

# Managing Insurgencies: How Did Some Insurgencies Get Resolved While Many Others Go On For A Long Time?

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## ABSTRACT

Title: Managing Insurgencies: How Did Some Insurgencies Get Resolved While Many Others Go On For A Long Time?

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Insurgencies are contests of wills and wits between people. Knowing who those people are, and understanding what they want (intent and desired outcomes), why they want it (motivation), and how they intend to achieve it (strategy, tactics, structure, resources) should naturally be a key focus in the bid to understand an insurgency and what needs to be done to counter it. In counter-insurgency (COIN), it is, thus, sensible to begin with, and maintain, a stakeholder analysis.

To defeat or end an insurgency, my hypotheses are as follow:

1. Addressing the intent and motivation of the insurgents or their supporters would provide the most enduring solution to the insurgency. Many COIN forces simply treat insurgency like any other crime, and thus fail miserably. ‘Addressing’ could mean providing alternative, making it irrelevant, or satisfying it fully or partially within acceptable boundaries.
2. Denying insurgents a secured environment to plan, coordinate, prepare, train, amass war material, and move freely in the shadow will make their operation untenable. It will be extremely helpful to discern what constitutes this “water insurgent-fishes swim in”, and who, if anyone, makes it possible, and how it could be made unsuitable for the insurgents.
3. Insurgents need tangible resources (e.g. weapons, funding, recruitment, and food etc) and support (e.g. intelligence, training) to attack and evade capture. Identifying the sources of these tangible resources and supports and denying them from the insurgents will help win the fight. [note: providing security to insurgent is also a tangible support, addressed separately as point 2 above due to its great significance]
4. Perception is a key basis of decision, thus action. Actively anticipating and shaping perceptions of key stakeholders is, thus, a powerful tool for counter-insurgency success.

## **PREFACE**

Counter insurgency is a different ballgame from trench warfare and manoeuvre warfare type of combat. The enemy is always in the dark, and hidden among people whom one often can't clearly discern whether they were friendly or hostile. He could, at different moment, switch back and forth between being be a law abiding citizen and someone who would slit throats without warning. COIN forces would likely have relatively overwhelming firepower, but which alone couldn't bring overwhelming victory quickly. If you ever find the bad guy, you might not be able to shoot him, even if he were to be shooting at you, for the bunch of people he is standing beside might be innocent, or not. If you do shoot and get him, you might not have won, for the effect to the larger war is not known yet. Such is the fight called counter-insurgency.

Nevertheless, counter-insurgency is still about the clash of wills and wits between people. To understand an insurgency, we have to, first, try to understand who the major players are, and the thoughts that make them click. The thoughts and decisions that determine their action are heavily driven by their perception of issues. To win in counter insurgency, one must attempt to anticipate and shape those perceptions that would influence the decision and action of these major stakeholders in the conflict, ultimately leading to condition favourable for ending the insurgency. It would be useful for COIN forces to pay attention to this often poorly appreciated domain.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background and Importance of the Problem**

Many regions and countries have been plagued by insurgencies, including Singapore in the past, and Thailand at present. Countless people suffer. Many lives have been, and will continue to be, lost. Countries pay blood, treasure, and energy dealing with them. Some succeed in resolving or defeating the insurgencies. Many are condemned to prolonged suffering, while some even have their future as a country destroyed.

In addition, in this age of globalisation, security problems spread easily. We have seen terrorism exported from troubled region such as Afghanistan. We are still experiencing security threat and crimes resulting from failed state, such as the piracy threat in the Gulf of Aden. It is, therefore, in the interest of the affected countries, as well as the international community, to see insurgencies resolved quickly and amicably. This research is intended to contribute to the knowledge and understanding in how some insurgencies could be resolved successfully.

Insurgencies are contests of wills and wits between people. Knowing who those people are, and understanding what they want (intent and desired outcomes), why they want it (motivation), and how they intend to achieve it (strategy, tactics, structure, resources) should naturally be a key focus in the bid to understand an insurgency and what needs to be done to counter it. In counter-insurgency (COIN), it is, thus, sensible to begin with, and maintain, a stakeholder analysis, and take into consideration all key stakeholders, instead of singularly focussing on eliminating insurgents. In every insurgency, there will at least be 3 major groups of stakeholders, namely:

1. The insurgents - which might be more than one group, and might include their political mechanism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that if insurgents or their backer have the combat strength to fight and win with a head on major battle, the strategy must be ready for that. Lest forces dispersed in smaller pockets for COIN activities might be fundamentally surprised. One good example was the Vietnam War, where insurgency fought with the Viet Congs had to be done in tandem with readiness to face the large North Vietnamese Army.



2. The COIN Forces and their political institutions.<sup>2</sup>

3. The population - which the contesting parties seek to control. This might require further sub-categorising into friendly, neutral, unknown, and hostile, for more effective COIN actions, more appropriate COIN forces behaviours, or better force protection tactics.

In addition, there might or might not be other stakeholders, such as other armed militias that are not insurgent, external supporters of the insurgents, or even stakeholders like religious / ethnic bodies that could control or influence the insurgents or COIN forces. At times, insurgents' motivations and capabilities could be sustained or fuelled by the other stakeholders. In essence, any major grouping of players that could seriously influence the outcome of the insurgency must be analysed and taken into account. For example, an analysis finding a segment of a population actively supporting the insurgents' capacity to attack might suggest a need for population control. On the other hand, a population that is intimidated into supporting or condoning insurgents should be protected instead of controlled. Similarly, an external group identified to be instigating or providing material support would require a corresponding strategy by the COIN forces. Wrongly identifying the problem could lead to ineffective COIN effort, or worse, create conditions detrimental to COIN success. Regardless, winning the support of the population will always be critical, at least in terms of denying insurgents the freedom of congregation and movement. It, however, might not always be the sole focus, as many cases had shown us that insurgencies could still be sustained even if the insurgents did not have meaningful support from the population.

In rare instances, there might be a clear centre of gravity that held the largest sway in ending the insurgency, such as the capture of the leader, Guzmán, which caused the disintegration of Abimael Guzmán's Sendero Luminoso, or Shining Path that threatened Peru from 1980 to 1992.<sup>3</sup> More often than not, however, it is the interactions of logics of a few major players' that would dictate the direction of the insurgency and how a

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<sup>2</sup>Note that a COIN primarily driven by an external power, and conducted by security forces not under control of the affected government will require those armed forces and political institution to be designated as separate stakeholders.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, & Beth Grill, "Victory Has a Thousand Fathers - Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency", p. 14

resolution is possible. These variables will also be dynamic and ever changing, and their interactions complex, and sometimes subjected to structural forces. Results from COIN actions might not always be direct, immediate, or expected. There will be need for constant assessments, learning, adaptation, re-assessment....

It is important to note that, for any COIN success to be sustained, there has to be a functioning and legitimate government (or authority) to exercise governance that is acceptable and sufficient for the people. In some regions, nationhood is not a widely accepted notion, and the central government does not actually have the mandate nor capability to govern all of the territory. As such, national level COIN solution might not lead to any meaningful outcome, unless it is possible to build a nation as a congruent political entity at the same time. That will likely demand huge price in blood, treasure, and time, and might be beyond the resources or determination of any stakeholder whose well-being is not directly and critically affected by it. Under such circumstances, COIN can at most be successful and sustainable in localised regions where governance is attainable. One good example is the current situation in Afghanistan.

In this research, four aspects are looked into in the insurgencies studied: Motivation fuelling the insurgency; “Water Insurgent-fishes Swim In” – the availability of an environment that allows the insurgent to operate in the shadow; Insurgent’s tangible capability to attack; and the war of perception. The importance of intelligence would also be examined.

Motivation Fuelling the Insurgency. Insurgency, like any warfare, is the clash of wills and wits of opposing forces by means of violence. The wills are sustained by human motivation, sometime consciously sought, and sometime sub-consciously triggered. The motivations are then manifested through actions enabled by physical capabilities. Conscious motivation are likely to come from ones’ needs and wants (think Maslow Hierarchy of Needs), while sub-conscious motivation could be a result of deep belief or systemic, structural dynamics that relegate decision to the sub-conscious mind (think religious fanaticism, cultural fascism, or ideological extremism). Although it is imaginable to stop an insurgency by just destroying insurgents or their capability, it is ultimately the addressing of their motivations, and those of their supporters, that will put the insurgency to an end. These motivations, once understood, could be answered with alternatives, made irrelevant, or satisfied fully or partially

within acceptable boundaries. Also, an important factor motivating an insurgent to continue with the conflict could be the fear of reprisal when the conflict ends, and what alternatives they have in terms of their livelihood, i.e. some might continue fighting because they do not know how else to live their lives. Alternatives must be available to encourage them to stop.

“Water Insurgent-Fishes Swim In”. For insurgents to wage an insurgency, the basic requirement must be that they could act while staying hidden in the shadow and avoiding getting neutralised. COIN forces suffer the disadvantage of being in the open (generally), making them easier targets, while insurgents enjoy relative safety by staying in the dark and choosing when and where to attack. However, insurgents must move, coordinate, prepare, and conduct their activities while staying hidden, and under fear of getting compromised.<sup>4</sup> Denying insurgents the environments that provide security to plan, coordinate, prepare, train, amass war material, and move freely in the shadow will make their operation extremely difficult and risky for the insurgents. It might even be difficult for them to have an acceptable quality of life, thus weakening their resolve.<sup>5</sup> As such, it will be extremely helpful to discern what constitutes this “water”, and how it could be made unsuitable for the insurgent fishes to swim in. At the same time, COIN can look at whether this “water” provides any tangible supplies to the insurgent war making capacity, which will be discussed in the next segment. It is often true that the population is the centre of gravity in COIN, but it helps to discern whether the entire population, or only a particular segment that is really “the water for the insurgent fishes.” The remaining segment of the population might be key stakeholders in the COIN,<sup>6</sup> and their actions and behaviours will have impact on the insurgents, but they are not “the water”. Strategy directed at them will definitely need differentiation.

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<sup>4</sup>For example, in order to prevent new and untested people from acquiring too much potentially compromising information, IRA’s training for participants from different areas were done by different trainers in different locations. Training was often unsatisfactory. To maintain security for the secret training camps, IRA had to move participants to the locations without them knowing where they were.

<sup>5</sup>One such example was the Malayan communists who suffered enormous hardship after they were driven into the jungle, cut off from the population centres and thus their means of livelihood. They eventually gave up.

<sup>6</sup> If they are the target of attacks, they must obviously be protected. If they can influence the COIN decision making, strategy must be in place to make sure their influence will not lead to detrimental conditions for COIN success, etc.

Capabilities to Attack. In a quantitative research presented in a paper titled “Victory Has a Thousand Fathers - Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency”,<sup>7</sup> it was found that all COIN campaigns (of the 30 selected) that ended with the COIN / authority winning, registered a pack of good practices that number more than bad practices on the balance sheet (from a list of 20 selected COIN practices), while all the campaigns that ended in lost had a zero or negative balance. And among the 15 good practices testable, only one, “*the COIN force significantly reduced tangible insurgent support*” perfectly predicts success or failure in all the 30 COIN cases. In all eight cases in which the COIN force prevailed, it disrupted at least three tangible insurgent support factors, while none of the COIN forces in the 22 losing cases managed to disrupt more than two. In addition, if COIN forces had popular support in the area of conflict, the COIN forces were mostly able to disrupt the tangible supports and vice versa. In rare cases where the COIN force had popular support, yet failed to significantly reduce the insurgents’ tangible support, the tangible supports were primarily coming from supporters outside the countries. Tangible supplies, such as food and basic life subsistence, personnel recruitment, weapons, funding, intelligence, training etc, are thus likely to be a key determinant of COIN outcomes. In addition, supplies provided from outside the area of conflict could also have crucial impact, and must be dealt with.

Foiling or defending against an attack is necessary. Neutralising (not necessary about killing) their capabilities to attack and denying them the “safe water to swim in” will provide longer term security. Identifying and addressing the motivations of the insurgents, and those of their supporters, is what ultimately influence the desire and will to resort to violence.

War of Perception. Human takes action by following his own decision and logics (or sometime sub-conscious impulse), and those logics are shaped by what he perceives the situation to be. It is important to note that perception may not always match reality nor effort put in to create that reality. A COIN force could do all the good deeds to win hearts and minds, but the effect may not be achieved if those good deeds are not known, or are not perceived as something important to the target-audience. It might even achieve the reverse if perceived wrongly. Sending population to protected villages could be seen as taking care of their safety,

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<sup>7</sup> By Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill and presented through the RAND National Defense Research Institute monograph series

or could be perceived as sending them to Nazis-type concentration camp (like what the Algerian felt). Building schools could be perceived as kindness in bringing education and thus better future, or might be perceived as intent to corrupt the children's mind. Perception often needs to be guided and shaped, to make them conducive for ending the insurgency. As such, desired perceptions important to precipitate an ending of the insurgency must be anticipated. From there, all actions of the COIN forces must take into consideration the perception it would generate in the stakeholders. There must also be intentional actions (and results), behaviours, and communication strategies to shape those perceptions.

The importance of these factors will be discussed in three insurgency cases that have effectively been concluded: Northern Ireland insurgency ending with successful COIN; Algeria War of Independence ending with failed COIN; and Senegalese Insurgency (1982-2002) representing an insurgency successfully ended with acceptable compromises.

### **Purpose of the Research**

To examine selected insurgencies to gain insights about how some insurgencies get resolved successfully and the role of the four key factors in the outcomes.

### **Scope of the Research**

Concluded insurgencies, especially those that arose from ethno-religious or political-ideological differences, are short-listed for this study. The historical background leading to the insurgencies are examined to establish the context of the grievances, and understand the outcomes insurgents seek to achieve. The four key factors are then examined for their impacts on the outcomes of the insurgencies to highlight their importance.

This research would not attempt to pass judgment on whether an insurgency is indeed a legitimate struggle on the part of the insurgents, or an illegal uprising with ill intent (e.g. the argument of whether insurgents are freedom fighters or rebels in each context). It treats each situation

where organised armed groups fought a state with an intent to wrestle political concession as an insurgency, and focus on examining the key factors that contribute to or undermine the attempt of the state to resolve or defeat the insurgencies.

### **Research Methodology**

This is a qualitative research done through review of relevant literatures, as well as sources of information in the digital media.

### **Limitation of the Research**

Literatures reviewed are predominantly English. It is inevitable that the research would not benefit from insights expressed in relevant literatures written in languages of the affected region, possibly thick in their understanding of the local contexts.

### **The Benefits of the Research**

This research aims to contribute to understanding of how some insurgencies get resolved or defeated, while others go on for a long time. With that, useful insights gained could be considered for implementation by affected countries or regions, while potential pitfalls could be avoided, to have a higher chance of success in resolving or defeating their insurgencies.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE NORTHERN IRELAND INSURGENCY 1969-1998

#### **Context: Historical Root**

To understand the conflicts and insurgency in the British Northern Ireland, one must have some knowledge of the historical relationship between Ireland and England / Britain that eventually led up to the appearance of Northern Ireland as a political entity.

The political relationship between England and Ireland dates back to the 12th century Norman (Anglo-French) invasion of Ireland (which then comprised a few small kingdoms), making Ireland a client state of England, and the arrival of Norman inhabitants in Ireland.

Then, in 1690, amid struggles for influence between the Protestants and Catholics, two rival claimants of the English (and Irish) and Scottish thrones fought the Battle of the Boyne on the east coast of Ireland. The battle, won by Protestant William III over Catholic James II, was a turning point in ensuring the Protestant ascendancy in the English Isles and Ireland. It would also be especially remembered as a crucial moment in the struggle between Protestant and Catholic interests in Ireland. Protestants in England soon introduced the penal laws that included banning Catholics from owning weapons, reducing their land, and prohibiting them from working in the legal profession. That became the basis of hundreds of years of what known as the Orange rule, restricting access to institutional power in Ireland to a small minority of Protestants. Frustration at the lack of reform eventually led to the Ireland war of independence in the 1920s.

The truce and post-ceasefire talks that followed led to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty on 6 December 1921, which partitioned Ireland into Northern Ireland and what was then Southern Ireland. After the ceasefire, political and sectarian violence between Republicans (usually Catholics) and Loyalists (usually Protestants) continued in Northern Ireland for many months. In addition, Republican oppositions aspiring for a united and independent Ireland opposed the partition and saw the treaty as a betrayal of the Irish Republic proclaimed during the Easter Rising against British rule in 1916. In June 1922, disagreement within the

Republicans over the Anglo-Irish Treaty even led to an eleven month Irish civil war. Many of those who fought against each other in the conflict had been comrades in the Irish Republican Army (IRA) during the War of Independence. The Civil War was won by the Free State (Southern Ireland) forces, but left the Irish society divided and embittered and sectarian tension in Northern Ireland still simmering.

The Irish Free State subsequently became today's Republic of Ireland through the Constitution of Ireland on 29 December 1937, while Northern Ireland remained as part of the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, the Republicans, still a significant force in the new republic, continued working on unifying the whole of Ireland, while playing a protector role for the Catholics in the north. The IRA's works in the north were either supported, or at least tolerated by the Irish in the south, as long as it did not threaten the Republic itself. However, at various points in the subsequent conflicts, due to concern for the security of the republic itself, and also external pressure, the Dublin government and security forces would outlaw the IRA.

Recounting how the history of Ireland and Britain got intertwined, and the struggles between Catholics and Protestants communities, help make sense of the conflicts between various factions in Northern Ireland - Catholics vs Protestants; Loyalist / Unionism vs Nationalist / Republicanism that gave rise to the insurgency. The Republicans' quest for a united Ireland, against the conflicting intent of the Northern Ireland's Protestant population to remain within Britain, would continue to breed tension. Along with real and perceived political and social inequality, it set the stage for a protracted insurgency in Northern Ireland that lasted three decades. More than 3,500 people were killed in the conflict. The insurgency was only considered by many to have ended with the Belfast Good Friday Agreement of 1998. Even so, it took another more than 10 years for violence to effectively cease.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>The British and Irish governments have agreed, under the 1998 Belfast Agreement, that the status of Northern Ireland will not change without the consent of the majority there. The landmark Good Friday Agreement called for an elected assembly for Northern Ireland, a cross-party cabinet with devolved powers, and cross-border bodies to handle issues common to both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Thus minority Catholics gained a share of the political power in Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland a voice in Northern Irish affairs. In return Catholics were to relinquish the goal of a united Ireland unless the largely Protestant North voted in favour of it. The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) was the only major political group in Northern Ireland to oppose the Agreement. Nevertheless, sporadic violence, disagreement over power sharing, suspension of home rule etc continued on and off for many more years before reaching a stable state known today.



## Major Players and Stakeholders

The Northern Ireland conflict, which is widely referred to by the British as “The Trouble”, was primarily a social-political one, but it also had an ethnic or sectarian dimension. It was the manifestation of the troubled relationship between Northern Ireland two main communities, which are, on one side, Unionists and Loyalists<sup>9</sup> – who mostly come from the Protestant community and generally want Northern Ireland to remain within the United Kingdom, and, on the other side, Irish Nationalists and Republicans<sup>10</sup> – who mostly come from the Roman Catholic community and generally want to leave the United Kingdom and join a united Ireland. The former generally see themselves as British and the latter generally see themselves as Irish.

The violence was characterised by the armed campaigns of Irish Republicans paramilitaries (such as the Provisional IRA), and Loyalist / Unionist paramilitaries (such as the UVF and UDA).<sup>11</sup> Other main players included the British and Northern Ireland state security forces (the British

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<sup>9</sup>Unionism in Ireland has focused primarily on maintaining and preserving the place of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. Loyalists are loyal to the monarchy of the United Kingdom, support the preservation of the Northern Ireland polity and oppose a united Ireland. Loyalists are also described as being loyal primarily to the Protestant British monarchy rather than to the British government and institutions.

<sup>10</sup>Irish nationalism asserts that the Irish people are a nation. Since the partition of Ireland, the term generally refers to support for a united Ireland. Irish nationalists assert that rule from London has been to the detriment of Ireland. Irish republicanism is an ideology based on the belief that all of Ireland should be an independent republic.

<sup>11</sup>The Ulster Volunteers were a unionist militia founded in 1912 to block self-government (or Home Rule) for Ireland, which was then part of the United Kingdom. The Ulster Volunteers were based in the northern province of Ulster, the part of Ireland where unionists and Protestants were the majority. Many Ulster Protestants feared being governed by a Catholic-dominated parliament in Dublin and losing their local supremacy and strong links with Britain. In 1913 the militias were organised into the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and vowed to resist any attempts by the British Government to 'impose' Home Rule on Ulster. Later that year, Irish nationalists formed a rival militia, the Irish Volunteers, to safeguard Home Rule. The UVF's declared goal was to destroy Irish republican paramilitary groups. However, most of its victims were Irish Catholic civilians, who were often chosen at random. Whenever it claimed responsibility for its attacks, the UVF usually claimed that those targeted were Provisional Irish Republican Army members or IRA sympathizers.

The UDA's/UFF's declared goal was to defend Protestant loyalist areas and to combat Irish republicanism, particularly the Provisional IRA. However, most of its victims were unarmed civilians according to the *Sutton Index of Deaths*. The majority of them were Irish Catholics, killed in what the group called retaliation for IRA actions or attacks on Protestants.

Army and the RUC, Northern Ireland's police force).<sup>12</sup> The Northern Ireland population was definitely a key stakeholder, but there was a need to differentiate between those friendly to the counter-insurgency effort, those neutral, unknown, or indifferent, and those who were hostile. As the grievances had much to do with the Northern Ireland governing policies, and sometimes the administration's intransigence to adjust, the Northern Ireland governing body was definitely a major stakeholder which the British's COIN measures would need to take into consideration. The Republic of Ireland's security forces and some of its politicians also played a part, as well as different external players at various point in the three-decade conflict, especially in term of supply of funding and weapons.

### **Major Grievances and Motivations Fuelling the Insurgency and the IRA's Objectives**

The root of the problem was believed to be the result of social-political discrimination against the Irish Nationalist/Catholic minority by the Unionist/Protestant majority. The Irish Republicans' believed that ridding the discrimination would require ridding the British backing of the Protestant community and the Protestant dominated Stormont (Northern Ireland Parliament). As such, the Republicans' struggle also manifested itself as the struggle for independence of Northern Ireland from British rule and the unification of the whole of Ireland, which had been partitioned by the Anglo-Irish Treaty. On the other hand, the Unionist / Loyalist feared for their well-being (and privileged status) under a Catholic majority Ireland, and were fighting to retain the status quo and to remain as part of Britain as prescribed in the Northern Ireland Constitution. Similarly, besides the desire to retain its client state of Northern Ireland after already losing the rest of Ireland, Britain was believed to also have a strategic interest of covering its western flank through a loyal Stormont administration.

Partitioning Ireland as a settlement for the Irish war of independence in effect meant leaving Northern Ireland, with a slim Protestant majority, to carry on its status quo, i.e. under discriminatory

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<sup>12</sup>The British government's view was that its forces were neutral in the conflict, trying to uphold law and order in Northern Ireland and the right of the people of Northern Ireland to democratic self-determination. Irish republicans, however, regarded the state forces as forces of occupation and combatants in the conflict, noting collusion between the state forces and the loyalist paramilitaries. Security forces brutality was sometime no less colourful than the insurgents' violence.

rule. Mass protests in the form of peaceful marches were common in Northern Ireland in the late 60s. The Republicans saw the potential and thus infiltrated these mass movements to use civil agitations to press for political reforms. Prominent IRA leaders could be seen among civil rights marches. IRA gunmen were sometime covertly deployed to provide protection for the marchers. Civil rights marches were often attacked by both Ulster Protestant Loyalists and by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), a largely Protestant police force. On 5 Oct 1968, a protest march in Londonderry was baton charged by the RUC. Television film of the attack was later shown throughout the world. Loyalists' Counter demonstrations were also regularly staged. Tommy McKearney, a former member of the PIRA,<sup>13</sup> in his book titled "*The Provisional IRA – From Insurrection to Parliament*", argued that the state of Northern Ireland, with all its state apparatus nominated by the Protestants, had such great inertia that it was not capable of peaceful, progressive reform. Britain, on the other hand, with its strategic interests, limitations, and even poor understanding of the root of the problem, was not able to institute changes in Northern Ireland. As such, he asserted that armed insurrection was the only possible way of forcing the reform.

There appeared to be many genuine grievances on the part of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland, which they were trying to seek resolution. At the same time, Catholics' protests and armed insurrection had similarly caused genuine suffering among the Protestants. That invited suppression from the state and retaliation from the Protestant community, leading into a vicious cycle of attacks and retaliations.

Political Inequality and Repression. Political dominance by the Unionists was allegedly maintained by unfair tweaking of the electoral boundaries. An example was County Fermanagh, where Unionists enjoyed 'majorities' in public sector bodies, despite being in the minority of the population.<sup>14</sup> Tommy McKearney also asserted that the state was overtly repressive, and so too was the dominant unionist society in Northern Ireland. Police brutality and partiality were not uncommon. Immediately after the Burntollet Bridge ambush<sup>15</sup> by Protestants against

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<sup>13</sup> A former IRA member who served over a decade and a half in the maximum-security, brutally-run prison known to the British as the Maze.

<sup>14</sup>Tommy McKearney, "The Provisional IRA – From Insurrection to Parliament," p9

<sup>15</sup>In an evening during the 1969 Catholic New Year's day student march from Belfast to Derry, a Protestant rally had taken place in Derry's Guildhall, which led to sectarian fighting on the edges of the Catholic Bogside area (allegedly started by drunk Catholic youth stoning the rally, Alistair p16). The

Catholic student marchers, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC – Northern Ireland Police Force comprising mainly Protestants) launched a punitive raid on the Catholic Bogside district of Londonderry and inflicted punishment on a large number of residents. The Policemen did not confine their attack to pedestrians, but entering houses, smashing furniture and assaulting people in their own homes.<sup>16</sup> During the outbreak of violence in the Battle of Bogside in 14 Aug 69,<sup>17</sup> RUC sent armoured cars, with heavy-calibre Browning machine-guns onto the Catholic Falls Road. Following that was Unionists supported by B Specials (reserves of the RUC comprising exclusively of Protestant volunteers and resembling a private militia loosely controlled by the RUC) launching an attack, burning houses as they went. The subsequent burning, damage to property and intimidation caused 1,820 families to fled their homes. Of which, 82.7% were Catholics.<sup>18</sup> This August 1969 riot was also the event that initiated the deployment of the British Army into Northern Ireland.

Social Economic Inequality. In pre-Partition Ireland, it was not unusual to find employment practices which openly and legally favoured Protestants over Catholics in recruitment for certain occupations.<sup>19</sup> Much of this had continued in Northern Ireland after Partition. A 1970 report on housing and employment discrimination in Fermanagh County pointed out that all senior public appointments were held by Unionists and almost all minor ones. The same picture could also be seen in private enterprises. State sponsored industrial development, similarly, favoured counties with large Protestant population.<sup>20</sup>

Signs of Judiciary Discrimination. In 1969, none of the High Court Judges and County Court Judges was Catholic, and only 3 out of 12

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marchers were bloodily ambushed the next day by Protestants (including many off-duty members of the B Special), near Burntollet Bridge, a bottleneck the marchers must pass in their journey to Derry.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid. 14, p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> In August 1969, riots between Protestants and Catholics broke out when the highly provocative Apprentice Boys of Derry parade, which commemorated the Protestant victory in the Siege of Derry in 1689, was allowed to proceed near Catholic Bogside. It led to a large communal riot now referred to as the Battle of the Bogside, three days of fighting between rioters throwing stones and petrol bombs and police who saturated the area with CS gas. During which, RUC personnel charged into the Catholic district, followed by Unionist crowd burning houses, including the burning down of much of Hooker Street [Ibid. 14, p. 51]. In the meantime, protests and riots in support of the Bogside Catholics began elsewhere in the Province, sparking retaliation by Protestant mobs.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. 14, p. 52

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. 14, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

Magistrates were Catholic.<sup>21</sup> According to Tommy McKearney, the Special Powers Act, in operation since 1922, contained shocking elements mainly used against the Catholics.<sup>22</sup> These included arrest without warrant, imprison without charge or trial, and home searches without warrant, and with force. The British government also permitted Northern Ireland to introduce internment without trial in August 1971, which was primarily directed against the Catholic Community. With that came massive searches and arrests. Tortures were used to extract information and confessions, and ‘virtual justice’ was used to secure convictions. Although Loyalist paramilitaries were also carrying out acts of violence against the Catholic and Irish nationalist community, no loyalists were included in the sweep.

Housing Discrimination and Others. Government built houses were often granted in disproportionate numbers to Unionist supporters.<sup>23</sup> An example cited was a village known as The Moy, where sectarian headcounts were almost balance, but a local government building programme in the early 1950s allotted over 80% of the available properties to Unionist supporters. There was also alleged discrimination in education policies.

Tommy McKearney argued that the main motivation of the Irish Republicans were to provide self-defence for the Catholics community against Loyalists’ attacks and police’s brutality, and to wrestle very basic reforms to end the inequality in Northern Ireland. Those include gaining sufficient political representation, fair access to employment and fair housing policies. That’s despite the IRA’s ‘Green Book’ - a handbook that every volunteer must study – articulating its long-term objective as the ‘establishment of a Democratic Socialist Republic’; and the short-term objective as: ‘Brits out’.<sup>24</sup> He asserted that ‘Brits Out’ was a ‘mean’ and not the ‘end’, and became inevitable after the British Army was deployed to suppress the insurrection, and especially after the Bloody Sunday shooting on 30 January 1972.

During the Battle of the Bogside, the IRA had been poorly armed and was unable to adequately defend the Catholic community, one of its

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 10

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 11

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 26

<sup>24</sup>Sean Boyne, “Uncovering the Irish Republican Army,” published in Jane’s Intelligence Review (August 1, 1996)

traditional roles since the 1920s. Some of the Republicans, thus, decided that armed insurrection was the only possible way of forcing the reform, after seeing very little achieved through political participation or civil agitation. That resulted in a split and the formation of the more militant Provisional IRA (PIRA) in end 1969, which advocated armed struggle as the way to go. The first "Provisional" Army Council issued their first public statement on 28 December 1969, stating, "We declare our allegiance to the 32 county Irish republic, proclaimed at Easter 1916, established by the first Dáil Éireann in 1919, overthrown by forces of arms in 1922 and suppressed to this day by the existing British-imposed six-county and twenty-six-county partition states."<sup>25</sup> That marked the beginning of the Provisional IRA and renewed zeal for armed insurrection.

The necessity for self-defence and their perceived duty to remove inequality and injustice for the Irish race, plus the lack of alternative path had certainly provided great motivation for the PIRA armed insurrection. Moreover, victory in the Irish War of Independence against the British in the recent past would have given them hope that their intent was achievable.

While the 1969 violence against the Catholics helped to crystallise the motivation of the IRA for armed struggle, a few more significant incidents thereafter were to further reinforce and legitimise it. The British Army nearby failed to intervene during the Loyalist attack of St Mathew's Church.<sup>26</sup> After which, they conducted a violent, one-sided, Falls road curfew to clear the Catholic area of arms,<sup>27</sup> without an equivalent act in the Loyalist area, and subsequently cranked up pressure by more cordon and search of Catholic areas. Those had apparently confirmed the fear of the Catholic people – that the British government and Army were not the saviour they had faintly hoped for, but a force that would help Stormont perpetuate its repressive, Orange-State like rule over the Catholics. Thus, to stop the repression, 'Brits out' was a prerequisite. The PIRA thus began attacking British soldiers. On 6 February 1971, Gunner Robert Curtis became the first British soldier to die in Ireland since the 1920s when he was killed in a gun battle in North Belfast. The level of violence

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<sup>25</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provisional\\_Irish\\_Republican\\_Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provisional_Irish_Republican_Army)

<sup>26</sup>Also known as "Battle of Short Strand". On 27 June 1970, IRA volunteers fought gun battles with loyalist mobs in what they believed was an attack of the St Mathew's Church and other Catholic areas in Short Strand, East Belfast.

<sup>27</sup>On 3 to 5 July, the IRA fought a three-day gun battle with 3,000 British troops who imposed a curfew on the Lower Falls area of Belfast. Over 1,500 rounds were fired by British troops.

was set to rise exponentially. Without the capacity to inflict decisive combat losses in the opponent, like what the Vietnamese did in Dien Bien Phu, the IRA nevertheless believed that enough soldiers sent back in coffins would make the British re-think their involvement in Northern Ireland.

In the 1971 discriminatory and brutal internment without trial directed against the Catholic Community, massive searches, arrests, and tortures further convinced the Catholic community and IRA that repression would need to be fought back. In the two days following 1971 internment, 17 people were killed in gun battles between the IRA and British Army. Instead of breaking the back of the Republicans armed insurrection, it sent IRA a flood of recruits. The IRA reached a high of its motivation and legitimacy for armed struggle. On 5 Sep 1971, the Provisional IRA published a five-point plan it deems as necessary before it would offer a truce. These were: (1) Ceasefire by the British Army; (2) Abolition of Stormont; (3) Free election to a 9-county Ulster Parliament; (4) Release of detainees, and; (5) Compensation for those injured by British Army actions.

Between 1969 and 1972, Britain maintained the Stormont Regime with the same Unionist party that perpetuated the Catholics' resentment. The British army deployed to suppress the insurgency, as back-ups initially, soon found itself playing the leading role as violence escalated. That predictably made them direct targets of the IRA attacks, which in turns hardened their views and tactics towards the Catholics communities in a vicious cycle of escalating hatred. With that, and the lack of sweeping social political changes, violence continued to escalate, eventually leading to the Bloody Sunday shooting on 30 January 1972. That not only further elevated IRA's motivation and legitimacy for armed insurrection, but also had adverse effect on the British international standing and public opinions. Britain finally, and reluctantly, replaced Stormont with direct rule from Westminster, and adjusted its strategy towards a power-sharing arrangement between the Unionist and the moderates, such as the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), in a framework with a Northern Ireland that continued to be part of Britain.<sup>28</sup> In the ensuing period, it had to briefly re-impose direct rule, or threaten to

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<sup>28</sup> The Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), an Irish Nationalist party advocating further devolution of powers while Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom. SDLP enjoyed some degree of popularity with the conflict-weary Catholics as an alternative to the physical force IRA.

do so, when the initiative was stalled by Unionists too reluctant or slow to change. While that limited concession by the Unionists was not enough to douse the motivation and legitimacy of the IRA, it would certainly have reduced it. It would also have made the British appear more like a power broker who could influence, rather than a one-sided oppressor.

Nevertheless, The IRA would soon remind all that it was still a major player. On 12 February 1976, IRA volunteer Frank Stagg (34) died on his 62nd day of hunger strike in Wakefield Prison in England. It was a Hunger strike in response to the authorities ending of special political prisoner status thus far given to captured IRA operatives. London government later backed down and allow the political prisoners to wear their own clothes instead of prison clothes. Winning this concession, of limited practical use but symbolically important, took almost ten years, the lives of ten hunger strikers, street riots and public demonstrations, and many deaths.<sup>29</sup> But beyond that, the hunger strike had massive value in creating perception of repression of the Irish under the British. It aroused the political energy that took thousands and thousands of young people across a wide section of the society to the street. It was something the Republicans could orchestrate and tap on. It was later known that the IRA was in secret negotiation with London, and was seeking concession beyond what the prisoners said they could accept, despite the danger to the hunger strikers. The hunger strike did break the resolve of then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who agreed to a negotiated deal to end it.<sup>30</sup>

The prisoner hunger strike produced one of the most intense periods of political protests and activities. Reassessing their strategy in a time when the insurrection started to appear tiresome, IRA capitalised on the situation. Anti H-Block committees set up throughout Ireland, firmly controlled by the IRA, eventually set the conditions for the emerging of the New Sinn Fein, the political arm of the IRA. Parliamentarism, once viewed as a poison to the armed insurrection, was promoted as the only mean of broadening the struggle. With leading supporters of the proposal like Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness professing that the armed

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<sup>29</sup> Tony Geraghty, "The Irish War – The Hidden Conflict between the IRA and British Intelligence," p. 99.

<sup>30</sup> Owen Bowcott, in a report for "the Guardian" titled "Thatcher cabinet 'wobbled' over IRA hunger strikers", on-line at <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/dec/30/thatcher-cabinet-hunger-strike-national-archives>; and in "Thatcher's Archive Finally Settles Dispute Over Hunger Strike Deal", Says IRA Prison Leader" on-line at <http://thebrokenelbow.com/2013/05/03/thatchers-archive-finally-settles-dispute-over-hunger-strike-deal-says-ira-prison-leader/>



struggle could continue in parallel with the new strategy, the option of entering parliament was soon accepted by the majority of the party members.

The prisoner hunger strike had proven that the insurgents had a bedrock of support that could not be easily eradicated. It became clear that, to end the insurrection, the IRA had to be included in any future settlement. Thus began the British strategy of getting a significant section of the IRA engaged in the Northern Ireland's parliamentary political process. It was this inclusion of the IRA in Parliamentarianism, together with the Good Friday Agreement that followed, and the significant weakening of the IRA militants' freedom of action and ability to attack (to be discussed below) that eventually created the conditions for ending the armed insurrection.

Amid all these, Unionist / Loyalist paramilitaries were also conducting attacks for retaliation, and sometimes allegedly for intimidating the Catholics into submission. There were also records of bombing made to appear like the work of IRA, but subsequently reported to be done by Protestants. Examples include the Tommy McDowell attempted bombing of an electric power station in 1969<sup>31</sup> and the bombing of McGurk's Bar in Belfast in 4 December 1971 that killed fifteen Catholics and injuring sixteen others. They too were targets for IRA attack. Their safety, their motivation to attack, and the reaction it provoked have to be featured into the COIN strategy. More importantly, the handling of their aggression had huge implications on the COIN forces legitimacy, and should have been dealt with more carefully for a better outcome in the war of perceptions.

### **“Water IRA-Fishes Swam In”**

The ‘water’ for the ‘IRA-fishes’ in Northern Ireland was clearly the Catholic or Republican / Nationalist segment of the population, who indeed had many genuine grievances, and whose interests the IRA claimed to fight for. The Stormont's government inability to make necessary reforms to address the Catholics' genuine grievances and the police brutality deeply convinced the Republicans that armed insurrection was the only way. That was further reinforced by the Loyalist violence, and

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 14, p. 64

the police condoning or even assistance. When the IRA emerged to be their only saviour and hope, it drew tremendous legitimacy, and thus support. The Catholic community then became the ‘water that the IRA could safely swim in’. It was not unusual for IRA fighters to receive help during their operations, be it in the form of early warning screen, hiding of weapon or attackers after attack, or even carting away of injured fighters. Besides those virtual safe zones, there were even physical safe havens. The existence of ‘Free Derry’<sup>32</sup> from 1969 to 1972, and long term support base concentrated along the porous southern border and a few of the rural counties further south, provided training ground, logistic support, and hiding places, giving IRA much respite to prepare, train, and operate.

When the British first took an active role, it did little to dent the motivation of the Catholics community to support the IRA. “When street violence boiled over, Northern Ireland was treated as just another rebellious colony, to be punished accordingly.”<sup>33</sup> The British army initial inability or unwillingness to act decisively to provide protection for the Catholics passed up a golden opportunity to deflate the legitimacy of the still-nascent Provisional IRA, and its justification for armed self-protection. To make matter worse, their actions were seen to be partial and oppressive. After failing to intervene in the battle of Short Strand, the Army was subsequently ordered to carry out house search for weapons in the Catholic Falls area in Belfast. The 34 hour seal-and-search operation caused enormous damage to residents’ home and possessions. There was also no parallel action to disarm Unionist areas of weapon.<sup>34</sup> The clearing of weapons from insurgents’ safe haven was definitely necessary. But the way it was done and the partiality involved did more harm than good. The Army had lost the opportunity to play the role of honest and impartial peace enforcers. That led the IRA to start attacking them. With the vicious cycle of violence, their image reached a low following the

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<sup>32</sup>‘Free Derry’, a self-declared autonomous nationalist area that existed between 1969 and 1972. Barricades first came up on 5 January 1969, secured by community activists with clubs, etc., as weapons, following the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and Loyalist mobs’ sacking of the area. In August 1971, in response to the introduction of Internment without Trial directed at the Catholics, barricades went up once more and Free Derry was declared a no-go area for the Army and police, defended by armed members of the IRA. Unarmed ‘auxiliaries’ manned the barricades, and crime was dealt with by a voluntary body known as the Free Derry Police. Any stranger entering Catholics areas would also invite scrutiny. Republicans would be alerted by inconspicuous signals, making any intelligence collection extremely difficult. Predictably, Free Derry became a safe sanctuary for IRA to hide, prepare, and launch attacks, until it was cleared by the British Army Operation Motorman in 1972 involving armoured bull-dozer and almost 22,000 soldiers.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. 29, p. 29.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. 14, p. 69

internment without trial and the Bloody Sunday shooting, adding to the motivation for armed struggle.

Actually, less than half the Catholics in Northern Ireland could be viewed as supporters of IRA armed insurrection, though few Catholics would cooperate with the authorities to the disadvantage of Republican fighters.<sup>35</sup> Catholics living a middle class type life were sufficiently contented, though not necessarily feeling equal. The IRA, largely made up of working class people fighting mostly for the plight of those lower down in the societal hierarchy, might not always be supported when they caused upheavals. If the British Army and government had played an even handed role and acquired the image of a fair, honest peace enforcer plus genuine leader for reform, there would have been a chance to reduce the support given to the IRA right from the beginning, or even increase support to the COIN forces to help end the violence.

Fortunately for the COIN forces, the violent and increasingly indiscriminate nature of IRA's attacks, and their often brutal intimidation or summary execution of dissidents, subsequently worked against their legitimacy. With a tactical error of its operative, the IRA also lost a valuable support base. When the IRA murdered Irish detective Garda McCabe in June 1996 when they tried to rob a postal van in the Irish Republic, there was a sudden, deadly increase of leaks to the British security from within the IRA.<sup>36</sup> The kill was presumably judged unjustified, provoking a massive backlash. Public outrage also drew 25,000 people to McCabe's funeral, turning it into a demonstration against terrorism. It was a turning point in the conflict. When the police force appealed to the public for information, they got plenty of help and, thus, started uncovering IRA arms factories.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, Republican supporters also grew increasingly disheartened with IRA inability to protect its supporters from Loyalist death squads killing.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, the Army and police did eventually gain much ground in physically rendering support difficult and severely curtailing insurgents' freedom of action. Information and knowledge were accumulated over time, although it was "difficult to run surveillance exercise in the

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 102

<sup>36</sup>Ibid. 29, p. 77

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 201

<sup>38</sup>Ibid. 14, p. 135

Republican ghettos of Ireland, where children became weary of new faces, and women hammer the pavement with bin lids as a warning of strangers at the door”.<sup>39</sup> Republicans fighters had the advantage in the beginning. The British army found itself patrolling hostile neighbourhoods in which they could not match local knowledge, and could not destroy suspected dangerous zones. However, once the British Army Commanders began to understand the geography of Belfast better, IRA losses mounted. Through persistent presence, house searches, and checkpoints, the British Army and RUC personnel became familiar with people, environment, and events in the relatively small and distinct areas for the Catholics working class. To avoid totally alienating the population, soldiers were taught to be courteous but firm. The way a battalion behaved made a big difference to its overall success, because “toughness was acceptable, roughness was not”. The British Army, with increased strength, was thus able to deny the IRA “the water to swim freely” in the urban areas.

The smaller-size IRA units in the rural areas spreading over much wider territories and operating near the southern border where they could easily evade across, were harder to pin down. While that allowed them to mount a much more protracted campaign, it also meant they were less likely to inflict decisive casualties on the British. The British Army was thus able to invest a much smaller effort to just contain the threat, and relied on UDR and RUC reserve recruited locally and had detailed knowledge of their own areas. Besides the advantage of local knowledge, locally recruited reserves provided constant on the ground presence. They expectedly were familiar with people and regular events in their native district. On or off duty, these men acted as eyes and ears, and actively supported the regular forces. Their civilian job that covered the entire cross section of services affords them to travel freely across Republican districts, and posed added threat to the Republican fighters. They could also man checkpoints, quickly sense anything that was different, and respond rapidly to incidents. That severely impedes the IRA’s freedom of action. In addition, besides the physical boots on the ground, the British started a massive intelligence effort that further denied the “water” to the IRA.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid. 29, p. 145

## **Intelligence as the Main Effort**

The “boots on the ground” approach, with its frequent checks and interaction with the people, formed a very important part of the British intelligence effort and overall strategy. Security check points, particularly rapidly implemented snap check points, as well as stop-and-search in areas of security concerns yielded precious intelligence. At such regularised interaction, members of public sometime took the opportunity to pass on useful intelligence data. Public perception about their safety from the insurgents’ retribution, and the level of acceptability of the security forces action and behaviour also determined the effectiveness of intelligence collection. Soldiers were taught to be courteous and firm, but not rough.

There are areas where security forces cannot have frequent access, so they rely on other eyes and ears of the populous. These came through confidential telephone line, or direct interaction with the public. The tradition of leaders attending funerals of their sacrificed warriors also made it difficult to conceal their identity, and provided intelligence unit opportunity to target individual terrorist, and learn more about his associates and base.

What the British lacked in support, they made up with massive surveillance of the relative small urban Republican localities. Externally, surveillance using various devices and also human observers covered selected areas like a cage. Suspects’ houses were electronically bugged. Intelligence agency went to the extent of enticing suspects away through offering all-expenses paid-for holiday that the target seemingly won through a well-staged competition or lucky draw, to allow the bug planting.<sup>40</sup> Observation posts, both overt and covert, were used to spot any change in routine. Airborne sensor with live feed TV, photographic devices with infra-red detection capabilities, listening devices, phone taping, hidden camera, motion detector, communications traffic interception were all readily used. By the late 1970s, technology had made it possible to surreptitiously place tracking transmitter to track vehicle or material movement of suspected insurgents, including placing devices in discovered weapon or explosive cache to track their movement or even listen to conversation in its vicinity.

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 135

From within, British Intelligence enlisted informers and planted double agents. As General Sir James Glover asserted, “there are as many ways to persuade an opponent to change side as there are human motives: politics, jealousy, a desire to get even and settle old score, sex, good life...”<sup>41</sup> For example, some Republicans were turned into informers through planted weapon and ammunition, following up with threat of life imprisonment for possession. British intelligence infiltrated many levels throughout the IRA. At the peak of the recruitment campaign between 1976 and 1987, an estimation of 1 in 30 IRA active members were informers. The high number of IRA’s executions of suspected informers could testify to this.<sup>42</sup> Success of British intelligence infiltration even forced the IRA to adopt a compartmented “cell” organizational structure to limit compromises when a unit was broken into. The IRA was undermined substantially by informers and ultimately by agents such as "Stakeknife" within their ranks.<sup>43</sup> Such infiltration not only yielded intelligence, but also seriously undermine trust and freedom of action in the organisation.

The British would soon also employ forensic sciences to yield effective form of intelligence, besides securing prosecution of terrorists. Forensics after an interdicted IED or after an explosion would often reveal the bomber’s "signature" characteristics, and also the origin of the explosives, timers, detonators and so on. One of the suspects caught through forensic investigation was Shane Paul O’Doherty who posted scores of letter bomb to England and mutilated many receivers. Hand writing of address on letter found in-tact, ready to post, were traced to the suspect O’Doherty. Chemical analysis of saliva used to seal the envelope clinched the case against him.<sup>44</sup> Other examples included the chemical analysis of explosive used to determine if they had been the same type, used the same material from the same source, and manufactured using what type of tools and skills. Some weapons that required more sophisticated skills that are beyond average handymen, or require specialised machine would then be narrowed down to a much smaller and easier to investigate sources. Fired bullet projectile and expended

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 156

<sup>42</sup> Irish Republican Army Counterintelligence Strategy – Academic Research by Hussein Nasser AlDein

<sup>43</sup>Andy R. Oppenheimer, author of “IRA: The Bombs And The Bullets,” in interview by David Hambling, <http://www.wired.com/2008/12/how-to-defeat-i/>. *Stakeknife* is the code name of a spy who infiltrated the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) at a high level. Reports claimed that *Stakeknife* worked for British intelligence for 25 years.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid. 29, p. 81

cartridges could also be studied to determine the weapon it had been fired from, and help nailed the correct suspect. Firearm residue was a major headache for the IRA. Each time a shot is fired, a cloud of particles covered the shooter, including the nose where particles could be recovered from the nasal passage.

An undercover unit known as Mobile Reconnaissance Force created a mobile valet service known as Four Square Laundry. Clothes to be cleaned were collected by van, and were actually run through forensic examination before they were cleaned. It took a double agent working for MRF and later turned by IRA to uncover the operation.<sup>45</sup> The use of forensic science was so threatening to the IRA that it prompted them to produce a 9000-word document on how to avoid getting incriminated as a result of sloppy preparation or execution of an operation. It also prompted the IRA to bomb the Northern Ireland Forensic Laboratory several times, culminating in its final destruction in September 1992.<sup>46</sup>

In tandem with the impressive intelligence effort, the British's also made use of computer data base and artificial intelligence that covers the entire population to be on top of the game in information. The success in British intelligence was to become a decisive factor. It was believed that by the time the Good Friday Agreement was reached, the British had infiltrated the IRA so effectively that it might be able to destroy it, had it been willing to deal with the fall-out.

### **IRA Tangible Capabilities to Attack**

The IRA was living and operating quite comfortably amount the Catholic population that generally supported them. Unlike the communist insurgents in Malaya, they were never driven into the jungle and had never had to struggle with basic life subsistence.

Disenchanted Catholics in Northern Ireland and some in the Republic almost represented IRA's only source of recruitment. IRA's recruitment swelled following each incident that was perceived to be highly unjust or atrocious against the community, as discussed earlier. Roughly 8,000 people passed through the ranks of the IRA in the first 20

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 90

<sup>46</sup>Andy R. Oppenheimer, author of "IRA: The Bombs And The Bullets," in interview by David Hambling, <http://www.wired.com/2008/12/how-to-defeat-i/>

years of its existence, though many left after arrest, "retirement" or disillusionment.<sup>47</sup> With IRA's legitimacy gradually affected by its violent and indiscriminate attacks, and the COIN forces avoiding dramatic events that caused surges in resentment, IRA's recruitment was moderated.

Curbing the IRA's access to weapons was extremely difficult, with its wide sources of international suppliers and a best-in-class in-house weapon development and production programme. An outline of the IRA weapons variety can be found in the 1993 edition of the British weapons Intelligence handbook, *The Terrorist Arsenal*. Besides the old lots of weapons concealed in barns across the border, senior officials in the Dublin government had been known to do gun runs, and they had been plans to distribute weapons to the Catholics in the north when they come under threat.<sup>48</sup> The IRA also had people in the US who had been sending arms to Irish Republicans from as far back as the 1920s. Over time, the IRA were to evolve a much wider access to weapons worldwide, bought, donated, raided, stolen, or earned.<sup>49</sup>

Over the decades, the IRA acquired experience of contacting with clandestine arms suppliers. Three main sources kept the PIRA war machine going: The USA, the Middle East, and home-made weapons and explosives.<sup>50</sup> Useful supplies of firearms soon began to reach IRA from overseas, such as the Armalite, also known as the M16, coming from the US and also Japan. It was not yet made in UK or even available to British forces. With the end of the Cold War, the vast arsenals of the Warsaw pact were also opened for business. Just like the criminal underworld, the IRA was in the market.<sup>51</sup> A batch of M60 machine guns was also imported in 1977. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the IRA had managed to obtain half a dozen Barrett rifles and other .50 cal Sniper Rifles.<sup>52</sup> Suddenly, soldiers could be shot at from more than 1km away.

The Barrette and other machine guns were also used against military helicopters. Between 1977 and 1993 at least twelve aircrafts were

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<sup>47</sup>According to Eamon Mallie and Patrick Bishop in their book, "*The Provisional IRA*"

<sup>48</sup>Ibid. 29, p. 173-174

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.,p. 177.

'An IRA apostate, Maria Maguire, revealed in her memoirs that the Spain Basque ETA terrorist movement had supplied the Provisionals with fifty revolvers in exchange for training in the use of explosives.'

<sup>50</sup>Ibid. 29, p. 181

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 185

<sup>52</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provisional\\_Irish\\_Republican\\_Army\\_arms\\_importation#cite\\_note-13](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provisional_Irish_Republican_Army_arms_importation#cite_note-13)



hit and four brought down.<sup>53</sup> 28 Nov 1972 saw the first recorded use of an RPG-7 by the IRA. The most valuable supply of arms and explosive for the IRA was from the international force built around the Palestinian resistance movement. By 1972, arms cargoes were flowing into Ireland from Libya. In parallel, Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi proclaimed his support for the revolutionaries of Ireland.<sup>54</sup> On 7 August 1985, the first of four Libyan weapon shipments for the IRA landed at Clogga Strand, near Wicklow, Republic of Ireland. They were to total more than a hundred tonnes of weapons and explosive that included one tonne of Semtex, reportedly SAM-7 missiles, more RPG-7s, AK-47s and hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition.<sup>55</sup> On 19 July 1991, the IRA fired a Surface-to-air missile at a RAF Wessex helicopter at Kinawley in County Fermanagh.

In addition, the determination and sophistication of the IRA homemade weapon programme could be gleaned from its development of mortars and rockets. IRA conducted its first mortar attack in May 1972 with a 50 mm copper pipe filled with 10 ounces (0.26 kg) of plastic explosives (later known as the Mark 1). It would soon be followed by a series of improved or different versions, be in in payload size, attack distance, stability or penetrating power. By the 1990s, the Mark 15, known as the "barrack buster" made its debut. It was the IRA large calibre mortar system with a calibre of 320 mm, loads with 196–220 pounds (80–100 kg) explosives, and a maximum range of 275 yards (250 m). It was even used with multiple launch tubes, such as an attack using 12 tubes against a British military base in Kilkeel, County Down, on 9 October 1993. There was also a Mark 16, a shoulder fired weapon for use against armoured vehicles. Rockets were also used to shoot down British helicopters.<sup>56</sup> They were sometime crudely deployed on the ground, or attached to hydraulic hoist towed by a tractor to the launching site, or even fired through false roof of a parked van.

The IRA also had decades of knowledge in making and using explosive by the time "the Troubles" begun. Moreover, explosives and detonators, such as those used for quarrying and civil engineering, were easy to obtain in the 1970s.<sup>57</sup> The bombs soon got bigger, more

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid. 43

<sup>54</sup>Ibid. 29, p. 180-181

<sup>55</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology\\_of\\_Provisional\\_Irish\\_Republican\\_Army\\_actions\\_\(1980%E2%80%931989\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology_of_Provisional_Irish_Republican_Army_actions_(1980%E2%80%931989))

<sup>56</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barrack\\_buster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barrack_buster)

<sup>57</sup>Ibid. 29, p. 171.

sophisticated, and deadlier. The IRA was also able to acquire and use military grade explosives. Car bombs, lorry bombs, bus bomb, and even bombs hidden in bicycle, made their appearances. There were also booby-trapped bombs in the electricity distribution boxes, fire extinguisher, garbage bin, book bomb, letter bombs, fire bomb, and the list goes on. The IRA was learning and innovating fast.

The British did have some limited success, though IRA weapon supply was never seriously threatened. Intelligence from Infiltrators and Informers, and effective use of forensic science gradually improve their ability to track down weapon producer, especially those that need special machine or highly unique expertise. With the co-operation of the Irish Republic, its ability to intercept weapon running through the sea, as well as across land from the south improved greatly. Once IRA was listed as a terrorist organisation, assistance by international partners, especially the American FBI, helped intercept huge amount of weapons the IRA was trying to bring in.

IRA's main source of funding appeared to come from America. There's a large Irish diaspora living in America. "In 1969, as TV images of Catholics being attacked were beamed back to Irish Catholic enclaves in Boston and New York, hats were literally passed around pubs." Fundraising for the IRA peaked whenever the British were seen to do something outrageous, such as the Bloody Sunday shooting or when hunger strikers died. Millions were also raised by the mainstream Irish charities, allegedly the American Ireland Fund,<sup>58</sup> Irish Northern Aid Committee, or Irish American organisations such as Clan na Gael.<sup>59</sup> This source of funding was only partly slowed with the American eventually listing of IRA as a terrorist organisation and the outlawing of its funding through American organisations.

Funding had previously also come from Ireland, from 'legitimate charitable collections', and the Irish government, at the time of Minister Mr Haughey, through the Irish Red Cross to a 'Northern Ireland Defence

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<sup>58</sup> Kevin Cullen, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ira/reports/america.html>

<sup>59</sup>[<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NORCID>] Irish Northern Aid Committee is an Irish American fund raising organization founded after the start of the Troubles. It is alleged to be a front for the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA), and that it was involved in fund raising for IRA arms importation from North America since the early 1970s.[[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clan\\_na\\_Gael](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clan_na_Gael)] The Clan na Gael is an Irish republican organization in the United States played a key part in NORCID and was a prominent source of finance and weapons for the Provisional IRA during "The Troubles"

Committee'.<sup>60</sup> False identities and bank accounts were used for siphoning funds from Irish government coffer through the Irish Red Cross into a slush fund for arm purchases. That was curbed only when the Irish government started viewing the IRA as a security threat. In addition, the IRA is known to have engaged in robbery, racketeering, and other forms of criminal activities.

For approximately three years after its formation, the PIRA offered training in the use of arms to local defence committee and groups of individuals without asking them to join the IRA.<sup>61</sup> This cast the net wide for potential recruitment, and created possibility of additional help during any assault on the Nationalist areas. It was also a way to compete for supremacy in Catholic Communities with the rival official IRA from which it had split. However, by late 1972, with influx of new members, PIRA decided to stop providing training for non-members, to tighten control over manpower and access to weapon.<sup>62</sup> The Irish Territorial Army had also helped trained civilian in the use of fire arms in 1969.<sup>63</sup>

The IRA had a rather established system of training newly accepted applicants, from learning about IRA customs, detection avoidance, to surveillance and interrogation coping etc. New volunteers were issued with the "*Green Book*", a training and induction manual that gave a broad overview to prepare them for active duty with the organisation. Newbies were also sent for minor but challenging intelligence gathering operation to assess their enthusiasm and commitment. Only when satisfied with their willingness and abilities would these new recruits be trained in the use of explosive and firearms.<sup>64</sup> The Irish Republican Army became the most skilled insurgent group in the world – and masters of the improvised explosive, by learning their skills over many years. They had proper training programmes where each engineer passed on to others their knowledge, as well as knowledge from previous campaigns, and Irish and British military sources of expertise.<sup>65</sup>

Initially, much of their larger scale training was done in secret camps just across the southern border. As the British started to get aware, training had to be shifted further into the Irish Republic. The IRA tried

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 175-176

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 75

<sup>62</sup>Ibid. 14, p. 78

<sup>63</sup>Ibid. 29, p. 174

<sup>64</sup>Ibid. 14, p. 176

<sup>65</sup>Andy R. Oppenheimer, author of "IRA: The Bombs And The Bullets"

not to have people from different areas training together, in order to prevent new and untested people acquiring too much potentially compromising information.<sup>66</sup> To maintain security for these secret training camps, participants were moved to the locations without them knowing where they were. Family loyalty was also important to keep involvement secret. When it became difficult to move large group of people south across the border after the authorities became aware of them, training were often done in smaller scales in sympathisers' home. The combined border control by the British and the Irish Republic was eventually able to restrict larger scale training done south of the border, and force it to be done in smaller pockets, thus affecting the quality of training, but never able to eradicate them.

### **War of Perception**

After failing to intervene during the Protestant armed assault in Short Strand, and its subsequent aggressive house search in the Catholic Falls that caused enormous damage to residents' home and possessions, the British Army drove William Long and John Brooke, two Unionist government ministers, through the area in British Army triumphal convoy.<sup>67</sup> That was an example of a fatal error in the war of perception, casting the British government and Army as the enemy in cahoots with Stormont against the Catholics. Many more poor moves and behaviours on the ground were to put them in a bad footing in the war of perception in the beginning, curtailing their ability to act as a solution for the Catholics plight.

Nevertheless, the British government did see the importance of perception as projected through the media. It attempted to shape the public understanding of the insurrection in Ireland through influence or even control over the broadcasting and print media, achieving broad consensus that identified public interests closely with government interests.<sup>68</sup> The conflict was generally reported in terms of British government striving to contain 'violent and often fanatical terrorists'. Another example was Pope John Paul VI's condemnation of the

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid. 14, p. 77

<sup>67</sup>Ibid. 29, p. 37.

When the curfew ended, even though huge amount of weapon and ammunition were captured, the British Army had killed four civilians, injured many more, and intimidated countless. The soldiers fired 1,454 rounds, including sniper rifles and sub machine guns, and thousands of CS Gas canister.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid. 14, p. 130-131

IRA, when invited to visit Ireland, which provided Britain with a propaganda windfall.<sup>69</sup>

British intelligence also sowed distrust within the IRA, and between the Republicans and its Catholic supporters, through infiltration of their rank and the effective use of informers. They also intercepted information sent by double agent, altered it, and fed false information back to the IRA. IRA operatives were actually identified and shot with IRA used weapon, the Thompson sub-machine gun to make it appear like it was fired by another IRA faction.<sup>70</sup> After 1972, the COIN forces adopted a strategy of returning Northern Ireland to normalcy, rather than an all-out pursuit of the insurgents. That had a calming effect on the perception of the people in Ireland and Britain, as well as the international community. Overall, they did pay attention to shaping of perception, but a clear strategy for the war of perception throughout the campaign would have helped them achieve a lot more.

### **Assessment of the British COIN in Northern Ireland**

Despite the loss of southern Ireland to independence, the British could not appreciate that the same conditions still existing in Northern Ireland after the partition would continue to breed grievances that would eventually explode into an all-out insurgency by the Republicans. Its initial refusal to force the necessary reforms provided the IRA a solid reason to engage in an armed struggle. Its partiality in suppressing the violence put the British on the defensive in the war of perception among the Catholic moderates initially. However, the subsequent serious political reforms made the armed insurgency less legitimate and the inclusion of the IRA in Northern Ireland parliamentary process also allowed the war-fatigued IRA to lay down their arms without appearing to lose. It was this addressing of the motivation of the Catholic community and the insurgents, plus the denial of a “safe water” for the insurgents through extensive intelligence work, plus the improvement in the war of perception through better security forces behaviours that set the conditions for the ending of the insurgency.

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 151

<sup>70</sup>Ibid. 29, p. 138

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ALGERIA WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

#### Context: Historical Root

Under the control of the Ottoman Empire from 1536, Algiers served for three centuries as the headquarters of the Barbary pirates. Their predation extended throughout the Mediterranean and far beyond, but they primarily operated in the western Mediterranean. In addition to seizing ships, they raided European coastal towns and villages, mainly in Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal, and further. European maritime powers had to pay the rulers of these privateering states (Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli and Morocco) to prevent attacks on their shipping. Nevertheless, French merchants progressively got involved in a complex and tangled trade with the North Africans.

On the pretext of a slight to their consul in 1827,<sup>71</sup> and ostensibly to fix the pirates problem, the French invaded and occupied the coastal areas of Algeria in 1830.<sup>72</sup> By 1848, with much of northern Algeria under French control, the 2<sup>nd</sup> French Republic declared Algeria as an integral part of France, organising it into overseas departments with representatives in the French National Assembly.

During the nineteenth century there were two waves of French immigration: post 1848 and post 1881. It was justifiable for the European settlers to claim that they created the modern economy in Algeria out of virtually nothing. But at the same time, many Algerians lost their lands. With their superior techniques and resources, European government and settlers progressively assimilated the best lands through buying or confiscation and pushed the indigenes out to the peripheral, thus pauperising them over time. The traditional Muslim populations in the rural areas were not integrated with the modern economic infrastructure of the European community. Traditional leaders were eliminated, co-opted, or made irrelevant, and the traditional educational system was largely dismantled. Economic hardship and feeling of injustice were to create penned up grievances. Later, the two world wars and the defeat of

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<sup>71</sup> Alistair Horne, "A Savage War of Peace – Algeria 1954-1962," 2006, p29

<sup>72</sup>The invasion was also allegedly Charles X's increasingly unpopular regime's strategy to distract minds from domestic problem by the pursuit of *la gloire* abroad.

colonial powers were also to shape the outlook of Algerian Muslims, so too did increased religiosity and pan-Arab nationalism.

The Algerian resistance could be broadly traced to three strands of Algerian nationalism: the religious movement embodied by the Association des Ulema led by Sheikh Abdulhamid Ben Badis; the revolutionaries represented by M.T.L.D. (Movement pour le Triomphe des Libertes Democratiques, successor of the Parti Progressive Algerien, P.P.A.) led by Messali Hadj; and the liberal Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto (UDMA) led by Ferhat Abbas.<sup>73</sup>

Between 1933 and 1936, mounting social, political, and economic crises in Algeria induced the indigenous population to engage in numerous acts of political protest. The government responded with more restrictive laws governing public order and security. Later, in March 1943, Muslim leader Ferhat Abbas presented the French administration with the Manifesto of the Algerian People, signed by 56 Algerian nationalist and international leaders. The manifesto demanded an Algerian constitution that would guarantee immediate and effective political participation and legal equality for Muslims and a federation structure. On the contrary, the MTLD firmly opposed Abbas's proposal for federation and was committed to unequivocal independence. Regardless, the French administration in 1944 was only willing to institute a reform package that granted full French citizenship only to certain categories of "meritorious" Algerian Muslims —military officers and decorated veterans, university graduates, government officials, and members of the Legion of Honor, numbering about 60,000.

With penned up political discontent, preceded by suffering as a result of two years of crop failure and severe hardship imposed by wartime shortages,<sup>74</sup> tensions between the Muslim and *colon* (colonists)communities exploded on May 8, 1945. Nationalist leaders agitated for Algeria's liberation by marking the liberation of Europe with demonstrations. The choice of VE Day (Victory in Europe Day) for an uprising had great significance, with France rejoicing its deliverance from an occupying power on one hand, while still occupying Algeria. The UN Charter was also about to be signed in San Francisco, amid pious declarations of self-determination for colonial subject people. In the meantime, the birth of the Arab League in Cairo less than 2 months ago

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid. 71, p. 38

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 24

had fuelled inspiration for Muslim independence, and the French army was still largely pre-occupied in Europe, and there was rarely any Gendarmes to maintain order in Algeria. On that fateful day, the police had told local organizers they could march in Sétif only if they did not display nationalist flags or placards. They ignored the warnings and went ahead anyway. The ensuing gunfire resulted in a number of police and demonstrators killed. Marchers then went on a rampage, killing 103 Europeans. Word of an uprising spread to the countryside, prompting villagers to attack *colon* settlements and government buildings. The army and police responded by conducting a prolonged and systematic violent raids of suspected centres of dissidence. According to official French figures, 1,500 Muslims died as a result of these countermeasures. Other estimates vary from 6,000 to as high as 45,000 killed.

Predictably, many Algerian nationalists drew the conclusion that independence could not be won by peaceful means, and so started organizing for violent rebellion. These included ex-PPA members who continued to operate clandestinely and maintain cells in the Aures Mountains and Kabylie while maintaining membership in the MTLD. In 1947, they formed the *Organisation Spéciale* (OS) operating loosely within the MTLD and led by Hocine Ait Ahmed. Their goal was to conduct terrorist operations since political protest through legal channels had been suppressed by the colonial authorities. Ait Ahmed was later succeeded as chief of the OS by Ahmed Ben Bella.

In 1952, anti-French demonstrations precipitated by the OS led to Messali Hadj's arrest and deportation to France. Internal divisions and attacks by the authorities then severely weakened the MTLD. In the meantime, *colon* extremists took every opportunity to persuade the French government of the need for draconian measures against the emergent independence movement. When the OS was subsequently broken up by the French police, Ben Bella created a new underground action committee. The new group, the Revolutionary Committee of Unity and Action (*Comité Révolutionnaire d'Unité et d'Action*, CRUA), was based in Cairo, where Ben Bella had fled to in 1952. Known as the *chefs historiques* (historical chiefs), the group's nine original leaders—Hocine Ait Ahmed, Mohamed Boudiaf, Belkacem Krim, Rabah Bitat, Larbi Ben M'Hidi, Mourad Didouch, Moustafa Ben Boulaid, Mohamed Khider, and Ben Bella—later came to be considered the leaders of the Algerian War of



Independence. The first full meeting of C.R.U.A. coincidentally took place on the day the fall of Dien Bien Phu was announced.<sup>75</sup>

Between March and October 1954, the CRUA organized a military network in Algeria comprising six military regions (referred to at the time as *wilayat*; singular: *wilaya*). The leaders of these regions and their followers became known as the "internals", while Ben Bella, Khider, and Ait Ahmed formed the "externals" in Cairo. Encouraged by Egypt's President Gamal Abdul Nasser (r. 1954–71), their role was to gain foreign support for the rebellion and to acquire arms, supplies, and funds for the wilaya commanders. In October the CRUA renamed itself the National Liberation Front (*Front de Libération Nationale*, FLN), which assumed responsibility for the political direction of the revolution. In tandem, the National Liberation Army (*Armée de Libération Nationale*, ALN), the FLN's military arm, was to conduct the War of Independence within Algeria. Resistance was to include two specific tactics. At home, the rebels were to use guerrilla warfare as their primary method of resistance, while internationally, the FLN launched a diplomatic campaign to gain support for Algerian independence (including mobilizing support in the United Nations and sending representatives to the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung).

In the early morning hours of November 1, 1954, the National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale—FLN) launched attacks throughout Algeria in the opening salvo of a war of independence. The rising was accompanied by a broadcast from the FLN headquarters in Nasser's Egypt, calling on Muslims in Algeria to join in a national struggle for the "restoration of the Algerian state, sovereign, democratic, and social, within the framework of the principles of Islam." An important watershed in this war was the savage massacre of civilians near the town of Philippeville in 20 August 1955. The FLN killed 71 *colons* and 52 pro-French, Algerian Muslims. The local French security forces killed around 130 FLN commandos and *fellagha* and injured a few hundred more. On the same day, European women and children were slaughtered at their homes in the countryside surrounding Constantine, whilst their men were working in the mines. That was followed by the retaliation by the government as well as *colon* gangs, with thousands of Muslim perished in an orgy aftermath of bloodletting. After Philippeville, all-out war began in Algeria. The FLN fought largely using guerrilla and terrorist tactics whilst

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

the French counter-insurgency tactics often included severe reprisals and repression. The insurgency only ended after the French electorate approved the Evian Accords in June 1962, and the Algerian referendum on July 1, 1962, which resulted in Algerian independence.

### **Major Players and Stakeholders**

By 1956—two years into the war—nearly all the nationalist organisations in Algeria had joined the FLN, which had established itself as the main nationalist group through both co-opting and coercing smaller organizations. The ALN was divided into guerrilla units fighting France and the MNA in Algeria.

The most important group that remained outside the FLN was the *Mouvement National Algérien* (MNA), founded by Messali Hadj as an alternative to the main Algerian nationalist movement. Messali Hadj had been ignored during the planning stage of the November 1954 war, and thus reacted by creating the MNA to oppose the FLN. The MNA and FLN armed wings fought each other during the early years of the War of Independence -- both in Algeria and in France (the 'café wars'). The FLN eventually gained the upper hand. By the time independence was achieved, the MNA had disbanded.

On the other side were the French state security forces, most notably the Para Division and the Foreign Legions, and the various governor-generals who were assigned to run Algeria. The military also enlisted the help of locals, known as the *Harki* Muslim Algerian auxiliaries. In addition, the French allegedly had an organisation called *La main Rouge* (The Red Hand), operated by the Foreign Department of the French intelligence service in the 1950s, which pursued the goal to eliminate the supporters of Algerian independence and the leading members of the FLN during the Algerian War. In a 1959 inquiry, West German authorities established that certain murders were committed by 'a secret organization called The Red Hand.'<sup>76</sup> General Paul Aussaresses, formerly member of the SDECE, also hinted about the existence of such

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<sup>76</sup>Extracted from "The State as a Terrorist: France and the Red Hand" by Thomas Riegler [<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/229/html>]. In 1985, French journalists Roger Faligot and Pascal Krop claimed through their research that the 'Red Hand' was purely an SDECE creation (Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionnage; English: External Documentation and Counter-Espionage Service, was France's external intelligence agency and predecessor of the DGSE).

secret operations against arms suppliers in his book titled “The Battle of the Casbah – Counter Terrorism and Torture”, though no details were disclosed.

The Algerian population, a major stakeholder, ranged from those who supported independence (mainly Muslims), to those indifferent or unsure, and those who vehemently opposed independence for Algeria (mainly *colon* population and some Muslims).

There were also the *colon* ‘ultras’ and their vigilante units, whose unauthorized activities were conducted with the passive cooperation of police authorities, which carried out *ratonnades* (literally, *rat-hunts*, *raton* being a racist term for denigrating Muslim Algerians) against suspected FLN members of the Muslim community.

There was another group that has to be classified separately, broadly consisting die-hards who opposed the independence and seceding of Algeria, and had major impact on the proceeding. These were disillusioned or disenchanted military leaders and former governor-generals of Algeria, such as General Raoul Salan, Maurice Challe, Soustelle, and their followers, as well as their creation, the Organisation Armee Secrete (O.A.S.), an underground unit pursuing terrorist type tactics.

The above is a simplified classification of the stakeholders, roughly presuming the state of France as one coherent main stakeholder. In the case of this Algerian war, the actual scene is one convoluted mess, with rapid change of government (and the fourth to Fifth Republic), Governor-generals of Algeria, military commanders, military units with varying orientation of loyalty, which all had significant impacts on how the situation on the ground developed. Thus, without an over-arching COIN leading agency, the outcomes were endless gyrations that unfolded according to the political situations and the relationship of each of the COIN apparatus with the state, notwithstanding the duel between the insurgents and the COIN establishments. Towards the end, citizens in mainland France and de Gaulle, the President, were to become major stakeholders key for the final outcomes.

Externally, there was Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt that provided direct support to the FLN, and the larger international community that opinion exerted pressure on France to end the conflict.

## Major Grievances and Motivations Fuelling the Insurgency

Firstly, there was the almost unstoppable force of history – post World War II and the realisation that colonial powers were, after all, not invincible, and their dominant not inevitable. These powers were greatly weakened by the war, and the end of colonial era had begun. Tunisia and Morocco, colonies of France, were both granted independence.<sup>77</sup> France was hoping to keep Algeria, not a colony, in theory, but an integral part of France as dictated by the 2nd French Republic. But the disparity in rights had no hope of convincing the Muslims. The force of de-colonisation would not be excluded in Algeria.

At the same time, economic hardship and feeling of inequality could be viewed as the main grievances. Too little resources in terms of schools, teachers, and funding were allocated for the Muslim kids' education. There was also huge disparity in the allocation, such as the two and a half million francs earmarked for European children in contrast with 450,000 francs allocated for the vastly more numerous Muslim children in 1892. The extent of land grab and uneven distribution discussed above was significant. As the European share grew, the Muslim share of land ownership shrank relatively. Although cultivated land owned by Muslims doubled since 1830, their population had trebled. The land thought to be able to sustain two to three million people had to feed much more. There were almost 9 million Muslims alone. 90% of Algeria's wealth then was held by 10% of the population. Moreover, nearly one million Muslims (or one in nine) were unemployed and another two million were seriously under-employed. Together with the unequal distribution of land, one can imagine the level of economic plight and outright starvation. Gravitating towards the city, where half of all available jobs were firmly occupied by the eleven percent of *colons* there, did not lighten their plight nor their grievances. As such, while France brought much material wealth to Algeria, it was like what Robert Aron said: "France did much for Algeria, too little for the Algerians."<sup>78</sup>

Under that backdrop, and the perception that such inequality was not a natural occurrence, but the result of deprivation or exploitation by the *colons*, discontent built up to boiling point. Algerian Muslims alluded much of their plight to the denial of political rights and representation.

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<sup>77</sup>2 March 1956 - Morocco granted independence by France. 20 March 1956 - Tunisia granted independence by France. Only the small enclave at Bizerte remains French (with a military base).

<sup>78</sup>Ibid. 71, p61-65

From 1856, native Muslims and Jews were viewed as French subjects, but not French citizens.<sup>79</sup> By 1956, two years after the war of independence broke out, no more than 8 out of 864 higher administrative posts were held by Muslim.<sup>80</sup> French Algeria was a society rigidly polarised along racial lines, economically, politically and culturally. *Colons* dominated the government and controlled the bulk of Algeria's wealth, blocking or delaying attempts to implement reforms.

The two world wars and their participation by a sizeable number also shaped the outlook of a generation of Algerian Muslims and their descendants. For example, about 173,000 Algerians served in the French army during World War I, and several hundred thousand more assisted the French war effort by working in factories. Those who had shed blood for the mother country felt deserving for equal treatment, and might have, for a moment, experienced respect from their commanders and comrades in arms in the battle field. They also learned the art of combat. Others were Algerians who stayed on in France after 1918, and sent the money they earned there to their relatives in Algeria. In France, they became aware of a standard of living higher than any they had known at home and of democratic political concepts.<sup>81</sup> Some Algerians' perception of themselves and their country were also shaped by a body of religious reformers and teachers. Some also became acquainted with the pan-Arab nationalism growing in the Middle East. However, leaders of the *colons* in Algeria had remained intransigent in any devolution of power to the Muslims. A good example was the Blum-Viollette proposal of 1938, which was still-born due to *colon's* protest.<sup>82</sup> Attempts for any reform were easily thwarted by the *colons* who had powerful allies in the French National Assembly, the bureaucracy, the armed forces, and the business community. They were strengthened in their resistance by their almost total control of the Algerian administration and police. Various dissident groups, therefore, were formed in opposition to French rule as a result.

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<sup>79</sup> In 1870, French citizenship was made automatic for Jewish natives, a move which largely angered many Muslims, which resulted in the Jews being seen as the accomplices of the colonial power by anti-colonial Algerians.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 71, p. 34.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>82</sup> The Blum-Viollette proposal was written by Maurice Violette, a visionary governor-general of Algeria in 1925-1927. It called for assimilation through access to French-like education and granting of rights to a modest number (less than 25,000 out of six millions Muslim) of meritorious Muslims (those highly educated or those who had served in the French military), with the plan to widen the benefits to other groups at a later date. It was viewed as the last attempt at assimilation.

After the insurgency started, the majority of the reforms, impressive they might be contrasted with what little the population demanded earlier, would more likely be seen as a compromise under weakness rather than benevolent reforms for the interest of the Muslims. That included striking moves like those of Lacoste's decree in March 1956 for the guaranteed minimum daily wage from 340 to 440 Francs, or his redistribution of government leased lands. Such reforms would have been viewed as a windfall under peaceful evolution, but was seen as attempt by helpless authority trying to make peace when reluctantly rolled out amid the full force of the insurgency. Worse, the perception would have been that insurgents' pressure alone could yield such compromises.

### **“Water the FLN-Fishes Swam In”**

Although disenchantment was widespread, FLN's main mean of getting the population to support its cause was through intimidation and not so much of a promised for a brighter future. Fear was everywhere. Bodies of loyal Muslims were often found appallingly mutilated, or having been subjected to slow death that security forces were powerless to prevent, with FLN's signature blatantly made known. Even Muslims who finally receive allocation of land through land reformation or other benefit from the late attempt at social reforms were under great danger of getting their throats slit. As a result, few peasants henceforth had dare to come forward to receive any benefit from the French. The same thing happened in urban centres. For example, with inhabitants either as supporters or as collaborators intimidated into silence, a network of bomb factories was set up in Casbah and Souma.<sup>83</sup>

Algerian insurgents also enjoyed the benefits of external sanctuaries. Shortly after gaining independence in March 1956, both Morocco and Tunisia granted the FLN the opportunity to set up training camps and logistic centers on their soil. *Armée de Libération Nationale* (ALN) based there, along with rural based guerillas, targeted European settlers and businesses. Later, both the Moroccan and Tunisian leaders also started providing money, arms, and support in international opinion to the FLN.

In addition, the insurgents were not quite a united front initially. The MNA remained an ardent and potent challenger, and bloody clashes

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid. 71, p. 84.

between the factions and their supporters were to continue splitting the perpetrators of the insurgency. Only in 31 May 1957, with the massacre of 303 Muslims supporters of the MNA at the village of Melouza by FLN *Wilaya* 3 did the challenge get stamped out. The FLN then dropped leaflets blaming French 'pacification' for the massacre.

Under such circumstances, protecting the population and winning them over with the potential of a better life, and doing so consistently over sustained duration, would be the approach that would have ultimately made the environment hostile to the insurgents. It would also force more intimidation by the insurgents, thus alienating them from the population further and making the "water" uninhabitable for the "insurgent fishes", and the security forces the potential saviours. Instead, the *colons* regularly and spontaneously embarked on overwhelming and indiscriminate reprisals, while COIN forces preferred collective punishment. In the reprisals for the Phillipeville massacre, the government claimed it killed 1,273 guerrillas in retaliation, but according to the FLN and to *The Times*, 12,000 Algerians were massacred by the armed forces and police, as well as *colongangs*. That was an early cause of the Algerian population's rallying to the FLN. Over and over again, the French military command ruthlessly applied the principle of collective punishment to villages suspected of sheltering, supplying, or in any way cooperating with the guerrillas. Villages that could not be reached by mobile units were subject to aerial bombardment. Ratissage, or 'raking-over' came to be the natural reaction following each insurgent attack. That was to be exploited by the FLN who cunningly provoked such draconian reprisals by the security forces and the *colons*, thus alienating the population while boosting its own recruitment and legitimacy. One such move was the calculated murder of *colon* leader, Mayor Amedee Froger by Ali la Pointe and the contemptuous detonating of a bomb in the cemetery during the funeral. The *colons* fell into the trap and went wild, inflicting massive punishment and killing innocent Muslims, while FLN operatives were ordered off the street beforehand.<sup>84</sup>

To be fair, there were attempts at protecting the population and winning their hearts and minds, but they were often too little, too late, and not universally well implemented. One example is the deployment of the Special Administration Section (*Section Administrative Spécialisée*, SAS), initiated by the Soustelle's regime in 1955, aiming to assume local

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid. 71, p. 187

Algerian administration and take into the protective net population who otherwise might be subjected to FLN intimidation or collateral damages of the Army's actions. The SAS's mission was to establish contact with the Muslim population and weaken nationalist influence in the rural areas by asserting the "French presence" there. SAS officers—called *képis bleus* (blue caps)—also recruited and trained bands of loyal Muslim irregulars. Late in 1957, General Raoul Salan, commanding the French Army in Algeria, instituted a system of *quadrillage* (surveillance using a grid pattern), dividing the country into sectors, each permanently garrisoned by troops responsible for suppressing rebel operations in their assigned territory. Salan's methods sharply reduced FLN terrorism, but unfortunately tied down a large number of troops in static defences, thus depriving him any sizeable troops capable of taking the fight deep into the insurgents' safe havens in the mountain. Only when General Challe revamped its counter guerrillas strategy, concentrating effort in selected areas one at a time did the COIN forces regained the initiative and seriously threatened to decisively defeat the insurgents' military effort in the rural areas.

In the urban centres, Jacques Émile Massu's paratroopers appeared to have the correct answer. Casbah area of Algiers was controlled by use of identification checks, making it difficult for insurgents to move freely and unobserved. Heads of family were also given responsibility for anything anyone in a particular household did. If carried out well, that would encouraged collective responsibility. Road checks included masked Muslim informers picking out suspicious characters. Intelligence operations led the fight. Unfortunately, the execution didn't go like it appeared. Collective responsibility weighed more towards collective punishments. Similarly, while the focus on intelligence was spot on, the methods used to collect them were anything but. Torture was widely used, though that was often denied. Paul Aussaresses, the head of intelligence, proudly described in great details some tortures under his hands, in his books "The Battle of the Casbah – Counter Terrorism and Torture" published in 2002. Though yielding much useful intelligence, torture became the poison that turned opinion against the French, as well as poison against their own souls. Summary execution as a convenient disposal of suspects could also not in any way be explained as legitimate. These solidified the will of the Algerian Muslims to resist any peaceful overture, and alienated opinion all around, including in the Frenchs' home soil. They were to become battles won that precipitated the loss of the war.



In response to FLN's strategy of using Tunisia and Morocco as a supply bases and sanctuaries, the French did well by creating an "impregnable" barrier from the Mediterranean to the Sahara. Fences were put up along the border of both Morocco and Tunisia to prevent Algerian FLN forces crossing into Algeria from training and logistic camps there. Completed in September 1957 and named the Morice Line was a defensive barrier duped "miracle" of modern technology" (a 700 km long, 2.5 m high 5,000 volt electric fence and 90 m minefield) and defended by almost 10,000 French troops on call, complete with the use of radar and air patrols. If, by any chance, guerrilla groups did manage to make it through into Algeria, helicopters, tanks, infantry and parachute units were available to pin them down and destroy them before they could link up with other guerrilla gangs. These were to prove effective in curtailing cross boarder insurgents and weapon movement, while forcing hundreds and hundreds of insurgents to hurl themselves into the killing zone in desperate attempt to breach the line and connect with the "interior".

### **FLN Tangible Capabilities to Attack**

The FLN was able to control certain sectors of the Aurès, Kabylie, and other mountainous areas around Constantine, south of Algiers, and Oran. When swept by French forces, the insurgents would simply retire to the mountains, and promptly return after the forces left. Terror kept the villages in line. In these places, the FLN was able to collect taxes and food, and to recruit manpower. Finding it impossible to control all of Algeria's remote farms and villages, the French government, likely taking cue from the British's success in Malaya, initiated a program of concentrating large segments of the rural population in camps under military supervision to prevent them from aiding the rebels. In the three years (1957–60) when the program ran, more than 2 million Algerians were removed from their villages, mostly in the mountainous areas, and resettled in the plains. However, it was difficult to re-establish their previous economic and social systems. Living conditions in the fortified villages were often appalling. There was also widespread starvation. These population relocation and controls effectively denied the FLN guerrillas key sources of their rations and manpower. Unfortunately, the plan was executed with the single minded aim of cutting villagers off from insurgents, and neglected the plight and need of the villagers'. The resulting hardship thus caused significant resentment among the displaced villagers.

The French and *colons'* repressive measures were principally responsible for FLN's recruitment, rapidly multiplying its strength following the Philippeville massacre. As disclosed by Ben Boulaid, one of the original C.R.U.A. leaders, or *chefs historiques*, French's *ratissages* were FLN's best recruiting agents. Prisons were also to become the best recruiting and training centres.<sup>85</sup> The FLN also absorbed into its rank those of other nationalist movements through its appeal and coercion. One of the most crucial was the taking in of Ferhat Abbas and the majority of those who followed him in the U.D.M.A. Not only swelling its rank, the disbanding of the U.D.M.A. also spelled the end of any moderates with whom French could hope to discuss any solution through peaceful means. Recruitment also brought in increasing number of non-Muslim. Among them were members such as Pierre Chaulet, a young *colon* surgeon, and Frantz Fanon, a Black doctor who had served in the French Army in the liberation of France. They not only brought to the FLN their much needed medical skills, but also their non-Muslim identity valuable in concealing the work of insurgency. Another notable group was a sizeable number of Jews who often worked as double agents against the French.

At the start of the insurrection, FLN's weapons were mainly WWII weapons abandoned by the Vinchy French and from careless American, collected and stored in caves over time, as well as sporting guns of uncertain antiquity and reliability. Subsequently, weapons were stolen from French convoys and outposts, taken off dead French soldiers or heirloom shotguns and hunting rifles, unsuited for a true guerrilla campaign. Many more were the weapons of farmers and hunters, shotguns and small caliber rifles.<sup>86</sup> In fact, on the opening day of hostility, seizing weapons and dynamite were some of the most important objectives of attack. Throughout the war, theft of French arms from depot and recovery from battlefield actually remained an important objective. It is the teaching of the FLN to its followers to "never leave behind the previous firearm of a fallen *djoundi*."<sup>87</sup> Weapons supplied by external supporters were negligible. Egypt's pledges of support were mainly realised in the provision of a base for the FLN political "externals" and its propaganda broadcast, and little in material or weapons. Following the Anglo-French landings at Suez during the Suez Crisis, Egyptian President

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid. 71, p. 110-111

<sup>86</sup><http://warfarehistorian.blogspot.com/2013/01/the-algerian-revolution-guerrilla-war.html>; Alistair p84

<sup>87</sup>Ibid. 71, p. 266

Nasser did pledge to increase aid to the FLN. However, not much were to reach Algeria.<sup>88</sup> The FLN was also never to attain the level of effectiveness, creativity, or sophistication of a home grown weapon production like those of the IRA.

In 1954 there were 200,000 Algerians living in France. Of those, 150,000 were working, the majority in the building or steel industries. Slowly but surely the FLN began to organise Algerians in France. It was Algerians in France that were to finance the war. Through a well organised system of collectors, the FLN taxed every Algerian in France on a sliding scale – 500 old francs a month for students, 3,000 for workers, to 50,000 and upwards for shopkeepers. Getting this money out of France presented a major problem for the FLN. Any Algerian that was a courier would immediately arouse suspicion. This meant that the FLN looked for French people sympathetic to their cause who would give them practical support. At the same time a small minority of French people actively looked for contacts with the FLN. They saw working with the FLN as a legitimate way of expressing their anger at the Algerian war. They participated in clandestine work, hiding FLN members, transporting money that the FLN received from Algerian workers, and 'passing' Algerians across frontiers.

Of the French people actively involved with the FLN the most famous are those associated with the Jeanson network, a group of French left-wing militants who helped FLN agents operating in the French metropolitan territory during the Algerian War. They were mainly involved in carrying money and papers for the Algerians and were sometimes called "the suitcase carriers" (*les porteurs de valises*). The network was set up by Francis Jeanson in 1957. During the late 1940s and early 1950s he had visited Algeria twice. Shocked by colonialism, he wrote a number of articles warning of the explosive situation on returning to France. In 1955 he co-authored a book fiercely attacking French policy in Algeria and highly sympathetic to the FLN. The arrests in February 1960 and the subsequent trial in September of the same year received large media attention and shocked France by how Frenchmen were helping its enemy. There were also other networks elsewhere in France, in Marseille, Lyon and Lille. Apart from these networks there was a wide range of French people that worked directly with the FLN. The memory of their Second World War resistance to Nazism was a vital reference point in

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<sup>88</sup>The *Athos*, with a cargo of arms destined for the FLN, was intercepted on its way from Egypt to Algiers.

explaining their motivations for resistance to the Algerian war, and thus the assistance to the insurgency.<sup>89</sup> Fund was also obtained through criminal activities, such as the armed raid of central post office of Oran that provided FLN with its first operational fund.<sup>90</sup>

### **Intelligence and Disinformation**

The bulk of COIN intelligence appeared to come from those extracted through torture of interned suspects. Its contribution to the success of battle and separately the war as a whole is already discussed above. Apart from that, the employment of undercover agents, infiltrators, and turn-coats contributed greatly to the COIN forces intelligence. The principal French employer of covert agents in Algiers was the Fifth Bureau, the psychological warfare branch." The Fifth Bureau "made extensive use of 'turned' FLN members, one such network being run by Captain Paul-Alain Leger of the 10th Paras. Selected turncoats unleashed in the Casbah to mingle with their former terrorist associates were exceptionally successful in leading intelligence operatives to FLN leaders. Their first major contribution was the tracking down of "Mourad" and "Kamel", bomb squad chiefs of FLN. They also planted incriminating forged documents, spread false rumors of treachery and fomented distrust. Similarly, by the end of January 1958, the infiltrated network of Wilaya 3 saw its entire western zone command deceived and loaded into helicopter heading to French jail, and the compromising of large quantity of incriminating document that would lead to mounting of more infiltration operations.

The FLN too used infiltrators and disinformation extensively. Some of the most embarrassing outcomes for the COIN forces include the raising of "Force K" and their later mass defection with a precious bounty of weapons. It turned out that the Force K leadership had been infiltrated and turned in the early stage of their formation. They even supplied the group with "F.L.N. corpses", that were in fact those of slaughtered members of dissident M.N.A.

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<sup>89</sup>Martin Evans has tracked down and interviewed many of those who helped the Algerian FLN - and outlines here the links between the experience of resistance to the Nazis and the struggle against colonial rule.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid. 71, p. 75

One big short-coming in intelligence was that neither the officers in command in the field nor the generals in the high command in Algiers took the time to study, recon, or gather meaningful intelligence outside of Algiers and the Casbah, in the *bled* and the Frontier where the guerrilla war was fought. These sectors of the rural regions to the South and West remained militarized with the FLN unopposed in much of the vast territories to West towards Morocco and Tunisia respectively. The only compensation for this was the use of natives familiar with the terrain and environment, such as *Servier's sharkis*, that proved extremely useful to track down FLN guerrillas. That lasted until General Challe took the fight deep into the FLN hideouts, and more importantly, stayed long enough to effectively disperse any meaningful concentration of insurgents.<sup>91</sup>

### War of Perception

The French and *colons* were losing the war of perception from the go, and almost throughout the whole war. First, the perception of inequality, injustice, and exploitation seized upon by the insurgents to start the war. The continued propping up of the *colons'* desire to maintain unequal distribution of power and wealth even after the insurgency started feed into negative perception. Then the perception of inability to stop the violence and protect the populations, and to play honest guardian of peace by acting with similar fairness towards perpetrators of violence on all sides. Worse, they were perceived to be the root of the suffering through its repressive measures and collective punishments. When there were true reforms, it was done from the position of weakness and did not give the perception of genuine care for the population. It was “the old story of reforms and compromise with the moderates of the interior that come too little and too late.”<sup>92</sup> All these were imposed above the perception of a France, who itself had just been liberated from the Nazis, who refused to heed the historical force of ending colonialism. Only brutal intimidation could temporarily suppress opposition in the Muslim Algerians. France even lost the homeland's perception in its legitimacy to continue holding on to Algeria, and alienated its own army who felt let down by its political masters. It was a perception war lost in all fronts.

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<sup>91</sup> <http://warfarehistorian.blogspot.com/2013/01/the-algerian-revolution-guerrilla-war.html>

<sup>92</sup> Alistair Horne, “The French Army and the Algerian War, 1954-62”, presented in “Regular Armies and Insurgencies” edited by Ronald Haycock.

To be discerning, the FLN wasn't doing a lot better in the war of perception, with their brutality. Nevertheless, on the political front, the FLN worked to persuade—and to coerce—the Algerian masses to support the aims of the independence movement. FLN-influenced labour unions, professional associations, and students' and women's organizations to lead opinion in diverse segments of the population. The first copy of the FLN's own newspaper, *El Moudjahid*, was distributed secretly through Casbah in June 1956. Later that year, clandestine broadcasting of messages through transistor radios became FLN's major weapon of war, with Algerians buying up all available stocks. Controlling sales and jamming transmission had little success. FLN truly became a mass movement.<sup>93</sup>

One top priority objective of the FLN was the internationalisation of the conflict, and the 'external team' in Cairo was responsible. After much lobbying, FLN did gain an invitation to attend the Bandung Conference, a landmark for the emerging third world, despite not representing any recognised government. It was a brilliant victory to be present when the conference condemned all forms of colonialism, and issued a unanimous proclamation of Algeria's right to independence. They also gained pledges of large sums of money and opened the gate to the UN, which months later included the Algerians' issue on its General Assembly's agenda. In addition, the Battle of Algiers, though ended with FLN losing the battle, created a focus of TV, news films, and journalists of the world, and thus immensely achieving the internationalisation of the Algeria issue sought for by the FLN.

## Own House

The French in the Algerian war was a classic example of how the war could be lost without the enemy actually winning, because the war was lost in its own house, and through the war of perception. In 1959, while General Maurice Challe appeared to have suppressed the major rebel resistance, political developments in France had already superseded the French Army's successes.<sup>94</sup> Earlier, recurrent cabinet crises focused

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid. 71, p. 133

<sup>94</sup>The ALN was close to being defeated during 1958. In the first seven months of that year it had lost more than 25,000 men. In addition, its command structures had been disrupted severely by key losses. In November 1958 the deputy military chief of Wilaya 4 and one of most respected ALN's commanders, Si Azedine (his real name was ZerrariRabah), had been captured.

attention on the inherent instability of the Fourth Republic and increased the misgivings of the army that the security of Algeria was being undermined by party politics. Army commanders feared another debacle like that of Indochina in 1954, when the government's order for pull-out was perceived to be political expediency that undermined French honour and turned sacrifices by the Army into nothing but disgrace. Later, in France, opposition to the conflict was growing among the population. Thousands of relatives of conscripts and reserve soldiers had suffered loss and pain. Revelations of torture and the indiscriminate brutality the army used on the Muslim population prompted widespread revulsion.<sup>95</sup> More and more articles by young national servicemen returning from Algeria were appearing in the press, recounting their shock by the immoral acts they had participated in, seen, or heard about there. By late 1960, political climate had changed fundamentally.<sup>96</sup>

International pressure was also building on France to grant Algeria independence. Since 1955, the UN General Assembly annually considered the Algerian question, and the FLN position was gaining support. France's seeming intransigence in settling a colonial war that tied down half the manpower of its armed forces was also a source of concern to its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies.

A "third force" among the population of Algeria, uncontaminated by the FLN or the "ultras" (*colon* extremists) through whom a solution might be possible, was nowhere to be found. Adding all these up, and shocked by the intransigence of *colon* extremists, de Gaulle recalled Challe and began to explore the policy which was to lead eventually to Algerian "self-determination". The *colon* ultras and some retired generals disgusted with the development were nevertheless clinging on to the hope that French Algeria could still be saved. They formed the Organisation del' Armée Secrète (OAS) with the intent to use terrorist tactic to stop Algeria's independence. The generals also secretly organised to attempt the over throw of de Gaulle, leading up to the "Generals Putsch". That

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<sup>95</sup>The torture case of young Algerian girl called DjamilaBoupacha, arrested for throwing a bomb into a café, received the widest publicity in France. She was allegedly submitted to the most revolting torture, which included being brutally deflowered with the neck of a bottle.

<sup>96</sup>5 Sep Manifesto of the 121 – "declaration on the right for insubordination in the Algerian war". Oct 60, several hundred thousand demonstrated.

was the last straw that solidified de Gaulle's decision to move towards Algerian self-determination.<sup>97</sup>

The demise of the Fourth Republic, the drawing in of over 1 million young French conscripts, and two coups d'états<sup>98</sup> later, the President de Gaulle so earnestly brought in to prevent the abandonment of French Algeria was to accede to the independence of Algeria. By then, some 25,000 French servicemen had been killed, along with countless innocent civilians and an unknown number of Algerians who fought for their colonial masters against the FLN. The French electorate approved the Evian Accords by an overwhelming 91 percent vote in a referendum held in June 1962. On July 1, 1962, some 6 million of a total Algerian electorate of 6.5 million cast their ballots in the referendum on independence. The affirmative vote was nearly unanimous.<sup>99</sup> The desire of the population mass, albeit against the wish of a minority but privileged community, and the motivation for insurgency was answered.<sup>100</sup>

### **Assessment of the French COIN in Algeria**

Again, lack of evolution eventually led to revolution. The "too little, too late" response to the genuine Muslims' grievances could not take away the FLN's motivation for insurrection nor their legitimacy, despite their brutality that alienated them from the population. Inability to protect the population also allowed intimidation to cow the population from cooperating with the COIN forces, and stop FLN from acquiring tangible material supports. But eventually, it was the loss of the perception war, among the home population, the international community, the Algerian population, and also its own army that led to the defeat of the COIN effort.

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<sup>97</sup> After a second round of negotiations in Evian, the French government declares a cease-fire in March 1962. For the next three months leading up to the French referendum on Algeria, despairing *pied-noir* in the OAS mounted terrorist attacks to provoke a major breach in the ceasefire by the FLN, and against the French army and police enforcing the accords. An average of 120 bombs per day were set off in March, with targets including hospitals and schools.

<sup>98</sup> The "generals' putsch" in April 1961, led by General Raoul Salan, General Andre Zeller, General Edmond Jouhoud, and General Maurice Challe, and aimed at stopping the government's negotiations with the FLN, marked the turning point in the official attitude toward the Algerian war. The army had been discredited by the putsch and kept a low profile politically throughout the rest of France's involvement with Algeria.

<sup>99</sup>In their final form, the Evian Accords allowed the *colons* equal legal protection with Algerians over a three-year period. At the end of that period, however, Europeans would be obliged to become Algerian citizens or be classified as aliens with the attendant loss of rights.

<sup>100</sup> Within a year, 1.4 million refugees, including almost the entire Jewish community, had joined the exodus to France.



## CHAPTER 4

### SENEGALESE INSURGENCIES, 1982–2002

#### **Background**

Casamance is a province in the south of Senegal. Geographically, it is almost cut off from the rest of the country. Separatist movement has been around since before Senegal's independence from France in 1960, but its first large demonstration for independence only happened in late 1982, when the Movement of Democratic Forces of the Casamance (MFDC) organised a march on the provincial capital, Ziguinchor. The MFDC, a separatist insurgent group, officially declared its armed struggle in 1990 and initiated its first organised attacks on military and civilian targets in the region,<sup>101</sup> waging an insurgency against the government of Senegal to demand for secession and independence for the southern region of Casamance.

#### **Major Players and Stakeholders**

Major players involved were the Senegalese government based in Dakar and its Army, the separatists - the Movement of Democratic Forces of the Casamance (MFDC), the population of Casamance region (population elsewhere were largely unaffected), and the Guinea-Bissau state that constitute a major external supporters for the separatist.

#### **Grievances and Motivations Fuelling the Insurgency**

Regional grievances included the perception that the region was ignored in the allocation of central government's investment, exploited by Senegalese from the north, and underrepresented in national politics.<sup>102</sup> The Diola people, the largest group in an ethnically-mixed region, have traditionally rejected central authority from the Senegalese

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<sup>101</sup>Norwegian Refugee Council, 2002, "Internally Displaced People – A Global Survey", 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, p. 65.

<sup>102</sup> Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill, "Victory Has a Thousand Fathers - Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies", presented through the RAND National Defense Research Institute monograph series

government.<sup>103</sup> In 1982, MFDC demanded that the Government of Senegal grant independence to the Casamance region, thus sparking off the conflict.

In an attempt to quell the insurgency, Senegalese military arrested and tortured hundreds of people. Some simply disappeared. The Diola ethnic community was especially at risk because government authorities suspected them of being sympathetic to the independence movement. The MFDC too was guilty of abuses. Reportedly, rebel soldiers often raid villages and forced civilians to give them food and money for the armed struggle. Those who refused were beaten and had their home burnt. Some of these acts were possibly based on ethnic criteria.<sup>104</sup>

Towards the end of the conflict, the government was able to make compromises by granting decentralization and regional autonomy, putting more authority, responsibility, and control in the hands of local leaders. That partially met the insurgents' motivation and reduced their legitimacy to continue with the insurgency. In conjunction, overtures to the rebels, such as financial payments to MFDC leaders who abandoned separatist claims, and offer of amnesty greatly incentivised the ending of hostility and provided a way out for the rebels. Ultimately, enough MFDC factions settled for peace, making the remainders resembling common criminals addressed by the local police.

### **Insurgents Freedom of Movement**

The insurgency began in 1982 largely in response to heavy-handed government crackdowns on protests and demonstrations. Initially, capitalising upon the grievances of the local populations, further helped by resentment resulted from government repressive measures, the insurgents enjoyed tremendous popular support. They even received "subscriptions" or "gifts" without coercion. It was also able to seek sanctuary in the neighbouring countries through the porous borders, and the tacit support from them. However, the MFDC later escalated its violence and turned on the local population after receiving external support from Guinea-Bissau. That was in contrast with the government's new "politics of 'charm.'" Popular support then swung unambiguously away from the MFDC and

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<sup>103</sup>Research and Centre for Peace archive – Senegal (1882 – 2005), found online at [http://ploughshares.ca/pl\\_armedconflict/senegal-1982-2005/](http://ploughshares.ca/pl_armedconflict/senegal-1982-2005/)

<sup>104</sup>Ibid. 101, p. 66.

towards the government. At the same time, the population was also getting weary of hardship aggravated through years of conflict.<sup>105</sup>

### **Tangible Supports**

In the beginning, the insurgents were able to sustain the conflict through popular support in the region. They also had rear-area sanctuaries in Gambia and Guinea Bissau, and could enlist the aid of their respective militaries in running guns and drugs, over and above tangible support. Weapons were also readily available due to conflict in the larger region and high regional arms traffic.<sup>106</sup> However, when the government succeeded in pressuring its neighbours to reduce their support while improving security of population, the insurgents' ability to replenish resources was significantly diminished. In contrast, the government finally recognised the seriousness of the insurgency and started sending additional military manpower and materiel to the region, including armoured vehicles and heavier weapons.

### **War of Perception**

The government's "politics of 'charm'", backed up by visible action of granting autonomy and improve COIN forces behaviour, in terms of ending arbitrary arrests and the use of torture, solidly position it to win the war of perception.

A peace deal between the government and MFDC rebels was signed in December 2004, and the peace had held since, with disarmament, demobilization and re-integration programs for former MFDC combatants.

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<sup>105</sup>It is estimated that the conflict has cut agricultural production by 50 percent. The tourism industry has been devastated by the conflict with many of its 16,000 employees being dismissed as a result of the continuing struggle. In addition, it is estimated that thousands of refugees have fled Casamance to neighbouring countries such as Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia. [<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/mfdc.htm>]

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 103. The rebels allegedly have received arms from Libya via Mauritania and The Gambia as well as from other conflicts in the region. Furthermore, the rebels allegedly finance their arms purchases by growing and selling marijuana. [ctr for peace]

### **Assessment of the Senegalese COIN in the Casamance Region**

The government's flexibility in addressing the insurgents' motivation, through the granting of regional autonomy, while winning its war of perception through its "politics of charm" ultimately set the conditions for ending the insurgency. Its ability to reduce the tangible support for the insurgents from external sources, plus its inducing of the rebels with incentives and amnesty to quit violence greatly reduced their tangible capabilities to continue fighting, thus playing a big part in setting the condition to end the insurgency.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### CONCLUSION

Insurgency, like any warfare, is the clash of human's will. This clash will be played out through complex interaction of their actions, driven by their logics (or sub-conscious reflexes). The thoughts that drive the action would determine the outcomes of the clash, and must be understood if counter insurgency is to be won. As such, all main players who could substantially impact the course of events must be identified, and their logics analysed.<sup>107</sup> The intent and strategy of major players will also be dynamic and ever changing, and their interaction complex. There will be need for constant assessments, learning, adaptation, re-assessment....

By the time an insurgency surfaces, there had to be some deep sense of grievances or lucrative purpose. These must be understood, and addressed to effectively neutralise the motivation to express them through violence. Had the British seen the grievances the Republican / Catholics were trying to redress, and addressed it sufficiently and early, the insurgency might not have occurred, or might at least have reached its settlement earlier. Eventually, the IRA's intent was addressed with an alternate solution in the form of parliamentary participation, and the potential of a united Ireland in the future through majority support. It provided an alternative path for the IRA to pursue its goal, as much as a face-saving way out for the tired IRA already heavily infiltrated by the British intelligence. The FLN's intent was met fully with Algerian independence, and the Senegalese MFDC's demand was answered with a compromised regional autonomy as well as personal security (amnesty) and incentives.

Insurgents need to operate in the shadow, and that will be difficult to do if the people around them disapprove of their aim or method. It is thus important to identify this "pool of water in which the insurgent-fishes

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<sup>107</sup>In addition, watch out for systemic forces that could shape behaviour against conscious wisdom. For example, putting two intelligence units on the same task without oversight or co-ordination could lead to detrimental competition; soldiers who shed blood and lose buddies would naturally form hatred that potentially lead to behaviour against common sense.

swim” and make it unsuitable for the insurgents. The desired outcome is the same, but the methods can vary, according to what best suits the situation. It might be “winning heart and mind”, “carrot and stick, with more carrot and less stick”, “drain the swamp” etc. The maxim will be “achieve that aim, preferably with multiple approaches, without doing more harm.”

People’s support for the insurgents could be a result of the ‘legitimacy’ or relevancy of the insurgents’ objectives, and their potential to achieve results (it’s dangerous to support losers). It might even just be a common hatred for the state, or a choice between two evils. Support could also happen when the people are intimidated, or when it is ‘profitable’, although such support are unlikely to be permanent, and can be reversed by changing the security conditions or through incentives. The motivation of the people involved, and their roles, should be established during the stakeholder analysis. COIN strategies can be more directed at the correct issues and people.

To turn this “water” into one that is unsuitable for the insurgent, expectedly, COIN forces must command more legitimacy and constitute a better choice in meeting the need of the people. They must also be able to provide sustained protection for the people against insurgents’ intimidation. The potential of a better future, achievable while protected against harm, is a powerful motivation. A second approach to make the environment inoperable for insurgents would be to physically render support for the insurgents difficult, such as the widespread infiltration of intelligence personnel or informers, tight surveillance of insurgents’ movement, or controlling access to the locality. A good solution would likely feature both approaches. The end state, whatever these measures are, must be to deny the insurgents “the water they can swim safely in”.

Curtailling tangible support, whether from the population or from external support is important to reduce the insurgents’ war making capacity. It not only could result in less attack, and thus better security for the population, but would likely have an effect on the insurgents’ motivation and calculation.

Win the perception war. COIN forces should understand and make use of the multiplying effect to its advantage. Human makes decision based on what he perceives, and what he perceives might not always coincide with the truth or facts. Despite all the good things that are done,

outcomes not perceived positively will not achieve the desired effects. If perceived negatively, it will even be detrimental to the goals. COIN forces need to identify a set of “perception outcomes” conducive for winning the COIN. All its actions and behaviours must maximise promotion and minimise undermining of those outcomes. Besides watching out for effects, it will also help greatly by having a strategy that proactively create positive perception. This strategy should include not only effective communication of information, but also deliberate actions and behaviours. Some examples include the British’s “boots on the ground” to provide assurance for security, its “tough is acceptable, rough is not” guideline for behaviours, and its management of information communicated, to stay on top of the game for perception war. Others include localised development that benefit the population, though it is best that those developments are prioritised by the benefiter themselves and not solely by the benefactor (perception of choice and ownership). It is also important to note that the perception war cannot be won by empty propaganda, as the material truth will eventually be the one sustaining the perception. Watch your own house too. The French in the Algerian war was a classic example of how the war could be lost in its own house, and through the defeat in the war of perception.

In counter insurgency, the importance of intelligence cannot be over-emphasised. Good intelligence is required to shine enough spot lights to deny insurgents the shadow they need to hide over the long run. No shadow, no insurgency. Intelligence is also needed for combat action, strategic assessments, and shaping the perceptions. The way the British often suppressed their impulse to net a small tactical shooting gain, and patiently milk some leads of its full intelligence potential is admirable. The patience paid off when they eventually netted the big fishes, and when the IRA felt the loss of freedom to move and act. Nevertheless, “history teaches us that, in the production of reliable intelligence, regardless of the moral issue, torture is counter-productive.”<sup>108</sup>

Savagery begets savagery, in a vicious cycle that often turn such contest of human wills into something more resembling animal acts. Violence might take a life of its own and those under its spell might actually derive joy out of it. Such was the observation by a young British correspondent watching *colon* mobs sacking one Muslim shop after another in Algeria, in sheer lust of destruction, after the bombing that

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid. 71, p. 19

started the Battle of Algiers.<sup>109</sup> In addition, the repugnant method used in the Battle of Algiers, torturing in the extraction of intelligence, and the brutal collective punishments eventually produced such negative reaction in France itself and elsewhere that ultimately led to the eruption of disapproval for the COIN forces. That was truly “winning battles, but losing the war.”<sup>110</sup>“Repression Wins Phases, but Usually Not Cases.”<sup>110</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

For successful COIN, identify and understand the major stakeholders, address the insurgent motivation and legitimacy, as well as the population’s grievances or desire early, when still in position of strength. Beware of traps that provoke emotive response that lose hearts and minds, and have a strategy to win the war of perception. In addition, give priority for intelligence.

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<sup>109</sup>Ibid. 71, p. 210

<sup>110</sup>Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, & Beth Grill; “Victory Has a Thousand Fathers - Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency”, presented through the RAND National Defense Research Institute monograph series



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## BIOGRAPHY



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- Commander Commando Training Institute
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# SUMMARY

Field: Military

**Title: Managing Insurgencies: How Did Some Insurgencies Get Resolved While Many Others Go On For A Long Time?**

Name: COL Ang Yau Choon

Course: NDC Class: 56

Position: Defence Attaché, Bangkok (designate)

## **Background and Importance of the Problem**

Many regions and countries have been plagued by insurgencies, including Singapore in the past, and Thailand at present. Some even have their future as a country destroyed. In addition, in this age of globalisation, security problems spread easily, thus it's important to see insurgencies resolved quickly and amicably. This research, therefore, intends to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of how some insurgencies get resolved successfully, focusing on four aspects: (1) Motivation fuelling the insurgency; (2) "Water Insurgent-fishes Swim In" – the availability of an environment that allows the insurgent to operate in the shadow; (3) Insurgent's tangible capability to attack; and; (4) the "war of perception". The importance of intelligence is also examined, and stakeholder analysis to understand logics of main players is advocated.

## **Purpose of the Research**

To examine selected insurgencies to gain insights about how some insurgencies get resolved successfully and the role of the four key factors in the outcomes.

## **Scope of the Research**

The historical background for the selected insurgencies, and the importance of the four factors will be examined in three insurgency cases that have effectively been concluded: Northern Ireland insurgency ending with successful COIN; Algeria War of Independence ending with failed COIN; and Senegalese Insurgency (1982-2002) representing an insurgency successfully ended with acceptable compromises.

## **Research Methodology**

This is a qualitative research done through review of relevant literatures, as well as sources of information in the digital media.

## **Limitation of the Research**

Literatures reviewed are predominantly English. It is inevitable that the research would not benefit from insights expressed in relevant literatures written in languages of the affected region, possibly thick in their understanding of the local contexts.

## **The Benefits Expected of the Research**

This research contribute to understanding of how some insurgencies get resolved, while others go on for a long time or ended in COIN's defeat.

# **THE NORTHERN IRELAND INSURGENCY 1969-1998**

## **Backgrounds, Stakeholders, and Motivations Fuelling the Insurgency**

Norman (Anglo-French) first came to Ireland through its invasion in the 12th century, making Ireland a client state of England. Subsequently, in 1690, Protestant King William III defeated Catholic King James II in the fight for the English and Scottish throne. That mark the beginning of Protestant ascendancy in the English Isles and Ireland. The Irish fought a war of independence with the British in the 1920s. The truce led to the Anglo-Irish Treaty that partitioned Ireland into the northern and southern Ireland. When the south declared its independence from British's rule, Northern Ireland, with a slim Protestant majority, remained as part of Britain, with tension between the Protestants and Catholics still simmering, and the Protestants still dominating Northern Ireland politics and ruling with discrimination against the Catholics. That gave rise to the insurgency, known as "the Trouble" in 1969.

The Northern Ireland conflict was the continued manifestation of the troubled relationship between Northern Ireland two main communities: Unionists / Loyalists and the Irish Nationalists / Republicans. Besides the Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries, other major stakeholders in "the Trouble" also included the British and Northern Ireland state security forces

(the British Army and the RUC, Northern Ireland's police force), the population, and the Northern Ireland governing body.<sup>1</sup>

The root of the problem was believed to be the social-political discrimination against the Irish Nationalist/Catholic minority by the Unionist/Protestant majority. Catholic population in Northern Ireland appeared to have many genuine grievances, but the Northern Ireland state, with all its state apparatus dominated by Unionists, was apparently not capable of peaceful, progressive reform. Britain, on the other hand, with its strategic interests, limitations, and even poor understanding of the root of the problem, could not institute the necessary reforms in Northern Ireland. Agitations for reform in the late 60s were met with attack and intimidation by Loyalists, as well as Police brutality and partiality. As such, Tommy McKearney argued that the Republicans resorted to armed insurrection mainly to provide self-defence for the Catholics, and to wrestle basic political reforms to end the inequality in Northern Ireland.

### **Assessment of the British COIN in Northern Ireland**

The British's initial refusal to bring about the necessary reforms provided the IRA a solid reason to engage in an armed struggle. When the British army was first deployed, they too failed to play a role of neutral peace broker, but appeared more like another force that was sent in by Stormont to suppress the Catholics. Expectedly, they too became a target of attack, creating a vicious cycle of violence such that the Catholics could only be seen as the enemy. Its high handed security enforcement, done with high degree of partiality against the Catholics, continued to enlarge the "pool of water for IRA-fishes", propelled many recruits to the IRA camp, and put the British on the defensive in the war of perception.

The British were finally forced to replace Stormont with direct rule from Westminster, and adjust its strategy to a power-sharing deal between the Unionists and the Nationalist moderates. That made the armed insurgency less legitimate. At the same time, 'boots on the ground' and heavy penetration by British intelligence also severely limit the IRA freedom to act. The subsequent inclusion of the IRA in Parliamentarianism allowed the war-fatigued IRA to lay down their arms without appearing to lose, leading to the Good Friday Agreement that eventually created the conditions for ending the armed insurrection. It was this addressing of the motivation of the Catholic community and the insurgents, plus the denial of "safe water" for the

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<sup>1</sup>The Republic of Ireland's security forces and some of its politicians also played a part, as well different external players at various point in the three-decade conflict, especially in term of supply of funding and weapons.

insurgents, and the improvement in the war of perception through reforms and better security forces' behaviours that set the conditions for ending the Northern Ireland insurgency.

## **THE ALGERIA WAR OF INDEPENDENCE**

### **Backgrounds, Stakeholders, and Motivations Fuelling the Insurgency**

Since France invaded Algeria in 1830 and later made it part of France, European settlers, or *colons*, had dominated its political power. While the *colons* brought material prosperity to Algeria, the traditional Muslim population in the rural areas were not integrated with the modern economic infrastructure. At the same time, *colon* government and settlers progressively assimilated the best lands through buying or confiscation and pushed the indigenes out to the peripheral, thus pauperising them over time. Economic hardship, partly exacerbated by explosion of Muslim population growth, and feeling of injustice thus created penned up grievances. Meanwhile, the *colons* dominated government had been intransigent in political and social reforms demanded by the Muslims and *colons* controlled the bulk of Algeria's wealth, blocking or delaying attempts to implement reforms. French Algeria was a society rigidly polarised along racial lines, economically, politically and culturally.

The main players in the Algerian war of independence included the National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale - FLN), the main nationalist group with a armed wing known as the ALN. The most important group that remained outside the FLN was the MNA, which the FLN eventually eliminated. On the other side were various governor-generals, and the French state security forces, including their Muslim Algerian auxiliaries. There were also the *colon* 'ultras' and their vigilante units, and the disillusioned or disenchanting military leaders and former governor-generals who opposed the independence and seceding of Algeria, as well as their Organisation Armee Secrete (O.A.S.), an underground unit pursuing terrorist type tactics. The Algerian population, a major stakeholder, ranged from those who supported independence (mainly Muslims), to those indifferent or unsure, and those who vehemently opposed independence for Algeria (mainly *colon* population and some Muslims). The actual scene is a lot more convoluted, with rapid change of government, military leadership, and military units' loyalty that saw endless gyrations in COIN approaches. Towards the end, citizens in mainland France and de Gaulle, the President, were to become major stakeholders key for the final outcomes. Externally, Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt provided direct support to the FLN.

On November 1, 1954, FLN launched attacks throughout Algeria in the opening salvo of a war of independence. Resistance was to include two specific tactics. At home, the rebels were to use guerrilla warfare as their primary method of resistance, while internationally, the FLN launched a diplomatic campaign to gain support for Algerian independence. This war was one of the most savage seen in recent history, due both to the FLN as well as French counter-insurgency forces tactics.

### **Assessment of the French COIN in Algeria**

Again, lack of evolution eventually led to revolution. The “too little, too late” response to the genuine Muslims’ grievances could not take away the FLN’s motivation for insurrection nor their legitimacy, despite their brutality that alienated them from the population. After the insurgency started, reforms were only seen as compromises due to pressure by insurgents. Also, France intention to hold on to Algeria, despite granting Tunisia and Morocco their independence, was going against the post-World War II de-colonisation trend.

FLN’s main mean of getting the population to support its cause was through intimidation and not so much of a promised for a brighter future. The FLN was able to control certain rural areas to collect taxes and food, and to recruit manpower. Under such circumstances, protecting the population and winning them over should be the approach that would have ultimately made the environment hostile to the insurgents. Instead, the *colons* and French regularly and spontaneously embarked on overwhelming and indiscriminate reprisals and collective punishment. Villages that could not be reached by mobile units were subject to aerial bombardment. *Ratissage*, or ‘raking-over’ came to be the natural reaction following each insurgent attack. The FLN, thus, cunningly provoked such draconian reprisals by the security forces and the *colons*, alienating the population while boosting its own recruitment and legitimacy.

On the other hand, the Battle of Algiers focussed TV, news films, and journalists’ attention, and help internationalise the Algeria issue. Though the FLN’s reputation was ugly too, it did manage to mobilise support in the United Nations and the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, together with pledges of large sums of money. However, it was eventually the leadership disorder in its own house and the loss of the perception war, among the home population, the international community, the Algerian population, and also its own army that led to the defeat of the COIN effort. The French and *colons* were losing the war of perception from the go, and almost throughout the

whole war. First, the perception of inequality, injustice, and exploitation seized upon by the insurgents to start the war. The continued propping up of the *colon's* desire to retain unequal distribution of power and wealth even after the insurgency started feed into negative perception. Then the perception of inability to stop violence and protect the populations, and to play honest guardian of peace by acting with similar fairness towards perpetrators of violence on all sides. Worse, the French were perceived to be the root of the suffering through its repressive measures and collective punishments. France even lost its legitimacy in its own homeland due to the use of torture and savage reprisals in Algeria, and alienated its own army who felt let down by its political masters. It was a perception war lost in all fronts.

## **SENEGALESE INSURGENCIES, 1982–2002**

### **Backgrounds, Stakeholders, and Motivations Fuelling the Insurgency**

From 1982–2002, the Movement of Democratic Forces of the Casamance (MFDC) waged an insurgency against the government of Senegal to demand for secession and independence for the southern region of Casamance. Major players involved were the Senegalese government based in Dakar and its Army, the separatists - the Movement of Democratic Forces of the Casamance (MFDC), the population of Casamance region (population elsewhere were largely unaffected), and the Guinea-Bissau state that constitute a major external supporters for the separatists. Regional grievances included the perception that the region was ignored in the allocation of central government investment, exploited by Senegalese from the north, under-represented in national politics.<sup>2</sup>

The insurgents initially enjoyed popular support, and thus freedom of action. However, they subsequently lost that “water to swim in” when their violence alienated the population, while government forces improved their behaviours and counter insurgency measures. The government eventually made compromises by granting Casamance regional autonomy. That partially met the insurgents’ motivation and reduced their legitimacy to continue with the insurgency. In conjunction, overtures to the rebels, such as financial rewards and offer of amnesty greatly incentivised the ending of hostility and provided a way out for the rebels. Ultimately, enough MFDC factions settled for peace, making the remainders appeared like common criminals who could be dealt with by the local police.

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<sup>2</sup> Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill, “Victory Has a Thousand Fathers - Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies”, presented through the RAND National Defense Research Institute monograph series



## **Assessment of the Senegalese COIN in the Casamance Region**

The government's flexibility in addressing the insurgents' motivation, through the granting of regional autonomy, while winning its war of perception through its "politics of charm" ultimately set the conditions for ending the insurgency. In addition, the insurgents' loss of support and thus freedom of action was reinforced by government forces ability to deny and reduce the tangible support for the insurgents from external sources. Coupled with its inducing of the rebels with incentives and amnesty to quit violence, they greatly reduced the insurgents' tangible capabilities to continue fighting, thus setting the condition to end the insurgency. A peace deal between the government and MFDC rebels was, thus, signed in December 2004, and the peace had held since, with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs (DDR) for former MFDC combatants.

## **CONCLUSION**

To succeed in COIN, all main players in the insurgency must be identified, and their logics taken into account. The deep sense of grievances or lucrative purposes of the insurgents and those they claim to represent must be understood and addressed, to effectively neutralise their motivation and legitimacy to resort to violence. It is also important to identify the "pool of water in which the insurgent-fishes swim" and to make it unsuitable for the insurgents. This can be done by delegitimising insurgents' cause and methods to discourage the population from supporting the insurgents, while increasing the appeal for the population to support the COIN forces, such as by providing effective and sustained protection against insurgents' intimidation. In tandem, deploy a comprehensive intelligence strategy covering both the insurgents' organisation as well as the area they operate in to deny them the freedom of action. In addition, it is crucial to curtail tangible supports to the insurgents, whether from the population or from external supporters, to reduce their war making capacity.

Winning the perception war is equally, if not more, important in ending an insurgency. COIN forces need to identify a set of "perception outcomes" conducive for winning the COIN. All its actions and behaviours must promote instead of undermine those outcomes. It should also have a strategy that proactively create positive perceptions. This strategy should include not only effective communication of information, but also deliberate actions and behaviours. This also applies to the COIN forces "own house", where the war could be lost through the war of perception.

In counter insurgency, good intelligence should be a key focus. Nevertheless, history teaches us that intelligence produced through use of torture is unreliable, and torture is counter-productive. It is also important to remember: Savagery begets savagery, in a vicious cycle that often turn such contest of human wills into something resembling animal acts.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To succeed in COIN, identify and understand the major stakeholders, address the insurgents' motivation and legitimacy, as well as the population's grievances early, when still in a position of strength. Beware of traps that provoke emotive response that lose hearts and minds, and have a strategy to win the war of perception. In addition, deny the insurgents their "water to swim in", reduce tangible support to the insurgents, and give priority for intelligence.