Civil-Military Relations in Vietnam

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The propensities for domestic violence in emerging nations during the past decade do not originate in international cold-war politics but are a consequence of the unstructured dynamics of independence and development. With the passing of colonialism there appeared new problems, many of staggering magnitude: social and economic advances fell short of popular expectations; internal development was uneven; social reform lagged behind industrialization; old elites refused to yield ground to new elites; ethnic minorities were no longer protected by colonial government. Whereas comparable problems have cropped up in Western society over a span of centuries, emerging nations are confronted by the convergence of these issues in extreme form at a single point in history. Immediate solutions are demanded at a time prior to the evolution of domestic political institutions capable of resolving them.

Further intensifying the opportunities for disorder is the weakened hold of traditionalism in emerging nations. The impact of the West, the desire for modernization, and the development process itself have freed populations from the traditional order and age-old restraints, a change which may facilitate development while enhancing the probability of domestic violence. Where violence becomes a norm in society there is an inevitable tendency for the military to play a prominent political role. In the face of social unrest, the army—as in Egypt, Korea, and Pakistan—may be tempted to supplant the

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existing civil government in the belief that it can maintain order more effectively and accelerate modernization. Even when the military does not assume direct control of government, the high expectation of violence in emerging nations requires civil authorities to divert scarce resources to the military establishment and rely heavily upon the army as a means of maintaining political stability. As specialists in the management of violence increase their influence in national affairs, the nation will begin to approximate what Harold Lasswell has called "the garrison-state."¹ In older industrial states, the tendency toward the garrison-state results from the belief that there is a high probability of war involving nation against nation. In emerging nations, the importance of the military is just as likely to be a consequence of a high probability of violence from within. The dominant role of the military in new states, as Edward Shils has observed, "is evidence that there are weaknesses in these states which cannot be compensated by those political institutions which were inherited or established at the moment of independence."²

Throughout the remainder of this paper I will be concerned with the role of the military in the Republic of Vietnam and the relationship between civil and military authorities in that nation confronted by the most advanced type of domestic violence, guerrilla warfare. In order to examine this problem in a meaningful context, I feel it necessary to analyze certain historical political developments as well as several theoretical concepts relevant to the strategy of guerrilla warfare. This paper will differ in several respects from most

²The Military in The Political Development of New States" by Edward Shils p. 11 in mimeographed collection of essays edited by J. J. Johnson for Rand Corporation, The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries. (Shils article pp. 8-130)
civil-military studies in that I will not focus on the military as an elite
group, a political group, or as a force for modernization, the three most
common types of civil-military studies in developing areas. Instead, I will
attempt to introduce a neglected facet of civil-military relations by assuming,
where possible, the perspective of the administrative sciences. This will
require me to engage in a brief description of the administrative and military
structures in Vietnam and their functional relationship with one another. If
this paper has any single orientation, it is that there are dysfunctional aspects
to civil-military relations in South Vietnam susceptible of immediate amelioration
through administrative reorganization.

The guerrilla war now imperiling South Vietnam can be traced to the
unresolved issues of the Geneva Conference in 1954 that ended the long conflict in
Indo-China. In the wake of Dienbienphu, the victorious Vietminh representatives
at Geneva felt they had a valid claim to the entire Vietnamese peninsula. As
a probable consequence of pressure from the Soviet Union, combined with the
genuine fear that the United States would intervene unless the war were brought
to a close, the Communist authorities postponed their claim to the entire
territory of Vietnam and agreed to the creation of two separate Vietnamese
states as a temporary expedient. Underscoring the temporary character of
divided Vietnam was a declaration appended to the Geneva Agreements, providing
that meetings would be held by the two Vietnamese states within 300 days for
the purpose of discussing reunification elections. Considering Ho Chi Minh’s
popularity as the leader in the war for independence, this election provision
seemed to assure the Communists eventual control of the entire country without
the risks of continuing the war against France.

An obstacle to Vietminh ambitions appeared when the United States and the government of South Vietnam refused to sign the Geneva Agreements and subsequently let it be known that they felt no obligation to abide by the provision for reunification elections. Unless the Communists were willing to relinquish their claim to the southern portion of Vietnam, which they were not, they could seek to achieve their goal of a united Vietnam through three alternative courses: They could attempt to reconvene the Geneva powers in the hope that they would compel South Vietnam to comply with the election provision; they could take direct military action against South Vietnam, relying on their own well trained, experienced 350,000-man army; or, as a third alternative, they could attempt to undermine the already weak South Vietnamese government through internal subversion and guerrilla warfare.

Initially when the South Vietnamese authorities refused to even consider the question of reunification elections, the North Vietnamese government protested to Britain and the Soviet Union, the co-chairmen of the Geneva conference. At the time, the Soviets accepted the British position that the preservation of peace in Vietnam was more important than an attempt to compel South Vietnam to hold elections. In terms of realpolitik, the Soviet Union recognized the extent of the American commitment to South Vietnam and was unprepared to support North Vietnam or Communist China in a war against the United States at the time. For this same reason, North Vietnam was deterred from pursuing her second alternative--direct military action against the South. Thus, as long as the Hanoi government remained determined to establish control over the entire nation, the only course open to her was to encourage internal subversion.
The decision to rely upon internal subversion and, if necessary, guerrilla warfare was one for which North Vietnam was well prepared. During the long struggle against the French, the Vietminh had transformed guerrilla warfare from an art to a science. Sending dedicated cadres into almost every village, the Vietminh were able to exact the support of the peasantry and make it impossible for the French to control the countryside, thereby confine themselves to the cities. In what is now part of South Vietnam, the Vietminh were particularly effective with the indigenous Montagnard tribes-people in the Central Highlands and the rice-growing peasants in certain areas of the fertile Mekong Delta south of Saigon.

The Communists never completely relinquished their hold in these two areas. Although there was a 300-day period of free movement after the Geneva Agreements to allow Vietnamese to choose whether they wanted to live in the North or the South, the Communist authorities chose to retain a network of support in the South rather than instruct their followers to emigrate northward. Approximately 900,000 refugees from North Vietnam resettled in the South (mostly Catholics); only a fraction of that number left South Vietnam to resettle in the North. Of those who did go North, many would one day return to their families in the South in order to organize the peasant population in a campaign of subversion, terrorism, and outright assault against the government of South Vietnam. When the time appeared propitious, the Communists would be well prepared to launch a long-range guerrilla war against the South Vietnamese government. By anticipating their own probable course of future action, the Vietminh kept intact the two essential ingredients for a successful guerrilla campaign, the same ingredients that had led to the downfall of French rule—a population base and a territorial base.
There is obvious irony that in an age of thermo-nuclear weapons, intercontinental missiles, and men in space, the most prevalent form of organized violence since World War II is guerrilla warfare. China, Greece, Indo-China, the Philippines, Malaya, Cuba, Algeria, South Vietnam, and Laos among other nations have all experienced anti-governmental revolutions. Each of these revolutionary struggles took on qualities peculiar to the political and environmental context in which it was being urged. Notwithstanding local variations, there are definite patterns to guerrilla warfare as it has occurred in developing nations. These patterns and strategies of guerrilla warfare have been discussed in reasonably accurate terms by a number of revolutionary leaders, most recently Mao Tse-Tung, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Che Guevara. The fundamentals of guerrilla war, therefore, are as available to governments as to guerrillas.

The most important difference between guerrilla and conventional warfare is that its immediate goal is neither the defeat of enemy troops in decisive battle nor the seizure and possession of a territorial target: the goal of a guerrilla force is nothing less than the population itself. The critical factor in guerrilla warfare is the ability of the revolutionary force to organize the population politically and win its active support. As a population is won over through the systematic application of political, psychological, and military weapons, the official government and army are denied the support of their own people. The government, so to speak, is left isolated from the nation.

Guerrilla warfare is essentially a violent form of political competition. Unless there is political malaise in government a guerrilla movement cannot
persist. In order to persist and eventually succeed, a guerrilla movement must capitalize on the weaknesses, injustices, and deficiencies of the political system and identify itself with the unfulfilled expectations of strategic groups. This is a theme repeated over and again by Mao Tse-Tung and echoed in the thought and action of other guerrilla practitioners: "Without a political goal, guerrilla warfare must fail, as it must if its political objectives do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and their sympathy, cooperation and assistance cannot be gained... Because guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation." 1

In South Vietnam, the Viet Cong guerrillas have aggravated the country's political problems rather than created them. They have turned to their own advantage the grievances, anxieties, discontents, and expectations of a socially uprooted and, to a significant extent, politically alienated population. A peasant population not yet integrated into the political community provides an attractive target for those intent upon capturing control of South Vietnam. Through terror and persuasion the Viet Cong has been able to recruit personnel, collect taxes, procure shelter, supplies and materials, and, most important, be protected and concealed by the peasant.

As the success of a guerrilla movement hinges on its ability to win over the population, conversely, the most effective counter-guerrilla strategy is to devise means to retain or regain the support of that same population. It is not, however, an easy matter for a government challenged by guerrilla terrorism to recognize this problem and achieve popular support. There is an almost

instinctive tendency for governments subject to guerrilla warfare to respond
to peasant disloyalty with indiscriminate reprisals and to rely primarily on
violence to maintain control. It is after all, not likely that a government which
lacks the political capacity to prevent or at least curtail a guerrilla movement
in its early stages will demonstrate the political adaptability and acumen to
establish its popularity with critical target groups at a time when these have
already begun to make overt commitments to an insurgent force.

The experiences of Malaya and the Philippines, on the other hand, reveal
that governments can improve their own political capacities during a guerrilla
war and do not necessarily have to succumb to the political traps created by
the fact of insurgency. The defeat of Communist terrorists in Malaya and
the suppression of the Hukbalahap rebellion would have been impossible if
these governments had not had military organizations which far outnumbered
the guerrillas; yet, it was not the military factor which was decisive in the
Philippines and Malaya, but the political factor. If overwhelming military
strength were sufficient to defeat a guerrilla force the French tri-color would
still fly over Indo-China and Algeria. The tide of battle in Malaya and the
Philippines turned only after the introduction of new political leaders, symbols,
and policies aimed at winning popular loyalty for the governments.

An experienced student of guerrilla warfare, Franklin A. Lindsay, has
concluded that "the first step in mobilizing a civilian population against Communist
subversion and guerrilla attack is to establish a set of political goals expressed
in terms that the average person can understand. They must be goals that strike
a sympathetic response and that aim to remove the inequities in the existing
society and the grievances they have caused." This is, however, only a

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necessary first step in the more difficult job of integrating alienated groups into the political community, an assignment made more difficult in emerging nations by the absence of organized groups capable of articulating interests. This places a heavy burden on political leaders and administrators to remain sensitive to popular demands, although these demands may not be articulated.

It is not reasonable to expect the overnight appearance of Western-style interest groups in peasant societies; it is reasonable to expect that the government of a primarily peasant society shall be sensitive and responsive if it is to avoid organized domestic violence. For example, detection of the South Vietnamese peasants’ negative reaction to the government’s policy of using forced labor and its perpetuation of purposeless petty tyrannies does not require particular governmental sensitivity to detect popular dissatisfaction. Of all those unsatisfied peasant demands the most frequently heard is the insistence on the need for protection. Constant war and violence have made the peasant highly conscious of physical security and he insists that his government provide it. South Vietnam’s dilemma is that to win the struggle it is necessary to have the loyalty of the peasant; yet, in order to gain this loyalty the government must provide him with protection, and this cannot be accomplished unless the peasant ceases to cooperate with the Viet Cong. At this juncture in South Vietnam, after a guerrilla movement has become well established, political moves by the government cannot give the peasant the protection he desires. Yet military action alone cannot restore security—unless it is coupled with an extensive program of political reform designed to eliminate original causes of social unrest.
The dilemma I have described is characteristic of the complexities of evolving an effective anti-guerrilla strategy. Once a guerrilla movement has established roots in the countryside, neither political nor military action alone can put an end to the movement: The only effective counter-guerrilla strategy (which, I might add, worked in Malaya and the Phillipines) is a two-pronged political and military assault against the sources of the problem. This requires the functional coordination of civil-military activities at all levels of government from the presidency down through the smallest village and hamlet. The two structures must integrate their activities, each complementing the program of the other while both remain conscious that the war they are waging is fundamentally a political war.

Implicit in these observations is the belief that adequate empirical data is available about the nature of guerrilla warfare to permit the formulation of an anti-guerrilla theory which can be operationalized. Moreover, American concern with unconventional war in the past few years has brought about a new level of sophistication in American military circles about the intricate relationship between political and revolutionary struggles. "Guerrilla warfare is a military expression of a political problem" has become a favorite axiom in some Pentagon circles. Military proverbs are often the distilled essence of theoretical analysis and this one reflects a political-military response to guerrilla warfare among military theoreticians.

If this estimate of the situation is correct, and a potentially effective counter-insurgency model exists, why, it may be asked, has not the Vietnamese government under President Ngo Linh Diem attempted to implement it? The answer is probably the same as the reasons why most states and cities
country have been reluctant to adopt model state constitutions and model
city charters. Fundamental changes in any political system affecting that
system's most important power structures encounter tremendous resistance
from those threatened or affected by the change. Domestic power considera-
tions and political cultures do not easily yield even when challenged by
guerrilla warfare.

This proposition becomes meaningful when related to the intense problems
and internal power struggles confronting South Vietnam immediately after
partition. In 1954 Ngo Dinh Diem ended his self-exile by returning to
Vietnam as Prime Minister under Emperor Bao Dai. The country by then
was in an advanced stage of social disintegration. The war had left the
South without unity, and an atmosphere of political disorganization prevailed.
Bao Dai had already become a thoroughly discredited figure and his Prime
Minister was little known except as a man reputed to be an honest nationalist,
both anti-French and anti-Communist.

By contrast, North Vietnam emerged from the war with the sense of unity
which accompanies a long and victorious struggle for independence. Ho Minh,
North Vietnam's first and only President, was the undisputed hero of the war
against the French: even in South Vietnam he remained a charismatic
legendary figure. North Vietnam began its independence as a nation,
whereas the task confronting Ngo Dinh Diem after partition was to build a
nation.
The most likely organizational structures on which Ngo Linh Diem might rely in his attempt to introduce order and social integration in South Vietnam were the army and bureaucracy. Neither of these, however, were sufficiently dependable and united to fulfil this purpose. The army, while possessing valuable organizational and technical skills, was ideologically divided and, at the senior level, inadequately staffed with loyal and experienced officers. Many officers still felt their personal destinies to be linked with France; others, who felt no attachment for either the French or for the Communists nevertheless remained uncommitted to the new state of South Vietnam.

The bureaucracy possessed the same unattractive characteristics. There was one important feature, however, which obviously distinguished the bureaucracy from the army and made it a preferred instrument for the achievement of social integration—the bureaucracy constituted less of a threat to the new regime, as it lacked the tools of violence. While an undependable or disloyal army was a constant threat to Ngo Dinh Diem, a disloyal bureaucracy was merely a serious handicap. Ngo Linh Diem's inclination to use the bureaucracy rather than the army was reinforced by the necessity of deploying the army to defend the nation against external attack, thereby making it less immediately available for use in internal reconstruction.

The years 1954 to 1956 convinced Ngo Dinh Diem that any independent power structure in South Vietnam not under his control represented an intolerable threat to him and therefore to the nation. During this period, in addition to having to resettle 900,000 refugees and attempting to restore the nation's economic life, the Prime Minister was confronted by a series of conspiracies and overt challenges to his authority. The first open challenge, significantly,
came from the army's Chief of Staff, General Nguyen Van Hinh. Hinh flagrantly disregarded the Prime Minister's instructions and in so doing was supported by Emperor Bao Dai, then "ruling" Vietnam from France. Hinh's behavior again demonstrated to Ngo Dinh Diem that the army, although crucial to national defense, was a source of competition to his authority.

In this two-year period Ngo Dinh Diem defeated a confusing array of claimants to special recognition or autonomous status within the nation. By late 1956, he had asserted his command over the army and removed General Hinh; disarmed the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai military-religious sects, removed Bao Dai as Chief of State by an overwhelming vote in a referendum, crushed the Binh Xuyen, the strange faction of Vice-Lords who controlled 5,000 troops and the Saigon police, and established himself as President of the Republic under a constitution written at his direction.

These political and military victories had a profound impact on President Ngo's political perspective and his style of governing. They had been gained, as he knew, by his own stubborn intransigence and refusal to compromise. He had preserved not only his own position but perhaps the independence of his nation from the divisive claims of feudal religious sects, organized gangsters, and various political and military opponents. The President had found a formula for success which he was quick to adopt, if indeed not to institutionalize as part of Vietnam's new political process. The thesis I am setting forth is that events in the early years, screened through Ngo's own personality, conditioned him to see himself as the principal leader of a movement destined to thoroughly reorganize Vietnamese society. Neither traditional nor constitutional restraints were to interfere with this mission. Thus there could be no virtue in a pluralistic society
or in toleration of ideological differences. He felt that Vietnam, corrupted by colonialism, Communism, and feudalism, needed radical reconstruction, but believed that any effort to govern by consensus would necessitate serious compromises in principle. Therefore, rejecting consensus as a suitable guide for national policy, the President by 1966 adopted as his style what David Apter has termed a mobilization system.  

The mobilization system required that the bureaucracy, and to a lesser extent the army, be accorded ever more responsibility for reorganizing and controlling society. Governmental officials were charged with organizing youth clubs, farmers’ associations, political groups, patriotic societies, student associations, and an indefinite number of other formal groups.

But, as I have earlier indicated, the President’s fear of the army and bureaucracy as potentially competing power centers meant that he would have to devise means to assure that neither organization would be in a position to challenge him. Stated differently, the instruments of control were the necessary—even the primary—objects of control. The most important technique he employed to assure maximum control was to introduce procedures which would centralize decision-making in the Presidency. Men whose distinctive qualification was personal loyalty to the President were placed in key positions throughout the two important power structures. Despite clear-cut hierarchical lines leading to the Presidency, President Ngo permitted lines of authority within the army and the bureaucracy to be abnormally confused and refused to delegate responsibility clearly. These characteristics are not

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unique to Vietnam but, it should be noted, are common to the political
systems of many developing states. What is unusual about the complex
role structure in Vietnam's political system and its pattern of authority
relationships is that they have been consciously imposed, without regard for
the dysfunctional consequences so clearly apparent in the army and
bureaucracy.

To the extent that soldiers and administrators are oriented toward
modernization and efficiency, and strive to enhance their effectiveness against
the Viet Cong, they are increasingly disturbed by these dysfunctional proce-
dures which hinder their effectiveness. This feeling is particularly acute
among functional elites within the army and bureaucracy who have developed
an awareness that these inefficiencies have been imposed upon them from
the Presidency. This awareness has affected morale and performance in
the bureaucracy, and has resulted in some disaffection from the regime.
The army has shown its distress in similar fashion although, having
access to the means of violence, on two occasions within the past eighteen
months members of the military have sought to remove the President from
office by force.

I have chosen to discuss the mobilization system, the complexity
and vagueness of role structure in the political system, and the centralization
of decision-making in the Presidency because these factors are directly relevant
to the performance and behavior of the military and administrative structures.

These same factors, as I will not attempt to demonstrate, set limits on the

degree and quality of cooperation between civil and military organizations at the operational level where the war against the Viet Cong is being fought.

The structural framework for civil-military relations in Vietnam was established at the time of partition. It was then felt by both Vietnamese authorities and American military advisors that the greatest threat to Vietnam's security would be a frontal attack by the Communists in the North. They recognized the probability of internal subversion, but believed it would be a minor problem that the individual provinces could manage.

The province is the pivotal unit of government in Vietnam, responsible for the 2500 villages of the country and the many more thousands of hamlets. Each of Vietnam's thirty-nine provinces is headed by a province chief who is subject to appointment and removal by the President and accountable only to him. President Ngo maintains direct contact with his province chiefs, and they consult him on a wide range of issues. Theoretically the Department of Interior is responsible for coordinating the activities of the provinces and supervising the performance of province chiefs. Actually, however, the President frequently bypasses it, and either intervenes directly in province affairs or relies on other organizations and individuals to keep him informed about provincial activities.

The President's brother, Ngo Dinh Can, who resides in the old Imperial Capital at Hue, has much influence over the selection and activities of provincial officials in Central Vietnam. Another brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, residing at the Presidency and serving as Presidential Advisor, is recognized by officials
as a man of tremendous power who is not reluctant to use it or to issue instructions directly.

Another means used to control provincial government are the four regional delegates who stand in the position of intermediaries between the President and the province chiefs. These delegates are agents of the President and are not allowed to issue instructions without his consent.¹

Until very recently the province chief, the President, and the official and non-official agents of the President just mentioned constituted the actual chain of command for dealing with guerrilla warfare. The military establishment was not directly within this chain of command, although the army upon instructions from the Presidency could assist provincial efforts to maintain security. Primary responsibility for maintaining internal security in Vietnam belonged to the province chiefs. As late as 1961, long after it was evident that the danger was not mainly external but internal, province chiefs remained dependent on various para-military, police, and voluntary defense groups under their immediate command for carrying out this responsibility. The most important such unit was the Civil Guard, which had been conceived originally as a territorial police force, but remained an inadequately trained and poorly equipped para-military organization. Each province chief had about 1200 Civil Guard available to him. Though totaling 50,000 members throughout the country, the Civil Guard units were assigned exclusively to individual provinces and were too fragmented to deal with security on a realistic basis. As internal security deteriorated rapidly in late 1959, it became obvious that the province chiefs could not protect the villages unless radical changes were made. Rather

than a systematic reorganization of responsibilities and procedures for maintaining internal security, a number of more tempering measures of expedience were approved by the President. In some provinces, for example, a company of the regular army was assigned to the province chief. This move reflected an unrealistic appreciation of provincial problems as well as of the entire issue of guerrilla warfare. The Viet Cong were no longer engaged in propaganda activities and political organization; they had reached the stage of guerrilla warfare where they were prepared to launch company-sized and even battalion-sized attacks against government installations.

Persistent in the view that the province was the appropriate level on which to deal with the Viet Cong, the President sought to introduce greater military competence into the provinces by removing many civilian province chiefs and replacing them with military officers. Soon most province chiefs were military officers, although many of these were "civilian administrators" who had been recently given military rank.

Another Presidential directive provided for the appointment of a Deputy Chief of Province for Security in each of Vietnam's thirty-nine provinces. This move enabled civilian province chiefs to turn over most of the security operations to a deputy who was always a military officer. Where the province chief was himself a military officer, he assumed command responsibility for the Civil Guard and other security forces in his province while turning over the bulk of civil administration to an administrative deputy who, invariably, was a civilian. Confusing this arrangement even further, military men who assumed the title of Province Chief retained military rank but were transferred from Army control to that of the Department of the Interior. These moves represented an
effort to integrate civil-military activities more closely by transferring military personnel to non-military administrative positions. But no comparable effort was made to integrate the army and the bureaucracy functionally. We thus see an anomalous situation where the nation was rapidly succumbing to a guerrilla movement while the government was administratively incapable of bringing into play its own military capabilities.

Let me cite some of the kinds of inefficiencies that resulted from the character of civil-military relations at the field level:

1. When a province chief required immediate support from the army, the commanding officer of the nearest military installation felt it necessary to obtain the consent of the President before dispatching units as small as a battalion. This procedure often caused delays of several days.

2. When a military unit did arrive to assist a province chief, there was no certainty whether the province chief or military officer would command the army unit.

3. Because security in each province was the particular responsibility of the province chief, the army was not free to move across province borders unless advance arrangements had been made.

4. There were no regularized channels for inter-provincial cooperation on security matters. Mutual assistance and exchange of intelligence was irregular and not dependable.

5. Since the army was only brought into a province for combat purposes at the request of the province chief the army was generally unfamiliar with the population and terrain of the province. Not knowing the
population it was inclined to treat the people in an insecure area as possible enemies. This gave rise to army brutality and indiscriminate reprisals, further contributing to the alienation of the people.

6. As security became the overriding concern in the provinces, chiefs of province allocated greater amounts of time, energy, and resources to the military aspects of security, to the neglect of civil administration.

7. Province chiefs felt that their performance was being judged by their ability to maintain security, and therefore submitted deceptive reports to Saigon authorities. This information provided military authorities with faulty intelligence.

Most of these problems may be classified as administrative problems which resulted from the inflexibility of the Vietnamese regime. In Malaya, where it took ten years to eliminate a less serious guerrilla threat, civil and military authorities at all levels integrated their activities through daily meetings that facilitated the exchange of intelligence and coordination of action.

The most formidable obstacle to broad reorganization is not ignorance of the problem but a conscious refusal by the President to relinquish enough control to give the army and bureaucracy adequate field autonomy and flexibility. Whatever organizational changes the United States is at present urging on the Vietnamese President will be temporized by the President's political gestalt. Ngo Dinh Diem's behavior reveals that he perceives a flexible army and bureaucracy capable of working in close cooperation as a threat to his survival as President--and he equates his own survival with that of his country. Certainly, the attempted military coup in 1960 and the more recent air force bombing of the Presidential palace did nothing to dispel the President's belief that he cannot afford to
relax his hold on Vietnam's power structures.

Notwithstanding Ngo's hesitancy, the serious concern of the American and Vietnamese governments over the increasing strength of the Viet Cong has produced some changes. The 50,000-man Civil Guard has been transferred from the Department of Interior to the Department of Defense, and it is now almost indistinguishable from the regular army itself. The United States has assumed responsibility for the training and equipping the Civil Guard. Concomitantly, the American and Vietnamese governments are upgrading the village self-defense corps so that it can serve effectively as a local constabulary.

Last year the Vietnamese government finally agreed to abolish the five military regions and replace them with three corps, each responsible for a different section of the country. The seven divisions of the army, divided among the three corps, were each assigned "tactical zones." It is hoped that the corps concept will provide the army with the kind of field flexibility needed in a guerrilla war.

By placing greater stress on the military chain of command, some restraints may be imposed upon the tendency of the President to deal directly with field commanders and bypass the military structure. There have also been recent indications that the President may under the urging of the American military agree to place province chiefs under the military chain of command for security purposes and under the Department of Interior for civil affairs. Finally, there are some signs that the President may use his newly created National Security Council in a meaningful way.

In conclusion, the changes I have discussed are administrative changes...
which, if implemented, will improve the quality of the army and the bureaucracy and enable them to carry out their mission more effectively. Moderate reorganization should also eliminate the most obvious dysfunctions in civil-military relations.

These are, however, palliatives, not solutions. They deal mainly with some of the peculiar consequences of the particularistic and somewhat idiosyncratic psyche of President Ngo Dinh Diem. They do little to implement the counter-strategy of guerrilla warfare. They bring some efficiency to a disorganized mobilization system, but they give it neither human purpose nor human loyalties. Administrative reform and improved civil-military relations can only check the problem: its solution in Vietnam also requires the introduction of new and imaginative political symbols, policies, and ideals.