

CHAPTER VIII

WESTERN COIN MODELS

8.1 Britain

For Britain, the tactics and procedures learned in the Malay Emergency formed the “backbone of British COIN doctrine from which other nations have copied”.¹ At the outset of the Emergency, British operational planners believed the true task at hand was the clearing of gangs of bandits. The result was military focused operations, conventional battalion and brigade sized sweeps through the jungle. These conventional military operations netted few results. It was not until the British identified the true task of breaking the power of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), and recognized the political nature of the conflict that they began to succeed. The true problem lay in convincing the Chinese population that their future was in an independent Malaya, rather than one subordinate to the Chinese Communists.

The British identified the Chinese squatters as the center of gravity in the conflict, and the priority was to separate them from the insurgents. Beginning in 1950, the Briggs Plan established 500 “New Village” settlements for the Chinese squatters, providing them with security, employment, higher standards of living, and education. By 1951, 400,000 squatters had been resettled. Once the British had the squatters under control in New Villages they had deprived the MCP guerrillas of their immediate popular support environment. In addition, to avoid alienating the Malays, the government started the

¹ M.W. Shervington, “Small Wars and Counterinsurgency Warfare: Lessons from Iraq.” diss., Cranfield University, 2005: p.41.

Rural and Industrial Development Authority to provide the same infrastructure benefits enjoyed in the New Villages.²

A significant aspect of British COIN strategy during the Malay emergency was the use of indigenous forces. “Tactically, indigenous forces eliminate insurgent leadership, cadre, and combatants, through death and capture by co-opting individual members, or by forcing insurgents to leave the area. Operationally, such forces help restore government control and legitimacy. And strategically, they serve as the shield for carrying out reform.”³

General Gerald Templer, who in 1952 served as both the High Commissioner as well as Director of Operations in Malaya, is credited as being the principal leader responsible for British success. A quote demonstrates his concept for achieving security and political stability. “I am convinced that an essential pre-requisite to the grant of independence of Malaya is the formation of an adequate Malayan Army to support the civil authority...” Templer sought to create Malayan security forces that were representative of the people whom they were designed to serve. He insisted that native Malayan-Chinese be included among the local security forces. This maneuver not only gave a stake in the overall success of the counterinsurgency and Malayan government to a sizable minority within the Malayan population, it also denied Chin Peng a critical base of support for his Malayan-Chinese Communist forces. In addition, he developed a plan that would bestow citizenship upon the hundreds of thousands of Chinese for whom Malaya was home. By providing local citizenry with a reason to accept his plans, he made them feel as part of the overall process of national reconciliation as opposed to simply having the process thrust upon them.⁴

² Vernon Bartlett, Report from Malaya. (London: Criterion Books, 2005), p.55.

³ Robert M. Cassidy, “The Long Small War: Indigenous Forces for Counterinsurgency.” *Parameters US Army War College Quarterly* XXXVI, 2 (Summer 2006), p.62.

⁴ Stephen D. Sklenka. Malaya and Algeria: Lessons in Counterinsurgency. Available from: <<http://pcrproject.com/blog/2007/03/09/officers-club-malaya-algeria-lessons-in-counterinsurgency>> [9 Mar 2007]

Cornerstones of British doctrine developed out of imperial policy and validated in the Malay Emergency, were minimum force, civil control, and the necessity of civil-military cooperation. The Notes on Imperial Policing in 1934 recognized that “excessive severity may antagonize the neutral or loyal element, add to the number of rebels, and leave a lasting feeling of resentment and bitterness.”⁵ If force was going to be used to control the Empire, it should be used carefully and in minimum quantities. These notes further reasserted the primacy of civil power in that insurgents often operate clandestinely within a general population, and as such they have much more in common with criminals. They are better dealt with by the police with the army in support.⁶ This is illustrated by the fact that the Director of Operations, a crucial position in British COIN doctrine, was given legally a civilian status.⁷ Finally, British doctrine was insistent on the need for coordination and a unified plan.⁸ The appointment of a Special Commissioner functioned to coordinate the overall police, civil, and military response.⁹

The British placed the military component of their overall counterinsurgency strategy in Malaya into proper perspective in relation to the employment of the other elements of national power. They recognized that military power had to complement and even be subordinated to the broader economic and political actions required to defeat the Malayan-Chinese Communist forces.¹⁰ The British experience generated an almost instinctive understanding of the legitimate grievances, political, social or economic that

⁵ M.W. Shervington, “Small Wars and Counterinsurgency Warfare: Lessons from Iraq.” diss., Cranfield University, 2005: p.38.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Bruno Cardoso Reis, “Theoretical Explanations of British, French and Portuguese Counterinsurgency Doctrine” diss., King’s College London 2007: p.19.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ M.W. Shervington, “Small Wars and Counterinsurgency Warfare: Lessons from Iraq.” diss., Cranfield University, 2005: p.38.

¹⁰ Stephen D. Sklenka. Malaya and Algeria: Lessons in Counterinsurgency. Available from: <<http://pcrproject.com/blog/2007/03/09/officers-club-malaya-algeria-lessons-in-counterinsurgency>> [9 Mar 2007]

caused rebellion and that needed to be addressed.¹¹ This model utilizes a political strategy in which the counterinsurgent state was built up in order to deliver a controlled road to independence. Winning the hearts and minds was a genuine component of substantive political change, a tool to win over the populace and prepare them for independence.¹²

8.2 France

While the British political strategy was to evolve Malaya into a fully self governing nation once the terrorists were defeated, when the French returned to Indochina in 1945, their political strategy was to “achieve better relations with the metropole”.¹³ The French intended to use the south as a basis of a French controlled Indochinese federation that would preserve their presence except in the north. The French militarists of the colonial regime resisted setting a timetable for their departure, and thus ushered in war which would end in the French Defeat at Dien Bien Phu.¹⁴

According to Dr. Bernard Fall, the French experience with COIN following World War II illustrated that “guerrilla forces cannot win a war. Guerrilla forces may be precious adjuncts to winning a war, but they may not really “win” in the accepted sense of the term. That, too, was based, perhaps, on the fact that we did win the war and did not lose any battles against enemy guerrillas. Nearly all the guerillas in World War II were on our side and not the opponent's side.”¹⁵ The fact is, the French commanders on the ground in Indochina recognized the political nature of the insurgency, but the leadership in Paris failed to make a unified and concerted effort to succeed politically rather than

¹¹ M.W. Shervington, “Small Wars and Counterinsurgency Warfare: Lessons from Iraq.” diss., Cranfield University, 2005: p.35.

¹² Bruno Cardoso Reis, “Theoretical Explanations of British, French and Portuguese Counterinsurgency Doctrine” diss., King’s College London 2007: p.9.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Norman G. Owen, “Vietnam, 1885-1975: Colonialism, Communism, and Wars.” The Emergence of Southeast Asia. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), p.344.

¹⁵ Bernard Fall. Counterinsurgency: the French Experience 18 January 1963. Available from <<http://www.smallwarsjournal.com/documents/bfall.pdf>> [10 Mar 2007].

militarily. For example, Major Robert Trinquier, who commanded all behind-the-lines operations in Indochina (his units became officially known as GCMA or Groupements de Commandos Mixtes Aeroportes') wrote, "the allegiance of the civilian population becomes one of the most vital objectives of the whole struggle. Military tactics and hardware are all well and good, but they are really quite useless if one has lost the confidence of the population among whom one is fighting."¹⁶ Having failed to identify the insurgency as a political problem above all else, the French political leadership failed in combining political and military efforts to defeat the insurgents.

If the British strategy is described as a "hearts and minds, minimum force approach," the French strategy by comparison can be called "total counterrevolutionary warfare and psychological warfare approach." According to French doctrine, the "total war approach" is not a license to retaliate at will against civilians, but a methodology to develop an integrated response to the insurgents.¹⁷ Additionally, the French had a long-standing imperial tradition of the soldier-administrator, whereby a soldier assumed substantial civilian tasks in the colonies as part of his military responsibilities. This is indicative of a great deal of militarization of the integrated response required in COIN. Intelligence, resettlement, and propaganda were largely or entirely taken over by the military. The French doctrine for psychological warfare was a technique to "conquer souls...an essential tool to cleanse the locals from the contamination of alien ideas of independence fed by the effective brainwashing machine of the insurgents designed according to Maoist principles."¹⁸

France utilized its dual COIN strategy of combining psychological and military effect with respect to its holdings in North Africa as well. In Algeria in particular, the French adopted a policy where local rulers would be encouraged to participate in the

¹⁶ Bernard Fall. *Portrait of the Centurion*. Available from:
< <http://www.cgsc.army.mil/carl/download/csipubs/trinquier/intro.pdf> > [9 Mar 2007]

¹⁷ Bruno Cardoso Reis, "Theoretical Explanations of British, French and Portuguese Counterinsurgency Doctrine" diss., King's College London 2007: p.6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p10.

indoctrination of that country in French values. This has been described as an oil slick, an imperialist infiltration intended to undermine the solidarity and authority of rebel chieftains. Officers were advised to avoid disturbance of any tradition or custom and to co-opt the traditional ruling classes. French conquest would take place as a patch of oil spreads through a step by step progression, playing alternately on all the local elements and utilizing the divisions between tribes and between chiefs. France's model fused political incentives and civic action to military conquest.¹⁹

8.3 United States

When the U.S. military first deployed to Vietnam, initially in an advisory role, it had no specific COIN doctrine. Counter guerilla operations had always been considered an additional requirement within the conventional military role, in the belief that any soldier could handle an insurgent.²⁰ Faced with the prospect of Communist China and Soviet Russia sponsoring the "wars of national liberation," the failure of the Bay of Pigs Invasion, and the growing insurgency in Vietnam, President Kennedy in 1961 called for the Defense Department to reorient doctrine and training from its emphasis solely on conventional warfare to COIN.²¹

Kennedy created a Special Counterinsurgency Study Group tasked to determine the proper role of the US in guerilla and counterguerilla warfare, and pressured the military to add COIN instruction in many of its professional development schools.²² The administration also enlisted the advice of academics such as Walt Rostow from MIT and

¹⁹ M.W. Shervington, "Small Wars and Counterinsurgency Warfare: Lessons from Iraq." diss., Cranfield University, 2005: p.38.

²⁰ John A. Nagl, Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife. Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p.124.

²¹ Wray R. Johnson, Vietnam and American Doctrine for Small Wars. (Bangkok: White Lotus, 2001), p.24.

²² John A. Nagl, Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife. Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p.125.

Ralph Sanders of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. Rostow's theories regarding revolution and counterrevolution had a direct influence on Kennedy, and as Chairman of the Policy Planning Council for the State Department, Rostow became the principal official advancing the President's views on COIN.²³ Sanders outlined a framework for COIN which would ultimately become policy and formed the basis for doctrinal development. Specifically, COIN programs had to:

1. Induce the elite to launch reforms
2. Prompt the people to identify themselves with the national government
3. Promote economic and social improvement at a rate fast enough to convey an image of progress.
4. Help provide opportunities for career advancement of all people, including those not of the elite.
5. Improve internal security by strengthening the armed forces, intelligence services, and the police.
6. Provide training to the armed forces specifically tailored to combating guerilla rather than conventional forces.
7. Enlist the sympathy of the people for the armed forces by encouraging military discipline and aiding civic action programs.
8. Improve the motivation and efficiency of the bureaucracies.²⁴

United States COIN doctrine would follow a whole nation approach, where the components, or functions of national power, would be integrated to achieve success. These functions are political, informational, economic and security.²⁵ An orchestrated effort combining the resources of the Defense and State Departments, the US Agency for

²³ Wray R. Johnson, Vietnam and American Doctrine for Small Wars. (Bangkok: White Lotus, 2001), p.35.

²⁴ Ibid. p.36.

²⁵ United States Department of State, United States Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, Counterinsurgency for U.S. Government Policy Makers: A Work in Progress, Oct 2007: p.15.

International Development, the US Information Agency, and the Central Intelligence Agency would bring all the functions together in combating insurgency.²⁶

8.4 Key Convergences of Western Doctrine

In his doctoral thesis entitled, “Theoretical Explorations of British, French, and Portuguese Counterinsurgency Doctrine,” Bruce Cardoso Reis explores and addresses the similarities and differences found in late colonial counterinsurgency strategies. He provides an accurate synopsis of the key convergences in their applications, and I argue that the development of US doctrine shares many as well. Firstly, in terms of the insurgencies themselves, the threat was communist, or at least subversive, and aligned with the interests of Moscow and Beijing. The insurgencies were all politically savvy, highly mobile, and clandestine, and as such difficult to identify and destroy. Secondly, in terms of doctrinal development, each of the counterinsurgent states recognized the need for improvements in the areas of intelligence, propaganda, economic aid programs, population control measures, and a coordinated civil-military response. Thirdly, with respect to specifically military matters, effective COIN strategy identified the need for a strong visible territorial presence of the army but also some sort of highly mobile and effective force for rapid offensive action.²⁷

During the “counterinsurgency era,” Thailand was beginning to fight a low level insurgency in the south against politically and ideologically organized ethno nationalist militant guerilla groups, and was also dealing with a Communist insurgency in other areas of the country. In addition, Thailand faced external pressure as well with the

²⁶ Wray R. Johnson, Vietnam and American Doctrine for Small Wars. (Bangkok: White Lotus, 2001), p.37.

²⁷ Bruno Cardoso Reis, “Theoretical Explorations of British, French and Portuguese Counterinsurgency Doctrine” diss., King’s College London 2007: p.7.

Communist movements in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, all sponsored by the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China. In this environment, Marks explains that key Thai personalities studied and were influenced by American and other Western (especially British) COIN concepts. The doctrinal convergences posited three essential tasks for successful resolution of insurgency: security force operations against the insurgents, population and resource control, and elimination of grievances.²⁸ As will be shown in the next chapter, Thailand experienced its own difficulties in developing and applying these tasks within a COIN model appropriate to its own structural realities.

²⁸ Tom Marks "Thailand: Anatomy of a Counterinsurgency Victory." *Military Review*, January-February 2007: p.42.