in February 1954 and noted that while he felt it could "withstand any kind of an attack that the Viet Minh are cabable of launching," he also warned that "a force with two or three battalions of medium artillery with air observation could make the area untenable." "Report of U.S. Special Mission to Indochina," February 5, 1954, OSD, *U.S.-VN Relations, Truman Administration*, 5.B.2, book 2:252. Giap moved four divisions and artillery into the hills surrounding the French strongpoints and overran them on 7 May 1954.

[202] MAAG-I, "Campaign Plan Redland," March 5, 1954, Entry 12, Box 2, USFSEA, 1950–1975, MAAG-V/AGD, SCGR 1950–1961, 092 Indo-China Country Statement 1954 thru 350.09 Redland Campaign Plan 1954, RG 472, NACP. The objectives and methods that O'Daniel outlined were reflected in the President's Special Committee on Indochina's March 1954 report. See "Report by the President's Special Committee on Indochina," report, March 2, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 1:1109–16.

[203] MAAG-I, "Campaign Plan Redland."

and then push them north out of Tonkin. Drawing on historical success, the plan states, "Operation REDLAND follows the 1949 plan employed by the Greek National Army in their war against communist guerrillas. The political and military situation in Greece then parallels in many ways the current situation in Indochina."[204] Describing the situations in Greece and Vietnam as similar was optimistically or ignorantly exaggerated. Force ratios between friendly and enemy forces in the two conflicts were far different, the total population in Greece was one-third of Vietnam's, and the Viet Minh enjoyed far greater support than the Greek Communists.[205] A better comparison would have been the Chinese Revolution, but since that scenario did not end well for the U.S. side, O'Daniel may have chosen Greece instead. Ironically, in February 1950, W. Walton Butterworth from the State Department had warned that economic and military aid were not the "missing components" that would prove decisive in Vietnam.[206] At the time, the French were using the Greek example to argue for U.S. support to their effort in Vietnam. Butterworth warned that any attempt by the French to draw an analogous line to the successful U.S. intervention in Greece was a "dangerous delusion."[207] Four years later, U.S. commanders were making the same deluded analogies.

The French defeat at Dien Bien Phu made O'Daniel's plan a moot point, but he would carry the thoughts forward when he relieved General Trapnell as MAAG Chief in April 1954. Confusion and indecision characterized the U.S. position toward Vietnam in the first months of his new tour. The French pleaded for U.S. intervention to save their besieged outpost but stubbornly clung to maintaining their special relationship with Vietnam. Washington debated intervention, even including the use of nuclear weapons, to try to save the French, but ultimately decided to stay out, and the fortress fell on 7 May

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[204] MAAG-I, "Campaign Plan Redland," Annex E.

[205] The Greek National Army maintained a ratio of approximately six to one against the Greek Communists (Democratic Army). Even with the additional forces O'Daniel proposed and the French maintaining their full contingent, his plan might have managed a ratio of two to one.

[206] "The Ambassador in Thailand (Stanton) to the Secretary of State," telegram, February 17, 1950, DOS, *FRUS, 1950, East Asia and the Pacific*, 6:739. Butterworth was the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs at the time.

[207] Ibid.

1954.[208] Despite billions in aid and the insistence that the United States could not afford to lose Indochina, over the course of a few weeks in April and May of 1954, that is what seemingly happened. The French government fell soon afterward, and the new Prime Minister, Pierre Mendes France, promised to settle the issue in Indochina at the Geneva Conference within thirty days of taking office.

Although the French remained in Vietnam until 1956, the Geneva Accords marked the beginning of the transition from France to the United States being the dominant external influence on Vietnam. Announced on 21 July 1954, the accords resulted in six main points: a general cease fire, a demilitarized zone at the 17th parallel, the withdrawal of French forces from the north and communist forces from the south, general elections set for July 1956, a prohibition on the introduction of reinforcements into the region or the establishment of new bases, and the creation of an International Control Commission (ICC) to monitor the accords' terms.[209] Notably, neither the United States nor the State of Vietnam government signed the accords. This technicality served later as justification for these two parties to ignore some of its provisions.

The human cost for both sides during the eight-year conflict ending in 1954 was steep. Sources count between 74,000 and 110,000 soldiers killed fighting for the French side and between 300,000 and 500,000 Viet Minh.[210] In materiel, the United States had

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[208] President Eisenhower set three conditions for U.S. intervention: it had to be part of a coalition, the French had to grant full independence, and France had to maintain its forces in Vietnam. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles could not convince the British to join in a coalition, thus not meeting the criteria. Editorial Note, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954 Indochina*, 13, pt. 1: 1236, quoted from Sherman Adams, *Firsthand Report: The Story of the Eisenhower Administration* (New York: Harper, 1961), 122. These same criteria were discussed two days later at the 6 April 1954 NSC Meeting. "Memorandum of Discussion at the 192d Meeting of the National Security Council," memorandum, April 6, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954*, 13, pt. 1: 1250–66.

[209] "The Final Declaration on Indochina," resolution, July 21, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954*, vol. 16, *The Geneva Conference* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1981), 1540–42, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195254v16.

[210] Numbers differ whether the source included missing and presumed dead and those who died in POW camps. O'Ballance is on the low end but breaks the numbers out as follows, "20,685 Frenchmen, 11,620 legionnaires, 15,229 North Africans and 26, 686 locally enlisted Indo-Chinese." O'Ballance, *Indo-China War*, 249. Logevall counts 110,000. Logevall, *Embers of War*, 607. Including civilians, Logevall calculates 325,000 killed on the communist side. Ibid., 619. The University of Quebec estimates between 300,000 and 500,000. "Casualties, Indochina War," The Indochina War, 1945–1956: An Interdisciplinary Tool, *Université Du Québec a Montréal*, accessed July 3, 2015, http://indochine.uqam.ca/en/historical-dictionary/223-casualties-indochina-war.html; see also Douglas Pike, *Vietcong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), 49.

spent $2.7 billion in aid to France, which amounted to almost 2,000 tanks and combat vehicles, over 30,000 transport vehicles, 360,000 small arms and machine guns, 5,000 pieces of artillery, 500 million rounds of ammunition, 10 million artillery shells, over 400 vessels, and almost 400 planes.[211] Although French leaders complained on occasion that equipment or supplies did not arrive quickly enough or that the MAAG overly scrutinized their requests, there is little evidence that the MAAG bore any responsibility for the French failure. Its expedited delivery of materiel saved the French during Giap's offensive in early 1951. The French simply had set a very difficult task for themselves in retaining Indochina as a French colony and had failed.

U.S. leaders recognized that success in Vietnam required an anti-communist political solution to counteract Ho Chi Minh's popularity. Besides granting Vietnamese independence, however, the high-level conversations in Washington invariably revolved around the need to develop the VNA, as if that was an alternative solution. In January 1954 during an NSC meeting, President Eisenhower lamented that "one of the outstanding failures of the Western world in Asia was its inability to produce good fighting material" and that the "Communists were more effective. They got hold of the most unlikely people and turned them into great fighters."[212] Eisenhower's observation was correct but discounted the effect of the anti-colonial nationalism that accompanied most of these movements. Vice President Nixon recounted a conversation he had with General Trapnell during which Nixon argued that "what was lacking to induce the Vietnamese to fight was a 'cause.'" The professional military man that he was, Trapnell disagreed, stating that "if the native soldiers were well led, well equipped, and well trained, they would fight."[213] Perhaps Trapnell was clouded by his own experiences, but

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[211] U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JCS and First Indochina War*, 218–19.

[212] "Memorandum of Discussion at the 179th Meeting of the National Security Council," memorandum, January 8, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 1: 950.

[213] Ibid., 13, pt. 1:951; In contrast, General Giap opined that "a weak and small nation and a people's army, once resolved to stand up, to unite together and to fight for independence and peace, will have the full power to defeat all aggressive forces, even those of an imperialist power such as imperialist France aided by the United States." In this case, Giap and Nixon would probably have been in agreement. As Giap further describes, his troops had no experience attacking fortified camps, yet they won at Dien Bien Phu. Vo Nguyen Giap, *People's War People's Army: The Viet Cong Insurrection Manual for Underdeveloped Countries* (New York: Praeger, 1962), 30, 170.

his response ignored the inherent belief in country and purpose felt among his own countrymen's soldiers. Ho Chi Minh had established this cause in his followers, but there was no counterpart on the anti-communist side. With France's defeat, the United States would get its opportunity to put Trapnell's hypothesis to the test.

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VI. U.S. MILITARY ADVISORS IN VIETNAM: FROM FRENCH MORASS TO U.S. QUAGMIRE, PART ONE

The United States inherited France's failure in 1954 and began fixing what it perceived were the French mistakes. Historian Frederick Logevall characterizes the American attitude toward the French effort in Indochina in 1954: "They [the French] had fought badly in Indochina and deserved to lose. Americans, on the other hand, were the good guys, militarily invincible, who selflessly had come to help the Vietnamese in their hour of need and would then go home."[1] The United States, absent even the framework of an agreed-upon plan in the case of French defeat, supported President Ngo Dinh Diem, an ardent nationalist but a difficult and divisive personality, as he struggled to unite his ethnically and religiously diverse population amid postwar strife and uncertainty. Hawkish only months earlier, Washington suddenly had second thoughts on the extent of this support, however, finally deciding to fund a South Vietnamese Army wholly insufficient for the threat it might face. Meanwhile, dysfunction between the U.S. Ambassador and the senior military advisor, lessons ignored from previous advisory experiences, and unfavorable southern geography set the conditions that would allow a renewed communist insurgency to gain a toehold in the South.

[1] Logevall, *Embers of War*, xxi.

A. THE UNITED STATES TAKES OVER: ANALYSIS PARALYSIS

Following Dien Bien Phu, the French leaders' position on U.S. involvement in training the VNA suddenly changed from haughty rejection to enthusiastic invitation.[2] Acting on this change in attitude, O'Daniel began preparing to assume the VNA training role and to build an army that reflected a combination of Trapnell's light division idea and his own Redland campaign plan. Accordingly, he recommended the creation of four light and five medium VNA divisions.[3] He also recognized the need to increase the size of the MAAG since it had never numbered more than 100 personnel. He recommended an increase to 492 personnel and made a point to note its relationship to other advisory groups, (e.g., "larger than JUSMAPG (Greece) . . . and considerably smaller than KMAG (Korea).")[4] In contrast—and more realistically—the JCS estimated that a training mission of 2,250 U.S. personnel was required to build the type of force that Vietnam required to face the Viet Minh at its current strength.[5] O'Daniel, motivated as he was, represented the far end of the spectrum of those with a positive outlook on Vietnam. On 9 May the chargé d'affaires in Saigon cautioned that O'Daniel's plan to build a Vietnamese army in six months that could face and defeat the battle-hardened Viet Minh reflected unrealistic

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[2] Even as late as 21 February 1954, as O'Daniel was preparing to replace Trapnell as MAAG commander, Navarre reinforced French dominance in Vietnam, insisting that his "acceptance of General O'Daniel was predicated on understanding that [the] latter's functions were limited to military assistance." He further asserted that "neither O'Daniel nor MAAG was to have any powers, advisory or otherwise, in [the] conduct and planning of operations or in training of national armies and cadres." "The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State," telegram, February 21, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 1:1062. In May, the Chief of the French General Staff General Paul Ely told U.S. leaders, including O'Daniel, that the "more Americans got into war here [Vietnam, the] better." "The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State," telegram, May 22, 1954, DOS, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, vol. 13, pt. 2, *Indochina* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1982), 1600, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195254v13p2. This was the same General Ely who at the end of March, in a meeting with JCS Chairman Admiral Radford, had resisted "any encroachment on French responsibilities or significant expansion of the MAAG." "Memorandum for the President's Special Committee on Indo-China, Subject: Discussions with General Paul Ely," March 29, 1954, OSD, *U.S.-VN Relations, 1945–1967*, 5.B.3, book 2: 280.

[3] Ronald Spector, "Summary of Interview with General John W. O'Daniel," February 4, 1975, Entry 1089, Box 2, Spector Files, RG 319, NACP.

[4] MAAG-I, "Plan for Joint Staff U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group Indochina," March 23, 1954, 4, Entry 12, Box 2, USFSEA, 1950–1975, MAAG-V/AGD, SCGR 1950–1961, 092 Indo-China Country Statement 1954 thru 350.09 Redland Campaign Plan 1954, RG 472, NACP.

[5] "Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson)," memorandum, May 20, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 2:1592.

confidence, given that Vietnam's internal situation was so problematic.[6] Despite the new enthusiasm the French displayed for U.S. involvement in the wake of Dien Bien Phu, the excitement subsided as the reality of the upcoming Geneva talks set in, and the two sides failed to reach an agreement on the extent of U.S. involvement and French concessions.[7] As a result, little activity took place on the issue until the Geneva Conference was concluded.

While the great powers were debating Vietnam's future in Geneva, the most controversial Vietnamese figure to feature in the U.S. effort in Vietnam—Ngo Dinh Diem—stepped off a plane in Saigon in June 1954, as newly appointed prime minister to Bao Dai. Diem faced a daunting task: the VNA was crumbling, the Vietnamese army chief of staff was jostling to seize power; hundreds of thousands of refugees soon would be moving from north to south; the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen sects were in control of large areas of the south; the future status of French occupation and U.S. support was unknown; and French and U.S. officials had mixed feelings about him. The CIA estimated that even with U.S. support, the likelihood of a strong, anti-communist government establishing itself firmly in the South to counterbalance the North was low and that the Viet Minh would win the 1956 elections outlined in the Geneva Accords.[8] In this tumultuous and uncertain time, the most important service the MAAG provided was helping to stabilize the new government.

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[6] McClintock listed the "complete apathy of the Vietnamese populace coupled with increasing tendency of fence-sitters to go over to enemy, absolute breakdown of mobilization plan, internecine rivalries between few men capable of showing leadership, and lack of leadership from Bao Dai and his Ministers" as the most significant obstacles in O'Daniel's path. Notably, he proposed inviting General Van Fleet, in recognition of his reputation as a master builder of foreign armies, to Vietnam to assess the situation and provide recommendations. "The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State," telegram, May 9, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 2: 1521.

[7] Eisenhower considered asking for congressional authority to intervene based on six conditions: 1. France and the three Indochinese states formally requested U.S. intervention, 2. Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand would join the coalition, 3. UN involvement, 4. France guaranteed independence for the three Indochinese states, 5. France maintained its forces in Indochina, 6. An agreement would be reached VNA training responsibility and command structure for the combined force. These conditions were never met and were superseded by the Geneva Accords. "The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France," telegram, May 11, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 2: 1534–35.

[8] CIA, *Post-Geneva Outlook in Indochina* (NIE 63-5-54), CIA , August 3, 1954, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0001166385.pdf.

In this endeavor, O'Daniel worked in concert with budding Cold War legend, Colonel Edward Lansdale. Lansdale, fresh from helping to defeat the Huks in the Philippines, arrived in Saigon on 1 June 1954, a few weeks before Diem. By this point, his reputation as an expert in unconventional warfare among U.S. leaders was well established. He had been part of O'Daniel's special military mission to Vietnam in 1953 and the president's special committee on Indochina in early 1954, which reflected this reputation. As a result, the Dulles brothers sent him to repeat his perceived Philippines success in Vietnam, and he entered a world that was dense with palace intrigue.[9] As General Trapnell put it in his 3 May 1954 debriefing, Vietnam was

> a war of many paradoxes—Where there is no popular will to win on the part of the Vietnamese. Where the leader of the Rebels is more popular than the Vietnamese Chief of State. Where a sizeable French army is composed of relatively few Frenchmen. Where the partners of the Associated States [Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia] regard each other as more dangerous than the enemy. Where a large segment of the population seeks to expel the French at any price, possibly at the cost of extinction as a new nation.10

Compared to Lansdale's experience in the Philippines, Vietnam was far different. The Philippines had a stable government with regular elections, had an established army that outnumbered its enemy, was geographically isolated from outside communist support, and had no external threat. Vietnam had none of these attributes. Thus, deploying Lansdale as a sort of mythical cleanup man was a testament to his talent but was in many ways naïve. Lansdale nevertheless quickly gained the ear of Diem and became one of his biggest supporters and most frequent American confidants.

As he demonstrated in the Philippines, Lansdale's talent was psychological warfare, and he assisted Diem in the promotion of and the media impact of Operation Passage to Freedom, the voluntary movement of Vietnamese between North and South following Geneva. To win the media war against communism, it was useful to show a mass migration

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[9] John Foster Dulles was Secretary of State, and his brother Allen Dulles was the Director of Central Intelligence. Currey, *Unquiet American*, 136; Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 127.

[10] "Major General Thomas J. H. Trapnall [sic] debriefing," May 3, 1954, OSD, *U.S.-VN Relations, 1945–1967*, vol. 5.B.3, book 2, *Justification of the War, Internal Commitments, The Eisenhower Administration, 1953–1960* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1967), 406, http://media.nara.gov/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-V-B-3b.pdf.

of Vietnamese fleeing southward from Ho's DRV regime. Thus, Lansdale organized an information campaign playing on religion, fear, and economic incentive to convince northerners to move south.[11] It is unknown how many of the approximately 900,000 refugees Lansdale's efforts convinced, but it did create a media win for the new government and gave Diem a Catholic political base.[12] Furthermore, Lansdale used his Philippine connections to bring Filipino medical and technical expertise to Vietnam under Operation Brotherhood to further illustrate the idea of free Asians helping each other and resisting the totalitarianism of communism.[13] As in the Philippines, Lansdale advocated for civic action programs to bring government to the political vacuum in the remote areas where the Communists were most likely to re-emerge.[14] Lansdale's efforts would mean little, however, if the Communists took over due to the lack of an effective South Vietnamese army.

It was not until August that the training mission again came under serious discussion, and the JCS recommended four preconditions be met before the United States should assume the training role: "a reasonably strong, stable civil government in control," a formal request for training and materiel support, full independence granted by France, and that "the size and composition of the forces . . . be dictated by the local military requirements and the overall U.S. interests."[15] The JCS, particularly General Matthew Ridgway, became the primary source of the paralysis surrounding the formulation of a way ahead in Vietnam, which contrasted sharply with the importance the United States had

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[11] Lansdale's PSYOPS group appealed to Catholics using slogans such as "The Blessed Virgin Mary is moving south" and to all groups with promises of land and money awaiting refugees in the south. It seems reasonable, though, that Catholics also might have been more attracted to the half of the country headed by a Catholic leader. Nashel, *Edward Lansdale's Cold War*, 60–61.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 168–70.

[14] Thomas L. Ahern, Jr., *CIA and the House of Ngo: Covert Action in South Vietnam, 1954–63* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2001), 52.

[15] "Memorandum from the JCS to the Secretary of Defense," August 4, 1954, OSD, *U.S.-VN Relations, 1945–1967*, vol. 5.B.3, book 3, *Justification of the War, Internal Commitments, The Eisenhower Administration, 1953–1960; Geneva Accords 15 March 1956*, 701–2, http://media.nara.gov/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-V-B-3c.pdf.

placed on Southeast Asia since at least 1950.[16] Ridgway, who had contended with the incomplete victory in Korea, was astonished that so soon after the Kaesong armistice U.S. leaders were contemplating involvement in another Asian war that was certain to require a cost "as great as, or greater than, that we paid in Korea."[17] Secretary Dulles argued strongly in favor of the advisory mission since a stable government depended on competent security forces, and the Vietnamese had already requested assistance. Furthermore, he argued that the MAAG could begin training while the French slowly withdrew from Vietnam. The only precondition left unaddressed was that of the Vietnamese Army's appropriate size. Despite Dulles's rebuttal and support from Ambassador Donald R. Heath and General O'Daniel in Vietnam, the sides remained at an impasse, which left the MAAG in limbo.[18] With little to do besides wait for Washington to decide on its future, the MAAG focused on the resettlement of refugees created by the Geneva partition. From August 1954 to May 1955, combined U.S. operation transported 310,848 military and civilian refugees from the uncertain North to an even more uncertain South.[19]

When Diem returned to Vietnam in 1954, he had been out of the country for four years. This absence allowed him to avoid the taint of Bao Dai's corruption and collaboration with the French. Nor had he been idle. As Edward Miller writes, when Diem arrived in Saigon, he "was a man with a plan—a plan that turned out to be remarkably successful in the short run, even as it also sowed the seeds of later failures."[20] Diem was

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[16] The JCS had rather abruptly taken the view in May 1954 that Indochina was "devoid of decisive military objectives" and the allocation of more than token U.S. armed forces in Indochina would be a serious diversion of limited U.S. capabilities. It viewed China as the primary aggressor and recommended that any contemplated action be fully directed there. "Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, Subject: Studies with Respect to Possible U.S. Action Regarding Indochina," May 26, 1954, *U.S.-VN Relations, Truman Administration*, 5.B.2, book 2:487.

[17] Matthew B. Ridgway, *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway* (New York: Harper, 1956), 277.

[18] For Ambassador Heath's position in support of U.S. advisory assistance, see: "The Ambassador in Vietnam (Heath) to the Department of State," telegram, August 22, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 2:1966–72; For O'Daniel's position, see: "Telegram from CHMAAG Saigon to Secretary of State," August 8, 1954, OSD, *U.S.-VN Relations, Eisenhower Administration*, 5.B.3, book 3:703–4.

[19] MAAG-I, "Monthly Activities Report No. 30 for May 1955," June 10, 1955, Entry 9, Box 2, USFSEA, 1950–1975, MAAGV, AGD, 12/1952-02/1956, Report No. 22: Sep 1954 to Report No. 36: Nov 1955, RG 472, NACP.

[20] Miller, *Misalliance*, 86.

first challenged by the army chief of staff, General Nguyen Van Hinh, whose own father had warned the Americans about his son's "dictatorial aspirations."[21] Despite Hinh's repeated threats that he would launch a coup d'état, Diem's deft political maneuvering, Ambassador Heath's stern warnings to Hinh, and Lansdale's surreptitious actions all combined to diffuse the situation.[22] Ultimately, Bao Dai recalled Hinh to France, where he remained in exile. Diem's government, although still shaky, was beginning to show signs of effectiveness. This first incident with the Vietnamese military leadership would influence Diem's relationship with it, however, and shape his method of control—a method that would undermine military effectiveness.

In October 1954 President Eisenhower finally settled the disagreement in Washington over the future of U.S. aid to Vietnam, but his decision reflected the same mistake made in Korea nine years earlier—ignoring the disparity in the belligerents' capabilities in favor of limiting the fiscal burden. At an NSC meeting on 22 October 1954, the Department of State recommended instituting at least a "limited training mission" to build an internal security force loyal to Prime Minister Diem that could lay the groundwork for a real VNA to meet the South's long-term needs.[23] Admiral Arthur Radford, the JCS Chairman, estimated that the cost to maintain the current VNA size of 235,000 was $443 million, and the total for Vietnamese and French forces was between $800 million and $1 billion.[24] Eisenhower recoiled at those numbers, stating "that the obvious thing to do was simply to authorize General O'Daniel to use up to X millions of dollars—say, five, six, or seven—to produce the maximum number of Vietnamese military units on which Prime Minister Diem could depend to sustain himself in power."[25] Although Washington had been prepared to spend $1 billion supporting the French in 1955, the cheap option won out,

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[21] "The Chargé at Saigon (McClintock) to the Department of State," telegram, May 12, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 2:1544.

[22] For a detailed chronology, see: Miller, *Misalliance*, 100–109; For example, Lansdale recounts that he maneuvered to have Hinh's closest lieutenants join him on a trip to Manila, thus spoiling a possible coup attempt. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 175.

[23] "Memorandum of Discussion at the 218th Meeting of the National Security Council," memorandum, October 22, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 2:2153.

[24] Ibid., 8, pt. 2:2156–57.

[25] Ibid.

despite bearing little relation to the objectives sought or the enemy's capabilities. Part of the rationale behind a smaller army was the recently concluded Manila Pact, which created the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a collective defense organization modeled after NATO that was intended to intervene in the case of regional aggression that was "of Communist origin."[26] Thus, the initial goal for South Vietnam was a well-trained, inexpensive army that could focus on internal security or the delay of a North Vietnamese invasion, even though the new, untested, loosely-knit SEATO was hardly a sure thing.

It took until December 1954 for General Paul Ely, Navarre's replacement, and General J. Lawton Collins, Eisenhower's Special Representative and Ambassador Heath's replacement in Vietnam, to conclude an agreement allowing the MAAG to assume the VNA training role. The agreement set the goal of establishing a 77,685-person army by 1 July 1955 and granted full responsibility for VNA training to the MAAG underneath the overall French commander.[27] Collins envisioned the VNA consisting of three light divisions focused on internal security and three field divisions capable of reinforcing them or delaying a northern invasion.[28] O'Daniel finally had what he wanted in regards to training the VNA, but once again arbitrary funding considerations, rather than the military situation, had dictated the host nation army's size. VNA leaders noted the problem right away. In a meeting with O'Daniel, Brigadier General Nguyen Van Vy expressed his concern that the force size was inadequate for the VNA's three missions: border defense, internal pacification, and preparation for the country's reunification after the 1956

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[26] The signatories were the United States, France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Pakistan, and Thailand. "The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Australia," telegram, September 8, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, East Asia and the Pacific*, 12, pt. 1: 900.

[27] "Letter from the Acting Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Young) to the Special Representative in Vietnam (Collins)," letter, December 15, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957*, vol. 1, *Vietnam* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1985), 1, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/ FRUS.FRUS195557v01.

[28] Light divisions consisted of approximately 5,225 personnel compared to 8,200 for the field divisions. The agreement called for an additional 3,000-person navy and 3,000-person air force. Including civilian support, the total number envisioned for the State of Vietnam Armed Forces was 88,000. Although the agreement was signed on December 13, 1954, the details are in an earlier message. "Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the President," memorandum, November 17, 1954, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 2:2263–64.

elections.[29] O'Daniel responded that the U.S. "financial contribution will support only a much smaller army" and that "a small, well-trained, well-led army" was preferable over "a large, poorly trained, poorly led army."[30]

At the height of France's effort to regain control in Vietnam, it fielded a security force of 443,900, comprised of 280,400 in the armed forces and 163,500 in semi-military auxiliaries.[31] With this force, the French barely maintained their position around the Hanoi-Haiphong corridor, a small redoubt around Hué in central Vietnam, and the majority of Cochin China in the south. Granted, the strategic situation had changed since Geneva, but the Americans—who were so ready to point to their advisory successes in Greece and Korea—abandoned the need for an adequate force structure to defend U.S. interests in favor of the even cheaper option. Considering that Washington had learned the hard way in Korea that parsimony up front could mean huge investments later, its decision to repeat that error when the enemy was so clearly known ended up being a tremendous gamble.

As 1955 opened, Diem was headed to a showdown with the religious sects and their militias, specifically the Binh Xuyen, whose power base was in the capital. Unwilling to form a more inclusive government, Diem lost the support of General Collins, and his anti-French sentiments also alienated the French. Collins traveled to Washington to argue against continuing to support Diem, but in a masterful stroke, Diem gained the army's loyalty and defeated or incorporated the sects.[32] This action cemented Diem's support from Washington and made him momentarily safe from his rivals in Vietnam. During this incident, Diem had also openly defied Bao Dai and lost his support, which led to his final act of 1955: challenging Bao Dai in a national election. Although the election reeked of voting fraud, by November 1955 Diem was the new President of the Republic of

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[29] MAAG-I, "Minutes of Conference at MAAG, 29 Nov 54," November 29, 1954, 3, Entry 12, Box 2, USFSEA, 1950–1975, MAAG-V/AGD, SCGR 1950–1961, 092 Indo-China Country Statement 1954 thru 350.09 Redland Campaign Plan 1954, RG 472, NACP.

[30] Ibid.

[31] MAAG-I, "Indochina Intelligence Brief," 21.

[32] Collins and Diem disagreed over the makeup of Diem's government. Collins wanted Diem to be more inclusive in order to build a broad coalition. Diem, who was more attuned to the fragility of the nascent government, resisted some of Collins's more insistent recommendations. When Diem picked the fight with the sects to centralize control, Collins saw it as perhaps the last opportunity to get rid of Diem and try to work with one of the few other Vietnamese possibilities. Miller, *Misalliance*, 110, 116–119.

Vietnam.[33] He subsequently established the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in December. French and U.S. differences in Vietnam, Diem's anti-French sentiments, reduced U.S. funding for French forces, and French troop requirements in North Africa led to the withdrawal of nearly all French forces from Vietnam in 1956. The United States and Vietnam were on a shared path to wherever Diem's actions might take them.

In this tumultuous political environment, Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, emerged as Diem's closest confidant and as the most important actor for events taking place behind the scenes. Judging from his memoire, Lansdale was unaware of Nhu's involvement in the same activities that Lansdale was undertaking for Diem. For example, Lansdale chronicles Diem's request in 1955 that he coordinate with Trinh Minh Thé, an important Cao Dai militia commander, to aid in bringing Thé over to the government's side to help break the sects' power.[34] In Lansdale's version, he is the single mediator, and he coordinates Thé's shift of allegiance and 2,500 militia troops to the government side.[35] In actuality, Lansdale and the CIA may have supplied the money necessary to bring Thé over, but Nhu and Diem conducted the critical negotiations.[36] Nhu was also the leader in the creation and growth of the Can Lao party, which essentially made South Vietnam a single-party state. Despite Lansdale's caution that silencing opposition through intimidation would be ultimately detrimental, Diem allowed his brother to continue, and a culture of fear and suppression began to grow in the South.[37] Frustrated with the Ngo brothers and the Embassy staff who tended to restate the U.S. position of supporting Diem, Lansdale left Vietnam in 1956. He had helped to install Diem in power amidst a quietly emerging insurgency, and he never returned for more than a few weeks until after Diem's death in 1963. Lansdale remained one of Diem's most ardent supporters due to their friendship but was unable to steer the stubborn president in what he considered to be the right direction. Even America's most

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[33] The elections were held on 23 October 1954, and Diem declared the creation of the Republic of Vietnam on 26 October. For more on likely voting fraud, see "Despatch [sic] from the Ambassador in Vietnam (Reinhardt) to the Department of State," telegram, November 29, 1955, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:589–94; Anderson, *Trapped by Success*, 118–19.

[34] Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 184–201.

[35] Ibid., 185.

[36] Ahern, *CIA and the House of Ngo,* 67; Nashel, *Edward Lansdale's Cold War*, 59–60.

[37] Currey, *Unquiet American*, 181–83.

renowned cold warrior in Asia, and arguably Diem's closest American confidant, was unable to crack fully the Ngo family circle.

B. ADVISOR HONEYMOON PERIOD IN VIETNAM

With permission to finally begin training the VNA, O'Daniel set up his organization on three main pillars that mirrored previous advisory efforts: advising headquarters and units; establishing U.S.-style professional schools such as artillery, armor, and engineering; and sending personnel to the United States to attend U.S. professional military schools. O'Daniel established a combined Franco-American training staff titled the Training Relations Instruction Mission (TRIM), but due to the French departure, it fell from a combined 346 in May 1955 to 189 U.S. personnel in March 1956.[38] The U.S. experience with KMAG had shown that a much larger organization was required to staff the schools and units with adequate advisors for even the ARVN's modest size, but increasing the MAAG manpower was problematic.[39] Even though the United States was not a signatory to the Geneva Accords, the Departments of State and Defense disagreed on the legalities of increasing the MAAG's size under the restrictions that the accords placed on reinforcements.[40] The State Department won, arguing that the size could not legally be increased. To circumvent these restrictions, Washington created the Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission (TERM) on 1 June 1956. TERM was ostensibly a separate unit from the MAAG, and its mission was to process the large amount of materiel leftover from the war. In reality, TERM primarily augmented TRIM's manpower, bringing TRIM closer to the size necessary to provide adequate numbers of advisors to all of the units. TERM also duplicated many staff functions since it was supposed to appear as a separate entity, which

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[38] United States Army Command and General Staff College, *Study on Army Aspects of the Military Assistance Program in Vietnam* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: USACGSC, 1960), D–5.

[39] In contrast, in January 1953 the State Department reported that the French training mission was creating an eight-division army and had 900 officers and 4500 noncommissioned officers dedicated to this effort. "Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Secretary of State," memorandum, January 28, 1953, DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Indochina*, 13, pt. 1:367.

[40] The Geneva Accords prohibited "the introduction into Viet-Nam of foreign troops and military personnel." The State Department presumed this to mean that the United States could not increase its numbers beyond what it had in country at the time of the cease fire on 22 July 1954. The Defense Department argued that as the French withdrew forces, the United Staes could replace them. "The Final Declaration on Indochina," DOS, *FRUS, 1952–1954, Geneva Conference*, 16: 1540.

resulted in wasted manpower. Furthermore, the ruse did not fool the ICC, which was responsible for overseeing the Geneva Accords. Its members consistently questioned the U.S. Embassy concerning TERM's status and its projected departure date.[41] Thus, Washington would have been better off ignoring the accords as the Defense Department lawyers suggested and augmenting MAAG with the manpower it needed based on the mission it was assigned.

The MAAG advisors faced the same challenges as their predecessors. As in Korea, few advisors possessed Vietnamese language skills. Vietnamese interpreters mitigated this problem, but operational security risks increased with communist infiltration, and the increase of U.S. personnel put a premium on good interpreters. Also like Korea, cultural concern with the preservation of personal status and dignity ("face") created problems between the advisor and his counterpart. General Samuel Myers, chief of the MAAG Army section, recounts a story in which he upbraided a Vietnamese captain for the filthy conditions in his hospital; the captain committed suicide an hour later.[42] Advisors dealt with corruption and black marketeering within the ARVN, which again were seen as part of the culture as in Korea. Short tour lengths, as few as six months, meant frequent turnover and time wasted as each new advisor figured out his job, established rapport with his counterpart, and figured out how to make himself useful. Finally, there was little advisor-specific training or selection. As the 1980 BDM Corporation study notes, advisors were not selected based on their aptitude for advising, "but rather on the basis of military occupational specialty and availability for and vulnerability to an overseas hardship tour."[43]

For the most part, however, advisors had met and overcome these challenges in previous missions. There is no indication that the advisors in Vietnam had greater problems

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[41] "Memorandum from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Jones) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Murphy)," July 26, 1957, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1: 827.

[42] Samuel C. Myers, interview by Ronald Spector, February 8, 1980, 6, Entry 1089, Box 2, Spector Files, RG 319, NACP.

[43] BDM Corporation, *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam: Omnibus Executive Summary* (McLean, VA: BDM Corporation, 1980), VI-30.

interacting with their counterparts than those in Korea.[44] While these issues were undoubtedly problematic on a daily basis, the Vietnamese political environment was far more influential on the ultimate success or failure of their work and was something largely outside of their control. For example, General O'Daniel wanted units to regroup into the larger divisions to be trained, then returned to their stations for operations. Diem argued that internal security needed to be assured before training could take place.[45] This difference of opinion led to a situation in which neither task was addressed adequately. In November 1955 there already were signs that internal security would be problematic without constant military presence. At a meeting with O'Daniel, Diem asked for support in building small village security elements since battalions departing their sectors to conduct MAAG training created a security vacuum.[46] In one instance, 57 houses had been burned down the day following a security battalion's departure.[47] Additionally, Diem's penchant for favoring loyalty over talent in his generals—a preference that difficult internal security conditions encouraged—degraded the military's combat effectiveness. U. S. advisors had little influence over an officer corps whose senior members were chosen on the basis of personal loyalty to the head of state, and whose professional future was accordingly not entirely dependent on professional accomplishment. The situation was made worse because the French had inflated the VNA salary structure. The VNA soldier made more than ten times the salary of his peer in Korea, a reflection of the incentive required for them to fight in support of the French.[48] This difference made U.S. support of the VNA far more expensive than the support it gave to other anti-communist armies, which placed even more pressure on U.S. personnel to cut costs and force structure, even though the imbalance in forces between north and south was known to be severe.

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[44] Robert Ramsey's study shows the challenges that advisors faced in Korea and Vietnam were virtually identical. Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces*, 28, 73.

[45] Spector, "Interview with General John W. O'Daniel," 265.

[46] "Memorandum of a Conversation," memorandum, November 7, 1955, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:583.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Spector, *Advice and Support*, 281; "Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Under Secretary of State (Hoover)," memorandum, November 22, 1955, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:587.

Although Washington had approved a Vietnamese army of fewer than 100,000, it was apparent by mid-1955 that the 170,000 soldiers remaining after Geneva would never shrink to the size that Washington had approved. The original concept was that the reduction in manpower would be accompanied by an improvement in quality by retaining the best soldiers, but VNA leaders simply did not reduce the organization's size as Collins had directed.[49] Diem's efforts to gain control over the sect forces by moving them into the VNA created additional upward pressure on the army's final numbers. Thus, in June 1955 the MAAG recommended and the new ambassador, Frederick Reinhardt, concurred with a 170,000-man army that eventually would be reduced to 100,000 by the end of 1956 when conscription would be enacted.[50] Conscription would have allowed for a reserve force to be trained, and conscripted soldiers would be paid less than volunteers. This larger army was to consist of four field divisions, eight light divisions, thirteen territorial regiments focused on internal security, and an airborne regiment.[51] While this force represented a more realistic appraisal of the military imbalance between north and south, it was still insufficient for the potential threats it faced.

In October 1955 Lieutenant General Samuel Tankersley Williams replaced O'Daniel as Chief of MAAG and went on to serve the longest tenure of any senior U.S. military commander in Vietnam.[52] Williams had a colorful background. He was relieved of his position as assistant division commander of the 90th Infantry Division shortly after D-

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[49] United States Army Command and General Staff College, *Study on Military Assistance Program*, D–8–9.

[50] "Telegram from the Ambassador in Vietnam (Reinhardt) to the Department of State," telegram, June 11, 1955, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:447–48. Reinhardt replaced Collins as the permanent ambassador in May 1955.

[51] Willard J. Webb, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Prelude to the War in Vietnam, 1954–1959* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2007), 123.

[52] O'Daniel remained a stalwart believer in South Vietnam's future, so much so that he later penned his own version of propaganda, *The Nation that Refused to Starve*, a children's book that chronicles fourteen-year-old Han Minh Huy's journey from the Red River Delta under the threat of communist takeover in 1954 to the south where his family received its own farmland thanks to the benevolence of President Ngo Dinh Diem's land reforms. John W. O'Daniel, *The Nation That Refused to Starve: The Challenge of the New Vietnam* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1962), 114.

Day in Normandy and demoted to colonel.[53] He redeemed himself during the Korean War, most notably during the last Chinese offensive of June 1953 when he rallied the II ROK Corps and brought the offensive to a halt.[54] He ended the war as a Major General. Despite his admirable wartime record and presumed abilities, his rough personality hindered him in his new role as soldier-diplomat.[55] He quickly gained the trust and confidence of Diem, but had little patience with fellow Americans. Colonel James Muir, a highly-placed member of Williams's team, stated bluntly that "Williams did not understand how to handle a staff."[56] Williams alienated those whom he counted on for day-to-day operations and perhaps most importantly, he developed an antagonistic relationship with Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow, who replaced Reinhardt in March 1957. Durbrow believed the United States should demand democratic reforms and threaten to cut off aid to achieve them, while Williams believed that Diem was no worse than any other Asian leader and should be supported for his pro-American and anti-communist views. Their relationship degenerated into frequent shouting matches during embassy meetings, and the result was a poor working relationship between the embassy and MAAG staffs from 1957 to 1961.[57]

In one of his first meetings with Diem, General Williams recognized that a primary challenge for the South would be guerrilla warfare against the Communists. Williams reflected on previous U.S. advisory efforts when he emphasized to Diem "that Communist guerrillas have been destroyed in Greece, Korea, [and] the Philippines," and that they could also "be destroyed in Vietnam."[58] Reflecting U.S. Army doctrine, he prescribed "early,

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[53] Williams was relieved and demoted in July 1944 due to his division's poor performance and altercations with his division commanders, who were themselves relieved. In October, General James Van Fleet took command of the troubled 90th division and helped to improve its performance. Williams later served as a division commander under Van Fleet in Korea.

[54] Harold J. Meyer, *Hanging Sam: A Military Biography of General Samuel T. Williams, from Pancho Villa to Vietnam* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1990), 113–14.

[55] Williams's nickname, "Hanging Sam," was due to his lack of patience stemming from a court martial over which he presided. During what was becoming a seemingly endless debate between prosecution and defense over the accused's state of mind, Williams finally shouted, "I've heard enough! Let's hang the sonovabitch!" Ibid., 108–9.

[56] James I. Muir, Interview by Ronald Spector, February 22, 1980, 3, Entry 1089, Box 2, Spector Files, RG 319, NACP.

[57] Meyer, *Hanging Sam*, 142.

[58] "Paper Prepared by the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (Williams)," December 28, 1955, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:606.

aggressive action" and "relentless pressure" to best combat communist guerrillas.[59] He was particularly reflective of the Korea example, arguing that the guerrilla campaign in the South diverted the ROKA's attention. Thus, the ROKA "was not strategically nor tactically deployed to meet the North Korean attack."[60] His analysis was flawed since it ignored the disparity in weapons and training between the two Korean armies that was more significant than their relative positions. Furthermore, if the ROKA had been deployed as Williams suggested, then the Korean guerrillas would not have faced constant pressure that he prescribed was necessary. Finally, he recommended that "any regular Army troops sent . . . to combat guerrillas should complete their task with speed, then turn the area over to the Civil Guard."[61] This mindset dominated Williams's advice and created conditions that frustrated the advisory effort and allowed the insurgency to regain a foothold in the South.

Following Geneva, the Viet Minh removed nearly all of their troops from the South, but left a residual cadre of approximately 10,000 behind in the event that the accords did not produce the ultimate results the Communists desired.[62] From 1954 to 1958, communist activity in the south focused primarily on indoctrination and building a base of support for future armed activity. Diem warned of growing Viet Minh activity in one of his first meetings with General Williams, although Williams remarked that he had not heard anything from his advisors in the field.[63] Furthermore, some of the sect forces that had not come over to Diem in 1955 began allying with the Communists against the government. In 1956 the term Viet Cong (which Diem claimed to have coined) gained currency in reference to South Vietnamese Communists, and they began a gradual campaign of indoctrination and intimidation. The latter was marked by assassinations and kidnappings,

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[59] "Paper Prepared by the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (Williams)," December 28, 1955, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:606; U.S. Army, *Operations Against Guerrilla Forces* (FM 31-20) (Washington, DC: GPO, 1951), 61.

[60] "Paper Prepared by the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (Williams)," December 28, 1955, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:606.

[61] "Paper Prepared by the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (Williams)," December 28, 1955, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:606.

[62] Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 30–31.

[63] "Memorandum of a Conversation," memorandum, December 28, 1955, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:602.

with President Diem suffering a failed assassination attempt during a visit to the Central Highlands on 22 February 1957. His narrow escape did not seem to faze him immediately, but it did signal that the Communists were already able to strike virtually wherever and whenever they chose. Speaking later, Williams described the VC soldier as "capable of undergoing hardship . . . clever, cunning, and utterly ruthless," and as someone who would "not hesitate to behead a village Mayor and place his head on a stake in the center of the village."[64] The growing Viet Cong threat was becoming more noticeable. One advisor recounted his experiences just walking around town: "I knew from the attitude of the shopkeepers and others that I passed on the streets whether or not any important Viet Cong cadre was observing my actions at the time."[65] Despite this growing threat, Williams remained focused on the possibility of conventional invasion, in many ways because that is what he was ordered to do and because the number of incidents was still relatively low.[66]

In September 1955 the JCS began examining U.S. options in the event of a communist invasion of South Vietnam, even though it assessed that subversion was the greatest threat.[67] It followed up this discussion with the outline of a concept of operations in June 1956 that was wholly inadequate for anything but a minor incursion by the north and displayed a surprising lack of historical reflection on the Korea experience. Noting the serious imbalance in forces between north and south in quantity, firepower, and quality, Admiral Radford, the JCS chairman, nevertheless expected the ARVN to "carry the main burden of the defeat of the aggressors."[68] It was supposed to achieve this feat with U.S. air and naval support, the introduction of approximately one division of U.S. ground troops, nuclear missiles, and the introduction of additional U.S. advisors. He expounded on this latter point, stating that "previous experience has amply demonstrated the success of such

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[64] Samuel T. Williams, "Personal Observations of Certain Foreign Military Personnel," May 2, 1964, Box 23, Folder 26, Williams Papers.

[65] Edward M. Dannemiller, Interview by Ronald Spector, March 10, 1980, 22–23, Entry 1089, Box 2, Spector Files, RG 319, NACP.

[66] Ibid.

[67] "Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson)," memorandum, September 9, 1955, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:539.

[68] "Paper Presented by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford) at the 287 Meeting of the National Security Council," June 7, 1956, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:703–9.

provisions."[69] Radford's plan was clearly dependent on hope, rather than historical evidence. He predicted that the enemy scheme of maneuver would be an attack across the 17th parallel similar to the NKPA's attack on the ROKA in June 1950. An influx of advisors in the midst of a disorganized retreat and reinforcement by one U.S. division would not have prevented the fall of South Korea. There was no reason to think that Vietnam would magically hold with the same prescription.

Williams responded to this plan realistically, stating that "the lack of Vietnamese training, field command structure and logistic balance in effect increases the Viet Minh superiority above the 2 to 1 ratio."[70] Rather than accept the informed opinion of the senior military advisor in country in good faith, Radford took offense at his plan being questioned, telling Williams's boss, "I have grave doubts as to [Williams's] ability and as to his being a proper representative in this important area."[71] Williams nevertheless remained in his position and continued to focus his efforts on consolidating the ARVN into divisions and training it on the KMAG model. Although a communist resurgence was only in its nascent phase, the Communists were sure to launch a renewed guerrilla struggle. The only question was, when? For this likelihood, Williams and Diem would depend on a force that would prove wholly unsuited for the task.

In 1955 Diem created the Civil Guard (CG) out of provincial militias that had existed during the French war. In conjunction with a village-level Self-Defense Corps (SDC) of armed villagers, Diem envisioned the CG as the first line of defense against the communist guerrillas. Williams gave full support to the plan since it supported his goal of keeping the ARVN out of the internal security business and focused on completing its full training plan. These organizations roughly mirrored the National Defense Corps that Van Fleet had set up in Greece to secure pacified areas and prevent guerrilla re-infestation. The difference was that the Greek organizations consisted of veterans and reservists facing

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[69] "Paper Presented by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford) at the 287 Meeting of the National Security Council," June 7, 1956, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:705.

[70] "Telegram from the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (Williams) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Stump)," telegram, June 7, 1956, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:711.

[71] "Letter from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Stump)," letter, June 14, 1956, DOS, *FRUS, 1955–1957, Vietnam*, 1:713.

similarly-armed forces. Furthermore, disagreement between the groups involved in the CG discussion stunted its development at a critical time.

Prior to assuming the prime minister position, Diem had established a personal relationship with Wesley Fishel of Michigan State University. As a sovereign nation, the RVN contracted in May 1955 for a Michigan State University Group (MSUG) to provide academic instruction to improve the South Vietnamese government and police.[72] The volunteers found themselves arriving in the midst of the post-sect fighting with harrowing tales of being caught in anti-communist riots, random terrorist attacks, and one member's kidnapping all occurring within their first few months in country.[73] MSUG assumed training of Vietnamese personnel in many areas, but its insistence on maintaining the Civil Guard as a police force versus the paramilitary force that Diem and Williams wanted was a lost opportunity that permitted the Viet Cong to begin reestablishing itself in the South.

From 1955 to 1960, the MSUG continually lobbied that the Civil Guard should be organized and equipped as a national police force analogous to a state police force in the United States.[74] A futile conversation between Ambassador Durbrow, the MSUG representative, General Williams, and President Diem in March 1958 illustrated the incompatible visions of the four parties. Diem wanted a force under the Department of Defense (DOD) that could meet the growing insurgent threat at least equally matched. Williams wanted an additional paramilitary force under DOD to avoid using the army to fight insurgents at all costs, stating it was "exactly what the communists want us to do."[75] Durbrow intimated that the Civil Guard could either fall under the DOD and be subject to the army manpower limitations or fall under the Department of the Interior and be subject to limitations on its weaponry and training.[76] The MSUG maintained its viewpoint that the

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[72] "Agreement between the Government of Vietnam and Michigan State University," MSU Vietnam Group Archive, Michigan State University, April 14, 1955, Annex 1, http://spartanhistory.kora.matrix.msu.edu/files/6/32/6-20-15A6-116-UA17-149_000002.pdf.

[73] John Ernst, *Forging a Fateful Alliance: Michigan State University and the Vietnam War* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1998), 15.

[74] Ibid., 78–79.

[75] MAAG-V, "Civil Guard Meeting with President Diem," March 5, 1958, 6, Box 13, Folder 3, Williams Papers.

[76] Ibid.

Civil Guard should be a civil police force. This discussion made little progress nearly three years after the guard's initial creation. Repeating the same mistake as in the Philippines, the guard fell under the Department of the Interior, which was necessary to receive any U.S. funding but hindered its training and limited it to castoff weapons. When the MAAG finally took over training in 1960 and the CG was equipped with the weapons it needed to face the Viet Cong, five years had been wasted due to ideological stubbornness.[77] Williams should have known better than to entrust the fight against the insurgency to another organization. The fight in all the guerrilla examples he mentioned to Diem in December 1955 had been won by the armed forces of that country. Vietnam should not have been treated any differently. Ultimately, intransigence on both the military and civilian sides resulted in a weak internal security effort that allowed the VC to gain a foothold. Since the Communists had focused on building support first, this foothold was more significant than the VC's small early numbers would imply.

While the Civil Guard awaited a U.S. decision on its future, it made do with the weapons it could acquire. These weapons were often turn-of-the-century French rifles with ammunition that was just as old. Furthermore, the Civil Guard often found itself guarding the most remote posts while the army kept the posts closer to civilization and markets.[78] Thus, the force least able to defend itself due to its poor weapons and training was also the least likely to be quickly reinforced if under attack. As VC activity began to increase, especially in 1960 and beyond, the Civil Guard naturally suffered more attacks and greater casualties.[79]

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[77] MAAG-V, "Civil Guard Meeting with President Diem," March 5, 1958; MAAG-V, "Record of Conversation Between the President, General Williams, and General Myers," October 13, 1957, 6, Box 13, Folder 2, Williams Papers.

[78] MAAG-V, "Record of Conversation Between President Diem and General Williams," January 7, 1957, 57, Box 13, Folder 1, Williams Papers; *U.S. News and World Report*, "Why U.S. Is Losing in Vietnam—an Inside Story: Interview with Former Chief U.S. Military Adviser, Lieut. Gen. Samuel T. Williams (Ret.)," November 6, 1964, Box 23, Folder 27, Williams Papers.

[79] In the second half of 1959, the MAAG reported 68 Civil Guard killed versus 37 ARVN. "Despatch [sic] from the Ambassador in Vietnam (Durbrow) to the Department of State, Subject: Special Report on Current Internal Security Situation," March 7, 1960, DOS, *FRUS, 1958–1960*, vol. 1, *Vietnam* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1986), 318; "Memorandum from General Lemnitzer to General Taylor, Subject: Counterinsurgency Operations in South Vietnam," October 18, 1961, OSD, *U.S.-VN Relations, 1945–1967*, vol. 5.B.4, book 1, *U.S. Involvement in the War, Internal Documents, The Kennedy Administration: January 1961–November 1963* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1967), 324–26, http://media.nara.gov/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-V-B-4-Book-I.pdf.

Despite this unfinished debate, Williams and his MAAG personnel continued to organize and train the Vietnamese. Working with the Vietnamese leadership, the MAAG divided Vietnam into military regions and assigned ARVN units to each one. Williams disbanded TRIM after the French departed in April 1956 and replaced it with the Combat Arms Training Organization (CATO), which was responsible for all advisory efforts. He placed his deputy in charge of inspecting ARVN units on a rotating basis to help determine the state of training and readiness and developed a 31-week training plan for each unit to complete. What he found was not surprising for a brand new army in a developing country, but the rate of improvement for basic infantry skills and the lack of emphasis on training in some units were causes for concern. The disparity between units often was stark. For example, one of the best units, the 2nd Field Infantry Division, was rated as "barely satisfactory in training" in March 1957 due in part to its participation in security duties.[80] In March 1958, however, it received a rating of superior.[81] Furthermore, its leadership had acted quickly on deficiencies, with nearly all of them corrected prior to the next MAAG inspection three months later. In contrast, the 13th Light Infantry Division showcased one of the worst examples of the ARVN. During the MAAG's first visit in December 1956, the deputy was told that the division had completed no training since it was operationally fighting the insurgency.[82] This claim was fabricated; the unit was actually training for a parade.[83] Over a year later, the division had accomplished virtually nothing and was rated as "barely satisfactory in training" and as possessing a poor combat potential.[84] The MAAG deputy continually pressed the units he visited to stop conducting security operations so they could focus on training, but this request ran the risk of allowing the security situation in the countryside to deteriorate. Clearly there was a balance between security and training, especially considering the ongoing debate over the Civil Guard, but

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[80] MAAG-V, "2nd Field Infantry Division Training Report," March 31, 1957, Entry 16, Box 2, MAAGV AGD, Training Visit Reports, 04/1956-12/1958, RG 472, NACP.

[81] Ibid.

[82] MAAG-V, "13th Light Infantry Division Training Report," December 31, 1956, Entry 16, Box 2, MAAGV AGD, Training Visit Reports, 04/1956-12/1958, RG 472, NACP.

[83] Ibid.

[84] MAAG-V, "13th Light Infantry Division Training Report," March 31, 1958, Entry 16, Box 2, MAAGV AGD, Training Visit Reports, 04/1956-12/1958, RG 472, NACP.

the right balance was never fully resolved. For his part, Diem often took action on the training reports, relieving junior officers whose units were found to be lacking.[85] Notably, he did not hold higher-level officers like colonels and generals accountable in the same manner out of fear of making powerful enemies.[86]

Diem's relationship with senior military leaders was a reason for concern looming over the ARVN, and it resulted in a lack of qualified senior officers since they were promoted due to loyalty, rather than competence. For example, when Williams pressed him to assign a permanent army chief of staff, Diem selected General Le Van Ty. Ty had been a captain in the French Army prior to service in the VNA and simply wanted to retire when Diem appointed him to replace Hinh in 1954 as the interim chief of staff.[87] According to his U.S. advisor, Ty could not speak Vietnamese very well, was not a keenly intelligent officer, and had the maximum potential of company command.[88] Other problems dealt with officers sent to the United States for professional training. Although they were supposed to be gaining military knowledge to bring back to their fledgling army, many senior officers spent more time in leisure activities like shopping and sightseeing. The younger officers who excelled in U.S. schools were often sent to other jobs, instead of returning to their units where they could pass on their knowledge. Thus, the effectiveness of the officer corps suffered, and the education it received did little to contribute to the ARVN's combat ability.[89]

In August 1958, the MAAG estimated that North Vietnamese forces consisted of "268,000 regular army troops organized into 14 infantry divisions, 1 artillery division, 1 anti-aircraft artillery groupment," and multiple independent regiments and support units.[90]

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[85] John F. Ruggles, Interview by Ronald Spector, February 27, 1980, 17, Entry 1089, Box 2, Spector Files, RG 319, NACP.

[86] Ibid.

[87] "Evaluation of Officer, Le Van Ty," June 1, 1960, Box 15, Folder 5, Williams Papers; Spector, *Advice and Support*, 280.

[88] Spector, *Advice and Support*, 280.

[89] Myers Interview, 7–11; Spector, *Advice and Support*, 282–85.

[90] MAAG-V, "Narrative Study," August 24, 1954, 2, Entry 12, Box 18, USFSEA, 1950–1975, MAAG Vietnam/AGD, SCGR: 1950–1961, 370.2 Seventh Quarterly Special TERM Report 1958 thru 400 Coordinated Country Team Development of FY60 Military Aid Proposals Vnm. 1958, RG 472, NACP.

Additionally, the North had a 235,000 man paramilitary force to "conduct internal security, defense, and guerrilla functions."[91] Facing this formidable force, the MAAG counted on an ARVN of 140,620 personnel who were still battling the forces of the religious sects as late as December 1957.[92] The MAAG assessment stated that "the Viet Cong ground forces are well trained, highly indoctrinated, and have the capability of executing sustained and highly effective operations through all types of terrain with minimum logistical support."[93] The force disparity and difference in quality was reminiscent of Korea, but the limits set by Washington remained unchanged.

Even with the South's force disparity vis-à-vis the North and an internal security plan dependent on the underequipped, undertrained Civil Guard, the year 1958 ended on a relatively positive note. ARVN divisions and regiments had three to four officer advisors, each headed by colonels for the former and majors for the latter. Although Williams had resisted the diversion of ARVN units to fight the slowly increasing guerrilla movement, Diem launched a major effort that seriously weakened the Viet Cong in the southern provinces.[94] The security situation began to change rapidly in 1959, however, and the advisory effort's early mistakes and issues it could not fix would be magnified greatly by a renewed and highly motivated communist insurgency.

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[91] MAAG-V, "Narrative Study," August 24, 1954.

[92] MAAG-V, "Country Statement for Vietnam as of 31 December 1957," December 31, 1957, 2, Entry 12, Box 13, USFSEA, 1950–1975, MAAG Vietnam/AGD, SCGR: 1950–1961, 000.72 Secret and Confidential Matters 1958 Thru 100 Vietnam Military Budget Estimate FY 1959 1958, RG 472, NACP.

[93] MAAG-V, "Narrative Study," 2.

[94] Spector, *Advice and Support*, 326–27.

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VII. U.S. MILITARY ADVISORS IN VIETNAM: TRADING A FRENCH MORASS FOR A U.S. QUAGMIRE, PART TWO

The situation in Vietnam from 1958 to 1963 was a tangled web of contradicting priorities between U.S. and Vietnamese leaders, and it provided a glaring example of the limits of military advising. The Vietnamese Communists decided in 1959 to resume their efforts to unify Vietnam under communist rule. Meanwhile, the MAAG advisors continued trying to improve the performance of a South Vietnamese army characterized by apathy, poor leadership, and favoritism, but found themselves caught between President Ngo Dinh Diem and his ineffective, coup-plotting generals. Diem, always quick to request more aid and a larger army, ignored nearly all the substantive recommendations that the MAAG proposed to improve his security forces. Furthermore, he had his own ideas on how to defeat the Communists.

Unable to solve the underlying problems of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF), the MAAG, under a new but ineffectual commander, supported an increase in the regular army's (ARVN) size and instituted U.S.-devised campaign plans and vague anti-guerrilla tactics in a vain attempt to compensate for RVNAF weaknesses.[1] Ultimately, however, the limits of the advisory program were laid bare when faced with training an army whose motivation and leadership, as a whole, were far below those of the enemy it faced.

The limited progress of the RVNAF also created unnecessary internal strife between the MAAG and the ambassador when the real problems were outside of the MAAG's control. Aided by a long, porous border, the Communists infiltrated unimpeded and enjoyed increasing support from the South's population. The new administration of President John F. Kennedy increasingly saw the situation in Vietnam as one for Washington to solve rather than Saigon, thus straying from the spirit of advice and support as a limited foreign policy tool. This shift in mindset resulted in the U.S.-

[1] This chapter will use RVNAF to refer to the security forces of South Vietnam as a whole, including the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps.

supported coup against the Diem regime and the transfer of power to the same ARVN leaders that had proven incapable of defeating the Communists.

A. VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST RESURGENCE

Following the Geneva Accords, the number of Vietnamese Communists remaining in the South was probably between 10,000 and 15,000.[2] While Ho Chi Minh and the northern communist leaders held out hope for a reunification through elections, they nevertheless decided in 1955 to implement a five-year plan that focused on consolidating power in the North, recovering economically, and expanding the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN).[3] Communists in the South focused on laying the groundwork politically for renewing the struggle to unite all of Vietnam but refrained from fully committing to revolutionary warfare.[4] By early 1959 there were fewer than 5,000 party members due to Diem's 1958 anti-communist offensive.[5] Diem's government was winning the near-term battle. Who would win the long-term war depended on the North's willingness to expand the struggle.

In what would become a historical milestone, the Communists met in 1959 in Hanoi and decided to liberate South Vietnam.[6] To support this goal, they also decided to

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[2] Duiker cites 10,000-15,000. Khuyen cites as many as 50,000 remained. William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, Westview Special Studies on South and Southeast Asia (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981), 173; Dong Van Khuyen, *RVNAF Logistics*, Indochina Monographs (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2000), 21, http://cgsc.cdmhost.com/utils/getdownloaditem/collection/p4013coll11/id/889/filename/890.pdf/mapsto/pdf/type/compoundobject/cpdtype/monograph/show/889.

[3] The PAVN was the overarching name for the communist armed forces. This chapter generally uses Viet Cong (VC) when referring to communist forces in the South, North Vietnamese Army (NVA) when referring to forces in the North, and Communists when referring to Vietnamese Communists.

[4] The official North Vietnamese history calls it "armed propaganda," which consisted of proselytizing the party message and opportunistic anti-government acts of violence. The Military History Institute of Vietnam (hereafter referred to as MHIV), *Victory in Vietnam: The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954-1975*, trans. Merle L. Pribbenow, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 18–19, 43–44. Le Duan, the communist leader in the South, outlined the communist strategy as a peaceful resolution of conflict with the "imperialist, feudalist, dictatorial, fascist" U.S.-Diem government by threading the needle between armed struggle and reform through legal means. Le Duan, "The Path of Revolution in the South," Department of History, trans. Robert K. Brigham and Le Phuong Anh, *University of Houston*, 1956, http://vi.uh.edu/pages/buzzmat/southrevo.htm.

[5] MHIV, *Victory in Vietnam*, 44; Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 81.

[6] MHIV, *Victory in Vietnam*, 49–50.

expand the overland infiltration and supply route through Laos and Cambodia that would become known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Over the course of the next 16 years, the North Vietnamese transformed what began as a crude set of hunting and smuggling paths into an extensive network of tunnels, defenses, bridges, and roads measuring as many as 13,000 kilometers, much of which was invisible from the air. Maintained by an army of workers numbering as many as 50,000, the Ho Chi Minh Trail withstood more air ordnance dropped on it than the United States dropped during the entire Second World War with no serious impact on the North's ability to infiltrate men and supplies into the South.[7] This engineering marvel was made possible by the same fervent dedication displayed by the troops who would travel its length over the next 14 years to fight the increasingly formidable RVNAF and its American backers.

In May 1959 the CIA reported that the Communists numbered only 2,000 active guerrillas in the South, yet it warned that the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps, who bore the brunt of anti-guerrilla activities, were "inadequately trained and equipped for the job, and units from the armed forces have continued to be called in to meet special situations."[8] For a combined RVN security force of nearly 250,000 personnel, this assessment spelled serious trouble for South Vietnam. Additionally, MAAG personnel were then in the Viet Cong crosshairs. As early as 1957, MAAG personnel found themselves targets of VC bomb attacks.[9]

By January 1960 the VC was capable of attacking heavily fortified ARVN camps like the 32nd Infantry Regiment's at Trang Sup. In the early morning hours of 26

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[7] Van Nguyen Duong, *The Tragedy of the Vietnam War: A South Vietnamese Officer's Analysis* (London: McFarland and Company, 2008), 64-66.

[8] CIA, "National Intelligence Estimate 63-59 Prospects for North and South Vietnam," CIA (May 26, 1959), 4, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0001166782.pdf. This chapter will frequently use anti-guerrilla, counter-guerrilla, and counterinsurgency interchangeably. The first term is typically used to describe defensive measures against guerrillas, the second is typically for offensive measures, and the third is a comprehensive civil-military approach. In the early 1960s, these terms were often mixed in documents and communications.

[9] MAAG-V, "Memorandum To: Chief of Staff and Each Division Chief," October 15, 1958, Entry 12, Box 13, USFSEA, 1950-1975, MAAGV/AGD, SCGR: 1950-1961, 000.72 Secret and Confidential Matters 1958 Thru 100 Vietnam Military Budget Estimate FY 1959 1958, RG 472, NACP. The first U.S. deaths at the hands of the VC in this new phase of U.S. involvement came on 8 July 1959 in an attack on a mess hall in Bien Hoa. "84. Editorial Note," *FRUS, 1958-1960, Vietnam*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1986), 735, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v01.

January, approximately 400 VC attacked the 32nd's camp housing 547 soldiers. The well-planned and coordinated attack may have had support from inside agents and resulted in 34 ARVN killed, 46 wounded, and 12 missing for a loss of 5 VC killed. More importantly, the ARVN lost nearly 700 individual weapons and over 60 machine guns and mortars.[10] In addition to the base buildings and infrastructure destroyed, this operation was extremely cost effective for the VC and was indicative of ARVN weakness in simple base defense tactics.

B. THE ADVISORY EFFORT ROLLS ON

Meanwhile, General Samuel Williams's MAAG continued to assist the ARVN in training and organizing itself to be able to fight effectively. Never satisfied with the light and field division model he inherited from his predecessor General John O'Daniel in 1955, Williams reorganized the ARVN into seven standard divisions of 10,450 men each that were suited to "combat on any type of terrain found in Vietnam."[11] Williams did not make this decision unilaterally. President Diem had called for a reorganization of the army into heavier divisions and corps as early as January 1957, mentioning "that all of his officers complained about this light division concept" due to their insufficient firepower and logistics.[12] The elimination of the light and territorial units would become controversial, however, as security in the rural areas worsened. The MAAG also reorganized the RVNAF's higher command structure, but this change did little to improve ARVN leadership.

By the end of 1959, the ARVN consisted of the seven new standardized divisions, an airborne brigade, four armored battalions, a marine group, a helicopter squadron, three

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[10] Combat Arms Training and Organization Division, "Final Report, 32d Infantry Regiment Incident, 26 January 1960," n.d., Entry 12, Box 21, MAAG-V/AGD, SCGR: 1950-1961, 250/6 Military Assistance Planning and Programming Handbook 1960 THRU 250/17 MAAG VN Log Est 32-59 1960, RG 472, NACP.

[11] MAAG-V, "First Semi-Annual Special TERM Report (1 June 1958 to 30 Sep 1958)," November 19, 1958, 2, Entry 12, Box 17, USFSEA, 1950-1975, MAAG-V/AGD, SCGR: 1950-1961, 352 Army Service and Technical Schools, Staff Colleges, and Troop Schools 1958 THRU 370.2 1st Semi-Annual Special Report of TERM 1958, RG 472, NACP.

[12] "Record of Conversation with President Diem," January 19, 1957, Box 13, Folder 1, Williams Papers.

corps headquarters, a Joint General Staff (JGS), and a field command that ostensibly directed the three corps to free up the JGS from warfighting.[13] These elements were layered on top of as many as six military region headquarters, including the capital region, and a system of province chiefs that all wielded or attempted to wield control over the forces assigned to them or that operated in their area. The Civil Guard (CG) and Self Defense Corps (SDC) forces typically fell directly under the province chiefs, who reported to the Ministry of the Interior. This reporting structure handicapped the paramilitary CG and SDC interoperability with ARVN units. The RVNAF had recreated virtually the same divided chain of command that failed in the Philippines. With a professional senior officer corps, this convoluted chain of command would have been less of a problem, but the steps that Diem had taken since 1954 cemented dysfunction into the very core of the RVNAF leadership.

Having faced down General Hinh's prospective coup in the latter half of 1954, Diem favored loyalty over military ability in selecting his highest ranking officers.[14] As Thomas Cantwell writes, the result of these early decisions was that "factionalism, mistrust and envy, not unity, soon became a permanent part of the army at its highest levels and represented a fundamental problem which [the] ARVN never solved."[15] The problem was that the Vietnamese leadership did not always recognize its shortcomings

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[13] The JGS was the Vietnamese equivalent of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Spector, *Advice and Support,* 299; Willard J. Webb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Prelude to the War in Vietnam, 1954-1959*, History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2007), 144–45.

[14] Colonel J. E. Robb, interview by Ronald Spector, June 17, 1980, Entry 1089, Box 2, Spector Files, RG 319, NACP. One senior advisor, Colonel Edward Dannemiller, remarked that the ARVN corps and division leaders were "way out over their heads" due to having been "put in that position overnight" versus growing into it based on merit and experience. Colonel Edward M. Dannemiller interview, ibid., 27. General Myers, the head of the MAAG's army section, remarked that "there were very few colonels and generals in the Vietnamese Army . . . who had a great deal of desire to improve themselves." He could only think of two senior Vietnamese officers who he considered "outstanding leader[s]." also had a low opinion of ARVN senior leadership. Lieutenant General Samuel C. Myers interview, February 8, 1980, ibid., 3. The 1960 CGSC study outlines certain aspects of the Vietnamese culture that resulted in poor military leadership, notably that it was "passive, submissive, fatalistic, accustomed to being led rather than leading, pastoral and non mechanical, and living at little more than a bare existence level." The North's leaders were nevertheless able to motivate their people who came from the same stock. United States Army Command and General Staff College, *Study on Army Aspects of the Military Assistance Program in Vietnam* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: USACGSC, 1960), C19–C20.

[15] Thomas R. Cantwell, "The Army of South Vietnam: A Military and Political History, 1955-75" (PhD diss., University of New South Wales, 1989), 37–38.

and maintained a dismissive attitude toward some of the MAAG's most important recommendations.[16] As General Williams continually pointed out even at the end of his tenure, there was a general attitude that training was secondary to virtually anything else.[17] Diluting control over the armed forces by anyone but Diem contributed to the regime's stability, but resulted in paralysis, miscommunication, increased possibility of fratricide, and loss of situational awareness during military operations.[18] It also further contributed to commanders ignoring orders, because a conflicting order might soon follow from some other source. As a 1960 U.S. Army study illustrated, "an example of conflicting and duplicating channels of command is where a division commander receives orders from both the corps commander . . . and the region commander in whose region his division is stationed. Another example is where the President, by means of his SCR-399 radio net (NCS in a radio van in the garden of the presidential palace) sends operational orders to a regiment direct[ly], bypassing the Department of National Defense, the general staff, the field command, the corps and the division."[19] This tangled web resulted in poorly coordinated operations and multiple battlefield seams that the Communists could use to their advantage.[20]

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[16] One advisor recounted a story in which a Vietnamese corps commander returned from visiting the ROKA in Korea. Asked about what he had learned from the Koreans, the Vietnamese major general replied that he learned that he should visit his troops in the field. General Williams was upset that the U.S. advisor had not passed this basic leadership point on to his counterpart. The general's U.S. advisor had recommended that action on numerous occasions, but the Vietnamese general simply ignored the advice. Brigadier General Charles P. Symroski and Nathaniel P. Ward, Interview by Ronald Spector, February 14, 1980, 25–26, Entry 1089, Box 2, Spector Files, RG 319, NACP.

[17] Samuel T. Williams, "Memorandum from General Williams to President Diem, Subject: Observations of and Recommendations for the ARVN," August 24, 1960, 16, Box 14, Folder 4, Williams Papers.

[18] USACGSC, *Study on Army Aspects of the Military Assistance Program in Vietnam*, C21.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Seams are places where two or more commanders' areas of responsibility meet. Since these are the limits of the commander's responsibility, they frequently result in insufficient attention since there is a tendency to expect the neighboring unit to adequately secure it. Thus, neither side effectively secures it, and enemy forces can operate more freely. As ST 31-20 points out, often these seams lie along geographical boundaries, which are often impassible areas like rivers and mountains. This feature would be especially true between provinces. U.S. Army, *Special Text 31-20-1 Operations Against Guerrilla Forces* (Fort Benning, GA: U.S. Army Infantry School, 1950), 36–37, https://archive.org/details/OperationsAgainstGuerrillaForces.

Unlike in Korea, or even Greece, where a greater state of emergency existed, the communist threat grew slowly in Vietnam. Thus, even though the chain of command was functioning poorly, there was less pressure on the senior U.S. advisor to insist on the removal of weak officers at the highest levels as Van Fleet had in Greece and Korea. For example, General Ty, who the MAAG identified early as a poor choice for Chief of the JGS, served in that role until his health forced him to retire in 1963.

As communist pressure increased in 1959, Williams sought a way to provide greater assistance to the ARVN that struggled against the VC as a result of "inadequate planning, logistical snarls, lack of aggressive execution of plans, failure to use proper chain of command, [and] lack of aggressive leadership."[21] The ARVN seemed to be holding its own only a year earlier but was suddenly having problems combatting a rather weak enemy. Citing common practices in the Greek Civil War, Williams requested permission to send U.S. advisors on ARVN operations to assist in mission planning and to provide better combat reports to assess ARVN effectiveness and the communist threat more effectively.[22] Williams's superiors initially balked at the idea of U.S. forces directly participating in ARVN combat operations, arguing that in 1947 conditions in Greece had deteriorated to the point where U.S. advisors were required to be "the behind-the-scenes director of the operation[s]."[23] Nevertheless, Williams received permission in May 1959 for advisors to accompany ARVN regiments and battalions, but they were restricted from participating in combat.[24] Later operations would show that advisors in the field were no panacea since they still relied on persuasion rather than true authority to correct deficiencies they might encounter in combat.

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[21] "61. Letter from the Chief of the Military Advisory Group in Vietnam (Williams) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific's Chief of Staff (Riley)," March 31, 1959, *FRUS 1958-1960*, 1:630.

[22] Ibid., 631.

[23] "62. Letter from the Commander in Chief, Pacific's Chief of Staff (Riley) to the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (Williams)," April 9, 1959, ibid., 1:633-34.

[24] "74. Letter from the Commander in Chief, Pacific, to the Chief of the MAAG-V (Williams)," May 25, 159 ibid., 1:682-85.

As VC attacks increased, Diem searched for innovative ideas that would halt the deteriorating situation with the least possible effort.[25] Against MAAG advice, he directed the creation of an elite force of 10,000 commandos (later Rangers) and requested that the MAAG provide anti-guerrilla training for the rest of the ARVN. Diem communicated these thoughts to Durbrow in February 1960.[26] They caused significant anxiety within an already divisive civil-military relationship in Saigon. Ambassador Durbrow, who had long resisted the arming and training of the Civil Guard to the standards that General Williams desired, then championed anti-guerrilla training. He used the ARVN's poor performance to criticize Williams's insistence on withholding the ARVN from internal security operations and training and organizing it primarily for defense against a northern invasion. Williams argued against the commando units since he felt it was either a veiled request for more forces when the United States was already footing most of the RVNAF's bill or an ill-conceived plan that would absorb many of the best soldiers from an already underperforming army and complicate operations that were already being executed poorly.[27] Ultimately, the commandos were an elite unit of sorts, and were probably the best fighters in the ARVN, but their creation was a distraction from more fundamental problems.

Diem's request launched what has become a perennial debate over the type of army that the United States built, which continues today. For example, historian Max Boot argues that in Vietnam, U.S. advisors failed to create a constabulary force as in previous advisory efforts, instead organizing "a miniature version of their own armed forces, complete with heavy armor, artillery, air force, navy, marines, [and] rangers," because the advisors believed that " the most likely threat would come from a Korean

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[25] See Spector for a narrative and map of major VC actions between 1957 and 1959. Spector, *Advice and Support*, Map 8, 337–343. Also, "112. Despatch from the Ambassador in Vietnam (Durbrow) to the Department of State, Subject: Special Report on Internal Security Situation in Viet-Nam," March 7, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, 1: 931–74.

[26] "104. Despatch from the Ambassador in Vietnam (Durbrow) to the Department of State," February 16, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, 1:890–98.

[27] "113. Telegram from the Chief of the MAAG-V (Williams) to the Secretary of Defense's Deputy Assistant for Special Operations (Lansdale)," March 10, 1960, ibid., 1:974–84; Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years*, 349–51.

War-style invasion."[28] Boot's argument ignores a number of facts. First, constabulary forces alone were insufficient for defeating guerrillas in Greece, Korea, and the Philippines. Second, the biggest proponent of the Civil Guard—the RVNAF's constabulary force—was General Williams. The problem was not a failure to create the constabulary force. The problem was overcoming South Vietnam's shortcomings to make it effective against the Viet Cong. In Korea the United States decided what kind of army the South Koreans would have, since the U.S. military government ran the country. In contrast, South Vietnam was a sovereign nation, whose leaders were in a position to decide what kind of army they wanted, as evidenced by Diem's decision to form the ARVN Rangers despite Williams's objections. Boot also states that guerrillas presented the greatest threat to the South, but that the "American advisers did not prepare the South Vietnamese soldiers for this challenge."[29] In this argument, Boot shared Ambassador Durbrow's sentiments in early 1960.

In April 1960 after realizing that the ARVN was in worse shape than he originally thought, Durbrow requested that Williams answer a series of questions concerning the ARVN's ability to conduct the type of warfare that it was becoming increasingly obvious needed to be waged. Broadly-speaking, Durbrow accused Williams of resisting anti-guerrilla training for the ARVN, of misleading him as to the amount of training being completed overall, and of making the ARVN less capable of fighting guerrilla forces due to his elimination of the light divisions.[30] Williams, in a clear sign of frustration with Durbrow, and perhaps with the ARVN's poor performance as well, responded with a vehement defense of his plan and his organization's accomplishments. He noted that the division reorganization followed a period of intense study and testing and resulted in divisions suited to fight either internal or external aggression. He argued that the ARVN

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[28] Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 288. Tom Ricks makes virtually the same argument, stating that Williams created "versions of the U.S. Army divisions of World War II—that is, regular forces designed for regular, state-on-state war." Ricks omits the part of history where those divisions fought Japanese forces that employed guerrilla tactics in their campaign to retake Pacific Islands. Thomas E. Ricks, *The Generals: American Military Command from World War II to Today* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), 224.

[29] Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace*, 288.

[30] "141. Memorandum from the Ambassador in Vietnam (Durbrow) to the Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group in Vietnam (Williams)," April 19, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, 1:1175–82.

weapons were superior to those of the Viet Cong. Most importantly, Williams insisted that it was up to the ARVN commanders to determine how to train and employ their units most effectively.[31]

On this latter point, Williams found himself facing the same problem as Van Fleet in Greece: how to provide weapons, equipment, and transportation to an ally without making him entirely dependent on it in all situations. The answer was solid leadership, but the ARVN continued to fall short in that domain. This aspect was not true in all cases, but it was often the case that the ARVN remained a road-bound force that could not and would not fight the Communists on their terrain. Williams was not entirely blameless, however. Like General Roberts in Korea before him, he had misled U.S. and Vietnamese officials with his words of praise for the ARVN. He referred often to the impressive accomplishments that the ARVN had made in training and organization. While he routinely pointed out the grave errors the ARVN faced in leadership, chain of command, poor training consistency, and lack of aggressiveness, he never applied the weight of his position and relationship with President Diem to effect drastic changes. No leaders of consequence were relieved as a result of his actions, and the chain of command was never fixed. Based on Williams's remarks and reports, it appeared that, while the ARVN had persistent problems, they were being addressed and would eventually be corrected since the ARVN was progressing.[32] The truth was that the ARVN did not fight well in a whole host of scenarios, whether on defense or offense. Williams had supplied the ARVN with anti-guerrilla manuals in 1958, along with guidance to his advisors that anti-guerrilla

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[31] "167. Memorandum from the Chief of the MAAG-V (Williams) to the Ambassador in Vietnam (Durbrow)," June 1, 1960, ibid., 1:1350–77.

[32] For example, in his final assessment of the ARVN in August 1960, General Williams spoke of the "Miracle of Vietnam" in reference to the "great, in fact phenomenal, progress that has been made by the Armed Forces [of Vietnam]." He then traces the RVNAF's evolution from a "myriad [of] small unconnected units of 1955 into a single, flexible, and maneuverable Armed Force" and "the infliction upon the Viet Cong of many defeats and losses." He continues with 75 pages of recommended changes. Williams, "Recommendations for ARVN," 1–2. In his response to Ambassador Durbrow on the state of anti-guerrilla training, Williams assesses that the "RVNAF, on balance, possesses an excellent state of combat readiness to combat guerrilla terrorist attacks within South Vietnam." "167. Memorandum from the Chief of the MAAG-V (Williams) to the Ambassador in Vietnam (Durbrow)," June 1, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, 1:1375.

training be emphasized.[33] The problem was not a lack of anti-guerrilla training as such. It was the army's lack of emphasis on conducting any training at all.[34]

In his final report to President Diem before departing in August 1960, Williams congratulated Diem on all that the RVNAF had accomplished since 1954, and listed a number of recommendations for the future. He recommended that officer and non-commissioned officer promotions be based on merit, loyalty, and ability, rather than on "personal friendship or other affiliations."[35] Such practices, amounting to a kind of institutional nepotism, compounded many other problems, including the ongoing weakness of the ARVN chain of command. Williams expressed concern over the continuing problem of individuals circumventing the chain of command in both directions and the problem of the dual military and provincial chain.[36]

In addition, Williams addressed other systemic problems including a lack of emphasis on training, little or no leadership follow-up on orders to subordinates, no centralized intelligence agency, multiple conflicting orders issued to units from different sources, and piecemeal assignment of forces, rather than maintaining unit integrity.[37] All of these problems were contrary to the advice that U.S. advisors had given their counterparts over the preceding five years. Much of the failure to heed the advice could be laid at Diem's feet. He was responsible for the dilution of power that prevented any one person besides himself from possessing too much control over the security forces. The cost was poor coordination and reduced effectiveness against what was still a small communist insurgency. What was needed was a single commander with the authority to direct the counterinsurgency effort as in Greece and the Philippines, but this sort of

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[33] "109. Letter from the Chief of the MAAG-V (Williams) to the Assistant Secretary of State for National Defense of the Republic of Vietnam (Dung)," February 29, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, 1:908–13.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Williams, "Recommendations for ARVN," 5.

[36] Ibid., 1; James Lawton Collins, *The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950-1972* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1975), 19, http://www.history.army.mil/books/Vietnam/devtrainrvn/index.htm. At any one time, Diem had over forty military commanders reporting directly to him: the province chiefs, chief of the Joint General Staff, corps commanders, field command, and the military region commanders.

[37] Williams, "Recommendations for ARVN."

authority was not forthcoming. It would be up to Williams's replacement to change the course of the war, but the events of the second half of 1960 would further cement Diem's obstinacy with respect to personal loyalty and centralizing power.

In August 1960 Williams's long tenure in Vietnam came to an end, and Lieutenant General Lionel McGarr replaced him. MAAG records from McGarr's tenure are sparse, although he authored a number of insightful reports emphasizing the need to refocus the ARVN and the MAAG away from defending against a conventional invasion toward addressing the growing insurgency threat. From a strictly resume-based assessment, McGarr seemed a particularly good fit for the position of MAAG Chief. He had been an infantry regiment commander in the Second World War, an assistant division commander in the Korean War, and commandant of the Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC). During his latter assignment, the CGSC prepared a staff study that analyzed the Vietnam problem and counterinsurgency and made recommendations that would inform the MAAG's shift in focus during McGarr's time as MAAG Chief. Although General Williams had already begun working on a re-examination of the strategy in Vietnam, the MAAG's Counterinsurgency Plan (CIP) would be implemented on McGarr's watch, and it corresponded with President John F. Kennedy's thoughts on combating communism. True to his ideals about an independent Vietnam, however, President Diem continued to implement his own reforms.

C. DIEM'S EFFORTS TO STABILIZE THE SOUTH

Ngo Dinh Diem may forever remain an enigmatic figure, at least in Western eyes. Never married, monastic in his personal habits, Catholic in a sea of Buddhists, and devoted to Vietnam, he has been judged an effective ruler by historians such as Mark Moyar, and by others as having maintained his power due only to American support.[38] Having solidified his power, Diem set about transforming his country. One of his most serious challenges was his lack of competent officials since the French had dominated the government administration. Unlike in Korea where the U.S. occupation force gradually turned over government administration to trained Korean replacements, the sullen French

[38] Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, xiv.

left the Vietnamese wholly incapable of running their own country.[39] Thus, Diem had little choice but to rely on those he knew and trusted, an action toward which he was already inclined. A lack of other competent Vietnamese gave him an excuse to maintain this attitude or rely on Americans or holdovers from the French regime, which made him look less connected to the Vietnamese he supposedly served.[40] Diem's concern was to reform South Vietnamese society into a modern, independent country while simultaneously warding off communist influence and infiltration. His policy combined classic counterinsurgency techniques of economic reform and population control with a military response to attempt to separate the peasants from VC elements trying to recruit them.

To address peasant grievances and compare favorably to what was happening in the North under Ho, Diem initiated land reform in the South. He lowered rent payments in 1955, and in 1956 he limited landowners to owning no more than 300 acres, and allowed peasants to buy land on credit.[41] The effect of this reform was minimal. After six months, only 2,000 peasant families had availed themselves of 12,000 acres total.[42] Furthermore, in many areas, the Viet Minh had seized land during the French War and signed it over to the local southern peasants who now considered it theirs. In many cases, the Government of Vietnam (GVN) simply reclaimed such land and offered it for sale to the same peasants.[43] From the peasants' perspective, such treatment was not land reform, merely corruption in a new form. Diem's sincerity toward real land reform as a means of countering the communists is a matter of debate. Edward Miller has argued that Diem

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[39] Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, 71–72.

[40] Frank Scotton, a U.S. Information Agency officer who served in Vietnam, recounts his boss's, Everett Bumgardner, assessment of Diem "as a man of good character but aloof personality and so disconnected that on assumption of the prime ministry (and later the presidency), he relied on the same civil service clerks, constabulary, and police personnel that previously served French masters." Frank Scotton, *Uphill Battle: Reflections on Viet Nam Counterinsurgency*, Modern Southeast Asia Series (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2014), 6.

[41] CIA, "Memo For Director of Central Intelligence, Subject: Agrarian Reform and Internal Security in South Vietnam," CIA (April 30, 1957), 3, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0001167501.pdf.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Webb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Prelude to the War in Vietnam, 1954-1959*, 141–42. Duiker writes that "two years after the program had been put in operation, less than 10 percent of the eligible peasants in South Vietnam had received land." Duiker, *Communist Road to Power*, 181–82.

was more interested in moving people to otherwise unused land, rather than redistributing the land in the areas where they already lived.[44] In this fashion, Diem drew on his own extensive knowledge of Ramon Magsaysay's EDCOR program in the Philippines, which used unoccupied land to control population density and build a spirit of accomplishment among the population. By relocating loyal South Vietnamese and giving them land, Diem hoped to create a "human wall in the depopulated area near the three frontiers [Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam]."[45] Much of Diem's attitude toward his people revolved around a philosophy of Personalism that Diem and his brother bent to their needs. In short, Personalism was a mix between benevolent dictatorship and limited democracy that respected the rights of the individual while still expecting certain sacrifices on behalf of the community as the government saw fit. It was meant to be Diem's counter to North Vietnamese communism, but, like the implementation of land reform and relocation efforts, it does not appear that Diem's government was ever able to convince the peasant masses of the benefits of his many ideas.[46]

French precedents at land reclamation and relocation prior to and during the Second World War and Diem's own small-scale relocation efforts led to Diem's idea for "agrovilles." These were basically miniature cities in the Mekong Delta with urban amenities and strong defenses but required the free labor of villagers and forced relocation that resulted in long transits between field and home for the peasants living

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[44] Miller writes that Diem was willing to break up the landholdings of his largest landowners but was loath to redistribute from his middle-class landowners to the poorest peasants. Edward Garvey Miller, *Misalliance: Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 161–62. In contrast, the Communists enacted an aggressive land reform program that appealed to the poorest classes but often persecuted even modest landowners. Logevall, *Embers of War*, 632; Bernard B. Fall, *Last Reflections On a War* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 94.

[45] "Memorandum of a Conversation," May 9, 1957, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vietnam*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1985), 801, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS195557v01.

[46] Personalism originated in France in the 1930s by the philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, who attempted to find a balance between Marxist totalitarianism and the excesses of capitalism that had contributed to the Great Depression. Ngo Dinh Nhu brought it back from his studies abroad and tried to implement it in Vietnamese culture. Miller, *Misalliance*, 43-46. For more explanation on the philosophy of Personalism as Americans at the time understood it, see "36. Letter from the Ambassador in Vietnam (Durbrow) to the Director of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs (Kocher)," October 10, 1958, *FRUS 1958-1960*, 411-18; "45. Despatch from the Ambassador in Vietnam (Durbrow) to the Department of State, Subject: Notes and Comments on 'Personalism' in Viet-Nam," December 22, 1958, ibid., 464-74.

there.[47] These factors resulted in peasant hostility to the point that the program was finally abandoned, but it was not the end of Diem's resettlement plan. Informed by British experiences in Malaya and those of the French in Algeria, Diem and his brother Nhu conceived of the Strategic Hamlet Program.[48] Less ambitious in its local impact—it focused more on improving the defensive measures of existing hamlets rather than relocating large populations into miniature cities—it nevertheless aimed to transform most of South Vietnam's 16,000 hamlets in a two-year period, a herculean task.[49] In September 1961 the British established the British Advisory Mission to Vietnam (BRIAM), which brought Robert Thompson and a group of counterinsurgency experts with experience in the Malayan Emergency to advise Diem. During this time of mounting guerrilla activity in South Vietnam, which American-trained ARVN forces seemed incapable of quelling, the introduction of proven ideas seemed reasonable.[50]

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[47] The French had tried to recreate in the Mekong Delta the "casiers" system of dikes, canals, and villages present in the Red River Delta. Two of these "casiers tonkinois" were built from 1943-1946, but it remained an experimental project. David Biggs, *Quagmire: Nation Building and Nature in the Mekong Delta* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 119-25. "169. Despatch from the Ambassador in Vietnam (Durbrow) to the Department of State, Subject: GVN Agroville Program," June 6, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, 1:1384–93; "112. Despatch from the Ambassador in Vietnam (Durbrow) to the Department of State," March 7, 1960, ibid., 1:935. The Cai San project, built in 1956 in the Mekong Delta, was a precursor to agrovilles that saw the relocation of 40,000 mostly Catholic refugees from the North. Despite some early problems, it became a successful resettlement project. Biggs, *Quagmire*, 161-69. To illustrate the attachment that some peasants had to their land, an ARVN officer, Phan Xuan Sinh, recounts a story in which he evacuated an old Vietnamese couple from a free-fire zone and burned their house down to prevent their return. A few weeks later, the couple had returned and rebuilt their house because their ancestors were buried there and it was their land. Christian G. Appy, ed., *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides* (New York: Viking, 2003), 26; Miller, *Misalliance*, 171–84.

[48] The Ngo brothers were well aware of the differences between the situations in Vietnam and Malaya concerning the usefulness of the strategic hamlets. "146. Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense's Deputy Assistant for Special Operations (Lansdale) to the Secretary to the General Staff of the United States Army (Bonesteel)," April 25, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, 1:1201–2; As Edward Miller points out, the strategic hamlet program was based more on Roger Trinquier's writings about Algeria. Miller, *Misalliance*, 232–34.

[49] Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, 159.

[50] The difference between the situation in Vietnam and that of Malaya was significant. In Malaya, the Communists were an ethnic minority situated on an easily isolated peninsula and lacked a friendly bordering country that could provide them with supplies. Thus, they were easily distinguishable, and population control efforts separated the insurgents from their internal support. Furthermore, the British had complete authority over the situation, which allowed them to implement their plans at will.

The number of hamlets increased rapidly, from 2,559 in July 1962 to 8,095 in August 1963.[51] This number compares to the 500 hamlets created over three years to control the Malayan situation.[52] As Robert Thompson describes with respect to Vietnam's strategic hamlets, "no attention was paid to their purpose; their creation became the purpose in itself."[53] The strategic hamlets suffered from many of the same problems as the agrovilles, including poor planning, rapid expansion, poor site selection, corruption among government officials, and a failure to adequately prepare and explain their purpose to the population.[54] Yet it still proved successful in certain areas of the country.[55] The Strategic Hamlet Program was initially problematic for the Communists since it limited their access to the population.[56] In the end, however, the speed and disorganization of the program meant that the RVNAF could not establish control over hamlets established in the VC-controlled areas, nor adequately defend those on the fringes.[57]

These relocation and defensive efforts, while positively affecting the economy, peasant livelihood, and security in some areas, appeared to have an overall short-term

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[51] Robert G. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), 138.

[52] Ibid., 141.

[53] Ibid.

[54] At times, strategic hamlets were constructed with no reflection on those being regrouped. For example, Robert Bayless, a U.S. advisor with the 7th Regiment in 1963, recounts a story in which two VC-friendly villages were scheduled to be regrouped into a hamlet and left in the middle of VC-controlled territory. The villagers were forced to work on the hamlet that they were told was for their protection, but these villagers were in league with the VC and had no interest in the ARVN's protection. Furthermore, they received no pay for their work, so they viewed it virtually as involuntary slave labor. The hamlet was never satisfactorily completed and, regardless, would have been a VC-controlled hamlet in the middle of VC-controlled territory. Ibid., 130–38; Robert M. Bayless, *Vietnam: Victory Was Never an Option* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 119–24; Robert M. Bayless, "The Advisors in Vietnam Who Served Before the Thousands Died, Part 1," Texas Tech Virtual Vietnam Archive, *Texas Tech University* (1963), 27–28, 34–36, http://www.virtual.vietnam.ttu.edu/cgi-bin/starfetch.exe?UJeYZHyjCfq1ZN7cSKmFseIxC@lRTs2wY63SPNCr@O@7AE2HQBhCWtkdwIH2dUzUH0nqwacHz4JrJrfxuP0eTp1LJ8u.hFWcy0FH.5Vxmm0/5050101002a.pdf; Phillipps, *Why Vietnam Matters*, 113-15.

[55] Ibid., 111-13.

[56] MHIV, *Victory in Vietnam*, 109; William Egan Colby and James McCargar, *Lost Victory: A Firsthand Account of America's Sixteen-Year Involvement in Vietnam* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989), 102.

[57] Bernard Fall estimates that "out of 8500 strategic hamlets, about 1400 survived the effort." Fall, *Last Reflections*, 222.

negative impact on the average peasant's view of the Saigon government. Combined with charges of corruption, the imprisonment of political dissenters, and the centralization of power among a small group of cronies, Diem's government was alienating the very people upon whom he depended for support. This sentiment passed to the RVNAF, whose leaders were pushed aside if they lacked the required political connections or were ignored as Diem conducted his anti-communist campaign through multiple channels to bypass their authority. This autocratic personality trait did not sit well with many Americans either, particularly Ambassador Durbrow, who, while continuing to work with Diem, was nevertheless critical of his regime and methods.[58] A group of Vietnamese political opponents summed up these complaints in the Caravelle Manifesto in April 1960. Along with addressing Diem's policies and administration, it rebuked him for his politicization of the military leadership and urged its complete reorganization to eliminate "clannishness and party obedience."[59] Diem, as might be expected, dismissed the substance of the manifesto, although he did retaliate later against its authors.[60] This was the environment in which General McGarr entered and tried a revised advisory hand to repair South Vietnam's military and security situation.

D. CONVENTIONAL COUNTERINSURGENCY

General Lionel C. McGarr assumed command as MAAG Chief on 1 September 1960 and lost no time addressing the security threat that the CIA had just described in August as deteriorating and if not reversed would "almost certainly in time cause the

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[58] William J. Duiker, *U.S. Containment Policy and the Conflict in Indochina* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 230–32; Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, 76.

[59] In addition, the manifesto criticized Diem's attempts at democratic government reform, such as a constitution, a national assembly, and elections as items done for show rather than real reform. The members criticized his imprisonment of political enemies, appointment of predatory civil servants, suppression of the press, corruption, and cronyism. Finally, they group lamented his alienation of the religious sects, who had previously been staunchly anti-communist, to the point that they were supporting Communists. U.S. Department of Defense, *The Pentagon Papers; the Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam*, The Senator Gravel ed, vol. 1 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 316–21.

[60] Anderson, *Trapped by Success,* 184.

collapse of Diem's regime."[61] On 4 September, McGarr presented his initial plan to improve the ARVN's ability to address the threat. He rightly noted the importance of "military, political, economic, psychological and sociological matters" to the country's stability and echoed Williams's long-standing critiques of the RVNAF's weaknesses.[62] These weaknesses were the Civil Guard's and ARVN's ineffectiveness, the latter of which McGarr attributed to its failure to train adequately. Like Williams, he recommended equipping the CG similarly to the ARVN, training it in anti-guerrilla techniques, and placing it under the Vietnamese Department of Defense. Unlike Williams, McGarr supported the Ranger force, seeing it as a deep reconnaissance asset. Finally, he called for an overall ARVN increase from the current 150,000 to 170,000 troops and additional helicopter assets. McGarr saved the most substantive comments for recommendations on actions that President Diem should take at the behest of the U.S. Secretary of State, which were larger government reforms similar to those laid out by the Caravelle Group in April.[63]

Even though the August 1960 CIA report had predicted that Diem's government was in no immediate danger, on 11 November 1960, ARVN paratroopers surrounded his palace and called on him to reform his government.[64] The coup leaders' demands were essentially the same as those laid down in the Caravelle Manifesto seven months earlier. In a disingenuous maneuver to buy time, the Ngo brothers agreed to the rebels' demands while they coordinated with nearby loyal units to move to the capital. These units included armor, and within 36 hours, the coup was over. The Ngos were still in charge, and Diem wasted no time rescinding any agreement to reform.[65] Throughout the affair, both Durbrow and McGarr worked with the coup plotters to calm the situation and

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[61] CIA, "Special National Intelligence Estimate 63.1-60 Short-Term Trends in South Vietnam," CIA (August 23, 1960), 1, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0001166419.pdf.

[62] "190. Paper Prepared by the MAAG-V, Subject: Actions to Strengthen Stability of Government of Vietnam," September 4, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, 1:1545.

[63] "190. Paper Prepared by the MAAG-V, Subject: Actions to Strengthen Stability of Government of Vietnam," September 4, 1960, ibid., 1:1544–59.

[64] CIA, "SNIE 63.1-60."

[65] Jack Schulimson, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, Part 1* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011), 27.

express their support for Diem and an anti-communist South Vietnam. Despite their efforts, Diem did not feel he received adequate U.S. support during the coup hours, particularly from Ambassador Durbrow.[66] As a result, Durbrow's last months in Vietnam were ineffectual.

Unlike Williams, McGarr was more sympathetic to the idea that guerrilla warfare was a separate and distinct type of warfare that required a different approach than what had been the focus to that point. McGarr's change of direction coincided with a renewed look in Washington at ways to combat the Vietnamese insurgency that resulted in a joint State-Department of Defense cable to Ambassador Durbrow in October 1960 directing him to draft a comprehensive plan to assist the GVN to defeat the insurgency.[67] For his part, McGarr had already formulated many of his thoughts on what the MAAG needed to accomplish for success in Vietnam. He delivered these thoughts to his advisors in a missive titled "Implementing Actions for Anti-Guerrilla Operations." Its goals were genuine, but as a reflection of the Vietnam situation, it was inadequate in its prescription. It begins with a list of limitations that, by themselves, would spell defeat. For example, "you can assume that political and economic reforms presently getting under way will not move rapidly enough to be felt for some time. . . . the population will continue to be terrorized, converted, or cajoled into assisting the VC."[68] His plan depended almost entirely on unifying the chain of command and eliminating leadership redundancy, goals that Williams had sought in vain for his five years as MAAG chief.[69] It was becoming more and more clear that drastic measures were necessary, such as a U.S.-led combined staff with operational control of forces and the authority to remove incompetent or corrupt officers. Unlike the situation in Korea in 1950, Vietnam was a slow-building fire

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[66] "256. Memorandum from the Officer in Charge of Vietnam Affairs (Wood) to the Director of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs (Anderson)," December 2, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, 1:1933.

[67] "206. Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Embassy in Vietnam," October 19, 1960, ibid., 1:1679–81.

[68] Lionel C. McGarr, "Memorandum from Lieutenant General Lionel C. McGarr to MAAG Advisors, Subject: Implementing Actions for Anti-Guerrilla Operations," November 15, 1960, 3, Entry 12, Box 21, MAAG-V/AGD, SCGR: 1950-1961, 250/6 Military Assistance Planning and Programming Handbook 1960 THRU 250/17 MAAG VN Log Est 32-59 1960, RG 472, NACP.

[69] McGarr, "Anti-Guerrilla Operations."

that did not lend itself to emergency measures. Even at its height, the Americans would not have the authority to make the drastic changes the ARVN required to win.

McGarr then lists the strengths and weaknesses of guerrillas, in terms generally favorable to the Viet Cong. For example, he notes "lack of coordinated firepower" as a weakness for the VC, but dismisses it since ambush and withdrawal tactics do not require additional firepower.[70] McGarr's plan involved a number of fanciful and mutually contradictory concepts, such as populating the entire length of the border with loyal Vietnamese, or conversely, removing the entire population along the border to create a five-to-ten mile wide free fire zone in which anyone wandering through could be targeted and killed. He does go on to prescribe some important tactical improvements that the MAAG could reasonably affect, such as improving tactical air control and pushing counterparts to conduct more night operations. About the only thing he really gets right is his assessment of the guerrilla when he writes, "to understand the success of Partisan-Guerrilla Warfare, we must go to the very basis—the wellspring of its power. This is MOTIVATION—the imbuing of a people and a cause with a sense of PURPOSE!"[71]

January 1961 brought Edward Lansdale back to Vietnam to assess the situation at the same time that the Saigon Embassy's Counterinsurgency Plan (CIP) arrived for Washington's review. Drafted apparently without any GVN involvement, the majority of its most critical recommendations depended on the GVN to perform them. These recommendations meant significant changes in current GVN organizations and processes. In summary, the recommendations were largely the same as those made many times before to strengthen popular support.[72] In the military realm, it concurred with McGarr's 20,000-man increase in the ARVN and prescribed vague measures like "take

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[70] McGarr, "Anti-Guerrilla Operations," 5.

[71] Lionel C. McGarr, "Anti-Guerrilla Guerrilla," November 10, 1960, Entry 12, Box 21, MAAG-V/AGD, SCGR: 1950-1961, 250/6 Military Assistance Planning and Programming Handbook 1960 THRU 250/17 MAAG VN Log Est 32-59 1960, RG 472, NACP.

[72] The plan called for the GVN to "suppress and defeat disruptive Communist activities in South Vietnam and concurrently maintain a capability to meet overt aggression, establish and maintain political and economic control and stability, interdict aid flowing to insurgents across Vietnamese borders." "1. Paper Prepared by the Country Team Staff Committee, Subject: Basic Counterinsurgency Plan for Viet-Nam," January 4, 1960, *FRUS, 1961-1963, Vietnam, 1961*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1988), 77–78, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v01.

extraordinary action starting at [the] highest levels of government and extending to the lowest political subdivision (the village) to establish and maintain internal security."[73] Thus, absent any influence on the real problems plaguing the ARVN, the plan offered no innovative solutions.

As Eisenhower turned over the presidency to John F. Kennedy, he emphasized the deteriorating situation in Laos and did not mention the events in Vietnam.[74] Kennedy, who had made lofty promises to support allies in his inaugural address, nevertheless reviewed the situation in Vietnam, with Lansdale in attendance, in January 1961. Asked for his opinion following his recent visit, Lansdale pointed out three criteria for success:

> First, the Americans in Viet-Nam must themselves be infused with high morale and a will to win, and they must get close to the Vietnamese; secondly, the Vietnamese must, in this setting, be moved to act with vigor and confidence; third, Diem must be persuaded to let the opposition coalesce in some legitimate form rather than concentrate on the task of killing him.[75]

Lansdale did not elaborate on the feasibility of the second and third criteria, which were clearly the most important and were issues that Lansdale himself had proven unable to affect. The question was not what needed to happen but rather how to make it happen. This critical point was either ignored or simply not considered by the others in the room. In the ensuing weeks, Kennedy considered replacing Durbrow with Lansdale but was ultimately dissuaded.[76] Anxious to attack the problem despite a lack of GVN support and his own concerns about "whether the situation [in Vietnam] was not basically one of politics and morale," Kennedy approved the CIP in February 1961.[77] An early champion for all things special, including Army Special Forces and Navy SEALs, Kennedy would

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[73] "1. Paper Prepared by the Country Team Staff Committee, Subject: Basic Counterinsurgency Plan for Viet-Nam," January 4, 1960, ibid., 1:62–90.

[74] Karnow, *Vietnam,* 264.

[75] "4. Memorandum from the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)," January 30, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, 1988, 1:103.

[76] Schulimson, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, Part 1*, 36.

[77] "4. Memorandum from the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)," January 30, 1961, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS 1961-1963*, 1988, 1:101.

use Vietnam as the testing ground for a revamped strategy of containing communism through surreptitious and inexpensive means.[78] When presented with the CIP, Diem was hesitant to commit, which was likely due to the actions the plan required him to take. What followed was a weeks-long disagreement between McGarr and Durbrow over the preferred method to persuade Diem to support the CIP, with Durbrow supporting coercion and McGarr recommending persuasion.[79] At about this time, the CIA estimated that Viet Cong strength in the South had reached 8,000–10,000 and that the Communists controlled "one-half of the entire rural region south and southwest of Saigon." Over 2,600 civilians and government officials were assassinated in 1960.[80] The McGarr-Durbrow disagreement—never truly resolved—coincided with the approval of Durbrow's replacement, Ambassador Frederick Nolting, who assumed his post on 10 May 1961.

While the administration was contemplating action in Vietnam, it was simultaneously coping with the Bay of Pigs disaster and the crisis in Laos that Eisenhower had warned about. These events, along with the increasingly dire intelligence reports, likely contributed to a growing sense of urgency within the Kennedy administration, which formed a Presidential Task Force on Vietnam and began considering the introduction of U.S. combat forces.[81] The U.S. takeover of the Vietnam problem had begun in earnest. As a result of this renewed emphasis on Vietnam, in April 1961 Kennedy approved a 100-man increase in the MAAG to 785, an ARVN increase to 170,000, and a Civil Guard increase to 68,000.[82] He took these steps despite his special counsel's, Ted Sorensen, noting the day before in reference to South Vietnam, that "there is no clearer example of a country that cannot be saved unless it saves itself-through

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[78] Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History, vol. 2* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc., 2002), 750; Francis J. Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces: 1961-1971*, Vietnam Studies (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2004), 5–6.

[79] Spector, *Advice and Support,* 367–68.

[80] CIA, "National Intelligence Estimate 50-61: Outlook in Mainland Southeast Asia," CIA (March 28, 1961), 7, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0001166395.pdf.

[81] United States, *The Pentagon Papers; the Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam*, The Senator Gravel ed., vol. 2 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 48–49.

[82] Ibid., 2:38–39.

increased popular support; governmental, economic and military reforms and reorganizations; and the encouragement of new political leaders."[83]

Kennedy reinforced his decision by sending Vice President Johnson to Vietnam in May 1961, to personally deliver Kennedy's promise of support against the Communists. Kennedy further considered the deployment of 400 Special Forces soldiers to train their counterparts and an additional ARVN expansion to 200,000.[84] While these latter moves were linked to the ongoing problems in Laos, Kennedy was nevertheless committing to greater support without any indication from Diem that he would take the necessary steps in the CIP, which Kennedy himself had raised in January. Furthermore, in May 1961 McGarr reported that Diem continued to balk at "a single chain of command, a central intelligence organization, and economic and political reforms," all critical elements for military success.[85]

Despite McGarr's initial appearance as the perfect man to assist South Vietnam in its counterinsurgency effort, he was not measuring up to the demands of the job and seemed more suited to drafting his various missives, rather than leading the advisory effort. As his deputy recounts, McGarr began traveling around the country shortly after his arrival to visit all the units that the MAAG was advising, but he never completed the tour. He gradually became reclusive and was absent from the headquarters for days at a time. Instead, he sent his staff command guidance in the form of often unintelligible tapes, recorded in his quarters.[86] He further neglected his duties with the country team, often sending his deputy to their meetings, instead of going himself even when he was in Saigon.[87] Although there are no specific instances of drastic errors as a result of his detached command presence, if the remarks of one of his subordinates is remotely true,

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[83] "37. Memorandum from the President's Special Counsel (Sorensen) to the President," April 28, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, 1:297–99.

[84] United States, *Pentagon Papers, Vol. 2*, 2:50.

[85] "41. Telegram from the Chief MAAG-V (McGarr) to the CINC, Pacific (Felt)," May 6, 1961, U.S. Department of State, *FRUS 1961-1963*, 1988, 1:346.

[86] Major General John F. Ruggles, Interview by Ronald Spector, February 27, 1980, 6–7, Entry 1089, Box 2, Spector Files, RG 319, NACP.

[87] Ibid., 8.

the efficacy of the MAAG was surely reduced during his time in command.[88] Either way, it appears that at least as early as November 1961, Washington had caught on to his weakness as a commander and began searching for a replacement.[89]

As Washington debated its way forward, the MAAG advisors continued their work against a steadily increasing VC force. In August the CIA estimated that the VC had "increased their hard-core strength from an estimated 4,000 in April 1960 to more than 12,000 by mid-1961."[90] They reflected this strength in September when a 1,000-man regular VC force, well equipped and in uniforms, attacked two ARVN outposts 50 kilometers north of Kontum in the Central Highlands. The ARVN reported 100 VC dead versus 19 ARVN.[91] Later reports from the advisors conflicted with the ARVN numbers, noting 92 dead and 77 missing.[92] The VC followed this operation with the seizure of the provincial capital of Phuoc Thanh and the public execution of the province chief and his assistant.[93] The cynic might argue that the MAAG advisors had not properly trained their counterparts according to McGarr's anti-guerrilla concepts, but perhaps there was a more fundamental problem that had not been addressed.

McGarr's "First Twelve Month Report" reflected his optimism about what the MAAG had been able to accomplish. It had taken over six months for his recommended 20,000-man increase of the RVNAF to be approved, but that was quickly followed by an additional 30,000 in conjunction with Johnson's visit. Meanwhile, the November 1960 coup, the situation in Laos, and the new administration served to delay attention on other

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[88] In an interview, Colonel Robb referred to him as "Splithead McGarr" and "one of the stupidest men I've ever worked with." Robb, Robb Interview, 1, 9.

[89] "253. Memorandum from the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to the President," November 15, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, 1988, 1:1724; "311. Memorandum from the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the President," December 6, 1961, ibid., 1:2047–48.

[90] CIA, "National Intelligence Estimate 14.3/53-61, Prospects for North and South Vietnam," CIA (August 15, 1961), 10, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0001166422.pdf.

[91] "127. Telegram from the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State," September 5, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, 1988, 1:882.

[92] Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, 134.

[93] "135. Telegram from the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State," September 20, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, 1988, 1:916.

necessary changes. He claimed to have streamlined the chain of command and ensured that Field Command, the position between the Joint General Staff and the army corps, "became the overall tactical headquarters . . . charged with the coordination and direction of all, countrywide, counter-insurgency operations."[94] Field Command, created in 1959 before McGarr arrived, ended up being a largely ceremonial post to appease U.S. demands rather than the type of counterinsurgency czar position that Magsaysay had held in the Philippines, and General Alexander Papagos in Greece. Other successes included better coordination between different military branches during operations, improved intelligence capability, and a successful national presidential election that saw Diem reelected without significant communist interference.[95] Regardless, the Kennedy administration had other plans for providing support to South Vietnam. The MAAG's days as an independent, limited support element to Diem's regime were soon coming to an end.

In October 1961 President Kennedy sent General Maxwell Taylor to Vietnam to assess the Viet Cong threat and the current U.S. and GVN efforts to combat it. In his report from the mission, General Taylor proposed "a shift in the American relation to the Vietnamese effort from advice to limited partnership."[96] Taylor explained that the limited partnership "requires change in the charter, the spirit, and the organization of the MAAG in South Vietnam. It must be shifted from an advisory group to something nearer—but not quite—an operational headquarters in a theater of war. The objective of this shift is clear. The U.S. should become a limited partner in the war, avoiding formalized advice on the one hand, trying to run the war, on the other."[97] Taylor proposed this nebulous relationship alongside a menu of recommendations including sending 8,000 combat

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[94] MAAG-V, "First Twelve Month Report of Chief MAAG-V," September 1, 1961, 10, Entry 12, Box 25, USFSEA, 1950-1975, MAAG-V/AGD, SCGR: 1950-1961, 250/16 MAAG VN Log Est. 32-59 1961 THRU 285 (220/8) Facilities 1961, RG 472, NACP.

[95] MAAG-V, "First Twelve Month Report of Chief MAAG-V."

[96] "210. Letter from the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the President," November 3, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, 1988, 1:1424.

[97] Ibid., 1:1434.

troops as a symbol of U.S. commitment, increasing the MAAG to 2,400 personnel, and sending combat support assets like helicopters and light aviation assets.[98]

Taylor's mission report tacitly admitted that all attempts to advise the highest echelons of Diem's government had failed. It proposed a new relationship that was poorly defined, not agreed upon by the host nation, and emphasized a bottom-up approach to advising that presumably would affect the fighting more directly by placing advisors with battalions and province chiefs. The mindset was that the advisors would succeed at the lower levels and that this success would bubble up to the higher levels to solve the RVNAF's fundamental problems. This thought process was contrary to the experiences of the MAAG's predecessors in Greece, Korea, and the Philippines. Van Fleet's forceful personality in Greece and Korea, in addition to the operational control the U.S. enjoyed over Korean forces in the latter case, permeated the highest levels of the military organizations in those countries. Important tactical events and training accomplishments depended on advisors at the lowest levels only after the approval and important changes came at the top. Lansdale's experience with Magsaysay in the Philippines was merely one of massaging ideas or acting as an objective sounding board for relatively minor decisions that Magsaysay was considering. At no time did Lansdale have to coerce Magsaysay to make drastic reforms in how he prosecuted the war. A solution to this problem eluded those in Washington who debated what to implement from Taylor's mission report.

Lansdale, as a member of the mission, recommended a radical shift in U.S. practices. He proposed for example, declaring sub-limited war, employing mobile U.S. civilian-military teams to pacify the villages, and embedding U.S. counterparts in the GVN who "would give the firm guidance of a friend to the Vietnamese official in that position," yet remain "very much in the background and encouraging Vietnamese initiative."[99] These ideas did not receive much follow-on discussion, perhaps because they were so fanciful. Lansdale, having been considered on numerous occasions as a

[98] "213. Memorandum from the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson) to the Secretary of State," November 5, 1961, ibid., 1:1541.

[99] "210. Letter from the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the President," November 3, 1961, ibid., 1:Appendix G.

special envoy and even ambassador to Vietnam, was again bandied about for a similar position, but remained at the Pentagon.[100] It is difficult to imagine him changing Diem's mind on the issues Diem felt most strongly about. During his time in Vietnam in the mid-1950s, Lansdale supported Diem's efforts and provided advice on directions Diem had already decided to go. By Lansdale's own admission, Diem had not heeded his advice to win the 1955 election by a solid majority, rather than the 98 percent that Diem manufactured, which was a strictly prestige-based decision.[101] There is no reason to believe that Diem would have listened to Lansdale on matters that threatened his survival.

Nevertheless, with little precedent or reflection on how to accomplish objectives so far unrealized with similar methods, the president signed National Security Action Memorandum 111, which offered additional helicopters and airplanes, intelligence assets, patrol boats, advisors, and economic aid—but no U.S. combat formations—to South Vietnam. In exchange, it called on Diem again to broaden his government's base of support and reform the military. Most significantly for the MAAG, it authorized a new organization tasked with the vague mission, "to carry out the other increased responsibilities which accrue to the U.S. military authorities under these recommendations."[102] With the Communists claiming 100,000 village-level guerrillas, 24,500 regional-level troops, and approximately 5,000 main force troops at the end of 1961, the new command would need to innovate to regain the initiative.[103] During this period of debate, Ambassador Nolting noted in a telegram that the French had 3,500 trainers in place during their war in Vietnam. Nolting made this note in anticipation of having to justify an increase in troops to the ICC, presumably without considering that, ten years earlier, the French had 3,500 trainers, led most of the Vietnamese units, and still lost to the Communists. The winners of the debate in Washington seemed to believe that

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[100] In his report to the president, Taylor recommended sending Lansdale, but there was too much resistance, presumably from the ambassador in Saigon and others at the State Department. "210. Letter from the President's Military Representative (Taylor) to the President," November 3, 1961, ibid., 1:1431.

[101] Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars,* 333–34.

[102] "272. National Security Action Memorandum 111," November 22, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, 1:1882–86.

[103] MHIV, *Victory in Vietnam*, 83–84.

more advisors would produce a groundswell of success that would overcome the RVNAF's inherent weaknesses.

Kennedy himself seemed uneasy about the commitment that he was making to South Vietnam. Even though his advisors would now be at greater risk due to their closer proximity to danger at the battalion level, he made sure to emphasize, during final discussions on MACV's establishment, "the importance of playing down the number of U.S. military personnel involved in Vietnam and that the U.S. military role there was for advice, training and support of the Vietnamese Armed Forces and not combat."[104] This attitude continued in the administration's failure to authorize combat awards for advisors until 1963, despite the increasing number of U.S. deaths: 16 in 1961 and 53 in 1962.[105] Furthermore, once large U.S. forces arrived in 1965, the advisor positions fell behind combat units for priority and prestige, and promotions were affected accordingly.[106] Implying that advisors in Vietnam were not in combat was a stain on Kennedy's integrity, and a politically expedient, veiled falsehood of a kind that continues to this day.

To oversee the expanded U.S. mission in Vietnam, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara directed the creation of a new command, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), under General Paul Harkins. The MAAG continued to exist as a separate command under MACV and received a new commander in March 1961, Major General Charles Timmes, who was an enthusiastic and engaged commander compared to McGarr.[107] The two commands overlapped for the next two years since MACV's mission focused on what the MAAG was already doing—advising—and coordinating support from an increasing number of airlift and intelligence platforms. This situation was new ground for advice and support. In Greece, the Greeks employed the majority of the

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[104] "2. Memorandum for the Record of a Meeting with President Kennedy," January 3, 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963, Vietnam, 1962*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1990), 93, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v02.

[105] "Statistical Information about Fatal Casualties of the Vietnam War," Defense Casualty Analysis System, *United States National Archives,* (Accessed August 31, 2015), http://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics.html.

[106] Jeffrey J. Clarke, *Advice and Support : The Final Years, 1965-1973 /* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1988), 511, http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/091/91-3/index.html.

[107] Bayless, *Vietnam: Victory Was Never an Option*, 74–75.

aircraft and other equipment sent to assist them, which kept the advisory mission small. In Korea, the massive U.S. infusion of men and materiel created a natural separation that allowed the MAAG to continue its separate duties. In Vietnam, the support assets were relatively minor—two companies of helicopters, intelligence assets, and light aircraft. With a four-star general in charge, at least four other generals on the staff, and an implied mandate not to copy McGarr's wait-and-see approach to the South Vietnamese insurgency MACV had to at least appear very busy and make progress.[108] It found itself almost immediately supporting President Diem's Strategic Hamlet Program, which was already in motion as it worked on a Comprehensive Plan for South Vietnam. This plan, issued on 19 January 1963, called for an even larger expansion of the ARVN, CG, and SDC forces to 231,000, 101,000, and 122,000, respectively. In addition, the plan prescribed an expansion of the Civilian Irregular Defense Group Program—U.S. Special Forces-trained security elements consisting of disenfranchised Vietnamese minority groups—to 116,000.[109]

The new plan also readdressed the ARVN chain of command problem, but it proved to be a final effort in futility. ARVN Field Command, established ostensibly to centralize the war-making effort, never actually wielded that authority. MACV's recommended reorganization in November 1962 eliminated Field Command and established four corps zones as the primary organizations responsible for security in their zones.[110] The reorganization did little to address any of the ARVN's fundamental problems such as favoritism, nor did it result in the removal of the recalcitrant generals known to be plotting to launch a coup. Conventional advice had met its limit in South Vietnam, and it is doubtful that a more intrusive method would have had better results.

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[108] Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967*, United States Army in Vietnam (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2006), 48. For more on frustration with McGarr, see Schulimson, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, Part 1*, 164–65.

[109] The most common group organized into the CIDGs was the Montagnards of the Central Highlands. "18. Memorandum from the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Felt) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Subject: Comprehensive Plan for South Vietnam," January 25, 1963, *FRUS, 1961-1963, Vietnam, January-August 1963*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1991), 208, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03.

[110] Schulimson, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960-1968, Part 1*, 83.

In an attempt to better prepare its advisors for the expanded mission in Vietnam, the U.S. Army established the Military Assistance Training Advisor (MATA) Course in 1962. The intensive six-week course taught language, culture, tactics, and weapons to prepare better the deploying advisors. It was the first standardized course of its kind—thus providing far more training than advisors prior to Vietnam—but it could not teach its students how to change the culture of the force they were going to advise. As one advisor notes, "When I left Fort Bragg, I thought I had received a tutorial covering all I would need to know about the Vietnamese culture. I was wrong. Soon after beginning my assignment, I realized that I had received only an introduction, and a lot of what I was taught was incorrect or mythical."[111] Although the army made great efforts to improve advisor training during Vietnam, the end result of the advisory effort when compared to those in Greece, Korea, and the Philippines, where advisors had no training, show it to have had a negligible impact on the outcome in South Vietnam.[112]

Critics of the advisory effort, such as Andrew Krepinevich, note that in 1963 only 3,000 of the 16,000 U.S. personnel in Vietnam had received the MATA course training, implying that the advisory effort suffered from personnel who were not adequately trained.[113] Viewed in isolation, Krepinevich's observation has merit and would normally provide a starting point for assessing the roots of advisors' difficulty in aiding the ARVN to fight and win. What Krepinevich fails to note, however, is that by 1963, the U.S. forces in Vietnam supporting the ARVN had moved far beyond just advising. They were providing combat support functions like helicopter insertion, intelligence assessment, and aerial observation, which were inherently more force-heavy than advisors, who only numbered a few, at most three, per battalion.[114] The number of support personnel would balloon in the coming years to far outnumber the advisors. In response to Krepinevich's

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[111] This same advisor only managed to avoid sleeping with the wife of a Vietnamese man who had offered her to him by claiming Catholic beliefs forbid him from taking another man's wife, thus letting him down easily and allowing him to save face. Martin J. Dockery, *Lost in Translation: Vietnam, a Combat Advisor's Story* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 13, 102.

[112] Birtle, *Counterinsurgency Doctrine*, 258.

[113] Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 49.

[114] Martin Dockery estimates only 2,000 of 16,000 personnel in Vietnam in 1963 were "actually engaged in the field in combat roles." Dockery, *Lost in Translation*, 160.

argument, the majority of the actual advisors in Vietnam had attended some sort of advisor training prior to their arrival.

The influx of advisors to battalions and provinces had mixed results, which seemed to be far more dependent on the Vietnamese unit commander than the limited partnership model under which the advisor was supposedly operating.[115] Two general themes were apparent: advice at the lower levels was always acknowledged but accepted or ignored seemingly at random; and the higher the rank of the counterpart, the more he was concerned with the political impact of his decision. Robert Bayless, assigned to the ARVN 7th Regiment, describes his counterpart, Major Vu Ngoc Tuan, as a "fearless commander," "ferocious during battle," "friendly and considerate when working with the peasants" and states that he had "never met a finer soldier."[116] His unit was brave and accomplished in battle despite operating in the Iron Triangle, the VC infested area north of Saigon. The 7th Regiment was nevertheless one of the units that helped overthrow President Diem in November 1963.

In contrast, Lieutenant Colonel John Paul Vann's experience with his counterpart, General Huynh Van Cao, was characterized by extreme frustration and lost opportunities that culminated in the war's first large-scale military debacle (at least by the standards of the time). A fiery officer, Vann joined Cao's 7th Division as its senior advisor in March 1962 as a true believer that firepower and helicopter mobility, well-applied, could destroy the communist hold over the countryside to the benefit of South Vietnam's government and its American backers.[117] Over the next six months, Vann coached Cao and his division in the coordination of the new capabilities that came with MACV's establishment (e.g., helicopters and developing intelligence for missions). On numerous occasions, Vann and his staff developed good plans that caught the VC off guard and

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[115] The range of memoirs and anecdotes truly runs the gamut. David Donovan was the de facto district chief since his Vietnamese counterpart was ineffective. David Donovan, *Once a Warrior King: Memories of an Officer in Vietnam* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985); Kregg Jorgenson worked with a company commander who was afraid to leave the base. Kregg Jorgenson, "A Good Ambush," War Story, *VietnamGear.com* (May 28, 2005), http://www.vietnamgear.com/Article.aspx?Art=7.

[116] Bayless, *Vietnam: Victory Was Never an Option*, vi.

[117] David M Toczek, *The Battle of Ap Bac, Vietnam: They Did Everything but Learn from It* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 75; Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 66–68.

placed sizeable units in the position to be destroyed by Cao's forces. Cao used subterfuge to avoid giving the orders necessary to close-out the mission, thus achieving a number of half-victories, which infuriated Vann and allowed the Communists to adapt and fight another day.[118] Vann's effectiveness came to a halt in September 1962 when Cao's forces were caught in an ambush shortly after a helicopter insertion and suffered 18 personnel killed. The result was President Diem's personal admonishment of Cao for the casualties and an end to the productive operations. Vann surmised that Cao's caution during the earlier operations stemmed, indirectly, from Diem's fear of another coup. Diem was willing to entertain U.S.-initiated operations as long as they did not result in too many ARVN casualties; otherwise, Diem was confident in his counterinsurgency strategy. He had built his own De Lattre Line of strategic hamlets. With American artillery and airpower, perhaps he thought he could sit back and destroy the Communists as they threw themselves against it.[119]

Cao was promoted to corps command at the end of 1962, resulting in his chief of staff, the even less impressive Colonel Bui Dinh Dam, becoming the new division commander when it received intelligence of a VC concentration near the village of Ap Bac, west of Saigon. Approximately 300 VC were entrenched in a north-south line in a plain of rice paddies. The division's plan, as drawn up by its American advisors, was an infantry attack on the north and south flanks with a frontal assault by armored personnel carriers from the west to crush the communist position. The battle began in the early morning hours of 3 January 1963 with an uncoordinated attack on the south flank across the rice paddies by poorly trained Civil Guard companies that quickly stalled under heavy fire. Vann, circling overhead as the senior officer on scene since no Vietnamese commander above the rank of captain was within five kilometers of the battlefield, guided a helicopter insertion of the division's reserve company to support the stalled CG troops. The helicopters landed too close to the VC position, which resulted in the immediate loss of three aircraft. Meanwhile, the armored company that was to attack from the west became uncharacteristically timid and took three hours to move to the

[118] Sheehan, *Bright Shining Lie*, 79–96.

[119] Ibid., 73–96, 118–122.

helicopter crash site. Finally, the force that was to attack from the north also met heavy resistance and failed to advance.[120]

With forces stalled or rescuing the downed helicopter crews and their passengers, Colonel Dam in a last gasp of desperation to salvage a victory, requested an airborne battalion be dropped near the northern flank for a final dusk assault. A poorly sighted line by the aircrews resulted in the battalion—whose commander also did not jump with his unit—being dropped too close to the VC line, and many of them were shot while under parachute. With the attackers in disarray, the VC used the cover of darkness to withdraw virtually unscathed.[121] The United States lost three soldiers, and the RVNAF lost between 25 and 63 killed, 100 wounded, and five helicopters.[122] What was envisioned to be a coordinated infantry attack on two flanks with an attack by the armored company to drive the VC out of their entrenchments and out into the open had devolved into a set of poorly coordinated, piecemeal attacks made worse by ill-fated decisions to try to remedy the situation. Throughout the engagement, Vann played the unenviable role of battlefield manager with no command authority. He vainly relayed information to Dam and Dam's orders to his unit commanders who executed them apathetically since they were not getting them directly from the ARVN division commander and because the CG units and the armored company actually reported to the province chief.[123]

The media fallout from Ap Bac was significant, due primarily to Vann's temper following the battle's conclusion. As an assessment of the limited partnership that Taylor's mission recommended, it was telling in its portents. Cao, now one of only four ARVN corps commanders, had been replaced by Dam, an officer unwilling to place himself where he needed to be to properly command his forces. Vann had played an important role, but he erred in recommending a landing zone so close to the enemy's position and perhaps for not insisting that Dam accompany him in the observation

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[120] Toczek, *Battle of Ap Bac*, 74–100.

[121] Toczek estimates in the realm of 15 VC killed and 12 wounded. Ibid., 118.

[122] Rough estimates based on the numbers Toczek gives. Ibid.

[123] Ibid., 84–87.

plane.[124] Unity of command failed since the CG forces and the armored company fell under the province chief's, not Dam's, command. Once the CG companies came under fire and lost a few soldiers, their commander refused to resume the assault to take pressure off of the other forces when they got into trouble. No Vietnamese commander was present on the battlefield to get them moving again. General Harkins downplayed the overall significance of the battle, which seemed out of touch with the participants.[125] His reaction was a constant theme during his tenure of deliberately inflating or emphasizing measures of South Vietnam success while suppressing bad news, which gave Washington decision makers the impression that the war was going well.[126]

Despite the setback at Ap Bac, the introduction of these new forces and methods, if combined with a program, like the strategic hamlets, that separated the population from the Communists, might eventually have turned the tide in the South. In August 1963 MACV produced a report on the ARVN's status that was at the same time a symbol of hope and frustration at what had been accomplished and what remained to be accomplished with South Vietnam's security situation. General Harkins noted the poorly coordinated group of units that were unable to affect VC border infiltration in any meaningful way. Only the assignment of all of the units in a given region to a single commander, preferably the corps commander, would allow for the type of coordination necessary to greatly affect the enemy's freedom of maneuver. The report also noted the "laudable" number of security patrols (4475) that the RVN forces conducted weekly but lamented the paltry number (175) that actually made contact with the enemy.[127] After nine years of advice and training, 39 of 90 ARVN battalions had still not been fully trained in the eight-week battalion training program that the MAAG had developed during Williams's time as chief.[128] The delays in training and poor performance in using

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[124] Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken*, 188–89.

[125] Ibid., 203.

[126] Cosmas, *MACV Escalation Years*, 91–94.

[127] MACV, "Agenda Items for Conference with President Diem," August 1963, 13, Entry 52, Box 1, Records of USFSEA, Headquarters, MACV, Secretary of the Joint Staff, Military History Branch, Historians Background Material Files (TS) Miscellaneous Documents 1962 THRU (TS) Secretary of Defense, Conference Agenda 1963, RG 472, NACP.

[128] Ibid., 32.

the training to establish security, as evidenced by the minimal patrolling numbers, should have given pause to any notion that victory was at hand. In contrast, the report's assessment of the Strategic Hamlet program was a reason for optimism. It recognized the reckless overzealousness of the program's construction schedule but nevertheless credited it with shifting 160 villages and over a million South Vietnamese from VC control to RVN control.[129] On the surface, it appeared that U.S. and RVN leaders had found a formula that had some prospect for eventual success despite the increased pressure that North Vietnam had been placing on the South. Unfortunately, the events of the second half of 1963 left the question unanswered as to whether the advisory effort had turned a corner in Vietnam.

E. THE OVERTHROW OF DIEM

Despite the administration's frustration with Diem and his refusal to make any of the reforms suggested in the military or civil domain, the Kennedy administration stood by him as the best hope for a non-communist South Vietnam even as it had considered removing him on many occasions. That support evaporated in the summer of 1963 when highly visible Buddhist demonstrations created an outsized press stir. Diem's crackdown on the protestors culminated in August 1963 in a raid on Buddhist pagodas by Ngo Dinh Nhu's special forces, which he subsequently tried to blame on the ARVN.[130] This event turned out to be the last straw. An ill-advised State Department cable sent on a Saturday evening, when many decision makers were away from Washington—including President Kennedy—gave Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. the authority to begin examining "all possible alternative leadership and make detailed plans as to how we might bring about Diem's replacement if this should become necessary."[131] Lodge and CIA agent Lucien Conein began coordinating with three ARVN generals who were disenchanted with Diem and promised many reforms in the wake of his removal from office. Nobody

[129] MACV, "Agenda Items for Conference with President Diem," 26.

[130] Ellen J. Hammer, *A Death in November: America in Vietnam, 1963* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1987), 166–68.

[131] "281. Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam," August 24, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, 1991, 3:2073–79; Hammer, *A Death in November*, 178–80, 185–88.

seemed to notice that these generals had failed to show much success against the Communists themselves. After much political maneuvering, the generals launched their coup on 1 November 1963. Diem's vision for a staunchly independent, anti-communist South Vietnam died with him.[132] Throughout Diem's time in power, the senior U.S. military advisors in Vietnam remained among his staunchest supporters, so much so that in the months leading up to the coup Lodge shut Harkins completely out of the coup discussions.[133]

F. DIEM: CAN'T WIN WITH HIM, CAN'T WIN WITHOUT HIM

Any hope that replacing Diem would result in a significant improvement in the security environment in South Vietnam was overly optimistic. Foreign Service Officer Frank Scotton recounts:

> We installed and collaborated with a family dictatorship and later embraced a cabal of generals who were previously French sergeants. Finally, the Washington perspective seemed, even then (to me), clouded with doubt, second guessing, scarcely any knowledge of the Vietnamese we supported, and no understanding at all of the national communist party. Almost every American falsely thought of the communists as an intrusion by North Viet Nam into South Viet Nam. Failure to recognize that the party was national in character and generally central Vietnamese in leadership, with grim commitment to unification, was (looking back) inexcusable. I was thinking, at the beginning of January 1964, that if our policy was to consolidate and preserve an independent South Viet Nam, that mountain was a lot higher and steeper than it had seemed in 1962.[134]

The official U.S. Army history notes that following the coup, ARVN "morale dropped to a new low by mid-1964," and "two successive coups created numerous changes in the command structure and seriously impaired the administrative and military efficiency of the Army."[135] Its fighting performance also decreased. From August 1962 to December 1963—17 months—the ARVN lost 10,500 weapons.[136] From January to

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[132] Hammer, *A Death in November*, 190–91.

[133] Cosmas, *MACV Escalation Years*, 102–3.

[134] Scotton, *Uphill Battle*, 88.

[135] Collins, *Development and Training*, 31–32.

[136] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 40.

December 1964, it lost 14,037, and the losses continued to increase.[137] Lost weapons meant ARVN killed or captured, or weapons dropped as soldiers fled battles. Either way, those weapons went to the enemy. Furthermore, as Howard Simpson writes, "national unity remained a major problem in South Vietnam" with all of the religious sects and ARVN units that had been loyal to Diem threatening the new government's stability.[138] Furthermore, the instability emboldened North Vietnam's leadership to apply more pressure on the South and send more troops down the Ho Chi Minh trail—10,000 in 1964.[139] This number grew to 90,000 in 1966.[140]

In 1965 the Johnson administration decided to begin a massive buildup of forces that was intended to make North Vietnam realize that conquering the South simply was not worth the investment. With this buildup came a massive shakeup of the South Vietnamese social structure. The older, more conservative elements adhered to tradition and lamented the infusion of morally corrupt American culture that seemed to take over the young Vietnamese.[141] Furthermore, the infusion of U.S. personnel created upward pressure on inflation such that ARVN soldiers' pay could not keep up. From 1964 to 1972, an ARVN colonel's pay fell in purchasing power from $400 to $82, and a private made 50 percent of a minimum-wage worker's pay.[142] The inflation placed the ARVN personnel in a desperate position, but since they held the power, they could make up the difference off the backs of the peasants or through black marketeering, which did nothing to improve the ARVN's standing in the eyes of its fellow citizens.

The only real chance that the United States had to put itself in a position to influence the replacement of ARVN leadership and its overall command organization

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[137] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 40.

[138] Howard R. Simpson, *Tiger in the Barbed Wire: An American in Vietnam, 1952-1991* (Washington: Brassey's, 1992), 177.

[139] Ibid., 188.

[140] Ibid., 189.

[141] Nguyen Duy Hinh and Tran Dinh Tho, "The South Vietnamese Society," in *The Vietnam War: An Assessment by South Vietnam's Generals*, ed. Lewis Sorley (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2010), 723.

[142] Dong Van Khuyen, "The RVNAF," in *The Vietnam War: An Assessment by South Vietnam's Generals*, ed. Lewis Sorley (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2010), 52.

was when MACV considered the idea of creating a combined command. General William Westmoreland ultimately rejected the idea due to concerns over security of sensitive intelligence, the political requirements associated with managing the national requests for specific positions on the staff, and possible communist accusations of imperialism.[143] Although the complications would have been significant and the likelihood of communist infiltration increased, it was probably the only way for the United States to have a chance to have a positive impact on the ARVN's most obvious weakness.[144] An unimpressive ARVN incursion into Laos in 1971, and the North's 1972 Easter Offensive led to some notable leadership changes, but often those replaced simply moved to higher positions where they wielded even more influence.[145] By then, of course, it was far too late for such changes to matter. As the official MACV history concludes, in 1975 "Saigon's forces still were plagued at the end by the same problems of weak and corrupt leadership, high desertion rates, and uneven tactical performance that had afflicted them at the beginning."[146] These were aspects that advisors had addressed for 18 years and had proven unable to fix.[147] In contrast, the North's ineffective generals were dead or had been replaced by a regime of iron ideological determination, which feared defeat more than it feared its own soldiers.

When the final hammer blow came in 1975, South Vietnam fielded an ARVN of 450,000 soldiers, 325,000 Regional Forces (previously the Civil Guard), and 206,000 Popular forces (previously the Self Defense Corps).[148] These ground forces were backed

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[143] Cosmas, *MACV Escalation Years*, 349.

[144] As an example of what might have been possible regarding ARVN leadership, the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) mission was able to secure the relief of many provincial level officials. There was no corresponding effort in the RVNAF.As Moyar writes, from 1968 to 1971, CORDS contributed to the relief of 14 of 20 provincial chiefs and 84 of 124 district chiefs. Mark Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*, Yale Library of Military History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 161–62.

[145] Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, 476–81, 484–87.

[146] Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Withdrawal, 1968-1973* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2006), 420.

[147] For more on problems in ARVN officer corps in later years, see Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, 229–31, 342–43, 502–3.

[148] Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1971-1973*, History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2007), 228.

up by a modern air force of 65,000 that included jet fighters.[149] In contrast, the NVA fielded somewhere between 336,000 and 436,000 men.[150] The NVA initiated its attack on northern South Vietnam around Hue and in the Central Highlands. The decisive thrust came directly at Saigon, like the Easter Offensive three years earlier, which the ARVN had only stopped with the help of massive airpower and advisor support. With these two assets no longer available due to Washington's decision to reduce support for Vietnam, the Vietnamese could not hold. Throughout this final campaign, the South Vietnamese resistance was wholly unimpressive.[151] The 18th Division at Xuan Loc east of Saigon stood apart as a unit that put up fierce resistance, and there were many acts of small unit and individual suffering and bravery.[152] There simply was not enough of it. Had the South Vietnamese truly been a unified body desperate to resist communism, as one general wrote, one would have seen the mass of paramilitary and local forces resisting the

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[149] Webb and Poole, *JCS and Vietnam*, 71-73.

[150] Cantwell, "The Army of South Vietnam," 386; In May 1974, the CIA estimated that "South Vietnam maintains about twice as many combat troops under arms as the Communists have deployed in the South." CIA, "National Intelligence Estimate 53/14.3-1-74 The Likelihood of a Major North Vietnamese Offensive Against South Vietnam Before June 30, 1975," CIA (May 23, 1974), 4, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0001166463.pdf.

[151] The withdrawal of the 23rd ARVN Infantry Division from Pleiku to Tuy Hoa in March 1975 was a reflection of the sad state of the RVNAF's senior leadership in the republic's last days. With NVA elements closing in from the west, the corps commander decided to regroup his forces on the coast for a counterattack or redeployment to the south. He issued the orders in secret then departed with the division commander to another part of the battlefield. This act left his deputy commanders and chief of staff to execute a tactical withdrawal, one of the most difficult maneuvers in warfare. The Chief of the Joint General Staff warned the corps commander that the French had suffered grave losses in 1954 conducting a withdrawal from the same area. Rather than use the historical reference as a source of ideas on how to punish these new invaders on the ARVN's own terrain, the withdrawal became a disorganized rout. Regional and Popular Force troops mostly failed to harass the enemy or protect the column's flanks and the division retreated with only a few battalions providing any noteworthy resistance. When it arrived at the coast ten days after leaving Pleiku, it had lost 75 percent of its combat strength. Cao Van Vien, *The Final Collapse*, Indochina Monographs (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1985), 83–95; William E. Le Gro, *Vietnam from Cease-Fire to Capitulation* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1985), 152–54.

[152] The 18th Division and some associated units held off three NVA divisions from 9 to 22 April but still was forced to retreat. Cao, *The Final Collapse*, 130–33. Also, the Ranger units tended to fight much harder than their regular counterparts.

North Vietnamese at every opportunity.[153] This resistance did not happen, either out of fear, apathy, or outright support for the Communists. These were characteristics that the advisory effort as envisioned by Eisenhower, Kennedy, Taylor, McNamara, Lansdale, and their successors were supposed to fix through advice and close personal relationships. In Vietnam, the desired results always remained well out of reach.

G. CONCLUSION

The United States' twenty-five year relationship with Vietnam's anticommunist struggle began and ended with military advisors. Generally impotent during the French Indochina War, the advisors shouldered the heavy responsibility of creating a South Vietnamese army that could withstand the larger, better-led People's Army of Vietnam, and a Northern strategy that featured internal subversion instead of overt invasion as the primary means to undermine South Vietnam's government.[154] The RVNAF's effort to combat this threat saw peaks of apparent success as in the late 1950s and valleys of abject failure in the early 1960s, which finally led to the introduction of U.S. troops and unprecedented airpower in an attempt to save the situation.[155] Even this relief did little to solve the South's critical shortfalls. In response to diminishing U.S. public support and general war weariness, President Richard Nixon's administration carried out Vietnamization, a euphemism for a complete turnover of the war effort to the South Vietnamese and the departure of all U.S. forces. The war's waning days saw advisors and air support play critical roles in support of the ARVN's attempt to fight off the NVA's Easter Offensive in 1972. When the advisors departed in 1973, there was nothing left,

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[153] The last Chief of the Joint General Staff, General Cao Van Vien insists that, "from the beginning to the end, the RVN leadership had always been determined to fight against the Communists and refuse to accept them into the South Vietnamese community through coalition. . . . Thus, despite accumulated losses, political disturbance, social malaise, and war weariness, the people of South Vietnam continued to fight against the Communists in order to live in freedom." Cao nevertheless abandoned his post in the days before the fall of Saigon and fled to the United States like many other senior commanders. Cao Van Vien and Dong Van Khuyen, *Reflections on the Vietnam War*, Indochina Monographs (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1980), 139.

[154] Bernard Fall describes the North Vietnamese Army as "man for man, one of the finest infantry forces in the world today." Fall, *Last Reflections*, 102.

[155] To illustrate the extent of the effort that the North Vietnamese withstood, the United States averaged more bomb payload dropped per day in 1965 than the French dropped during the entire 56 day siege at Dien Bien Phu. Ibid., 231.

tactically or organizationally, on which the RVNAF could have claimed to lack instruction. The reduction in U.S. support had minor short-term effects that could have become serious problems if the ARVN resistance had been prolonged, but the RVNAF fell so quickly that this situation did not occur. The RVNAF was simply outgeneraled and outfought. Nearly twenty years of direct U.S. advice and support had been unable to instill the leadership and motivation that were necessary to win.

There are many reasons why the advisors could not achieve their goal of a South Vietnamese Army that could adequately defend South Vietnam from internal and external threat. The two reasons at which the advisors worked on a daily basis were devotion to country and leadership. As Vice-President Nixon had suggested in 1954 while the anti-communist Vietnamese were fighting for the French, the Vietnamese lacked a cause around which they could rally. In his way, Diem tried to unite his country, but neither he nor the military junta that followed was able to develop the level of nationalistic fervor that the North did. It would be a mistake, however, to adopt the point of view of Paul Kattenburg, an East Asian specialist in the State Department, who wrote years later, "The real weakness was the Vietnamese didn't want to fight. I mean they never did, at any time. They had chosen comfort and easy living over the miserable existence of the Viet Minh and the Viet Cong."[156] The RVNAF suffered 110,000 killed and 500,000 wounded.[157] It did not throw up its hands at the first sign of the enemy. But a willingness to suffer does not, in itself, guarantee success in war.

The most tangible reason for failure was the senior military leadership. For a country ruled by combat-hardened generals who had sneered at young U.S. military advisors' efforts to offer suggestions, their performance in strategic decision making, operational planning and execution, and tactical leadership was dismal. If the South's leaders could have mobilized the southern population around a cause like their northern counterparts, they might well have won.[158] Both Williams and McGarr seemed to have

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[156] Appy, *Patriots*, 83.

[157] Spencer Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, & Military History* (New York: Oxford Press, 1998), 64.

[158] In comparison to northern generals like Dang Vu Hiep, who left his family in 1964 and did not return until 1975, the majority of southern generals were far more concerned about their own political position and comfort rather than fighting and winning. Appy, *Patriots*, 9.

earned President Diem's trust, but neither one ever forcefully argued for Diem to relieve his cronies and replace them with proven fighters. Once the generals took over, they continued the practice such that in December 1974, on the eve of the North's final offensive, the CIA was still disparaging the poor quality of RVNAF commanders.[159]

From the beginning, internal security was the besetting problem in Vietnam, by which both popular apathy and official incompetence were piteously exposed. The guerrilla forces in the South were only estimated at 7,000 in 1960.[160] The Greeks, Koreans, and Filipinos had all dealt with internal security problems of greater or equal magnitude with far fewer problems. Meanwhile, the RVNAF numbered approximately 250,000 personnel, and Diem would soon try to herd his entire population into fortified villages to protect them from this underwhelming horde of Communists. Unlike the other three cases, however, the Vietnamese Communists had three key advantages: a long, porous border; a devoted following; and significant outside support. Furthermore, they made few mistakes. A Korea-like offensive in the early 1960s would have surely drawn in overwhelming U.S. combat power and probable large-scale defeat for the communist forces. Thus, the Communists slowly built support for themselves, undermined GVN efforts to secure the countryside, and took advantage of weak points in the RVNAF defenses to score victories. Once the infrastructure was in place, it was up to the United States to pledge indefinite support to an RVN that proved itself to be beyond reform. In 1975 Washington had spent more blood and treasure than anyone could have foreseen in 1963 and was not willing to spend any more.[161]

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[159] CIA, "National Intelligence Estimate 53/14.3-2-74 Short-Term Prospects for Vietnam," CIA (December 23, 1974), 5, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0001166473.pdf.

[160] MAAG-V, "Revised Draft Study, Internal Security Problem, SVN," January 9, 1961, 1, Entry 12, Box 25, USFSEA, 1950-1975, MAAG-V/AGD, SCGR: 1950-1961, 250/16 MAAG VN Log Est. 32-59 1961 THRU 285 (220/8) Facilities 1961, RG 472, NACP; The Official North Vietnamese history claims approximately 7,000 village-level guerrillas, 1,000 regional troops, and 3,500 full-time troops that had infiltrated back from the North. MHIV, *Victory in Vietnam*, 66–67.

[161] U.S. losses were 47,382 killed, 10,811 noncombat deaths, 153,303 wounded, and 10,173 captured and missing in action. Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War*, 64; The Vietnam War cost $738 billion in 2011 dollars. Stephen Daggett, "Costs of Major U.S. Wars," Congressional Research Service, June 29, 2010, 2, http://cironline.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/June2010CRScostofuswars.pdf.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The end of the Second World War ushered in dramatically new international conditions, characterized by U.S. leadership of what became known as the Free World, confronting a bloc of communist powers led by the Soviet Union. Faced with the challenge of managing a global reorganization fueled by a combination of communism and anti-colonialism, the United States sent military advisors to assist other nations in developing their capacity to resist internal subversion and external aggression. The efforts in the Philippines and Greece were largely successful, while the mission in Korea built an army that was adequate for internal defense, but found itself outmatched by a more heavily armed North Korea. In Vietnam, the advisors entered a military and political labyrinth in which both subversion and aggression fueled and reinforced each other in ways that proved impossible to disentangle. In the end they were unable to build a South Vietnamese Army sufficiently effective to sustain an anti-communist regime in Saigon. Despite signs that advisors there were not achieving U.S. goals, successive administrations stuck with them until the conflict reached a point at which the United States had to commit its own combat forces if it was not to suffer outright political defeat.

In advance and in practice, it is not easy to recognize the conditions under which an advising effort is likely to succeed, though there is obviously value in trying to do so to the greatest extent possible. There are many cautionary statements about advisory efforts, particularly those concerning the U.S. experience in Vietnam. A postwar study concluded that "aid and advice, especially when based on misconceptions, cannot provide a client state with the requisite leadership, determination, and cohesion to defeat a pervasive and sophisticated insurgency."[1] More recently, in reflecting on the recent U.S. effort in Iraq, Walter Pincus wrote, "Vietnam should have taught the U.S. that as an outside power—with no common language, culture or history—Americans cannot bring

[1] BDM Corporation, *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam: Omnibus Executive Summary* (McLean, VA: BDM Corporation, 1980), VI–7, http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a096423.pdf

about national unity in other countries."[2] If examined in isolation, these observations seem accurate enough, and certainly proved true in Vietnam, which is offered as the exemplary case. Korea, however, presented a different, more successful scenario that somewhat belies Pincus's conclusion. The Americans in Korea faced all of the same challenges in language, culture, and history as those in Vietnam but still created an effective force relative to its original mission, which was to provide internal security. The same can be said for the Philippines and Greece. In Korea, in contrast to Vietnam, it was the success of counterinsurgency in the South, rather than the failure, that induced the North to choose general war.

It would be irresponsible and historically ignorant to discount advisors altogether based on their achievements in these cases and others. The challenge is recognizing where advisors might be effective, and, once committed, whether they are actually achieving U.S. objectives. It would also be irresponsible to suggest a strictly formulaic approach to advising; that is, if conditions a, b, and c are met, then advisors will succeed. Peter Murphy suggests this approach in his article on the success of Chinese assistance to North Vietnam while simultaneously pointing out that "the U.S. continues to have difficulty finding similar success" in its assistance efforts.[3] Murphy argues that even though the "Vietnamese Communists consistently demonstrated more motivation to fight . . . the Chinese must have done something right in their military assistance efforts."[4] He then discusses three reasons why the Chinese were successful: they had a shared historical relationship with the Vietnamese, their support was appropriate for the North's infantry-centric army, and the Vietnamese Communists did not become dependent on Chinese assistance.[5]

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[2] Walter Pincus, "In Iraq, Lessons of Vietnam Still Resonate," *Washington Post*, May 25, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-iraq-lessons-of-vietnam-still-resonate/2015/05/25/86a20a82-00bd-11e5-805c-c3f407e5a9e9_story.html?wprss=rss_national-security.

[3] Peter Murphy, "Why Military Advising Was So Successful in Vietnam . . . For the Chinese: And What the U.S. Can Learn From It," *Small Wars Journal*, Small Wars Foundation, June 28, 2015, http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/why-military-advising-was-so-successful-in-vietnam….

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

Presumably, the United States failed in Vietnam because it got these three things wrong, but this argument implies that if it had gotten them right, the outcome would have been drastically different. Furthermore, while America could choose where it intervened, it could not choose the circumstances of the political and military environment prior to its intervention. Although many Americans disdained their Vietnamese counterparts and the equipment provided to the South created a dependence on continued American support, Murphy's factors were far less important than the much larger shortcomings of poor leadership and will to fight in the RVNAF, whose inclination and ability to accept the assistance being offered was a crucial requirement of success. Without Chinese aid, the North would have continued fighting with whatever it had, but without U.S. aid, the South would have collapsed much earlier than it did. Furthermore, in Greece, Korea, and the Philippines, the United States did not meet all of Murphy's criteria either, yet it still met with varying levels of success.

A comparable parallel to Murphy's scenario was the support that the United States provided to the Afghan mujahedeen in their war against the Soviets in the 1980s. There, the United States found itself in something like China's role in Vietnam, supporting an ideologically committed, independent ally of sorts who, like the North Vietnamese, would have fought the Soviet occupation with whatever it had. Thus, successful Chinese advising in Vietnam was far more dependent on the North's devotion to its own cause than on any secret advising formula that the Chinese implemented. Northern leaders developed this cause, and it resulted in superior leadership and national will in the North versus the South. These two elements were clearly the most important in all four cases.

A. FACTORS AFFECTING ADVISING

Other factors do matter, however, and to the extent that they can be identified or understood at an early stage, will go a long way in contributing to the success or failure of an advising mission. The following elements are by no means prescriptive, but they do represent some of the most observable and influential factors that advisors face. They are

presented in logical order, conceptually speaking, but their relative significance in practice will obviously shift depending on the given situation.

1. Will

The most decisive trait for a host nation force is its willingness to fight and die for its cause. For advisors, this trait is also the most difficult to influence, and a lack of it may be a major reason why an advisory mission was formed to begin with. Furthermore, the friendly side's motivation must be judged relative to that of its enemy. It is not enough to be somewhat motivated if the enemy is passionately committed. In the four cases here, the Communists' willingness to fight was well established and allowed them to hang on for as long as they did, or win in Vietnam's case. In the Philippines and Korea, U.S. advice and assistance provided the small push needed to overcome internal conflicts within those governments and armed forces. The Koreans, with the habits they had learned from the Japanese, had to be restrained, if anything. The Filipinos, at a stalemate when Ramon Magsaysay took over, were plenty willing to fight Huks, but lacked the organization and leadership to do so effectively. Greece and Vietnam saw the greatest disparity of will between the host nation force and their communist enemies. In the former, the advisors overcame the difference through changes in leadership, increased materiel, and poor decisions made on the communist side. In the latter, the advisors had little influence over any aspect of the environment—besides delivering military equipment—that would have contributed to an improvement in South Vietnam's will. U.S. support raised morale, especially in the short term, but in none of the cases did the U.S. support diminish the requirement for the host nation force to prove it could ultimately fight and win on its own.

2. Leadership

Where advisors have the greatest potential for exercising a positive influence on the host nation force is in the development of its leadership. In Greece and Korea, General James Van Fleet played a key role in pressing for the relief of weak leaders. The advisors in Korea had an even greater influence since they were present from the birth of the ROKA and helped select its initial leadership. Ramon Magsaysay filled this role in

the Philippines with American backing, ridding the army of political generals and promoting fighters like Napoleon Valeriano. In Vietnam, a succession of senior U.S. military advisors recommended organizational changes to the army but placed little emphasis on finding higher level commanders whom Diem trusted and who were competent. The pressure to solve this problem fell ultimately on State Department civilians, who opted for Diem's removal, rather than continue to urge reforms that failed to result in substantive change.

The transformation evident in the Greek Army following General Papagos's appointment to head the anti-communist campaign shows the potential for influence on this factor, but U.S. selection of allied leadership has great potential for unforeseen problems. If Washington gets in the habit of selecting other countries' leadership, advisory efforts will lose their veil of providing assistance to allies and assume the role of puppeteer that communist and Islamic militant propaganda labels the United States.[6] Furthermore, the U.S. eye for foreign talent is dubious. Even General Papagos initially proved to be problematic as he demanded a huge increase in the army as the price for an offensive. In Vietnam, the United States identified the generals who replaced Diem as worthy successors, but they proved to be just as susceptible to cronyism. The most that could be reasonably expected is to push for the replacement of political generals with proven combat leaders and to recognize when the leadership problem is beyond repair. The mistake in Vietnam was doubling down on an advisory mission with some additional military technology that would not solve the military's fundamental problems of poor leadership and mediocre will. In Greece, Korea, and the Philippines, the advisors were able to effect meaningful change at the highest levels, which then improved the entire advisory effort.

[6] Kadir A. Mohmand, "Afghanistan's Puppet Leaders," *Veterans Today*, September 19, 2014, http://www.veteranstoday.com/2014/09/19/afghanistans-puppet-leaders/; Christopher Haress, "North Korea U.S. War? Kim Jong-Un Ready for Conflict with United States and 'Puppet' South Korea," *International Business Times*, July 31, 2015, http://www.ibtimes.com/north-korea-us-war-kim-jong-un-ready-conflict-united-states-puppet-south-korea-2033343.

3. Actions and Influence of the Senior Advisor

From the standpoint of what Washington can influence directly, the selection of the senior military advisor is the single most important decision to get right, assuming a decision to intervene in the first place. Since big decisions matter most, the higher the level of real influence, the greater the impact of that advice. It is equally true that the wrong person will have less influence than the right one. For example, in Greece the queen personally requested General Van Fleet, and his influence there was significant. Likewise in Vietnam, President Diem repeatedly requested Edward Lansdale's return, but internal U.S. politics precluded this. Whether it would have had the results desired will never be known. Instead, Washington depended on Generals Lionel McGarr and Paul Harkins, neither of whom possessed Lansdale's track record and personal credibility.

Van Fleet's outsized influence in Greece helped save that nation from whatever the communist insurgency might have won, but it also nearly derailed the political process and stunted the necessary military leadership when he supported General Papagos as emergency dictator, in contrast to the recommendations of Ambassador Henry F. Grady. In Korea, the advisory effort received short shrift until it finally came under the command of a general officer in 1948, which placed it almost three years behind its northern adversary. General Roberts's overly optimistic reports might have given the impression that the South was in no danger. When war came, Roberts' absence from the country, as he was on his way to retirement, placed the advisory effort and its advisees in an even worse position than the neglected one they were already in. In the Philippines, the role of the senior advisor was relatively insignificant since Magsaysay was such a forceful personality and enacted all of the significant changes necessary to turn the situation in the government's favor. In Vietnam, the succession of questionable commanders invites the question of how they were selected or left to remain for so long.

4. Physical Terrain and Political Geography

Of the factors affecting advisory operations, terrain and geography seem almost too banal to consider. Yet they are also the easiest to appreciate, even with only a rudimentary knowledge of the host nation's people or politics. A simple glance at a map

gives a feel for the challenges that could be faced prior to committing any forces. In Greece and Vietnam, the long, shared borders with neighboring countries, which either sheltered known communist supporters or were incapable of serving as a barrier to infiltration (e.g. Laos), frustrated efforts to rid the country of communist insurgents. In contrast, Korea and the Philippines benefitted from easily isolated terrain that allowed their forces to choke off the guerrillas effectively. Although U.S. leaders recognized the challenges in Greece and Vietnam, there was little they could do about them. The neutralization of Greece's borders depended almost exclusively on internal bickering within the communist bloc, while the mountainous inland terrain in Vietnam was a recognized communist refuge that was never effectively neutralized.

5. External Support

External support, or the absence thereof, played an important role in all four cases. The U.S. ability to affect it was largely a function of geography. In Greece, the United States was fortunate to step into an inter-communist political rivalry between Premiers Josip Tito and Josef Stalin that resulted in minimal external support for the Greek Communists. The Communists nevertheless used the long, porous border to evade Greek forces, but the lack of weaponry that could challenge the Greek National Army left them in a disadvantageous position that, when combined with other factors, left them unable to win. Despite this advantage, U.S. leaders were convinced that the Greeks received more support than they actually did. In contrast, the Huks received no external support, by virtue of being on an island. Even so, government ineptitude and Huk perseverance allowed them to survive longer than they reasonably should have. With Magsaysay's arrival and the reorganization of the military structure, the government's performance drastically improved, and it rapidly reversed the stalemated military situation.

External support played a far larger, quite possibly decisive, role in Korea and Vietnam. Without Soviet aid, specifically offensive armor and artillery, the North Koreans would have fielded an army similar to that of the South Koreans. With the aid, the North came very close to pushing the South's forces and the frantically arriving U.S.

forces into the sea. Likewise, U.S. command of the sea allowed for a reversal of the situation with the landing at Inchon. Pressing the realized gains too far led to the most decisive external support—the Chinese intervention—which again gave the advantage to the North. As Chinese supply lines extended, the United States again brought its advantages to bear. Combined with an enormous recruitment drive of South Koreans, the UN forces stabilized the front once again. Had the United States made a reasonable investment in the South Korean forces earlier, the geography could have neutralized the North's superiority, perhaps for an even smaller investment than what the Soviets and Chinese had made in the North.

In Vietnam, Chinese weaponry allowed the Communists to defeat the French in 1954, with Chinese-supplied artillery and even gunners providing the margin of victory at Dien Bien Phu.[7] This support continued throughout the U.S. experience and was compounded by the Communists' ability to infiltrate men and supplies down the Ho Chi Minh Trail into the South and, to a lesser extent, by sea. Those routes allowed the Communists to threaten the South everywhere continuously. In the early years, with the ARVN focused on defending against a conventional invasion, this advantage allowed the Communists to foment political dissatisfaction that served as the basis for support when the North decided in 1959 to escalate its efforts. If Vietnamese geography had mirrored that of Korea, it is entirely possible that an advisory effort could have built a force capable of defending the South with a far smaller commitment than Washington made from 1965–1973.

6. Host Nation Government

The four cases here generally saw a good working relationship with the host nation government, although Vietnam saw an increasingly strained partnership in the year preceding the coup against Diem. Rather, the critical factor is whether the host nation government has the support of the people through whatever means necessary. As such, a cult of personality can supersede actual government effectiveness. In Greece, the king and queen actively sought public venues and opportunities to visit the troops to build

[7] Daniel Moran, *Wars of National Liberation* (London: Cassell, 2001), 98.

support for the Nationalist cause. Likewise in the Philippines, Ramon Magsaysay tirelessly moved around the countryside to engage with the population as a benevolent, concerned member of the government. In both cases, the actual reforms that the Greek and Filipino governments were able to make in the short time span of their respective wars was relatively minor.

In contrast, President Diem was more reclusive but enacted more reforms during his time as president. If he had coupled these programs with greater efforts to reach out and secure public affection and confidence for himself, perhaps he would have maintained greater support for his government. Although he had a deep concern for the peasantry, he never seemed to appreciate the value of establishing himself as a charismatic figure. It is obviously wrong to imagine that the solution to all political problems resides with a man on horseback, but in circumstances in which a country becomes visibly dependent upon powerful outsiders, it is especially important that it possess leadership capable of embodying the nation's hopes and symbolizing its identity. Exactly how this can be done must vary with individual cases. But it will always be important.

7. U.S. Domestic Politics: Advice Is Free. Advisory Missions Are Not.

Throughout the period addressed in this study, U.S. domestic politics played either a supportive or limiting role in the execution of military advising. The separation of powers in the U.S. government means that, while the president and cabinet may decide to employ military advising to advance American policy, they are dependent on Congress to fund it. In all four of the cases studied here, the annual appropriations cycle injected uncertainty into the amount of money that would be available for assistance, which meant ambassadors and senior advisors would submit requests in December for the next fiscal year, which began the following October.[8] Furthermore, there was almost always downward pressure from Congress on the amount of military aid that it was willing to fund. This pressure was particularly intense during non-crisis periods, which suggests

[8] For more discussion on the limitations of short-term planning and appropriation, see Draper, *Composite Report,* 29–30.

that, at least on the margins, Congress may be inclined to view military advising as a form of crisis management, rather than of long-term capacity-building. It is fact when immediate tactical pressure recedes that conditions are best suited to establish credible forces through advising. The result in Korea, and perhaps Vietnam before the U.S. buildup, was an insufficient army vis-à-vis its opponent. This failure to invest resulted in far greater expenditures than might have been required if made earlier. The notion that advisory efforts are cost-effective does not mean that they will feel cheap at the time. Often they will feel like the sort of long-term investments that are all-too-easily short-changed.

8. Civil-Military Teamwork

Dysfunctional civil-military relationships among the senior Americans assigned to a host country pose a risk to the advisory effort and require constant review by Washington leadership to ensure that U.S. objectives are not undermined by personality conflicts that are directly under U.S. control. In Greece and Vietnam there were serious disagreements between senior civilian and military representation. In Greece, Ambassador Grady and General Van Fleet disagreed on General Papagos's possible appointment as emergency dictator and on Van Fleet's proposal for another GNA manning increase following the inconclusive 1948 campaign. In both cases, Grady won out, which probably turned out to be better than the alternative.

In Vietnam, the poor relationship between Ambassador Durbrow and General Williams could hardly have benefitted the advisory effort. With Durbrow taking a much stronger position toward Diem than Williams, the two were never able to apply adequate pressure for the most critical changes that the South needed. Civil-military disagreement within a country team is not a bad thing in itself and is no doubt inevitable to some extent, but if it creates deep chasms of lasting discord, then it is detrimental to the mission and should be addressed by replacing one or more of the individuals involved.

9. Host Nation Organization

The way the host nation organizes its forces is one of the key issues on which advisors should provide insight for their counterparts. The natural tendency for U.S.

advisors was to build institutions similar to those in the United States and provide instruction based on U.S. Army tactics. Critics like Andrew Krepinevich and others have criticized this mirror-imaging approach, but the recipients of this advice showed themselves capable of adapting it to the environments in which they operated. In Greece, for example, U.S.-supplied equipment such as artillery and aircraft was relatively plentiful, even though the United States would only support a 145,000-man Greek National Army (GNA). Also, since the Greek Communists decided to directly confront government forces, the GNA did not require much in the way of special formations to defeat the communist Democratic Army. The Greeks did develop small numbers of commandos for special missions and the National Defense Corps to garrison cleared areas, but they fell under a unified chain of command and had clear responsibilities.[9] The advisory efforts in Korea and the Philippines were likewise streamlined, with the Filipinos specifically adapting their battalion combat teams to the requirements needed in the jungles and hills of Luzon.

In contrast, the Vietnamese approach to defeating the Viet Cong was the establishment of a disorganized conglomeration of units and commanders with overlapping missions, disjointed chains of command, and random training standards depending on whether the MAAG or State Department officials were responsible for training. Sir Robert Thompson counts at least eight different Vietnamese organizations that were responsible in some way for prosecuting a piece of the anti-communist fight, while Andrew Birtle more recently counts fifteen by 1965.[10] This dispersed military effort and Diem's increasing coup concerns resulted in some units answering to province chiefs, some to unit commanders, and still others to the Joint General Staff. Any of these units could also receive direction directly from President Diem. If the enemy had been equally disorganized, then this construct might not have been as problematic. As it was, the fights between Ambassador Durbrow, Diem, General Williams, and the Michigan

[9] Cable, *Conflict of Myths,* 18–19.

[10] At various points, there were the ARVN, the Civil Guard, the Self Defense Corps, the Gendarmerie, the National Police, the special forces, the Republican Youth, and the Hamlet Militia. Robert G. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), 103; Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine*, 320.

State University Group did little to prevent this structure from being cemented as the South Vietnamese security construct, although it was primarily driven by the country's internal dynamics.

Much was made of the U.S. failure to properly organize the ARVN to conduct counterinsurgency—that it was organized to conduct conventional combat against an invasion from the north, which rendered it incapable of defending against VC attacks. This argument is overly simplistic, and worse, implies that there is a magical organization that will ensure success against an insurgency. U.S. advisors regularly used standard U.S. infantry doctrine to instruct their counterparts, which had been sufficient for previous advisory efforts. The Greeks, Koreans, and Filipinos showed that they were not hindered by following U.S. organizational advice as they successfully defeated their internal threats. Likewise in Vietnam, the ARVN's formal organization was less important than its operational employment. General Williams constantly pushed for the ARVN to stay out of the counter-guerrilla fight and leave it to the paramilitary and police forces on the notion that this was a lesson learned from Korea. Had the Koreans followed the same advice and concentrated uniquely on maintaining border security, the communist-inspired internal unrest likely would have grown and might have even made the North's 1950 invasion unnecessary. Advisors need to ensure their advice emphasizes the immediate threat, especially when, as was the case in Vietnam, the United States is willing to defend an ally with combat forces.

10. Advisor Selection and Training

When it comes to advising, few subjects receive as much attention as advisor selection and training. Proponents like John Nagl argue for a permanently established advisory capacity, with Nagl himself proposing a dedicated advisory command of 20,000 personnel under a lieutenant general.[11] The reasoning is that advisory efforts frequently receive poor support, especially when they share the same battlespace with combat forces, or when the advisor role is filled by ad hoc units comprised of National Guard and

[11] John A. Nagl, "Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for an Army Advisor Command," *Military Review* 88, no. 5 (October 2008): 21.

reservist personnel, who are liable to be relatively underprepared for the unique challenges advisors face. Setting aside the possibility that citizen soldiers may well bring mission-enhancing skills to complex advisory efforts—like experience working outside of a military-centric structure—Nagl criticizes the U.S. Army's failure to adapt its tactics and organization in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan to better address the needs of counterinsurgency.[12] His solution, ironically, is a rigid advisory command structure that prescribes down to the individual position the exact size of battalion, brigade, and division level advisor teams, which of course cuts against the idea that advisory efforts must be specifically adapted to the situation's needs.[13] Nagl's idea would also eliminate four Brigade Combat Teams from American operating forces and might have other unintended consequences if the advisory command ended up absorbing more senior personnel, as top-heavy advisor teams are likely to do.[14]

This proposal is neither unique nor new, although Nagl's solution is particularly manpower intensive and appears to be based mostly on the American experiences in Afghanistan, where minimal conventional forces generally left advisors with an insufficient organic security capability.[15] Typical after-action criticism of advisors identifies short tour length, failure to understand the culture, lack of language skills, poor selection process for advisors, and the negative career impact to advisors as problems that should be addressed to improve future advisory efforts. In this vein, the BDM study following Vietnam recommended that "future advisory efforts should rely on a cadre of highly trained specialists rather than a massive effort by amateurs; those specialists should be familiar with the history, culture, and government of the country in which they serve and they should be fluent in the indigenous language and well trained in advisory

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[12] John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, Paperback ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 120.

[13] Nagl, "Institutionalizing Adaptation," 25–26.

[14] Ibid., 26.

[15] Nagl wrote his article in 2008 when there were few conventional forces in country; thus, he likely determined that a 25-man advisory element be the standard battalion-level advising. Ibid.

techniques. Further, the tour of duty for advisors should be of sufficient duration to be effective and to assure continuity."[16]

While these recommendations seem like common sense, they imply that the advisors' shortcomings were mostly to blame for the failure to build an effective RVNAF, rather than the RVNAF's own impossible-to-overcome weaknesses. Of course, testing the BDM proposal will likely never happen since highly trained specialists take years to create and require either knowing in advance where they will be needed or creating them for every country. Moreover, by the 1970s, there were many U.S. personnel with years of experience in Vietnam, including John Paul Vann, Edward Lansdale, and Rufus Phillips, but they did not seem to make any difference. Considering Lansdale and Phillips had been involved in Vietnam from the beginning of U.S. intervention, there is little reason to believe that a more highly trained group of advisors would have been any more effective at overcoming the South's internal politics. Also, the other three conflicts resulted in effective armies with what the BDM study would consider to be a group of amateurs. A conflict that hinged on the cultural sensitivity and language skills of the advisors versus the quality of the advice and whether it was adopted by the leadership and aggressively acted on, would be an extreme statistical anomaly. Surely better training is always preferred, but a highly trained group of advisors is just as dependent on the host nation for success as a group of amateurs. Better training is not a substitute for bad decisions made elsewhere. These recommendations also imply that better tactical-level results can somehow make up for poor strategic decisions. Advisory efforts are no different from regular warfare in that respect. Expecting a bottom-up approach to revolutionize an army is wishful thinking.

B. THE FUTURE OF ADVISING

Scholars and practitioners point to current advisory efforts in Colombia and the Philippines as successful models for limited U.S. intervention in another country's internal conflict where a larger U.S. presence might be detrimental or prohibitively

[16] BDM Corporation, *Strategic Lessons Learned*, VI–31.

expensive.[17] Counterbalancing these relatively successful advisory efforts are the disappointing results in Afghanistan and Iraq and the outright failures in Yemen and Syria. Despite eight years of advising and training, and continued support even after the departure of U.S. forces, the Iraqi Army proved itself incapable of stopping an Islamic State militia force of lesser size, but with greater will. As one report observed during the fall of Ramadi in May 2015, "even Iraq's Golden Division—a U.S.-trained special-forces unit considered the most capable in the country—suddenly deserted its positions."[18] The U.S. effort in Syria is far worse, with $42 million spent having resulted in "four or five" trained individuals actually fighting and 54 others having been captured by Al Qaeda upon returning to Syria.[19]

U.S. national strategy and recent history show, however, that advisory efforts are likely to remain as Washington's first response to helping its allies.[20] The return to Iraq to "degrade, and ultimately destroy" the Islamic State, the continuing advice and assistance mission in Afghanistan, and the attempt to buttress Ukrainian forces against Russian subversion are contemporary examples of what promises to be U.S. military self-

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[17] Fernando M. Lujan, "Light Footprints: The Future of American Military Intervention," Center for a New American Security (March 2013), http://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/light-footprints-the-future-of-american-military-intervention; Linda Robinson, "The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces, CSR 66," Council on Foreign Relations (April 2013), http://www.cfr.org/special-operations/future-us-special-operations-forces/p30323.

[18] Loveday Morris and Mustafa Salim, "Chaos in Iraqi Forces Contributed to Islamic State's Biggest Win This Year," *Washington Post*, May 23, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/chaos-in-iraqi-forces-contributed-to-islamic-states-biggest-win-this-year/2015/05/22/cf4e000e-ffd4-11e4-8c77-bf274685e1df_story.html.

[19] Luis Martinez, "Only '4 or 5' US-Trained Syrian Rebels Fighting ISIS, General Says," *ABC News*, September 16, 2015, http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/general-austin-us-trained-syrian-rebels-fighting-isis/story?id=33802596; Helene Cooper, "Few Trained Syrians Still Fight ISIS, Senators are Told," *New York Times,* September 16, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/17/world/middleeast/isis-isil-syrians-senate-armed-services-committee.html?_r=0.

[20] U.S. Congressional Budget Office, "The 2013 Long-Term Budget Outlook" (Washington, DC: GPO, September 2013), 2, http://www.cbo.gov/publication/44521; The White House, "National Security Strategy 2015," The White House, February 2015, https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy.pdf; U.S. Department of Defense, "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense" (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012), http://www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf; U.S. Department of Defense, "2014 Quadrennial Defense Review" (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 4, 2014), http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf; .

help programs for the near future.[21] These same efforts show the difficulty in building a national army in countries awash in regional, religious, or ethnic factionalism. As in the four cases studies here, good decisions and progress at the highest levels of the host nation government and armed forces will matter more than thousands of hours spent on the shooting range instructing apathetic recruits. Whether the United States is able to affect this high-level change through political pressure, the assignment of an able senior advisor, or some other means will increase the chances for success, but should not imply that a problem like Afghanistan is necessarily within the ability of a U.S. advisory effort to solve. Advisors are a means to an end, with great usefulness under certain conditions. An honest, continual reassessment of these conditions is necessary to ensure that the desired results are within the advisors' capacity to achieve.

[21] Barack Obama, "Statement by the President on ISIL," The White House, September 10, 2014, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1.

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