

# Report

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# REPORT

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

This year the *Report* editorial staff is pleased to present the spring edition of our journal. In this year's edition of *Report*, we have a wide sampling of articles picked from a competitive field of submissions. From a harrowing tale of Cold War espionage to an in-depth look at Betty Friedan's watershed work, our authors, contributing from schools across the country, provide us with original research that has helped to make all of us a little worldlier. All of this, however, would not have been possible without our cadet editors and our faculty advisors. I would like to extend my sincere thanks for their time and dedication to making this edition of *Report* what it is.

After graduation, some of us will go on to graduate school and further education, but all of us will serve as officers in the U.S. Army. For each of us our time working on *Report* will serve us well and exemplify what hard work and team cohesion can accomplish.

Finally, thank you, the reader, for your interest in and support of *Report*. We put our time and effort into this publication so that we can share great scholarship by our fellow history students. Your support of this project through your readership is what makes all the work our editorial team has put in worthwhile. We sincerely hope that you enjoy reading our articles as much as we have enjoyed preparing them for you.

Regards,

Daniel J. Berardino '20  
Editor-in-Chief

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## THE SOVIET RATIONALE OF FOREGOING DISINFORMATION IN THE CASE OF THE BERLIN TUNNEL

BY TYLER PACHESNY

The tensions of the Cold War were largely the product of uncertainty. In Europe, the Americans and the British could no longer collect radio communications as they had in the past, for the Soviets had switched from “longwave,” easy to intercept frequencies, to “shortwave” frequencies that operated only within line-of-sight.<sup>1</sup> Along the Iron Curtain there was little opportunity to listen in on radio transmissions over the airwaves, but there *was* ground wire in place that the Americans and British recognized and chose to exploit with the Berlin Tunnel. 1,476 feet long, the tunnel stretched across the East-West Berlin boundary to tap underground wiring carrying messages throughout the Eastern Bloc and even to Moscow.<sup>2</sup> The Russian Committee on State Security (KGB) knew about the tunnel months before construction had even begun, thanks to the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) turncoat George Blake.<sup>3</sup> Despite a prime opportunity to exercise the central pillar of Russian intelligence and political strategy, active measures, the Russians chose to leave the potential counter-intelligence exploit of the Berlin Tunnel unused because they weighed their asset, George Blake, so highly. Though some authors and former KGB officers will argue that disinformation was, in fact, used in the Berlin Tunnel, the reality is that there is nothing more than a hunch to suggest this. The lack of evidence alone cannot put the disinformation theory to rest, but an examination of Soviet motivations just might. Given the nuances of the Russian context, including the recent coming apart of the Cambridge Five and the KGB not knowing that the National Security Agency (NSA) had broken Russian teleprint encryptions, it was far more rational to do everything they could to retain Blake.

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<sup>1</sup> National Security Agency and Central Security Service, *Operation REGAL: The Berlin Tunnel* (Fort Meade, Maryland: 1988) 1.

<sup>2</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “A Look Back: The Berlin Tunnel Exposed,” accessed 30 November, 2018. <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/the-berlin-tunnel-exposed.html>

<sup>3</sup> George Blake, *No Other Choice*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 182.

Blake's long road to becoming a Soviet spy began when he and his family fled from the Netherlands during WWII and he was recruited by SIS shortly after he arrived in England.<sup>4</sup> During his clandestine service in Korea, Blake was captured by the North Koreans. Through both his growing disillusion with the aimlessness of his intelligence service and exposure to Communist propaganda in the POW camp, Blake was ideologically driven toward the Communist cause.<sup>5</sup> Before returning home to Berlin after the war, Blake made contact with a KGB officer and arranged to supply the Soviets with any and all intelligence he could access.<sup>6</sup> Blake reintegrated with SIS back in England where he was assigned to a new technical intelligence department called "Section Y," where Blake documented all information that crossed his desk.<sup>7</sup> When plans to build the Berlin Tunnel were presented in a meeting, Blake had been there in charge of the minutes, and cleverly retained a carbon copy of his notes for his KGB handlers.<sup>8</sup> Blake's information tipped the KGB to the operation before it even began.

The KGB knew about the Berlin Tunnel since the day Blake provided information on it, January 18, 1954, but took no actions to deny the exploit until April 22, 1956, over fifteen months later.<sup>9</sup> The inaction on behalf of the Soviets has been interpreted as strange by many and has led some CIA, KGB, and academics alike to the conclusion that a large portion of the information that SIS and the CIA received from the tunnel was nothing more than disinformation.<sup>10</sup> The KGB

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 26, 88; Blake was adamant he did what he did for purely ideological reasons and that these are the most dangerous and valuable sort of agents. It is likely that the KGB saw particular value in Blake as agent for this reason among many other contextual reasons.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 137-139.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 143-145.

<sup>7</sup> Roger Hermiston, *The Greatest Traitor: The Secret Lives of Agent George Blake*, (Islington, England: Aurum Press, 2013) 148, 158.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 163-164.

<sup>9</sup> Hermiston, *The Greatest Traitor*, 164; Central Intelligence Agency. *Recapitulation of the Intelligence Derived*, Appendix B of *Clandestine Services History: The Berlin Tunnel Operation 1952-1956* (Langley: undated), 1.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1968-06-24.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev, and George Bailey, *Battleground Berlin: CIA vs. KGB in the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 207-208; Murphy notes a number of authors including Morchetti (CIA), Nechiporenko (KGB), and Tissier. The reason why I do not go into their sources further is because they are dated and ill-informed. Explain why these individuals thought what they did is far more important than what they thought in particular which Murphy, Kondrashev, and Bailey clearly show to be flawed.

defines disinformation as “the secret channeling towards an adversary of false information... designed to mislead him and prompt him to take decision and measures which fit in with the plan and intentions of the [KGB].”<sup>11</sup> In a 1998 interview, former Head of KGB Foreign Counter Intelligence, Oleg Kalugin, described disinformation as “the heart and soul of Soviet intelligence.”<sup>12</sup> Other former Soviet Bloc intelligence officers have attested that “the resources and personnel devoted to these [disinformation] operations... confirm the importance of these activities in Moscow’s view.”<sup>13</sup> There is plenty reason to think that the Soviets ought to have seen the Berlin Tunnel as an opportunity for disinformation. Blake himself suggested the possibility for disinformation in a tongue-in-cheek manner, saying, “Indeed it might [have been] possible to make use of [the Berlin Tunnel] to the Soviet advantage.”<sup>14</sup>

Despite the clear opportunity for disinformation, the KGB seemed to show restraint, out of concern for Blake’s safety. Blake explains that his safety was “considered of paramount importance [by the KGB].”<sup>15</sup> Joseph Evans, a former CIA officer who was closely involved with the tunnel, states that, “no analyses of the tunnel product and no data from independent sources have uncovered signs of disinformation in this material. Independent sources, on the contrary have validated items which analysts of the tunnel traffic initially unearthed.”<sup>16</sup> NSA’s review of suspected disinformation operations relating to the tunnel independently yielded similar findings. Intelligence officials concluded, “It was highly unlikely that the Soviets and East Germans had the time, funds, and inclination to undertake

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<sup>11</sup> Vasili Mitrokhin. *KGB Lexicon: The Soviet Intelligence Officers Handbook*, ed. Jeff Kingston, (Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2002), 30.

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/usma/detail.action?docID=1111747>

<sup>12</sup> Oleg Kalugin, interview by CCN Cold War Production Team, *Inside the KGB*, CNN, January 1998.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20070206020316/http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold-war/episodes/21/interviews/kalugin/>

<sup>13</sup> Richard H. Shultz and Roy Godson, *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy*, (Washington DC: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1984), 174.

<sup>14</sup> Blake, *No Other Choice*, 25.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph C. Evans, “Berlin Tunnel Intelligence: A Bumbling KGB,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 9 (1996): 48.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/08850609608435304?needAccess=true>

such an immense effort [of using the Berlin Tunnel for disinformation].”<sup>17</sup>

Not only is there no evidence that the Soviets actually used active measures through the Berlin Tunnel, but there is plenty of reason to suggest it would not have been rational for them to do so. The Soviets took no actions to intervene either directly, by denying the cable exploitation, or indirectly, by instating a disinformation operation, the reason behind that the decision to do neither was measured against the value of George Blake as an asset. Sergei Krondrashev, Blake’s case officer at the time, plainly states that “the communication lines being tapped by... [the Berlin Tunnel] were not used for disinformation. To do so would have involved too many people and would have risked Blake’s security.”<sup>18</sup> The value that the Soviets assigned to Blake relative to the possible damages that the Berlin Tunnel could have caused were based on two important factors: the context of Soviet espionage at the time and that the Soviets believed only their unencrypted traffic was vulnerable to exploitation.

Blake was recruited as a Soviet spy in fall, 1951, coincidentally around the same time that the now famous Cambridge Five Soviet spy ring was coming apart.<sup>19</sup> The group had been recruited from Cambridge University in the 1930s by KGB to spy for the Soviets, made up of five members, hence its name.<sup>20</sup> In 1951, one its members, Carincross, had confessed to spying, while two others, Burgess and Maclean, had recently fled to Moscow, leaving Philby and Blunt under heavy suspicions.<sup>21</sup> By the time Blake returned to England in April 1953 to begin spying for the KGB, the USSR’s greatest spy ring was no more.<sup>22</sup> The KGB were short on quality agents and therefore placed the longevity of Blake’s role with them as a top priority. The KGB hoped to run Blake as an agent for many years as they had the Cambridge Five, so when Blake brought them information on the Berlin Tunnel in January 1954, less than a year after he had begun spying, it would have

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<sup>17</sup> National Security Agency and Central Security Service, *Operation REGAL: The Berlin Tunnel* (Fort Meade: 1988), 22.

[https://www.nsa.gov/Portals/70/documents/news-features/declassified-documents/cryptologic-histories/operation\\_regal.pdf](https://www.nsa.gov/Portals/70/documents/news-features/declassified-documents/cryptologic-histories/operation_regal.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Murphy, Kondrashev, and Bailey, *Battleground Berlin*, 218.

<sup>19</sup> Blake, *No Other Choice*, 142; Andrew and Mitrokhin, 154-161.

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 57-58.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-161.

<sup>22</sup> Blake, *No Other Choice*, 153.

been rash to put him at risk. The Soviets had established the Cambridge Five in the 1930s and by the end of their nearly twenty-year investment, former KGB General Oleg Kalugin recalls them as “one of the most spectacular spy rings of the century.”<sup>23</sup> It was from this long-term perspective and the massive success that the Cambridge Five had brought that the Soviets framed Blake’s prospects as an agent. It would have been exceptionally short sighted to risk exposing their new agent with a long career ahead of him to unearth the Berlin Tunnel or even use disinformation through the tunnel as it may have alerted SIS or the CIA that something was amiss.

The KGB decided to sit on the Berlin Tunnel intelligence that Blake had given them. Pitovranov, the KGB chief of the area did not know about the tunnel until over a year after Blake provided the initial intelligence.<sup>24</sup> Many top KGB officers were not even aware of the Berlin Tunnel until after it was uncovered in 1956, under conditions that would not draw suspicion.<sup>25</sup> The KGB allowed the tunnel to operate for nearly a year until heavy rains caused legitimate faults in the tapped section of their lines to expose it, all the while the Soviets had lost massive amounts of intelligence to SIS and CIA during its operation.<sup>26</sup> Value, not quantity, was the primary metric the KGB used to assess the suspected damages, but this is where they may have made a grave miscalculation.

The KGB had assumed that their encrypted communication traffic had not been broke by the Americans, but this was not the case. The NSA had already discovered how to break landline encryptions in 1951, unbeknownst to the Soviets.<sup>27</sup> If KGB assumptions had been correct and encrypted traffic actually had been safe, then American exploits would have been limited to plaintext telephone conversations, which NSA Center for Cytological History (CCH) Director, David Hatch, admits would have “yielded only routine – but sometimes interesting – information.”<sup>28</sup> The NSA’s investigations revealed that “while George Blake knew about the tunnel and the fact that it was

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<sup>23</sup> Oleg Kalugin, *Spymaster: My Thirty-Two Years in Intelligence and Espionage against the West*, (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 137.

<sup>24</sup> Murphy, Kondrashev, and Bailey, *Battleground Berlin*, 236.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> CIA, *Clandestine Service History*, 23; NSA and CSS, *Operation REGAL*, 23.

<sup>27</sup> NSA and CSS, *Operation REGAL*, 2.

<sup>28</sup> David Hatch, “Berlin Tunnel Part II: The Rivals,” *Cryptologic Almanac*, NSA (February, 1998), 2. [https://www.nsa.gov/Portals/70/documents/news-features/declassified-documents/crypto-almanac-50th/Tunnel\\_2.pdf](https://www.nsa.gov/Portals/70/documents/news-features/declassified-documents/crypto-almanac-50th/Tunnel_2.pdf)

tapping telephone lines, he apparently had not been informed of the flaw on Soviet teleprinters that allowed analysts to exploit encrypted messages... [and secure] high quality intelligence.”<sup>29</sup> Given that the KGB believed only routine information would have been exposed, it was only logical that they decided not to risk using disinformation. This small loss of not particularly valuable information would certainly be worth ensuring Blake’s safety—but unfortunately for the KGB their assessment was wrong, and their gamble did not pay off... or did it?

While it can be clearly shown how the Soviets arrived rationally their conclusion not to use disinformation or expose the tunnel, it is much more difficult to say whether their assessment was a blunder or not. Co-authors Murphy, Kondrashev, and Bailey bring up an interesting piece of evidence that is difficult to deliberate. They claim the so-called ‘technical breakthrough’ that would have allowed the Americans to read Soviet encrypted traffic exhibits “some misunderstanding” because such a break through “played no role in processing telegraphic circuits in Washington headquarters.”<sup>30</sup> The source that these authors base this claim upon is their interview with Frank Rowlett, who was Technical Director in the Office of Operations for the NSA at the time.<sup>31</sup> Given that there is no record of this interview, is impossible to corroborate this and stack it against the sources that contradict him. What is most interesting about this contradiction is that both are endorsed by the NSA, one by Rowlett and another by the official historical document of the NSA. The historical NSA document references, in part, David Martin, author of *Wilderness of Mirrors* who interviewed Carl Nelson of the CIA’s Office of Communications at the time.<sup>32</sup> With access to neither interview, the result is a stalemate that will have be resolved with more extensive research in the future.

Perhaps it is only fitting that certain aspects of the Berlin Tunnel’s intelligence history remain unresolved, after all, that is the nature of the field. There are times that, due the clandestine nature of many operations, details will be muddled, confused, or contradictory—

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Murphy, Kondrashev, and Bailey, *Battleground Berlin*, 206.

<sup>31</sup> “Frank B. Rowlett,” *Cryptologic Hall of Honor*. National Security Agency. Accessed 13 December 2018. <https://www.nsa.gov/about/cryptologic-heritage/historical-figures-publications/hall-of-honor/Article/1623037/frank-b-rowlett/> ; Technically he worked for the Armed Forces Security Agency which was the predecessor to the NSA, but I have kept naming conventions the same for clarity sake.

<sup>32</sup> David C. Martin, *Wilderness of Mirrors*, (Connecticut: Lyons Press, 2003), 76.

truth can be elusive and sometimes even only be revealed as new information surfaces. Despite what remains unresolved, there is a great deal that has yielded useful conclusions. The KGB's decision to not use the Berlin Tunnel for disinformation is not a puzzling choice, but a very rational one. The Soviet espionage scene was in the process of rebuilding given the disintegration of the Cambridge Five's dynasty. Blake represented a new hope for the KGB as he would ideally become an increasingly valuable agent over the course of a decade or more as the Cambridge Five had been. Blake's value to the KGB mandated his protection. When the KGB weighed the lost opportunity by forgoing disinformation through the Berlin Tunnel and allowing the Tunnel to operate for the time being, it was with the assumption that only unencrypted cable traffic was vulnerable. Though there is not definitive evidence whether encrypted traffic was vulnerable or not, Blake had no knowledge of it being so, which led the KGB to proceed with this assumption. It was just rational calculus, a trade of "routine information" for the promise of an agent who had only just begun providing his services to the USSR. With the huge burden of future KGB intelligence prospects on the Blake as an agent, it is easy to see how the comparatively marginal gains of disinformation in this case were never worth the risk.

## DEMYSTIFYING *THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE*: BETTY FRIEDAN'S BESTSELLER IN CONTEXT OF THE POSTWAR AMERICAN PARADOXES

BY SALLY MA

Known as the “Women’s Emancipation Proclamation,” Betty Friedan’s bestseller *The Feminine Mystique* has long had the reputation of reviving feminism in the culturally repressive post-WWII period of the United States.<sup>1</sup> Published in 1963, *The Feminine Mystique* presented Friedan’s indictment of the postwar cultural climate that convinced middle-class women they could find complete fulfillment through domesticity. Media and scholars often credit the book for resurrecting feminism and single-handedly starting the second-wave feminist movement. Scholar Katherine Macklem wrote on March 15, 2004, “It’s been 40 years since Betty Friedan and her seminal *The Feminine Mystique* unleashed the women’s movement.”<sup>2</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* said on February 7, 2006, “*The Feminine Mystique* revived an American feminism then thought to be extinct and unnecessary.”<sup>3</sup> Scholar Margalit Fox stated in the same year, “[Betty Friedan’s] searing first book, *The Feminine Mystique*, ignited the contemporary women’s movement in 1963 and as a result permanently transformed the social fabric of the United States and countries around the world.”<sup>4</sup> Friedan herself also contributed to this perception, stressing in *The Feminine Mystique* the death of feminism in the postwar period. “The fact is that to women born after 1920, feminism was dead history,” Friedan asserted, “It ended as a vital movement in America with the winning of that final right: the vote.”<sup>5</sup> Along the

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (London: Picador, 1999), 295.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine Macklem, “Kids vs Career. (Cover story).” *Maclean’s* 117, no. 11 (March 15, 2004): 24. MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost, accessed May 11, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Jacoby, “Keep the ‘Mystique’ Alive,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 2006, accessed May 10, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/422076295/FE4CB1C7864A4530PQ/90?accountid=36348>.

<sup>4</sup> Margalit Fox, “Betty Friedan, Who Ignited a Movement With ‘The Feminine Mystique,’ Dies at 85: [Obituary].” *New York Times*, February 6, 2006, accessed May 10, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/433291147/fulltext/FE4CB1C7864A4530PQ/1?accountid=36348>.

<sup>5</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963), 100.

same lines, Friedan implied the absence of feminist progress in previous women’s studies, reporting that these studies all perceived women in terms of the idealized image of peaceful and content housewives.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, Friedan suggested the revolutionary influence of the book in 1983 in the *New York Times*, “It is 20 years now since *The Feminine Mystique* was published. I am still awed by the revolution that the book helped spark. Even now, women—and men—stop me on the street to reminisce about where they were when they read it.”<sup>7</sup> Although Friedan was more measured in her word choice “helped spark,” her emphasis was on “spark.” In fact, the editors’ bolded and italicized introduction to her article in the *New York Times* praised Friedan as “the author of the landmark book that became a catalyst for the women’s movement.”<sup>8</sup> The editors’ lauding manner implied that Friedan’s humble tone was her calculated strategy to promote her book and convey its revolutionary influence.

Although the popular culture lauded *The Feminine Mystique* for resurrecting feminism and igniting the second-wave feminist movement, some scholars took a more critical stance. In 1998, historian Daniel Horowitz noted that Friedan failed to acknowledge the substantial debt her book owed to thinkers such as Thorstein Veblen, Simone de Beauvoir, and Friedrich Engel.<sup>9</sup> Two years later, scholar Jessica Weiss challenged Friedan’s historical account of America’s postwar period, revealing that the postwar families were not stagnant and fixated on traditional values.<sup>10</sup> Most recently, historian Stephanie Coontz criticized in 2011 that crediting the book for launching the second-wave feminist movement neglected the rich history of female resistance, especially the women’s suffrage movement in the 1920s.<sup>11</sup> Although *The Feminine Mystique* did contribute tremendously to the

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<sup>6</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Betty Friedan, “Twenty Years After the Feminine Mystique,” *New York Times*, February 27, 1983, accessed May 11, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/122221956/72E9B0D5C53949FCPQ/2?accountid=36348>.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 200-201.

<sup>10</sup> Jessica Weiss, *To Have and to Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom, and Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 16.

<sup>11</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 139.

feminist movement, people's common perception overestimated the book's value. *The Feminine Mystique* was the timely product of preceding feminism, particularly the ongoing feminist developments in the late 1940s and the 1950s. In fact, surveys and articles point to how suburban women were experiencing forms of feminism in their marriages. The real impact of *The Feminine Mystique* lay in its success in giving voices to a group of young, middle-class, primarily white housewives living in suburbia, trapped and silenced in the postwar American paradoxes, and empowering them to regain their confidence and independence.

Admittedly, the postwar era witnessed the staggering resurgence of domestic ideology in American society, partially as a backlash against the women's suffrage movement in the 1920s. While the women suffragists succeeded in winning women's right to vote and expanded women's sphere beyond the home, popular culture in the postwar era increasingly stressed that a domestic life embodied true womanhood. The domestic ideology specifically applied to the expanding group of young, middle-class women living in suburbia. As Friedan elaborated, "The suburban housewife—she was the dream image of the young American women... She was healthy, beautiful, educated, concerned only about her husband, her children, home. She had found true feminine fulfillment."<sup>12</sup> Such was the image that the popular culture disseminated, assuring middle-class women that they would find ultimate fulfillment in no place other than home. The image was so prevalent and powerful that consequently, many suburban women internalized this view and endeavored to conform to the image of the happy housewives, an image Friedan named "the feminine mystique."<sup>13 14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> The rise of the feminist mystique had various causes. In addition to being a backlash against the women's suffragist movement, the resurgence of domesticity was also caused by the rise of Freudian psychoanalysis that defined true womanhood as female passivity, blamed working women for "establishing a she-tyranny" over American men, and diagnosed women who deviated from the traditional female values as neurotic. Further perpetuating the domestic ideology, the white, middle-class American families in turn embraced family life as the source of stability after years of social upheaval from the Great Depression to WWII. The prevailing consumerism also contributed to women's retreat to home by defining housework and purchase for household needs as women's way to express individual creativity. The impending nuclear threat of the Cold War further enforced the concept of home as a safe haven and of women as the center of home. Sara M. Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of*

However, Friedan was wrong in inferring from the resurgence of domestic ideology the death of feminism. In fact, revolutionary feminist developments took place in the postwar era that distinguished the era from previous ones. Most strikingly, American families became more egalitarian in the late 1940s and the 1950s. In a *Fortune* magazine poll in 1946, to the question “who do you think is most often to blame when a marriage isn’t a success, the man or the woman,” an overwhelming majority of men (64%) and women (62.6%) chose “both equally.”<sup>15</sup> Such results signaled a significant step towards an egalitarian marriage from the traditional notion that blamed women entirely for a failed marriage. In 1955, a college textbook titled *Making the Most of Marriage* was published, in which author Paul H. Landis urged couples to discard old-fashioned ideas and embrace a marriage of equals.<sup>16</sup> A 1956 issue of *LIFE* magazine featured an article titled “Changing Roles in Modern Marriage,” in which author Robert Coughlan said, “With mutual respect based on understanding he can dry the dishes or tuck the children in, she can paint the fence or write the checks, without any loss whatever of prestige or emotional confidence.”<sup>17</sup> Coughlan’s support for moderate blurring of the division between men and women in marriage represented the new flexibility in gender roles. In fact, the postwar call of domesticity among the middle-class families extended beyond mothers, to fathers as well. As M. Robert Gomberg, columnist for the *New York Times Magazine*, wrote, “Advised, often demanded by experts in the field of family living, the change [in fifties marriage included] father’s more mature willingness to share more of family life, including routine chores and day-to-day details of childrearing.”<sup>18</sup> As historian Jessica Weiss summarized, “[Fifties marriages were not] based on a contentedly traditional division of labor. Rather, they were... a site of nascent struggle for a more

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*Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Knopf, 1979), 12; Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*, 28, 37, 69.

<sup>15</sup> Editors of *Fortune Magazine*, “Fortune Survey: Women in America,” *Fortune*, August 1946, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Weiss, *To Have and To Hold*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Coughlan, “Changing Roles in Modern Marriage,” *LIFE*, December 24, 1956, accessed May 12, 2016,

<https://books.google.com/books?id=00EEAAAAMB&lpq=PA3&vq=peter%20mars%20hall&pg=PA50%23v=onepage&q=woman&f=false#v=snippet&q=changing%20roles>.

<sup>18</sup> M. Robert Gomberg, “Father as Family Man,” *The New York Times Magazine*, September 6, 1953, 34; quoted in Weiss, *To Have and To Hold*, 87.

egalitarian reality in middle-class marriage.”<sup>19</sup> American couples’ new flexibility in their marital roles laid the foundation for the upcoming crusade for women’s equality in the next decade.

Contributing to the more egalitarian marriage was the growing acceptance of married women in the workplace, another major change in the postwar American society. Women’s employment during World War II loosened cultural barriers against married women employees.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, scholarly voices started challenging women’s confinement to domesticity. Sociologist Elizabeth Hawes observed in 1943, “No woman on God’s earth wants to have her life swing around a solitary, boring, repetitive business which means exhausting herself washing the same dishes and clothes, cooking food for the same people, seldom seeing a living soul other than a tired husband and her own children...”<sup>21</sup> She went on to assert, “Certainly any woman can be a ‘good wife’ and a ‘good mother’ and do other creative work outside her own little love nest.”<sup>22</sup> Hawes was pioneering in delineating the monotony of domestic routines and in supporting women’s work outside of home. After WWII, scholars’ defense of working women carried on. In 1956, Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein argued, “The sentimental cult of domestic virtues is the cheapest method at society’s disposal of keeping women quiet without seriously considering their grievances or improving their position.”<sup>23</sup> Both Hawes’s work and Myrdal and Klein’s poignant criticism of the domestic ideology helped shape Friedan’s arguments.<sup>24</sup> By downplaying and failing to acknowledge their contributions in *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan made her own work appear more innovative.

Scholars’ challenges of women’s confinement to domesticity, coupled with the increased acceptance of working women, prompted feminist progress in the postwar era; consequently, voices challenging the feminine mystique and advocating for women’s part-time jobs

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<sup>19</sup> Weiss, *To Have and To Hold*, 16.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Hawes. *Why Women Cry: Or, Wrenches with Wrenches*. (1998 ed. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1943), xv, accessed May 20, 2016, <https://archive.org/details/whywomenscryorwen00hawerich>.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein, *Women’s Two Roles: Home and Work*. (1998 ed., London: Routledge, 1956), 146, accessed May 20, 2016, <https://books.google.com/books?id=ImrkSJOTSSsC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

<sup>24</sup> Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*, 144.

emerged in the general interest magazines and newspapers. For example, a 1947 issue of *LIFE* magazine presented an article titled, “American Woman’s Dilemma,” which deemed a purely domestic life harmful for the American women. The author observed, “[Many housewives] fall back on numbing rounds of club meetings[,] card playing [,] low-grade fiction[,] and...dream realms of movies and soap operas.”<sup>25</sup> To address American housewives’ collective boredom, the author advocated for part-time jobs because they would not disturb a mother’s child-caring duty.<sup>26</sup> The article proposed that “[a married woman should] combine part-time work with housekeeping while she is young and to use this experience more fully when her children have left home.”<sup>27</sup> Similarly, a 1949 *New York Times* article by John Willig suspected that women could not achieve ultimate fulfillment through domesticity. After surveying 784 graduates from the Class of 1934 of the Seven Associated Colleges<sup>28</sup> during their fifteenth reunion, journalist John Willig reported, “[Many graduates] complained about the dullness of the domestic life and the monotony of family routine.”<sup>29</sup> He observed, “[Graduates’ typical comments included] ‘Frustrating drudgery, far from creative...’ [and] ‘...can be very lonely, and if you have intellectual interests, very dull.’”<sup>30</sup> The media’s opposition to the happy housewife myth and its support for women’s part-time jobs represented the postwar feminist progress that laid the foundation for Friedan’s 1963 advocacy that women should stand up against the feminine mystique and combine career with marriage.

As World War II induced the public to look more favorably on married working women, the postwar period also witnessed growing affirmation of married suburban women’s contributions to the American society through employment. For instance, a 1953 issue of

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<sup>25</sup> “American Woman’s Dilemma,” *LIFE* magazine, June 16, 1947, 109, accessed May 15, 2016,

<https://books.google.com/books?id=mEgEAAAAMBAJ&q=dilemma#v=snippet&q=dilemma&f=false>.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>28</sup> The Seven Associated Colleges included Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley.

<sup>29</sup> John Willig, “Class of ’34 (Female) Fifteen Years Later: 784 graduates report on themselves,” *New York Times*, June 12, 1949, accessed May 9, 2016,

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/105900720/4F194AEC6FA4F38PQ/3?accountid=36348>.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

*LIFE* magazine featured a complimentary article about mothers who worked to improve family life materially, saying, “Married women’s employment created much of the affluence postwar families enjoyed.”<sup>31</sup> Notably, in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1962, an editorial titled “Some Gentle Observations About Women” expressed confidence in women’s intellectual capacities and advocated for women’s equal employment opportunities: “The fact is we continue to deny women real equality of opportunity. We have, in the American woman, one of the nation’s great neglected resources...because she has brains, time, knowledge, courage, sensitivity, and dedication that are needed in our struggle for survival.”<sup>32</sup> With the undertone of Cold War anxiety, the editorial urged that women would join the working force to strengthen the nation in its “struggle for survival” against the Soviet Union. The increased recognition of women’s intellectual capability and their contribution to society through employment, as expressed by scholars and mainstream media, signaled monumental progress in women’s liberation.

As the women’s suffrage movement and World War II left indelible marks on the postwar American society, the postwar era featured feminist ideas emerging within the suburban families and circulating among the media, scholars, and activists. By downplaying the debt that *The Feminine Mystique* owed to the broader historical context, Friedan impressed her readers with a more revolutionary value of her book than it truly had. Instead of the pioneer that blazed the untraveled trail, *The Feminine Mystique* was the bursting blossom of the budding feminism in the postwar era, echoing and synthesizing a strain of feminist ideas that paved its way. Yet without exaggeration, the real power of *The Feminine Mystique* remained historic and extraordinary, for the book helped an immense group of young suburban women find their voices at the crucial time of their life in an era of disorienting societal changes.

Although feminist ideas already started circulating in the postwar period, the majority of suburban housewives could not access them due to the strong influence of women’s magazines. Not only did major women’s magazines constitute a large portion of what suburban women read in the 1950s, but their readers also formed more than half

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<sup>31</sup> Weiss, *To Have and To Hold*, 48.

<sup>32</sup> “SOME GENTLE OBSERVATIONS ABOUT WOMEN,” *Saturday Evening Post*, March 17, 1962.: 110, MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost, accessed May 12, 2016.

of the total female population.<sup>33</sup> These magazines were largely responsible for disseminating the concept that all women who willingly gave up their career ambitions would find fulfillment in being a homemaker. As Friedan reported in *The Feminine Mystique*, “[In 1958 and 1959], I went through issue after issue of the three major women’s magazines without finding a single heroine who had a career...other than ‘Occupation: housewife.’”<sup>34</sup> While Friedan may have exaggerated her case on the absence of feminist voices in the women’s magazines, more objective research came from sociologist Francesca Cancian, who investigated two major women’s magazines, *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *McCall’s*. She found that in the 1950s, these magazines contained more emphasis on housewives delighted to sacrifice work for home than in any other decade since the 1900s.<sup>35</sup> When Friedan attempted to publish *The Feminine Mystique* in *Redbook*, another major woman’s magazine, *Redbook* rejected, saying, “If we put something like this in the magazine, it sounds as if we think it’s true, which isn’t so. It’s distinctly an individual point of view...”<sup>36</sup> *Redbook’s* rejection represented women’s magazines’ traditionalist stance in the 1950s, shielding suburban women from voices opposing the feminine mystique.

Strengthening the influence of women’s magazines was the sense of isolation encompassing suburban women. As postwar middle-class families shrank in size, giving rise to more nuclear families, housewives became increasingly shut in their individual families from the outside world. As a woman named Carol Sears narrated, “I find I now depend on [my husband] for fun, excitement and diversion. He prefers young people, I really feel best with people my own age and older. But I have grown away or shy away from people and never invite them in for an evening as he will be bored with them or just not like them.”<sup>37</sup> Sears’ narration represented many suburban women who conformed to the feminine mystique and lost their independence as well as their social connections. This sense of alienation prevented

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<sup>33</sup> Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*, 65.

<sup>34</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 44.

<sup>35</sup> Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*, 67.

<sup>36</sup> Redbook rejection, 1962. (Betty Friedan Papers, MC 575, Box 154, Folder 1937),” *Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University*, accessed May 13, 2016, <https://schlesingerlibrary.omeka.net/items/show/46>.

<sup>37</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 184.

women from recognizing that they were not alone when they could not feel as delighted as the housewives in the women's magazines. In a letter to Friedan, a reader of *The Feminine Mystique* recalled her loneliness: "I was expecting a book that was going to discuss aspects of being a woman that I didn't fully realize yet. I fully expected you to develop a thesis that would state quite clearly how it was that so many women find true fulfillment in being homemakers. Even though I had never been able to do so, I thought that most women were."<sup>38</sup> Consequently, the suburban housewives internalized the feminine mystique and endeavored to muffle feelings other than joy and contentment with their role.

While the ignorance of opposition to the feminine mystique led many suburban women to feel forced to conform to the image, paradoxical societal changes of the postwar era further discouraged these women from leading a life of more than domesticity. The suburban women in the late 1940s and the 1950s faced a disorienting mixture of societal messages on womanhood. Contrasting the feminine mystique, the media celebrated successful career women. In a 1947 issue of *LIFE* magazine, an article titled "Full-time Career" praised married women who worked as factory workers, business women, and lawyers.<sup>39</sup> However, the author added that working was a good plan only if these married women were successful and were able to provide their children with secure and well-run homes. Similarly, in a 1956 issue of *LIFE* magazine, an article titled "A Lawmaking Homemaker" featured a woman elected to her fourth term in the Minnesota House of Representatives. The article stated in a commanding tone, "Combining a political career with a home is no easy task for a housewife, but Mrs. Sally Luther, 38, of Minneapolis, carries it off to the satisfaction of both her constituents and her family."<sup>40</sup> Underlying this paradox was the assumption that although some women could indeed combine marriage and career, these were the few and gifted. Although media's

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<sup>38</sup> "Letter from reader in Needham Heights, Massachusetts, March 22, 1964 (page 1). (Betty Friedan Papers, MC 575, Box 59, Folder 723)," Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, accessed May 12, 2016, <https://schlesingerlibrary.omeka.net/items/show/68>.

<sup>39</sup> "American Woman's Dilemma," *LIFE*, June 16, 1947, 102, accessed May 15, 2016, <https://books.google.com/books?id=mEgEAAAAMBAJ&q=dilemma#v=snippet&q=dilemma&f=false>.

<sup>40</sup> "A Lawmaking Homemaker," *LIFE*, December 1956, 50, accessed May 12, 2016, <https://books.google.com/books?id=00EEAAAAMBAJ&lpq=PA3&vq=peter%20mars%20hall&pg=PA50#v=onepage&q=woman&f=false>.

celebration of successful career women was progressive, such progress was limited. In reality, the social expectation of career women about homemaking did not diminish. Additionally, these women received little support with housework and child care.<sup>41</sup> As career women had no relief from domestic duties, in committing themselves to their career they chose to create more work and pressure for themselves. Consequently, the high demand of combining career and marriage either intimidated or inhibited the majority of American women to take on the task, making married working women only a rare exception to the social norm.

Adding on to the pressure that married working women faced, the popular culture defined truly successful women as traditionally feminine and completely devoted to domesticity. As *Redbook* commented, "Few women would want to thumb their noses at husbands, children and community and go off on their own. Those who do may be talented individuals, but they rarely are successful women."<sup>42</sup> The condemnation of working women as unfeminine stemmed from the rise of Freudian psychoanalysis in the postwar era. The Freudian theory popular in the mainstream culture defined true womanhood as female passivity and advocated for "castrating" working women.<sup>43</sup> While most people held a less extreme view, they still considered domesticity as women's first priority, and believed that a career would detract women from their domestic duties. Journalist Dorothy Thompson exemplified this opinion by warning her readers in *Ladies Home Journal* that before a woman attempted a career, she should make sure she was a "genius," because if she ended up doing mediocre work, she would be blamed for wasting the chance of raising an outstanding child.<sup>44</sup> Such social attitude made married working women face highly critical judgments on their performances both at work and at home, thus dissuading most married women from venturing to enter the workplace.

Moreover, although part-time jobs became available in the postwar period, which allowed more leeway for married women to work, these jobs were difficult to find. In the aforementioned survey of

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<sup>41</sup> "Primary and Secondary Contradictions in Seattle: 1967-1969," in *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation*, ed. Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Barr Snitow (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998), 224.

<sup>42</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 25.

<sup>43</sup> Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*, 69.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii.

784 members of the Class of 1934 during their fifteenth reunion, many women reported, “To find part-time jobs, even in teaching, where the need is supposed to be great, is extremely difficult.”<sup>45</sup> Out of the 23 million white female population in 1950, only 6 million had part-time employment, with 3 million only employed part-time for less than a third of a year.<sup>46</sup> The lack of part-time work, coupled with society’s oblique discouragement of female working women, forced the majority of the young suburban women to refrain from combining work with marriage.

For the women who knew no alternative to domesticity, the ugly reality of leading a domestic life did not change, belying the pretty promises of the feminine mystique. “There was a strange discrepancy between the reality of our lives as women and the image to which we were trying to conform, the image that I came to call the feminine mystique,” Friedan observed.<sup>47</sup> To arrive at this observation, Friedan first gathered from her 200 Smith college classmates their answers to her questionnaire during their fifteenth reunion in 1957. She then interviewed eighty other women spanning the age range from high school to forty years old. Her research convinced her of the prevalence of suburban housewives’ silenced frustration with the domestic life. As Friedan described in the book’s famous first paragraph in the chapter “The Problem That Has No Name:”

The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning... Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Club Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night—she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question—“Is this All?”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Willig, “Class of '34 (Female) Fifteen Years Later.”

<sup>46</sup> Congress, Statistical Abstract of the United States, H.R. Rep. No. 86th-No. 331, 2d Sess., at 22 (1960); Susan B. Carter, *Part B. Work and Welfare*, millennial ed., vol. 2, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Earliest Times to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 312.

<sup>47</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 9.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

This passage captured the systematic silencing of the suburban housewives that isolated these women, lured them to internalize the feminine mystique, and prohibited them from challenging the status quo or vocalizing their true feelings. In the following pages, Friedan elaborated upon this "sense of dissatisfaction" among the suburban wives about domestic routines. "Sometimes, a woman would say, 'I feel empty somehow...incomplete.' Or she would say, 'I feel as if I don't exist,'" Friedan described, for instance. "Sometimes she went to a doctor with symptoms she could hardly describe: 'A tired feeling...I get so angry with the children it scares me...I feel like crying with no reason.'"<sup>49</sup> Friedan further explored the impact on women when they internalized the feminine mystique: "If a woman had a problem in the 1950's and 1960's, she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage, or with herself...She was so ashamed to admit her dissatisfaction that she never knew how many other women shared it. If she tried to tell her husband, he didn't understand...she did not really understand it herself."<sup>50</sup> In this passage, Friedan revealed the self-distrust, shame, isolation, and confusion confronting suburban housewives.

The advancement in women's education contributed to and worsened the housewives' mental suffering. During the 1950s, more girls completed high school than in any previous era, and young white women found that they were twice as likely to go to college as their mothers had been.<sup>51</sup> As many of the educated women graduated and conformed to the feminine mystique, the intellectual training they received made the boredom of domesticity hit them harder. Unlike their counterparts in the first half of the twentieth century, who seldom experienced higher education, this new generation of housewives had expanded their horizons through the progress in women's education but ironically ended up becoming more prone to dissatisfaction. Barbara Winslow's mother, an active civil worker, exemplified this irony. "My mother was, on the surface, the model of an emancipated woman within marriage, [but] I believe my mother was frustrated by her role as a wife and mother," Winslow, a leader of the second-wave feminist movement, recounted. Surprisingly, Winslow's mother's oppression occurred in an open-minded family environment, with male support of female liberation. As Winslow said, "Recently she told me that she

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<sup>49</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 20.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*, 60-61.

believed my role models were my grandfather...and my father...[because both men] believe strongly in women being independent. Instead, I believe my mother, with all the contradictions in her life, is my role model.”<sup>52</sup> Winslow’s mother succeeded in nurturing and inspiring a future feminist leader with her brilliant intelligence, making it more shocking to observe the mother’s struggle to grapple with the discrepancy between her supposed liberation as an educated woman and her frustration with domesticity.

Indeed, Winslow’s mother’s experience represented yet another paradox on postwar womanhood: the popular culture perceived that the new emphasis on women’s education embodied postwar women’s liberation, which was worth celebrating; however, such perception only made many suburban housewives feel guiltier for their discontent when they conformed to domesticity. As Friedan described, “[Suburban women who have internalized the feminine mystique tell themselves that] we ought to salute the wonderful freedom we all have and be proud of our lives today. I have had college and I’ve worked, but being a housewife is the most rewarding and satisfying role.”<sup>53</sup> The feminine mystique played women’s education to its benefit, masking its silencing and oppression of women with glorious celebration of women’s equality, which caused more confusion and self-doubt among suburban housewives. As a woman named Joan C. described, “It would have been easier if everyone had been...negative...Then you could have gotten indignant. But it was like being enveloped in a big cloud of cotton candy, sweet and sticky. You couldn’t punch your way out.”<sup>54</sup> Another woman named Anne Parsons expressed even stronger frustration that perhaps hinted at her desperation: “I began to wish that someone would call me names or throw stones or threaten to send me to a concentration camp so that at least I would know for certain the world was against me.”<sup>55</sup> Extolling the postwar expansion of women’s sphere both in college education and in the workplace, the popular culture disguised and sugarcoated the subtle and unspoken form of women’s oppression—the conformity to the feminine mystique—causing more confusion, shame, and self-doubt among the discontented suburban women.

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<sup>52</sup> "Primary and Secondary Contradictions," in *The Feminist Memoir Project*, 224.

<sup>53</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 24.

<sup>54</sup> Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*, 74.

<sup>55</sup> Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*, 75.

For many suburban women, *The Feminine Mystique* was the first voice that affirmed their muffled feelings, and in their letters to Friedan they expressed their struggle before reading the book as well as their shocks of recognition after reading it. For some, internalizing the feminine mystique led to guilt and self-doubt. As a woman named Lillian Rubin said, "[Friedan] called it perfectly. The feeling didn't have a name....So you turned it inward and assumed *you* were the problem. And so did everyone around you."<sup>56</sup> Others suffered from confusion and depression. For instance, a woman named Sally A. wondered whether she should see a psychiatrist because she often cried "for no reason" in the middle of the afternoon; she recalled thinking, after reading *The Feminine Mystique*, "Everything just clicked."<sup>57</sup> For many, leading a domestic life also meant becoming trapped in a sense of unworthiness. One housewife represented this feeling by writing a poem prompted by reading the book: "I'm afraid I'll just vanish./ Like some small thing/ In the ground/ That no one knows/ Even existed."<sup>58</sup> The writings of thousands of suburban housewives revealed the staggering reality that stood in stark contrast to the feminine mystique.

By giving voices to the suburban housewives' discontent, *The Feminine Mystique* helped these women break out of their isolation and recognize their individual grievances as collective. As one woman wrote, "My husband cannot understand why I have suddenly turned miserable after 11 years of a good marriage. I had been unhappily living in the belief that my feelings about marriage were all wrong, that no other woman feels as I do...Now that I know I am not alone in feeling as I do, the future seems quite a bit brighter."<sup>59</sup> Recognition of their shared grievances marked the suburban housewives' first step towards regaining their confidence and standing up to oppose society's systematic silencing of their voices.

In addition to being the unprecedented cohesive force that bonded the suburban housewives, *The Feminine Mystique* was also powerful in legitimizing their frustration with domesticity. Using the recent sociological and psychological findings, including Maslow's

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>58</sup> Pat Andrews, "The Feminine Mystique," *Chicago Tribune*, June 2, 1963, accessed May 5, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/182742816/87B094E3D72B4C8CPQ/1?accountid=36348>.

<sup>59</sup> Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*, 26.

hierarchy of needs, Friedan illustrated in the chapter titled “The Forfeited Self” that the need for self-actualization was a defining characteristic of human health.<sup>60</sup> Friedan then analyzed that the feminine mystique, by defining independence and intellectual ambitions as antagonistic to femininity, prohibited women from growing to their full human capacities.<sup>61</sup> As Friedan contended, “A woman cannot find her identity through others—her husband, her children. She cannot find it in the dull routine of housework.”<sup>62</sup> To further support her case, Friedan documented women’s transformations when they no longer saw marriage and motherhood as the only means to their ultimate fulfillment. As one woman recounted, “When I was putting my whole self into the children, it was as if I was always looking for something through them. I couldn’t just enjoy them as I do now... Maybe a woman has to be *by herself* to be really *with* her children.”<sup>63</sup> This woman’s experience, representing those of many more women, demonstrated the fundamental flaw of the domestic ideology that denied women’s independence for supposedly women’s own good. Friedan pioneered the translation of complicated scholarly studies into accessible language similar to that of women’s magazines, combining academic research results with individual stories, which boosted the book’s popularity and expanded its influence.<sup>64</sup>

After presenting a persuasive justification for the housewives’ yearning for something more beyond home, Friedan laid out concrete suggestions for social changes in the chapter titled “A New Life Plan for Women.” Friedan argued that for women to achieve personal growth, education and applying education to a profession were keys.<sup>65</sup> Friedan further advocated that women should not beat themselves down to be feminine and should look for jobs equal to their actual capacity—jobs that they could take seriously as part of a life plan, in which they can grow as part of society, such as a lifelong commitment to art, science, or politics.<sup>66</sup> For those who approached forty years old and

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<sup>60</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 316.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

<sup>63</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 343.

<sup>64</sup> Patricia Bradley, *Mass Media and the Shaping of American Feminism, 1963-1975*.

Jackson, MS, USA: University Press of Mississippi, 2004. ProQuest ebrary: 11,

accessed May 8, 2016,

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/philipsexeter/detail.action?docID=10157899>.

<sup>65</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 357.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 345 & 348.

managed to seize these keys, according to Friedan, they reported, “[Although my] skin looks faded and tired...I have a growing sense of self-realization, inner serenity and strength.”<sup>67</sup> In addition to urging women to take up serious commitments besides domesticity, Friedan also appealed for two major policy changes: first, to establish a national education program, similar to the GI bill, that would assist women in completing high education; second, to allow for maternity leaves and sabbaticals and to construct professionally run nurseries that would allow women to combine their commitment to profession with marriage and motherhood.<sup>68</sup> By concrete instructions, Friedan pointed a clear direction for women to take actions both for achieving personal growth and for demanding societal changes. Friedan’s instructional writing style, which resembled the popular women’s self-help articles, also helped popularize the book and enhanced its power in mobilizing the suburban housewives.<sup>69</sup>

Friedan’s encouragement of women to pursue their ambitions and cultivate personal growth played a transformative role in many suburban women’s lives. Through letters to Friedan, many expressed their gratitude that the book helped them regain their confidence and motivation. One woman, married eight years with two children, wrote, “Although I stood highest in my high school class and read constantly, none of my ideas were important [to my husband.] [Thank you for] that extra boost I needed to know I am important to myself and my children and not just a diaper changer.”<sup>70</sup> Another said, “Thank you, thank you, thank you for your inspiring book, the *Feminine Mystique*. Yours were the words I needed to put all the pieces together and buckle down to some more serious pursuits—to commitment I have been avoiding for some undetermined reason.”<sup>71</sup> Similarly, one reader thanked the book for saving her from misery and empowering her to reclaim her independence and self-esteem. “For years I have wondered what lingering adolescence made me feel that my college years were the happiest of my life when here I was a most fortunate woman with ‘everything’ a woman could want,” she said. “And now I know. It’s

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>68</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 370 & 375.

<sup>69</sup> Patricia Bradley, *Mass Media and the Shaping of American Feminism*, 12.

<sup>70</sup> Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*, 28.

<sup>71</sup> “Letter from reader in Concord, Massachusetts, June 18, 1963. (Betty Friedan Papers, MC 575),” *Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University*, accessed May 12, 2016, <https://schlesingerlibrary.omeka.net/items/show/59>.

because that was the one time in my life when I made my own decisions and was personally responsible for the results...I felt reborn and all-powerful.... I am never going to forget that I am not my husband's other self: I am ME."<sup>72</sup> The aforementioned reader who published a poem in response to *The Feminine Mystique* thanked the book for helping her break out of the myth of the ideal womanhood—being a wife, mother, and a sexual companion to her husband—and regain her own identity and individuality: "I'm standing up;/ Please count me./ I'm not Mrs. So and so/ I'm not mama/ Or honey."<sup>73</sup> Thus *The Feminine Mystique* was revolutionary in raising an immense group of young suburban housewives out of self-deprecation and empowering them to reclaim their independence. The book's success in uplifting this group of women laid tremendous foundation for the second-wave feminist movement in the late 1960s.

Contrary to popular perception and Friedan's own portrayal, *The Feminine Mystique* did not single-handedly trigger the second-wave feminist movement, nor did it resurrect feminism that vanished in the postwar resurgence of the domestic ideology. To say otherwise is to neglect the ongoing revolutionary developments in the late 1940s and the 1950s that distinguished this time period from the previous ones. The arguments in *The Feminine Mystique* echoed a strain of feminist ideas prior to the book's publication, marking the book a timely offspring born of the budding feminism in its era. Nevertheless, the real power of *The Feminine Mystique* remained monumental. The book gave voices to a generation of young, middle-class women silenced and isolated in the trap of the feminine mystique. The popular culture told these women that they were lucky to receive college educations and have working experience, but their ultimate fulfillment would and only could come from full-time commitment to marriage and womanhood. When these women felt frustrated with the boredom of the domestic routines and yearned for something more beyond home, they had little support to help them resist the cultural insistence that their yearning was abnormal. As a result, these women experienced mental sufferings ranging from confusion and loneliness to shame, self-doubt, and desperation. Historian Stephanie Coontz offered a memorable

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<sup>72</sup> "Letter from reader in Suffern, New York, November 8, 1964. (Betty Friedan Papers, MC 575)," *Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University*, accessed May 11, 2016, <https://schlesingerlibrary.omeka.net/items/show/69>.

<sup>73</sup> Andrews, "The Feminine Mystique."

characterization of this generation of women and *The Feminine Mystique*'s impact on these women:

They were...like the farm boys from World War I who passed through New York City on the way to the killing fields of France and then, when the war was over, couldn't go back to the farm. We understood and accepted those soldiers who didn't return to the farm.

But it took Friedan to help us understand that there were women who, through their education, saw glimpses of the world of work and then didn't want to go back to being housewives. Or they went back under enormous pressure from everyone, but spent the next years of their lives with their noses pressed against the proverbial glass—looking in at a world that they would never be part of.<sup>74</sup>

Indeed, *The Feminine Mystique* was extraordinary due to its success in deconstructing the paradox and hypocrisy of the postwar era and putting a tremendous and resonating dent in, if not shattering, the “glass” that was the feminine mystique. Most remarkably, the book pioneered in communicating complex scholarly studies in an accessible fashion by using individual stories and the language of women's magazines familiar to suburban women. Consequently, *The Feminine Mystique* reached a generation of women who were previously isolated from the existing feminism, empowering them to regain their voices, break the confinement of domesticity, and demand for social changes. As Coontz continued, “[*The Feminine Mystique* electrified the] women who might otherwise have been lost entirely to themselves and to the women's movement.”<sup>75</sup> Forty three years after the book's publication, Marlene Sanders, founding chair of Women's eNews and Friedan's lifelong close friend, recounted, “Friedan had wakened a sleeping generation of women, and millions of them would educate themselves and enter the workforce with all the energy of an eruption from Etna.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*, 118 & 119.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>76</sup> Marlene Sanders, “Betty Friedan Work Women From Mystique of Sleep,” *Women's eNews*, February 7, 2006, accessed May 9, 2016. <http://womensenews.org/2006/02/betty-friedan-woke-women-mystique-sleep/>.

When the second-wave feminist movement took off in the late 1960s, these women would join in the fight with reclaimed independence and self-esteem and become an immense part of a crusade that would transform women's place in the American society.

## **EXHUMED MEMORIES: HO CHI MINH, POL POT, AND NATIONALIST STRUGGLE IN INDOCHINA**

**BY JONATHAN FORMELLA**

Since the chaos that was the Indochinese Wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, both Vietnam and Cambodia have been etched into global memory accompanied by visions of hellscape, bloodshed, and a common human experience of terror. Under Ho Chi Minh and Pol Pot, respectively, the nations of Vietnam and Cambodia engaged in vicious struggles to realize their dreams of nationalism and independence. Beneath the rhetoric and actions of the two nations and their leaders is a complex array of historical factors, culture, and ideologies which led to the manifestation of Ho Chi Minh and Pol Pot as leaders of their respective nations. By analyzing the origins, backgrounds, and leaders of the nationalist movements of Vietnam and Cambodia, it becomes clear what characterized the respective nationalistic movements of each nation and to what degree they were successful. Ho Chi Minh used the rhetoric of communist liberation to unite the masses in a nationalist struggle utilizing guerrilla strategy and mass uprising, while Pol Pot reactively employed tactics of xenophobia and anti-foreign propaganda to establish a violent regime amidst the chaos of the Indochinese Wars.

For Vietnam, resistance to foreign aggression had been infused in Vietnamese blood for centuries. Beginning with the anti-Chinese resistance in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, the Vietnamese engaged in what would become a time-honored tradition of struggle against foreign oppression. Vietnamese heroes such as the Trung sisters would be celebrated as defiant warriors against the Chinese, and this legacy would carry into the age of imperialism and nationalism as a major aspect of the Vietnamese nationalist movement.<sup>1</sup>

At the onset of French colonialism, proto-nationalist resistance occurred in a variety of forms. The Confucian scholars at the village level historically made up some of the most fundamental social and political structures in Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh would later remark that the collective village structures espoused by Confucian teachings made

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Weller Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 40.

Vietnam a nation which could easily adopt communism.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the military might of the French colonial forces was able to overcome proto-nationalist resistance and establish a colonial regime in Vietnam. Both the Confucian elites and the peasant guerillas were defeated, and the Nguyen court, once a formidable power in Southeast Asia, now became a puppet for the French colonial regime.<sup>3</sup> The origins of the later Saigon regime's patron-client relationships with the French and Americans can be seen in this arrangement. In both the puppet Nguyen court and Saigon regime, these client regimes would suffer from a chafing lack of popular support.

By 1900, a new generation of nationalists threatened French colonial regime in Vietnam. Unlike the Confucian patriots who had resisted French domination in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and were largely influenced by traditional Confucian values, these new scholar-patriots sought to bring about the modernization of nationalism in Vietnam. The iconic figure who represented the character of this nationalistic movement was a talented scholar by the name of Phan Boi Chau. Like many of his nationalist peers, Chau was born into an elite family.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike the Confucian patriots of the century prior, Chau and his cohort believed they must look to modernization rather than the past to assert the national identity of Vietnam. Chau saw the rapid changes taking place in other countries in Asia and the influences of the West upon Chinese and Japanese modernization. They greatly admired the successes of the Meiji Restoration and the revolution of Sun Yat-sen in China. Unfortunately, Chau and his comrades failed to grasp the potency of the masses in order to achieve modernization and social change. While Chau and his nationalists were passionate and determined in their patriotic cause, they were unable to spread their nationalistic fervor beyond their elite scholarly circles to the Vietnamese people.<sup>5</sup>

Besides the Viet Minh, there were many factions within Vietnam vying for the mantle of nationalist leadership and legitimacy during the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The VNQDD was a right-wing Vietnamese nationalist faction which organized semi-effective

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<sup>2</sup> Son Ngoc Bui, "The Confucian Foundations of Ho Chi Minh's Vision of Government." *Journal of Oriental Studies* 46, no. 1 (2013): 35-59.

<sup>3</sup> William J. Duiker *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam* (Boulder: Westview, 1996), 7.

<sup>4</sup> William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh* (New York: Hyperion, 2001), 25-26.

<sup>5</sup> Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 7-9.

operative groups but ultimately proved unviable as an option for mass nationalistic mobilization.<sup>6</sup> In Southern Vietnam, a rival communist faction known as the Trotskyites would initially form nationalist cells among the workers. However, the tight grip of direct French imperial rule proved to be a hindrance for would-be successful nationalist activities. The pro-French collaborationist class of South Vietnam also saw some moderate attempts to reform the imperial regime. However, the French were reluctant to sacrifice too much power to these elites. Once the French departed Vietnam, the Saigon ruling elite were incapable of cultivating sympathy among the masses because of their reputation as imperialist collaborators and their own inexperience at political administration.<sup>7</sup>

Eventually, the Communist Party of Vietnam led by Ho Chi Minh emerged as the dominant nationalist movement in Vietnam. Unlike other nationalist movements, Ho Chi Minh's nationalism was characterized by a hybrid of Marxism-Leninism, popular nationalism, and anti-imperial resistance. From an early age, Ho Chi Minh was engaged in the struggle to end the brutal French colonial regime. French clampdowns on his nationalist protests at school forced him to flee to Saigon where he found work as a shipboard cook. After moving on to France in 1919, Ho encountered a number of colonial expatriates as well as the leftist European intellectuals who first attracted Ho Chi Minh to radical socialist politics. Ho later wrote that they have "...shown their sympathy towards me, towards the struggle of the oppressed peoples."<sup>8</sup> Ho was further persuaded to pursue the interests of anti-colonialism in the French Socialist Party after his plea for assistance at Versailles was ignored by the Allied Powers.

While in France, Ho attempted to unite colonial expatriates along with French socialists and communists to lobby against French imperialism. The Intercolonial Union was masterminded by Ho and made up mainly of Vietnamese, Algerian, and Madagascar nationals united by a common cause of anti-colonialism.<sup>9</sup> Though his comrades often disagreed and argued among themselves, Ho's experience with the Intercolonial Union in Paris also gave the young nationalist training in creating broad-based coalitions that would become invaluable during

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<sup>6</sup> Alfred W. McCoy, "Modern Nationalist Movements." Lecture, Southeast Asia Since 1800, Vilas Hall, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, March 17, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ho Chi Minh. *The Selected Works* (New York: Prism Key, 2011), 141-143.

<sup>9</sup> William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*, 8-46.

the founding of the Indochinese Communist Party and Viet Minh later on.

It was during his stay in France that Ho Chi Minh encountered the writings of the Bolshevik revolutionary Vladimir Lenin. Lenin's particular concern for oppressed colonial peoples in writings such as "Thesis on the National and Colonial Questions" attracted the aspiring Vietnamese revolutionary and would have a profound effect upon his political strategies for the rest of his life. In his article, "The Path Which Led Me to Leninism", Ho Chi Minh explains how Lenin's articulation on the strategic importance of promoting anti-colonialism would ensure a global communist society. Ho writes, "...by studying Marxism-Leninism parallel with participation in practical activities, I gradually came upon the fact that only socialism and communism can liberate the oppressed nations and the working people throughout the world from slavery."<sup>10</sup> Beguiled by Lenin's emphasis on anti-colonialism, Ho Chi Minh subsequently incorporated many Leninist tactics into his own revolutionary style.

As a major supporter of Lenin's works, Ho Chi Minh believed in the Leninist strategy of toppling a feudal regime by organizing a common front of communists and liberal bourgeoisie to work for a first revolution. Ho Chi Minh was also fiercely determined to avoid the same mistakes as Phan Boi Chau and other nationalist factions such as the VNQDD and the Constitution Party, whose localized and small cell-based movements inspired little excitement among the Vietnamese masses. Adopting Leninism and learning from previous nationalist failures, Ho Chi Minh became a successful nationalist leader because he reached out across social classes and the political spectrum to rally anticolonial forces to his cause. This step was a key element in Ho Chi Minh's greater plan to harness the disorganized and spontaneous nationalist revolts into a lethal weapon for the eventual establishment of the mass-based Viet Minh coalition in the 1940s.<sup>11</sup>

This tactic was not only ingenious in that it appealed to a wide variety of Vietnamese, but also saw the front grow, specifically under the leadership of the Viet Minh and the Indochinese Communist Party. Although The Viet Minh was a collection of nationalist groups, at its core it was communist in nature. This strategy of a communist-directed alliance would later recur in the Vietnam War as the National

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<sup>10</sup> Ho Chi Minh. *The Selected Works.*, 141-143.

<sup>11</sup> Ho Chi Minh, and Jack Woddis. *Ho Chi Minh: Selected Articles and Speeches, 1920-1967* (New York: International Publishers, 1970), 15-72.

Liberation Front, or Viet Cong, which formed in South Vietnam as a coalition of anti-Saigon forces including former elements of the Cao Dai religious sect under the leadership of Hanoi and communist direction.<sup>12</sup>

With the turn of the century in colonial Vietnam, the French system of high imperialism instituted major socioeconomic changes into Vietnam. Many Vietnamese were forced from their homes to work as coolies in plantations or factories. These changes and increased interaction resulting from the changing socioeconomic situation in Vietnam allowed for a greater horizontal unity among the Vietnamese peasants and proletarians while allowing for nationalism to mature among the populace. Soviets were established to help protect the livelihood of workers. The Vietnamese communists would infiltrate these Soviets in order to achieve a greater massed following that many of their nationalist contenders failed to procure. To Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh, nationalism was necessary to liberate the Vietnamese peasants and proletarians from the bondages of French imperialism. Their moderate land reform measures pragmatically encouraged the sympathy of the masses while retaining broader, multiclass support.<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately for the Viet Minh, the distress and rage of the Vietnamese workers, and peasants boiled over before Ho's stratagem came to full maturity. Though overall unsuccessful in overthrowing the French colonial rule, the Nghe-Tinh labor revolts from 1930-1931 enhanced the strategy which would come to characterize the nationalism of the Viet Minh. The failure of Nghe-Tinh taught Ho Chi Minh many valuable lessons. They had considerable mass support among the proletariat and peasants, yet more strategic planning and patience was needed. Following the suppression of the Nghe-Tinh Revolt from 1930-1931 and the failure of the Vietnamese Nationalist Party in 1928, Ho understood that a successful uprising required more than raw revolutionary fervor. Ho Chi Minh and his comrades in the ICP realized that the Vietnamese required arms and meticulous strategic planning to overthrow their colonial oppressors.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Young, Marilyn Bratt. *The Vietnam Wars 1945-1990* (New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Scott, James C. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

<sup>14</sup> Fitzgerald, Frances. "Half Lenin, Half Gandhi." *New York Times* (New York), October 15, 2000.

The answer to the protracted struggle--and a major characteristic of nationalism in Vietnam which would come to be fundamental to the Viet Minh movement--was the guerrilla, unconventional nature of its forces. Vo Nguyen Giap, the legendary Viet Minh general, saw his communist soldiers as a nationalist army working for the people against imperialism. Giap remarks, "The Vietnamese Army is indeed a national one. In fighting against imperialism and the traitors in its service, it has fought for national independence and the unity of the country."<sup>15</sup> Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap cleverly used their military forces not only to engage in military action but also to demonstrate solidarity with the people and spread communist propaganda among the population. As the title of his book, *Military Art of People's War*, suggests, the foundation of the Viet Minh struggle lay with the people. Military victories were followed closely with pushes for education in Ho Chi Minh's communist ideology.<sup>16</sup> In this way, the Viet Minh successfully empowered and directed Vietnam's nationalist movement by defeating imperialist forces and winning the hearts and minds of the people.

Unlike competing nationalist movements, Ho Chi Minh and his communist movement emerged successful in Vietnam. Waiting for the right moment to unleash their uprising, the moment of maximum opportunity was determined by Ho and his comrades to be the surrender of the Japanese empire in the summer of 1945.<sup>17</sup> The August 1945 Revolution in Vietnam was a turning point in the history of modern Vietnamese nationalism as the previously unorganized nationalist movement in Vietnam was successfully led by Viet Minh cadres and other patriots in overwhelming the Japanese-led puppet government. However, Ho's pragmatism towards Vietnamese progressives and the returning French after 1945 angered many of his comrades in the ICP. Ho believed it was necessary to preserve the legitimacy of his government by compromising with non-occupant forces. Duiker writes, "By portraying the Vietminh Front as a broad-based movement armed with a program that could appeal to all progressive and patriotic forces, Ho not only managed to extend its appeal well beyond the normal constituency of the Communist Party,

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<sup>15</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap. *The Military Art of People's War* (New York: New York: Monthly Review, 1970).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 68-69.

<sup>17</sup> "Peace in Indo-China?" *New York Times* (New York), March 10, 1939.

but he also put into position to lobby for recognition by the victorious Allies as the legitimate voice of Vietnamese nationalism.”<sup>18</sup> With the Viet Minh in a strong position to negotiate with the Allies, Ho prepared his famous Declaration of Independence speech to be delivered on September 2, 1945 in Hanoi.

Though in many ways similar to Vietnamese nationalism, the nationalist movement in Cambodia reflected its nation’s status as a former Southeast Asian power now in decline. The glorious Angkor Empire which reigned in splendor in modern day Cambodia had long decayed by the arrival of French colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cambodia was then constantly struggling to maintain its borders against constant military threats and the expansionism of Vietnam and Siam. Unlike Vietnam, which was a relatively powerful Southeast Asian state at the onset of French imperialism, Cambodia was a weak state which relied upon diplomacy and political maneuvering to assert autonomy. This chaotic political state became increasingly imbalanced following Cambodian independence from France in 1953 and allowed for rival factions to compete for power.<sup>19</sup> This situation afforded the ruthless and irrational Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge the opportunity to seize power for a brief but shockingly brutal four years.

While the Vietnamese and the Burmese were being crushed by the might of the European imperial militaries, the Cambodian court lead by King Sihanouk came to see that diplomatic negotiations might be the best course to protect some notion of national autonomy. King Sihanouk saw making concessions to the French and peacefully agreeing to imperialism as a way not only to avoid the destruction of Cambodia but also to establish security of the borders against the Vietnamese and the Siamese which had been eroded in recent decades.<sup>20</sup>

Under the French colonial regime, Cambodia was a highly taxed yet relatively peaceful part of French Indochina. It was a multiethnic country with a Khmer majority of 80%. Nearly five percent of the population was minority with many Vietnamese, Chinese, and

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<sup>18</sup> Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*, 344.

<sup>19</sup> Hall, Daniel George Edward. *A History of South East Asia* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 99.

<sup>20</sup> Steinberg, David Joel., ed. *In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History* (London: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 123-127.

Cham people. A Cambodian nationalist movement began to gain steam in the 1930s. A local communist party was formed in 1951.<sup>21</sup>

During WWII, the Thai incursion into Cambodian territories showed the vulnerability of Cambodia to Cambodian nationalists. The recurring theme of the Cambodian nationalists from the 1940s onward was the nightmare of losing territory. Historically, there had been many genocidal wars in Cambodia against the Vietnamese. Pol Pot's form of nationalism, once he and the Khmer Rouge gained power, was fiercely opposed to what he and his followers believed to be Vietnamese expansionism. Pot and his followers drew upon centuries old animosity towards the Vietnamese to fuel the flames of nationalism in their conflict against Vietnam in the 1970s. Though Pol Pot was not successful as a revolutionary in the same way as Ho Chi Minh and the ICP, he represents Cambodian nationalism in its most radical and violent form and therefore he and the Khmer Rouge are worthy of examination for what they can explain about Cambodia and its own nationalist struggle.

Before the rise of the Khmer Rouge, however, official nationalism best describes the Cambodian experience early on as Cambodia came to become an independent nation in 1953. This official Cambodian nationalism under King Norodom Sihanouk, ruling from 1941-1955, was largely based on the top-down approach where the elites dictated the formation of a national identity. A grassroots nationalist movement in Cambodia slowly began to emerge but was eclipsed largely by the royal official nationalism.<sup>22</sup> Many of the grassroots nationalists in Cambodia, including Pol Pot, felt they initially had to turn their more advanced Vietnamese nationalist counterparts for support, as exemplified by the assistance of the Vietnamese-led ICP during the Indochinese wars.<sup>23</sup>

The royal official nationalism espoused by King Norodom Sihanouk often contrasted with the relatively primitive, grassroots nationalism of Cambodia which saw its heritage in the Khmer culture and language. The Khmer Rouge ideology hybridized the pre-

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<sup>21</sup> Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), xx-xxi.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>23</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

nationalist, grassroots movement of the Cambodia with the rhetoric of international communism while asserting a sense of dynastic tradition and continuation derived from Angkor history. The leaders of the Khmer Rouge were largely French-educated Cambodians who had been raised in relatively well-off Cambodian families. The choice of Kampuchea itself reflected the grassroots nationalism which saw a return to the dynastic traditions of Cambodia, for which Kampuchea had been the official dynastic name.<sup>24</sup> The CPK nationalism was fueled by a siege caused by foreign hostility towards its regime which was seen as a triumph over the grassroots nationalism which tended to be less hostile in terms of international relations. Thus, the characteristics of CPK nationalism were ultra-nationalistic in that they wished to create a glorious dynasty which prized the ethnic identity of the Khmers while demanding a rigid ideological loyalty to the Khmer Rouge doctrine.

After the fall of the Japanese Empire in 1945, the French return to Indochina was met with armed resistance from the Viet Minh and the Cambodian nationalist movement known as Khmer Issarak. In 1951, the Vietnamese sponsored the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party (KRPR). Like the common front tactics of the Vietnamese during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the Unified Issarak Front was composed of the KRPR and other non-communist movements. Though often antagonist to the KRPR, most of the groups were ultra-nationalistic who even carried out ethnic massacres of Chams and Vietnamese. After the Vietnam War and when Cambodian-Vietnamese relations had severely deteriorated, there were Vietnamese pogroms against ethnic Chinese in Vietnam.<sup>25</sup> Though unified in their struggle against the Japanese and other non-Khmers, the Khmer Rouge would come to dominate the nationalist movement in Cambodia through skillful propaganda in the countryside and the opportunistic leadership of Pol Pot.

The Khmer Rouge was born from Saloth Sar, later to be known as Pol Pot. Pot was born to a relatively well-off Cambodian fisherman's family. His sister was concubine to King Monivong so he had access to the royal palace in Phnom Penh. Like many of the future cadre of the Khmer Rouge, Pol Pot was quite familiar with palace life

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<sup>24</sup> Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), xvii.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, i-xxxii.

and used his connections to receive a scholarship to study technology in France.<sup>26</sup>

Like Ho Chi Minh before him, Pol Pot came into contact with French communists in the form of the French Communist Party. From 1949 to 1953, Pol Pot studies electronics at technical college in Paris. He joined the French Communist Party and joined the clique of Cambodians known as the *Cercle Marxiste*. This clique of French-educated Cambodian communists would form the vanguard of the Kampuchea Communist Party and the leadership of this Khmer Rouge elite would greatly determine the character of Cambodian nationalism from 1975-1979.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly to Ho, Pol Pot was inspired by the sympathy of the FCP towards the colonial peoples of French Indochina. Ironically, the ideologies of the West, imperialism and communism, both gave Ho Chi Minh and Pol Pot the catalysts and cohesive ideologies for creating their own anticolonial nationalist movements. Pol Pot, along with many of his French-educated comrades who would form the leadership of the Khmer Rouge, used their experiences in France to become acquainted with the communist movement and form bonds that would distinguish themselves from the pro-Hanoi cadre of the Cambodian communist movement.

Upon returning from France after flunking out of college, Pol Pot joined the communist movement in Cambodia alongside many of his French-educated colleagues. Pot became extremely skeptical of the Vietnamese-trained cadre among the KPRP leadership. He believed that the pro-Hanoi cadre, though assisting his forces during the Vietnam War, were at the core nothing more than tools for Vietnamese expansionism into Cambodia. A ruthless strategist, Pot played the alliance with North Vietnam to his advantage during the Vietnam War in order to come to power in Phnom Pen but would later purge the Vietnamese-trained cadre once he assumed power in 1975.

Originally, the KPRP was controlled largely by rural, Buddhist communist veterans who were pro-Vietnamese and moderate. However, the French-educated clique led by Pol Pot eventually came to take the mantle of leadership during the Vietnam War and reorganized

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<sup>26</sup> Ben Kiernan, "The Original Cambodian." *New Internationalist*, New Internationalist, 5 Apr. 1993, [newint.org/features/1993/04/05/original](http://newint.org/features/1993/04/05/original).

<sup>27</sup> David P. Chandler *Brother Number One A Political Biography of Pol Pot* (Boulder: Routledge, 1992).

the KPRP into the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), more infamously known as the Khmer Rouge with their party cadre being known as the Angkar. Though the aftermath of Dien Bien Phu in 1956 was supposed to usher in Cambodian independence and prosperity, the Vietnam War greatly destabilized the already struggling nation. The chaos on the border regions of Cambodia during the war crippled the export duties revenue for King Sihanouk's government, its main source of financial stability.<sup>28</sup> The porous Cambodian borders also allowed the country to become a theater of the war and suffer from South Vietnamese raids and American bombings. The Khmer Rouge began an armed uprising in 1967 while in 1970 General Lon Nol overthrew King Sihanouk. Sihanouk, now in exile in Beijing, decided to side with the Khmer Rouge who eventually took power in 1975. While the Vietnam War and the campaign by Washington and Saigon only served to retard the Communist Party of Vietnam's unification of Vietnam, the chaos resulting in Cambodia allowed for the Khmer Rouge to seize power and begin their short-lived reign of terror.<sup>29</sup>

The characteristics of Cambodian nationalism can be traced in the writings of Pol Pot. Unlike the characteristics of Ho Chi Minh's nationalism, which saw anti-colonialism and the unification of Vietnam as key to its struggle, Pol Pot's ideologies largely believed in ethnic cleansing and a constant struggle with enemy nations as central to Khmer Rouge legitimacy. As part of this struggle to the death with Vietnam, Pot had the Hanoi-leaning members of the CPK cadre purged. One CPK slogan was "Today, the Angkar has decided to attack rats."<sup>30</sup> As part of the anti-foreign struggle, the CPK purged the country of anyone partaking in suspicious behavior. Radios, while not explicitly illegal, could be used for subversive activity. Even if someone was ethnically Khmer, they could possess the mind of a Vietnamese, and it was the duty of the CKP to root out these devils.

Pol Pot would also use his communist training to learn about Mao Zedong Thought and how to successfully wage guerilla warfare in Maoist fashion. To Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, the tactics of guerrilla warfare and using the people were intrinsically tied with their form of nationalism. Like their Chinese and Viet Minh counterparts, guerrilla and psychological warfare played an integral role in the

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<sup>28</sup> Kiernan, "The Original Cambodian," xxii.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi.

<sup>30</sup> Henri Locard, *Pol Pot's Little Red Book, the Sayings of Angkar* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm, 2004), 106.

formation of the Khmer Rouge. During the war against Lon Nol's Republic from 1970-1975, the Khmer Rouge became hardened guerrilla veterans which only increasingly fueled their extremism and bloodlust. Taking inspiration from the Mao Zedong Thought, the supplies were to be economized and the property of civilians was to be respected.<sup>31</sup>

While waging their insurgency against the Republican forces of Lon Nol from 1970-1975, the Khmer Rouge used propaganda warfare to convince the beleaguered Cambodian people that Lon Nol's regime was an American puppet government which was committing atrocities against their families. The Khmer Rouge guerrillas, by strategically economizing on supplies and waging propaganda warfare successfully gained enough of a following to threaten the Republican regime and install Pol Pot as head of Cambodia. However, as soon as the Khmer Rouge took power, their concern for the sympathy of the people was deserted as everyone became required to surrender extra supplies to the Angkar.<sup>32</sup>

The Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot saw themselves in a constant struggle with other nations to maintain their national integrity and obsessively preached national self-reliance. They severed ties with the USSR and Vietnam while adopting a Stalinist-style party organization which inevitably led to the purging of suspected traitors. According to historian Ben Kiernan, "Two transnational ideologies—one traditional and colonial, the other modern and communist—provided the high culture from which the CPK's racist ultranationalism derived."<sup>33</sup> Pol Pot, like Ho Chi Minh, took the powerful message of liberation from communism and merged it with his country's traditions and historical anxieties. It is important to note that the nationalism embodied by Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge was not only an anticolonial movement against the West but also an attempt to reverse many historical embarrassments of loss to the Vietnamese and to rebuild the might of the Angkor Empire.

The specifics of Khmer Rouge nationalism came to see Cambodians who did not accept their leadership as Cambodians with Vietnamese minds. This Khmer Rouge's ultranationalistic rhetoric was its reasoning behind the massacring of so-called traitors to Cambodia.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 82-83.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>33</sup> Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975*, xx.

In the minds of the Khmer Rouge, a true nationalist not only had to reject foreign influence but also strictly adhere to CPK doctrine.<sup>34</sup> The Khmer Rouge refused to train with Western nations such as the United States for being imperialist.<sup>35</sup>

Upon coming to power, the Khmer Rouge attempted to destroy everything they considered reactionary and not native to Cambodia including Buddhism and Ballet.<sup>36</sup> Pol Pot wanted to rid the country of any culture which he did not believe belonged as part of the new Angkor Empire. CPK officials demanded that all extra goods, save for some spare clothing, be given to the Angkar, another name for the party. In this way, CPK officials confiscated goods such as bicycles and radios in the name of collectivism. The individual and the family were to be demolished in the name of the Angkar and the collective.<sup>37</sup>

In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge was largely aided by the side-effects of the Vietnam War. North Vietnam wanted to train reliable communist cadre in Cambodia to help their war effort in South Vietnam. The merciless bombing campaign which caused hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties in Cambodia served as a catalyst for many Cambodians to join the ranks of the Khmer Rouge. Bombing campaigns by the US military gave the Khmer Rouge reason to recruit young Cambodians into their ranks by asserting that it was Lon Nol's Republican government which had requested such strikes.<sup>38</sup>

Whereas the Viet Minh strategy relied upon mass mobilization through the wooing of the Vietnamese masses, the Khmer Rouge's tactics were based upon making the best out of chaotic situations which saw them come into power largely as a result of external factors such as spill out from the Vietnam War. If not for the Vietnam War, King Sihanouk may not have been ousted by General Lon Nol, and there would never have been the Vietnamese alliance between the CPK and North Vietnam. However, in Vietnam, the Viet Minh under Ho Chi Ming would likely have been able to quickly gain power in all of Vietnam after WWII had it not been for Allied stubbornness. The Viet

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<sup>34</sup> Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975*, xi.

<sup>35</sup> Locard, "The Original Cambodia," 4.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Becker, *When the War Was Over: The Voices of Cambodia's Revolution and Its People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

<sup>37</sup> Locard, "The Original Cambodian," 277.

<sup>38</sup> Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975*, i-xxi

Minh seizure of power was the inevitable strategic outcome after decades of conflict while the virulent seizure of power by the Khmer Rouge had little base in the Cambodian population, especially after their mass murder of many Cambodian people.

Serving as a bloody encore to the Vietnam War, the Cambodian-Vietnamese War was the result of the ethnic and political tensions between Vietnam and Cambodia which eventually dethroned the Khmer Rouge. While the ICP under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh and his comrades was able to create a successful, massed based movement among the Vietnamese people, the Khmer Rouge failed to maintain popular support and were forced to use violence in order to enforce their rigid ultra-nationalistic vision for Cambodia. The start of the Cambodian-Vietnamese War and its outcome are representative of the characteristics of the nationalist movements in Vietnam and Cambodia which were in power at that time. The Khmer Rouge, with their bloody social engineering of the masses, extremist xenophobia and lack of loyalty among the Cambodian population, saw themselves waging an unwinnable war against a relatively stronger opponent in the newly united Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The Hanoi regime's success in surviving the onslaught of South Vietnam and its patrons furthered its popularity among the Vietnamese people. Forged by the warfare strategies of Ho Chi Minh, Giap and their successive leadership, the Vietnamese military moved forward to bulldoze the Khmer Rouge regime.<sup>39</sup>

In retrospect, there are many historical factors which influenced the growth of nationalism in Vietnam and Cambodia. The mode of imperial conquest in each nation was reflected in the nature of colonial rule in each respective country during its tenure. In both nations, there were a number of nationalist factions and movements which struggled to establish legitimacy and assume leadership for each respective nationalist movement. In Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh and his Viet Minh colleagues were able to successfully emerge as the leaders of Vietnamese nationalism by adapting communism and popular front tactics to unite the Vietnamese people in mass mobilization against colonialism and the Saigon regime. In Cambodia, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge successfully utilized the chaos of the Vietnam War and help from their temporary allies in Vietnam to emerge as the triumphant, albeit-short lived reign as the ultranationalist rulers of

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<sup>39</sup> David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992).

Cambodia. Whereas the foundation of mass appeal allowed the Hanoi regime to fight off numerous enemies through strategic grassroots support and survive to the present, the Khmer Rouge irrationalism, xenophobia, and use of violence to stay in power ultimately eroded the nation and led to their deposition by the Vietnamese. The bloody scars left by the struggles for nationalism in both nations invite both reflective solemnity and further inquiry to fully understand the zealotry and tragedy of these movements.

## THE STRATEGIC UTILITY OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN YEMEN AND RHODESIA

BY STAVROS ATLAMAZOGLU

Special Operations Forces (SOF), or Special Forces, are military units specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations.<sup>1</sup> Special Operations require unconventional tactics, techniques, and procedures. SOF personnel are specially selected and highly trained individuals, often equipped with the best military technology available to a country. Common SOF capabilities include but are not limited to special reconnaissance (SR), direct-action (DA), foreign internal defense (FID), unconventional warfare (UW), hostage-rescue (HR), counterterrorism (CT), counterproliferation (CP), and counterinsurgency (COIN). Because of the nature and rigors of their mission, SOF units tend to be small, ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand personnel. Conversely, conventional forces are the ‘regular’ units in a military force. They are trained, equipped, and deployed to conduct large-scale operations.

Between the two, there exists a relationship of supporting and supported actors. Historically, and due to their specialized nature, SOF units tend to support conventional forces in operations. More recently, however, the scale has shifted in favor of SOF: conventional forces have increasingly become a supporting element for SOF in operations, with Operation Iraqi Freedom being the best example of this shift in roles.<sup>2</sup>

Special operations are an appealing option for policymakers because they defy conventional wisdom by utilizing a small force to defeat ones often much larger.<sup>3</sup> The main reason for opting to use a SOF unit to conduct a mission is because of their low-cost, high-results nature. Policymakers and military leaders tend to employ SOF units

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<sup>1</sup> In the global military dictionary, the terms Special Operations Forces and Special Forces are interchangeable. In the United States, however, Special Forces refers to a US Army unit (the famed Green Berets).

<sup>2</sup> The apportioning of ISR assets, which were highly desired by almost every unit, at the height of the counterinsurgency in favour of the numerous SOF Task Forces highlights this shift; Sean Naylor, *Relentless Strike—The Secret History of Joint Special Operations Command* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2015), 309-310.

<sup>3</sup> William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Ballantine Books, Random House Publishing Group, 1996), 1.

because of their small to non-existent footprint, thus reducing the risk of domestic political setbacks if an operation does not go as planned or fails altogether.<sup>4</sup> As US General Peter Schoomaker, former commander of US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), puts it, SOF can offer “an array of expanded options, strategic economy of force, [and] ‘tailor to task’ capabilities.”<sup>5</sup> SOF have also been utilized in a strategic attrition role, withering the opponent’s morale and numbers through repeated raids.<sup>6</sup> In warfare, strategy is the means with which to achieve the designated political objectives. Wars are mostly lost or won on the strategic level.<sup>7</sup>

SOF units tend to be so effective because they manage to overwhelm an opponent by achieving relative superiority through concentrated surprise, speed, and violence of action at the enemy’s most vulnerable point. Swiss military theorist Antoine-Henri Jomini argued in favor of this “decisive point” approach. He asserted that a commander should always seek points where to concentrate superior forces and firepower and thus defeat an enemy that overall could be more powerful.<sup>8</sup>

SOF are designed to be effective on all three levels of warfare. On the tactical level, SOF can provide a commander with extraordinary choices to achieve mission success. For example, during Operation Anaconda in 2002, three Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) reconnaissance teams were able to call in numerous airstrikes against the al-Qaeda forces that were hammering the assaulting elements of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne and 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain divisions. It was their specialized training and equipment that enabled the SOF teams to infiltrate the

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<sup>4</sup> Operation Gothic Serpent (aka the “Black Hawk Down” incident) in Somalia and the subsequent response of the Clinton Administration suggests that sometimes SOF, despite their smaller footprint, can be the cause of political backlash.

<sup>5</sup> General William H. Peter Schoomaker, “Special Operations Forces: The Way Ahead,” *Defense Issues* 13 (1998): <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/1998/s19980201-schoomaker.html>, accessed March 10, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> The Special Air Service (SAS) and Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) operations against Axis forces during the North Africa campaign are a prime example of this; James Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy: From World War II to the War on Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2007), 3.

<sup>7</sup> USAF College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education (CADRE), “Three Levels of War,” *Air and Space Power Mentoring Guide* 1 (1997): p. 1. accessed March/April 2018, [http://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Volume\\_1/V1-D34-Levels-of-War.pdf](http://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Volume_1/V1-D34-Levels-of-War.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Antoine Henri Jomini, *The Art of War*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1971), 85-88.

mountains surrounding the Shahi-Kot valley, where the terrorist forces were situated, and wreak havoc upon the enemy.

On the operational level, SOF allow a commander to keep constant pressure on the enemy by assaulting his vulnerable points, thus making him commit forces for rear echelon security and having an adverse impact on his morale. For instance, during the North African campaign in the Second World War, the Special Air Service (SAS) and the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) conducted numerous raids, ambushes, and reconnaissance operations deep behind enemy lines. They destroyed so many aircraft on the ground, that the Afrika Korps leadership was forced to relocate forces from the front to provide security. Their recon forays, moreover, prove crucial in breaching the Mareth Line, during the latter stages of the North African campaign. LRDG patrols were able to find passages on the southern tip of the Axis fortifications that could sustain large armored formations.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the Allied leadership utilized these paths to outflank the Axis fortifications.

Finally, on the strategic level, SOF provide policymakers an effective and timely option to exert national power around the world. For example, Operation Neptune Spear utilized Navy SEALs from the Naval Special Warfare Development Group (DEVGRU) to eliminate Osama bin Laden and thus decapitate al-Qaeda's leadership.

In this paper, I argue that due to their specialized nature SOF are inherently strategic if appropriately employed. I define proper employment as the utilization of SOF in a manner that leverages their unique skillsets and accounts for their limitations. For example, a Navy SEAL platoon is uniquely qualified to conduct maritime-counterterrorism operations. But employing the same SEAL platoon in an airfield seizure would be counterproductive. SOF units' capabilities enable commanders to achieve results disproportionate to the force committed. Thus, faced with strategic decisions, commanders are more likely to assign vital missions to SOF units. I first examine the role of the British Special Air Service (SAS) in the Dhofari war (1965-1975). Thereafter, I examine the role of Rhodesian SOF (the Rhodesian Light Regiment, SAS, and Selous Scouts) in the Bush War (1964-1980). I conclude by juxtaposing the units' strategic effectiveness.

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<sup>9</sup>Mike Morgan, *Sting of the Scorpion: The Inside Story of the Long Range Desert Group*. (London: The History Press Publishing, 2003), 175-180.

## Oman

The Dhofar Rebellion (1963-1976), as the war in Oman is better known, was a Cold War conflict small in numbers but large in significance. A coalition of British, Pakistani, Indian, Jordanian, Iranian, and Baluchi troops served alongside the Omani Sultan's army. Their opponent was the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG), a communist group, which received financial and military support from South Yemen, the Warsaw Pact, Iraq, China, and Egypt.<sup>10</sup> In all, less than ten thousand coalition troops faced around three thousand communist insurgents.

Great Britain had been active in the region since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, mainly through the industrious traders of the East India Company. As elsewhere, soldiers followed traders: In 1798, the Sultan and the British government signed a treaty of friendship, which allowed for a longstanding British military presence. In the subsequent centuries, Britain's influence steadily increased through commercial deals and military assistance to the Sultan.<sup>11</sup>

The British were involved in the conflict mainly because of Oman's economic and strategic importance to their and the West's interests. The Strait of Hormuz, which passes by the north Omani coast, was then—and still is—the world's most valuable oil sea lane and a strategic chokepoint. During the conflict, 56% of the European Economic Community's (the European Union's predecessor), 30% of US, and 90% of Japanese oil snaked through the Strait of Hormuz.<sup>12</sup> In an era wherein the Domino Theory prevailed, the reality of Oman succumbing to Communism alarmed many Western leaders.<sup>13</sup> Oman had to remain free. And Great Britain would ensure it.

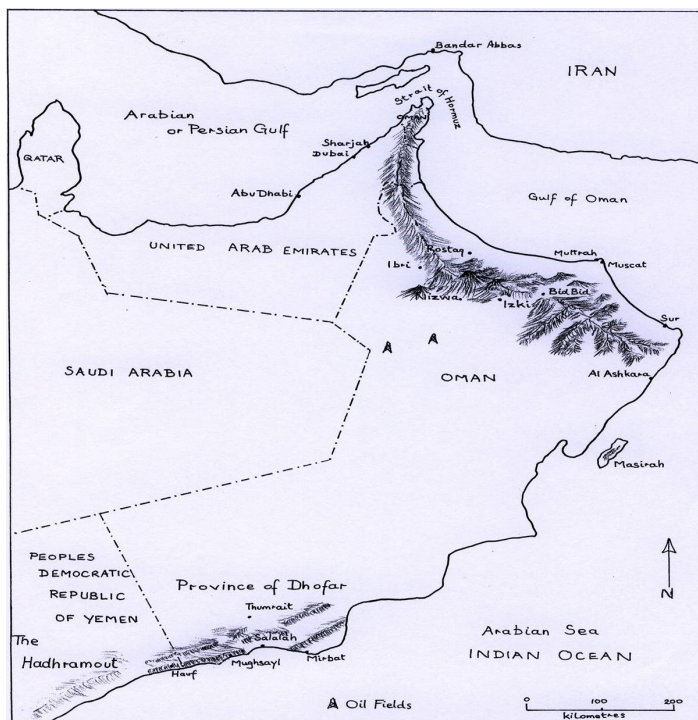
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<sup>10</sup> Ian Gardiner (retired Brigadier, RM) in discussion with the author, May-August 2017. According to Brigadier Ian Gardiner, they were evidence of Russian and Chinese advisors operating within Oman.

<sup>11</sup> Lieutenant Colonel John McKeown, *Britain and Oman: The Dhofar War and Its Significance*, Master's thesis, (UK: Cambridge University, 1981), 10-11.

<sup>12</sup> Today, 25% of global supply sails through the Strait.

<sup>13</sup> The Domino Theory held that if a country became Communist, it would quickly 'contaminate' its neighbors.

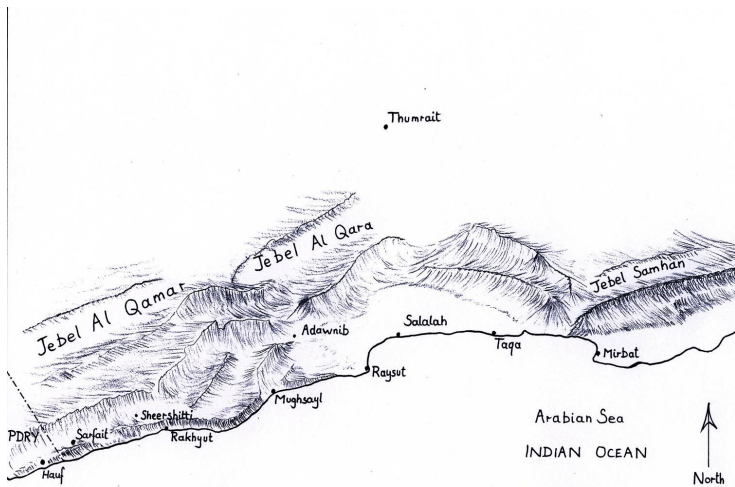


*Hand drawn map of Oman; Dhofar lies in the South (Ian Gardiner).*

Moreover, Oman was becoming a considerable oil exporter. In 1957, substantial oil sources had been discovered, and commercial exportation began in 1967. By the end of the conflict, 90% of Oman's GDP came from oil.<sup>14</sup> However, British business interests in the Sultanate transcended the petroleum industry and included construction and development firms.

<sup>14</sup> McKeown, *Britain and Oman: The Dhofar War and Its Significance*, 2.

Oman was divided in the northern part, which had the oil and most of the country's other resources, and the Southern province of Dhofar, which is a mountainous, humid country, with boiling temperatures and few water sources. A monsoon season (June-September) enveloped Dhofar in a mist "that was," according to veterans, "thick enough often to curtail flying and provide cover for the insurgents."<sup>15</sup> Consequently, during the monsoon season ground and air operation were limited. The province itself is geographically divided into two parts: the coastal plains and the Jebel (mountains). An ideal place to begin a revolution.



*Hand drawn map of Dhofar with prominent Jebel (Ian Gardiner).*

But why a rebellion? Negligence and international developments. Throughout Oman's violent and fragmented history, Dhofaris had been treated as second-class citizens. Their villages and families had not seen any development for centuries. Their quality of living was medieval. The reason behind their historical negligence is mainly their ethnic difference from the rest of Omanis, who are mostly Arabs. And not even the common thread of Islam could unite them.<sup>16</sup>

Government negligence meant that Dhofaris revolted often. But it was the region's new international realities that turned this one into a rebellion and full-blown war. The People's Democratic Republic

<sup>15</sup> Nick Knollys in discussion with the author, May-August 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Dhofaris also use their own language instead of Arabic.

of Yemen (PDRY), Oman's southern neighbor, wished to share the merits of communism with its neighbor. In 1963, the PFLOAG sensed an opportunity to turn Dhofari discontent into a rebellion. By 1970, most of Dhofar was under communist control. The ageing Sultan, who had been conspicuous in his distaste for civic development, was ousted in a British sanctioned coup d'état by his modernizing son, Qaboos bin Said. Qaboos had been educated in Britain and embraced modernization and development.<sup>17</sup>

British military contribution was two-fold: (a) officers and enlisted personnel who were seconded to the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), providing leadership and technical expertise; (b) British troops, such as the SAS and RAF elements, which remained under British leadership. Additional military assistance came from Commonwealth ex-servicemen who, under lucrative contracts, served as mercenaries. Most of the fighting, however, was done by the Arab soldiers they led. The war was fought predominately in Dhofar.<sup>18</sup> The Government's strategy was simple: Purge Dhofar from insurgents, hold the ground, and then develop it through civil projects. The Sultan and his British advisors understood that they could not defeat the insurgency without addressing the population's reasonable grievances. Adhering to proven counterinsurgency realities, they opted for a hearts-and-minds approach instead of a repressive campaign that focused on enemy killed.<sup>19</sup>

## Operations

In the summer of 1970, the first SAS contingent arrived in Oman. For secrecy reasons, it numbered twenty men. Establishing a spartan base, they began developing their campaign. Masterminded by Major Tony Jeapes, the SAS came up with a four-pronged campaign that accounted for Dhofar's political (tribal system) and socioeconomic (livestock economy) realities: (a) start a hearts-and-minds campaign on the Jebel; (b) provide veterinary assistance to the villages; (c) provide medical assistance to the population through roving clinics; (d) gather and analyze intelligence to formulate a counter-intelligence strategy.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 21-29.

<sup>18</sup> The SAS, however, undertook a very small amount of covert external operations inside the PDRY.

<sup>19</sup> The US, who at the time was heavily engaged in Vietnam, mostly followed the latter approach, with the known results.

<sup>20</sup> Tony Jeapes, *SAS: Operation Oman* (London: Kimber, 1983), 25.

The SAS focused their efforts on the Jebel because it was Dhofar’—and the Insurgency’s— powerbase for it contained most of the villages. The terrain offered numerous challenges: waves of treacherous mountains, arid thorny scrub, deep wadis, which held the region’s water supply, and jungle—the incongruous result of the monsoon season.

To achieve their first three objectives, the SAS created four-man civil action teams (CATs). Each team had a leader, Arab speaker, medic, and signaler. Once a village had been cleared by the conventional forces, the CATs came in and established medical and veterinary clinics. The SAS’ medical training proved invaluable.<sup>21</sup> They could treat anything from toothaches to gunshot wounds. To address the more serious cases, and to reach the more isolated villages, the SAS established a flying-doctor service. They also drilled new wells, which became vital given the Jebel’s scant water resources and the difficulty villagers had to reach them. By the end of the development phase, each village could boast its well, a hitherto unheard luxury. CAT teams handed authority to the newly established Dhofar Development Department at the earliest possibility. The SAS approach was so successful that the insurgents attempted—with varying results—to copy it on their controlled villages.<sup>22</sup>

To achieve their fourth objective, the SAS established an intelligence cell, which included an information team specializing in psyops. The insurgency drew power and legitimacy from the Sultans’ perennial mismanagement and negligence of Dhofar. The lack of government information and literacy amongst the Dhofaris helped the insurgents. To counter that, the SAS cell started a newspaper—with more visual material to counter the high illiteracy. They also set up a radio station (Radio Dhofar) and distributed transistors to the villagers. Moreover, they placed news-boards, with announcements about the civil development program and useful information, in each village. “Islam is our way, freedom is our aim,” became the official logo of the campaign. Further, acting on the SAS’ advice, government officials established a livestock market in Dhofar’s plain. The result was the economic integration of the Jebelis and thus their further commitment to the government’s victory.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Conventional medical officers often deployed with CAT teams.

<sup>22</sup> Jeapes, *SAS : Operation Oman*, 80-83.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 90-97.

Soon, the civil development initiatives bore fruits. An increasing number of insurgents deserted to the Sultan's forces, offering valuable intelligence on supply routes, caches, and enemy organization. The ever-resourceful SAS took advantage of the desertions to add another phase to their campaign: Enter the Firqats.

The Firqats (literary meaning company) were tribal paramilitary units formed from former insurgents. They were fierce but undisciplined fighters. The SAS established the British Army Training Teams (BATTs) to train, advise, and lead the deserters. Each BATT's size depended on the number of their fighters (it varied from six to twenty SAS troopers). The attached SAS troopers were responsible for everything from basic military discipline, payment and wellness, to fire support requests. Soon, great bonds developed between the SAS and their firqatmen, who refused to operate without their SAS advisors.



*Firqatmen. Men carrying AK-74s from dead enemies (Nick Knollys).*

The firqats acted as the eyes and ears of the conventional forces. Furthermore, and more importantly, the firqatmen were able to approach their fellow villagers and ensure that the Government's civil development initiatives reached them and addressed their needs. Indeed, no one could understand Dhofaris better than their own fathers, brothers, and sons.

The SAS developed the firqats in three phases. First, a BATT would gather deserters from the same tribe, elect a leader, issue

equipment, and then begin training. Second, the newly established firqat would return to its tribal area, accompanied by its SAS adviser, and clear it from insurgents. Finally, an SAS CAT team would arrive and commence civil development operations. The firqat would remain behind to police their tribal area and ensure that no enemy returned, a task for which they were uniquely suited given their previous experience with the insurgency.<sup>24</sup>

A pattern soon emerged: each successful firqat operation would encourage further insurgent desertions, which in return produced more firqats. The SAS troopers treated deserters with tact and respect. They did not interrogate them but rather discussed with them, thus building rapport and gaining their trust. Only a highly trained and disciplined unit such as the SAS could achieve that.

The firqats' effectiveness to attract more deserters can be summed in the following incident described by Major General Arthur Denaro, who as a young SAS officer was part of a BATT:

“For two days I'd been lying in ambush with my soldiers. When the enemy, of whom we'd been told on good intelligence were coming, arrived. And they were just about to enter the killing zone of my machine guns when suddenly one of my young Arabs stood up. And the enemy run. Mildly irritated, I turned to this lad, and while shaking him up and down by the throat, I said, why did you do that? 'One of them was my brother,' he said. And the next day that whole enemy patrol surrendered.”<sup>25</sup>

When the war ended in 1976, twenty-one firqats numbering more than 1600 men were actively policing the Jebel. The firqats' importance in winning the campaign is evidenced in the praise of their fellow conventional warriors. Brigadier Ian Gardiner, who was seconded to a conventional SAF unit, said that “for all their limitations, I don't believe we could've won the war without the *firqats*.”<sup>26</sup> And the firqats could not have happened without the expertise and patience of the SAS.

Meanwhile, the conventional SAF units focused on interdiction operations in an attempt to limit the movement of insurgents into Oman. Omani units manufactured two extensive defensive lines

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<sup>24</sup> Jeapes, *SAS : Operation Oman*, 210.

<sup>25</sup> Oxford Union. *Red Poppy Debate*. (2015. Oxford), YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZ5jyQthUcA>

<sup>26</sup> Ian Gardiner (retired Brigadier, RM) in discussion with the author, May-August 2017.

(Leopard and Hornbeam lines), which run from the Saudi border to the north down to the coast to the south. For the most part crossing over mountainous terrain, the lines had multiple fortified positions as their strongpoints. Platoon to company size units were stationed there and conducted patrols in the Jebels surrounding the lines. Aside from limiting the infusion of insurgents and materiel inside Oman, the defensive lines were intended as a fixing point that would draw large insurgent groups that then could be destroyed by SAF's firepower superiority.<sup>27</sup>

Although the defensive lines were not as effective as the BATT or firqat missions, they were significant in the overall campaign. The SAF leadership had grasped the importance of focusing on winning over the Dhofaris. The two defensive lines supported that strategy by denying the guerrillas materiel and manpower.

### Conclusion

The Oman campaign is studied as a paragon response to an insurgency. There was a clear political objective: reconcile not punish the Dhofaris. And in true Clausewitzian fashion, the military strategy adhered to that. Indeed, every operation was centered around that goal.

Mao argued that an insurgency must first retreat and gather forces, then build infrastructure and population trust, and finally counterattack.<sup>28</sup> An astute counterinsurgency strategy, thus, would target the transition between these phases, thereby denying the guerrillas' goals. In a counterinsurgency environment, winning over the population is crucial. To achieve that, however, a force must be able to hold its ground. In-an-out operations achieve little more than temporarily frustrate the guerrilla—he can hide once government forces approach, only to return once they have left. That is why the SAS were crucial to the campaign's success, thereby proving their strategic utility, and consequently, the strategic utility of SOF.

Before the SAS CATs, government forces would storm the Jebel, clear a few villages, and then withdraw. They did not have the population's support to establish a permanent presence. The SAS, however, ensured a constant presence on the Jebel, secured the battlefield, and enabled civil development. Conventional forces could

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<sup>27</sup>Brigadier Ian Gardiner, interview with the author.

<sup>28</sup> Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*. (Illinois: Champaign, 2000), 3-11.

not achieve that given their lack of cultural and counterinsurgency expertise. Thus, the Dhofaris, who like all reasonable people waited to see which horse was going to win before they committed their support, were persuaded to back the government.

The SAS, moreover, built their strategy around the Dhofari culture. They utilized the tribal system, which emphasized democratic participation and meritocracy over pedigree, to raise and control the *firqats*. Such cultural sensitivity is difficult to find in a conventional force. In counterinsurgency operations, local training is vital since foreign assistance has an expiration date. That is the reason why the success of the *firqat* scheme was so important: it ensured the durability of the government's strategy.<sup>29</sup>

The SAS also used Islam in their favor: Through psychological operations (the radio, newspaper, etc.), they targeted the Dhofaris' deep religious faith and branding the conflict as a 'Jihad' against the unholy Communist insurgency. The fact that the Insurgency advocated atheism helped them considerably.<sup>30</sup>

In the end, the SAS proved a superb strategic tool for British policymakers. The geopolitical stakes were high. British and Western oil security and commercial interests depended on a communist-free Oman. The successive British governments, however, were constrained by military commitments in Northern Ireland and the Vietnam War's unpopularity. Thus, the SAS, with their counterinsurgency capabilities, small numbers, and covert nature were the only realistic choice for success.

The following brief Motion by the British Parliament serves as a lasting acknowledgement of the SAS' strategic utility during the Dhofari war:

"This House is greatly encouraged by the successful conclusion to the ten-year war in Oman. . . [and] records with pride the contribution made by hundreds of present and former members of the British armed forces, and pays special tribute to the work of the Special Air Service."<sup>31</sup>

### **Rhodesia: Introduction**

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<sup>29</sup> Jeapes, *SAS : Operation Oman*, 110-121.

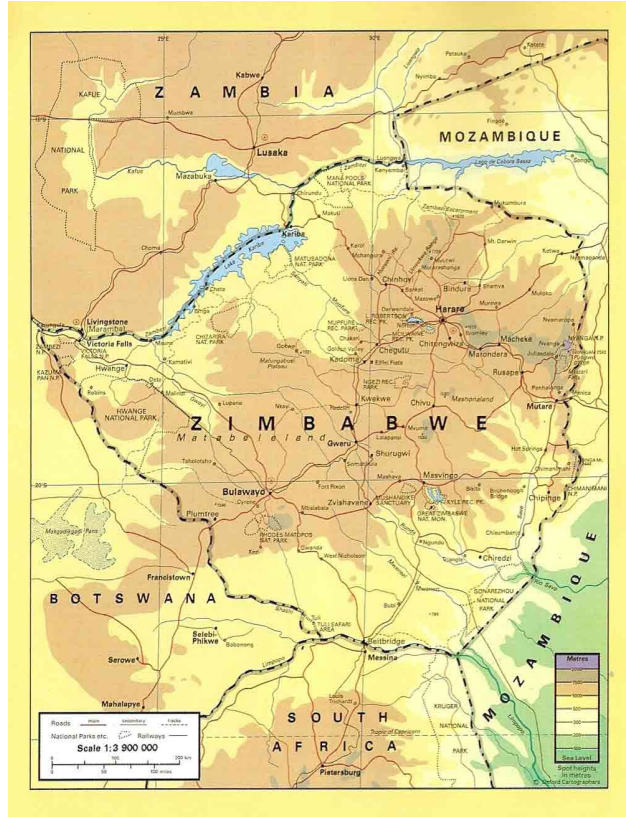
<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 123.

<sup>31</sup> John Akehurst, *We Won a War: The Campaign in Oman 1965-1975* (Wilton: Michael Russell, 1984), i.

Rhodesia was a British self-governing colony founded in 1890 by Cecil Rhodes. Historically, a white minority dominated the political and socioeconomic landscape. During the decolonization phase of the 1950s-60s, London pressured majority (black) rule. In response, the Rhodesian government declared a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965. The international community condemned the UDI and imposed sanctions. Nevertheless, the UDI seemed an economic and political success. The Rhodesian economy grew, and white immigration increased. However, the Rhodesian government became complacent and did not foresee the need for a long-term political strategy. As a result, a Marxist, African nationalist insurgency began.

The Rhodesian Bush War (1964-1980) was a small but intense search-and-destroy Cold War conflict. Despite UN sanctions, the Rhodesian government received considerable overt and covert support. Israel and France provided helicopters and arms, and ironically—given the insurgency’s Marxist credentials—Rhodesia traded more with the Eastern Bloc than with the West. South Africa was by far Rhodesia’s most valuable ally. The Apartheid regime supplied its northern neighbor with invaluable economic and military support. On average, South Africa furnished 50% of the Rhodesian defense budget.

The insurgency was comprised of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), and its military wing the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), led by Joshua Nkomo and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), with its military wing the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), largely led by Robert Mugabe. Both parties waged their struggle from abroad (ZANU/ZANLA from Mozambique, ZAPU/ZIPRA from Zambia). And although they later unified as the Patriotic Front (PF),



they were bitter opponents. China, Cuba, and the Soviet Bloc provided them with financial, materiel, and training support.

Initially, the insurgency's strategy was based on the hope of British intervention. The guerrillas had focused on small incursions and urban warfare (bombing hotel, cafes, and universities). But they had enjoyed no local support; for instance, a major incursion in 1967 failed because locals informed the security forces. Once that British help became unlikely, the insurgency reorganized, shifted its approach, and transformed the war.<sup>32</sup>

In the early 1970s, the ZANU/ZANLA leadership, influenced by their Chinese training and advisors, began a 'proper' Maoist

<sup>32</sup> R. T. Wood, *Counter-strike from the Sky: The Rhodesian All-arms Fireforce in the War in the Bush 1974- 1980* (Johannesburg: 30° South Publishers, 2009), 35-39.

insurgency by incorporating the first two stages of revolutionary warfare: (a) withdraw and gather forces; (b) build infrastructure and population trust. Hitherto, the insurgents had focused only on the third stage (counterattack). Insurgents used local grievances to bolster their support among the Black Rhodesians. Their strategy, moreover, became more sophisticated as they targeted Rhodesia's socio-economic fibre with numerous geographically spread incursions, forcing the government to call territorials.<sup>33</sup>

The Government responded by flocking rural Black Rhodesians to protected villages (fenced camps), a scheme inspired by the Malayan Emergency. It also erected a mined barrier alongside the Zambian and Mozambique borders to limit incursions (by 1980, it had claimed some 8,000 insurgent lives). The Rhodesian war effort, however, increasingly relied on SOF, which were so successful that by 1974 there were just sixty insurgents within Rhodesia.<sup>34</sup>

The fall of the Portuguese junta in 1974 robbed Rhodesia of a valuable ally and turned Mozambique into an insurgency hub. The endless miles of the Mozambican border stretched the small Rhodesian forces to their limits (they had to secure Zambian and Botswanan borders as well). Portugal's flight also meant that Rhodesian SOF became increasingly important in the war effort as they were uniquely qualified to attack the insurgency in its new overseas haven. In 1975, a ceasefire and negotiations came to nothing. Thereafter and till the war's end in 1980, the operational tempo intensified. Reservists were summoned more often and for longer periods, and the economy stagnated.

But the beginning of the end for the Rhodesian government came in 1976. Following a special operation inside Mozambique (Operation Eland) which killed over 1,000 insurgents, South African Prime Minister B. J. Vorster cut oil, ammunition, and financial aid. More crucially, however, he publicly called for majority rule.

Prime Minister Ian Smith conceded and announced majority rule within two years. His bitter words describe the Rhodesian dependence on its 'ally': "In the end it was Vorster who we had to accept. If it had been Kissinger, I could have said 'Hop off!' If it had been the British I could have said the same. There was only one person in the world to whom I could not say that and that was Vorster." South

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 35-39.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 35-39.

African politicians foresaw that international pressure would bend Rhodesian intransigence, and a black government would emerge (this did not, of course, mean that they wanted Mugabe or Nkomo).<sup>35</sup>

In 1979, following a fully democratic election, from which the PF abstained, Bishop Abel Muzorewa became Rhodesia's first black Prime Minister. Nonetheless, Great Britain did not recognize his government and the UN called the election void. British diplomacy held that only a solution with Mugabe would be final—a belief centered on Mugabe's significant power on both national and international levels. (Interestingly, Margaret Thatcher had not only committed to acknowledging the result but also had branded the PF as a terrorist organization.) In 1980, an election brimming with irregularities and terror elected Robert Mugabe.<sup>36</sup>

The Rhodesian Bush War presents a paradoxical case: despite the government's military victory, it lost the war. Why? Because a clear political strategy did not exist. Nonetheless, the military leadership had recognized that only a political solution could offer a lasting victory. As Army Chief General Walls said "we had always hoped [for a] non-racial, multi-interested, anti-Marxist" political solution.<sup>37</sup> The military, thus, constantly sought to buy time until the politicians accepted reality. And its strategy was centered around the most unlikely of forces: SOF.

## **SOF**

I consider SOF the SAS, Selous Scouts, and Rhodesian Light Infantry. Among others, their capabilities included raids, reconnaissance, sabotage, combat tracking, communications interception, leadership elimination, abductions, unconventional warfare, and pseudo-operations. They were Rhodesia's tip of the spear. And although they began the war supporting conventional forces, they soon became the supported force.

SOF units attracted most of the 1,400-2,000 foreign volunteers, who came from all over the world, chiefly for ideological reasons. They conducted internal and external operations: Internals focused on border-control, counterinsurgency, and Fireforce missions; externals

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid,40-43.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 40-43.

<sup>37</sup> Segal, Allan Segal and Brian Lapping. *End of Empire*. DVD. (1985. London: Granada Television).

focused mainly on raids, reconnaissance, and sabotage. Rhodesian SOF also conducted unconventional warfare (UW) in Mozambique. SAS troopers raised, trained, advised, and equipped the RENAMO, an anti-Marxist group, to fight against the Mozambique government, which harbored and supported the ZANU/ZANLA.

## RLI

The Rhodesian Light Infantry (RLI) was an all-white unit formed in 1961. In 1964, it was renamed to 3 Commando, The Rhodesian Light Infantry. It was an airborne commando unit that specialized in direct-action missions. The RLI was the key cog behind the Fireforce's ludicrous lethality (estimates put RLI's body count to 12,000 insurgents, thus earning the unit the title of the ultimate "Killing-Machine").<sup>38</sup>

The RLI was comprised of an HQ and four Commandos of around 100 men each. Most troopers were Rhodesian regular and territorial soldiers, but there were also many foreign volunteers. During the hectic closing stages of the war, the same RLI troopers would sometimes conduct three combat parachute jumps in a day; an RLI trooper holds the world record for most operational jumps (73).<sup>39</sup>

**SAS**

The Rhodesian Special Air Service (SAS) was an all-white unit formed in the early 1950s as the 'C' Squadron of the British SAS. They fought in the Malayan Emergency and later reformed as the 1 Rhodesian Special Air Service (1RSAS). Their mission capabilities included reconnaissance, direct-action, sabotage, unconventional warfare, and combat tracking. They were proficient in many infiltration methods to include Freefall Parachuting and waterborne insertion (utilizing kayaks). Alongside with the Selous Scouts, they conducted most of the external operations. During war's initial stages, the SAS did border control and combat tracking missions. But as the war intensified, they reverted to their raid and reconnaissance specialties. The unit had less than 250 troopers. Hopefuls had to pass a legendarily difficult selection course. As part of the cooperation between Rhodesia and South Africa, a covert South African Squadron (D) was attached to

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<sup>38</sup> Chris Cocks, *Fireforce: One Man's War in the Rhodesian Light Infantry* (Roodepoort, South Africa: Covos-Day, 2000). p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ron Reid-Daly, *Pamwe Chete: The Legend of the Selous Scouts* (South Africa: Covos-Day, 1999), 173.

the SAS to gain combat experience and to assist operations. Despite their high operational tempo, the SAS lost just 38 troopers.<sup>40</sup>

### Selous Scouts

The Selous Scouts were a multiracial unit formed in 1973 to clandestinely eliminate insurgents in and outside Rhodesia through pseudo-operations. In pseudo-operations a force copies the guerrilla, infiltrates the civilian communities or operational areas, and obtains intelligence that enable the elimination of actual guerrillas.<sup>41</sup> The unit's intelligence-gathering capabilities proved crucial to the Fireforce's successes. Indeed, at the war's end, the Scouts were credited with 68% of enemy casualties, losing only between 30-35 Scouts.<sup>42</sup> Scouts' pseudo-teams also frustrated the Insurgency's political infrastructure, sowing confusion among its ranks. Their methods were so effective that South Africa begged for operational information (which it received in exchange for large quantities of materiel).<sup>43</sup>

Initially, only a few hundred strong, the unit quickly swelled to 1,000 men. As with the SAS, a rigorous selection provided the right soldier. Lt. Col. Ron Reid-Daly (who had served with SAS in Malaya) was responsible for the unit's military activities and Police Superintendent M. J. P. 'Mac' McGuinness for intelligence aspect.<sup>44</sup>

Once a guerrilla had been captured, a Special Branch officer would debrief him and analyze his intelligence. Then, the leadership would decide whether to 'turn' him (incorporating him into the unit) or not. "Tamed terrs," as they were called, served alongside regular Scouts and received bounty pay for kills and captures.<sup>45</sup> The operators' combat-tracking expertise coupled with the turned terrorists' knowledge made the Selous Scouts the ultimate Bush masters. At

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<sup>40</sup> Charles D. Melson, "Top Secret War: Rhodesian Special Operations," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 16, no. 1 (2005): p. 75. doi:10.1080/0959231042000322567.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Melshen, *Pseudo Operations: The Use by British and American Armed Forces of Deception in Counter-insurgencies 1945-1973* (University of Cambridge, 1995), ii-iii.

<sup>42</sup> Reid-Daly, p.13; Charles D. Melson, "Top Secret War: Rhodesian Special Operations," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 16, no. 1 (2005): 75. doi:10.1080/0959231042000322567.

<sup>43</sup> Reid-Daly, 474.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 36-37.

<sup>45</sup> Paul L. Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War: A Military History* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2009), 106.

some stage, the unit even experimented with limited biological warfare.<sup>46</sup>

### **Operations: Fireforce**

In 1974, Rhodesians introduced the Fireforce concept: an airborne rapid-reaction force that intercepted, trapped, and destroyed insurgent parties within Rhodesia. Both SOF and conventional units conducted Fireforce missions, but it became an RLI specialty. South African helicopters and crew were seconded to the Rhodesian Air Force and enabled the successful Fireforce missions (with South African support, Rhodesians could deploy fifty helicopters).

The average Fireforce was divided into air and ground elements: the ground element had a headquarters troop and four troops of twenty-eight men each. Each troop was further divided into seven four-man sticks. Their speed and mobility were remarkable: Helicopters could be screaming towards contact just eight minutes after getting the "call."<sup>47</sup>

This is what a typical Fireforce contact looked like: A reconnaissance team (usually SAS troopers or Selous Scouts) spots a guerrilla party. They map out the possible venues of retreat and call a Fireforce. The 'First Wave,' a Dakota C-47 carrying twenty men, four Alouette III helicopters, three G-cars (G for Ground) and a K-car (K for kill), carrying four sticks, and a Lynx light-attack airplane, scrambles to the Bush. The 'Land Tail' follows in trucks with reinforcements and fuel for the choppers. The Dakota drops its parachutists in a line (drops were from 300-500 feet without reserve parachutes; as the last man jumped, the first hit the ground). The paratroopers then form a sweep line and advance towards the guerrillas. Contact ensues, and the guerrillas either flee or perish, most usually the former. Then, the Fireforce commander, circling above the area in the K-car, places his sticks to the path of the retreating guerrillas to act as 'stops.' The guerrillas are trapped between the hammer of the sweep line and the anvil of the 'stops.'

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<sup>46</sup> Melson, 74.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Arbuckle, "Rhodesian Bush War Strategies and Tactics: An Assessment," *The RUSI Journal* 124, no. 4 (1979): 29.  
doi:10.1080/03071847909441843.

Usually, there were five Fireforces, each stationed closed to an operational area. Tours lasted from three weeks to several months. As the war intensified, the Fireforce concept evolved. The main difference between early and later operations was the quicker positioning of 'stops' and the introduction of parachutists. Later, a 'super' Fireforce acted as national Quick Reaction Force (QRF).

It is crucial to highlight the strategic thinking behind the Fireforce concept: the military understood the war's realities: faced with personnel and technical shortages, a vast battlefield, and a more numerous enemy, they sought targeted missions rather than 'heart-and-minds' operations. Unsurprisingly, the men on the ground agreed: "The Special Branch," L/Cpl Chris Cocks, an RLI Troop Commander, recalled "wanted captures, it wanted documents, it wanted bodies to identify. But to the troops, this was a hassle and certainly of secondary importance to the 'proper' task at hand of killing."<sup>48</sup>

Using Rhodesia's small air capabilities to the maximum benefit, Fireforce units achieved an 80:1 kill ratio. As a high-ranking officer explained, "Each operation is a planned operation; we tend to concentrate on one particular area where we get the best return for the men used." Fireforces attained relative superiority, a concept von Clausewitz supported when he wrote that "the greatest number of troops should be brought into action at the decisive point." Rhodesians were vastly outnumbered by the guerrillas, but by concentrating their forces, they exponentially increased their effectiveness. Their approach was centered on achieving relative superiority over a more numerous enemy. Without the Selous Scouts and SAS recon teams spotting the enemy and the RLI's exceptional close-combat skills, the Fireforce concept would not have been successful. And as a concept it was so effective that the South African Defence Forces (SADF) copied it in Angola and Namibia.

## **Externals**

SOF units conducted external operations to deny the insurgency safe havens and destroy its training and equipment infrastructure. Most externals took place in Zambia, Mozambique, and Botswana (but they reached as far as Tanzania and Angola).<sup>49</sup> They

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<sup>48</sup> Cocks, , *Fireforce: One Man's War in the Rhodesian Light Infantry*, 258.

<sup>49</sup> Flower, Ken. *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record: Rhodesia into Zimbabwe, 1964-1981*. (London: John Murray, 1987), 114.

varied in size, participants, and aim: They could be Selous Scouts in ‘flying columns’ (i.e., heavily armed trucks targeting large guerrilla camps); they could be huge Fireforce operations; usually, however, they were reconnaissance, ambush, sabotage, or leadership elimination missions conducted by small SAS and Selous Scouts teams (between two and eight men). During externals, operators used guerrilla weapons and uniforms, and European troops blackened their faces and wore balaclavas to hide their white skin.<sup>50</sup> Until 1975, externals were covert and deniable. Thereafter, as negotiations failed, the Rhodesian government did not care as much in denying them.

In 1974, the SAS conducted Rhodesia’s first major external operation against a ZIPRA camp in southern Zambia. More than 500 followed its lethal pattern. Small SOF reconnaissance teams would infiltrate behind enemy lines, gather intelligence, and then a larger force would destroy the target.<sup>51</sup> The most successful external operation was Operation Dingo in 1977, when 165 SAS and RLI troopers raided a ZANLA camp in Mozambique, which housed close to 11,000 insurgents, and killed more than 5,000.<sup>52</sup> During the war’s last phases, externals increased in volume and size because of the Fireforce’s devastating effectiveness in eliminating guerrillas within Rhodesia—there was simply not enough of them left! “There is no single day of the year when we are not operating beyond our border,” said General Walls in 1978.<sup>53</sup> SOF units were uniquely qualified to conduct such operations, which to be successful require the force to remain uncaught, due to their small size and concentrated lethality. Moreover, cross-border operations were vital given that they directly target the insurgency’s logistical and administrative powerbase.

Most important, however, was the strategy behind externals: Rhodesians sought to prevent rather than to mend—externals successfully took the fight to the enemy. Later, they also sought to destabilise the governments of Zambia and Mozambique by destroying vital infrastructure. By 1979, for instance, Zambia had become a

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<sup>50</sup> Wood, 102.

<sup>51</sup> Melson, *Fireforce: One Man’s War in the Rhodesian Light Infantry*, 57-59.

<sup>52</sup> Wood, p.41; P. J. H. Petter-Bowyer, *Winds of Destruction: The Autobiography of a Rhodesian Combat Pilot* (Johannesburg: 30 Degrees South Publishers, 2013), 445-446.

<sup>53</sup> Melson, *Fireforce: One Man’s War in the Rhodesian Light Infantry*, 68.

virtually destroyed place within a 30km radius from the border, and there was only one bridge left standing in the country.<sup>54</sup>

The nature of the conflict—isolated actions ranging from platoon to company size engagements—and manpower shortages meant that the conventional Rhodesian military was confined in a patrolling and policing role within Rhodesia. The more difficult and politically risky external operations were preserved for the Rhodesian SOF units. The Rhodesian strategy, thus, utilised the military's stronger attributes and avoided large-scale, simultaneous operations across the country.

### **Conclusion: Rhodesia**

“In my professional judgment,” wrote in 1978 Sir Walter Walker, a former NATO commander, “based on more than 20 years’ experience of counter-insurgency and guerrilla type operations there is no doubt that Rhodesia now has the most professional and battle-worthy army in the world for this type of warfare.”<sup>55</sup>

So, were Rhodesian SOF strategic? Undoubtedly. Often, Rhodesian SOF have been called ‘firemen,’ achieving extraordinary tactical feats of little strategic value.<sup>56</sup> But all operations are tactical. Puzzled together, however, they can become strategic. For example, external operations were strategic because they harassed, denied haven, destroyed vital infrastructure, and destabilized the foreign governments that supported the insurgents. They also targeted the Insurgency’s strategy (i.e., infiltrate in Rhodesia as many guerrillas as possible).<sup>57</sup> Through externals, the military sought and gained the initiative and offered politicians vital breathing space. Moreover, large externals were often the means to specific political ends. For example, in 1979, as the Lancaster House negotiations were underway, the Rhodesian SOF destroyed a huge ZANLA base in Mozambique, the New Chimoio, to weaken ZANU’s negotiating position.

On a first glimpse, Fireforces were tactical: they interdicted and destroyed guerrilla parties within Rhodesia. But glued together, they negated the insurgency’s infiltration strategy. Or, as Charles

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<sup>54</sup> As the war intensified, conventional units also conducted some externals; Wood, p.47; Moorcraft, 53; 67.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 107.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 47, 66-68; Arbuckle, 30.

<sup>57</sup> Arbuckle, "Rhodesian Bush War Strategies and Tactics: An Assessment,"30.

Melson, Chief Historian, USMC, argues, they “allowed the Rhodesian security forces to fight the guerrilla incursions to a stand-still to allow time for political solutions to be negotiated.”<sup>58</sup>

Furthermore, Rhodesian SOF operations have been branded as reactive.<sup>59</sup> Per standard counterinsurgency doctrine, a campaign must be 80% political (hearts-and-minds) and 20% military (body count). As a senior officer admitted: “We relied 90 per cent on force and 10 per cent on psychology and half of that went off half-cocked. The guerrillas relied 90 per cent on psychology and 10 per cent on force.”<sup>60</sup> But reactive or proactive is relative and contextual. On a first view, the military had two options to choose from: (a) a hearts-and-minds approach; or (b) a ‘body count’ approach. But the political, socioeconomic, and geographical realities, meant that only the latter was feasible.<sup>61</sup> A hearts-and-minds strategy requires sufficient numbers to both secure the battlefield and interact with the population.<sup>62</sup> Rhodesia had the numbers for only the former (On an average day, the Rhodesians could not field more than 1,500 servicemen).<sup>63</sup> Thus, the emphasis on Fireforces and externals instead of hearts-and-minds missions.

Externals were inherently pre-emptive rather than reactive operations, despite some historian’s claims.<sup>64</sup> Their goal was to destroy the insurgency’s capacity to wage war: they sought to prevent not heal, as a hearts-and-minds operation would do. Discussing externals, the Rhodesian Foreign Minister P.K. van der Byl said that, “It’s defence. It’s all part of the same thing. It is absolutely self-defence what we did.”<sup>65</sup> And even doubters agree that through externals and Fireforces the military gained and held the strategic initiative till the end.<sup>66</sup> And

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<sup>58</sup> Wood, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 44; Arbuckle, 32.

<sup>60</sup> Moorcraft & McLaughlin, 199.

<sup>61</sup> Interestingly, Paul Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, proponents of the ‘unstrategic camp’ acknowledges these limitations; Moorcraft, 47.

<sup>62</sup> Riley M. Moore, "Counterinsurgency Force Ratio: Strategic Utility or Nominal Necessity," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24, no. 5 (2013): 856-857.

<sup>63</sup> Moorcraft & McLaughlin, 38.

<sup>64</sup> Arbuckle, 32.

<sup>65</sup> AP Archive. *Synd 3 6 77 Rhodesian Foreign Minister Van der Byl Interview*. (1977. Salisbury, 2015), YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nT-uuKnCkrA>

<sup>66</sup> Moorcraft & McLaughlin, 63.

the numbers are telling: by 1980, Security Forces had killed 40,000 insurgents to the cost of 1,735 men, a 23:1 kill ratio.<sup>67</sup>

That is not to say, of course, that the Rhodesian *overall* strategy was proper. Yet to argue, as some historians have done, that its military element was erroneous and that a hearts-and-minds approach would have been successful is correct only in theory.<sup>68</sup> History has shown that an insurgency is only defeated by winning the population. The Rhodesian military, of course, understood that ideal strategy would have to be centered on winning the population—although undoubtedly segregationist, the military was apolitical; the troops served a black PM equally well as a white PM.<sup>69</sup> General Walls (who had personal experience of an effective hearts-and-minds campaign from Malaya, where he had commanded ‘C’ Squadron SAS) said in an interview that, “you lose the war if you have the civilian population against you. You win if you have them with you”<sup>70</sup> Further, the Rhodesian Army’s counterinsurgency manual stated that:

“Political policy and offensive action by the military forces are essential for seizing and holding the initiative. . . [but] no single program—political, social, psychological, economic or military—will in itself succeed. It is a combination of these elements, together with a joint government/police/military approach to the problem, which will counter the efforts of the enemy, and restore lawful authority.”<sup>71</sup>

But such a strategy mandates political purpose, something that the Rhodesian politics lacked—they were short-sighted and often contradictory. Ian Smith and Foreign Minister P. K. van der Byl wished to maintain the status quo (White minority rule and no compromise); but General Walls and Ken Flower, the head of the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO), understood that victory could come only through compromise. And the military strategy (buy time for political settlement) reflected their views. “I made it clear,” said General Walls, “when I became Commander of the Army in 1972 that one cannot win this war by purely military means.”<sup>72</sup> A year later, in the process of

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<sup>67</sup> Wood, 48.

<sup>68</sup> Moorcraft & McLaughlin, 196-200; Arbuckle, 32.

<sup>69</sup> Moorcraft & McLaughlin, 199.

<sup>70</sup> Roger Marston, “Not Ordinary White People”: The Origins of Rhodesian COIN Theory and Practice,” *The RUSI Journal* 131, no. 4 (1986): 26, doi:10.1080/03071848608522735.

<sup>71</sup> Rhodesian Army, *Counter Insurgency Manual* (Salisbury: Rhodesian Army, 1974), 6-7.

<sup>72</sup> Moorcraft & McLaughlin, 66.

forming the Selous Scouts, General Walls again emphasized that “time is not on our side. Yesterday is too late.”<sup>73</sup>

Ironically, the military proved so successful in their strategy of buying time, that the government became complacent and sought little compromise. In the end, SOF were strategically crucial in the success of the wrong strategy.

## Conclusion

Counterinsurgency expert Dr Michael Evans states that “if the politics of a counterinsurgency campaign are misconceived, then the strategy drawn from those politics is almost certain to be flawed.”<sup>74</sup> It follows, thus, that wars of every nature are won or lost in the politicians’ offices. Both conventional and SOF units are tools in a policymaker’s toolkit. Their tactical or strategic impact depends not on their capabilities but their employment.

In Oman, the British political strategy was to support the Sultan, which would stabilize and secure the region and thus enable profitable geopolitical and commercial arrangements. Secrecy, however, was a crucial factor that informed British strategy. The US was fighting an increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam. British forces were also engaged in Northern Ireland. Thus, British politicians dreaded the negative publicity of a protracted war in Oman.<sup>75</sup> The secretive SAS, therefore, offered an ideal strategic choice. Their capabilities (light footprint, highly trained, flexible, culturally savvy—e.g., they could speak Arabic, they had veterinary capabilities, and every trooper had medical training, both vital during hearts-and-minds operations) enabled victory through the CAT and firqat initiatives, which the latter has been acknowledged as “a key element of the SAF’s strategic offensive.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ron Reid Daly and Peter Stiff, *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War* (London: Galago, 1983), 45.

<sup>74</sup> Michael Evans, "The Wretched of the Empire: Politics, Ideology and Counterinsurgency in Rhodesia, 1965–80," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 18, no. 2 (2007): p. 176, doi:10.1080/09574040701400601.

<sup>75</sup> Ian Gardiner (retired Brigadier, RM) in discussion with the author, May–August 2017.

<sup>76</sup> Austin G. Long, *Locals Rule: Historical Lessons for Creating Local Defense Forces for Afghanistan and beyond* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND/National Defense Research Institute, 2012), 94.

In Rhodesia, there was not a coherent political strategy. Although faced with an insurgency, Rhodesian politicians did not pursue a hearts-and-minds strategy that would have enabled overall victory (they did ‘win’ in the field). Military leaders, on the contrary, did understand the war’s political nature—numerous primary sources support this. Thus, they sought to buy time for their political masters. And they relied on SOF because of their direct-action, special reconnaissance and unconventional warfare capabilities.

Up till the early 1970s, when the insurgency was unorganized and impotent, SOF supported the police operations, mainly through border defense and limited external operations. The political strategy at that point was to maintain the status quo (i.e., minority rule), something that was enhanced by the initial socio-economic success of the UDI.

Thereafter, once the insurgency had reorganized and shifted its strategy, SOF continued in their containment approach. The Rhodesian government, complacent by the military’s success in dealing with the insurgents, did not resolve to a clear political objective. As negotiations failed and the war intensified, SOF bought time, through externals and Fireforces, for the politicians to formulate a political strategy or to reach a compromise.