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## Student Solution to Exercise A, Installment One: Extension Course in Counterinsurgency

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STUDENT SOLUTION TO EXERCISE A  
INSTALLMENT ONE  
EXTENSION COURSE IN COUNTERINSURGENCY

by

Commander Louis A. States, USNR

This student extension education paper has such unusual merit and originality that it is considered worthy of receiving fleet-wide distribution by being published in the *Naval War College Review*.

'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. . . . That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.'

The directive for this paper requires that the excerpt of the Declaration of Independence quoted above be examined with a view to determining whether or not prevalent causes of recent insurgencies are in consonance with the principles set forth in that document.

This particular quotation from the Declaration is a summary statement of a political philosophy based on man's recorded contemplation of himself and his environment over a period of some twenty-five hundred years. Man has no doubt reflected on such matters for a much longer period but, certainly, since the time of Plato, the thinking of the best minds has been recorded and has come down to us. It is one of the great documents in any language and, like the Gettysburg Address, is incapable of improvement by alteration or restatement. I referred to it as a summary statement and this it is, since within its few words the framers deal objectively with man's place in the Creator's scheme, his relationships

with all mankind and the relationships of man with his society - and from these derive and state a concept of a political system suitable to the world as they see it to be.

Dealing with an idea so simple in its terms and so vast in its implications is probably beyond my capability and certainly beyond the scope of this paper. It seems obvious, and yet insufficient, to say that man who is alive, free and happy does not afford a very suitable soil in which to sprout the seeds of insurgency. Yet, as any summary statement must, this one speaks in terms which are extremely difficult to define due to their tremendous breadth and depth of meaning. My plan therefore will be to briefly put this statement into its historical perspective and by further enquiry attempt to understand for myself more clearly the definitions which might be acceptable today for life, liberty and happiness. In this connection, it is my understanding of the precept that we are searching for a fundamental consonance and not an agreement that any list of specific grievances in any specific situations does, or does not, come under the broad shelter of the Declaration. To summarize my own opening statement, I will attempt to analyze this excerpt from the Declaration, state my understanding of it and find what general application it may have in recent current affairs involving insurgency.

As a part of such an analysis, the Declaration of Independence should be put into chronological perspective and other statements therein should be examined to discover what significance, if any, they lend to the quoted excerpt.

From an historical standpoint, the Declaration was framed an even one hundred years after the first significant rebellion had developed in the colonies. Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia in 1676 serves as a convenient landmark to fix the beginning of a century of discontent prior to the Declaration. Bacon's Rebellion concerned discontent over taxes, land laws and administrative practices considered by the colonials to be restrictive of their personal rights. This affair tended to set a pattern, irregular but persistent, in the years that followed. Over these years the growing discontent of the colonials, when it came into the open, was appeased or repressed by measures designed to meet only the immediate crisis. Then, as now, expediency served only to delay the eruption and did nothing to eradicate the causes underlying the unrest. English policy with regard to the colonies failed to recognize the ever-growing complexity of colonial life, the increasing political awareness of the colonials and their genuine need for more self-government as

opposed to more rule from London. There was a consistent pattern of pressure, peaceful for the most part, being met by varying degrees of reform which, when it appeared, was already insufficient. When English policy with regard to the colonies did take a more firm and, apparently, a longer range form, it unfortunately appeared to the colonials to be one of regression under which they not only failed to obtain the reforms they desired, but stood to lose some of the gains previously made. There resulted thereafter what could, for the first time, be termed a rising tide of widespread discontent concurrent with the realization that there was an underlying political, economic and potential military strength in the colonies.

I feel that in any successful insurgency there must occur an event which shows, or is accepted as showing, some clearly definable area of insurgent strength or governmental weakness in the face of the insurgency. It appears that this would be necessary to provide an acceleration or impetus to the insurgent course of action. It would seem to me that in this case the Stamp Act of 1765 provides such an impetus. It was extremely objectionable to the colonists and was met with an almost universal resistance up to the level of flat and outright refusal to obey its requirement. In this case the government rapidly retreated, refused to face the issue and repealed the Act in 1766. There followed a decade of increasing colonial confidence and pressure of all types, increasingly more overt in nature. The Boston Massacre in 1770 and the Boston Tea Party in 1773 were logical phases of the deteriorating situation and the formal Declaration of Independence was a logical outcome. Historically, then, we may conclude that the statement under consideration did not initiate or cause an insurgency, but resulted from the contemplation of one which had existed in some form, and in some degree, for one hundred years.

The quoted excerpt from the Declaration of Independence sets forth a moral principle under which it is neither treasonable, criminal nor wrong to alter or abolish any form of government which does not conduct itself in accordance with the expressed principle. Inasmuch as alteration from without and abolishment without a consent to be abolished require acts of violence against the government, this moral principle affords justification to the individual or groups for subversion, insurgency and civil war against a legally constituted government. When one considers the fearful waste of life and property accompanying violent forms of insurgency and civil war it must be concluded that the framers of the Declaration felt that they were indeed expressing a principle completely

fundamental to their continued existence - one not to be set aside by any other consideration. Such a fundamental right established in principle carries with it the obligation of enforcement. This is not overlooked for, where the principle is involved with government, ' . . . it is their [the peoples'] right, *it is their duty*, to throw off such government. . . .'

The statement of principle involved in the quoted excerpt was not an innovation of the insurgent leaders. Since man first contemplated himself and his place on earth he has recorded his persistent belief in his individual intrinsic value and his rights derived from this evaluation. Christianity, the one continuing cohesive element in Western civilization, is based upon a high and equal valuation of every individual before the Supreme Being. Similar views are implicit in the great Eastern religions. Intellectuals from the time of Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, on down to the eighteenth century, had proclaimed the rights of the individual conferred on him by the bare fact of his existence. Now this principle was brought forward in a political instrument in justification of years of insurgency and for the civil war which the framers knew to be inevitable once its implementation was sought.

The extreme gravity of the situation was obvious to the framers of the Declaration. They emphasize this, and at the same time reinforce the position that they act under a moral compulsion, by stating ' . . . Governments long established should not be changed for light or transient causes; . . . ' They recognize the need for international approval. They appeal for this, and perhaps for the favorable judgment of history, when they write ' . . . [their] decent respect for the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.' It must be presumed that each of the specific charges against the Crown which follows did, in the opinion of the framers, infringe one or more of the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

In summary to this point, the Declaration advances a political philosophy which embraces two basic concepts. The first is that mankind is an institution of the Creator and the second, that government is, or ought to be, an institution of mankind. This is in direct confrontation with the existing philosophy which agrees that mankind is an institution of the Creator but conceives that government [The Crown] is also an institution of the Creator for the purpose of governing mankind. It is obvious that there is

no definable area of compatibility in the implementation of these two philosophies.

If the political concept of the Declaration is valid, and I believe it to be, its all-embracing scope is extremely difficult to apply except by a gross use of oversimplification. This is due in part to the fact that of the three expressed rights—Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness—neither has any empirical or readily definable value or meaning. Life is of no consequence in a consideration of the causes of insurgency unless the term is equated with the fear or apprehension of an untimely deprivation of life, or the *means* of sustaining it. Equated thus, it is a definable and specific cause though it is of a relative value which varies from one individual to another. Liberty is likewise a relative value but by fencing in a specific area it may be defined with some clarity. The pursuit of happiness, I feel, cannot be defined for the purpose of enquiry into the causes of insurgency without going into the complete nature of man, both as a species and as an individual. It is a measurable value but the measuring stick is within the individual and no two sticks are the same. The value placed on these three unalienable rights reflects the whole individual and his relationship with his environment. It represents a philosophical concept of value which to have meaning and to be definable must be applied to a specific individual in a specific circumstance. Furthermore, the measuring stick is not stable even in the individual and this presents further difficulties in analysis.

These reflections lead inevitably to what appears to me to be perhaps the most fundamental trait of the nature of man—discontent with his environment—physical, spiritual and intellectual. All other forms of life on this planet, if they survive, eventually achieve a satisfactory relationship with their environment and, once achieved, their desires tend to become stabilized, and they are content. This is not true of man either as an individual or as a social unit. Any improvement or elevation of his level of physical comfort, intellectual attainment or spiritual awareness is immediately consolidated as a new base representing his minimum demands—one from which he immediately launches a new move into yet higher ground. This discontentment of mankind has accounted for his march from an unknown beginning to the level he has attained today. Whether or not the march has been worthwhile is not here in question, but it has been inevitable and apparently will remain so.

In accepting the validity of the foregoing, I am accepting the obvious fact that mankind is continually in an insurgent state or in the consolidation phase of a past insurgency after which the insurgency will continue. I believe this to be true, but I would define this as evolution. Any marked acceleration of this normal speed of advance I would equate with revolution. In nonpolitical revolutions we use other terminology as, for instance, the scientific breakthrough; or we add various modifiers to the word revolution such as economic, educational, intellectual or even spiritual. In these cases, however, we are dealing for the most part with institutions or ways of life which do not have the means at hand to forcibly defend the positions wished to be perpetuated. It is notable in this instance, that when physical force is at hand in such circumstances it is frequently used when the institution to which the force is available is under external pressure. In general, however, these nonpolitical institutions do not have such force. The political scene is different. Here, the primary attribute of the political institution is that of having the coercive force available. Some cultures have evolved in which the mechanics of government are so arranged as to be acceptably prompt in yielding to what Mr. Macmillan calls the winds of change. These cultures have experienced political evolution. Other cultures have never developed such a manner and method of responsive government and have experienced the political revolution. In these latter instances then, we see the legal holders of the coercive force either unwilling or unable to respond to the needs or the demands of those over whom the force is wielded. This creates an obstruction to a vital and fundamental force present in all mankind. I would use the illustration of the dam thrown across the stream. It will stop the flow for a time but in the end it will be overflowed. If it is built higher it will again be overflowed or will collapse. I equate the collapse with the revolution. There is only one method of preventing such a collapse and that is to allow the flow to continue unabated but with judicious modifications of direction. This would seem to be the way of the political systems which avoid the revolution as opposed to those which are subjected to them.

To find a point of application I will first agree completely that man does indeed have the rights set forth for him in the Declaration of Independence and that, moreover, he is naturally bent, actually impelled, to attain those rights to the highest degree or form of which he has the capacity to envision—and that his capacity for vision in this instance is unlimited. To

this extent then, the quoted excerpt of the Declaration must be present in some form in every insurgency. The form of its presence must be determined, but it is very difficult to apply a philosophical concept of such breadth and depth as the one set before us. Mark Twain is reputed to have said, in effect, that a man is incapable of understanding a philosophical concept when he is wet, cold and hungry. To my mind this puts the philosophy of insurgency in a proper perspective. It underlies deeply every circumstance of every insurgency, but it is the wet and the cold and the hunger which actually translate man's natural instincts to insurgency into the overt act.

Woodrow Wilson wrote, 'When I look back on the processes of history . . . I see this written on every page: That nations are renewed from the bottom, not from the top.' Professor Toynbee has recently written 'For the first time since the dawn of civilization the masses have become alive to the possibility that their way of life can be changed for the better.' Yielding to my penchant toward oversimplification I feel that Professor Toynbee's 'masses' and Mr. Wilson's 'bottom' are the same as Mark Twain's 'wet, cold and hungry.' It is here that I feel we find our point of application. It is at the bottom and in the masses that we find the wet, the cold and the hungry. I do not imply that physical discomfort is the only prevalent cause of insurgency. There is also a 'bottom' where the quest is for intellectual and spiritual freedom, where the individual hungers for dignity and pride as well as for bread. Whatever bottom they are on, all share one thing in common and that is subjection to the coercive power of their political system.

It is from this bottom that the insurgency originates. When it is first seen it has already existed for a measurable time and would not be seen had it not already gathered strength and momentum. At this time its causes are probably very simple and may reflect a specific discontent with specific circumstances. For it to maintain momentum it must have leadership and at this time I feel that the true causes begin to become obscured. This is due to the fact that once leadership is established the movement will take on the color of the leader, at least in the form of an overlay to the color of the cause. This is a significant factor since the leadership may not, and frequently does not, represent the true causes of the insurgency, but uses the insurgency to strengthen its own cause by accretion. This necessity for accretion also tends to dilute the pure insurgency since numerical requirements are paramount. In the end, affiliation with the insurgency will be based not on what it stands for but what it



stands against. Finally then, the insurgency, even if it is untouched by forces external to the nation in which it originates, becomes a heterogeneous force with components which probably agree on only one thing, and that is the desire to overthrow the current political system.

This tendency to accommodate all comers who are willing and able to lend assistance can be further complicated by the infiltration of the insurgency by forces external to the state of origin in order to take over the insurgency and further its own political aims. This is not new in the histories of insurgencies but, since World War II particularly, it has become a highly organized and effective method of waging war against a state while ostensibly keeping clear of the situation.

This ability of the external power to gain control of what otherwise might be a purely internal affair stems from the requirements of modern armed action. The time is long since past when the farmer with his scythe blade was as effective in combat as the professional with his sabre or the frontiersman with his hunting rifle more effective than the professional with his musket. The guerrilla on his own terrain may be able to make more effective use of less modern weapons, but this holds only until the professional soldier is adequately trained and motivated for this type of warfare. The point is that the insurgent band or force must have access to an adequate logistic source for all phases of his effort. This problem is most easily solved when the logistic source is provided by the external power. Thus the truly national insurgent leader may not only accept but seek the external intrusion into his leadership.

The provision of leadership itself offers an additional avenue through which the insurgency may be corrupted and taken over. The early phases of the insurgency may produce the ideological leadership, but it would be difficult to refuse the affiliation of foreign professional military personnel who can provide the operational leadership required when the violence of the insurgency commences the inevitable escalation to civil war.

Nothing has been said to this point of the various types of insurgency and in my approach to this subject there is little that needs to be said. It will be noted, however, that the *coup d'etat* type of changeover has little to do with insurgency, and true insurgency has little to do with the *coup d'etat*. This generalization would not hold up in cases similar to those of

Hitler and Mussolini but, particularly in Latin America, it would seem to be part and parcel of an established system in which the changes at the top neither reflect nor affect the underlying causes of persistent insurgencies. It is to be noted, however, that governments susceptible to the frequently recurrent coup are in fact still targets for the external power which wishes to intervene via the avenue of an infiltrated insurgency.

I feel also that the insurgency against the victorious invader does not require comment as to cause. The continued resistance of the citizenry after the collapse of the defending professionals has been common throughout history and constitutes, at whatever level it appears, a component part of the national effort to defend the home country. It is only when the insurgent group joins the invader to help pull down his own political system that we need to enquire. In such a circumstance it appears there is a *prima facie* case against the political system for having engendered a situation in a segment of its society in which those involved will willingly entrust their fate to an armed invader in lieu of a continuing loyalty to their native system. It occurs to me in this connection that a nation least likely to have an active and purely internal insurgency would, in all probability, generate a most powerful and effective insurgency when faced by the occupation of the victorious invader—and vice versa. It is also evident that the nation which survives defeat, invasion, and occupation is left with what is actually an insurgent government which will have to be taken into consideration and adequately accommodated in the postoccupation phase even if the old political system is reinstated.

In an effort to terminate this phase of my enquiry I will try to differentiate between the causes of insurgencies and what I will call the 'trigger' of insurgencies. I believe the causes to be adequately contained within the opening quotation of the Declaration concerning 'Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness' when considered in the light of mankind's eternal drive to improve himself and his environment. I contend that this concept underlies every insurgency and that it exists in a lightly dormant state in even the most placid of political situations. Therefore, I conclude that it is present and is an accountable factor in insurgencies, but I prefer to think of it as the powder charge in the rifle. My 'triggers' then would be the circumstances which detonate the charge or disturb the dormant state of insurgency.

I have previously noted the need of the insurgency for numerical strength and that this strength of numbers is to be formed at the bottom of the national pyramid. It is therefore along this bottom that the most sensitive triggers are likely to be found. It is here that the so-called necessities of maintaining life are recognized as being exactly that. Food, shelter and clothing, in that order, would constitute an adequate list of man's minimum demands. All of these, and food in particular, come from the land and where land, or reasonably free access to the use of land, for the purpose of producing food is not equitably assured, we find what I consider the most sensitive trigger of insurgency. Shelter and clothing adequate to fill minimal requirements can also be wrung from the use of land and may be grouped with food as part of this most fundamental and sensitive issue. Historically, this problem of equitable distribution of land or its use has triggered more revolutions than any other single area of man's activity.

Granted that man no longer is bound by slavery as such, it is also along this bottom where he is to be found still bound in economic chains, in the chains of ignorance and in those of intellectual, cultural, and even racial segregation—and politically impotent to ensure his release.

I feel it is justifiable to conclude that where oppression of any type, and in particular economic oppression, exists, and where existing political systems are unwilling or unable to lift the oppression, insurgencies will develop. Comment has already been made of the rapid proliferation of causes once the insurgency is in the open. Note has also been taken of the current inclinations of external powers to reinforce existing insurgencies or even to promote them. I feel that these aspects are not in consideration since they are phenomena of a phase which develops later in time than the one in which I think the cause is to be found. With regard to the promotion of insurgencies by the external power, I feel that a pure promotion is impossible in my concept of cause since in the absence of cause there is no point of penetration for the promoter.

The framers of the Declaration were, in my opinion, on sound historical ground when they used the phrase of 'Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.' If history teaches us anything beyond man's chronological movements it reveals the innermost nature of man himself—or, in the aggregate, mankind. Their expressions were, I believe, truly and completely consonant with this revealed nature. Since I also believe that this nature has remained unchanged, I would have to conclude that prevalent causes of recent insurgencies are completely consonant with the precept set for this paper.

## BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

Commander Louis B. States, USNR

Commander States entered Trinity College of Duke University in 1925 and graduated with an AB degree in 1929.

He enlisted in the USNR in January 1942 and served with the 3rd Construction Battalion in the South Pacific where he was commissioned LTJG in September 1943.

After returning to CONUS in February 1944, he attended the Navy School, University of Arizona and in the summer of the same year was assigned to duty with Underwater Demolition Team ELEVEN.

In February 1945 he became Commanding Officer of Underwater Demolition Team ELEVEN and was serving in that capacity when the team was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for the period April through June 1945.

He was assigned as Chief Staff Officer to Commander, Underwater Demolition Teams, Pacific in June 1945 and was the Acting Commander of Underwater Demolition Teams, Pacific from March 1946 until shortly before being released to inactive duty in September 1946.

Commander States was recalled to active duty in January 1950 and later served as Commanding Officer, Underwater Demolition Team FIVE in Korea. He was again released to inactive duty in January 1953.

Commander States has been awarded the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, and the Order of Orange, Nassau (Netherlands).

His present position is Assistant General Manager, Board of Directors, and Secretary, Ocean Shore Iron Works, Inc. of San Francisco.

He continues to actively participate in the Naval Reserve and is presently assigned to Naval Reserve Officers' School 12-6, San Mateo, California where he has instructed in Strategy and Tactics and International Law.