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Assisting Counterinsurgency in the Philippines and Vietnam

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1. Introduction

This paper examines the role of external support to a foreign nation's counterinsurgency operations, with a focus on American security assistance during the Cold War. It develops an argument that the key elements of such a support effort are the supported counterinsurgency strategy and the possession of sufficient leverage over the host nation to bring about the implementation of that strategy. The paper has four sections. The first provides a survey of the literature on foreign assistance to counterinsurgency, noting its lack of treatment in most theoretical COIN literature. The second section introduces the paper's main argument, examining both counterinsurgency strategy and issues of leverage in inter-alliance bargaining. The following section provides two heuristic case studies that illustrate the paper's argument. The final section provides an assessment of the case studies and a conclusion.

2. The Issue

Throughout the Cold War, the United States attempted to lend political, economic and military support to "friendly" regimes that it believed were threatened by Communist-backed insurgency and subversion. Yet, even in cases that were perceived to be successful examples of this policy, scholars are split over the degree to which American assistance actually contributed to the outcome.¹ Despite the fact that the majority of America's experiences with counterinsurgency involve coming to the aid of an ally, the

¹ For example, compare divergent views on the efficacy of American aid in the Greek Civil War contained in: Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1994), pp. 515-525; Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War* (New York: NYU University Press, 1986), pp. 9-32; Anthony James Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 2000), pp. 145-188; and D. Michael Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U.S. Counterinsurgency Doctrine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 166-204.

particular challenges of working with or through a partner nation are not widely discussed in the counterinsurgency literature. As Daniel Byman has noted, “Analyses [of insurgencies] are typically bifurcated into two players: the insurgents on one hand, and the counterinsurgent forces on the other.”²

While classical counterinsurgency literature assumes that a local government and its supporting ally share common goals, priorities, and interests in regard to counterinsurgency operations, the historical record suggests this is often not the case: Maintaining power is frequently the priority for the local government and the types of economic or political reforms required to defeat an insurgency are often considered as threatening to ruling elites as the insurgents themselves.³ As a result, despite providing overwhelming amounts of money and material to its partner, the U.S. has frequently been unable to gain sufficient leverage to compel its ally to address the political and economic root causes of the insurgency.⁴

Critical analyses of American involvement in foreign counterinsurgencies have focused on the divergence of interests between the U.S. and its local ally as a key explanation for the failure of counterinsurgency support efforts in Vietnam, El Salvador

² Daniel Byman, “Going to War with the Allies You Have: Allies, Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism,” (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2006), p. 3.

³ The lack of attention paid to the role of allies can be partially explained by the fact that many of the early texts on counterinsurgency were written by British and French authors, such as Kitson, Thompson, Paget, Galula, and Trinquier, based on their experiences in the “Wars of Decolonization” in which the European powers *were* the local government.

⁴ The focus on inter-alliance relations between the U.S. and its client states in this project mirrors recent developments in the “new” historiography of the Cold War which recognizes that, far from being puppets, Third World leaders had great latitude to shape their own destinies and often were able to achieve their own policy goals at the expense of their great power patrons. See, for example, John Lewis Gaddis, “On Starting All Over Again: A Naïve Approach to the Study of the Cold War,” in O.A. Westad, ed, *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 31 and Tony Smith, “New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Fall 2000), pp. 567-591.

and elsewhere.⁵ It has been argued that, in the absence of sufficient leverage to encourage reform, American aid and support actually undercuts the local government's own incentives for reform and encourages counterinsurgency strategies based solely on force and repression.⁶ In some cases, this can result in a situation where the local ally is actually worse off than it would have been absent U.S. assistance.⁷

While these scholars are correct to highlight the importance of differing priorities and relative leverage between allies, they go too far in arguing that the asymmetry of interests possessed by the two states will necessarily preclude the United States from inducing its ally to adhere to a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy. American support efforts in the Philippines during the Hukbalahap Rebellion appears to demonstrate a degree of success in cajoling reluctant allies to undertake reforms that, while necessary for attacking some of the root causes of popular dissatisfaction, ran contrary to the interests and goals of the state's ruling elite.⁸

3. Assisting Counterinsurgency

This paper advances the argument that it is through a combination of a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy and the delivery of aid in a manner that maximizes leverage

⁵ Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms*; Benjamin Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building* (Santa Monica, Calif: RAND, 1991).

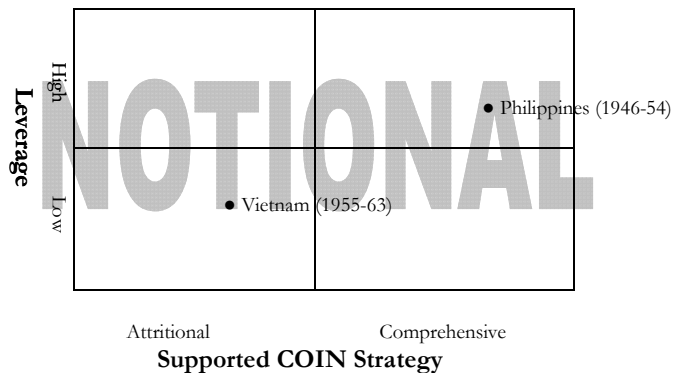
⁶ For a general critique that external aid simply maintains the status quo in a developing nation by entrenching the position of those already in power, see P.T. Bauer, *Equality, the Third World, and Economic Delusion* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 100-110. The specific issue of external support reinforcing the tendency to employ coercive measures in counterinsurgency is taken up in T. David Mason and Dale A. Krane, "The Political Economy of Death Squads: Towards a Theory of the Impact of State-Sanctioned Terror," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (June 1989), pp. 183-4.

⁷ Arguments to this effect are contained in Richard J. Barnet, *Intervention and Revolution: The United States in the Third World* (New York: World Pub. Co., 1968) and William E. Odom, *On Internal War: American and Soviet Approaches to Third World Clients and Insurgents* (London: Duke University Press, 1992).

⁸ Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 145-208; Cable, *Conflict of Myths*, pp. 44-70; Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance, 1950 to the Present* (New York: Free Press, 1977), pp. 22-40.

over the local government that effective counterinsurgency assistance can be rendered. Figure 1 demonstrates how the case studies of U.S. assistance explored here could be evaluated as a product of the interaction between these two critical factors.

Figure 1



To develop this argument, this section first briefly identifies the causes of insurgency before entering into a discussion of the principals of counterinsurgency as well as ally-patron dynamics in counterinsurgency.

3.1 Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

3.1.1 Sources of Insurgency

Definitive patterns of insurgency are difficult to identify. Walter Laqueur has noted that, as a historical phenomenon, insurgencies have displayed remarkable breadth:

Some were Communist inspired, others were not; some were led by young men, some by old; some of the leaders had military experience, others lacked it entirely; in some movements the personality of the leader was of decisive importance, in others there was a collective leadership; some wars lasted a long time, others were short; some bands were small, others big; some guerrilla movements transformed themselves into regular armies, others degenerated into banditry... Some won and some lost.⁹

Nevertheless, it is possible to make some generalizations about the sources of insurgency.

⁹ Walter Laqueur, *Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study* (Boston: Little Brown, 1976), p. 386.

Insurgencies, particularly those that emerged during the Cold War, can be said to have both root causes and proximate causes. As scholars of internal conflict have identified, root causes of internal conflict typically include some form of societal cleavage along religious, class, race or linguistic lines.¹⁰ These cleavages are often accompanied by economic or political inequality for large portions of the population and a corresponding privileged elite who seek to maintain the status quo from which they benefit. These social, economic, and political factors provide an incentive for segments of the population to favor armed violence as a means to overturn the status quo, and as such are necessary but not a sufficient condition for the outbreak of an insurgency.

The notion that insurgent movements are a spontaneous response by oppressed peoples to the presence of fundamental social or political inequality is an idealistic and simplistic view of internal conflict. For widespread discontent to transform into an active insurgency, proximate causes are also necessary. Two of the most important proximate causes are the presence of revolutionary leadership and the weakness of the state. The experiences of various revolutionary groups from Latin America to Asia suggests that the presence of what Theda Skocpol called “marginal political elites,” who are willing to seek the power and status denied to them by the state’s existing political and social structures through violence, are a key component in the development of an armed rebellion.¹¹ These frustrated elites often form the leadership of insurgent movements, even among those groups dedicated to waging revolution on behalf of the exploited

¹⁰ Lucian Pye, "Roots of Insurgency," in *Internal War*, ed. Harry Eckstein (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), p. 163.

¹¹ Theda Skocpol, "France, Russia and China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (April 1976).

masses.¹² The ability of these elites to gain support and legitimacy depends on their capacity to exploit the discontent engendered by the insurgency's root causes.

A second proximate cause of insurgency is the weakness of the state. The combination of mass discontent with frustrated elite leadership can be a powerful force, but it is one that is most effectively employed against a fragile government. Fearon and Laitin's quantitative analysis finds that the capacity of a state's security forces and the government's ability to administer rural areas are highly correlated with the occurrence of internal violence.¹³ In considering the success of insurgents in Cuba, Algeria and Nicaragua one cannot ignore the fact that their opponents were either corrupt and incompetent (Batista and Somoza) or in an advanced state of political dissolution (the Fourth Republic).¹⁴ These examples stand in marked contrast to stable governments ranging from the Philippines to Peru where strong central authority was able to survive the challenge posed by domestic insurgents.¹⁵ As Hannah Arendt noted in her study of

¹² This is particularly true in the case of Latin America as is argued in T. P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes since 1956* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). Few insurgent leaders have had humble origins, for example, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara was a doctor, Fidel Casto studied law at Havana University, Brazilian urban guerrilla Carlos Marighella had previously been a legislator while Shining Path founder Abimael Guzman had been a university lecturer. This is not phenomenon that is confined to the Americas: Ho Chi Minh attended a French prep school in Hue and was a failed applicant for the civil service while General Vo Nguyen Giap was a graduate of the University of Hanoi and had worked a history tutor in a private school. Even the agrarian Hukbalahap movement in the Philippines had elite leadership: Its military leader Luis Taruc had been a medical student and a congressman while the leader of its political wing had a Ph.D. from Columbia University and was a chemistry professor at the University of the Philippines. Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), p. 33-36.

¹³ James Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (February 2003).

¹⁴ Laqueur, *Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study*, p. 402.

¹⁵ Regime type certainly matters in this case as well. Effective, authoritarian states can act against insurgents without regard to public opinion, as the Iraqi government did when it put down the Kurdish rebellion in 1974. *Ibid.*, p. 390.

revolution, “Generally speaking, we may say that no revolution is even possible where the authority of the body politic is truly intact...”¹⁶

3.1.2 Counterinsurgency Strategy

Insurgents present a significantly different challenge for a state than do regular opponents. Modern conventional warfare, at least in its ideal sense, is fought between two or more well defined forces in an open confrontation. Battle is characterized by the employment of combined-arms operations that either seek to defeat an enemy by massing firepower on a decisive point or employing maneuver to disrupt his cohesion. In conventional warfare taking and holding decisive territory can be an important sign of progress towards a military victory that can be achieved by weakening or destroying the opposing force.

In counterinsurgency, the opponent is not a uniformed soldier, but an irregular fighter who primarily employs “hit & run” tactics against soft targets while avoiding direct confrontation with regular forces. As a result, many of the principles of conventional warfare are turned on their head. For example, the use of overwhelming firepower can be a detriment in counterinsurgency, while dispersion rather than concentration of forces can be key to success. Seizing and holding territory in counterinsurgency is meaningless if the government cannot exert control or keep the guerrillas away once its own soldiers depart the immediate area. Most importantly, the historical record suggests that internal wars require different standards of victory than conventional conflicts. While there are a few historical cases where a government

¹⁶ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1965), p. 112.

achieved an outright victory over an insurgent movement, more often, the result is a “qualified victory,” a slow tapering off of violence or some form of political compromise.

There are a variety of political or military approaches that a state can employ to respond to internal violence. For the purposes of this analysis, these are grouped into two archetypical counterinsurgency strategies: *attritional* and *comprehensive*. As with any concept in political science these are simplifications of reality, nevertheless, they do represent two distinct choices available to states.

Attritional counterinsurgency strategies focus on defeating and destroying the insurgents. Such approaches emphasize the use of military forces which is frequently employed against guerrillas in large-scale “search and destroy” operations that can make extensive use of artillery and airpower. When conducting “war amongst the people” this less discriminate use of force can be associated with significant collateral damage which often results in “an upward spiral of civilian alienation.”¹⁷ In the political realm, coercion is the primary tool for deterring insurgents. In the language of economics, this approach believes that raising the “costs” of being an insurgent or supporter will reduce the overall “supply” of insurgents.¹⁸ Dissent can be repressed through a variety of measures, including the curtailment or elimination of civil-liberties, the empowering the security

¹⁷ Gavin Bulloch, “Military Doctrine and Counterinsurgency: A British Perspective,” *Parameters*, Vol. XXVI, No. 2 (Summer 1996), p. 4. The phrase “war amongst the people” comes from Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2005).

¹⁸ The foremost articulation of this approach can be found in Nathan C. Leites and Charles Wolf, Jr., *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (Santa Monica, Calif: Rand, 1970). Other scholars who argue that repressive violence can deter popular support for insurgents include: Douglas A. Hibbs, Jr., *Mass Political Violence: A Cross-National Causal Analysis* (New York: Wiley, 1973), pp. 82-93 and David Snyder and Charles Tilly, “Hardship and Collective Violence in France, 1830 to 1960,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 37, No. 5 (October 1972), p. 527. This is not to suggest, however, that any of the scholars listed here advocate the entire range of coercive measures that are associated with the attritional strategy described above.

services to make arbitrary arrests, the harassment of legitimate political opposition, while high-profile political opponents can be arrested or killed.

Although attritional counterinsurgency strategies may appear to garner a government short-term benefits, they are frequently self-defeating in the long-run.¹⁹ The use of force does not eliminate opposition to the government, it merely suppresses it for the moment.²⁰ As Ted Gurr argues, “force threatens and angers men, especially if they believe it to be illicit...angered, they want to retaliate.”²¹ Brian Job has coined the term “insecurity dilemma” to refer to the pernicious cycle of state repression leading to alienation and radicalization of the opposition which triggers further attempts at repression.²²

In contrast to the military led approach of attritional counterinsurgency strategies, *comprehensive* strategies place a significant focus on the political realm. In this mode of thinking, insurgency is primarily a political phenomenon, and as such, any response to it must be primarily political as well. As French counterinsurgency theorist David Galula argues, “Military action is secondary to the political one, its primary purpose being to afford the political power enough freedom to work safely with the population.”²³ Reducing political violence to an acceptable level does not always require a fundamental

¹⁹ The possible exception to this are highly effective authoritarian states, like Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, or Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, where strategies have met with temporary success. As Walter Laqueur has pointed out, effective totalitarian regimes suffer from few insurgencies. Walter Laqueur, *Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study* (Boston: Little Brown, 1976), p. 390.

²⁰ A case in point can be seen in the brutal tactics employed by the Russians and later the Soviets to assert their domination over the Caucasus and Central Asia. The use of secret police, forced relocation and mass executions may have kept a lid on dissent as long as the state was strong, but as the dissolution of the Soviet Union demonstrated it did not lead to long-term internal cohesion let alone support or goodwill for the government in Moscow. cf. Robert F. Baumann, *Russian-Soviet Unconventional Wars in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Afghanistan* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1993) and Ian F. W. Beckett, “The Soviet Experience,” in Ian F. W. Beckett, ed., *The Roots of Counter-Insurgency: Armies and Guerilla Warfare 1900-1945* (London: Blandford, 1988), pp. 83-103.

²¹ T. R. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 232.

²² Brian L. Job, “The Insecurity Dilemma: National, Regime, and State Securities in the Third World,” in Brian L. Job, ed., *The Insecurity Dilemma: National Security in Third World States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992), pp. 11-35.

²³ David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), p. 88.

change in the political or economic conditions that fuel the insurgency, but the worst aspects of those conditions must be ameliorated through some type of reform.²⁴ Regardless of the nature or professed aims of an insurgent movement, economic grievances typically form a core motivation for their supporters.²⁵ Political and social dissatisfaction are also important issues, as Ted Gurr notes, a person's willingness to embrace a belief system that rationalizes violence is a product of their discontent.²⁶ Effective actions to ameliorate these types of discontent include: broadening the government to include excluded elites, holding elections, land reform, economic restructuring, improvement of civil services such as medical care or the lifting of existing restrictions on specific groups be they political, ethnic, linguistic or religious.

The emphasis on politics does not mean that comprehensive counterinsurgency strategies are simply based on concessions and reform. The use of force will be necessary as political measures can take time to take effect and there will always be a hard core of insurgents who cannot be reconciled to the government. In a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy, however, the use of force is subordinated to political action. As a result, the emphasis is on the discrete use of force that seeks to disrupt the insurgent's cohesion. Population based security strategies employing "clear and hold" tactics seek to separate the insurgents from their base of support in the population. With an area "cleared" of insurgents and the population protected from reprisals, the government can begin to reassert its control over a given area and attempt to regain the loyalty of the local people who are a critical source of intelligence.

²⁴ Joes, *Resisting Rebellion*, pp. 30-31.

²⁵ Jack A. Goldstone, "An Analytical Framework," in Jack A. Goldstone, ed., *Revolutions of the Late Twentieth Century* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 37-40.

²⁶ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, p. 208.

In selecting a counterinsurgency strategy, decision-making can be shaped by a state's structural constraints or the political preferences of ruling elites. For developing nations, both of these factors can push a besieged government towards attritional COIN strategies. States facing an insurgency often possess weak or ineffective state institutions and suffer from "declining public order, rising domestic violence, stagnating economies, and infrastructure deteriorating because of the lack of basic maintenance."²⁷ Previous research indicates that states with weak institutions tend to employ counterinsurgency strategies based on the use of indiscriminate repressive violence as they lack the resources or capacity to employ reformist strategies in the face of political opposition.²⁸ The leadership of conventional militaries may prefer attritional counterinsurgency strategies because they employ the armed forces in a manner that is similar to the types of traditional operations they train and organize themselves to execute.²⁹ Alternately, the ruling elites of a developing country may chose to pursue attritional based counterinsurgency strategies because they are unwilling to change the domestic status quo as they or their supporters are beneficiaries of their society's unequal distribution of economic or political power.³⁰

²⁷ William J. Olson, "The New World Disorder," in Max G. Manwaring, ed. *Gray Area Phenomena: Confronting the New World Disorder* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), p. 11. Similarly, James Fearon and David Laitin's study of the outbreak of internal conflict indicates that important determinants of the prospects of an insurgency include the reach of government institutions into rural areas and the level of the state's police and military capabilities. James Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (February 2003).

²⁸ Mason and Krane, "The Political Economy of Death Squads," pp. 175-198.

²⁹ This is not just true of developing nations. Andrew Krepinevich has described the U.S. Army's resistance to adapt to comprehensive counterinsurgency strategies in Vietnam. Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

³⁰ Scholars who argue that authoritarian regimes are generally resistant to reforms that redistribute wealth or political power and therefore favor repressive responses to political violence include Ted Gurr, "The Political Origins of State Violence and Terror: A Theoretical Analysis," in Michael Stohl and George A. Lopez, eds., *Government Violence and Repression: An Agenda for Research* (London: Greenwood, 1986), pp. 45-72 and James M. Sloan, "State Repression and Enforcement Terrorism in Latin America," in

Even when a government recognizes that reform measures must accompany the use of force, historically governments facing internal conflict have tended to focus largely on the military aspects of the problem, or argue that the economic and political aspects cannot be addressed until after the security situation is resolved. While such views are understandable, they are nevertheless wrong.³¹ In assisting an ally, the counterinsurgency strategy that America supports must respond to both the proximate as well as the root cause(s) of the insurgency.

3.3 *The Trouble with Allies*

Developing a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy that balances political, economic and military efforts is simply an intellectual exercise, however, if the strategy is not implemented. It is at this stage where the divergent interests between America and its local ally become most apparent (see Figure 2). The cases studied in this project suggest that the U.S. must gain sufficient leverage to compel its ally to adopt the reforms and policy changes necessary to overcome the insurgency.

Figure 2 Divergent Priorities in Internal Conflict

Counterinsurgency Objectives		
	Local Government	External Patron
Goal	Regime survival	Support threatened regime
Interests at stake	Vital	Limited. The supermajority of insurgencies occur in the periphery, which is only of limited importance to the national interests of great powers.
Relative interest in defeating insurgency	Variable. Maintaining power is the priority for the local	High. The insurgency is the primary reason that the patron is

Michael Stohl and George A. Lopez, eds., *The State as Terrorist: The Dynamics of Governmental Violence and Repression* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), pp. 83-98.

³¹ James E. Cross, *Conflict in the Shadows: The Nature and Politics of Guerrilla War* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1963), p. 98.

	government and engaging in the types of policy changes and reforms required to defeat an insurgency could be as threatening to ruling elites as the insurgents themselves.	involved in the conflict.
Political objective	Maintain independence	Provide a credible commitment to ally
Preferred means	Contain violence while preserving the social and political arrangements that favor existing elites. Employ massive military force to defeat the rebels militarily. If possible, rely extensively on Patron support to stabilize the situation, without compromising domestic arrangements.	Provide indirect aid and support (military, political, economic) that avoids direct involvement in the conflict. Encourage policy changes/reforms in the local government that will address popular grievances and increase counterinsurgency capability

Directing an ally on the “right path” can be quite difficult given the independence of the local ally. It becomes even more so when one considers the challenge of gaining sufficient leverage to compel policy change in a reluctant local partner. Despite the overwhelming military and economic power of the United States and the apparent total dependence of a local ally on U.S. support for its continued survival, American policy makers have often found themselves in the frustrating position of being unable to gain sufficient influence over the military or government of a smaller partner nation.³² To understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to consider the concept of commitments and how they can affect inter-alliance bargaining power.

In situations ranging from extended deterrence to economic negotiations, states make commitments to signal their intentions to adversaries and allies alike. In making a commitment, a state sends a message to multiple audiences, which in the context of alliances can be a double-edged sword. While a great power wants to send a clear, credible signal to a potential adversary that it intends to support and defend its ally, the

³² Robert O. Keohane, "The Big Influence of Small Allies," *Foreign Policy*, No. 2 (Spring 1971).

very act of doing so changes the power dynamic between the great power and its ally.³³ With the “prestige, honor and reputation” of the great power attached to the smaller state’s continued existence, the leverage that the power has over its ally declines in inverse proportion to the strength of that commitment.³⁴ This can lead the smaller power to free ride on its patron, under investing in its own security, or, in extreme cases, attempting to fully “pass the buck” for its security to its larger ally, confident in the notion that it is too important to be abandoned.³⁵

The literature on alliance behavior can provide insight into the dynamics that bring this about. Glenn Snyder argues that inter-alliance bargaining power is a function of three factors: the allies’ dependence on the alliance, their commitment to the alliance and their comparative interest in the issue they are bargaining over.³⁶ *Ceteris paribus*, a state’s bargaining power will be superior *vis-à-vis* an ally the lower its dependence on the alliance, the looser its commitment to the alliance and the greater its interests at stake in the negotiation.

Of these three factors, dependence is the most straightforward. A state’s dependence on an alliance is determined by the benefits received from the alliance compared to those it can obtain from alternate sources. Many who are puzzled by the idea that a weak state could possess superior leverage to a strong state in an alliance focus solely on the weak

³³ Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 432.

³⁴ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, pp. 35-91.

³⁵ For a discussion of underinvestment by smaller powers in an alliance see Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances," *The Review of Economics and Statistics* (1966). Buck-passing is significantly more common during periods of bi-polarity than in multi-polar systems as the superpowers had no option to defect or realign when their allies pass the buck. Glenn Herald Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 346.

³⁶ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, p. 166.

state's relative dependence on the alliance for security.³⁷ While it is true that "the more dependent one's partner, the greater one's power over it," the effect of dependence can be mitigated by the other two factors.³⁸

The more firmly committed a party is to an alliance, the less credible their threats to withdrawal support to their allies are, and therefore the weaker their bargaining position. This is one area where the asymmetry in power can benefit the bargaining position of the weaker ally. During the Cold War, various leaders of the United States believed it was in their strategic interest to defend free nations and "draw a line in the sand" against Communist expansion. This broader strategic interest provided the U.S. with strong incentives to ensure the continued existence and independence of its allies. By virtue of their relative weakness, however, those same allies don't necessarily feel that they need to take actions to preserve their stronger partner.³⁹ When a great power declares that it is willing to "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship" on your behalf, the logical thing for a small power to do is to sit back and let its ally do the work. In the case of South-East Asia during the Vietnam War, the result, as Robert Keohane points out, was a "cruel and ridiculous paradox [where] the United States fights in Vietnam to defend Asia from Communism, but must pay South Koreans, Thais and Filipinos to secure their participation."⁴⁰ When partnered with a stronger ally who has global commitments and interests in the preservation of the alliance, the relatively lower level of commitment (and

³⁷ For example, in an otherwise excellent analysis of the U.S. Army's role in supporting allied counterinsurgency efforts, Stephen Hosmer makes the assumption that an ally's dependence translates into leverage for the U.S. Stephen T. Hosmer, *The Army's Role in Counterinsurgency and Insurgency* (Santa Monica: Rand Corp., 1990), p. 23..

³⁸ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, p. 168.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 170.

⁴⁰ Keohane, "The Big Influence of Small Allies," p. 163.

lack of global interests) possessed by the weaker ally provides it with potential bargaining power.

The final determinant of bargaining power is the relative importance of the issue at hand for the two parties. The greater the interest relative to the ally, the greater the bargaining power possessed by the more interested party. In the course of bargaining between the U.S. and the host nation government over counterinsurgency reforms, the ally may have strong incentives to resist U.S. proposals that would threaten their power base or core supporters. Conversely, while the U.S. wants to see these reforms made, its interest in the subject doesn't approach that of the host nation government, providing the ally with more bargaining power over the issue.

Thus far the discussion appears to support the contention by Shafer, Schwartz, and others that the bargaining dynamics simply prevent the U.S. from gaining sufficient leverage over its allies to compel reform. However, as was previously discussed, the historical record indicates that the U.S. has on occasion been able to induce an ally to make the reforms necessary to defeat an insurgency. In considering this, it is important to remember that bargaining power is not a function of the actual levels of dependence, commitment and interest but rather the perceived level of those values. As a result, it is possible to take actions to alter the subjective assessment of bargaining power made by one's ally. This could come about as a result of a specific bargaining strategy or the making of other commitments that "lock in" the party to the achievement of certain goals.

In his study of the relative balance of influence between states, Richard Cottam identifies a number of passive and active "levers" that can provide one state with leverage

over another.⁴¹ For the purposes of this study, the most salient of Cottam’s “active levers” is the perceived ability to grant or withhold economic, technical and/or military assistance. A relevant parallel to the problem of how to gain sufficient leverage to induce a policy change in a counterinsurgency exists in the field of political economy where a number of scholars have studied development aid and the use of loan conditionality by international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. IFIs attempt to encourage policy reforms in the economies of developing nations by linking loans or aid to specific reforms. Future lending or aid becomes conditional on the implementation of these reforms. To facilitate enforcement, loans are often tranchéd—paid in installments, so that payments can be kept conditional on actions for a longer period with later tranches withheld if the loan conditions are not being met.⁴²

The reason that conditionality has proved necessary to encourage reform are similar to the need for leverage in counterinsurgency support: Leaders of the recipient states are not necessarily seeking to maximize the welfare of their citizens, rather they are seeking to enrich themselves and the supporters at the public’s expense—a form of rent seeking. There are suggestions that conditional aid can be a means to promote policy reform. In a model of the effects of loan conditionality on domestic policy reform, Eduardo Fernandez-Arias argues that if aid is provided when a successful reform is implemented, the commitment to provide aid in the future “unambiguously accelerates reform.”⁴³ However, these results have not met with universal acceptance and there still remains

⁴¹ Richard Cottam, *Competitive Interference and Twentieth Century Diplomacy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967), p. 84.

⁴² Allan Drazen, *Political Economy in Macroeconomics* (Princeton, N.J. ; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 608.

⁴³ Eduardo Fernandez-Arias, "Crisis, Foreign Aid, and Macroeconomic Reform" (paper presented at the fifteenth meeting of the Latin American Econometric Society, Santiago, Chile, March 1997).

some debate over the effects of aid on the pace of domestic reform.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the actual record of success of the World Bank's conditionality programs is questionable.⁴⁵ However this result may be due, in part, to the way that the conditions are structured. IFI conditionality is overwhelmingly *ex ante*—governments receive loans and aid before undertaking policy reform.⁴⁶ Once the loans or aid is received, the local government may choose not to undertake reform. Humanitarian pressures as well as organizational preferences provide the IFIs with high incentives to continue dispersing loans despite a failure by recipient government's to implement promised measures.⁴⁷ As a result, the threats to withhold aid are largely not credible.

In a theoretical model of state behavior, Allan Drazen suggests that while traditional conditionality programs have had a low success rate, it may still be possible to influence the rent-seeking behavior of local decision-makers via aid. Specifically, he argues, that giving aid or loans selectively, "only when the government begins to act cooperatively," and holding back assistance otherwise is fundamental to ending the government's rent-seeking behavior.⁴⁸ While encouraging reform in a recalcitrant government is a difficult prospect, the findings of Fernandez-Arias and Drazen do suggest that there might be some way to gain influence over a host nation's government via the way that aid and support is structured and delivered—particularly if strict *ex-post* procedures are followed.

⁴⁴ Alessandra Casella and Barry Eichengreen, "Can Foreign Aid Accelerate Stabilisation?," *The Economic Journal*, No. 106 (May 1996). finds that conditional aid may actually delay domestic reform.

⁴⁵ A study of the World Bank's own conditional loans programs by David Dollar and Jakob Svensson finds that the conditions have no impact on domestic decision-making. David Dollar and Jakob Svensson, "What Explains the Success or Failure of Structural Adjustment Programmes?," *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 110, No. 466 (October 2000).

⁴⁶ Van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999*, p. 214.

⁴⁷ On the humanitarian pressures faced by IFIs, see *Ibid.*, p. 224.. For more on the incentive structures of IFIs, see Paul Mosley, Jane Harrigan, and J. F. J. Toye, *Aid and Power: The World Bank and Policy-Based Lending* (London: Routledge, 1995).

⁴⁸ Allan Drazen, "What Is Gained by Selectively Withholding Foreign Aid?," (working paper: University of Maryland and NBER: April 1999), p. 19.

That is to say that the provision of all assistance is made conditional on specific reforms or policy actions.⁴⁹ Unlike World Bank conditionality programs, assistance should only be delivered after a given reform is made, not before.

Having laid out the deductive logic of the importance of a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy and leverage in providing assistance to an ally's counterinsurgency effort, the following section explores the validity of these propositions in two heuristic case studies.

4. Heuristic Case Studies

This section briefly explores two case studies of U.S. assistance to allied counterinsurgency efforts in Southeast Asia, one successful (the Philippines) and one unsuccessful (Vietnam) to examine the interaction of strategy and leverage.

4.1 Philippines 1949-1953

The end of the Second World War found the Philippine economy devastated and its society marked by deep divisions between the politically dominant land-holding classes and the peasantry. Rural unrest in the post-war period centered on the *Hukbong Mapagpalaya na Bayan*, an amalgam of a peasant rights movement and the Philippine Communist Party that had come together to wage guerrilla war against the Japanese

⁴⁹ Such an approach has not often been undertaken. As Bruce Moon reports, only rarely has foreign aid been linked to specific political concessions. Bruce E. Moon, "Consensus or Compliance? Foreign-Policy Change and External Dependence," *International Organization*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (1985). For general works that explore the role of positive incentives as policy instruments for responding to security challenges, see David Cortright, *The Price of Peace: Incentives and International Conflict Prevention* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), Daniel W. Drezner, *The Sanctions Paradox: Economic Statecraft and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Thomas Bernauer and Dieter Ruloff, ed., *The Politics of Positive Incentives in Arms Control* (Columbia, SC: Univ of South Carolina Press, 1999).

occupation. In the immediate post-war environment, the Huks, as they were known, in alliance with several left-wing parties attempted to bring about reforms of the highly distorted socio-economic structure of Philippine society by working through the political system. Such attempts at reform, however, were met with political obstruction and physical repression by the Filipino government.

As discontent mounted, the Huks began to take up arms and return to their guerrilla ways to both resist the attacks from the government and the private armies of wealthy landowners, and to seek the overthrow of the administration of President Elpidio Quirino. In the 1949 Presidential election, Quirino was returned to power in a ballot marked by widespread evidence of voter intimidation and outright fraud. A stolen election perpetuated by a government that was already guilty of corruption, favoritism and abuse of power drove anti-Quirino Filipinos into the arms of the Huks.

By late 1949, the insurgent movement was estimated to have 15,000 full time guerrillas, 100,000 political cadres and over a million peasant sympathizers. Organized into company-sized units of 100 fighters, the Huks ambushed police patrols, raided towns and carried out an assassination campaign against rural landlords. Displaying a relatively high degree of cohesion, the Huks were capable of carrying out multiple simultaneous operations by units of 300-500 men against widely disbursed targets.

The Filipino government initially dismissed the Huk violence as mere banditry and charged the Philippine Constabulary, a national para-military police force under control of the Ministry of the Interior, with restoring order. Poorly trained with a reputation for corruption and brutalizing citizens, the Constabulary's campaign against the Huks pushed the rural population closer to the insurgents as they employed collective punishment and

even burned down whole villages suspected of pro-Huk sympathies. After the liberation of the Philippines, the U.S. government had largely ignored the Huks, but by 1949, the growing Huk success, compounded by the defeat of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists in China and the outbreak of the communist insurgency in Malaya compelled the United States to take an active role in assisting the Philippine government's counterinsurgency campaign. The situation in the Philippines appeared to be all the more urgent in the wake of the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950.

From the start the U.S. advocated a comprehensive COIN strategy; military action had to be complemented by reform in the political and economic spheres. The Philippine government only appeared to be concerned with furthering the interests of the country's landed elites—a situation that would have to be altered to address the causes of rural instability. The need for both military and political action was recognized and advocated by both the State Department and the Department of Defense, both at the country level and in Washington, which allowed the United States to pursue a unified strategy and to present a consistent message to the Filipino government. Furthermore, given the endemic corruption in the Philippine government, aid would be conditioned on the implementation of specific reforms, with first priority being given to efforts to improve the state's military capacity. Significantly, the U.S. did not deploy military advisors or trainers on a large scale as it was concerned about “Americanizing” the conflict.⁵⁰

In return for the increased aid requested by the Philippine government, the U.S. required that the JUSMAG, have a share in defense decision-making, that the Philippine Constabulary be reorganized and placed under the control of the Philippine Armed Forces

⁵⁰ At its height, the American military mission to the Philippines, the Joint United States Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG), consisted of 58 officers and men.

(PAF) and that Ramon Magsaysay, a respected independent Congressman and veteran of the anti-Japanese guerrilla resistance, be appointed as Secretary of Defense. Rather than push for a package deal, each of these reforms was tied to specific tranches of aid and addressed in turn. The Philippine government was extremely angry that its ally would not immediately provide it with the aid it desperately needed, and the PAF Chief of Staff criticized the Americans for linking military aid to a reorganization of the security forces. However, the United States refused to grant the Philippines a “blank check” for the attritional counterinsurgency campaign.

In December 1949, the first of the conditioned reforms was executed when the Philippine government agreed to a joint military program that allowed U.S. military personnel attached to the JUSMAG a say in decision-making. This development resulted in the accelerated delivery of the first tranche of military aid.

The JUSMAG had long argued that the primary responsibility for counterinsurgency operations should be given to the respected PAF rather than the widely despised Constabulary. Not only were the Constabulary’s heavy-handed methods a source of discontent in the population, but they had been a major tool by which the election fraud of 1949 had been perpetuated. These two factors made it extremely unlikely that the Constabulary could win the respect and popular support necessary to succeed against the Huks. When the Americans first pushed Quirino to reorganize the Constabulary he attempted to placate them, in an effort to gain the tied military aid by agreeing to reorganize and then delaying implementation. When that failed, he attempted a partial reorganization that left operational control of the Constabulary in the hand of the Interior Ministry, which staunchly supported the interests of the landlord class. The Americans

refused to give in to partial measures and insisted on full implementation of the reforms before the associated military aid was provided. As a result, in July 1950, the Constabulary was downsized and integrated into the PAF, and the next day the U.S. delivered a major shipment of military supplies.

A falling out with his Secretary of Defense in August 1950 over the promotion of party loyalists within the Philippine Armed Forces and the lack of military success against the Huks, led Quirino to attempt to take over the defense portfolio himself—a move which many feared would lead to the end of civil government in the Philippines. When the State Department, the Embassy and the JUSMAG made it clear that increases in military aid depended on Magsaysay's appointment to the vacant post, Quirino acquiesced. The appointment of Magsaysay opened the door to a further overhaul of the Philippine defense establishment. American advisors suggested that the PAF be structured for internal security duties by reorganizing it into 1,000 man Battalion Combat Teams (BCT), a move that Magsaysay quickly endorsed. Each of the BCTs was assigned to a specific geographic area where it provided static defense against Huk violence while dispatching small six-man patrols to detect and harry the Huk formations. The effectiveness of the BCTs was enhanced by a streamlining of the PAF's command & control and intelligence structures.

Magsaysay gave high priority to ensuring that the BCTs had sufficient logistical support so that units in the field did not have to forage or steal supplies from the local population—which had been a significant source of friction with the peasantry. Unannounced inspections, a purge of over 400 incompetent officers and the inculcation of the notion of service to civilians across the AFP improved the public's confidence in

the military, which enhanced its ability to win the trust of the peasantry that formed the Huk's support base. The benevolent perception of the PAF was further bolstered when Magsaysay established a telegram service for peasants to report abuses by the military, assigned military lawyers to provide free legal assistance to poor farmers involved in disputes with landlords, and deployed the armed forces on "civic action" missions to repair roads, dig wells, and distribute medical supplies.

A key propaganda tool employed by Magsaysay was the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) program, which offered amnesty and free land to Huks who rallied to the government's side. Although only a very small number of Filipinos actually benefited from the program, it created a perception that issues of land reform were being addressed, which stole supporters from the Huks.

Although positive, these developments took time to have an effect on counterinsurgency operations. Throughout the middle of 1950, the Philippine government was on the strategic defensive as the Huks, operating in brigade-sized formations of 1,000 men, captured towns and villages—some less than 50 miles from Manila. By early 1951 the U.S. assistance program faced a dilemma. Despite Magsaysay's efforts to date, there were still abuses and corruption within the PAF. The U.S. wanted to reward and encourage Magsaysay's aggressive efforts, but was worried that a significant extension of military aid might undercut the conditionality being applied in the economic and political spheres and lessen the Filipino government's willingness to undertake the tough measures required by the comprehensive approach. At the same time, the Quirino government was complaining that it was undertaking difficult reforms with little to show for it. The U.S. decided to bolster Magsaysay's efforts by providing

\$10 million to raise new BCTs, while maintaining conditions on military aid that was contingent on rooting out corruption in the PAF—particularly the PAF Chief of Staff, General Castenada. Further reforms of the armed forces were carried out through the summer of 1951 which resulted in the release of additional military aid from the United States. As the PAF increased in both effectiveness and size (expanding from 32,000 to 56,000 between 1950 and 1952) it began to gain the upper hand against the Huks—significantly curtailing their activities and effectiveness.

In the face of an armed rebellion, the fragile post-war economy of the Philippines necessitated direct American aid to prevent its collapse. In keeping with their strategy, however, the U.S. linked such aid to reform in the economic sphere that would contribute to rural development, stabilize the economy, and reduce support for the Huks. Such measures included increased wages for agricultural workers, a more equitable income tax system, reform of the civil service, public health programs, and measures to improve rural infrastructure and agricultural production. Aware of the widespread corruption and inefficiency of the Filipino government, the U.S. insisted on the right to supervise the implementation of such programs. The Quirino government publically decried the intrusive monitoring demands made by the U.S., but the Americans stuck to their conditioned approach to aid. Eventually a deal was struck and reform programs were initiated, although they moved forward at an uneven pace.

As with the conditioned military aid, the Quirino government attempted to get the U.S. to release economic aid on the promise of reform rather than its actual implementation. Despite the desperate financial situation faced by its client, the U.S. insisted that reform precede assistance. In this manner, a balanced budget and the

passage of minimum wage legislation was rewarded with a grant of \$50 million in economic assistance in April 1951, which funded programs to increase the production of food and export crops, provide credit for tenant farmers and raise rural living conditions.

Given the role that the fraudulent elections of 1949 played in bolstering support for the Huks, the comprehensive strategy advocated by the U.S. included efforts to liberalize the Philippines political system. In particular, attention was focused on the 1951 elections for the Philippine Senate. Although military efforts and aspects of Magsaysay's hearts and minds campaign were reducing the Huk threat, the Americans feared that a repeat of the 1949 election would radicalize the political opposition and expand grassroots support for armed resistance to the government. The U.S. undertook a number of overt and covert steps to ensure a fair election. In addition to making it known to all political parties that it would be clearly monitoring the conduct of the election, Embassy personnel arranged for Magsaysay and the AFP to provide security at the polls. On the covert side, the CIA provided funds to establish an NGO, the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) that would educate the Philippine public about free elections and serve as a non-partisan election "watchdog." The result was an extremely free election by Filipino standards, which delivered an overwhelming defeat for candidates from Quirino's ruling Liberal party. While this outcome certainly frustrated the government, the demonstration that political change could be achieved within the Filipino system was an important setback for the Huks.

In the wake of their electoral defeat, the Liberal party attempted to reverse a number of the reforms that had undercut their grip on power. In particular, they attempted to separate the Constabulary, which had been an effective tool in bringing about the political

fraud of 1949, from the PAF by arguing that their consolidation put too much power in the hands of the Secretary of Defense. Magsaysay's role in guaranteeing the honesty of the 1951 election also came under fire from Liberals who demanded that he be removed from office for having been "partisan" during the election campaign. The U.S. moved to diffuse both issues by heaping public praise on Quirino and Magsaysay for their role in bringing about a fair election while communicating via the JUSMAG that removing the Philippine Constabulary from the PAF would result in reduced military assistance. A further attempt to bolster Magsaysay's fortunes took place in June 1952 when he was invited to Washington to meet with President Truman.

American efforts to ensure that reforms "stuck" were met with the machinations of Liberal party bosses who sought to bolster their own position ahead of the 1953 Presidential election by ousting Magsaysay and reappointing General Castenada, who had been removed for corruption, as the head of the PAF. If the Constabulary could not be controlled, why not the entire military? As with the 1951 election, there was a widespread fear among American observers that a fraudulent result could provoke violence and that Quirino, who was standing again, had little chance of winning in an honest vote.

Aware of Quirino's many failings, in addition to his slow progress on key social and economic reforms, the U.S. looked favorably on Magsaysay as an alternate candidate. In March 1953 Magsaysay resigned as Secretary of Defense over the government's neglect of the reforms necessary to address the problems of the rural poor that were being championed by the Huks. In a deal secretly brokered by the U.S., Magsaysay was nominated as the Presidential candidate of the opposition Nationalista party while several

prominent Liberal party bosses were persuaded to defect and throw their support behind the opposition. Going beyond the expression of concern voiced in 1951, the American ambassador explicitly warned Quirino that the U.S. Congress would terminate both military and economic aid to any Philippine government that took office through fraud.

The Liberal party refused to back down, launching a campaign of harassment of opposition candidates and NAMFREL employees, while persisting in their attempts to gain control over the Philippine Constabulary. Quirino's government attempted to put counter-pressure on the United States by demanding that the Ambassador and other senior embassy personnel who were perceived to be pro-Magsaysay, be recalled and threatening to withdraw the Filipino contingent fighting in Korea. When these measures failed to achieve their desired effect, false ballots were prepared, gangs of recently released prisoners were recruited to intimidate voters, and Liberal party loyalists were appointed to key positions in the Constabulary.

Magsaysay's dynamic populist campaign that reached out to the average Filipino was a stark contrast to Quirino's machine politics. To ensure a fair ballot, the U.S. bolstered NAMFREL and deployed JUSMAG officers and U.S. journalists as poll watchers—against the express wishes of the Filipino government. The end result was a landslide victory for Magsaysay who won twice as many votes as Quirino. On the insurgent front, the combination of vigorous military action, restoration of public faith in the political process and a degree of social/economic reform undercut the Huk's mandate. By 1954, a majority of the Huk's supporters had decided to wage their campaign through the ballot box, while small bands of holdouts retreated to the rural fringes. The following year less than 1,000 Huk guerrillas remained under arms.

4.2 Vietnam 1961-1963

Throughout the later 1950s, the U.S. backed government of Ngo Dinh Diem was increasingly challenged by internal instability. Even before Hanoi lent its support to “armed resistance” in 1959, Diem’s government faced opposition to its highly centralized authoritarian style of governance that relied heavily on a clique of family members and fellow Catholics. While Diem was respected as a nationalist, many of those around him were perceived to be corrupt cronies. The South Vietnamese government’s anti-communist campaigns, which relied heavily on the use of secret police and extrajudicial powers, nearly wiped out the Vietminh/Viet Cong in the South in the mid-1950s, but also indiscriminately targeted opposition leaders and other nationalists who were not loyal to the regime.

When armed insurgency broke out in South Vietnam, the security forces were hard pressed to respond effectively. The Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), which had been constructed on a U.S. model, consisted of seven divisions and four armored regiments totaling 150,000 men. The primary mission of the ARVN, as conceived by the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), was to defend the country against external aggression. Providing internal security in Vietnam was the 50,000 man paramilitary Civil Guard and a part-time local militia called the Self-Defense Corps (SDC) that protected individual villages. Although many counterinsurgency theorists emphasize the importance of para-military forces and local militias in counterinsurgency these forces received only sporadic assistance and training. This lack of internal security capacity forced the ARVN to assume counterinsurgency duties for which it was not well trained. The primary method employed was a conventional multi-battalion search-and-

destroy operation featuring preparatory artillery fire. Although paying lip-service to the imperatives of counter-guerrilla warfare, the ARVN's approach was largely endorsed by American military advisors who believed that the best way to defeat guerrillas was to use fire and maneuver to "find, fix, fight and finish" them. These operations, which could inflict considerable collateral damage on local peasants, rarely encountered VC guerrillas who simply withdrew for a time and returned once the ARVN left. The ARVN's counterinsurgency operations frequently occurred during the day and tended to avoid intensive patrolling, small unit operations or night-time missions. By late 1960 it was estimated that the VC's full time guerrillas and part-time militia totaled 15,000 men under arms.

Upon taking office, the Kennedy administration was made aware of the deteriorating security situation in South Vietnam and the need to take action to prevent a communist takeover. The administration's first response was the Counterinsurgency Plan (CIP). Drawn up during the final year of the Eisenhower administration, the CIP offered the South Vietnamese Government funding to expand the ARVN by 20,000 men to 170,000 and increase the paramilitary civil guard by 32,000. The CIP also provided aid for psychological warfare and covert action against North Vietnam. In return for this support, Washington asked Diem to broaden his political base, reduce corruption, restore a coherent military chain of command and initiate civic action programs in the provinces. Secretary of State Rusk instructed the U.S. ambassador Elbridge Durbrow to inform the South Vietnamese Government that the aid was contingent on liberalization in South Vietnam.

Diem responded to the initial U.S. proposal with a flurry of announcements of impending administrative reforms that would devolve power in the government at the national and local levels. There would be little follow-through on these proposals, however. Meanwhile, Diem resisted the American pressure for true power-sharing in the government. As the negotiations between the U.S. and South Vietnam over the CIP drug on, the Kennedy administration was increasingly annoyed by the lack of progress, while Diem responded to U.S. pressure by going on the offensive. He publically charged that the U.S. was refusing to provide South Vietnam with the aid it needed to defend itself and claimed that Washington failed to understand the problems facing his government.

Diem's continued recalcitrance paid off. Durbrow's arguments that Washington should strictly condition the military aid provided under the CIP on Saigon's implementation of key economic and political reforms came to an end in March 1961 as he was replaced by Fredrick Nolting, who was instructed to win Diem's trust by assuring him of complete U.S. support. This was followed in May by a visit to Vietnam by Vice-President Johnson who proclaimed strong American support for Diem. The deteriorating situation in neighboring Laos prompted Kennedy to move ahead on aid to Vietnam despite the lack of reform. The MAAG concurred with this action, arguing that military aid should not have to wait on difficult political or social reforms. NSAM-52 authorized military, political, and economic support to the South Vietnamese Government. This included the 20,000 man expansion of the ARVN and MAAG training of the Civil Guard. In effect, Diem won the support promised under the CIP without having to implement any of its reform measures.

Another round of cosmetic reforms in the South Vietnamese government followed the announcement of the U.S. assistance package. Dissatisfaction at the superficial reforms undertaken by Saigon led six South Vietnamese diplomats to resign in protest at the clear sign that Diem intended no change in his method of governing. In the wake of the expanded U.S. commitment and public expression of support for the South Vietnamese government, the U.S. found itself with less influence over Diem.

Less than a month later, the U.S. received an aid request from the South Vietnamese government asking for support to expand the ARVN by 100,000 men. The South Vietnamese military was having a hard time coping with increased infiltration of communist cadres via Laos. Once the security situation was stabilized, Diem promised, he could implement the political and social reforms that the U.S. was calling for. The U.S. agreed to finance a further 30,000 man expansion of the ARVN (bringing end strength to 200,000), but deferred a decision on the remainder of Diem's request. Officials from State and AID urged Kennedy to insist on attaching conditions to U.S. aid such as delegation of authority in the South Vietnamese government and land distribution measures that they believed would strengthen the government's political situation. In a letter to Diem, Kennedy made it clear that implementation of these measures would guarantee that South Vietnam would be one of the "highest priorities" for his administration.

Diem's objections to the idea of conditions being put on U.S. aid found sympathy with Ambassador Nolting who believed that the immediate provision of aid without conditions was necessary to maintain the "momentum and confidence" of the American-South Vietnamese relationship. In response to the objections, Secretary of State Rusk

decided to revise the bargain that Kennedy had offered: the military and economic aid would go ahead, but the political and social actions that the U.S. had been pressing for would be set aside to be negotiated at a later date.

Throughout the fall of 1961 large-scale battalion sized operations by VC guerrillas marked a rapid deterioration of South Vietnam's security situation, leading Diem to declare a state of emergency in October. An interagency compromise between State and Defense produced a "limited partnership" approach to the fresh crisis. In return for a substantial increase in military trainers and the provision of American aircraft and helicopters, the U.S. expected to move beyond advising to exercise a role in decision-making with the South Vietnamese government during the on-going conflict. Unlike in the past, this expansion of support was tied to the completion of outstanding reforms such as the rationalization of the ARVN's command structure and the inclusion of opposition elements into government. Diem rebuffed the proposal stating that South Vietnam would not become a protectorate, but the U.S. held firm on the conditionality aspects of the aid. As before, Diem attempted to exert counter-leverage on the U.S., this time approaching France and Taiwan as alternate sources of military equipment and trainers. After the U.S. sweetened the deal with an additional \$160m in aid, an agreement was reached by Ambassador Nolting in a marathon bargaining session. The joint agreement made it clear that the South Vietnamese government would take specified steps to increase its efficiency and public support before the U.S. provided it financial and military support.

Despite the hard won battle to convince Diem to accept strict conditions on American aid, U.S. began to undermine its position almost immediately by rushing military aid and personnel (the number of advisors more than tripled from 900 to 3,000

during 1961) into South Vietnam rather than waiting for the agreed reforms to be undertaken. The improved firepower and mobility provided by U.S. aircraft and equipment allowed the ARVN to take the offensive in the first half of 1962, which put American pressure for implementation of the political and economic aspects of the counterinsurgency effort on the back burner. American advisors believed that this additional aid would allow the ARVN to undertake decisive offensive operations against the Viet Cong. The VC threat also appeared to be kept in check by Diem's Strategic Hamlet program. A variant of the "clear and hold" strategy whereby areas cleared of VC activity by the ARVN would be secured through the construction of fortified villages that could be defended by the local SDC detachment supported by the Civil Guard. Civic action programs and aggressive policing in these fortified villages would, in theory, win popular support and eliminate the communists support base. Although solid in theory, the program was implemented in a haphazard manner that undercut its effectiveness. Rather than securing areas with the least VC activity and then slowly expanding the secure area in keeping with the "oil spot" principle, the Strategic Hamlets were widely scattered around the country and were often focused on areas with extremely high VC concentration. As a result, the poorly trained and poorly equipped Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps were unable to provide effective security and many of the hamlets were fully penetrated by communist agents. At the time, however, none of these shortcomings were apparent.

By the middle of the year, however, the apparent battlefield successes led officials in State and AID to argue that Diem should be pressed for implementation of the reforms he had agreed to in December. This concern about the insurgency's root causes was coupled

with a string of reports from the field on the various administrative and security shortcomings of South Vietnam's counterinsurgency operations. A series of fact-finding missions dispatched by Kennedy delivered pessimistic assessments of the situation in South Vietnam: the lack of political liberalization was hurting the counterinsurgency effort, the strategic hamlet program was a "sham," and the ARVN's large-scale sweep operations backed by artillery and airstrikes were proving ineffective against the VC guerrillas. The CIA reported that the politicization of the officer corps was hindering ARVN effectiveness, and that after the massive injection of U.S. aid, equipment, and advisors, South Vietnam was barely "holding its own" in "a steadily escalating stalemate."

In 1963 U.S. policy was overtaken by the unfolding conflict between Diem's government and South Vietnam's sizeable Buddhist minority. Demonstrations against perceived religious discrimination spread throughout the country after a clash between Buddhist protestors and the ARVN in Hue turned violent. A series of self-immolations by Buddhist monks attracted international attention for Vietnam's "Buddhist crisis." Serving as a rallying point for anti-Diem sentiment, the Buddhist protestors attracted the support of students, urban elites and even some Catholics and government employees. With congressional pressure on the Kennedy administration mounting over this issue, the U.S. made it clear to Diem that a failure to reach an accommodation with the Buddhists could result in the suspension of U.S. aid. The threat spurred the South Vietnamese government to reach an accord with the protestors, however, as with promises of reform in the past, implementation of the agreement was plagued by delays. Instead of

reconciliation, the SVG renewed its crackdown on dissent—declaring martial law and arresting nearly 1,500 Buddhist leaders on a single day.

In an effort to bring about a change in the South Vietnamese government's behavior, the U.S. initiated a slow-down of all non-military aid, while Kennedy told Walter Cronkite in a television interview that that South Vietnam would almost certainly lose its fight with the communists unless there were “changes in policy” and “perhaps personnel” in Saigon. America was sending a signal that its commitment to the Diem government was in question. Once again, American pressure triggered more promises of reforms that were not delivered.

After a series of fact-finding missions to Vietnam, the administration decided to apply a more significant short-term pressure to the regime. In a series of targeted aid cuts, the U.S. suspended the Commercial Import Fund, which accounted for 40% of South Vietnam's imports and AID loans for several major infrastructure projects. In addition, all aid to the Vietnamese Special Forces, which were under the command of Diem's brother and had been used by the government to attack dissidents, would be withheld until they were deployed on the battlefield and placed under the command of the Joint General Staff. It was hoped that the tangible reduction in the American commitment to South Vietnam would spur Diem to undertake the liberalization that would gain the popular support necessary to win the war. Restoration of the U.S. aid was made contingent on a host of specific military and political actions that would allow the South Vietnamese government to better prosecute the war against the Viet Cong: increased tempo of ARVN operations, employment of “clear and hold” operations to root out Viet Cong infrastructure, better training for the Civil Guard and SDC, an end to

arbitrary arrests and brutal interrogation methods, a new land reform program and the appointment of opposition politicians to the government.

Once again, the South Vietnamese government dug in for “a protracted war of attrition with the United States” to resist the pressure for reform. As October drew on, however, there were signs that the pressure was having a positive effect. Diem began putting out feelers to gauge the American’s resolve, as internal Vietnamese assessments indicated that Saigon “could not go on” without U.S. assistance. When it became clear that America was standing firm, the South Vietnamese government suddenly announced that the Vietnamese Special Forces would be placed under the command of the Joint General Staff and deployed on counterinsurgency operations—a key U.S. demand. Soon after Diem reached out to the U.S. ambassador in a manner that suggested the pressure was having an effect and that he was gradually more open to the U.S. proposals. The extent of Diem’s willingness to compromise is unknown, however, as his failure to build a significant support base in the population caught up with him on November 2nd, 1963, when he was overthrown and killed by dissident ARVN generals.⁵¹ A series of weak military governments in Saigon and a deteriorating security situation in the countryside led President Johnson to commit American ground troops eighteen months later and open a new chapter in the Vietnam War.

5. Assessment and Conclusion

The two cases explored here show significantly different approaches to a recalcitrant client government facing internal instability. In the case of the Philippines, the United States viewed the Huk rebellion as a challenge that’s political and military roots were

⁵¹ Due to space constraints the issue of tacit U.S. support for Diem’s ouster is not taken up here.

intertwined. This view was shared by all U.S. personnel both civilian and military, in Manila and in Washington, which led to unified support for a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy. The Americans pushed for military efforts based on small-unit action and the discriminate use of force while pressing for complementary economic and political reform. To compel its ally to undertake the military and political measures necessary to overcome the insurgent challenge, the U.S. strictly linked its aid to concrete “reforms” and only provided such assistance ex post. In the face of protest and complaint by the client government the U.S. maintained its approach, refusing to accept mere promises of reform or half-measures. Such actions may appear to be highly intrusive, but they were necessary to protect the host nation from itself, particularly when the inclination of the Quirino government was to rely on force and political repression to defeat the Huks. In the Philippine case, commitment to an ally was not a commitment to a specific government or individual. When more robust leadership presented itself, the U.S. did not hesitate to support the political opposition, even going as far as to take actions that could be considered covert subversion a friendly government.

In Vietnam, the political and administrative failings of the Diem government were noted, but significant pressure was rarely brought to bear to push the client to change its behavior. Aid programs were notionally cast as exchanges of assistance for reform, but Diem was never held to account for his failure to deliver on his promises. The ad-hoc and piecemeal nature of the American approach to Diem’s government resulted, in part, from deep divisions over the best way to deal with Saigon. Some in the State Department, most notably Ambassador Durbrow, argued that the political aspects of the struggle were paramount and therefore assistance should be strictly conditioned on the

South Vietnamese Government's performance; while others, such as Ambassador Nolting, Ed Lansdale and much of the DoD, believed that the military struggle deserved priority and a blank check and unconditional support was the way to win Diem's trust. This lack of a unified approach and vision allowed Diem to exploit the divisions within the U.S. government to avoid pressure to change policies or reform. In the end, the American approach favored unconditional support, but it failed to deliver results. The lack of political efforts was compounded by the conventional focus of American military assistance which proved unsuitable for battle against the Viet Cong.

There are a number of significant differences between the Philippine and Vietnam cases, including the scope of the troubles facing the incumbent governments and the degree of external support for the insurgents, however, in comparing the two it would appear that the use of strictly conditioned aid and narrow commitments to a client government in support of a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy represents a more successful approach than unconditioned aid and (apparently) unlimited commitments to an attritional counterinsurgency campaign.