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From China to Cuba: Guerilla Warfare as a Mechanism for Mobilizing Resources

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From China to Cuba:

Guerilla Warfare as a Mechanism for Mobilizing Resources

by

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From China to Cuba:

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Jorge L. Barrera

ABSTRACT

Guerilla Warfare[1] is a weapon of the weak; it is decisive only where the actor in power fails to commit adequate resources to the conflict. The Chinese and Cuban revolutions are examples of guerilla warfare success, albeit under different conditions and employment techniques; while Mao Tse-tung utilized decentralized guerilla warfare to indoctrinate and mobilize the masses of peasants for revolutionary struggle against a stronger enemy; Fidel Castro employed a more centralized approach to create the conditions necessary for popular support of the revolution. However, in both cases guerilla warfare was simply part of a pragmatic grand strategy to build nationalism across all classes of society. It is well known that revolutionary movements do not succeed where only one class of society is mobilized. As a result, both Mao and Castro designed dual strategies: an internal component focused on the peasant base; and an external component focused on a nationalistic appeal to all classes of society. In a revolutionary setting, the strong force of nationalism can cut across all

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[1] The word *guerilla* is taken from the Spanish word for "little war" which originated during the Napoleonic Wars of the early 19th century.

segments of the population and strongly enable popular support for the insurgents.

Both revolutionary leaders skillfully managed the contradictions associated with their respective dual strategies – a difficult task indeed since the dual strategy is one of deception. This thesis will prove that through such a plan of action, Mao and Castro integrated efforts such as leadership and ideology, with the key ingredient of guerilla warfare, to create the conditions for the control of resources necessary to achieve ultimate victory. Following revolutionary success, the experience of guerilla warfare and the dual strategy - particularly in Cuba - shaped the respective foreign policies within the context of a worldwide struggle against imperialism. Cuba has continued to refine the dual strategy in order to obtain international support and maintain the Castro regime in power. China eventually adopted a dual strategy of a different variety: the separation of economics from communist ideology. Although implementation of the dual strategy continues to the present day, it was the revolutionary process that not only validated the concept, but provided the credibility required to continue its execution.

Chapter One

Introduction

The Cuban and Chinese revolutions – but particularly the latter - are
known as peasant[1] revolutions. Thus, the perception is that peasants rebelled in
response to poverty and traditional exploitation by the upper classes and
succeeded in changing the social structure of the country. Of course, reality is
considerably more complex than that. These conditions alone are not enough to
provide a revolutionary situation, nor can peasants alone succeed in a revolution.
The inter-relation of a number of social, economic, and political factors that
converge at a particular point in time can set the conditions for revolutionary
uprising and subsequent social change. According to Charles Tilly (1978), the
struggle for power translates into control of resources. The actor (government
included) that can best mobilize and control resources such as land, labor,
capital, information, and arms into collective action against the rival actor(s) will
claim the right to rule and control government. The mechanisms to mobilize
resources include cross-cutting [class] alliances, ideology, leadership,
organization, and violence.

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[1] Peasant is defined as a member of a class compromising small farmers and tenants,
sharecroppers, and laborers on the land, where they constitute the primary labor force in
agriculture (Webster's Dictionary).

Both Mao Tse-tung and Fidel Castro successfully employed these mechanisms to mobilize the resources required to challenge those in power, and thus set the conditions for eventual victory. Through guerilla warfare, Mao was able to indoctrinate and mobilize the peasants into a decisive force for success to await the development of a revolutionary situation. In contrast, Castro's band of revolutionaries succeeded in creating the conditions for revolution, by establishing their primary support amongst the rural peasantry and then expanding to urban regions. However as Barrington Moore (1966) explains, even if a revolutionary situation exists and the proper strategy is implemented to mobilize resources, it does not necessarily mean that such circumstances will automatically result in a revolution; a decisive catalyst or ingredient normally ignites these conditions into a revolution. In the case of China, the consensus is that the decisive ingredient for communist revolutionary victory was the Japanese conquest and the occupation policies of a foreign foe. In Cuba, Fulgencio Batista's brutal campaign against rural villages that he perceived to be supporting Castro proved to be a major asset to the cause of the revolutionaries. I argue that in fact it was guerilla warfare that served as the catalyst for eventual revolutionary victory in both case studies. By shaping their respective guerilla campaigns, both Mao and Castro were able to design strategies that permitted them to appeal to the different classes, and allowed them to shape a nationalistic platform – as an alternative to a communist or socialist one – that eventually succeeded.

This research seeks to compare the two revolutions by utilizing guerilla warfare as the basis for comparison as it shaped the revolutionary strategies of China and Cuba. I will discuss strategies for mobilizing[2] popular support resources, focusing on the peasantry; then transition into the key role of guerilla warfare in implementing and integrating the overall revolutionary strategy to capitalize on the conditions that existed for revolution, and thus set the conditions for eventual success in 1949 and 1959 respectively. In the case of China, this paper focuses on the period of 1935 to 1945, which coincides with Mao's leadership of the Communist Party, the Japanese occupation, and the implementation of the communist strategy for popular support and guerilla warfare. For Cuba, although the focus for comparison is the period from 1956 - when Castro's 82 revolutionaries landed in Cuba - to his consolidation of power in 1959, I will also discuss the internationalization of Castro's strategy following revolutionary victory.

Theoretical Framework

Revolutionary Theory.

Revolutionary theories seek to organize revolution "facts" into a framework that can predict the revolutionary potential of a society or explain the causes of why a revolution failed or succeeded. These facts include leaders, followers, ideology, organization, techniques, and external support. The most commonly discussed are Marxist Theory - its main argument being that revolution occurs when the exploited economic class is sufficiently alienated to

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[2] *Mobilization* is the process whereby [in this case] peasants commit their resources (land, food, time, energy, and even their lives) to revolutionary organizations (Wickham-Crowley 1991, 177)

gain revolutionary consciousness; the Systems Theory – related to a failure of existing social structures to perform their essential functions; and Modernization Theory – which suggests that revolutionary conditions occur when the state is unable or unwilling to adapt to the demands and interest mobilized by modernization (Greene 1999).

The People's War is Mao Tse-tung's version of the Marxist Theory; he realized that the urban *proletariat* focus of Marxist theory did not apply to China. Obtaining the support of the peasantry, while appealing to all classes of Chinese society, was his pragmatic approach to acquiring broad-based popular support; that is, build the Red Army, and await the objective conditions for a popular uprising, in order to engage in the last revolutionary step: armed struggle (Greene 1999; Shum 1988).

Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, inspired by Mao's People's War, further refined Marxist theory into their own blend, which resulted in the *foco*[3] theory. While acknowledging that popular forces could defeat a stronger enemy, and that the countryside was where the struggle would begin, the *foco* theory stated that popular support would be created during the armed struggle itself; there was no need to wait until all the conditions for making revolution exist; the insurrection could create them (Guevara 1961). Jules Régis Debray[4] expanded and

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[3] The word *foco* is derived from the Spanish word for focus, and is described both in English and Spanish as the "center of activity, or area of greatest energy, of a storm, eruption, etc." (*The Oxford Universal Dictionary*, 3rd ed.)

[4] Debray is a French intellectual, journalist and professor. Although a well-known leftist activist, he did become an associate of Guevara and fought with him in Bolivia during 1967. He also interviewed Castro several times. His work, *Revolution in the Revolution?*, is considered supplementary to Guevara's writings on guerilla warfare and revolutionary theory (Wickham-Crowley 1991).

formalized the *foco* theory – within a Latin American context – in his *Revolution in the Revolution?* (1967) effort. In essence, a small group of revolutionaries was considered enough to jumpstart a revolution, while concurrently developing the conditions for popular support.[5]

The cornerstone of both revolutionary theories is that popular forces can win a war against a superior army. This of course is a testament to the power of guerilla warfare when supported by the masses. This form of violence became the primary mechanism for mobilizing resources and undermining the moral authority of the actor in power. Mao chose to build his own peasant army and developed the tactics of guerilla warfare from base areas in the countryside (Drew and Snow 1988; Kennedy 2008). To Mao, the role of guerilla warfare went beyond the obvious: it would also serve as a mechanism for obtaining popular support (Friedman 1970); for getting close to the peasants and sharing their hardships; for indoctrination of peasants; and for obtaining small victories against the Kuomintang (KMT) Nationalists, and then the Japanese in order to obtain credibility and motivate the masses. Finally, it would provide a springboard for the development of conventional armies that would eventually confront the KMT for the right to rule China. For Che and Castro the existence of a guerilla *foco* would pose a threat to the government's legitimacy and exclusive monopoly over

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[5] In this work, I generally credit Che Guevara with the *foco* theory of revolution because he codified its principal component of guerilla warfare in writing - based on his experiences during the Cuban revolution. However, it was Fidel Castro that developed it in practice, mostly by trial and error, during the revolutionary campaign. Further, Régis Debray is generally credited with formalizing the *foco* theory. Thus, although I generally credit Guevara throughout this document, the reader must realize that all three individuals played an important role in the development of the *foco* theory of revolution.

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violence. Such a challenge was to force an oppressive state to use increasing levels of violence and oppression and thus radicalize all sectors of opposition (Johnson 2006; Kling 1962). The end result is the same: classes of society riding a wave of nationalism unite against the government and overthrow it.

Specific Theory

Charles Tilly's Resource Mobilization, in his Political Conflict Theory, will provide the framework for analysis. I will discuss the blending of the mobilization mechanisms – with guerilla warfare as the main ingredient - into a cohesive strategy that appealed not only to the main effort of such strategy (the peasants) but also other classes in pursuit of the broadest possible alliance. Both revolutionary leaders understood that a revolution cannot succeed without support from the different classes of society. I will examine research that focuses on the blend of politics and forms of warfare to achieve the end state of regime change through violence. The central idea of the comparative analysis is that guerilla warfare is not exclusively a form of violence in the pursuit of power, but that to achieve success when revolutionary conditions exist, it must be part of a grand strategy that incorporates political, social, economic, and psychological variables, with an end state of maximum mobilization of resources.

However as previously discussed, Barrington Moore (1966) explains in his work *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, that a decisive catalyst or ingredient normally ignites revolutionary conditions into an actual revolution. In both China and Cuba, the situation was ripe for a peasant's revolt. The structure of China's peasant society could not adjust to the stresses associated with

market forces and modernization; its agrarian bureaucracy inhibited reform and weakened the link that bound the peasants to the upper classes, resulting in the survival of a peasant mass that eventually became the main force behind the revolution (Moore 1966). In Cuba the repressive Batista regime, a disaffected peasantry without a history of private ownership, and large numbers of unemployed rural workers in a sugar mill dominated economy (Pérez-Stable 1993), combined with a tradition of rebellion in the east of Cuba - created the conditions for a guerilla movement in the *Oriente* province countryside (Pérez 1988; Wickham-Crowley 1991). As part of this research, I intend to prove that guerilla warfare not only shaped the grand strategy of both case studies, but was also the decisive catalyst in facilitating revolutionary victory.

Concepts and Definitions

Revolution

In his work, *The Anatomy of Revolution (1966)*, Crane Brinton defines revolution as a "drastic, sudden substitution of one group in charge of running a territorial political entity for another group." A literature review indicates that revolution is also associated with:

(1) An alteration in the personnel, structure, and function of government that are not sanctioned by the prevailing constitution.

(2) A relatively abrupt and significant change in the distribution of wealth and social status.

Thus, it is clear that not all the conflicts commonly referred to as revolutions meet the above criteria. For example, the American Revolution could be classified as a

"War of Independence" instead of a revolution, because the social status of social groups did not abruptly change. However, it is apparent that both the Chinese and Cuban revolutions meet the definition and conditions stated above.

Strategy

Strategy is a plan of action, or complex decision making process that connects the ends sought (objectives) with the ways and means of achieving those ends (Drew and Snow 1988; O'Neill 1990). Hence, for the Chinese and Cuban revolutions, the *ends* sought were the control of resources. Among the *means* were guerilla warfare, leadership, and ideology. The *Grand Strategy* then sought to coordinate resources to achieve a political objective – that is, social and regime change. Both Mao and Castro utilized dual strategies (internal and external) to attain the control of resources. The internal strategy focused on obtaining the support of the peasants – for Mao they would provide the great force to offset the military strengths of the Nationalists; for Castro sanctuary to conduct his guerilla campaign. The external focused on appealing to other classes of society and international actors.

Nationalism

Nationalism is the process of integrating the masses into a common political form (Kohn 1944). Castro realized that fostering and harnessing nationalism would unite the classes and serve to control resources. Mao developed his political theory of "*New Democracy,*" the application of Marxism to the specific conditions and needs of China, with the intent to broaden the ideological appeal by merging the patriotic sentiment of nationalism with the

reforming passion of Marxism (Wylie 1980). Essentially, the New Democracy

called for state ownership of big banks, industries, and commercial

establishments. But all other enterprises would be permitted to remain in private

hands. The ownership of land was to be readjusted, not for the purpose of

building a socialist agriculture, but to turn the land into peasant property (Mark

1951). Thus, the upper classes are reassured because socialism was not defined

as the immediate objective but only as a long term goal; conversely, the lower

classes are satisfied that their land reform agenda will eventually be met.

To the Cuban revolutionaries, nationalism meant imparting a common

revolutionary identity to the population. Through the revolution, Castro developed

the possibility of a new "imagined community" that incorporated a new sense of

Cubanidad (Cubaness) based on the political and social ideals of the revolution.

In forging this "imagined community," a concept developed by Benedict Anderson

(1991), Castro combined the ideals of a classless society with a passionate anti-

establishment rhetoric that would become essential parts of being Cuban and

independent (Pérez 1988). Of course, the Batista government contributed to

Castro's nationalism by implementing a brutal campaign of repression against

perceived supporters of the revolutionaries. Nevertheless, both leaders needed a

mechanism to integrate all elements of their revolutionary strategies and

demonstrate to the people not only progress, but their commitment to the

struggle…Guerilla warfare would be that mechanism.

Guerilla Warfare

The essence of guerilla warfare is highly mobile hit-and-run attacks by lightly to moderately armed groups that seek to harass a normally superior enemy and gradually erode his will and capability to fight. Guerillas place a premium on flexibility, speed, and deception (O'Neill 1990; Drew and Snow 1988). Guerilla warfare is one technique (means) of violence that revolutionary movements can employ to achieve their ends; others include, terrorism, *coup d'état*[6], or a combination of these three techniques. Both Mao and Castro's lieutenant, Che Guevara, shaped the techniques, tactics, and procedures of guerilla warfare to fit their particular circumstances and conditions.

Insurgency, war, and warfare

Insurgency is the organized use of subversion and violence by a group or movement that seeks to overthrow or force change of a governing authority. Insurgency can also refer to the group itself. When compared to their adversaries, insurgents generally have strong will, but limited means. It is the relative disparity in assets that normally requires groups to use insurgency, although some insurgents may have no interest in working within the existing political system (JP 3-24). War is a contest of wills between sociopolitical groups, or as the Prussian military theorists Carl von Clausewitz proposed: "War is a continuation of politics by other means (Drew and Snow 1988)." There are differences in the ways wars are waged and these are referred to as warfare. A form of warfare may be viewed as one variety of organized violence emphasizing

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[6] The sudden overthrow of a government by a small group of persons in a position of authority, normally the military.

particular armed forces, weapons, tactics, and targets (O'Neill 1990). Three

forms of warfare are associated with insurgencies: guerilla war, conventional

warfare, and terrorism. These will be discussed in more detail in the chapters

ahead.

Research Objective and Hypotheses.

The focus of this work is popular support, particularly of the peasantry, and

thus the research objective is to determine how mobilization of the masses was

achieved by Mao and Castro. I seek to prove that guerilla warfare was the key

ingredient that integrated the separate efforts to mobilize resources

(organization, ideology, violence, etc.) into a coherent plan of action that

established the direction of both revolutions. Both revolutionary leaders survived

a series of strategic failures and almost complete extermination, by designing

dual strategies to de-emphasize class struggle and instead encourage national

unity and moderate reform, and thus establish cross-cutting alliances throughout

all classes of society. As a result, they were able to offset the resource

mobilization advantages (particularly military) of their rivals I intend to analyze

this central theme of both strategies as it applies to a common objective in the

achievement of revolutionary ends: the buildup of nationalism. Hence, this thesis

project seeks to answer the following questions:

- What was Mao Tse-tung's/ Fidel Castro's strategy for mobilizing popular
  support resources?

- What role did guerilla warfare play in building nationalism?

As I answer these questions, I will demonstrate that both Mao and Castro utilized variations of guerilla warfare to design a grand strategy that built nationalism across classes of society.

Research Design

At its core, this is a case study of two similar cases that explores the cause and effect relationship of guerilla warfare (independent variable) and nationalism (dependent variable). However, this approach ignores other important variables such as organization, ideology, and leadership that in these two cases, also served to build nationalism. An intermediate step is that of designing a grand strategy that can wrap all other variables into one. Thus, rather than examining multiple instances of $X_1 \Rightarrow Y$, I will examine a single instance of: $X_1 \Rightarrow X_2 \Rightarrow Y$. That is, a causal chain in a *Process Tracing* form of analysis, where X_1 = Guerilla Warfare; X_2 = Grand Strategy; and Y = Nationalism.

This case study of revolutions relies on analyzing archival information of the Chinese and Cuban Revolutions as well as forms of warfare. I intend to conduct an in-depth longitudinal examination of revolutionary theory in order to provide a theoretical framework for the case study. However, in analyzing the causal chain described above – as it applies to the Chinese and Cuban Revolutions – it is more of a mix. The variable X_1 (guerilla warfare) is best analyzed through a longitudinal study because the tactics and techniques of this form of warfare had to be refined and adapted to the specific situations over an extended period of time. Further, in both cases, guerilla warfare was [initially] simply a mechanism for survival of the movement(s), not part of a grand strategy

or campaign plan that would ultimately serve to mobilize the resources required achieve success. However, the variable X_2 (grand strategy) is best analyzed through a cross-sectional study of the point in time when the grand strategy was designed and applied to the revolutionary phenomenon to achieve the desired effect: Y (nationalism).

The unit of analysis for this study is the revolutionary process. These are two similar cases because the Chinese and Cuban Revolutions are peasant revolutions that occurred within ten years of each other; both successfully employed guerilla warfare as a form of violence; had strong and charismatic leaders that sought to build nationalism as a mechanism for regime change; and both resulted in extended communist regimes. I seek to demonstrate that the main difference was in the employment of guerilla warfare. Regarding X_1, my argument is that although the basic tenets of this form of warfare remained constant; a principal difference between the two was in the degree of command and control. Castro insisted on highly centralized control of guerilla activities, through Che's *foco* theory; while Mao decentralized activities to a group of cadres for local initiative and immediate response. Both variations proved to be the key ingredient in shaping – albeit in different ways - the grand strategy.

As far as X_2, I argue that both Mao and Castro utilized dual strategies (internal and external) to attain the control of resources. As discussed earlier, the internal strategy focused on obtaining the support of the peasants – for Mao they would provide the great force to offset the military strengths of the Nationalists; for Castro sanctuary to conduct his guerilla campaign. The external focused on

appealing to other classes of society as well as the international community. I will

examine the specific mechanisms that facilitated the conduct of such strategy

and how instrumental was the role of guerilla warfare in implementing it. Of

course, implementation carries certain risks; even if the internal and external

strategies are parallel, overlaps do occur resulting in contradictions. Thus in this

research, I will prove how both leaders brilliantly found a solution by orchestrating

the dual strategy contradictory elements through the manipulation of, time,

space, and participants.

Next, the explanation of **Y** is straight-forward. It is well-known that

regardless of how nationalism is inspired it offers the greatest flexibility for

revolutionaries, to appeal to all classes of society. Thus, as the main objective of

the grand strategy, nationalism – would be the principal tool in the mobilization of

resources. The basic concept of how Mao and Castro built nationalism - through

their dual strategies - has already been discussed in the "Concepts and

Definitions" section of this chapter. Finally, I intend to incorporate Barrington

Moore's (1966) thesis that a catalyst normally ignites a revolution when a

revolutionary situation exists. I will do so by arguing that guerilla warfare was in

fact the catalyst for both revolutions. This in fact is a contradiction to his proposal

that – in the China scenario – it was the Japanese invasion.

My rationale for this study is to clarify misconceptions of guerilla warfare in

revolutions as simply a form of violence; that is, a stand-alone instrument for

actors that seek power. In this comparative analysis, I argue that guerilla warfare

is not exclusively a form of violence in the pursuit of power, but that to achieve

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success when revolutionary conditions exist, it must be part of a grand strategy that incorporates political, social, economic, and psychological variables, that maximize the mobilization of resources to achieve the end state of political and social change.

Data Collection Plan and Chapter Overview

As discussed in the previous section, this case study of revolutions relies on analyzing archival information of the Chinese and Cuban Revolutions as well as forms of warfare. Extensive works on guerilla warfare have been published; more importantly, both Mao and Che Guevara codified their particular variations of guerilla warfare by publishing works on the subject - these will form the cornerstone of the X_1 discussion. As far as X_2, there exists plenty of literature on making strategy – from tactical and operational to strategic. The challenge lies in analyzing how both revolutionary leaders fused politics and violence into a grand strategy that appealed to the masses. My focus in the **Y** analysis is to describe how Mao and Castro coordinated the mobilization of resources and skillfully manipulated the contradictions of their strategies to achieve a radical nationalism that led to ultimate revolutionary success.

Chapter two provides an overview of the dynamic relationship between insurgencies and revolutions. I will discuss and select a framework for understanding the development of revolutions, examine several revolutionary theories to provide context, and discuss factors, settings, and conditions that make revolutions favorable – and how they apply to the Chinese and Cuban revolutions. I will then examine the revolutionary theories developed by Mao and

Guevara, and thus provide the reader with the necessary background information to understand why guerilla warfare became the backbone of the revolutionary strategy employed by Mao and Castro.

Chapter three analyzes guerilla warfare not only as a form of warfare frequently employed by insurgents, but as a resource. My point is that guerilla warfare is not exclusively a form of violence in the pursuit of power, but that to achieve success when revolutionary conditions exist, it must be part of a grand strategy that incorporates political, social, economic, and psychological variables, with an end state of maximum mobilization of resources. The discussion of such a strategy in Chapters four and five presents the core argument of my thesis. The focus is on the respective "dual strategies" employed by Mao and Castro to mobilize the resources required to challenge the actor in power. This strategy of deception requires certain elements or conditions, such as successful employment of guerilla warfare, leadership, ideology, and of course a revolutionary setting. I will explain how each revolutionary leader molded these elements to fit their particular conditions and achieve revolutionary success.

The focus of chapter six is the continued employment of the dual strategy following revolutionary victory in Cuba. The internationalization of the insurgent strategy by Fidel Castro, with the United States as the primary enemy, was built on the experiences of the revolution and the philosophy of guerilla warfare. I will explain how Castro used this strategy to remain in power for over 50 years. The conclusion summarizes the main themes and findings, and offers some perspectives and speculation about the way ahead for China and Cuba.

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Chapter Two

Revolutionary Theory

Introduction

Building a theory of revolution can be problematic and complex. There are no simple or straightforward answers to explain revolutions, the factors that cause them, or the likely outcomes. For example, a common held notion is that poverty breeds revolution. Although this view contains an element of truth, it does not explain why historically revolutions have not occurred in scores of extremely poor countries. Another common view is that revolutions occur when a state faces increasingly unmanageable difficulties, but once again this view fails to explain the occurrence of revolution in several countries that have experienced such situations (Goldstone 1994). Cuba faced extreme political and economic hardship following the collapse of the Soviet Union, but a second revolution did not occur; currently, Zimbabwe faces economic collapse and extreme poverty, yet no revolution has taken place. Hence, although not totally inaccurate, common observations on revolutions do not provide a full understanding on the framework and dynamics of revolutions. In this chapter, I will discuss and select a framework for understanding the development of revolutions, examine several revolutionary theories to provide context, and discuss factors, settings, and

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conditions that make revolutions favorable – and how they apply to the Chinese and Cuban revolutions. I will then examine the revolutionary theories developed by Mao Tse-tung and Che Guevara. The purpose of this descriptive approach is to provide the reader with the necessary background information to understand why guerilla warfare became the backbone of the revolutionary strategy employed by Mao and Castro.

In general, revolutionary theories seek to organize revolutionary "facts" into a framework that can predict the revolutionary potential of a society or explain the causes of why a revolution failed or succeeded. These facts include leaders, followers, ideology, organization, techniques, and external support (Greene 1999). Commonly discussed theories include the Marxist Theory - its principal tenets being that revolutions are related to historical transitions, that revolution is an agent of change, and that revolutions are progressive and beneficial. Following the stage of capitalism, a revolution in the name of workers would result in a socialist stage (Goldstone 1994). The Systems Theory – related to existing social structures such as the political and economic systems that fail to perform their essential functions resulting in violent responses by society. Finally, the Modernization Theory – which suggests that revolutionary conditions occur when the state is unable or unwilling to adapt to the demands and interest mobilized by modernization (Greene 1999). However, theories provide only a point of reference and could prove incomplete in the analysis of any particular revolution. More importantly, revolutionary leaders will modify a particular theory to fit their particular situation, or apply more than one in their quest for success.

The *People's War* is Mao Tse-tung's version of the Marxist Theory; he realized that the urban *proletariat* focus of Marxist theory did not apply to China. Mao observed the impoverished peasants of China's Hunan province driven to desperation by tax collectors, the oppression of the military, manipulation of grain prices by greedy merchants, and the ruthless exactions of gentry[7] landlords. Mao recognized that, instead of Marx's factory workers, a disciplined, literate, trained, and politically loyal to the revolution peasant armed force was the instrument to achieve power (Mao 1937, 1938; Schram 1966). Thus, obtaining the support of the peasantry while appealing to all classes of Chinese society was the principal objective in a pragmatic strategy to acquire broad-based popular support; that is, build a Red Army that was thoroughly indoctrinated with the appropriate political consciousness; await the objective conditions for a popular uprising; then engage in the last stage of the revolutionary struggle: armed conventional warfare focused on surrounding the cities from the countryside.

Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, inspired by Mao's success, further refined the *People's War* doctrine, into their own blend, which resulted in the *foco* theory. While acknowledging that popular forces could defeat a stronger enemy, and that the countryside was where the struggle would begin, the *foco* theory stated that popular support would be created during the armed struggle itself; there was no need to wait until all the conditions for making revolution exist; the insurrection could create them. In essence, a small group of revolutionaries was considered enough to initiate a revolution, while concurrently developing the conditions for

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[7] The word gentry generally refers to people of high social standing resulting from birth (Webster's Dictionary)

popular support. The basic argument is that the existence of a guerilla *foco*

poses a threat to the legitimacy of a government's right to rule and its exclusive

monopoly over violence (Johnson 2006; Wickham-Crowley 1991). Such a

challenge normally generates a violent and oppressive government response,

which typically targets the rural peasantry resulting in increased support for the

insurgents, and radicalizing all levels of government opposition. Like Mao's,

Castro's strategy focused on securing the peasant masses, but also was

designed to align with the middle class. As the revolutionary movement grows in

both urban and rural regions, the government is overwhelmed allowing a

successful strike against its forces, bringing the revolutionaries to power.

In summary, both Mao and Castro refined existing revolutionary theories

to fit their particular conditions, political situation, and geography to exploit the

weaknesses of their respective enemies. The principal instrument in their

strategies was guerilla warfare. Thus, in order to set the stage for the analysis of

each revolution, explain why guerilla warfare was such an important component,

and why it was the driver for strategic and operational strategies; it is important to

understand the framework for revolutions, revolutionary theory, and the

conditions that can generate a revolution.

Background: Explaining Revolutions

Building a theory of revolution is not a simple task – because of the

diversity of dynamics in different countries; however, three common notions that

explain the genesis of revolutions emerge (Goldstone 2001): first, the rise against

oppression; second, the state faces an unmanageable accumulation of

difficulties; and finally, the population accepts radical views as a mechanism for change. Although these three basic notions are not totally inaccurate – and can certainly be applied to China and Cuba, they provide only a partial understanding of historical revolutionary patterns.

Following the Russian revolution, the first generation of revolutionary studies – that also included the English, American, and French revolutions - sought to examine in more detail why and how revolutions develop, resulting in a set of propositions that provide guidelines in understanding patterns of events associated with revolutions; these include the role of different actors such as intellectuals, moderates, and radicals; as well as the reactions of the state to revolutionary forces; which are then placed into a context of struggle between these actors to assume leadership of the state. Subsequent generations of revolutionary studies further develop issues of why revolutions arise; the sources of opposition; and what happens as revolutions develop and unfold.

The American historian, Crane Brinton, in his work *The Anatomy of Revolution* (1938), compared the dynamics of revolutions to that of a fever that rises with popular discontent to the point where it is no longer tolerated, and the regime is replaced. Brinton, and other historians of the 1920's and 1930's era, analyzed the history of revolutions and determined that a certain uniformity, best described in stages, existed in the development of revolutions (Goldstone1994):

1. The majority of intellectuals condemn the government and demand significant reform.

2. State attempts a measure of reform combined with suppression of

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revolutionaries.

3. The fall of the regime begins with a political crisis resulting from inability of government to deal with a crisis, rather than action by the revolutionaries.

4. Once in power, internal conflicts between revolutionaries results in a lack of unity.

5. The moderates gain the leadership but fail to satisfy those who insist on radical changes.

6. The moderates are opposed by the radicals; power is gained by progressively more radical elements.

7. Radicals replace the moderates; often manifested by a strong man with supreme power.

8. The extremists impose coercive rule to implement radical reform.

9. A period of terror occurs.

10. Radicalism eventually leads to pragmatic moderation; the revolution is over.

This model implies that there is a revolutionary process and that not much change really occurs between the pre-revolution situation and that of the post-revolution; but it cannot explain why, under some circumstances, an improved government is the result. Although Brinton does provide a useful sequence of events in the analysis of revolutions, one can conclude that there is not a one-size-fits-all process. Crinton's model was based on revolutions prior to that of China and Cuba.

Jack Goldstone's selection *An Analytical Framework* (2001), attempts to provide a model for understanding the development of revolutions. This guide is

by no means an all-encompassing checklist of events and circumstances. Instead it provides a process framework for analysis that must consider how different forces and trends inter-connect and affect a particular society. Goldstone suggests three processes that overlap, interrelate, and are common to all revolutions – offering forecasting implications and thus possible pre-emption: state breakdown, revolutionary contention, and state rebuilding. State breakdown results from the conjunction of fiscal distress – which prevents government from meeting its obligations to the citizenry; elite alienation – which is united against the government, but divided over the degree of reform or change; and mobilization of the populace – against the state and counterrevolutionaries. Only when these elements rise together, through several sectors of society, can conditions be set for state breakdown and revolution. Multiple factors such as economic conditions, population growth, and international influence can cause these elements to arise; nonetheless, each society is different and must be analyzed independently to determine the effects of these forces.

During the process of revolutionary contention, groups struggle to form a "dominant coalition." Groups that are better organized and have access to resources, have a better chance of achieving dominance. An agent that unites the population, such as a strong ideology, can also serve as an important mechanism for group leadership. The themes of rectification, redistribution, and nationalism emerge as groups jockey for position and attempt to dominate the revolutionary struggle. Unfortunately, this often leads to periods of terror and the emergence of repressive regimes. The final process – state rebuilding –

commences once the new ruling group consolidates its authority through a variety of means that could contain repression. A key task is the rebuilding of political institutions, which is shaped by class and economic structures prior to the revolution, the international context, and the objectives of the new elites shaped by experiences under the pre-revolutionary regime. An analysis of this last factor can result in a forecast of state reconstruction and allow international powers to preempt revolution through economic or diplomatic techniques. However, once the revolution is in place, these techniques, or even military power, are likely to fail in the attempt to re-direct the agenda of the revolutionary government, as it begins to consolidate its authority, usually through re-building of the army, internal repression, and assertive nationalism.

In summary, the preceding framework by Goldstone offers a partial, but practical guide for understanding the development of revolutions. Goldstone argues that the key factor in igniting a revolution is a conjuncture of several conditions that work interactively to undermine the state result in a breakdown of the state; he also suggest that during this process, intervention to forestall revolution could be successful if it can effectively counter one of the conditions previously discussed, even though the others may still be present. Once the government loses the initiative, the process of revolutionary contention starts; that is the jockeying of coalition groups for the control of resources to compete with the government; those that are better organized and have a strong ideology that appeals to the largest portion of the population, normally emerge on top. Finally, this framework also suggests that a period of terror and the emergence of

coercive and aggressive regimes are likely outcomes of revolutions. Goldstone framework for analysis of revolutions fits both the Chinese and Cuban revolutions. I will continue to refer to it in subsequent chapters. Throughout history, several revolutionary theories have been developed each focusing on a different aspect of revolution: causes, pre-conditions, process, or even likely outcomes. I will briefly discuss a number of theories that not only provide context to this case study, but also insight to later on explain particular circumstances in Cuba and China.

Revolutionary Theories

> *"Without a revolutionary theory, there is no revolutionary movement[8]."*
> Vladimir Lenin

Classic approaches in the development of general theories of revolution began with the French Revolution of 1789 as a model, for it was the most dramatic and well known in European history (Goldstone 1994). Several theories of revolution emerged from the model of the French Revolution. The *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published in 1848, which outlines the requirements to achieve the goal of a classless society through a historical progression of feudalism-capitalism-socialism-and communism. The main thesis is that the fall of capitalism and the ruling *(bourgeoisie)* class is inevitable because they seek the growth of capital which is conditional on the wage labor of the working (*proletarian*) class. Another influential work is that of Alexis Tocqueville, *The French Revolution and the Growth of the State*, also published in 1848, in which he argues for caution, noting that revolutions often strengthen

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[8] As quoted in *www.brainyquotes.com*

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the power of the state rather than weaken it – as opposed to Marx who saw revolution as progressive and beneficial (Goldstone 1994). Tocqueville also stated that increasing prosperity, can actually promote a spirit of unrest, as the general public people become hostile to ancient government institutions. In fact, those parts of France in which the improvement in the standard of life was most pronounced, were the chiefs centers of the revolutionary movement. Finally, Max Weber's selection *Bureaucracy and Revolution* (1994) amplified the work of Tocqueville on state power arguing that bureaucracy - when state authority is derived from legally defined offices rather than from hereditary position or privilege – increases when the government abolishes such privileges. Thus, the likely outcome of revolution is a permanent and entrenched bureaucracy. Weber also argued that often the initial impetus for revolution is provided by a charismatic leader who challenges traditional authority.

In the 20th century, studies of revolution moved through three waves of research. The *natural histories* scholars of the 1920s and 1930s, of which Crane Brinton was part, I have already introduced. The 1960s and early 1970s saw the development of *general theories of political violence*. During this period, political changes associated with emerging modern states, combined with fast economic growth resulted in a general climate of revolutions, coups, riots and civil wars (Goldstone 1994). It was during this wave that Régis Debray (1967) codified the *foco* theory as a model for armed struggle in Latin America, with the rural guerilla vanguard as the mechanism for the oppressed masses to assume power. Also during this period, Samuel P. Huntington developed the Modernization Theory in

his work *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968). Huntington states that revolution is a characteristic of modernization because educational and economic growth increases demand by the people for political participation, faster than political institutions can accommodate them. Groups that do not gain access to political power may revolt. According to Huntington, revolutions do not normally occur in traditional societies – with a low level of socio-economic complexity – or in already highly modern societies. However, they are likely to develop in societies with limited socio-economic development, or those going through a process of political modernization. A complete revolution assimilates new groups into politics thus creating a new political order; the crucial factor being the concentration or dispersion of power – which follows the collapse of the old regime – among three social types: moderates, counter-revolutionaries, and radicals. Huntington also describes the trends in Eastern and Western revolutions and concludes by stating that revolutions do not occur in democratic political systems.

A counter-argument to Huntington is offered by Charles Tilly in his work: *Does Modernization Breed Revolution?* (1973). Tilly states that Huntington's theory is weak because of ambiguities and contradictions. For example the term "modernization" in itself is vague and difficult to pinpoint within a specific regional context. Additionally, he [Huntington] does not identify what specific groups within a society contend for power or their ability to mobilize resources. Tilly offers a theory of *Collective Mobilization* (1978) that instead emphasizes the ability of contending groups to mobilize resources and apply them in conflict with the state.

Hence, the major issues for groups to execute collective action are the resources already controlled by the group prior to mobilization, the process of obtaining additional resources and re-direct them towards social change, and the extent to which external support increase the pool of resources.

In his work *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966), Barrington Moore seeks to explain the historical development of three alternative paths to the modern world through revolutionary variations: the *bourgeois* revolution – culminates in a combination of capitalism and parliamentary democracy; top-down conservative revolutions that result in fascism; and peasant revolutions that lead to communism. The author also identifies a number of variables that explain why countries have taken a different route; these variables center on the structural differences in agrarian societies and the response the requirements for modernization. Moore makes three important points on agrarian societies in relation to the third path of peasant revolutions that lead to communism: The first point is that when the commercial inclination is weak among the landed upper class, the result is the survival of a peasant mass that can eventually be the main force behind a revolution leading to communism. Next, the survival of peasant social structures into the modern era - when they are subject to stresses such as market forces, modernization and technology - and possibly still subject to an agrarian bureaucracy that inhibits reform. Finally, agrarian bureaucracies of royal absolutism tend to weaken the landed upper class resulting in a break of the link that binds the peasants to the upper classes, setting conditions favoring peasant revolutions. I consider Moore's second point

as the most relevant to Cuba and China and also re-enforces Huntington's thesis regarding the reaction of societies to modernization and its possible implications. Additionally, it facilitates the understanding of peasant revolutions and their association with Marxism.

Eric Wolf (1969) further expands on peasant revolutions. He states that while peasants are difficult to mobilize due to factors such as a mindset of independence and not collective action, as well as a lack of "tactical freedom" to act - meaning at least partial possession of resources that can be used for political leverage; they can nevertheless revolt in reaction to social strains on traditional lifestyles. Wolf cites three sources of such strains: (1) Demographics – principally population growth, (2) Commercialization – that threatens traditional access to communal lands, and (3) Authority crisis – which refers the convergence of the first two strains, resulting in a dislocation of the traditional power structure between the government, elites, and peasants. However, even with the presence of one or more of these factors, "tactical freedom" is still essential. Such freedom may be available to a landowning middle peasantry; or to peasants who live in remote areas away from government authority, particularly in defensible mountainous regions, as was the case in Cuba. Still, an external force capable of challenging existing power structures is normally required for the transition from rebellion to revolution; in my case studies: the Chinese Red Army and Castro's guerilla band.

The third wave of revolutionary studies in the late1970s and 1980s focused on *structural theories* of revolution. These theories conclude that since

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states vary in structure, they are vulnerable to different kinds of revolution; they further contend that revolutions begin with some combination of state weakness, conflicts between states and elites, and popular uprisings (Goldstone 1994). Theda Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* (1979) is one of the most widely recognized works of the third 3rd wave. Skocpol concept of social revolution draws heavily upon Marxist focus on social-structural change and class conflict Wicham-Crowley 1991, 1992). Skocpol's structural approach examines multiple relationships among political actors. For Skocpol, the key to revolution is the creation of a power vacuum as the state power is undermined by several key relationships between states and elite groups, between peasants and landlords, and between competing states. These relationships vary according to structure of certain states and societies. Skocpol's theory can be applied to China and to a certain extent Cuba as well. In fact, her 1979 work is a comparative analysis of the revolutions in France, Russia, and China. I will refer to her work, as well as the other theorists discussed, in subsequent chapters.

In conclusion, revolutionary theories have changed over time. Initial studies focused on the French Revolution and the establishment of a logical pattern to their development. Other scholars focused on different aspects of revolutions, such as causes and pre-conditions, or actual process; yet others analyzed the likely outcomes. The violence associated with revolutions led to additional theories as to why people would take up arms in revolt. Finally, the changes associated with modernization and economic changes, led to yet additional theories. Not only can something be learned from every theory,

particular circumstances in both the Chinese and Cuban Revolutions can be explained with one theory or another. However, the fact of the matter is that the Marxist Theory of Revolution provided the basic strategic framework for the respective theories of Mao Tse-tung and Che Guevara. As a result it deserves a more detailed explanation.

Classic Marxist Theory

Although both Che and Mao refined the Marxist Theory to fit their own purposes and particular situations, undoubtedly the Marxist approach to revolution remains the unquestioned core and basic framework of their respective theories. Thus, it is essential to describe the basic philosophy and concepts of the Marxist Theory of Revolution as formulated in the Karl Marx and Frederick Engels *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, published in 1848. Marxism holds that class struggle is the central element to social change in Western societies. According to Marx, the principal mechanisms for change are the workers, exemplified by his axiom of *"Workers of the World Unite."* The goal of a classless society is achieved through a historical progression of stages; each stage is the result of social relationships developed by a society in the fulfillment of their basic needs:

Primitive => Slavery => Feudalism => Capitalism => Socialism => Communism

- Primitive – No property thus no class conflict; a cooperative tribal society.

- Slavery – The tribal society develops classes of slaves and masters.

- Feudalism – Aristocracy is the ruling class over serfs; merchants develop into capitalists.

- Capitalism – Capitalists are the ruling class who employ the workers.

- Socialism – Workers gain class consciousness and overthrow the capitalists.

- Communism – A classless society; common ownership of the means of production.

Of course, revolution can be the mechanism to transition from one stage to the next. Marx understood revolutions not as stand-alone incidents of violence, but as class based movements that develop as a result of inherent friction between classes, within an economic structure. Forces that create friction include the alienation and exploitation of lower classes, politics, social values, religion, law, morality, culture, and ideology. The economic structural system cannot contain the social forces and contradictions in the desire/needs of society, forcing it to rupture into revolution. The essence of Marx's theory is the relation of means of production (tools, infrastructure, and materials) and modes of production (means of production focused on labor) that constitute the economic structure that meets society's needs and expectations.

The basic source of a revolutionary contradiction in society is the emergence of a disjuncture within a mode of production between the social forces and social relations of production (property ownership and surplus appropriation). The disjuncture manifests itself in intensifying class conflicts. The consolidation of an emerging mode of production within the confines of an existing one; for example, capitalism within feudalism or socialism within capitalism, creates the conditions for the growth of class unity and consciousness

of a revolutionary class that results in continuing struggles with the existing

dominant class (Skocpol 1979).

Revolution itself is then accomplished through class action led by the self-

conscious rising of a revolutionary class (ex. the *proletariat* in socialist

revolutions). Although the revolution could be supported by other classes – such

as the peasantry – these are not normally class conscious[9] or politically

organized. Of course Mao and Castro proved different. Once successful, a

revolution marks the transition from the previous mode of production and form of

class dominance to a new mode of production, in which new social relations of

production, new political and ideological forms, and in general, the hegemony of

the new triumphant revolutionary class, create the appropriate conditions for

further development of society. In short, Marx sees revolutions as emerging out

of class-divided modes of production, and transforming one mode of production

into another through class conflict (Skocpol 1979). In addition to revolutionary

and social theory, exemplified by the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx also theorized

on economics in such works as: *A Contribution to the Critique of Political

Economy* (1859), and *Capital* (Vol I, 1867); additional key points that shape his

theory of revolution include the following:

- The fall of capitalism and the ruling (*bourgeoisie*) is inevitable because they

   seek the growth of capital which is conditional on the wage labor of the

   working *(proletarian)* class.

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[9] Class consciousness refers to the social situational awareness that a social class attains, and its capacity to act in its own interests based on such awareness.

- The alienation and exploitation of workers results in a revolutionary setting. Alienation is the separation of laborers from the results of their labor. Exploitation results from the use of labor as a commodity with little regard for their welfare, and without adequate compensation.

- Higher level of economic development results in higher probability of revolution.

- The process of production requires a system of state oppression, allowing a small minority to force the majority to work for its own profit.

- An essential element of state oppression is the so called *"superstructure"* - a system of cultural, religious, political and philosophical beliefs, justifying status quo and providing explanations for the misery of the oppressed and welfare of the oppressors.

- Means of production are constantly developing, due to invention and competition. There always comes the day, when the *superstructure* no longer encourages production: on the contrary, it hampers its further development. The modes of production are no longer compatible with modern means of production – creating conditions for revolution.

This theory was drawn mostly from analysis of numerous *bourgeois* revolutions. It explains perfectly the past, but its prediction of the future is questionable. According to Marx theory, socialism should appear first in highly industrialized capitalist societies. This of course was not the case in Russia, in the early 20th century, as Lenin sought to jump-start a revolution. He modified the Marxist theory of revolution to fit his own needs and the conditions of Russia at

the time. Lenin argued that it was possible to have socialism in the least developed capitalist countries; through indoctrination, workers would gain insight into their exploitation and would bring about revolution leading to their control of the means of production. Additionally, Lenin rejected the *Determinism* philosophy of Marxist Theory that events (such as revolutions) are causally determined by prior occurrences – that is, future events are linked to past and present events in a cause-effect relationship.

A key concept of Lenin's theory is that of the *Vanguard Party* as the central force of mass action and safeguard of the revolution. Given that the workers were in a day to day struggle for survival, and thus normally fail to develop class consciousness, the Vanguard Party would be the engine of proletarian revolution (Wickham-Crowley 1991). Lenin also realized that alliance with other classes was essential for success. Although for Lenin, the position of revolutionary vanguard was reserved for the workers, he argued that an alliance between the peasants and workers would maximize the chances of success in overthrowing the czar (Vanden 1982). Lenin brilliantly manifested the cross-cutting alliance with the peasant class in the national flag depicting the hammer and sickle. Power was for the taking in 1917, Lenin succeeded by blending the Marxist theory of revolution with strong organization, leadership, and ideology – often referred to as Marxism/Leninism.

People's War Theory

Mao's thesis on peasant-based revolutionary war – in which people not weapons – is the decisive factor – was developed progressively and gradually as

Mao studied Chinese history, the Russian revolution, and observed the existing conditions in China. In doing so, he created an original theory of war (Schram 1966). Mao Tse-tung's principal variation from Marx and Lenin is the reliance on the peasantry vice the industrial urban forces as the mechanism for change; he argued that this applied to semi-feudal societies of the Third World – the *People's War*. The two principal observations from Mao's theory are (Mao 1927):

- The rural masses contained the potential for organized revolutionary action.

- Only the peasantry of China, and not the urban proletariat, would provide the base for revolution.

Mao visualized peasant-based protracted struggle waged to wear down and discredit the government while at the same time gaining support from larger portions of the population. By basing the insurgency in the countryside and by expanding its support, Mao envisioned the government becoming increasingly isolated, impotent and surrounded in the cities (Drew and Snow 1988). Mao viewed the revolutionary struggle as a flexible three-phased conflict (Mao 1938):

(1) Insurgents establish secure operating bases in the countryside.

(2) Conduct escalating guerilla warfare in order to discredit the government and demonstrate its inability to control and protect the populace.

(3) The balance of power shifts to the insurgents, who then shift to conventional warfare to destroy government forces and overthrow the government.

As the government attempts to suppress the insurgents, it gets drawn into the countryside where the peasant masses, through guerilla warfare, selectively engage government forces and slowly erode their will to fight, while continuing to

gain popular support. The key in shifting the balance of power is winning the

support (or at least neutrality) of the population through a sophisticated package

of political, psychological, and economic programs designed to take advantage of

grievances against the existing power structure and build nationalism. Eventually,

the government forces will be reduced to the cities, where the peasant masses –

now an army – will destroy them and gain power (Drew and Snow 1988).

A basic theme of Mao's theory is the political indoctrination of the

guerillas, as well as the masses; that is, "unity within the army and unity of the

army with the people." Mao recognized that a disciplined, literate, trained, and

politically loyal to the revolution armed force was the instrument to achieve power

(Mao 1937). Although Mao insisted that the Party retain its position of

prominence, the People's Army was just as important as the vanguard of the

revolution. The Army was a symbol of loyalty, devotion, and self-sacrifice as an

instrument of the revolution by fighting, conducting propaganda, and mobilizing

the masses. But if it was to be a co-equal to the Party, it had to be thoroughly

indoctrinated with the appropriate political consciousness (Schram 1966). Thus,

this is a slight modification of Lenin's thesis which clearly defines the party, led by

the revolutionary elites, as the protectors and leaders of the revolution.

In summary, Mao's philosophy regarding the People's War and revolution

consisted of three pillars or components: First, the guerilla warfare component,

as the mechanism for mobilizing the masses; second, a communist component,

for political indoctrination of the masses as well as the army; finally, the Chinese

nationalism component to establish a common consciousness in the minds of the

population. Mao's theory of revolution worked and served to inspire other revolutions as well as revolutionary theories. Among these is the Cuban revolution and Che Guevara's *foco* theory.

Foco Theory

Fidel Castro and Che Guevara adopted and modified Mao's theory of insurgent warfare to fit local conditions and cultural differences. Che, on his *Guerilla Warfare* (1961) essay, revealed three fundamental conclusions about armed revolution in the Americas:

(1) Popular forces can win a war against the army

(2) One does not necessarily have to wait for a revolutionary situation to arise; the guerilla insurgents can create them.

(3) In the underdeveloped countries of Latin America, rural areas are the best battlefields for revolution.

The first point is congruent with Mao and has been proven throughout history; it also re-enforces the power of guerilla warfare when combined with popular support. However, the second point does deviate from Mao, who argued for the buildup of an Army - that at the right time - would fight a conventional war against the government's army; it also deviates from the traditional Marxist Theory of class struggle that culminates in a revolution by the *proletariat*. Guevara concurs that the guerilla band can grow into a regular army in order to deliver a "knock-out" blow to the oppressive oligarchy army, but dismisses the indecisive and patient attitude of revolutionaries that procrastinate under the

pretext that it is difficult to fight a professional army. Guevara advocates instead for immediate action by a guerilla band to bring about revolutionary conditions.

It is Guevara's contention that the existence of a guerilla *foco* can undermine the legitimacy of the government's right to rule and its monopoly over violence. Such as a challenge would escalate the level of violence of an already oppressive state, to a level that radicalizes the government opposition. Within the Latin American context, extreme oppression will typically fall disproportionally on the rural peasantry, thus validating Guevara's third point (Johnson 2006). Guevara does admit that certain minimum pre-conditions are needed to create a revolutionary situation for the *foco* to capitalize on:

(1) The masses must be shown that social problems will not be addressed by the government.

(2) The oppressive government must break the peace first.

The presence of these pre-conditions does not guarantee the success of the guerilla *foco*. They do form the socio-political framework for the *foco* to operate and become the spark for a revolutionary situation. Guevara acknowledges that if a government came to power through popular vote and maintains at least the appearance of constitutional law, a guerilla uprising can only occur once all legal means to effect change have been exhausted. He does adjust this tenet later on by arguing that democratic governments can still be oppressive and exploitative through drafting of new laws and constitutional changes that serve the interest of the ruling class.

The third conclusion validates Mao's People's War centered in the countryside, but de-emphasizes the role of urban masses as per traditional Marxism. Guevara does not fully undermine the important role of resistance by organized workers, but explains that in the urban areas, armed revolt can be easily suppressed through the suspension of civil liberties, forcing the resistance to go underground. In contrast, rural areas offer sanctuary from oppressor forces and close cooperation with the local peasantry. Again, it must be emphasized that it was Fidel Castro who designed the revolutionary campaign, selected its operational objectives, and established the political end state. Guevara then developed the principles of the *foco* theory from the lessons learned of the revolutionary struggle.

According to Guevara the guerilla *foco* is not only the vanguard, but also the political and military center of the revolution (Debray 1967). Other political forces might come into play in the efforts against the government, but the strategic, operational, and tactical decisions will always rest with the leadership of the *foco* (Moreno 1970). This centralization of power reflects the Lenin influence on Che and is in direct contrast to Mao who decentralized operations and indoctrination to his communist guerilla cadres. Debray (1967) made reference to the "meticulous and almost obsessive" attention to detail that Fidel Castro paid in planning operational activities, from the selection of objectives to the number of bullets issued to each fighter. Che learned from Castro and thus insisted on controlling everything believing in a tightly controlled elite organization

for decision-making (Friedman 1970). Thus, the *foco* reigns supreme for Guevara.

In summary, Guevara, places a high degree of primacy on the guerilla band creating the conditions for revolution; for him, guerilla warfare is the basis of the people's fight for liberation; a fight of the masses, with the guerilla band as the armed nucleus. Unlike Mao, who placed the guerillas and the communist party on equal footing, Che, places the guerilla *foco* as the one and only vanguard of the revolution. Debray (1967) argues that in Latin America historic circumstances have not permitted Communist Parties to take root and establish themselves in order to spearhead revolutionary action. Thus, the guerilla army will be the nucleus of the party, not vice versa; the guerilla force then becomes the political vanguard from which a real party can develop.

Revolutionary Setting

The different revolutionary theories discussed so far have certain commonalities that permit making general statements about revolutions. It is widely accepted by scholars that certain conditions must exist before people undertake the difficult task to rebel and drastically change society, form of government, and their previous leaders, sometimes even by utilizing extreme forms of violence. Of course, these conditions are simply guidelines and by no means a checklist to predict revolutions. Every case is unique and the variables involved are weighted differently, or perhaps not at all, based on the particular situation. For example, it is unlikely that the Cuban revolution would have succeeded without the strong personality and leadership of Fidel Castro, the

conditions of the peasantry in the *Oriente* province, or more importantly, the neutralization of the U.S. during the revolutionary period. In China, although the agrarian conditions favored revolution, it took Mao's leadership and the Japanese invasion to tilt the balance in his favor. Thus, there is no specific causal effect that can predict revolutions with any certainty; rather a variety of factors interrelate to create conditions favorable to revolution. According to Greene (1999), the presence of what can be considered obvious preliminary signs or preconditions, as well as what can be considered "accelerators," can increase the probability of a revolution occurring. Pre-conditions include the following:

- *Geography* – Geographic conditions can often determine the success or failure of a revolutionary movement. For example, variables such as physical geography of a country can facilitate the external support of an insurgency or perhaps geographic isolation can hinder it. In Cuba, it is unlikely that Castro would have succeeded without a base of operations in the remote *Sierra Maestra* Mountains, located in the *Oriente* province – traditionally a region of insurgency since the days of Spanish rule. Mao utilized the northwest region of the Shensi Province region to build his Red Army and test his communist policies for eventual expansion. Economic geography, that is differential rates of regional economic development, can heighten hostility between socioeconomic classes. Finally, political geography can also determine revolutionary potential; for example, a highly centralized state with universities and industry located near a capital, can result in the blending of students and workers into a revolutionary movement.

- *Demography* – Factors such as population growth, migration of citizens – either internally or to a foreign country, can contribute to a revolutionary condition. For example, in Cuba, the large migration of anti-Castro middle and upper class Cubans to the United States, explains the relative socially homogenous population that lacked political activism; this of course worked to the advantage of the Castro regime during its consolidation period. Pre-revolutionary China's population growth significantly strained limited agricultural resources, resulting in a peasant radicalism that was eventually exploited by Mao (Greene 1999).

- *Cultural Cleavage* – A culturally and/or racially diverse society, particularly with non-assimilated immigrants, can create or raise the level of friction with the indigenous majority. Such conditions can lead to social conflict and political instability. Cuba's history of slavery resulted in a large black population subject to discrimination, low social status, and a lack of access to government services. Castro found extensive support among this segment of the population. The Japanese occupation of China served to unite the nation in a wave of nationalism against the foreign invaders; as I will describe later, Mao harnessed this nationalism as part of his grand strategy. Religion falls in this category as a special case because it can facilitate or prevent revolution. The relative weakness of the Catholic Church in Cuba made it a non-factor in opposing Castro. Although more of a philosophy or ethical system than a religion, Confucianism was not viewed as a threat by Mao because its teachings subordinated it to the state. Mao actually found a role for

Confucianism in his grand revolution strategy. Once in power, however, he eventually sought to eliminate it.

- *Land Tenure* – Land ownership in agricultural societies is the primary measurement of wealth and social status. Hence, socio-economic differences are most visible in this type of society. Historically, extremely unequal distribution of land has resulted in almost all revolutionary movements of modern times. Prior to the Chinese Communist revolution, the vast majority of Chinese, at least 80%, were peasants, but only 20% of the total population were landowners (Greene 1999; Skocpol 1979). In the first half of the 20th century, Cuba was to a large extent, owned by foreigners – both land and industry. This would lead to the slow development of a Cuban national identity comprised of the people – that is, the workers, the mill-workers, the *Negroes*, and the peasants. Foreigners controlled the means of production but the Cubans on the whole worked for it (Thomas 1971). Both Mao and Castro capitalized on the socio-economic conditions of their respective nations for popular support.

Three additional pre-conditions can increase revolutionary potential. First, economic change which can threaten the status quo; the spread of western capitalism has been cited as an important pre-condition in both Cuba and China. Next, social status discrepancies associated with inconsistencies in the division of political, economic, and social status. In both Cuba and China, a weak middle class within the context of an economically developing, but largely agrarian society, was a major pre-condition for revolution. Finally, the lack of political

adaptation to accommodate the interests of newly mobilized social classes can increase political tension. Castro attempted to effect reform through constitutional channels before turning revolutionary. Of course, the presence of several preconditions does not guarantee the development of a revolution; however, the presence of one or more of the following accelerators can fuse a number of preconditions and expedite a revolutionary situation (Greene 1999):

- *Military Defeat* – Whether against insurgents, against an invading foreign power, or through an external military intervention; a military defeat undermines the legitimacy of the government and facilitates cross-cutting alliances against it. The government's military defeat suggests that its efforts to inspire citizen loyalty and sacrifice lack credibility.

- *Economic Crises* – People are more likely to take direct action against the government when their own economic circumstances become critical. This is a stronger incentive than ideology or social justice. However, once mobilized in protest of food shortages, unemployment, or inflation, the masses are more susceptible to revolutionary ideology and organization. Normally, economic crisis alone is unlikely to provoke collective revolutionary action; however, it could highlight other social or economic problems, and serve to focus revolutionaries.

- *Government Violence* – Arbitrary and indiscriminate, beyond the maintenance of law and order, serves to lower the government's legitimacy and raises the potential for revolt.

- *Elite fragmentation* – A common pattern observed in revolutions is that of divisions among members of the political elite. These divisions are frequently brought about by military defeat or economic crises. Such fragmentation is an indicator of declining government competence, which serves to lower its legitimacy in the minds of its citizens, and can lead to political instability.

- *Reform and Political Change* – Abrupt departure from past policies without accompanied changes in political institutions and representation; bad government reforming itself – usually half-hearted, not enforced, repudiate past inequalities and lower regime's legitimacy.

One final point regarding revolutionary settings; Barrington Moore (1966) explains that a decisive catalyst or ingredient normally ignites revolutionary conditions into an actual revolution. In both China and Cuba, the situation was ripe for a peasant's revolt: The structure of China's peasant society could not adjust to the stresses associated with market forces and modernization; its agrarian bureaucracy inhibited reform and weakened the link that bound the peasants to the upper classes, resulting in the survival of a peasant mass that eventually became the main force behind the revolution (Moore 1966). In Cuba the repressive Batista regime, combined with a disaffected peasantry without a history of private ownership, and large numbers of unemployed rural workers in a sugar mill dominated economy, created the conditions for a guerilla movement in the countryside. As part of this research, I will examine the pre-conditions, accelerators, and decisive catalyst of each revolution, and the important role that

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guerilla warfare played in facilitating the catalyst, or maximizing its benefits for eventual revolutionary victory.

Conclusion

There is no set formula, checklist, or pre-conditions for revolutions to occur. Several forces come together, at a certain point in a society's history, which set the conditions for regime change or revolution. However, it is important to note that each country and region is geographically, culturally, socially, and economically different. In this chapter, I have attempted to provide a progression of theories and studies to set the stage for the comparative analysis of the Chinese and Cuban revolutions. Jack Goldstone's thesis in the development of revolutions will provide context for the revolutionary process. The Marxist theory of revolution will frame the strategic framework for analysis and general guidelines, because both revolutionary leaders in the China and Cuban revolutions derived their own theories from Marx. Charles Tilly's Mobilization of Resources theory will operationalize the strategic objectives and explain the role of guerilla warfare revolutionary theories, by Mao and Che, in meeting those objectives, as well as shaping the strategies for success. I consider Tilly's theory more operational than strategic and thus applicable to my case study; while the Marxist Theory of revolution offers a general framework – such as conditions, accelerators, and timing – these conditions must be operationalized and Tilly's theory offers a pragmatic guide to doing just that: the control of resources by any means necessary. In subsequent chapters, I will discuss the blending of the mobilization mechanisms – with guerilla warfare as the main ingredient - into a

cohesive strategy that appealed not only to the main effort of such strategy – the peasants – but also other classes in pursuit of the broadest possible alliance. Both revolutionary leaders understood that a revolution cannot succeed without support from the different classes of society. By blending politics and forms of warfare they both achieved the end state of regime change through violence.

The cornerstone of both revolutionary theories is that popular guerilla forces can win a war against a superior army. This form of violence became the primary mechanism for mobilizing resources and undermining the moral authority of the actor in power. Mao chose to build his own peasant army and developed the tactics of guerilla warfare from base areas in the countryside. To Mao, the role of guerilla warfare went beyond the obvious: it would also serve as a mechanism for obtaining popular support; for getting close to the peasants and sharing their hardships; for indoctrination of peasants; and for obtaining small victories to motivate the masses. Finally, it would provide a springboard for the development of conventional armies that would eventually confront the KMT for the right to rule China. For Che and Castro the existence of a guerilla *foco* would pose a threat to the government's legitimacy and force a violent response from the government. The resulting campaign of oppression would naturally fall on the peasants creating a backlash against the government across all sectors of opposition. The end result is the same: classes of society, riding a wave of nationalism, unite against the government and overthrow it.

The central idea of the comparative analysis is that guerilla warfare is not exclusively a form of violence in the pursuit of power, but that to achieve success

when revolutionary conditions exist, it must be part of a grand strategy that

incorporates political, social, economic, and psychological variables, with an end

state of maximum mobilization of resources. Thus, a comprehensive analysis of

guerilla warfare, as not only a technique but an overall philosophy for the

attainment of strategic objectives is in order.

Chapter Three

Guerilla Warfare

Introduction

Violence is a resource - and as such - it can be harnessed, mobilized, and employed. But violence for the sake of violence is not a successful technique for winning the popular support required to achieve political objectives. First and foremost, it must be integrated into a grand strategy that clearly defines the parameters for the use of violence in support of political objectives. This is certainly easier than done – the use of violence requires political vision, assets, command and control, and discipline in its employment. Further, it could possibly require the political leadership to publicly separate itself from violence; this concept is part of the "Dual Strategy" that will be discussed in latter chapters. Ultimate success in mobilizing and utilizing any resource depends on effective organization, which seeks the active support of large segments of the population, on behalf of an actor's cause. In this case study, the government and the insurgents are the two principal actors that compete for resources. Both Mao and Castro recognized the importance of organization to obtain popular support. Realizing that they were at a resource disadvantage against an entrenched government, they sought to slowly bleed the government of support, as they concurrently spread their message and broadened their support across all

segments of society, through organization in the countryside, urban areas, and even within the government. Essentially, organization would be the mechanism to connect the leadership of the insurgency with the population. But an ingredient was needed in the formulation of a grand strategy to inspire and unite the masses in support of the insurgent's cause. That key ingredient would be guerilla warfare.

Guerilla warfare is a weapon of the weak. Both Mao and Castro were in extreme positions of weakness against their respective rivals, as they formulated their revolutionary theories with guerilla warfare as the principal component. They really had no other choice. Mao's communists were almost exterminated once by the KMT. Castro had been arrested and thrown in jail by Batista. Further, political participation was not an option in either environment. The use of violence would lead the road to change. Of course, what differentiates an insurgency from a political protest movement- such as Gandhi's in India or Khomeini in Iran – is the use of violence. The violent component of an insurgency is manifested in different forms of warfare – that is, a variety of organized violence which emphasizes particular armed forces, weapons, tactics, and targets. Three forms of warfare have been associated with insurgencies: guerilla war, conventional warfare, and terrorism, (O'Neill 1990).

Terrorism is a form of warfare in which violence is directed primarily against non-combatants rather than government police/military forces or economic assets. While the targets of such violence – through assassinations, bombings, arson, torture, etc. – may appear random, they are carefully planned

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to maximize the political impact in support of the insurgency (Greene 1999; O'Neill 1990). Terror ultimately attacks people's minds by instilling fear in government officials and their supporters and convincing people that the insurgency is powerful, while the power of the state is weak; another function of terror is to provoke the state into a response of indiscriminate violence and oppression against the population; finally, on a sufficient scale, it can also disrupt the functioning of government (Joint Publication 3-24). However, an exclusive reliance on terror as a revolutionary or insurgent technique is a certain sign of the movement's weakness (Greene 1999). Although both Mao and Che Guevara/Fidel Castro used terrorism selectively and on a relatively small scale; their respective theories were clear in the negative impact of terrorism on popular support (Mao 1937; Guevara 1961). Conventional warfare – defined as the direct confrontation large units in the battlefield – was seen by Mao and Che as possible necessity in the last phase of revolution to defeat government forces. Initially, however, insurgencies are not strong enough to measure up with the government in conventional warfare; whether the transition is made, depends on the insurgent strategy, and vulnerabilities of the government's armed forces.

Thus, the most common form of violence utilized by insurgents has been guerilla warfare. Guerilla warfare differs from terrorism in that it targets the government's armed forces, police, or their support units – and in some cases – key economic infrastructure, rather than unarmed civilians. The essence of guerilla warfare is highly-mobile hit-and-run attacks conducted by lightly armed bands that seek to harass the enemy and gradually erode his capability and will

to fight. Guerillas place a premium on flexibility, speed and deception (Mao 1937; Guevara 1961). In this chapter, I will introduce the characteristics of insurgent warfare and the use of guerilla tactics in waging a successful insurgency; such analysis will provide the reader with an understanding of how successful employment of violence by a weak actor can eventually lead to success. I will also explain the basic guerilla tactics of Mao and Che in order to demonstrate, in latter chapters, how these actions - at the lowest tactical level - were well planned and integrated into a grand strategy that eventually resulted in a buildup of nationalism in support of the insurgents. Although guerilla warfare is a tactical tool, to Mao and Fidel Castro, it went far beyond a mechanism for violence: Guerilla warfare was a philosophy that guided operational and strategic decisions.

Fundamentals of Insurgency and Guerilla Warfare

Insurgents wage revolutionary warfare, and for the most part, insurgencies are revolutions, as they seek to control resources and instruments of violence against the government to achieve their goals. As discussed in Chapter 2, the basis and inspiration for most third world revolutions since in the latter half of the 20th century, was Mao Tse-tung, who through trial and error, refined and tested his ideas and techniques in the long civil war in China, as he attempted to overthrow the government of Chiang Kai-shek. The principal political and military tool in an insurgency is guerilla warfare, waged in a fashion where the ultimate end state is to disaffect the population from the government. Mao's basic theory was adapted by Fidel Castro and other insurgents theorists, such as Vo Nguyen

Giap in Vietnam, to fit local conditions. Hence, every insurgency has its unique characteristics. Nonetheless, successful insurgencies have four characteristics in common that constitute the basis of insurgent warfare doctrine (Drew and Snow 1988).

The first is that they are normally protracted struggles. Rebels are at a disadvantage as they go against an entrenched government that commands a military, controls the economy, and has direct access to means of communication. Although a quick victory is unlikely, time is normally on the side of the insurgents and it is used as a weapon to weaken the government. Every day that the insurgency continues to exist, serves to discredit those in power, adds a degree of legitimacy to their cause, and creates a sense of inevitability that the insurgents might just prevail. Those that are not ardent supporters might start to hedge their bets and either indirectly support the insurgency, or remain neutral –both wins for the rebels. The classic example is the Vietnam War. The U.S. possessed an unquestionable advantage in weapons, technology, and training but the insurgency slowly - and over time - bled the U.S. forces turning public opinion in the U.S. against the war; no conflict in a democracy can continue without popular support. As a result, although U.S. forces never lost a battle, the war was eventually lost.

Second, and probably most important, is the central role played by their infrastructures – the underground organization that can be a primary source of strength for the insurgency. This political infrastructure performs several functions that are vital to the initial survival, subsequent growth, and eventual

victory of the insurgency: intelligence gathering, provision of supplies and financial resources; recruitment and political expansion; sabotage, terrorism, and intimidation; and the establishment of a shadow government. Agents placed within government agencies are important facilitators, but also sympathizers embedded in the general population can help the insurgent's cause by reporting troop movements or conducting small acts of sabotage. If the insurgent underground succeeds, the government appears weak and ineffective.

The third characteristic of successful insurgencies is the subsidiary importance of insurgent military actions. Although important, success in the battlefield is not crucial to the success of the insurgent movement. This explains why insurgent forces can lose virtually every battle and still win the war. The key is blending insurgent military actions with the political component.

The fourth and final characteristic that successful insurgencies have in common is the use of guerilla tactics – the classic insurgent strategy used by the weak against the strong. As opposed to conventional operations designed to win a quick victory, guerilla tactics are designed to avoid that decisive defeat against a stronger enemy. Basic concepts of guerilla warfare are as follows:

- Operations are based on the mobility of the individual soldier.
- Operate in small units to avoid presenting high-value large targets to government forces with superior firepower.
- Fight only when it is advantageous to fight – often by concentrating forces against isolated government units or posts.

- Holding terrain is not normally advantageous; to do so invites destruction by superior enemy forces.

The immediate objective of these concepts is to negate the major advantage of government forces – superior firepower and numbers. By doing so, the insurgency remains relevant and active in the pursuit of its operational objectives: first, shift government attention away from activities of the insurgent political infrastructure, so that the movement can continue to grow; second, harass, demoralize, and embarrass the government, its military, and its allies; and lastly, elicit a violent response from a frustrated government, which as we know, are often counterproductive and further alienate the population from the government. If successful guerilla tactics result in increased popular support for the insurgents, a frustrated government slowly loses command and control of the nation, resulting in an expansion of the insurgent infrastructure. Eventually, the forces combine to favor the insurgents, who by now can assemble and mass large units using conventional tactics, to deliver the final blow to the government.

Two additional points regarding insurgent warfare (as opposed to conventional warfare) - are worth mentioning. First the *center of gravity* – that is, the resource from which a military force draws its strength, and if neutralized would result in defeat - is twofold: its covert political infrastructure embedded in the general population and popular support itself. Without an infrastructure or popular support, the insurgency has no political arm, is devoid of its intelligence apparatus, and unable to access its principal source of manpower and logistical support. Of course, no government can survive without the acceptance of the

people – particularly one opposed by an attractive insurgency; thus, in this case, the center of gravity for the government's power is also located within the general population. This is why popular support is the key strategic objective of most insurgencies. A second unique feature of insurgent warfare is that insurgent military forces win when they do not lose. Although guerillas often lose small tactical engagements, the fact that they normally do not concentrate their forces, allows them to avoid total defeat and continue the fight. Their survival in the face of vastly superior government strength adds to their credibility. Conversely, conventional military forces lose when they do not win. The failure to do decisively defeat an inferior insurgency discredits the government's military and the government as a whole.

In summary, the military warfare conducted by insurgents – often manifested in the form of guerilla warfare – is the direct opposite of conventional warfare. Conventional military forces seek to concentrate forces at the decisive time and space to achieve quick and decisive victories. Insurgent military forces take the opposite approach, by dispersing in time and space to avoid decisive defeat. While conventional forces attempt to achieve a decision by acting faster than the enemy can react, insurgent guerilla forces seek to extend the conflict to prevent an effective reaction. For the guerillas, time becomes a weapon (Joint Publication 3-24; O'Neill 1990). Both Mao and Castro took this basic framework, the lessons of history, and their particular situations, to build their respective blends of guerilla tactics. The basic tactics are very similar; the principal

differences are in their execution. As I will explain on the following sections, while

Mao decentralized operations, Castro preferred absolute control.

Basic Guerilla Tactics – Mao Tse-tung

> *"The guerilla must move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea[10]."*
> Mao Tse-tung

Mao's thesis on peasant-based revolutionary war – in which people not

weapons – is the decisive factor – was developed progressively and gradually as

Mao studied Chinese history, the Russian revolution, and observed the existing

conditions in China. In doing so, he created the original theory of war discussed

in Chapter 2. Mao also drew heavily from the ancient Chinese Strategist, Sun

Tzu, whose book *The Art of War* is still in use today at military colleges. Mao's

Basic Tactics (1938, 53) book defines the overall philosophy of guerilla tactics:

> *When it is not advantageous for our main land army to meet the
> enemy in large scale engagements and we therefore, send our
> [guerilla] units which employ the tactics of avoiding strengths and
> striking at weaknesses, of flitting about and having no fixed
> position, and of subduing the enemy according to circumstances,
> and when we do not oppose the enemy according to the ordinary
> rules of tactics, this is called employing guerilla tactics.*

According to Mao, the essential feature of all guerilla strategy/tactics is to

concentrate forces in order to destroy the enemy units one by one. The aim is not

to hold territory or cities, but to destroy the enemy and stir up the courage of the

popular masses. To achieve this result, Mao stresses the importance of accurate

information on the enemy's movement and secrecy regarding the guerilla's

movement, as indispensable. Both of course depend on the support of the

population, which takes us back to the fundamentals discussed earlier and the

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[10] As quoted in *www.military.quotes.com*

prominence of organization in a successful insurgency. Among other basic tenets

extracted from *Basic Tactics* and *On Guerilla Warfare* (1937), Mao recognizes

the importance of political organization down to the guerilla unit level:

- Do not attack strong positions or fight hard battles.

- Organize the masses and fight with them.

- When the enemy advances we retreat; when the enemy retreats we pursue;
  the enemy halts, we harass.

- Importance of organization – to include political in guerilla units.

- Deal strongest possible blows to the enemy's morale and in creating disorder
  and agitation so he can neither advance nor retreat.

- Peculiar quality of operations lies entirely in taking the enemy by surprise.

- The sole habitual tactic of a guerilla unit is the ambush.

- Political and literacy training – to raise and strengthen the fighting capacity of
  members; to stimulate the soldier's national consciousness, their patriotism,
  and their love for the people and masses.

Although Mao emphasized discipline and loyalty of subordinates in the

execution of orders by superiors, he also recognized the importance of

increasing the "spirit of initiative," in order to adapt to rapidly changing situations.

Mao emphasizes initiative and de-centralization in the following passage from

Guerilla Warfare (1937, 52):

> *"In guerilla warfare, small units acting independently play the*
> *principal role, and there must no be excessive interference with*
> *their activities. In orthodox warfare [in principle] command is*
> *centralized. This is done because all units and supporting arms in*

all districts must coordinate to the highest degree. In the case of guerilla warfare, this is not only undesirable but impossible."

Mao defined the relationship of guerilla unit commanders and their subordinates in the same manner as that of the Communist Party and the masses: the former establish the objectives, and the latter carries them in a combination of obedience to orders and initiative (Mao [May] 1938). This decentralization of operations served Mao well; not only did it allow him to gain speed relative to his opponents, it was also well-suited to the vast distances and geography of the Chinese countryside that made command, control, and communications difficult. There are three elements that facilitate decentralization (Warfighting 1989). The first are mission-type tactics; that is, the assignment of a mission to a subordinate without specifying how the mission is to be accomplished. The higher commander describes the mission and explains its purpose; the subordinate commander determines the tactics needed to accomplish the task based on the mission and the higher commander's intent. As a result, each leader can act quickly as the situation changes without having to pass information and wait for orders. The second element I have already mentioned: commander's intent. As the situation changes, subordinate commanders who clearly understand the purpose, can take action in the absence of orders and thus exploit situations as long as it complies with the overall intent or vision of the commander for the operation. Finally, the experience factor cannot be underestimated in gaining speed through decentralization. Veteran units are normally familiar with different situations, or at least know generally

what to expect, and thus can think, move, and act faster than untried units. It is

clear from analyzing *Basic Tactics* and *Guerilla Warfare,* that Mao emphasized

decentralization and the speed it generates in relation to the enemy's decision-

making and action cycle. Acting faster is a great advantage in combat as the

enemy falls in a reactive mode and loses the initiative.

At this tactical level[11], Mao also took the opportunity to inject political work

and nationalism into his guerilla commanders, cadres[12], and fighters. On *Guerilla*

Warfare (1937, 89), Mao States:

> *"The political goal must be clearly and precisely indicated to*
> *inhabitants of guerilla zones and their national consciousness*
> *awakened."*

Mao also dedicates an entire chapter of *Basic Tactics* (1938) to political

work. In this chapter he explains that through political indoctrination, the goal is

to raise the fighting capacity of guerilla fighters to a higher level. He measures

the fighting capacity of a guerilla unit not so much by its conduct of military

operations, but by its ability to utilize political consciousness and political

influence to obtain the support of the masses and inducing them to accept the

insurgency leadership. The main content of political work is dedicated to

stimulating the fighter's national consciousness, patriotism, and love for the

people and the masses. All fighters must be of a single mind and endowed with

the resolve and will to save the nation together. To this end, orders of superiors

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[11] There are three levels of war: the *tactical* level of war refers to the art and science of winning engagements and battles; the *operationa*l level coordinates tactical results to attain strategic objectives; the *strategic* level focuses directly on national policy objectives (U.S. Marine Corps Warfighting Field   Manual 1).

[12] The fundamental role of the cadre is enforcement of political and ideological discipline, subversion of opponents, and co-optation of social power to support the insurgent strategy (Joint Publication 3-24).

must be carried out while maintaining strict military discipline. Mao also makes it a point that guerilla units must also carry out propaganda among the masses regarding the intent of the enemy. The chapter goes on to explain mechanisms for political work, such as small group discussions; methods such as topics, timing, and number of personnel; and types of political work during ordinary times, during battle, and after battle.

In summary, the main takeaways from Mao's *Basic Tactics* and *Guerilla Warfare* are that guerilla units avoid enemy strong positions and concentrate forces against weak ones. Next, operations should be decentralized to generate speed in decision-making and avoid the command and control limitations imposed by China's geography. And finally, that political work be integrated into guerilla units to build national consciousness and support of the masses. Success in these three areas would set the conditions for the implementation of Mao's Dual Strategy in the pursuit of revolutionary victory. In Cuba, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara developed the guerilla tactics that would succeed in a different environment and political situation.

Basic Guerilla Tactics – Che Guevara

"The revolution is not an apple that falls when it is ripe; you must make it drop[13]."
Ernesto "Che" Guevara

Historically, the *coup d'état* is the most frequently used form of violence in Latin America. Professional militaries in Latin America see themselves as defenders of the constitution and defenders against subversive movements and corrupt politicians. Under the *coup* scenario, the armed forces occupy

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[13] As quoted in *Che Guevara Speaks: Selected Speeches and Writings* (1967).

government buildings, deploy to key areas of the capital in a display of force,

secure the means of communication, and thus force the president and his

associates to seek asylum in a foreign embassy. A military *junta*[14] assumes

power and proclaims control of the government's administration until a civilian

government can be restored, typically through elections. However, such revolts

do not change the established social or economic structure; it simply changes

those in power and the composition of government workers by non-constitutional

means (Kling 1962). By the time Castro and his band invaded in 1956, he was

seeking power along with social change, the *coup d'état* option died with his

initial failed attempts prior to his 1952 arrest. Castro's pursuit of power by

unconventional means assumed the form of guerilla warfare. This resulted in two

major variations of the Latin American norm (Kling 1962):

1. A protracted campaign of guerilla warfare rather than a quick hit.

2. A complete change in the existing social and economic institutions.

     While Mao had learned through trial and error, Castro and the cadres of

leaders around him were familiar with the principles and requirements of guerilla

warfare. Before their invasion of Cuba in 1956, this group was instructed and

trained in the tactics of guerilla warfare in the mountains of Mexico by veterans of

guerilla warfare in the Spanish Civil War; one of them, Alberto Bayo, had been a

General in the Republican army (Guevara 1963). It is here that the foundation for

the *foco* theory of revolution was laid, by observation of guerilla movements in

Asia, and by constant practice. They learned that a small determined nucleus

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[14] A junta is essentially a committee of senior military officers.

could initiate guerilla warfare and that the growing band must be divided into

relatively small detachments (Kling 1962). The actions of these small groups

were to be controlled by the inner circle of revolutionaries. Guevara builds on

Mao's concepts of guerilla warfare. The essence of *foco* tactics are captured on

Guevara's *On Guerilla Warfare* (1961,6):

> *Guerilla warfare is a fight of the masses, with the guerilla band as*
> *the armed nucleus. One resorts to guerilla warfare when oppressed*
> *by superior numbers and arms. The guerilla must possess a highly*
> *developed knowledge of the terrain on which he operates avenues*
> *of access and escape, possibilities for rapid maneuver, popular*
> *support, and hiding places. All this favors rural areas. [Here] the*
> *guerilla can represent the great mass of poor farmers. [Hence], the*
> *guerilla is – above all else – an agrarian revolutionary.*

The *foco* is essentially a means to create a revolutionary situation. Once

the group obtains the support of peasants in the area, and thus ensure its

survival, then the *foco* can move on to its primary task of creating instability and

opposition to the government. Other *foco* functions include attacking the enemy,

protecting the peasants, and implementing agrarian reform – but survival of the

foco is paramount. According to Guevara (1961), the *foco* is composed of 25-35

men under the politico-military leadership of a commander. The individual

fighters must be first and foremost a social reformer of high moral standards and

self-control, who seeks to introduce social reform to the peasants through

personal example. To Guevara, popular support is indispensable. Once again,

this takes us back to the fundamentals discussed earlier and the importance of

organization in a successful insurgency. In fact, Guevara dedicates an entire

chapter, a section of a separate chapter, and an appendix to organization. In

these sections, he explains the optimum organization of the guerilla bands for combat, the supporting logistics, as well as the organization for the entire movement, to include civil administration, propaganda, and the role of women. The following include some of Guevara's basic tenets of guerilla warfare and organization:

- The guerilla relies on mobility to flee from action when necessary, to shift his front, to evade encirclement, and even to envelop the enemy.

- Nothing helps the combat forces more than accurate intelligence.

- The guerilla numerical inferiority makes the element of surprise extremely important in facilitating disproportionate loses upon the enemy.

- Sabotage is an important revolutionary means, but it should be differentiated from terrorism.

- Indiscriminate terrorism against ordinary people is inefficient and can provoke retaliation.

- Shock, not sustained attack is the key to fighting in the open country.

- Guerilla organization is not fixed, rather is task-organized to specific needs.

- A good number for a guerilla band in the countryside is 10-15 men; this number provides good mutual support, adequate firepower when massed, can rapidly scatter, not easily detected, and maximizes mobility.

- For a major attack, guerillas can be massed in greater numbers, but immediately thereafter, must withdraw back into small groups.

Like Mao, Guevara emphasizes loyalty and discipline in the execution of orders, but decision-making is centralized in the leadership of the guerilla *foco* –

the center of the revolution (Moreno 1970). Centralization worked in Cuba because the individual members and subordinate leaders of Castro's forces did not posses the experience and military knowledge to carry-out mission-type tactics. Castro's resources were limited and centralization minimized risk as operations were methodically planned against limited objectives that ensured success; and the scope of Castro's operations were limited mostly to the *Oriente* Province. The fight in the cities was left to other segments of the opposition to Batista. Unification with these elements would come later through the mobilization of resources.

At this tactical level, Guevara introduces the individual guerilla as the mechanism for political change; a crusader for the people's freedom, who after exhausting peaceful means, resorts to armed rebellion; he aims directly at destroying the existing social order and replacing it with something new. Since the economic and political conditions in the Americas favor initiating the fight in rural areas, the guerilla makes "agrarian reform" his banner for revolution. Thus, to obtain the status of true crusader, the guerilla must adhere to a strong moral conduct and strict self-control. At first, he will not stress social reform, acting more as an advisor to the peasants in matters of the technology, economics, and culture. He does not steal and bothers the rich as little as possible. These are basic principles of the "Dual Strategy" that I will explain in detail in latter chapters. As I have discussed previously, revolutions cannot succeed without appealing to all classes. By preaching agrarian reform to obtain the support of their base, yet

downgrading its importance to other classes, the guerillas seek broad popular support.

Whether by design, inspiration from Mao, or simply by default in the application of guerilla tactics, Guevara lays the foundation for the Dual Strategy, as one studies *On Guerilla Warfare* (1961). Guevara explains that the individual guerilla should be recruited from the area in which he will fight in order to develop contacts, make use of his local terrain knowledge, and provide him with a sense of fighting for his own area. Men so dedicated must have an ideal – one that is simple yet worth dying for. For peasants, the right to own land and fair social treatment; for industrial workers, a decent job and wages combined with social justice; and for students and professional workers, the ideal is more abstract, such as freedom. As I will discuss later, the underlying framework that fuses the different ideals is nationalism

In summary, apart from the essence of the *foco* theory introduced in Chapter 2, the main takeaways from Che's *On Guerilla Warfare* are that his basic tactics of mobility, surprise, and concentration of forces only when necessary, are right out of Mao's concept for guerillas. Guevara sanctions sabotage, but in a controlled manner that does not appear as terrorism. But Guevara also provides tactical guidance that supports the Dual Strategy, by focusing on agrarian reform, but not dictating to the peasants; and by not alienating other classes, even though Guevara's contempt for the upper classes is evident. Above all, it is the individual guerilla that sets the example for social reform and armed rebellion; the people then carry it forward as it snowballs into a nationwide rebellion.

Conclusion

Guerilla warfare is a form of violence that is governed by the laws of warfare (Wickham-Crowley 1991); in other words, unlike terrorism there is nothing illegal about it, as long as it complies with the accepted norms of armed conflict. Both Mao and Guevara/Castro applied the fundamentals of guerilla warfare, but shaped them to fit their particular situations, while being cautious to maintain the legitimacy of the insurgency in the eyes of the population and the rest of the world. This is essential for domestic popular support and possible international aid. Both revolutionaries recognized that a sanctuary is an essential element of guerilla warfare. Mao operated in the vast territory of the Chinese countryside to maneuver and attack the enemy at his weakest points. He evaded extermination by disappearing into the populace. Mao developed incredible skill in changing the profile and character of his forces – from guerilla bands, to organized army units, back to guerilla bands, and to civilians. Castro never developed such a changing character; his band of guerillas relied more on fixed bases from where to launch attacks, then would simply disappear into the remote, heavily vegetated, and inaccessible mountains of the *Sierra Maestra*. As for war material, neither Mao nor Castro received any substantial aid from outside sources. Instead, they mostly supplied themselves by capturing war materiel from their enemy – a basic tenet of guerilla warfare. Mao did not consider urban sabotage an important element of the insurgency, but Fidel Castro and Guevara saw it as complementary, often coordinated from their own headquarters in the mountains (Peterson 1970).

Both doctrines of guerilla tactics relied on the example set by the individual fighters; but Mao took it a step further by placing a much larger degree of faith in his guerillas. And here lies the greatest difference between Mao and Che: command and control; centralization versus decentralization. Che and Castro insisted in running the show; they distrusted the abilities of those around them except for the inner circle (Moreno 1970). This was partly due to the geography and the specific conditions of Cuba, but also ideology. Although Che was a rather unorthodox Leninist, he still believed in elite and tightly controlled organization (Friedman 1970). Mao, on the other hand, relied on decentralization and the local initiative of his cadres and the people. Mao focused on attracting maximum support from all classes - to include the capitalist bourgeoisie; Guevara, on the other hand, stressed socialism instead of alliance with nationalistic capitalists. However, Che – at the direction of Fidel Castro - was careful not to take his antagonism too far with the upper classes; otherwise he risked isolating the guerillas from a potential source of financial and manpower support, as well as running the risk of that segment of society aligning itself with reactionary military nationalists (Friedman 1970). As it was, elements of the middle and upper classes never fully trusted Castro and his followers. But as I will discuss later, in the end, Castro was able to mobilize enough resources to partially offset the antagonism of these elements.

Leadership was defined and exercised differently by Mao and Castro. Both stressed leadership by example, but Mao's teachings and actions appear more genuine and pragmatic than Castro's. Mao could accept – as he did – his

rival Chiang Kai-shek as national leader in the fight against Japan, but at the same time work to displace him. As such, he appears to be truly fighting for the interest of the people instead of himself (Friedman 1970). On the other hand, Castro and Che could never accept subordination to anybody or any group. Castro has eliminated potential opponents for 50 years. Guevara's insistence on subordination of Bolivian guerillas contributed to failure (Johnson 2006; Moreno 1970). These two different approaches to leadership reflected on the execution of the Dual Strategy that I will discuss in the following chapters. Castro was direct and thus more transparent in dealing with the inconsistencies of such strategy; Mao, while pragmatic in order to appeal to different groups without utilizing violence, had to design a number of mechanisms to deal with such inconsistencies.

The principal takeaway from this chapter is that in China and Cuba, the form of warfare resorted to by the insurgents was guerilla warfare; but in both cases, guerilla warfare went beyond simply military tactics techniques, and procedures. It was the catalyst for mobilizing the peasant masses, for political indoctrination, and the main ingredient in a grand strategy to mobilize the resources required for revolutionary victory (Mao 1937, 1938; Guevara 1961, 1963). Guerilla warfare was the mechanism for political work from the bottom-up, which combined with top-down strategic organization, would result in the buildup of nationalism – the objective of the grand strategy. Guerillas must appear as nationalists, otherwise they will not win the mass support, the elites, and the patriotic youth needed to educate, organize, lead and die for the revolution

(Friedman 1970). Mao would have never come to power if he had not been able to mobilize the Chinese peasantry by exploiting their nationalist sentiments. Nationalism was the decisive factor in China. In Cuba, and the rest of Latin America for that matter, nationalism is a strong issue. The nationalist banner can be up for grabs and not necessarily fall in the hands of the guerillas. In fact, Latin American history is full of examples of militaries – acting for the *bourgeois* – taking the nationalist mantle and expropriating the properties of outside powers. Castro realized full well the requirement to design a strategy that would promote and harness nationalism in favor of the guerillas, or possibly risk losing the nationalism banner to other groups in search of resources and power. In the next two chapters, I will discuss how Chinese and Cuban revolutionary leaders incorporated a number of mechanisms - within a revolutionary setting - to develop a cohesive strategy focused on nationalism…What I refer to as a Dual Strategy.

Chapter Four

China Revisited

Introduction

The Chinese revolution is the best known peasant revolution. This is

because peasants comprised the preponderance of the masses behind Mao Tse-

tung's rise to power. Although Chinese peasants rebelled in response to poverty,

traditional exploitation by the upper classes, and did succeed in changing the

social structure of the country, reality is significantly more complex than rebellion

in response to social conditions. As previously discussed, these conditions alone

are not enough to provide a revolutionary situation, nor can peasants alone

succeed in a revolution. The inter-relation of a number of social, economic, and

political factors that converge at a particular point in time can set the conditions

for revolutionary uprising and subsequent social change. Mao's focus in his

struggle for power was the control of resources. He successfully mobilized and

controlled resources such as peasant masses, land, information, and cross-

cutting popular support to effectively neutralize and eventually defeat the superior

military of the Kuomintang (KMT) Nationalists. Mao went as far as forging an

alliance with the KMT against the Japanese occupation, under the leadership of

the KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek, in order to not only rebuild his forces – but also

appeal to elites, intellectuals, and students, while continuing to harness resources for the eventual showdown with the KMT. Mao effectively utilized a number of mechanisms, such as ideology, leadership, organization, and violence to build his nationalistic appeal as he sought broad popular support across all classes.

During the period from 1935 to 1949, the Chinese Communists, led by Mao Tse-tung, successfully employed these mechanisms to mobilize the resources required to initially challenge the Japanese occupiers, and then the nominal rule of the Kuomintang (KMT) Party to set the conditions for eventual victory in 1949. Most important was Mao's ability to turn the peasants into the decisive force for success. The communist party had previously failed to achieve mobilization objectives by focusing instead on the Bolshevik model of urban proletariat uprising and thus excluding either the *bourgeois* or peasant support (Green 1999). It took Mao's leadership and vision to survive strategic failure and almost complete extermination, by designing a new approach for popular support that would offset the resource mobilization advantages (particularly military) of its rivals – essentially a rural strategy based on the peasantry (Mao 1927). Thus, this chapter seeks to answer the question: What was Mao Tse-tung's strategy for mobilizing peasants in support of the revolutionary struggle? I will discuss the blending of the mobilization mechanisms into a cohesive strategy that appealed not only to the main effort of such strategy – the peasants – but also other classes in pursuit of the broadest possible alliance.

However, as Barrington Moore (1966) explains, even if a revolutionary situation exists and the proper strategy is implemented to mobilize resources, it does not necessarily mean that such circumstances will automatically result in a revolution; a decisive catalyst or ingredient normally ignites these conditions into a revolution. In the case of China, the situation was ripe for a peasant's revolt: The traditional structure of China's peasant society could not adjust to the stresses associated with global market forces, industrialization, and modernization; there was simply a lack of incentive for landowners and gentry to modernize and perhaps lose their prominent status. The KMT, in power since 1911 - and reminiscent of the Manchu Dynasty and warlords before them – did not undertake any serious land reform, stopped short of altering the elites' control of local life, and instead sought to maintain the *status quo*. Additionally, through the 19th and early 20th century, the agrarian bureaucracy had not only inhibited reform, but weakened the link that bound the peasants to the upper classes, by essentially not performing any functions that the peasants regarded as essential to their way of life; hence the link between rulers and ruled was weak and largely artificial, and thus liable to break under strain (Moore 1966; Skocpol 1979). Additionally, landlords had a historical interest in peasant overpopulation. An excess of peasants bid up the rents for the landlord as they competed to work the land. The result was the survival of a peasant mass that eventually became the main force behind the revolution (Moore 1966). Finally, by 1934, the Communists had designed the proper strategy for mobilization by abandoning the Bolshevik model. Moore argues that the decisive ingredient for communist

revolutionary victory was the Japanese conquest and the occupation policies of a foreign foe. The next logical question is why did the KMT fail and the communists succeed in their responses to the Japanese? As important as the Japanese contribution was, I would argue that in fact it was guerilla warfare – as conducted by the communists – that served as the catalyst for eventual revolutionary victory.

In this chapter, I will discuss Mao's strategy for mobilizing popular support resources, focusing on the peasantry; then transition into the key role of guerilla warfare in implementing and integrating the overall communist strategy to capitalize on the conditions that existed for revolution, and thus set the conditions for eventual success in 1949. The chapter focuses on the period of 1935 to 1945, which coincides with Mao's leadership of the Communist Party, the Japanese occupation, and the implementation of the communist strategy for popular support and guerilla warfare. Nonetheless, I will also discuss the Communists' strategy for the continuation of the Civil War, following the defeat of the Japanese in World War II, through their eventual victory. However, it is important to set the stage by discussing the factors and history that led to Mao's change of strategy.

Background

The young intellectuals that founded the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921 believed that their main task was to organize the Chinese *proletariat* for a socialist revolution that would be part of the international transformation that Marx had envisioned, and which the Russian revolution seemed to herald. Within a few years, the CCP had indeed built a national labor base representing a half-

million workers (Meisner 1986). Heavily influenced by the Soviet Union and the Moscow-based Communist International dual policy of supporting both the KMT and CCP, but also because of political conditions in China, in 1924 the CCP was pressured to ally itself with the KMT in order to achieve the twin goals of national unification and national independence; that is, the elimination of warlord separatism and foreign imperialism. The CCP was the junior partner of the alliance since the KMT did control a territorial base of operations in southern China. As a result, Soviet arms, money, and military and political advisers – for the purpose of building a modern army –were directed to the KMT. To the CCP, Moscow offered moral encouragement and political advice. A "United Front" was formed (Meisner 1986).

By 1926, the new National Revolutionary Army under the command of new KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek, began a successful campaign against the warlords that controlled most of northern China, and achieved at least nominal control over most of China (Lazzerini 1999). Concurrently, mass movements were organized in both the cities and the countryside. However, the combined success of the military and mass movement campaigns exposed the tensions within the alliance. The popular social revolution agenda promoted by the CCP was simply incompatible with the terms of the KMT-CCP alliance, as it threatened classes and groups that formed the social basis of the Kuomintang and the *bourgeoisie* revolution advocated by Moscow. Once Chiang had acquired enough military power and the financial support of the upper classes, he turned to a campaign of destruction against the CCP and the mass movements.

The political strength of the CCP was virtually extinguished in the purge of 1927-

1928. CCP cadres, trade unions, and student organizations were annihilated in

the cities, but the suppression of peasant associations was particularly brutal

(Meissner 1986; Skocpol 1979). The communists learned some important

lessons out of this defeat (Shum 1988):

- Military power was decisive in determining the outcome of political class

  struggles

- Urban proletariat focus of revolutionary movement did not apply to China

- Support of peasantry had been insufficient

- The social revolution was not appealing to all classes

Those who survived, led by Mao Tse-tung, fled to remote areas of the

countryside to design a new strategy and attempt a new revolution. Mao had

identified the peasants as the force for success in his *Hunan Report* (1927) and

thus built a tiny military base by recruiting peasants and uniting with local bandits.

Eventually, he achieved military predominance in the southern Kiangsi province

and established the Chinese Soviet Republic in 1931. The communists

established a functioning and sizable civilian government that controlled a

territory of about 15,000 square miles and 3 million people (Meisner 1986). The

KMT did not ignore this growing threat. Following four unsuccessful campaigns

against the Communists, the KMT employed new tactics in the fifth and forced

Mao and his followers into the famous "Long March" to another remote region of

China; this time in the sparsely populated northwest region of the Shensi

Province. The 1934 defeat had also resulted in important lessons learned about

the preconditions for the political and social mobilization of rural resources

(Meisner 1986; Skocpol 1979; Shum 1988):

- The predominance of the Red Army[15] and the security it guaranteed

- Radical land policies which threatened middle peasants were

  counterproductive

- Meaningful and lasting land reform could not be imposed from above

Additionally, the communists acquired valuable experience in running a

government; experimented with land re-distribution; and the principles of guerilla

warfare were developed and tested. Once again, the communists would regroup

and design the final strategy for the mobilization of the masses. However, an

important new variable was introduced shortly thereafter – the Japanese invasion

of 1937. By this time Mao had achieved effective control of the CCP and it would

be his revolutionary theory and vision for ultimate success that would guide the

new strategy against the Japanese and the KMT.

Development of Dual Strategy

Strategy is defined as a plan of action that organizes efforts to achieve

objectives. As discussed previously, and based on Tilly's (1973, 1978) theory,

control of resources is the overall objective. The focus of the communist guerillas

was popular support, particularly of the peasantry, and thus the objective was

mobilization of the masses. To achieve the objective, separate efforts

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[15] Although "Red Army" and "People's Liberation Army (PLA)" are terms used interchangeably when referring to Mao's military forces, I utilize Red Army throughout this document because that is what Mao's band of guerillas, peasants, and bandits - as the military arm of the CCP - were called following the 1927 purge. The PLA originated when elements of the KMT rebelled following the breakup of the first "United Front" in 1927, but then went on to join Mao's Red Army. In the civil war following Japan's defeat in WW II, the Red Army was formally renamed the People' Liberation Army (britannica.com; globalsecurity.com).

(organization, ideology, violence, etc.) were integrated into a coherent plan of action that established the direction of the revolution. The CCP would de-emphasize class struggle and instead encourage national unity and moderate reform, while at the same time continue the indoctrination, protection, and organization of peasants in the countryside without pressure from the KMT (Skocpol 1979; Shum 1988). In essence, Mao saw the Japanese invasion as an opportunity to improve the CCP's position in its continuing struggle with the KMT.

Thus, during the resistance to Japan, the CCP pursued a dual strategy – external and internal. The external strategy focused on securing the sympathy and support of the majority of the upper classes and to isolate the KMT domestically and internationally. By stressing a liberal patriotic image, defending elite (human, property, political) rights, and calling for unity and moderate reforms, the Communists hoped to build cross-cutting alliances and broaden their appeal (Chen 1986). Additionally, they hoped to recruit elites into the administration for indoctrination and organization of the masses (Shum 1988). The principal mechanism for implementing the external strategy was a second "United Front" with the KMT against the Japanese invaders. Faced with Japan's increasing assertiveness, the CCP and the KMT concluded that a second united front, in August 1937, was necessary. The terms were kept vague in order to increase appeal and reduce alienation (Chen 1986). Although Chiang Kai-shek's hand was forced by his own generals to join the united front, the alliance was mostly in name only and cooperation was minimal. In view of the failure of the first united front of 1927, neither Chiang nor Mao had any illusions about the

long-term success of this second effort. Nonetheless, for a short time most of the nation rallied behind Chiang in defense of the nation (Lazzerini 1999). The Communists were cautious, tentative, and patient; they hardly engaged the Japanese in major battles, but instead utilized and refined their guerilla tactics, while the KMT expended significant resources in fighting the Japanese, as well as attempting to contain Communist growth. Although Mao's guerilla tactics emphasized "the flexible dispersal or concentration of forces according to circumstances" (Mao, May 1938, 123), he instructed the CCP leaders to carry out "dispersed guerilla warfare" against the Japanese invaders and not "concentrate our forces for a campaign" (Kennedy 2008[16]), in order to avoid depletion of resources. The Communists rebuilt while holding on to their countryside enclaves as the KMT was forced to retreat from their city strongholds. The end result was that the Communists gained the control of resources and thus increased their power, specifically (Skocpol 1979; Shum 1988):

- Transformation into a national party fighting for national defense and unity

- Provided CCP with a legitimate banner to organize peasants for resistance

- Neutralized the former opposition of landlord elites

- Acquired the service of progressive elites to contribute resources and skills

- Fostered nationalism by subordinating class warfare to national interest

- Adopted mutually beneficial policies for both the elites and masses

- KMT support was reduced to a minority of the upper class

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[16] Kennedy references this quote to *Guanyu hongjun zuozhan de yuanze* ("On the Operational Principles of the Red Army"), 1 August 1937, in *Mao Zedong's Collected Writings*, Vol 2, p.20

As a result, the Communist based areas became the most democratic, popular, and economically viable in China; and the legitimacy of the KMT, in spite of its nominal leadership in the resistance war, was undermined domestically and internationally (Shum 1988). Nonetheless, both Mao and Chiang knew that an eventual showdown between the KMT and CCP for control of China was inevitable. Mao had long ago realized that the peasants were the greatest source of strength for the CCP to achieve a decision against the KMT (Mao 1927). The internal strategy – that stressed class struggle to mobilize the entire peasantry – became his main effort.

Dual Strategy

> *"[Peasants represent] a force so swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to suppress it[17]."* Mao Tse-tung

The challenge for communist leader Mao Tse-tung was to mobilize this great force of peasants to offset the anticipated military strengths of the KMT Nationalists – a difficult task indeed. Peasants are not easily mobilized since their goals are normally local and they lack access to resources. In addition, Chinese peasants were not accustomed to cooperating with each other beyond the limits of the family or clan, making the acceptance of solidarity and a new kind of society extremely difficult (Moore 1966). Although a degree of the "tactical freedom" and associated "leverage" described by Wolf (1969) and explained in Chapter 2, existed in the middle peasantry, they were constrained by the existing power structure (Wolf 1969). Further, even poor peasants could not just be forcibly drafted into the Red Army or forced to provide supplies and guerilla

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[17] *The Hunan Report*, Mao (1927, 54)

bases; they had to be persuaded. Peasants would not willingly and reliably provide such support unless the Communists seemed to be fighting in their interests. Mao had built an important base in the Communist held areas of the Shensi province; it was time to consolidate gains and expand in the countryside.

Rectification Campaign

Following some political and military reversals in 1941, the CCP chose to consolidate their gains in the base areas of the countryside by launching a series of mass campaigns aimed at solidifying the ties between the Party and the masses and achieving a high level of mass mobilization. Among these programs were the Rent and Interest Reduction Campaign (1942), the "To the Village" Movement (1941-2), the Campaign for Strengthening the Militia (1941-4), and the Production Movement (1943) (Lazzerini 1999; Shum 1988). I will not describe these and other campaigns in this chapter; the point is that these campaigns sought to mobilize the Communists principal resource – the peasant masses – within the spirit of the Dual Strategy, so as not to alienate the support of other classes. For example, the Rent and Interest Reduction Campaign was based on compromise between classes in the interest of a united resistance: the landlord's reduction in rent was tolerable so long as they could retain their property and collect rent. Thus the CCP gave equal emphasis to the necessity of improving the living conditions of the peasants and workers and protecting the economic and political interests of the landlords and capitalists. The policy of class reconciliation was preserved. Nonetheless, policy is just that, policy; the success of the campaigns depended on the effectiveness of mobilization. To encourage

and increase popular involvement, the party developed an operational technique

known as "mass line," a set of principles and rules by which Communist cadres

became intimately involved and identified with the peasant masses (Lazzerini

1999; Meisner 1986).

Mass-Line Politics

Mass-Line techniques were formulated and implemented during the period

of resistance against Japan (Schram 1967), as the basic leadership tool that the

CCP cadres employed to mobilize the masses. The central concept of mass line

dictates the establishment of a direct relationship between the general population

and CCP cadres, by means of a conscious and continuous operational process

that maximizes contact through democratic participation, group discussion, and

criticism (Skocpol 1979). The philosophy of mass-line is exemplified by the

following quote from Mao (1942, 219):

> *Revolutionary statesmen, the political specialists who know the science or art of revolutionary politics, are simply the leaders of millions upon millions of statesmen – the masses. Their task is to collect the opinions of these mass statesmen, sift and refine them, and return them to the masses, who then take them and put them into practice.*

The goal was for cadres to form new mass line or "comradely"

relationships with the masses, while preserving the national direction of the CCP

(Wilson 1963). The technique comprised a three-stage process (Lazzerini 1999):

1. Cadres would go directly to the people to determine what kind of program

   appealed to them

2. Popular desires were then integrated with party ideology and goals

3. Convince the masses that to support the particular program(s) was in their

   best interest

   Mass-line reflected Mao's conviction that party policy and its operational

aspect must originate with the masses and be based on popular support. The

key to success of the mass line was in the cadres themselves, and the ability to

arouse the people into believing in the program and to act upon it with genuine

commitment. The technique's application was essential in implementing the Rent

and Interest Reduction campaign discussed previously (Lazzerini 1999).

   The rectification campaigns and use of mass-line techniques achieved major

results by the end of the Japanese occupation in 1945. Communist propaganda

reached millions of people, party membership rose to 1.2 million (compared with

40,000 in 1937), and the Red Army numbered about 1 million men (Lazzerini

1999). What had been a movement on the verge of extinction twice before (1927

and 1934), was now capable of challenging the KMT for the leadership of China.

It not only had successfully mobilized the personnel, organizational material, and

military resources to succeed, but had the support of millions believing in the

Communist ideals.

   However, the success of mass-line politics did not mean that the United

Front policy was brushed aside or submerged in the interests of promoting class

struggle. Rather at times, mass-line politics were actually subordinated to the

politics of class collaboration: the Party would refrain from fully satisfying the

peasants' demands in order not to antagonize the majority of the elites (Shum

1988). This of course carried certain risks; even if the internal and external

strategies were parallel, overlaps do occur resulting in contradictions. In Mao's

case, the call for unity with landlords against the Japanese contradicted the Party

struggle for redistribution of wealth and a much more radical redistribution of rural

power (Chen 1986). Earlier, I explained how compromise between the classes

was emphasized in the Rectification Campaign, but that was after the peasants

had been already mobilized by mass-line. The cadres had the difficult task of

dealing with the occasional contradictions of the dual strategy. The solution was

to orchestrate its contradictory elements through the manipulation of time, space,

and participants (Chen 1986). In other words, one strategy (internal or external)

would be subordinated to the other during periods when it was strategically

feasible (time); or depending on the local circumstances of a particular area as

opposed to another (space); or the specific audience (participants). Of course,

the strategic direction in the orchestration of contradictions originated with the

party. Leadership and ideology were the central elements in the fusion of

operational techniques (rectification campaign, mass-line) with strategic objective

of the dual strategy (mobilization of resources) and thus deserve a short

discussion.

Leadership

The leadership capabilities, charismatic attraction, and credibility of Mao

Tse-tung cannot be underestimated in mobilizing resources and obtaining

popular support. By the end of the Long March, he had achieved almost cult

status – some of it, of course, self-promoted. The brilliance of Mao cut across the

entire spectrum of conflict: political and military. His design of the dual strategy,

development of Chinese Communism, and of course his concept of guerilla

warfare were all validated with the eventual victory of the Communists. The

importance of Mao's leadership surfaces when compared to Chiang Kai-shek.

Following the Japanese invasion, Chiang held all the cards: he was head of the

established government, controlled the National Liberation Army, and the country

(CCP included) had united behind him. But Chiang was a military leader not a

political leader; his failure to build cross-cutting alliances and a political strategy

eventually cost him broader appeal to the masses.

Mao's genius was in adapting the long-range objectives of the communist

revolution to the social demands of the peasants while building and sustaining

cross-cutting class alliances (Greene 1999). In the absence of survey data, it is

impossible to specify exactly how many people joined the CCP's cause because

of Mao's leadership, as opposed to other factors, but many observers of the

Chinese Revolution have indicated that the force of Mao's personality was

important (O'Neill 1990).

Ideology

The principal functions of revolutionary ideology are to facilitate the

development of cross-cutting alliances between classes as well as revolutionary

mobilization; additionally, it serves to legitimatize the revolutionary movement

(Greene 1999). Thus, following the CCP defeat of 1927, Mao had a pressing

need to find theories that were useful to the survival and growth of the political

and military movement that he was leading (Wylie 1980). Guerilla warfare would

be the initial military theory; his political theory was exemplified by his concept of

"New Democracy." A full explanation of Mao's ideology is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, a brief explanation is necessary to understand how ideology ties in with mobilization of the masses. Essentially, Mao's "New Democracy" was the application of Marxism to the specific conditions and needs of China – or what the CCP referred to as the "*Sinification of Marxism*." The intent was to broaden the ideological appeal by merging the patriotic sentiment of nationalism with the reforming passion of Marxism (Wylie 1980).

Mao expressed the belief that the Chinese revolution would consist of two stages: first the stage of the New Democracy – a *bourgeois* democratic revolution suited to the particular needs of China; then the stage of socialism (Mao 1940). However, the New Democracy stage does not result in a dictatorship of the *bourgeoisie* or the *proletariat*, but in a dictatorship of the united front of all the revolutionary classes – workers, peasants, intelligentsia, and national bourgeois (Mao 1940; Mark 1951; Meisner 1986). Mao stated that while the eventual goal was socialism, the New Democracy stage could last a long time and that the transition would occur when the necessary conditions were "ripe" (Mao 1940). Economically, Mao's New Democracy called for state ownership of big banks, big industries, and big commercial establishments. But all other enterprises would be permitted to remain in private hands. The ownership of land was to be readjusted, not for the purpose of building a socialist agriculture, but to turn the land into peasant property (Mao 1940; Mark 1951).

The brilliance of the New Democracy is threefold. First, it appealed to all classes with a blend of nationalism and pragmatism. The upper classes are

reassured because socialism was not defined as the immediate objective but only as a long term goal. The lower classes are satisfied that their land reform agenda will eventually be met. Second, the vagueness in parts of the ideology (i.e. transition when conditions are "ripe") allowed flexibility and political space. Finally, it achieved the purpose of facilitating cross-cutting alliances and mobilizing the masses. Nevertheless, the best strategy, ideology, and leadership would not necessarily result in victory over the superior KMT. The Communists needed a mechanism to integrate all these elements and demonstrate to the people not only progress, but their commitment in the struggle against the Japanese and eventually the KMT... Guerilla warfare would provide such a mechanism.

Guerilla Warfare

"Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun[18]." Mao Tse-tung

This famous Mao quote has been interpreted in a number of different ways. I agree with the version that in political and social class struggles military power often proves to be the decisive force. To succeed, revolutionaries normally either win over the allegiance of the armed forces, or otherwise neutralize it. Mao chose to build his own peasant army in order to offset the advantage provided by the established army of Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT. Following the defeat of 1927, Mao started developing the tactics of guerilla warfare from base areas in the countryside (Skocpol, Lazzerini 1999). The design was by necessity because guerilla warfare is a technique of the weak, and Mao understood that at the time

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[18] As quoted in Mao (November 1938, 146)

it was his best chance to stay relevant and prevent extermination by the KMT. To Mao, the role of guerilla warfare went beyond the obvious: it would also serve as a mechanism for obtaining popular support; for getting close to the peasants and sharing their hardships; for indoctrination of peasants; and for obtaining small victories against the KMT and Japanese in order to motivate the masses. Finally, it would provide a springboard for the development of conventional armies that would eventually confront the KMT for the right to rule China.

To achieve these objectives, Mao insisted on political control over military operations combined with a strong program of ideological indoctrination both for party members and for the troops, with the party maintaining at all times its leadership over the army (Greene 1999; Wylie 1980). Such control somewhat contradicts his own essence of guerilla warfare of decentralized small units that conduct highly mobile hit-and-run attacks against weak targets. The risk is, that theoretically, nothing prevents guerilla-type military forces from developing into scattered, disunited bands of armed thugs that abuse the populace. Mao resolved this dilemma by establishing control of the Red Army Guerillas; placing well-trained and indoctrinated political commissars, committees, and cadres throughout the ranks to educate all military members and ensure compliance with Party goals – thus combining decentralized guerilla tactics with political-ideological unification through party control (Skocpol 1979).

Further, the Chinese Red Army was trained to "unite" with the civilian peasantry (Skocpol 1979). Essentially, this meant treating peasants' lives, property, and customs with respect. In fact, Mao recognized the importance of

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bonding with the peasants by demanding adherence to a code of conduct to deal with the people. In what he referred to as "Eight Points of Attention," he warned his military forces to (Mao 1966, 134; O'Neill 1990):

- Speak politely

- Pay fairly for what you buy

- Return everything that you borrow

- Pay for anything you damage

- Do not hit or swear at people

- Do not damage crops

- Do not take liberties with women

- Do not ill-treat captives

Unification of the CCP guerilla units with the people also meant becoming involved in their lives by assisting peasants in production activities, sharing peasants' living conditions, and by promoting political education, Party activities, and militia organization in the villages with which they came in contact with. In sum, the Red Army had to undertake economic, political, as well as combat activities (Skocpol 1979).

In pursuing a guerilla campaign, the Red Army was instrumental in the implementation of Mao's dual strategy. As the Communists expanded their influence into areas owned by the landlords, the policies of the Rectification Campaign, such as tax or rent reduction, provision of local social services, and protection depended – as previously discussed – on mass-line techniques, which in turn required cadre direct access to the communities under the security of at

least a minimal military-administrative shield (Sckocpol 1979). Politically, the Communists applied the "three thirds" system, under which local government in the guerilla areas was composed of one-third Communists, one-third from other organizations, and one-third non-party people. The result was not democracy in the sense of majority rule, which would have been difficult under the circumstances, but it was honest government which earned the respect of a large part of the population (Schram 1967) and reinforced the New Democracy doctrine.

Thus, it is clear that Red Army guerillas played a decisive role in the emergence of the CCP as the manifestation of the country's resistance to Japan and with the control of significant resources to challenge the KMT for the right to rule China. That is why I argue that the catalyst for revolution was guerilla warfare under the leadership of Mao and not as Moore (1966) has suggested that it was the Japanese invasion. If Barrington Moore were correct, the KMT should have benefited most from the invasion and thus emerged victorious. The war of resistance was conducted under the leadership of the KMT government, which in spite of severe military setbacks, did achieve some early victories, never succumbed to Japan, and thus could claim military leadership against the invaders. But the KMT employed the wrong political strategy by not mobilizing the masses in its support or building cross-cutting alliances, as well as the wrong military strategy by attempting to defend cities against the superior Japanese. On the other hand, the CCP's military strategy of guerilla warfare re-enforced all political policies to build peasant support, cross-cutting alliances, and mass

indoctrination, while at the same time achieving small victories and successfully

securing Communist held areas in the countryside. As a result, the CCP

assumed political leadership of the resistance along with some military success,

while the KMT assumed military leadership with limited success and no political

leadership.

In support of Moore, the argument could be made that the invasion was an

event while guerilla warfare is a technique and that without the invasion it is likely

that Mao would have eventually failed. But what actually united the population in

a wave of nationalism were the brutal occupation techniques of the Japanese

that terrorized the population and prevented even the support of some of the

upper class that might have been sympathetic to the Japanese. Thus, I see it as

an argument of techniques where guerilla warfare proved to be superior.

Nonetheless, the invasion was a major variable, and in the final analysis, very

difficult to separate its impact from that of guerilla warfare. What is clear is that

the Communists had built a significant base of support prior to the intensified

attacks of the Japanese in 1940. The CCP had mobilized enough resources to

challenge the KMT; nobody can predict what could have happened without the

invasion.

Guerilla warfare was only a stage in Mao's version of protracted popular-

war military strategy. To defeat the KMT, a transition into conventional warfare

(the direct confrontation of large units in combat) would be required. Only this

kind of warfare would finally settle the issue of supreme power in the struggle

between the Communists and the Nationalists. The civil war of 1945-1949 would resolve the issue in favor of the Communists.

Civil War and Revolutionary Victory

Through the Dual Strategy, the CCP enjoyed spectacular growth and expansion of its power during the war of resistance against Japan (1937-45). The shift in emphasis from agrarian revolution and class warfare to national resistance paid dividends, as it enabled the Communists to identify themselves with the spontaneous outburst of peasant nationalism in response to Japanese aggression and atrocities, and thus won them the popular support they required to go against the KMT (Shum 1988). The communists were successful in fostering an image of conducting guerilla warfare in defense of the people. Although they did not hold any major cities after World War II, they enjoyed strong grass roots support, superior organization and morale, and large stocks of weapons seized from the Japanese. On the other hand, the war left the Nationalists severely weakened and their policies left them unpopular. Although Chiang was personally incorruptible, his government was corrupt and mismanaged the economy into hyperinflation.

The Japanese surrender set the stage for the continuation of civil war in China. In 1945, Mao and Chiang met for a series of talks regarding the formation of a post-war government. Both agreed on the importance of democracy, a unified military, and equality for all Chinese political parties. But the truce was tenuous; decades of animosity and mistrust could not be overcome and efforts to form a coalition government failed. By 1946, the two sides were fighting an all-out

civil war. Nevertheless, Mao did not want war in early 1946; rather than seeking Chiang's overthrow, he merely sought to fend off the Nationalists offensive which would allow the CCP to negotiate peace in more favorable terms. Thus, Mao's goal throughout the first few months of the war remained a negotiated peace (Kennedy 2008). Both sides set in motion strategies to expand their territorial control. Chiang enjoyed the support of the U.S. and used it to move his forces to principal cities around China. Communist strategy called for building on their strength by surrounding and taking over cities of North China.

Chiang attempted to eliminate the CCP in the North by using troops belonging to northern warlords, who had sided with Chiang during the previous phase of the civil war and then switched to join the Japanese during the invasion. This strategy of course backfired, as the peasants associated the warlords with the hated Japanese invaders, and thus further eroded any popular support for Chiang. Mao's confidence grew. In November 1946, he raised his sights considerably by referring to the conflict as "the people's war of liberation." For the first time, Mao proposed the actual overthrow of the regime (Kennedy 2008). As per his revolutionary theory, Mao then transitioned to conventional warfare in the prosecution of total war to destroy the KMT army. The technique that he used was "positional warfare." As Mao explained: mobile warfare resembled guerilla warfare in its emphasis on mobility and surprise, but involved greater concentration of troops and firepower over a large range of territories. As such, mobile warfare had the potential to inflict greater punishment on enemy forces in a given period of time, but required greater organization and coordination from

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above (Kennedy 2008). The center of gravity, discussed in Chapter 3, now shifted from popular support in the guerilla warfare phase, to the moral and physical cohesion of the Nationalist Army.

In the summer and fall of 1947, the Red Army of Mao began to win important victories in North China. The subsequent capture of KMT tanks, heavy artillery, and other combined-arms assets allowed execution of larger offensive campaigns. Although the KMT had an advantage in numbers and weapons, and benefited from international support, their low morale hindered their ability to fight. Economic collapse and government corruption compounded the battlefield disasters of the KMT. The communists expanded south, and by late 1949, the Red Army was pursuing remnants of KMT forces into southern China. On October 1, 1949, Mao Tse-tung declared the creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Chiang Kai-shek and his remaining Nationalists retreated from mainland China to the island of Taiwan. Mao had achieved total victory. His guerilla tactics and revolutionary theory had been validated…The dual strategy was a success.

Conclusion

"Learn from the masses, and then teach them." Mao Tse-tung

The winning communist strategy of mobilizing the peasants in support of the revolutionary struggle, was born out of the defeats of 1927 and 1934; learning from those mistakes the communists realized that to defeat the KMT, they must have their own territorial base, their own army, and rely primarily on the support of the worker-peasants masses. Additionally, Mao's ascendancy to

the CCP meant the implementation of his rural strategy without significant opposition within the CCP. However, the Communist's defeat in 1934 showed them that they could not afford to alienate the intermediate classes because as history shows, revolutionary movements do not succeed where only one class of society is mobilized. The Communists would have faced enormous difficulties if the majority of landlords and capitalists had gone over to the KMT or even the Japanese. Mao Tse-tung's dual strategy – characterized by moderation, reformism, and pragmatism rather than radicalism –   eventually proved to be the winning formula in mobilizing and controlling the resources required to challenge the Kuomintang.

As a result, the Communists experienced an expansion of their power during the Japanese occupation. The Chinese Communists mixed simple living, self-reliance, and guerilla warfare into an aggressive nationalistic strategy that won widespread admiration from all classes of society. They increased their territorial control across North China, refined their tactics, and grew in confidence for the eventual showdown with the KMT. Although the Nationalist also held back from major offenses against the Japanese, gained in international stature, and even acquired a powerful ally in the United States, they suffered from a variety of internal weaknesses. A wrecked economy, runaway inflation, loss of popular support, and the loss of economically advanced territories to the Japanese, created the conditions for the eventual communist victory. As described in Chapter 2, it is clear that several pre-conditions regarding a revolutionary setting applied to the Chinese situation: conditions of peasantry, geography,

demography, and land tenure; as well as accelerators such as military defeat, and economic crises.

However, it was guerilla warfare that ultimately facilitated the Communists ability to reach directly into the villages and organize the peasants for resistance, production, and class struggle; and afforded the Communists access to its greatest source of strength and the extraordinary resources they needed to control, in order to hold the line against the Japanese and achieve the goal of mobilizing resources to eventually challenge the Kuomintang. As a result, I consider guerilla warfare as the catalyst that ignited the existing revolutionary conditions and enabled the Chinese Communists to lead a revolution to victory. The Cuban revolution offers striking similarities and differences, which allows us to better understand the role of guerilla warfare in the mobilization of resources.

Chapter Five

Cuba Revisited

Introduction

The consensus classifying the Cuban revolution as a peasant revolution is not as strong as the Chinese case study. In fact, some scholars have gone as far as describing the Cuban revolution as a middle-class revolution, mostly by arguing that the radicalized sectors of the middle class spearheaded the mobilization of the peasantry to bring the revolution to power (Pérez-Stable 1993). In addition, the guerilla leaders could trace their backgrounds to the middle class; the urban underground that supported Castro, and cooperated with recruitment and sabotage, was composed of mostly middle class; even middle-class political figures helped finance Castro's original expedition from Mexico (Kling 1962). Nonetheless, Castro's band of guerillas would have never survived without the support of the peasants, who not only provided the bulk of recruits to the rebels, but also the sanctuary and resources that allowed the band to grow and become the spearhead of the rebellion against the Batista regime. Wolf's (1969) thesis of "tactical mobility" (or autonomy), discussed in Chapter 2, was particularly applicable to the *Oriente* region of Cuba: a peasantry in a peripheral area beyond government control, with defensible mountainous redoubts, and

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ethnically different from the surrounding population.[19] Further, agrarian reform was the basic political objective of the revolutionaries – as stated by Guevara (1961, 7): "*Above all else, the guerilla is an agrarian revolutionary.*" Hence, in the final analysis, the Cuban revolution can be classified as a peasant's revolution.

Like Mao, Castro realized that the control of resources was the key to power – a difficult task indeed. How can a band of only twelve men, in complete disarray following a disastrous landing in the southern coast of Cuba, possibly take on an entrenched government with a standing army, and supported by a superpower? One possible mechanism could have been the traditional *coup d'état*, so prevalent in Latin American history. But as discussed in Chapter 3, Castro rejected this option. Besides, a *coup* with military elements – even in favor of the 26th of July Movement – would have represented a counter-force to his revolutionary objectives (Debray 1967). Castro wanted sweeping social and economic change; guerilla warfare would be the vehicle to mobilize resources and accelerate the rate of socio-economic change. But guerilla warfare is not a stand-alone mechanism; it must be integrated into a strategy that mobilizes resources, particularly popular support - the key to any insurgent movement. Castro's challenge was to mold a number of instruments such as organization, charismatic leadership, information, and violence into a strategy that would build his nationalistic appeal across all segments of society. As in the previous chapter, I will conduct an analysis to answer the questions: What was the insurgent strategy for mobilizing peasants in support of the revolutionary

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[19] *Oriente* province contained a significant Afro-Cuban element (Wolf 1969).

struggle? How did this strategy appeal to not only the peasants, but other classes as well? Although his focus was slightly different than Mao, Castro also designed a dual strategy of deception that would allow him to maintain his base of peasant support, appeal to the middle class, and neutralize his greatest threat – the United States.

During his guerilla campaign, Castro did not deliberately antagonize the middle class elements of Cuban society; instead, he sought their sympathy by exploiting their resentment of Batista (Kling 1962). The promise of free elections and civil liberties appealed to the middle class. But Castro was careful to avoid specific statements and policies regarding social, economic, and foreign policy which could threaten the support of his leftist base. Of course, two years after assuming power he declared himself a Marxist-Leninist, thus abandoning the businessmen and middle class who had originally supported him. These groups then formed the bulk of the exile community in the United States. Hence, Castro initially concealed his hostility to the interests and values of the middle and upper class, in order to obtain a broad coalition of support across all classes of Cuban society (Kling 1962). This is the underlying basic framework of the Dual Strategy. Additionally, as part of the strategy, Castro skillfully manipulated the North American press. By portraying himself as a freedom fighter against a corrupt regime, he effectively neutralized the possible involvement of the U.S. – the most important actor in Cuban affairs and one that could stop the revolution dead on its tracks.

Castro also benefited from the existing revolutionary pre-conditions that existed in the Cuban society and economy: land tenure inequalities, economic crisis, cultural cleavages, and government violence all existed in Cuba during the 1950's. As the principal economic engine, the sugar industry in Cuba absorbed rural labor and brought factories to the countryside; but it did not create an agrarian population with any significant land ownership and could not provide year-round employment for rural workers and blacks (Kling 1962; Pérez-Stable 1993), who received low wages, few social services, and were poorly housed and educated. On the other hand, urban workers were better off with higher wages and job security and better access to health care and education. Mounting inflation, combined with unemployment and underemployment took its toll on the morale and material condition of the Cuban working class, resulting in resistance to maximizing production through technology and instead opting to preserve jobs (Pérez 1988) – perhaps a classic validation of Huntington's Modernization Theory discussed in Chapter 2. These problems were all exacerbated by significant population growth. This revolutionary setting was expertly exploited by Castro. Undoubtedly, it was Castro's guerilla warfare campaign that ignited the existing pre-conditions into a revolution, and served as the catalyst referred to by Barrington Moore (1966).

In this chapter, I will discuss Castro's strategy for mobilizing popular support. Although the focus is the peasantry, I will also explain the important role of leadership and ideology as a link between Castro's 26th of July Movement and important sectors of society such as the elites and middle class. I will then

transition into an explanation of the important role of guerilla warfare in uniting the variety of groups in opposition to the Batista government, and creating the synergy in the strategy that exploited the revolutionary conditions that existed in Cuba at the time, and thus ride a wave of nationalism to the eventual victory of the rebel army. This chapter focuses on the period of 1953 to 1959, which includes the failed attack led by Castro at the *Moncada* Barracks; his arrest and two years of imprisonment, and subsequent release; exile to Mexico and return to Cuba to conduct the 1956-1958 guerilla campaign; and revolutionary victory marked by the departure of Batista to the Dominican Republic on January 1, 1959. However, it is essential to provide context to the discussion of such an unlikely triumph, after what amounts to only 25 months of insurrection, by discussing the factors and history that set the conditions for the success of Castro's strategy.

Background

The roots of the Cuban revolution can be traced back to the struggle against Spain in the late nineteenth century, which forged a commitment to national independence and social justice among many Cubans. The legacy of the Ten Year War (1868-1878), in which separatists in the east rebelled against the Spanish government with an agenda built on the reformist tenets of free trade, representative government, and abolition of slavery - set the stage for a growing independence movement. The war stalled in the eastern provinces, but negotiations to end hostilities resulted in a wide range of administrative and political reforms and the eventual abolition of slavery in 1886. Nevertheless,

uprisings continued – one labeled "*La Guerra Chiquita*" in 1879 lasted months - but all eventually failed. Consequently, irreconcilable veterans of the Ten Year War as well as a significant pro-independence expatiate community, began to organize around a vision of *Cuba Libre* (Free Cuba) and a commitment to armed struggle. José Martí, a young writer in exile, emerged as a leader in the independence movement and defined *Cuba Libre* as: independence from Spain and the United States – untrammeled, unconditional, uncompromising national sovereignty; a Cuba free from racism and oppression, a republic responsive to the needs of all Cubans (Pérez 1988). In 1892, Martí established the Cuban Revolutionary Party (PRC) with the goal of liberating Cuba. The basis for the radical nationalism that would eventually serve Castro had been established (Pérez-Stable 1993).

A new grand strategy was also developed by the insurgent independence movement: overthrow the colonial administration by undermining the socio-economic system it protected. Thus, the war was now against the dominant social class, the local collaborators of colonialism. The operational strategy was to destroy all active sugar plantations and supporting infrastructure. Planters faced a dilemma: comply with the production ban dictated by the insurgents and face economic hardship, or risk destruction of property. As the destruction continued, it became evident that the insurgents would ultimately prevail. By the end of 1897, the elites then turned to the U.S. in an attempt to encourage intervention in order to maintain their properties, security, and status. The U.S. had historically pursued hegemony even at times the outright annexation of

Cuba[20]. A victory by the Cuban insurgency threatened this goal. Citing the need

to establish order and security by terminating the war, President McKinley sought

congressional approval for "neutral intervention[21]." Instead, Congress approved

intervention with the disclaimer that once pacified, government and control of the

island would go to the Cubans. The Spanish-American War resulted in the

freedom of Cubans from Spain, but in essence they transitioned to another

master: the United States – who sought to maintain legal hegemony by granting

independence under a number of provisions that became known as the Platt

Amendment – principally, the right of the U.S. to intervene in Cuba to preserve

independence and stability. The U.S. effectively occupied Cuba until 1902, but as

stated by Pérez (1988, 192): "Cubans had achieved self-government without self-

determination and independence without sovereignty."

     After granting independence to Cuba, the U.S. continued to control the

government and policy formulation during occupation and thus facilitated U.S.

(and some European) business interests in the island, and their control over

sugar production, land purchases, railroad construction, tobacco, and mining. By

1925, the U.S. owned 41 percent of all the sugar mills and 60 percent of the

harvest (Pérez-Stable 1993). In summary, foreign capital dominated the Cuban

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[20] North American interest in Cuba had its origins early in the 19th century as a component of "Manifest Destiny" and the notion of physical and political gravitation to a North American Union. Subsequently the principle of "no transfer," a proposition by which the U.S. refused to sanction the cession of sovereignty [of Spain] over Cuba to a third party, was seen as the most efficient means of acquiring eventual possession of Cuba. President James K. Polk attempted to purchase Cuba from Spain; and prior to the U.S. Civil War, the Southern States contemplated the annexation of Cuba to the Union as a slave state, in order to balance the power in Congress (Pérez 1988).
[21] McKinley argued that an intervention as a neutral to stop the war, offered a means by which to establish, by virtue of arms, U.S. sovereignty over Cuba (Pérez 1988).

economy and labor immigration displaced Cuban workers with very little left for the Cubans. Black Cubans and women fared worse. As a result, the old separatist coalition began to re-organize – not around the pursuit of property or economic power – but around the pursuit for political power (Pérez 1988; Thomas 1971). A series of corrupt and at times repressive governments followed, and in 1933 a protest regarding army conditions by a group of disgruntled non-commissioned officers (sergeants and corporals), developed into a limited mutiny at an Army camp, to which anti-government groups rapidly rallied around. As a result, civilians transformed an act of insubordination into a full-fledged military coup and used it as an instrument for political change. In September 1933, a new government emerged under Ramón Grau San Martín formed by a coalition of convenience between rebellious soldiers who sought amnesty and dissident civilians in search of political power. The provisional government ruled for 100 days allowing the rebellious soldiers to purge and arrest their formers officers and consolidate themselves under the leadership of Sergeant Fulgencio Batista. This was the first government in Cuba without sanction and support of the U.S. and as such caused uneasiness in the U.S. government and economic interests. The U.S. pursued a subversive strategy thorough non-recognition and destabilization of the government coalition. In 1934, with the implicit support of the U.S., Batista withdrew his support of Grau, eventually leaving Batista and the Armed Forces in control of the government (Pérez 1988; Thomas 1971).

Batista's authority increased throughout the 1930's. He restored order and tranquility, established social programs, and won the support of foreign capital. A number of puppet presidents were installed, but Batista remained as the single most dominant political force on the island. The Platt amendment was abrogated, economic conditions improved, and terms of trade with the U.S. were re-negotiated. Although the agreement contributed to the economic revival, it also re-focused Cuba on sugar production, returning the island to the patterns of pre-depression dependency. A new constitution was adopted in 1940, which set the stage for elections won by Batista – now a populist and out of uniform - against Grau. The 1940 Cuban Constitution embodied a social compromise protecting private property, sanctioning an interventionist state, endorsing agrarian reform, and promoting a host of social rights (Pérez-Stable 1993). A fair and well-written document, it would later come back to haunt Batista.

The Batista presidency coincided with the Second World War and the economy mostly benefited. Batista did not run in 1944; the next few years were marked by a series of boom-bust economic cycles - as Cuba continued to depend on sugar as an export – and two separate governments that took corruption to unprecedented levels. These conditions set the stage for Batista's return in a 1952 well-planned military coup. Batista's overthrow of Carlos Prío ended 12 years of constitutional government; but few were upset with the passing of the Prío government. The coup pre-empted the elections of 1952 in which Batista was running a distant third. A young activist lawyer and member of the *Ortodoxo* Party named Fidel Castro, would have likely won the Congressional

election of the Havana district (Pérez 1988; Pérez-Stable 1993; Thomas 1971).

The coup served to radicalize him as he became a proponent of armed insurrection. The opposition to Batista was disorganized and incapable of a response to the takeover. A leader capable of galvanizing the masses against Batista was needed. Fidel Castro seized the opportunity.

Development of Dual Strategy

In response to the coup, on the 26th of July 1953, Castro led 165 young Cubans in an attempt to seize the *Moncada* Military Barracks in Santiago de Cuba, to then distribute arms to the population, and spark a national insurrection. It was a resounding fiasco. Dozens of youths were captured, tortured, and killed; the rest were imprisoned. The nation was appalled by the government repression, but also moved by the daring attack. When brought to trial, Castro convincingly defended himself and gained many admirers and followers after his performance. Although sent to jail, Castro's statement (Castro 1953, 76): *"Condemn me, it does not matter. History will absolve me!,"* captured the imagination of the nation – and combined with the failed, but daring attack - served to propel Castro into contention for the leadership of anti-Batista forces, and reaffirm armed struggle as the mechanism for change. Although he probably did not know it at the time, the attack on the barracks marked the beginning of his dual strategy to seek wide popular support:

- The year 1953 was the centenary of José Martí's birth and the symbolism was not lost on Castro; he knew Martí's appeal to Cubans would serve him well.

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- The date of the attack gave birth to his *26th of July Movement* – an attempt to organize the opposition into a single group.

- More importantly, the *26th of July Movement* had acquired high-profile martyrs.

- In his trial, he defended himself with dignity and compassion as he outlined his political program of nationalistic reform (Pérez-Stable 1993).

Thus, Castro planted the seed for his eventual revolutionary leadership, ideology, and dual strategy. He had risked his life by standing up to Batista; he identified himself with Cuba's greatest patriot; his nationalistic rhetoric combined with his charismatic persona appealed to a broad segment of society. In his trial, he described the program he would have implemented had insurrection been successful: restoration of the Constitution of 1940, agrarian reform, profit-sharing in industry, greater share of sugar industry profits for the Cuban people, and confiscation of misappropriated wealth. He defined the Cuban people as the unemployed, rural workers, industrial laborers, small farmers, teachers and professors, small merchants, and young professionals (Castro 1953). Absent of course, where the large landowners and industrial interests (Pérez-Stable 1993). But they could be ignored, as they represented a small segment of the population and his aim was broad popular support. Castro's agenda had appeal, he would return.

Castro was freed from jail in 1954 as part of a set of concessions by Batista who had a new sense of stability following rigged elections. Castro immediately resumed his opposition activities, but then went into exile in Mexico, as he reaffirmed his belief in armed insurrection. Of course, that meant that

Castro had to breakaway from the *Ortodoxo* political party. However, he realized

that he needed financial and political resources that at the time only the middle

and upper classes could offer. The effort to mobilize the peasants was not yet a

priority – that would come later almost by necessity. In August 1955, the 26th of

July Movement issued a manifesto to the people of Cuba:

> *The Cuban Revolution does not compromise with groups or persons*
> *of any sort…[It] will never regard the state as the booty of a*
> *triumphant group…[We] assume before history responsibility for our*
> *actions. And in making our declaration of faith in a happier world for*
> *the Cuban people, we think like Martí that a sincere man does not*
> *seek where his advantage lies but where his duty is, and that the*
> *only practical man is the one whose present dream will be the law of*
> *tomorrow* (Pérez-Stable 1993, 54).

The Manifesto made the 26th of July Movement separate and distinct from

the *Ortodoxo* Party and Fidel Castro was its central figure (Pérez-Stable 1993).

Additionally, it contained a nationalistic, patriotic, and unifying appeal to the

classes whose support Castro sought; and it also justified armed struggle against

the corrupt regime. It is likely that Castro's intent was to remain relevant as he

sought to control resources belonging to established opposition groups, such as

organization and information; and to establish credibility not only with the Cuban

people, but internationally. The latter was important, because as already

discussed, external support can play a defining role for either the insurgents or

the government. Castro returned to compete for power during December 1956,

with 82 revolutionaries that included his brother Raúl and Che Guevara, aboard

the yacht *Granma*. It is unclear exactly how Castro intended to achieve his

objective; did he mean to spark a rebellion by conducting a high-profile attack -

possibly, a *coup d'état*? Or was he focused in obtaining the leadership of the already established opposition? Perhaps his intent all along was to wage a protracted guerilla campaign. In any case, the decision was made for him, as Batista's troops routed the rebels' botched landing, and the surviving revolutionaries fled to the mountains in desperation. Castro's band now consisted of a dozen demoralized men in a remote area of Cuba.

A dozen men, even if their numbers included Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro, and Che Guevara, had no hope of overthrowing a government in command of an army. If this group of leaders was to have a chance in their pursuit of power, they had to recruit additional fighters. It is likely that Castro's original objective was to assume the leadership of the urban underground movements. However, these movements had proved incapable of overcoming the forces of Batista, thus validating Guevara's thesis that urban underground movements were ineffective against an oppressive government (Guevara 1961). Further, Castro was geographically isolated from this source anyway. As a result, he was forced to recruit his guerilla troops mostly from among the inhabitants of rural areas. Thus, whatever may have been the original motives of Castro and his followers, the situation in 1957 dictated that he attract the peasantry and the unemployed rural inhabitants, in order to obtain a mass base of support from which to draw the required resources to mount a challenge for power Castro now shifted his main effort to mobilizing the peasantry. The Dual Strategy was now reality.

Dual Strategy

"The guerilla makes agrarian reform his banner.[22]" Che Guevara

The challenge in attracting the peasants was less of a challenge for

Castro than Mao. As discussed previously, peasants are normally difficult to

mobilize. But the situation and history of eastern Cuba was different. Castro and

his followers stepped into a tradition of rebellion in the *Sierra Maestra*. Further,

the historical social conditions of the area, home to an estimated 50,000

peasants living in varying degrees of poverty, facilitated recruitment and support

(Wickham-Crowley 1991). They occupied the worst of worlds: low paid laborers

in large estates, or low producing farmers on marginal land. These conditions set

the stage for persistent conflict between peasants on one side and landowners

and the armed forces on the other. Hence Castro's band fell into armed struggle,

they did not create it[23]. These communities of outcasts, peasants barely

surviving, fugitives, outlaws, and bandits became the first recruits in the emerging

rebel army (Pérez 1988).

Thus, to appeal to the peasantry and increase the size of his guerilla

army, Castro had to become identified with policies holding out promise of

landownership reform. Not surprisingly, Castro's movement became one of

radical agrarian change. The sugar industry provided labor for farmers and

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[22] Guevara (1961, 30)

[23] The east versus west conflict had been a part of Cuba since early in the colonial period when the east did not share in the prosperity of Havana and the west. Isolated and neglected, eastern Cuba was the historical source of rebellions to include the "Ten-Year War" (1868-1878). A spirit of insurgency continued during the Batista regime, as local army commanders consistently terrorized rural communities and peasant squatters of untended tracts of land, setting the stage for permanent conflict between peasants on one side and landowners and the armed forces on the other (Pérez 188; Thomas 1971).

brought factories to rural areas. But it did not create an agrarian population with a

direct interest in the maintenance of private ownership, and it could not provide

year-round employment. As a result, the recruiting of fighters for Castro's guerilla

band was facilitated by a peasantry that did not possess the land it cultivated and

a rural population that lacked adequate employment (Kling 1962). Castro

capitalized on the rural conditions with his message of land reform, allowing him

to develop a mass base and a sanctuary in which to train, grow, and then expand

operations. As per the Guevara doctrine outlined in Chapter 3, the peasantry was

to provide intelligence, supplies, and protection as well. As a result, the guerilla

movement became identified with radical agrarian change – the internal

component of the dual strategy.

Once Castro felt secure in his countryside base, he needed to get his

message out to the rest of Cuba and the world. But this message had to be

different from the one for the peasants. Agrarian reform did not have a strong

appeal to the middle class and urban workers of the cities, and he knew that the

United States would be suspicious of his intentions, so soon after the Chinese

communist revolution. Plus he was also competing against other opposition

groups. During July 1957, he issued a communiqué from the *Sierra* advocating

for a civilian provisional government, restoration of civil liberties, social and

economic reforms, and abstention by other nations from intervention in Cuba

(Guevara 1963), definitely a more moderate message that appealed to middle-

class interests and values. More importantly, through his guerilla and

propaganda campaign (Débray 1967), Castro was successful in undermining the

moral authority of the Batista regime. The guerilla developed a communications and information apparatus that included a radio transmitter and a small newspaper, *El Cubano Libre* (The Free Cuban) (Guevara 1963; Castro 1998). Castro utilized these mediums to continuously challenge the legitimacy of Batista by pointing out and demonstrating (Kling 1962):

- Batista's assumption of power by a *coup d'état*
- The repressive techniques, to include torture, of the government
- Government corruption
- Lack of wealth distribution
- Sanctioning of gambling and prostitution by the government

Hence, Castro was successful in portraying Batista's government as brutal, dictatorial, illegal, and immoral. This campaign was effective in two important counts: it accelerated the general discontent of all classes of society with Batista, and placed the U.S. government in a defensive position with Batista. But most importantly, it exploited Cuban nationalistic sentiment, by portraying Batista as a puppet of foreign interests.

Additionally, Castro was well aware of the important part played by the North American press in the war of independence. He instructed his Havana contacts to bring to his camp in the mountains the most gullible foreign correspondent they could find. This was an easy task, for the Havana contacts had the perfect man already spotted. His name was Herbert Matthews of the New York Times (Lynch 1998). In fact, Castro told Guevara[24] that: "[Matthews]

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[24] Guevara (1963, 130)

appeared to sympathize with the revolution." The significance of the interview was enormous. First, it created for North Americans the legend of Castro – the freedom fighter – fighting oppression[25]. Second, it grossly exaggerated the number of guerillas and war equipment under the leadership of Castro[26]. Matthews brought Castro back to life in a big way; he was now an international figure (Lynch 1998; Thomas 1971). The external component of the dual strategy was now taking form: a moderate message of restoring democracy and implementing the Constitution of 1940. The target: the middle and upper classes, but also the United States.

As mentioned earlier, minimizing the role and interference of the U.S. in the conflict was one of the objectives of Castro's dual strategy. U.S. Policy was essentially caught in a dilemma between a "freedom-fighter" they did not really trust, and an oppressive dictator in Batista. The hesitation of the U.S. resulted in it being neutralized – that is, irrelevant to the political process. Three major factors contributed to the U.S. indecisiveness (Kling 1962). First, the negative image of Batista; he was portrayed as a dictator who profited from gambling and corruption and kept himself in power through oppression. Second, the confused image of Castro; rejection of Batista did not equate to embracing Castro. Was he

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[25] Matthews wrote: "The personality of the man [Castro] is overpowering. It was easy to see that his men adored him…Here was an educated, dedicated fanatic, a man of ideals, of courage, and of remarkable qualities of leadership; one got the feeling that he is now invincible…a great talker who dealt fairly with the peasants, paying for everything they ate…The 26th of July Movement talks of nationalism, anti-colonialism, and anti-imperialism." To Matthews, Castro said: "You can be sure that we have no animosity towards the United States and the American people…we are fighting for a democratic Cuba and an end to the dictatorship." (Thomas 1971).
[26] At the time, Castro had only eighteen men, but Matthews wrote of the forty men Castro had in his camp, and of bands of similar size that he "knew were close by." In fact, Raúl Castro kept passing in front of Matthews with the same men (Lynch 1998; Thomas 1971).

a communist or a nationalist? Conflicting behavior and reports – as part of the

dual strategy - blurred the image of Castro to the point that the U.S. could not

classify him as friend or foe. And finally, the two previous points resulted in a

vague U.S. policy. On the one hand the U.S. halted shipment of arms to Batista

in early 1958, but on the other, the U.S. did not attempt to stop shipments of

arms to Castro by friendly nations. Nonetheless, the U.S. did not completely

abandon Batista. As a result, the U.S. hesitation and procrastination allowed

Castro's guerilla forces to conduct their campaign, achieve eventual victory, and

consolidate power, without any obligation to the U.S – a major achievement for

Castro and one that portrayed him as a true nationalist.

Of course, the dual strategy carries certain risks. Even if the end state of

the two components is the same – that is, wide popular support – overlaps do

occur resulting in contradictions. In Castro's case, his message of radical social

reform for the lower classes, peasants, and rural laborers contradicted his public

announcements that he simply wanted to restore the democratic regime that

existed before Batista's coup in 1952 (Weitz 1982). Castro orchestrated the

contradictory elements by borrowing a page out of Mao's book; he would

subordinate one strategy to the other at specific times when it was strategically

feasible. For example, as he was building his guerilla band in the mountains, the

internal strategy was dominant; later, as he attempted to consolidate the

government opposition groups, the external prevailed. But Castro's technique

was not as refined as Mao's. The latter spent years fine-tuning his techniques in

liberated zones of the vast Chinese countryside; could count on the organization

of the communist party; and had a vast guerilla army with experienced political

cadres to indoctrinate the masses. Castro's time and resources were limited. The

equalizers to resolve the contradictions were leadership and ideology

Leadership

Individual leaders can become the principal reason why some people

support insurgent movements. The phenomenon of charismatic attraction has

been exemplified by both Mao and Fidel Castro. When such men are either

perceived to have supernatural qualities (Mao), or manifest impressive speaking

skills and a dynamic, forceful personality (Castro), they frequently are able to

motivate others to join their cause through their example and persuasiveness

(O'Neill 1990). Of course, Castro benefited from key lieutenants such as his

brother Raúl, Guevara, and Camilo Cienfuegos[27], but Fidel's forceful personality

almost single-handedly drove the insurgency, and the population identified the

insurgency with Castro. In fact, Che Guevara states in his work *On Guerilla

Warfare* (1961): "In Cuba, a nucleus of twelve dedicated men – plus a Fidel

Castro – were able to succeed."

Like Mao, Castro's leadership abilities, charismatic attraction, and

eloquence were instrumental in mobilizing resources and obtaining popular

support. Débray (1967) refers to the quality of "tenacity," which Fidel Castro

possessed, as a requirement to Latin America's revolutionary wars. His daring

attack on the *Moncada* Barracks, brilliant self-defense at his subsequent trial,

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[27] Camilo Cienfuegos was one of the surviving revolutionaries of the *Granma* landing. Cienfuegos
was later put in command of a guerilla column that achieved considerable success against
Batista forces in late 1958. He is considered one of the heroes of the revolution (Guevara 1963).

imprisonment, and now leadership of a guerilla band, who portrayed an overall confidence of eventual victory against the hated Batista, conferred in him a special reputation for courage, leadership, and enormous credibility with the Cuban people. As previously discussed with Mao, it is impossible to measure how many people joined the rebel's cause because of Castro's charismatic attraction; but undoubtedly the force of his personality was important. The traditional Latin American political culture has defined political conflict as struggles between strong individuals – or *caudillos* – and their followers, and Cuba is no exception. Fidel Castro can easily be classified as a strong and charismatic leader capable of arousing the masses with nationalistic fervor in the *caudillo* tradition (Kling 1962).

These qualities are indeed essential for obtaining popular support, but also in inspiring fighters to continue the fight under difficult conditions. The morale of a guerilla fighter is especially dependent upon the inspiring view of his leader; circumstances in the life of a guerilla fighter can demoralize him. His life is in danger; daily life is uncomfortable; his food supply is uncertain; his family life shattered; and victory can seem remote. But faith in the capabilities of his leader can sustain him indefinitely (Kling 1962). In summary, a successful insurgent leader is able to break the ties between the people and their government, and secure credibility for the insurgent efforts. Castro was successful on all counts.

Ideology

During the revolutionary period, Castro did not attach himself to any dogmatic formula such as Marxism. In fact, it was not until April 1961, over two

years after the initial victory, that Castro declared the socialist character of the revolution. Whether Castro planned all along to convert the revolution to a Marxist model has been the subject of much speculation. He certainly had Marxist sympathizers in his inner circle, such as his brother Raúl and Che Guevara, but he realized that adherence to a communist or Marxist doctrine would not appeal to the majority of Cubans; it would definitely antagonize the U.S., and also threaten the covert international aid that he was receiving from Costa Rica and Venezuela. Thus, Castro kept his distance from the Cuban Communist Party – which he distrusted anyway - and made the ideology of the revolution one of popular empowerment, collective liberation, and distrust of political parties (Moreno 1970).

In essence, Castro favored an ideology focused on nationalism, which offered the greatest flexibility in attracting majorities in all classes of society – the principal objective of the dual strategy. Of course, it is a fact that an ideology that appeals to national identity is probably the most powerful means of mobilizing resources (Greene 1990), but Castro did add a twist to this formula. He made the guerilla force the center of the revolution and thus the nucleus of nationalism. As the vanguard of the revolution, it would not be subordinated to a political party, ideology, or international actor (Débray 1967). In sum, Castro had enough confidence in himself and his leadership that he rejected the revolutionary ideologies of Mao and Lenin and instead developed a radical nationalism with two principal components: national sovereignty and social justice (Pérez-Stable 1993).

Nonetheless, despite his charismatic leadership, ability to build cross-cutting alliances, and nationalistic ideology, Castro's quest for power may very well have been in vain, without the special position that resulted from leading a guerilla campaign against an oppressive government. By taking on Batista's army – albeit in small engagements – it showed the world that the rebels could beat the army and challenge Batista's claim to legitimacy and monopoly on resources of violence. There were other - more established – opposition leaders, but they did not control a guerilla band of motivated and well-led fighters. Guerilla warfare proved to be the mechanism that fused leadership, ideology, and the dual strategy into a cohesive mass movement for mobilization and control of resources.

Guerilla Warfare

> *"Guerilla warfare is a fight for the masses, with the guerilla band as the armed nucleus[28]."* Ernesto Che Guevara

The message of the quote above is clear: the guerilla band was the center of the revolution and armed struggle would be the mechanism for obtaining popular support; for getting close to the masses with their message of radical nationalism; and for obtaining the small victories that would eventually make them the only alternative against Batista. Unlike Mao, Fidel Castro did not have the option of building an army that would rival Batista's. His only hope was to use his guerilla band to neutralize it, by creating the conditions that would stop U.S. military aid and eventually make the army crumble from within. The rebels would obtain small, yet symbolic, military victories against remote government outposts;

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[28] Guevara (1961, 6)

gradually increase the scope of military activities; then, as popular support grew, the government would become increasingly isolated from the people and the army would lose its cohesion and will to fight.

The guerilla band gave Castro a tool that none of the other opposition leaders had: a controlled means of violence against the government and the ability to capitalize on its propaganda effects. Publicity about the guerilla leaders exploits encouraged sympathy, attracted fresh recruits, and created doubts about the authority of the established government (Kling 1962). Sure, other opposition groups could employ violence through sabotage, but they had no visible symbol that represented their cause. Further, they had to remain underground in the cities, with no chance of using a Herbert Matthews to capture the imagination of all Cubans and gain international support. The romance associated with the guerillas was hard to resist: the weak against the strong, nationalists against oppressors, and a charismatic leader against a corrupt and illegitimate one. Most Cubans could not help but sympathize with Castro and his guerilla band. The dual strategy, as shaped by guerilla warfare was beginning to bear fruit.

As already discussed, Fidel Castro and his followers also benefited from the fact that they established (not by choice) their main base in the *Sierra Maestra*, a region distant from the army's base of operations and whose inhabitants were dissatisfied with the Batista regime; from there the band could expand. On the other hand, the urban underground had limited opportunities to do the same. The government had an intelligence network in the cities, as well as informants. Besides, if there was one aspect that his army was experienced at

was urban insurrection, having gained expertise during the 1930s. Batista effectively marshaled that experience against the urban underground (Pérez-Stable 1993). But rural Cuba – particularly in *Oriente* - was another matter; with a limited presence in the countryside, as well as a lack of experience and training in fighting guerillas in a jungle environment, the government's army indeed had a challenge in their hands. The rebel army first achieved success simply by surviving and later by resisting the regular army. However, the rebel leadership knew quite well that the eastern mountains were not representative of Cuban society (Pérez-Stable 1993). In order to defeat Batista, they had to incorporate the urban groups…Guerilla warfare would be the mechanism.

Castro was not completely isolated in the mountains. His 26th of July Movement was also active in the cities, but even within the movement there was dissension between the urban (*llano*) and countryside (*sierra)* factions.[29] A united front – similar to Mao's with the KMT – was required. Castro utilized the dual strategy, as shaped by guerilla warfare, to move in that direction. Gradually, the opposition to Batista centered on Castro through a mixture of competence, shrewdness, and plain luck (Childs 1995). Castro's luck in the form of accidental elimination of alternative leaders was remarkable. Several attacks launched against important government targets failed, and ended the aspirations of these rivals through loss of influence or even killed in the attempt. Most important was the death of Frank País – his most serious rival within the 26th of July movement.

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[29] Guevara: "The division between the Sierra and the Llano was a real one." (Guevara 1963, 318)

País was killed in July 1957 by the City of Santiago police[30]. A general strike, called by all opposition groups, in April 1958 failed; as other attacks and expeditions by other groups against Batista failed, they contributed to a general belief of dissatisfaction with the government; but more importantly, they channeled popular support towards the guerillas as the only credible challenge to the forces of the government. The end result was a subordination of the urban and labor underground to the guerilla leadership in the *Sierra Maestra* (Childs 1995). Castro's leadership was consolidated in a meeting of the 26th of July Movement's National Directorate that took place in the *Sierra* on May 3, 1958. As stated by Guevara (1963, 317):

> *The guerilla conception would emerge triumphant from that meeting. Fidel's standing and authority were consolidated, and he was named commander in chief of all forces, including the militias – which until then had been under Llano leadership. Fidel was also named secretary general of the July 26 Movement.*

The argument is often made that Batista was his own worst enemy and that a revolution would have occurred in Cuba with or without Castro. This misses the point on the importance of guerilla warfare. Batista had to respond to the open challenge of the rebels; the problem was that he took the bait offered by Castro by employing the incorrect counter-insurgency technique. Instead of winning the "hearts and minds" of the people by persuading them that their best interests would be served by the government's success, Batista embarked on a campaign of terror against peasants, and police brutality against the urban underground and civilian leaders. On the other hand, the rebels also took care to

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[30] Another serious rival, Havana student leader José Antonio Echevarría, was killed in a university student attack on the Presidential Palace in March 1957.

avoid operations that produced large numbers of casualties, thus alienating as few people as possible. It is evident then that guerilla warfare played the decisive role in shaping the dual strategy. Without the credibility of having a guerilla band that could achieve success against the government, Castro would have never been able to attract popular support, neutralize the U.S., and mobilize resources for revolution. Indeed, the leadership of the opposition to Batista gradually centered on the guerilla band that constituted the only credible threat to the dictator. Thus, a system of "dual power," which is part of Tilly's mobilization theory, developed in Cuba: claims by the government as the only central authority no longer went unchallenged (Wickham-Crowley 1991). After a full year in the mountains fighting the government in the *sierras*, and standing up to Batista, they had earned the right to lead others in the struggle.

Revolutionary Victory

By the middle of 1958, Cuba approached a revolutionary situation. Batista was now perceived as the greatest single obstacle to the return of political stability and economic prosperity. The insurgency had its effect: tourism declined and the flow of foodstuffs from the countryside to the cities was halted. Sabotage and destruction of property further contributed to the economic crises (Pérez 1988). Castro's dual strategy had secured the peasant masses, an alignment with the middle class, absorption of the urban underground, and the leadership of the revolutionary struggle – all bound together with a spirit of radical nationalism and *Cuba Libre*. This is apparent in Castro's signing of the Caracas Declaration in July, 1958, a document that called for the unity of anti-Batista forces in an

effort to restore civil democracy in Cuba. The Pact of Caracas established Fidel Castro as the principal leader of the Anti-Batista movement and the rebel army as the main arm of the revolution (Pérez 1988). Although in retrospect, Castro was likely less than genuine in his support for the Caracas Declaration, it was a move that permitted him to appeal to middle classes and allowed him to benefit from riding a nationalistic platform as opposed to a socialist one (Johnson 2006), the essence of the dual strategy. Castro had been successful in mobilizing the resources required to openly challenge Batista. It was time to enter the final stage of revolutionary conflict.

Insurgent victories forced the government to concede rebel-occupied zones to the guerillas, creating enclaves of liberalized territories. The expanding struggle in the countryside was accompanied by growing resistance in the cities. The insurgents opened a new front against the regime – a war against property and production as a means to isolate Batista from the support of the economic elites. The strength of the Batista regime had been to maintain political order and social peace, but it was now failing to do even that (Pérez 1988). The regime was now expendable. Batista had to go, but he wouldn't do so without a fight. In mid-1958, Batista launched his most formidable offensive against the guerillas with an estimated 12,000 troops deployed to the *Sierra Maestra.*

By the end of the summer the offensive had failed. Batista's army was battered but not yet defeated. The final rebel strategy to achieve a decision was to attack along three points: Pinar del Río province in the west of the island; Las Villas in the center; and the City of Santiago in the eastern province of Oriente

(Guevara 1963). The Battle of Santa Clara in Las Villas proved to be the decisive victory. The rebel column was led by Che Guevara, and although Fidel Castro had been recognized as the leader of the anti-Batista forces, full revolutionary unity on the tactical front had yet to be achieved. A number of groups were operating in the *Escambray* Mountains outside of Santa Clara; these included groups from the Popular Socialist Party, the Revolutionary Directorate, and the Authentic Organization; in fact, a total of five different organizations were operating in the area under different commands (Guevara 1963). An intense campaign for revolutionary unity was carried out, and after a series of agreements, a fragile common front was formed, with Guevara as commander in chief of the armed forces in Las Villas (Guevara 1963).

The Battle of Santa Clara began on December 27, 1958, and by January 1, the city had fallen. Batista's armed forces collapsed through desertion and defection and simply ceased to fight as the guerillas routed them in a counteroffensive. Additionally, the U.S. government withdrew their support for the Batista government. The rebels had successfully mobilized manpower and materiel resources, organized popular support of the guerilla band while minimizing those available to the government, and brought the urban movement under the leadership of Fidel Castro. A short-lived military coup was rejected by Castro (Guevara 1963); nothing could stop the rebels now. They refused any sort of compromise with a military *junta* or the government, as everybody accepted their leadership. Castro controlled the resource of violence; at this point, nobody

would dare to dispute their right to conduct the revolution the way they wanted (Moreno 1970). Batista, increasingly isolated, fled the country in January 1, 1959.

Conclusion

"This time the revolution is for real." Fidel Castro

Fidel Castro made the above declaration upon entering Santiago de Cuba on January 1, 1959 (Pérez-Stable 1993). Few Cubans paused to consider what the revolution really meant and what lay ahead. They were simply elated with the end of the Batista regime; things could not possibly get any worse. But Castro's revolution was in fact real and has survived time and time again for over 50 years. Unlike Mao who designed, tested, and refined his strategy over decades of struggle, Castro's strategy was essentially *ad hoc* over a period of only 25 months following the landing in Cuba. Nonetheless, his objective was fixed: he had to secure his mass base of peasants, appeal to the middle class, and also neutralize the United States. To accomplish these objectives, he designed a strategy of deception – a dual strategy – to first survive and grow a guerilla force with peasant support as he appealed to the peasantry through a program of drastic agrarian reform – implemented through guerilla warfare. But then expand into the rest of Cuba with a more moderate and appealing message of democratic reform.

The guerillas gained widespread support by declaring that their objective was to restore equality and justice to the nation. On several occasions Castro stated that he simply wanted to restore the democratic regime that existed before Batista's coup in 1952, and restore the 1940 Constitution. In 1958, he even

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signed the Declaration of Caracas, which called for unity among all the anti-Batista groups. The guerillas benefited greatly from these public announcements of moderation as well as the inability of moderates to display any progress in overthrowing Batista. As time went on, and Castro achieved small victories against the government forces, more Cubans threw their support behind the guerillas, as it appeared that Castro was the only one capable of deposing the dictator. Additionally, the population started buying into the moderate Castro rhetoric and figured that a guerilla victory could not be any worse than the Batista government (Weitz 1986). U.S. involvement was essentially neutralized, as Castro's dual strategy resulted in an ambivalent U.S. foreign policy with Cuba.

The level of popular support had an important impact on the insurgent's performance, but to maximize popular support, they had to fuse the rural support with the urban underground (Childs 1995). These forces were linked to the guerillas through various organizations such as the underground cells of the 26th of July Movement and of the Civic Resistance Movement[31]. International support also had an impact: sanctuary (unintentional) provided by Mexico; favorable coverage in the American press – particularly in the *New York Times* by correspondent Herbert Matthews; and shipments of arms to the rebels from Latin American countries. Thus, the rebel's operational strategy consisted of two parallel tracks: public professions of moderation designed to win popular support, combined with selective use of force against their opponents (Weitz 1986).

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[31] The Civic Resistance Movement was an urban resistance group organized to attract groups and individuals who did not openly support armed struggle (Sweig 2002)

There are some who still argue that it was not Castro and his guerilla band who brought about the downfall of Batista. They point out that the middle class was alienated, the rich did not feel secure, some generals betrayed Batista, bishops wrote pastoral letters, U.S. embargoes were enforced, the army disintegrated, and the whole political structure collapsed (Moreno 1970). But this situation simply validates Goldstone's thesis of a revolutionary setting, as well as Barrington Moore's (1966) point that such settings are normally ignited into a full revolution by a catalyst. There is no question that in the Cuba case study, guerilla warfare was such a catalyst. Without Castro's guerilla band the wave of nationalism that swept the nation might have never been generated. Further, the opposition was disorganized and lacked the proper strategy to take on the government. Batista could have otherwise stayed in power as the U.S. paved the way for a democratically elected replacement that could have possibly diffused the revolutionary setting.

It was principally guerilla warfare, however, that tilted all the revolutionary conditions to the insurgent's favor. Guerilla warfare molded Castro's dual strategy by providing a credible opposition to Batista – one that could actually obtain victories against the government's army. Guerilla warfare brought an ideology of radical nationalism to the setting, and the charismatic leadership to unite Cubans in opposition to the regime. This revolution was different; it was succeeding in its own terms without the interference of international actors such as the United States. The Cuban people believed Castro's nationalistic ideology and rhetoric. They either chose to ignore the contradictions in his dual strategy,

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or blindly follow him. Those that still mistrusted Castro stayed on the sidelines, reasoning that things couldn't get any worse, and if they did, the United States would always be there to set things right…They were all wrong. The next chapter describes how Castro took the *foco* theory of revolution, to an international level. The dual strategy would live on.

Chapter Six

Dual Strategy Aftermath

Introduction

Following their revolutionary victories, Mao Tse-tung and Fidel Castro took different paths with their respective revolutionary theories and dual strategies. Mao elected not to aggressively pursue an insurgent strategy at the international level, choosing instead to pursue a mostly isolationist policy as he consolidated his power. Sure, the argument could be made that communist revolutionary warfare became a weapon for China to export revolution and communism. Learning from the Korean experience of 1950-53 that overt aggression would be opposed by the international community, China did support insurrection in Laos, as well as North and South Vietnam during the 1950s and 60s. But these countries bordered China and were located within its area of influence. China's interests were at stake as they felt threatened by what they perceived was U.S. expansion. Mao's philosophy was that revolution could not be exported. Struggles for liberation had to take national form; that is, only locals can lead and make revolutionary war, as they innovate to fit their particular conditions (Friedman 1970). Further, as a nuclear power[32] and later-on a member of the

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[32] The PRC began developing nuclear weapons in the late 1950s and conducted its first nuclear test in 1964.

United Nations Security Council,[33] China could not convincingly pursue an insurgent strategy in world affairs. That is not to say that China has not supported rogue states such as North Korea with their U.N. vote, but again, that is mostly to protect their own interests as they try to avoid criticism against their own policies such as human rights.

Domestically, Mao's highly flexible and pragmatic dual strategy turned into a rigid and ideological strategy exemplified by the *Great Leap Forward* economic and social plan, and the *Cultural Revolution*, which was an attempt re-capture the spirit of the revolution – both were resounding failures. The objective of the *Great Leap Forward* (1958-63) was to modernize China's economy. Abandoning the dual strategy that had served him so well, Mao sought to redistribute land and collectivize agriculture in order to generate the capital for industrialization. However, the rapid change and unrealistic goals led to failure and famine. Mao lost political capital to the moderates within the CCP and the program was eliminated. Later, seeking to re-establish his authority, Mao launched the *Cultural Revolution* during his last decade in power (1966-76). His targets were the moderates; the mechanism: mobilized urban youths designated as *Red Guards* tasked with enforcing Mao's ideology and security. The result was a period of social and political chaos combined with economic disarray. Mao had enough internal problems to consider exporting revolution. Following Mao's death in 1976, and with the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping, China adopted a dual

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[33] China was designated a permanent member of the UN Security Council under Article 23 of the UN Charter. However, the Republic of China (Taiwan) also claimed to represent China. In 1971, the PRC was awarded China's seat by General Assembly Resolution 2758 and the Republic of China lost membership in all UN organizations.

strategy of a different variety: the separation of economics from communist ideology. Maoist dogma was out and pragmatism was in. Since then, for the most part, China has played a cautious game internationally, focusing on promoting policies that increase economic growth. Nonetheless, even if China did not actively export revolution, it did inspire a number of them, to include of course, the Cuban revolution.

Fidel Castro, on the other hand, internationalized the *foco* revolutionary theory by continuing an insurgent strategy that placed Cuba as the *foco* within a global context. The motive for armed struggle became increasingly less local and instead directed against the entire imperialistic system led by the United States. By emphasizing the universality of revolutionary conditions, armed struggle became an appealing option to some countries integrated into the world capitalist system (Childs 1995). Castro could not just turn inward; he lacked the raw materials, subsistence, and economic resources to do so. Instead he would "export revolution" and confront the United States in order to obtain international support. He then skillfully refined the dual strategy. The external component focused on promoting his revolution, developing a strong following in Latin America, enhancing Cuba's influence, and increasing Cuba's value as an ally to the Soviet Union, in order to obtain and then continue its sponsorship. The internal component targeted the Cuban people and their continued support of the revolution through the buildup of nationalism. The dual strategy was to continue for another 50 years in Cuba. This chapter will examine how Castro refined and

executed this strategy, which builds on the experiences of the revolution and the philosophy of guerilla warfare.

Over the close to five decades of Castro's rule, Cuba transitioned to communism with the adoption of a strong Marxist-Leninist political agenda; developed cooperation and dependency with the Soviet Union; faced-off with the U.S. in the "Bay of Pigs" invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis; conducted military interventions overseas; lost sponsorship, with the fall of the Soviet Union; and endured a continued U.S. economic embargo. During this time, the island's economy and the welfare of Cubans have stagnated. Today, problems continue, from inadequate agricultural production and restricted diets, to a crumbling infrastructure and failing public services. Through it all, Cubans have endured significant political and economic hardship. How can a society accept these terrible conditions without organizing and mobilizing against the regime? I suggest that the regime relies on three pillars to remain in power: repression, emigration, and nationalism. The first two pillars will be briefly discussed in this chapter, but the focus will be on the mechanisms that Castro utilizes to foster nationalism – the objective of the internal component of the dual strategy. The U.S. imposed economic embargo is one of those tools – and presently the most important – utilized by Castro to cultivate a strong nationalistic sentiment in the Cuban people against an external enemy: the United States.

The economic embargo actually serves the Castro brothers by focusing Cubans on self-determination, national sovereignty and the defense of the fatherland (Pérez 1988). The regime skillfully manipulates the built-in

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contradiction of the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba with its dual-strategy. Internally, the embargo builds nationalism, while externally it promotes sympathy for the regime and criticisms towards the U.S. Thus, the economic pressures of the embargo are worth the political benefits that the Cuban government has gained. I argue that the Castro regime has sought to continue the economic embargo as a mechanism to promote nationalism and international support. Castro needs a conflict in order to create a climate of permanent confrontation that allows him to justify his absolute power and economic policies, under the pretense that he is defending the homeland. Without a conflict, there is no justification for the extreme hardship imposed on the Cuban people. The U.S. is the obvious target: a superpower that is only 90 miles away, who seeks the suffering of all Cubans through an "illegal" economic embargo – or as Castro prefers to call it: a "blockade." The regime's political calculation is that by emphasizing confrontation with America, through an insurgent strategy, the masses will continue to support the government. I will identify key openings in U.S. – Cuba relations that could have resulted in the lifting of the embargo, but Castro repeatedly made political moves that ended any prospects of closer relations.

Therefore, I will examine the build-up of nationalism in Cuba that has culminated in a strategy that on one hand condemns the embargo, but on the other seeks to continue it as a mechanism for popular support through nationalism. I also seek to answer the question of what mechanisms are used by the Castro regime to foster nationalism. I will provide an account of how the

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Cuban government utilized historical events to build nationalism, as well as some of the more traditional methods such as symbols, sports, and the media; then transition to a short discussion of the U.S. economic sanctions; and conclude with an analysis of Castro's "dual-strategy." Although Fidel Castro resigned as President in February 2008 – resulting in the election of his brother Raúl as president – Fidel is still Chairman of the Communist Party, and undoubtedly retains veto power over all strategic foreign policy, defense, and economic decisions. As a result, I will continue to refer to Fidel as the ultimate decision-maker. This chapter focuses on the period following the 1959 revolution, but with particular emphasis on the period following the end of the Cold War. Nonetheless, in order to set the context for my analysis, it is important to explain what led to the continued confrontation between Cuba and America…The seeds were planted shortly after consolidation of the revolution.

Background

Following the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the strong nationalism promoted by Fidel Castro, gradually entered the post-revolutionary regime. The revolution, having succeeded in its own terms, enjoyed enormous popularity. Castro consolidated his power by eliminating past political institutions and to rule by decree; he delivered popular reform decrees that resulted in a significant redistribution of wealth. Castro then pushed further using the well-organized and established Cuban Communist Party to purge all dissent from the government and eliminate all opposition media. Gradually, anti-communism became synonymous with counter-revolution (Pérez 1988). The opposition to Castro took

new forms as exile groups organized and adopted techniques such as internal sabotage. But Castro's support was strong as he integrated nationalism into the defense of the revolution. Relations with the United States continued to deteriorate - through the expropriation of U.S. business interests in Cuba - resulting in a continued economic embargo, which has in different forms, endured to the present day.

By the end of 1959, Castro was firmly in control. He had essentially eliminated a powerless provisional government by systematically isolating and pushing aside any liberals or moderates that had been in government. He broke with all past political institutions he considered implicated in past misgovernment: the presidency, congress, the courts, the army and police, the press, political parties, and the church. The masses demanded deep radical changes, and their charismatic leader delivered as he ruled by decree with reforms that reduced rents and properties, increased wages and reduced rates of utilities, as well as agrarian reform – resulting in a significant redistribution of wealth (Pérez 1988; Prevost 2006). These early reforms won the revolutionary government immediate widespread popular support, which of course, was not unanimous. The U.S. saw its interests threatened and demanded compensation for property nationalized through agrarian reform. Liberals, property owners, and the middle class were increasingly suspicious of Castro's intentions. The opposition and exile groups organized, but this played right into Fidel's hand: now defense of the nation became indistinguishable from defense of the revolution (Pérez 1998).

Nationalism immediately became an important tool for Castro to continue the consolidation of his revolution.

Of course, nationalism was integrated with the other two pillars. Castro controlled the means of violence which were used to purge all dissent. As the elimination of the U.S. presence continued, the classes economically dependent on and ideologically allied to the U.S., all but collapsed (Pérez 1998). Nevertheless, these well-educated and professional classes still represented a threat to the regime, which repression alone could not control, due to the numbers as well as political implications. Emigration was the solution and Castro used it for nationalistic purposes as well:

"Let the worms[34] leave; we do not want them and we do not need them," he is quoted as saying. The massive middle class emigration between 1959 and 1962 eliminated the possibility of an internal challenge to the regime, but it also had negative consequences for all parties. The island was drained of its talented professionals, affecting development for years to come; the Cuban immigrants had placed their faith on the U.S, instead of challenging the regime from the inside. The U.S. had created another enemy for Cuba – the exile community.

Relations continued to deteriorate as Cuba sought trade and political relations with the communist bloc. Once alternative markets for sugar exports and an oil agreement with the Soviet Union had been secured, the U.S. lost its economic leverage on the island. Cuba continued expropriating North American properties. The U.S. responded with an economic embargo and a ban on most

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[34] Worm – or *gusano* in Spanish – is a term popularly used in Cuba in reference to counter-revolutionaries.

U.S. exports; Cuba then nationalized a broad range of private enterprises to include Cuban-owned interests. The North American attempt to use economic coercion to force Castro into moderation had failed. Confrontation with the U.S. further radicalized the revolution and facilitated the alignment with the Soviet Union (Prevost 2006). Once again, Castro played his cards masterfully. The socialist character of the revolution was now affirmed.

Nationalism in the Castro Era

> *"If the Americans do not like what is happening in Cuba, they can land the Marines and then there will be 200,000 gringos dead."* Fidel Castro, 1959

The growth of nationalism is the process of integrating the masses into a common political form (Kohn 1944). To the Cuban regime, this meant imparting a common revolutionary identity to the population. Through the revolution, Castro developed the possibility of a new "imagined community[35]" that incorporated a sense of *Cubanidad* (Cubaness) based on the political and social ideals of the revolution. Nationalism is normally imposed from above by the so-called political "elites." In the Cuban case study, this applies to Castro, his brother Raúl, the close circle of revolutionaries, and the upper echelons of the Communist party. According to Hobsbawm (1990), the reception to the imposition of nationalism could be universal or separated by class. In Cuba, it was accepted by the masses, long ignored by the previous governments, but not the upper and middle classes, most of which migrated to the United States. The political elites have

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[35] The "imagined community" is a concept developed by Benedict Anderson (1990) to explain nationalism. Anderson argues that a nation is actually an "imagined" political community because, unlike an actual community, there is no face-to-face interaction between its members. People perceive themselves as part of a group (or nation) through the power of the media and the sharing of similar interests.

skillfully used historical events and mechanisms to "connect" with the masses regarding the revolutionary identity. In forging this "imagined community" the political elite combined the ideals of a classless society with a passionate anti-U.S. rhetoric that would become essential to being Cuban and independent. Several events have shaped Cuba's "revolutionary" identity. The regime has expertly manipulated and exploited these experiences to build nationalism. Next, I will discuss several examples of such events, as well as the mechanisms used to connect with the masses.

Events

The failed Bay of Pigs invasion by Cuban exiles – half-heartedly supported by the U.S. and organized by the Central Intelligence Agency- during April 1961 (Lynch 1999), proved to be a turning point for Cuba-U.S. relations, and one that Castro exploited for nationalistic and survival purposes. Nationalism, repression, and emigration were the tools employed. Nationalism: the major result of the American intervention was the consolidation of Castro's power by creating a solid identification of the Cuban people with the common revolutionary identity imposed from above. The forces under Castro had defeated two enemies: the U.S. and Cuban exiles - they could do no wrong. Repression: the government moved against anyone suspected of opposition to the regime; by the end of the month, an estimated 100,000 persons were imprisoned or otherwise detained; virtually no suspected opponent of the government remained free in Cuba after that time (Pérez 1988). Emigration: thereafter, planeload after planeload of Cubans that opposed the regime left the

island. Castro was confident. He then declared the "socialist" character of the

Cuban revolution (Pérez 1988; Prevost 2006), and abolished the 1940

constitution proclaiming "direct government by the people." Additionally, Castro

built on the anti-U.S. component of the revolutionary identity by seeking the

protection and sponsorship of the Soviet Union. The survival of the revolution

was all but guaranteed a year later, when the United States, as part of the

negotiations to remove Soviet missiles from Cuba, agreed not to invade the

island (Pérez 1988). Cubans could be proud of their "imagined community" that

had defeated the mighty empire.

The international interventions by Cuba in the Middle East and Africa not

only played to the anti-U.S. component of Cuban nationalism, but increased

Cuba's prestige within the Third World, as well as the pride of Cubans with the

performance of their armed forces. The small island of Cuba was having an

impact internationally. Cuba's success in Africa[36] led directly to a prominent role

for Castro in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), an organization of Third-World

countries that grew in prestige during the 1970s. NAM strongly endorsed Cuba's

Africa policies, and in 1979, Castro was elected to the presidency of the

organization. The presidency of NAM represented a new height of prestige for

Castro and revolutionary Cuba (Prevost 2006). Although Castro lost political

capital when he backed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, he reversed the

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[36] Following the War of Independence (1961-1975) in Angola, the two main groups – the *National Union for the Total Independence of Angola* (UNITA) and the *Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola* (MPLA) became antagonists in the ensuing Civil War (1975-2002). In 1975, Cuba deployed 36,000 troops to Angola in support of the MPLA, and were able to prevent South African intervention into Angola to support UNITA. As a result, Cuba gained significant influence in the region (Prevost 2006).

situation during the Falklands/ Malvinas War in 1982. Parallel to the success in

Africa and with NAM, Cuba also played an important role in Central America and

the Caribbean in the early 1980s, as a supporter of the revolutionary

governments that emerged in Grenada and Nicaragua. By the end of the decade,

Cuba was extending its trade with most of Latin America and Castro was a

prominent participant at regional political meetings (Prevost 2006). Ordinary

Cubans felt significant pride regarding the importance of their leader and country

in international affairs.

The end of the Cold War and subsequent breakup of the USSR and the

Soviet Bloc produced complete disarray and distress in Cuba. The cancellation of

trade arrangements and commercial agreements, trade subsidies, and economic

assistance, subjected Cuba to the full impact of international market forces. Cuba

responded with the implementation of the "special period," a framework to

implement a series of austerity measures. Cuba plunged into a deep cycle of

scarcity in which daily life was essentially a fight for survival in the pursuit of the

most basic needs. The resulting depression reduced the gross domestic product

(GDP) by 35 percent, led to closure of hundreds of factories, and left tens of

thousands of Cubans unemployed; real wages declined by 80 percent between

1989 and 1995 (Purcell and Rothkopf 2000).

Cuba responded to the difficult times with pragmatic measures such as

the pursuit of new markets, new trading partners, free farmer's markets,

legalization of self-employment, and the legalization of U.S. dollars. Development

strategies encouraged foreign investment in all industries to include agriculture,

transportation, construction, mining, and textiles, but most importantly tourism – that could provide much needed foreign exchange (Purcell and Rothkopf 2000). Although conditions improved, the mass infusion of dollars into the economy caused some resentment among those Cubans that were unable to benefit from access to dollars, whether by remittances or participation in the tourism industry. Other side effects included internal "brain drain" to the tourism industry, rise in petty theft, prostitution, corruption and expansion of the underground economy (Pérez 2006; Prevost 2006). Castro later rolled-back some of these reforms and also conducted a new wave of repression and emigration to eliminate the dissent caused by the special period. Nevertheless, Castro still retained considerable moral authority and loyalty among vast numbers of Cubans. They had survived the extreme hardship of the special period and the tightening of the U.S. embargo…They could claim victory against the enemy.

Ten years ago, the saga of Elián Gonzalez mobilized Cuba in a nationalistic fervor that had been somewhat dormant during the special period. Having survived the death of his mother in an ill-fated crossing of the Florida Straits, the unaccompanied five-year-old arrived in the United States in November 1999, and was immediately the subject of competing claims of custody between his cousins in Miami - with strong support of the exile community - and his father in Cuba (Pérez 2006). Castro himself took the lead in arguing the father's case for custody in the international court of public opinion and seized the opportunity to mobilize the population in support of the boy's return. He was successful in both counts. The highly publicized controversy was

resolved with a raid of federal agents to recover the boy from the custody of the Miami relatives and his eventual return to Cuba. The massive demonstrations in Cuba re-enforced Cuban nationalism. Once again, Castro had beaten the enemies of the revolution: the United States and the Cuban exile community.

More recently, a series of tropical storms and hurricanes in 2008 provided a new platform for the Cuban government's propaganda campaign. The destruction caused by the storms supplied ample material for television commercials and newscasts that emphasized the government's role in protecting the people before and after the storms. Images of families being rescued by emergency workers from flooded streets with messages like "now is the time to show our unity," played to the nationalistic sentiment of Cubans. In addition, the dual strategy was manifested in the rejection of humanitarian assistance offered to Cuba by Washington. The U.S. offered to provide Cuba with contributions of $5 and $6 million dollars to cover recovery expenses, but was turned down twice by the regime in Havana (www.MiamiHerald.com). This act of defiance – even if it means continued hardship – plays well with most Cubans. They, and other Latin Americans, see it as standing up to the U.S. and not accepting gifts from the enemy.

Mechanisms

According to Hobsbawm (1990), symbols are an important component in building nationalism. Communist Cuba has certainly incorporated this concept into the daily life of Cubans. Castro capitalizes on the symbolic legacy of national heroes of the past such as the 19th century Cuban patriot, José Martí, who not

only advocated for the unity of all Cubans regardless of race or ethnicity, but also warned of the dangers of U.S. hegemony in the Western hemisphere. Others include the heroes of the Cuban revolution, such as Castro himself and Ernesto Che Guevara, who represent the ideals of the revolution; sports figures who represent the success of the Cuban system; and of course, the display of the Cuban flag virtually everywhere, as well as the singing of the national anthem before any public activity – to include the workplace, community meetings, and sports events. But symbols, or nationalistic propaganda for that matter, are useless unless they can be disseminated to the masses.

Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991) describes the importance of the media in establishing links among individuals to develop a common bond and ideology. Billboards displaying the images of Castro, Martí, and Guevara are a common medium throughout Cuba and proclaim the success of the revolution: A Castro billboard states: "*Vamos Bien*" (we are doing well), or a silhouette of the revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara with the slogan: *Seguimos Tu Ejemplo* (we follow your example). Of course, in a communist state the government controls all media, and the Cuban regime employs this mechanism very well in the dissemination of nationalistic and political ideology to the masses. The daily government newspaper, *Granma*, is full of nationalistic and revolutionary ideology reports and editorials. On a latter section of this chapter, I will provide a sample of *Granma* reports concerning the U.S. economic embargo.

Sports provide another mechanism that serves to instill pride and nationalism in the Cuban people. The government spends considerable

resources in the development of a national sports program. The success of Cubans in international sports is undeniable. For example, in the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic Games, Cuba finished in 12th place with 24 medals – highest of any Latin American nation and ahead of countries such as Brazil, Canada, and Spain. In fact in the all-time medal list, Cuba places 23 out of 126 nations (an additional 79 countries have never won any medals), well ahead of Brazil – the next Latin American country in number 33 (www.olympic.org). These figures are remarkable considering the size of Cuba, and the fact that the standings include the Winter Games, for which Cuba does not field a team. Success in sports allows the Cuban regime to claim superiority to other political systems in Latin America. Its impact on nationalism cannot be underestimated.

Although there is no political debate in Cuba, the 1976 constitution established "Organs of People Power" (OPP) to provide an element of popular participation in policy implementation (Prevost 2006), and a forum for the common people to express their personal and community concerns through elected representatives. Additionally, the revolution did achieve success in the areas of education, nutrition, and health services – virtually eliminating illiteracy, malnutrition, and providing free health care for all citizens. The government cites the OPPs and gains in social services as proof of the success of the revolution and its ideals. In general, the people consider these gains noteworthy, particularly in relation to other Latin American countries.

So far in this chapter, I have established the fact that Castro built on his revolutionary movement through repression, emigration, and intense nationalism.

He cleverly utilizes events and the media to connect with the masses. Cuban nationalism is anti-Yankee and tends to bolster a regime in confrontation with the United States (LeoGrande 1982). I have also attempted to answer the central question regarding mechanisms used by the Cuban government to foster nationalism. But the focus of this chapter is the U.S. economic embargo and Castro's dual strategy – inspired by a guerilla warfare insurgent philosophy - in dealing with the sanctions for political benefits.

U.S. Economic Sanctions

The economic embargo - initially imposed by President Eisenhower in 1960 - has held to this day, albeit in a variety of forms. The particulars of the different variations are well documented and beyond the scope of this chapter. However, there are two important points worth mentioning. First, America's justifications for sanctions have been reactive to Castro's political moves. During the 1960's and 1970's, U.S. strategy was to isolate communist Cuba economically to encourage internal discontent and weaken the regime from within.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the embargo could no longer be justified by reference to the Soviet threat or Cuban international interventions, since the loss of Soviet support made it virtually impossible to "export revolution." As a result, Washington began to define its Cuba policy in terms of democracy, human rights, and a market economy (Purcell 2001). The second point is that these policies, combined with the unwavering efforts of Castro, have had the opposite effect and serve to forge Cuban nationalism, as manifested in the

resolve and solidarity of Cubans to continue with the revolution. The overall winner has been the regime. Cubans must unite in defense of the nation against the "enemy," that being the U.S. and Cuban exile community plotting against the island. Foreign governments and international organizations have expressed their opposition as well. Castro has made political gains internally and externally; his "Dual Strategy" has been consistently validated.

Development of Cuba's Dual Strategy on the U.S. Economic Sanctions

The attention that Cuba gets in U.S. politics has not subsided since the end of the Cold War. The discourse has probably only intensified. Castro made sure of this by attacking the embargo and creating incidents that highlight the "threat" to his regime (Purcell and Rothkopf 2000). This pattern has repeated itself for almost 5 decades. However, the unpleasant truth is that for the first 30 years the leverage of the economic embargo was not as significant because the Cuban economy was subsidized by the Soviet bloc. Nonetheless, the Cuban regime would have benefited economically by investment and trade with its close neighbor, but the rising of hostile rhetoric assumed a dynamic of its own. During the 1960s, Washington continued with a policy of hostility that included not only the embargo, but the recruiting of allies to join in the isolation of Cuba. Outside the hemisphere these efforts met with little success, but among Latin American states only Mexico refused to abide by the Organization of American States (OAS). Cuba responded by increasing its efforts to export the revolution to its Latin American neighbors (LeoGrande 1982). Cuba's leaders made a decision on

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a policy of insurgent confrontation with the United States and dealing with the reality of the embargo. The stage was set for the future.

In the early 1970s U.S. policy makers began to reassess relations with Cuba. The policy of hostility had failed to destabilize the island and Castro had continued to export revolution. Concurrently, the initiation of the policy of *détente* made Cuban communism less threatening and the embargo less rational (LeoGrande 1982). As Latin American states began to abandon the sanctions, Cuba did respond with moderation in its revolutionary adventures and pressure within the U.S. to normalize relations with Cuba increased. The Ford administration moved in that direction; it eased the economic embargo for subsidiaries of U.S. firms operating abroad, voted in 1975 to relax the OAS sanctions, and dropped its demand that Cuba sever its relations with the Soviet Union as a precondition for normalization (LeoGrande 1982). The denial of aid to third countries that permitted their ships to trade with Cuba was also revoked (Purcell 2003). Additionally, private discussions began on the full range of bilateral relations. However, the movement towards normalization ended when Cuba deployed 35, 000 troops (LeoGrande 1982; Prevost 2006) to Angola in support of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) resistance to a South African incursion (Prevost 2006). Besides threatening a military response to any further Cuban interventions abroad, the U.S. declared the withdrawal of Cuban troops a precondition for resuming the normalization process. Castro chose political benefits abroad over better relations with America; that is, the continued use of the embargo for propaganda and

nationalism over economic benefits for the Cuban people. The confrontational pattern continued.

By the time President Carter assumed office in 1977, Cuban troops had begun withdrawing from Angola, and Washington sought to improve relations. A fishing agreement was negotiated and bilateral discussions on a wide range of issues resumed (LeoGrande 1982). A series of bilateral concessions followed: The U.S. halted reconnaissance over flights and lifted the ban on travel to Cuba. The Cubans responded by releasing over 4,000 political prisoners and starting a dialogue with the Cuban exile community regarding visits to Cuba and to allow reunification of families (LeoGrande 1982). These efforts culminated with the establishment of diplomatic interests sections in both capitals (Purcell 2003) – a move just short of diplomatic recognition. But Carter's efforts to normalize relations collapsed in 1978 when Cuba sent 20,000 troops to Ethiopia in support of the communist military junta in a border conflict with Somalia. Carter felt that the Cuban leader had betrayed him (Purcell 2003). A succession of mini-crises that included the presence of Soviet fighter aircraft and combat units in Cuba, as well as the 1980 flotilla of Cuban refugees from Mariel,[37] further deteriorated relations (LeoGrande 1982). Once again, an opportunity was lost as Castro selected continued confrontation over normalization of relations.

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[37] The Mariel Boatlift (April- September 1980) was a mass exodus of Cubans following an economic turndown and the subsequent announcement by Castro that Cubans that wanted to leave could do so. Political implications resulted when it became known that a number of exiles included convicts from Cuban jails and patients from mental institutions. By the time the boatlift ended by mutual agreement, over 125,000 Cubans had migrated to Florida with the help of the exile community.

President Ronald Reagan assumed a tough stance with Cuba as his administration promoted the tightening of the embargo and the re-isolation of Cuba within the hemisphere (Prevost 2006). Of course, Cuba continued with its confrontational policy with the U.S. as it assisted the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, pursued political influence in Grenada, and shipped arms to guerillas in El Salvador. Overall, Cuba had gained politically with its foreign interventions, anti-U.S. policy, and the continuation of the U.S. embargo. This was especially true through Reagan's tenure, as most of Latin America resented his aggressive foreign policy across the region. Externally, Cuba assumed a prominent role in non-aligned movement of Third-World Countries, and rallied Latin American countries on a nationalistic basis against the U.S. support of the British in the Falklands/Malvinas War of 1982, thus helping breakdown Cuba's isolation in Latin America (Prevost 2006). Internally, Castro continued to use the embargo, and Cuba's improved international relations, to strengthen the anti-Yankee Cuban nationalism, which of course tends to bolster a regime in confrontation with an external power (LeoGrande 1982).

Up to this point, the argument could be made that although Castro can use the embargo for propaganda and nationalistic purposes, the political gains combined with Soviet subsidies more than offset the economic gains of lifting the embargo. Thus, it was an easy decision for the Cuban government to continue the pattern of confrontation. However, the status quo changed with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. By 1993 Cuba had lost 75% of its import capacity, and the country's economy had contracted by 50%. Outside the

context of war, no modern economy had been so devastated in the twentieth century (Prevost 2006). The resulting hardships on the Cuban people have already been discussed. The conditions were set for the Cuban regime to complement some of the pragmatic measures already undertaken to improve the economy – such as development of the tourism industry and small capitalistic projects – with efforts to improve economic relations with the U.S. But would Washington respond? It did not. President George H.W. Bush continued the hard line against Cuba by signing the Cuba Democracy Act – which gave the Executive Branch the option of selective lifting of sanctions to reward positive actions by Cuba (Purcell 2003; Roy 2000). However, the election of President Clinton offered a new beginning and an opening to better relations.

U.S. policy makers had expected the revolutionary government to collapse in the absence of Soviet bloc support (Prevost 2006). But the regime survived and the U.S. sought to increase the pressure through the Helms-Burton (H-B) 1996 Act. The Clinton administration opposed the legislation because of strong opposition from U.S. allies[38] (Prevost 2006) and had even launched a series of "people to people" initiatives to try and build unofficial bridges to Cuban society (Roy 2000). Further, Secretary of State Warren Christopher issued statements regarding "U.S. calibrated responses" to Castro's actions, an indication of U.S. willingness to move in the direction of gradually normalizing relations with Cuba

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[38] The Helms-Burton Act strengthened the embargo by extending its application internationally to foreign companies trading with Cuba, and penalized foreign companies allegedly trafficking in property formerly owned by U.S. citizens but expropriated by Cuba after the 1959 revolution (www.state.gov).

(Suchliki 2003). Passage of the H-B act was not a done deal. On one side stood the agricultural, travel, and energy lobbies, as well as Cuban-American family associations, and cultural, religious, and humanitarian groups (Roy 2000); on the other, stood the powerful Cuban-American lobby and their 6-8% of the vote in the swing state of Florida. But once again, Castro forced the hand of Congress and the President.

In early February, the Cuban government unleashed a wave of brutal repression against *Concilio Cubano*, an umbrella organization of dissident groups on the island, and arrested more than 100 of its members - thus reinforcing Castro's opposition to any kind of political opening within the island (Suchlicki 2003). Worse yet, on February 24, 1996, Cuban MIG-23 and MIG-29 fighter jets shot down two civilian Cessna airplanes from the Miami-based *"Brothers to the Rescue"* activist group. Granted, the group had been warned in the past about violating Cuban airspace while dropping leaflets on the island and spotting for rafters; and on this particular date at least one of three airplanes (specific reason why the third aircraft was not shot down is unknown) is known to have entered Cuban airspace. Nonetheless, this is hardly a reason for engaging unarmed aircraft with hostile fire. Other measures such as escorting the aircraft beyond national airspace or instructing them to land would have been appropriate. In a highly centralized regime like Cuba's – and with likely international ramifications - the order to execute such an action had to come from the highest levels of the Cuban government. Undoubtedly, that would be the Castro brothers. The timing, in the middle of Congressional debate of the H-B Act, was hardly coincidental.

Castro made a conscientious decision to shoot down those aircraft knowing full well that it would lead to passage of the H-B legislation and tightening of the embargo. Thus, the incident shattered any near-term possibility of rapprochement between the United States and Cuba. As a result, President Clinton, who at first had been ambivalent, appeared compelled to sign the H-B bill into law on March 12, 1996 (Roy 2000).

Internally, Castro capitalized with the incident and passage of the H-B Act. "National sovereignty" had been at stake and thus few Cubans sympathized with the *Brothers to the Rescue* pilots; and the tightening of the embargo was effective at stirring strong U.S. sentiments. For example, following passage of the H-B Act, Castro organized numerous island-wide demonstrations and protests (Katz 2005). These of course served to build nationalistic fervor and distract Cubans from the failures of their own regime. Externally, the aircraft incident brought some initial international condemnation, but this was outweighed by the H-B international implications. Despite the aircraft controversy, Cuba managed to rally other countries to its side serving to bolster Cuban nationalism and the government's legitimacy in its "fight" with the U.S. Since 1994, the United Nations General Assembly has voted (by margins as large as 157 to 2) to support the embargo's repeal. Moreover, powerful figures such as Pope John Paul II have criticized the "unjust and ethically unacceptable" U.S. embargo – helping Castro seize the moral high ground (Katz 2005; Roy 2000). During November 2007, the Summit of Leaders from Latin America, Spain, and Portugal called for the U.S. to end the economic embargo (Miami Herald 2007). More recently, at the

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December 2008 *Latin American Summit*, leaders not only welcomed Raúl Castro

to the summit meeting, but also condemned the U.S. embargo

Further evidence of Castro's dual strategy can be implied from quotes and

reactions of Cuban officials to passage of the H-B Act. Carlos Lage, executive

secretary of the Cuban Council of Ministers, argued that the H-B Act had a

corresponding political benefit, it "has played a role in unifying the Cuban people,

has unified the international community, [and] has increased our adrenaline flow"

(Roy 2006). Moreover, he predicted that the law would not interfere with the

economic recovery of Cuba – as forty-three nations had invested in 143 new

ventures (Roy 2006). The H-B Act also helped the Cuban government when

things did not go well. Cuban officials have made use of H-B to explain real or

anticipated economic problems by stating that the law creates a "climate of

uncertainty" for investors and it is the cause of any misery and hardship

experienced by the Cuban people (Roy 2006). As explained earlier, the media is

the primary mechanism for getting this message to the masses. The *Granma*

website (www.granma.cu) – a reflection of the government's newspaper – offered

the following recent (April 2009) headlines in the front page of the international

edition:

- *United Nations Vote Condemns Embargo of Superpower that Intends to Isolate Cuba*

- *The Entire Planet Condemns the Blockade*

- *Success of Cuban Team in ALBA[39] Games and World Series of Platform Diving*

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[39] ALBA stands for the *Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas*, a regional organization created by Venezuela to promote alternatives to capitalism.

- *Fidel talks about the Che [Guevara] Documentary*

- *President of United Nations Human Rights Counsel Praises Cuba*

Further, the front page includes links to editorials by "comrade" Fidel, as well as links to his principal speeches. Thus, these headlines serve to fuel the national sentiment of Cubans against the enemy that – through the embargo – attempts to crush the nation; the sports headline – as discussed earlier – is used to instill pride in Cubans and their system; and the use of Che Guevara as a symbol of revolutionary values validates Hobsbawm's (1990) thesis on the importance of symbols to build nationalism. Such use of media and propaganda to connect the elites, that do the "imagining," with the masses, validates Anderson's theory of "Imagined Communities."

Conclusion

"The Revolution has not yet started." Fidel Castro, 1999

The Cuban revolution fused two of Latin America's most genuine characteristics: a thirst for nationalism and the role of the *caudillo* (strong man) (Roy 2000). Fidel Castro and his close group of revolutionaries have successfully made the connection with the masses to create this "imagined community" through the media and other mechanisms. A proven technique for fostering nationalism is a conflict with an external foe. History is full of examples: the Japanese invasion actually united the Chinese communists and nationalists in a wave of nationalism during World War II; and the Argentines supported the military dictatorship in the invasion of the Falkland/ Malvinas islands in 1982, to

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cite just two examples. Castro effectively utilizes the embargo to stir strong anti-U.S. sentiments and effectively "maintain" an external enemy alive. While the United States hopes the sanctions will force change, or perhaps the collapse of the regime, the Cuban government blames the United States for the chronic economic problems within the island.

This chapter has set out to prove the thesis that the Castro regime seeks to continue the U.S. imposed economic embargo as a mechanism to promote nationalism and international support. This dual strategy promotes the regime internally while concurrently it obtains international legitimacy. The central concept to prove my thesis is the wave of missed opportunities by Cuba that would have possibly led to the eventual termination of the embargo. Each time, Castro consistently chose continued confrontation. I suggest that this is not coincidence, but part of a systematic approach to continue the embargo. Granted, a case for the other side of the argument – that Castro truly wants an end to the embargo – can certainly be made. After all, Castro has spent significant resources lobbying U.S. interest groups and politicians. However, that is simply part of the strategy. The Cuban regime must "appear" to want to end the embargo – otherwise they would lose all credibility in the eyes of Cubans and the international community. Consequently, the dual strategy is conducted by the decision makers of the Cuban government – possibly only the Castro brothers – which is of course a feasible course of action in a dictatorship, particularly one as centralized as Cuba's.

Over the last ten years, the U.S. has tried both partial engagement as well as an aggressive approach. In 1999, President Clinton announced an offer to increase communications with Cuba, combined with an offer of food and medicine (Roy 2000). Predictably, Castro chose resistance. Cuban Economy Minister José Rodríguez called the offer "crumbs." Ricardo Alarcón, president of the Cuban National Assembly, went further calling the offer "subversive, meddlesome, and counterrevolutionary" (Roy 2006). The apparent disappearance of the enemy could not be allowed; the threat had to continue. More recently (October of 2007), President Bush gave his first stand-alone address on Cuba in four years (www.foxnews.com) challenging the dictatorship and encouraging dissidents to step up efforts on the island in pursuit of change. Bush proposed new initiatives to follow-through on his call: the creation of an international "freedom fund" to help Cuba's potential rebuilding of the country; a U.S. licensing of private groups to provide Internet access to Cuban students; and an invitation to Cuban youth to join a scholarship program (www.foxnews.com). All this of course plays right into Castro's hand. While condemning the speech for all the usual "anti-imperialist" reasons, the Cuban authorities found it quite to their liking, and so embarrassingly out of touch, that they chose to broadcast and print it on the island media (Miami Herald 2007).[40] They were comfortable with broadcasting the speech because it strengthens their position. Castro had also pre-empted the speech by saying that Bush had a

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[40] Bush's statement about Cuba's "socialist paradise is a tropical gulag," was deleted.

vision equivalent to a new "conquest of Cuba by force" and that he [Bush] "could spark World War III (www.foxnews.com).

The recent election of U.S President Barack Obama has definitely changed the dynamic of U.S.-Cuba relations. Mr. Obama has declared the need for closer relations and has lifted remittances and travel restrictions to the island for exile families. In return, Raúl Castro declared that Cuba was willing to discuss "everything" with U.S counterparts to include human rights, freedom of the press and expression, and political prisoners. At the April 2009 *Summit of the Americas*, Obama responded by saying that Washington seeks a new beginning with Cuba, but also called for Cuba to release political prisoners and reduce taxes on remittances from the U.S. Unfortunately, Fidel immediately intervened, reducing expectations for improved bilateral relations, when he wrote an editorial in *Granma* stating that Obama "without a doubt misinterpreted Raúl's declarations," suggesting that Obama had no right to dare suggest Cuba make even small concessions (www.MiamiHerald.com). It appears that once again an attempt for improved relations by a U.S. President has been derailed by Fidel.

The embargo is a complex issue with many variables and actors: the powerful lobby of Cuban-American voters in the swing state of Florida, with its 27 electoral votes; U.S. economic interests; increased isolation of U.S. foreign policy; human rights; and many others. Whether the sanctions are effective or not was not the subject of this chapter. It is evident that for 50 years the embargo has failed to bring down the Cuban communist regime; but there is also no guarantee that engagement would have led to any kind of political reform, or

change of existing internal policies that lie at the root of Cuba's failed economy. It is also clear that many Cubans have not bought Castro's rhetoric or imposed nationalism. They risk their lives crossing the Florida Straits in pursuit of freedom, and many in Cuba view the exiles as fortunate to have escaped and live in freedom, democracy and economic prosperity. But the Castro brothers still enjoy the support of the majority of Cubans on the island. Therefore, it is safe to say that prosecution of the "Dual Strategy" will continue for as long as the Castro brothers – and particularly Fidel – are making the strategic decisions.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

In this work, I have set out to prove that the following relationship was the formula for success in both the Chinese and Cuban revolutions:

$$\textbf{Guerilla Warfare} => \textbf{Grand Strategy} => \textbf{Nationalism}$$
$$X_1 \qquad\qquad X_2 \qquad\qquad Y$$

An initial requirement to apply this relationship of variables is the existence of several pre-conditions that can create a revolutionary setting and contribute to the success of failure of a particular insurgent movement. Factors such as geography, demography, land tenure, and socio-economic status interact with one another to increase revolutionary potential and shape a particular setting. Issues or friction in one or more of these pre-conditions worked in favor of the insurgents in China and Cuba, as both settings were ripe for revolution. Their development can be best explained through Jack Goldstone's *An Analytical Framework* (1991), which frames revolutions by analyzing three overlapping processes of state breakdown, revolutionary contention of anti-government groups, and state rebuilding once the dominant group achieves power and attempts to consolidate the new regime. Accelerators such as military defeat, and economic crises serve to increase the revolutionary "fever' described by Crane Brinton, in his work *The Anatomy of Revolution* (1938). Finally, as suggested by

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Barrington Moore (1966) a catalyst normally ignites the revolutionary setting into an actual revolution. I have suggested throughout this thesis, that guerilla warfare was the catalyst for the Chinese and Cuban revolution. More importantly, however, guerilla warfare was the principal component of the revolutionary theories designed by Mao, and Castro's chief lieutenant - Che Guevara.

Mao refined the Marxist Theory of Revolution to fit the particular Chinese setting. Mao's *People's War* subsequently inspired Fidel Castro's guerilla revolutionary campaign and Guevara's *Foco* Theory. They both realized that the source of strength to defeat a superior army was the peasants, but their strategies were slightly different. Mao concluded that a peasant Red Army, thoroughly indoctrinated and with a nationalistic consciousness, was the key to the revolutionary struggle. People, not weapons would be the decisive factor. The Red Army was co-equal to the Communist Party as the vanguard of the revolution. On the other hand, for Castro and Guevara, the peasants provided sanctuary and the initial recruits of their guerilla band, but the focus was the support of the middle class. Castro's intent was to energize and unite the majority of the population in a movement of liberation. Castro did not necessarily follow a dogmatic formula or ideology but relied mostly on a nationalistic platform. Castro and Guevara saw the guerilla band as the one and only vanguard of the revolution. However, in both cases, the principal instrument in their respective strategies was indeed guerilla warfare.

In these two case studies, guerilla warfare went beyond simply military tactics techniques, and procedures. It was the catalyst for mobilizing the peasant

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masses, for political indoctrination, and the main ingredient in a grand strategy to

mobilize the resources required for revolutionary victory. Guerilla warfare was the

mechanism for political work from the bottom-up, which combined with top-down

strategic organization, resulted in the buildup of nationalism – the objective of the

grand strategy. The principal takeaway regarding guerilla warfare in these two

case studies is that it is not simply a stand-alone form of violence in the pursuit of

power, but that to achieve success when revolutionary conditions exist, guerilla

warfare must shape the grand strategy that incorporates political, social,

economic, and psychological variables, with an end state of maximum

mobilization of resources. As per Charles Tilly's Theory (1978), mobilization

seeks control of manpower and materiel resources. A successful grand strategy

then maximizes the resources available to the insurgents, while it minimizes

those available to the government. Mao and Castro developed such a plan of

action – a dual strategy - for mobilizing popular support resources.

The Dual Strategy is a strategy of deception because it seeks wide

popular support of groups or classes with divergent interests. Thus, in order to

appeal to the different groups, the insurgent's message is modified according to

which group it is targeting at a particular time and place. The dual strategy

contains two principal components: internal and external. In general terms, the

internal strategy focused on securing the sympathy and support of the peasant

base. By promising radical social and agrarian reform, having peasants comprise

the bulk of the insurgent force, and basing guerilla operations from the

countryside, the peasantry was assured that their interests were indeed the main

effort of the revolutionary struggle. The external strategy focused on securing the alliance of the majority of the upper and middle classes as well as the international community, in order to isolate the government. By stressing a liberal patriotic image, defending justice, and calling for unity and moderate reforms, the insurgents sought to widen their appeal to the majority of the population and classes of society.

The conduct of a Dual Strategy carries certain risks. Overlaps do occur between the internal and external components that result in contradictions. For example, the promise of radical agrarian reform contradicts the protection of property rights for landowners. The solution is to subordinate one component to the other based on the elements of time, space, and participants. Only a strong and charismatic leader can manage these elements and maintain credibility, particularly when violence is involved. Mao and Castro were successful because they skillfully administered these contradictions - and within a revolutionary setting - expertly incorporated several variables such as ideology, organization, and violence - to achieve the mobilization of resources that could challenge the actor in power. However, at its core, the dual strategy requires the mechanism of guerilla warfare to measure progress and provide credibility in the revolutionary struggle, and thus provide focus and direction in pursuit of nationalism – the principal objective for the dual strategy.

In a revolutionary setting, the actor that is better organized to obtain access to resources has the best chance of achieving dominance. The appeal of nationalism cuts across all classes of society and strongly enables the

mobilization of resources by the revolutionaries. In fact, an ideology that appeals to national identity is probably the most powerful symbolic means of mobilizing revolutionary support and offers the greatest flexibility in appealing to all the society's classes (Greene 1999). Mao was able to achieve the proper mix of communism and nationalism. Communist ideology provided Mao with a coherent and articulate system that resonated with peasants and facilitated their support for revolution (Greene 1999). But the dual strategy at times de-emphasized communist ideology and instead focused on nationalism in order to obtain broad mass support. The Japanese invaders facilitated the growth of nationalism as the communists were successful in fostering an image of conducting guerilla warfare in defense of the people. Castro relied exclusively on nationalism; in fact, when exactly did Castro turn Marxist is not clear; what is clear is that in Cuba communist ideology was either non-existent or relatively unimportant until after revolutionary victory (The Economist 2009). Mr. Castro relied on the long-standing hostility of Cubans towards the strong economic and political influence of the Unites States, to build a nationalistic platform. In sum, guerillas must appear as nationalists, otherwise they will not win the mass support required to challenge the actor in power

Alexis de Tocqueville in *The French Revolution and the Growth of the State* (1848) stated that revolutions often strengthen the power of the state. The protracted popular war of the Chinese Revolution devastated the country. Nevertheless, the new communist government was able to transform China from a declining and dependent power into an assertive and independent great power

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(Katz 2001). For a short period of time, Communist China did seek to spread its brand of revolution elsewhere in the developing world, but to fully assert itself, China had to become part of the world community. Although the *Cultural Revolution* brought a period of social and political chaos combined with economic disarray, China remained a power player as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and as a nuclear state. It also became a broker in the bipolar world of the Cold War as it shifted emphasis of relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, while maintaining an independent foreign policy.

In 1978, China adopted a dual strategy of a different variety: the separation of economics from communist ideology, with the introduction of market reforms that focus on capitalism with a heavy mixture of government control. As a result, China has become one of the world's fastest growing economies, and for the most part - except for flare-ups with Taiwan in 1995-96 and with the U.S. in 2001 - China has played a cautious game internationally, focusing on promoting policies that increase economic growth and maintain the status quo (The Economist 2009). China's importance in the world today is undeniable with the world's second largest economy and the largest standing army.

In Cuba, the revolution succeeded on the cheap without a long protracted struggle. It also became a stronger state – at least internationally. The revolution transformed what was essentially a U.S. colony into an independent state. The Cuban revolution inspired the "left" throughout the world and ignited revolutionary struggles across the region. Cuba actively pursued a policy of vigorously

exporting revolution through its support of international revolutionary solidarity, Third World nationalism, and by providing arms and funds to insurgents (Childs 1995), as it sought to advance their interest and influence. Essentially, Fidel Castro internationalized the *foco* revolutionary theory by continuing an insurgent strategy that placed Cuba as the *foco* within a global context. Cuban-inspired insurgent movements succeeded in Nicaragua in the 1970s, but failed in Venezuela in the 1960s and Bolivia in 1967 (Weitz 1986). Although Mr. Castro did stop trying to overthrow Latin American governments more than two decades ago, shortly before his Soviet sponsor collapsed, Cuba's influence is still relevant today. Its achievements in health, education, and social welfare provided a credible model for Hugo Chávez *Bolivarian* revolution in Venezuela, who in turn has influenced a socialist transformation in Bolivia, Ecuador, and a return of the *Sandinistas* in Nicaragua.

Fidel Castro successfully refined the dual strategy to adapt to changing conditions. The external component focused on promoting his revolution, developing a strong following in Latin America, enhancing Cuba's influence, and increasing Cuba's value as an ally to the Soviet Union, in order to obtain and then continue its sponsorship. The internal component targeted the Cuban people and their continued support of the revolution through the buildup of nationalism. Mr. Castro consistently presented himself as a nationalist first and a communist second. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the dual strategy has continued with the U.S. economic embargo as the principal tool utilized by Castro to provide focus in its execution. In this work, I have argued that the

Castro regime has sought to continue the economic embargo as a mechanism to promote nationalism and international support. Castro needs a conflict in order to create a climate of permanent confrontation that allows him to justify his absolute power and economic policies, under the pretense that he is defending the homeland. Without a conflict, there is no justification for the extreme hardship imposed on the Cuban people.

Castro has continued to validate this dual strategy with positive results: the regime has considerable international political and even economic support; and the regime has remained in power. Cuba now receives substantial aid from Venezuela's Hugo Chávez oil money. In turn Mr. Chávez benefits from the services of Cuban doctors and political and security advice designed to keep Mr. Chávez in power. A handful of other radical socialists who have achieved office through elections such as Bolivia's Evo Morales also seek inspiration in Mr. Castro. He is treated with respect by social democrats such as Brazil's Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. In many cases that is because he offered them friendship in the past, when they were persecuted by dictatorships that had American backing. This is of course ironic because Castro has oppressed Cubans as well. The same applies to Presidents Cristina Fernandez of Argentina and Michelle Bachelet of Chile, who have recently visited Cuba and expressed support. Additionally, Latin America is now united in wanting to end the diplomatic isolation and many would like the U.S. to lift its long-standing economic embargo against the island (Summit of the Americas – April 2009). Nonetheless, fifty years after the revolution, and the subsequent imposition of communism, the island is

once again close to bankruptcy (The Economist 2009). If success and failure are measured by the quality of life of ordinary Cubans, then undoubtedly, the revolution has failed; however, it has succeeded in the minds of the Castro brothers and Cubans who are proud of their "imagined community."

So what does the future hold for these two countries? There are many who predict that China will be the next challenger to the United States. But China's military power is still far behind that of the U.S. particularly in the naval component. China has not been a naval power for centuries and building one to match that of the U.S. will take decades. The question is whether China can remain stable as it resolves the contradictions associated with a relatively free market economy and a communist political system, as it occurs when economic decisions are made for political reasons, resulting in corruption and inefficiency. Further, the relative prosperity of the coastal regions compared with the mostly poor interior can lead to friction and conflict. It is likely then that China will continue to seek, and maintain, the status quo for the short term; however, the current system appears unsustainable for the long term. Slow and measured political reform is possible, but also a figure like Mao might emerge once again to bring equality and social reform through a strong nationalistic and pro-communist rhetoric. In fact, China's "leftists" are becoming more active as the global economy sputters (The Economist 2009). It is then quite possible that the dual strategy will re-emerge once again in China.

The prospect of reform of Cuba looked promising when in February 2008 Fidel stepped down as president in favor of his brother Raúl, who is considered

more of a pragmatist than an ideologue. Further, the election of U.S. President

Barack Obama, who promised closer relations with Cuba during his campaign,

offered a unique opportunity for change. However, since then, Raúl declared,

during the 50th anniversary of the revolution, that the: "U.S. enemy will never stop

being aggressive, dominant, and treacherous;"[41] this was followed by the rebuttal

of Fidel regarding Mr. Obama's statements at the *Summit of the Americas* in

April; finally, the Castro brothers asserted their dictatorial authority by sacking

some of the younger and reform-minded officials in a recent government

shakeup. Thus, the likelihood of reform is low, as long as the Castro brothers and

the old revolutionary guard that comprise the inner circle remain in power.

However, the regime is unsustainable long term considering the island's weak

economy, lack of resources and infrastructure, and of course the advanced age

of its leadership. Although the dual strategy will continue for the foreseeable

future, regime change is imminent for Cuba…However, only the Cuban people

should make that decision.

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[41] As quoted on www.breitbart.com (1/2/2009)

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