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# School of Naval Command and Staff: The Tribal Soldier: A Study of the Manipulation of Ethnic Minorities

Howard J. Johnston  
*U.S. Marine Corps*

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**THE TRIBAL SOLDIER: A STUDY OF  
THE MANIPULATION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES**

A Research Paper written by  
Lt. Colonel Howard J. Johnston, USMC  
School of Naval Command and Staff, 1966

**INTRODUCTION**

Ethnic minorities have played an active role in the history of the world. Accounts of violent struggles involving ethnic tribes abound in the Bible and figure prominently in later historical records. Together with the economic and political development of the world, ethnic mixing took place which permitted the creation of the great nation-states of today. However, the amalgamation of ethnic minorities is far from complete. For example, the United States is still confronted with a major racial problem. In this case, the broadest-based government in the richest country of the world is making some headway toward a solution. In 40 or 50 of the most underdeveloped countries of the world, weak, unsophisticated governments backed by primitive economies are confronted by segregated ethnic minorities who in aggregate sometimes outnumber the dominant ethnic group.

In view of present world conditions, the socio-political implications of these situations are staggering. The Communists have properly evaluated this potential weak spot and are making every effort to exploit it in the cause of their world revolution.

This problem involves the entire range of human relations. Intensive long-range social, cultural, and economic programs will be required to achieve the balanced homogeneous societies necessary for national survival. To achieve optimum results from these programs, they must be applied to those groups which are most critical to the development of stability and progress in these countries. After selection of a group, the first step in the application of these programs will be the establishment of control or of an effective alliance.

This thesis is devoted to the determination of the criteria which can be used both in the selection of those ethnic minorities which are critical and as guidelines in their manipulation in an insurgent or counterinsurgent situation.

Southeast Asia has been chosen as the area of consideration because of the ethnic diversity found in the region and the degree to which various ethnic minorities have contributed to military operations, both past and present.

Facts and opinions not otherwise documented are based on the experience of the author gained during service as the Assistant U.S. Naval Attache' to Thailand and Laos in the period 1958 to 1961.

## I—SOUTHEAST ASIA IN TRANSITION

Long involved in the struggle for power among the major nations, Southeast Asia has assumed a position of critical importance in the world today. Caught between the Communist and the free worlds, it provides an arena for political and military activity which promises to have major effect on the future of mankind.

Geography. Mainland Southeast Asia is considered to include and be limited to the countries of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma, and the mainland portion of Malaysia.<sup>1</sup> These states share many common features. They all have need for all types of economic

Johnston: School of Naval Command and Staff: The Tribal Soldier: A Study of development. They are predominantly rural societies. All of the states have great social diversity created by the presence of many ethnic and other social groups. They have a low level of educational and cultural development.<sup>2</sup> Topographically, these countries share the common characteristic of low-lying, highly-productive valleys occupied by the dominant ethnic majority and vast areas of mountainous and upland bush areas. These last, isolated and underdeveloped, are the homes of most of the minority groups.<sup>3</sup>

Sociology. Traditionally, throughout the entire area, the relations between the dominant and minority groups have been that of conqueror to conquered, master to slave; or, at best, one of mutual tolerance and suspicion. This widespread lack of reciprocal relationships in intertribal dealings and the long history of abuses arising from this situation have resulted in deepseated antagonisms which complicate the achievement of any national political cohesion. For example, Dommen states:

The biggest question mark in Laos, however, remains not the affinities of her politicians nor even the expansionist drive of the Vietnamese and the Chinese but the conflicting loyalties of ethnic groups. These loyalties transcend all ideological groupings and they are of more permanent character. The basic question is still whether any government in Laos, Communist or non-Communist, can overcome the age-old animosities between lowlander and mountain tribesmen.<sup>4</sup>

Economics. As a result of the many similarities between these states and the nearly simultaneous withdrawal of colonial control from all of them but Thailand, they face the world confronted by the same social, political, and economic problems. The economy of each of these states, including Thailand, is still largely controlled by foreign and minority interests which tend to be exploitive in nature. The resultant withdrawal of potential capital and the lack of investment incentive created by the poorly conceived and executed economic policies typical of this area hamper the development of the required economic bases and requires correction.<sup>5</sup>

Politics. Concurrently, the requirement exists for the development of domestic political cohesion

among the heterogeneous population of each country. In the political vacuum, too often left by the withdrawal of Western control governments have arisen of every political form and character ranging from the reestablishment of monarchies to military dictatorships. The development of democratic systems has been hampered by a lack of political consciousness among the people, the absence of democratic traditions, and the intense international pressures of the modern world.<sup>6</sup>

These governments do share an urgent sense of nationalism. At times, the fear of possible foreign influence rather than logic seems to govern national policy. Hence, independence is the keynote in the propaganda campaigns of both sides in the cold war struggle in Southeast Asia.

Chinese Communist Position. Fear of China dominates Southeast Asia and has even for the past 200 years of Western preeminence, since the 4th or 5th century. Prior to the European colonial period, the Southeast Asian States paid tribute to or were actually held in physical subjugation by China. Most of the ethnic groups of this area originally came from what is now China, and the migrations usually resulted from Chinese pressure. Since then, the Chinese have formed large colonies of aggressive hardworking colonists in every country. These colonists have demonstrated awesome organizational talents, both economically and politically, to the local citizenry.<sup>7</sup>

The emergence of Communist China as a powerful monolithic nation has revitalized the old fears of Chinese imperialism. In substantiation, China, dedicated to violent world Communist revolution, has recently reiterated its intent to sponsor and aid indigenous subversive insurgents in the seizure of Southeast Asia.<sup>8</sup> Chinese Communist policy stresses that "Peoples' wars of liberation" are to be conducted by, with, and for national groups, i.e., from within the country involved, with Chinese participation limited to aid and advice.<sup>9</sup> The technique employed in such a war is that of a "National Democratic" revolution, which is described as: "a revolution against imperialists and their lackeys by all anti-imperialists and patriotic forces including the national bourgeoisie."<sup>10</sup> According to the same source, the "National Democratic" revolution will necessarily be followed by a "Socialist" revolution, which is conducted by the

Johnston: School of Naval Command and Staff: The Tribal Soldier: A Study of peasants who are lead by the proletariat and eliminates all non-Socialist elements. In other words, help from any source will be welcomed in getting rid of a current government, but, thereafter, anyone not joining the Communists will be done away with.

Optimum exploitation of the "peoples' war" technique would obviously result in an international situation in Southeast Asia analogous to that existing during the hegemony of the Middle Kingdom, i.e., Mother China surrounded on the south by vassal states owing their very existence to her and dependent upon her.

United States Position. Opposed to Red China, the United States has, by treaty and by action, taken the leading role among the Western nations in attempting to deny the Communists their goals. Since 1949, Red China has been met in crises: first in Korea, next in Formosa, and now in Southeast Asia. The United States effort, based on various bilateral and multilateral treaties with both Asian and European countries, has ranged from military conflict to a wide range of aid programs. These include cultural, economic, and social programs designed to aid the countries of this area in the solution of the previously noted internal problems and military aid to defend themselves. The cost of these programs runs into the billions of dollars and includes the efforts of thousands of advisors.<sup>11</sup>

This action by the United States has directly thwarted the announced aims of the Communists and has made the elimination of the United States from the Asian scene of paramount importance to them.

Communist Technique. In addition to the aid and advice to be contributed to the "peoples' wars," the Communists have developed a skillful and vitriolic propoganda campaign aimed at discrediting the United States.

The central theme of this campaign is one depicting the United States as being bent on world domination, the enslavement of the people of Southeast Asia, and the use of Asian homelands as battlefields in aggressive wars against the peaceful Communist.<sup>12</sup> This is tailored to take advantage of different situations as they develop. This propoganda is aimed at the people and stated in terms they understand. Ideological arguments are replaced

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by threats of rape, pillage, slavery, and hunger  
offset by sweeping promises of freedom.

Before scoffing at such a campaign and its utterly unrealistic content, one must remember the level of social and intellectual development found in this area. This is effective and takes full advantage of the fear of colonial domination and any anti-Western sentiment present, much in the same manner that the Japanese achieved initial success during World War II with their "Asia for Asians" slogan.<sup>13</sup>

The common ethnic and cultural background shared by the Chinese and the majority of the people of Southeast Asia provides a distinct advantage to the Communists. In addition to a distinct ethnic difference, the American has too often required special housing, special food, an interpreter, servants, and other comforts not enjoyed by the populace. The Chinese advisor can and does lose himself in the population, which lends itself admirably to propaganda, political infiltration, and aid programs. Also, the ability to employ Chinese-bred and/or trained cadres of the same ethnic background as the insurgents in a "peoples' war" has proved to be of great value.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Americans are always readily identifiable, e.g., U.S. programs, activities, and mistakes are obvious; this fact is capitalized on by the Communist propaganda machine.

United States Techniques. The techniques of the Communists and the United States are similar. They both depend on propaganda, aid, and advice. The goals are diametrically opposed. The United States hopes by education and economic development to help build strong, independent, free nations; whereas, the alternative offered is subordination of the individual to the requirements of the government in some form of Communist state, which at best will be a vassal to China.

The methods to be used by the United States to achieve these goals must be flexible and intelligently applied. They must include social, economic, and political efforts ranging from private investment and cultural exchanges to direct military action as the situation dictates. The choice of methods is critical and on their choice hangs the key to success. Basic to all of the effective methods, however, is the requirement for education at all levels of society. Experience has repeatedly

Johnston: School of Naval Command and Staff: The Tribal Soldier: A Study of confirmed that any progressive and constructive educational program is difficult, if not impossible, to pursue in a climate of war. Witness the difficulties encountered in the AID program in Vietnam today. Consequently, we must ensure peace before our program can achieve its full effect.

Lin Piao recently reiterated, "Communism thrives on social disorganization, and its doctrine prescribes violent revolution as the means of initiating social change."<sup>15</sup> In view of this and his statement in the same speech calling for the spread of "Peoples' wars of liberation" to the countries of Southeast Asia, it is apparent that our choice of methods in the application of aid and advice to these countries must effectively deny China the means of waging such wars. This failing, we must defeat the Communists in their own war, by combat if necessary. This means that since this is a war for people rather than terrain, we must win to our side and control those segments of the population that have the greatest potential value to the Communists. In the past, our efforts have been directed at those segments most influential in a modern society, e.g., politicians, government officials, labor and business leaders. Now we must concentrate on the lowest classes, particularly the farmer or rural peasant, and among the ethnic minorities, for it is here that the Communists look for support for their "peoples' war."<sup>16</sup>

## II--THE PEOPLE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

In a war in which the population becomes the objective, thorough knowledge of the people is imperative. This chapter, which sets forth some basic ethnological and demographic peculiarities of the region, is included to provide a common background for succeeding chapters.

Ethnology. The major ethnic groups of Southeast Asia are primarily based on language.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, as LeBar states:

In reality there are few fixed tribal boundaries that can conveniently be shown on a map, most areas of Southeast Asia being highly mixed from an ethnic point of view. Furthermore, the conventional map cannot indicate the vertical distribution of people, so important in the mountainous



*Naval War College Review, Vol. 20 [1967], No. 1, Art. 5*  
regions; and swidden farmers, in particular, are frequently migratory, so that ethnic boundaries are at best only indicative of the actual situation.<sup>2</sup>

There are four major ethnic divisions in Southeast Asia and thirty groups falling under these divisions. The complexity of this population is better appreciated when it is realized that LeBar and his colleagues have treated as separate tribes, each possessing its own distinguishing characteristics, in excess of 150 subgroups in this area. Many of these groups are so small and have become so closely assimilated with other groups, or are so deficient in social organization, that they are of minute political or military importance. However, in others are found large populations, major areas of geographic dominion, relatively well-organized societies, and deep-seated traditions and prejudices. For example, among the Thai in Thailand, the Tai Yuan of Chiang Mai, numbering in the millions and dominating northern Thailand, consider themselves distinct from the Siamese of the south.<sup>3</sup>

Comparison of the ethnolinguistic with a topographic map of the area reveals that what appears on the linguistic map as a rather indiscriminate distribution of peoples in fact reflects the ground forms of the area quite accurately. As noted in the first chapter, the dominant majority tends to live in the richer, more accessible lowlands along the rivers and seacoasts; whereas, the minorities are generally found in the less desirable areas--on the hills, or in the more remote regions. One marked exception to this is the Chinese who tend to congregate in the population centers.

In some cases, the minorities occupy their present areas as a result of being evicted from more desirable lands by invaders. This is found with the Mons who were forced from the Irawaddy Delta by the Burmese and from the Chao Phya Delta by the Siamese. There is strong evidence also that the Khmers and Chams were driven from their ancient homes in the Mekong Delta and in Central Annam by the Vietnamese.<sup>4</sup>

In other cases, the migrants probably arrived too late to claim the better land and lacked the strength to evict the occupants; hence, they took to the hills. In still other cases, the less desirable land may have been chosen voluntarily. Fear, the environmental requirements of traditional crops,

Johnston: School of Naval Command and Staff: The Tribal Soldier: A Study of hunting, or even climatological criteria may all have played a part in tribal location. An interesting example is provided by the Meos, whose homes are always located above 3,000 feet in elevation. They are, apparently, incapable of bearing any but a cool temperate climate, even for a short time.<sup>5</sup> The result of these settlements has been the development of the peculiar altitudinal zoning found in the hills of Southeast Asia. There it is common to find in one valley the Lao along the river banks engaged in wet-rice culture; on the slopes above, between one and three thousand feet, the Yao and Kha engaged in growing upland rice; while above three thousand feet, the Meo raise rice and opium.<sup>6</sup>

Demography. In amplification of the complexity evidenced by the geographic dispersion of peoples, the following population breakdowns and comments are provided:

#### BURMA<sup>7</sup>

Burmese	12,800,000	Wa	200,000
Karens	1,800,000	Lolo	100,000
Shans	1,500,000	Indian and Pakistani	800,000
Kachins	450,000	Naga	90,000
Chins	400,000	Chinese	350,000
Mons	400,000	Indo-Burman	200,000

Total 15,590,000

Typical of the whole area, each of these groups is an identifiable majority in specific localities with the exception of the Indian and Chinese groups. These latter tend to be urban dwellers, but within the larger towns and cities are to be found congregated by choice or direction in their own districts.<sup>8</sup>

#### THAILAND<sup>9</sup>

Thai	18,585,000	Indian and	
Chinese	3,000,000	Pakistani	60,000
Malay	700,000	Mon	60,000
Cambodian	185,000	Karen	60,000
Vietnamese	100,000	Others	100,000

Total 22,850,000

The apparently overwhelming majority of Thais is reduced considerably when it is considered that this figure includes all of the Thai-speaking people of Thailand, such as the Shans, the Lu, approximately

2 million Tai Yuan (Northern Thai) and some 3.5 million Tai Lao (Northeastern Thai), in addition to the dominant Siamese.<sup>10</sup>

As reflected in the figures on Burma, the significance of many minorities is more deeply appreciated when it is considered that such a relatively minor group as the Malays constitutes about 85 per cent of the population of the southernmost four provinces of the country.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, the remaining 15 per cent is largely Chinese.<sup>12</sup> Thus, in an area of strong ethnic orientation, Thailand finds itself with its southern boundary protected not by Thai, but by an extension of the ethnic majority of its neighbor, Malaya. The Malays, as late as the mid-1950's, evidenced extreme unrest under Thai rule and have been supported openly by certain elements in Malaya.<sup>13</sup>

#### MALAYA<sup>14</sup>

Malay	3,125,474
Chinese	2,333,756
Indian and Pakistani	<u>707,108</u>

Total 6,278,758

Not listed above and considered economically and politically unimportant are approximately 35,000 aboriginal inhabitants of central Malaya, belonging to various tribes of either the Senoi-Semang or Jackun groups. Due to the arbitrary limitation of the area under consideration to mainland Southeast Asia, the insular portions of modern Malaysia have been omitted, other than those islands immediately offshore of the Malay Peninsula and historically associated with the Malay States. Singapore, as a separate country has been omitted.

#### NORTH VIETNAM, SOUTH VIETNAM, CAMBODIA AND LAOS<sup>15</sup>

Group	North Vietnam	South Vietnam	Cambodia	Laos
Vietnamese	13,000,000	9,750,000	300,000	50,000
Khmer		480,000	4,000,000	
Cham		40,000	80,000	
Thai	800,000	25,000	30,000	800,000
Hill Peoples	300,000	900,000	75,000	600,000
Chinese	100,000	800,000	180,000	15,000
Totals	<u>14,200,000</u>	<u>11,970,000</u>	<u>4,665,000</u>	<u>1,465,000</u>

The term "Hill Peoples" in these figures is a gross oversimplification, since it encompasses substantial portions of the population of each country and is composed of many different ethnic groups. Some of the more important of these will be dealt with in detail later. By showing them in this manner, it was felt that the relative importance of the minorities in each country was best presented as well as giving an excellent across-the-board comparison of the general population structures in the modern states which compose Indochina.

The figures shown in this chapter are at best approximations. There are no known census figures for this area that are considered to be more than estimates, and the estimates vary widely. The figures presented here are considered to represent as near to a consensus among knowledgeable individuals as is possible, and, if not accurate in quantity, it is hoped that they reasonably reflect proportions.

Political Boundaries. Adding to the already complicated ethnological picture is the political subdivision of the area. The international boundaries are almost exactly those left by the departing colonial powers. These boundaries resulted from the scramble for wealth and territory among the European powers rather than from the recognition of any limits based on the peoples or societies of the area.<sup>16</sup> Thus every country of Southeast Asia has significant ethnic minorities that are shared with at least one neighboring country and which in some instances, as we have seen with the Thai Malays, actually belong to the dominant ethnic majority in the neighboring state.

Unassimilated minorities, even though small, pose thorny problems to settled governments operating in sophisticated nations, as the United States has found in dealing with its own racial problems. To a weak government in an unsophisticated country faced with intense external political pressures, a minority problem can spell disaster.<sup>17</sup>

### III—CASE STUDIES IN TRIBAL WARFARE

The remainder of this paper will be devoted to examining the manner in which ethnic peoples may be dealt with to gain their support in insurgent situations.

The case studies in this chapter were made to determine and evaluate characteristics fundamental to a successful military or paramilitary alliance with an ethnic minority.

The cases selected are not considered unique and there are undoubtedly other instances of the same type in this area which are of equal or greater importance. However, each of these cases is considered to illustrate a number of different aspects of the military or paramilitary exploitation of ethnic minorities. Each case history is sufficiently well-documented to permit conclusions to be drawn with a minimum of conjecture. The groups chosen have each played a significant part in a major military campaign.

The search for historical references was limited to the period 1941-1954, as it was felt that the problems confronting the belligerent in this period were most nearly comparable to those encountered in the present. At the same time, the operations and their required alliances have been terminated long enough to permit a reasonable appreciation of any after effects of these programs.

#### KACHIN

The name Kachin is applied to the Jinghpaw speakers of northern Burma. The smaller ethnic groups, the Atsi, Lashi and Maru, who all use the Kachin or Jinghpaw language, are included with the Kachin. They are Tibeto-Burman in background and apparently originated somewhere to the north of their present location.<sup>1</sup>

Locational Factors. Estimates of the Kachin population vary between 200,000<sup>2</sup> and 450,000<sup>3</sup> in Burma, with sizeable groups in China and India.

Geographically, the Kachin tribes are widely distributed throughout western Yunnan, northern Burma and eastern Assam in an area roughly encompassed by the coordinates 96<sup>0</sup> and 99<sup>0</sup> N and 23<sup>0</sup> and 28<sup>0</sup> E.<sup>4</sup> This is a rough and mountainous country covered with tropical vegetation. It varies in altitude from 15,000 feet in the north to less than 1,000 feet along the Irawaddy at Myitkyina and Bhamo, the major cities in the Kachin country.<sup>5</sup>

History. Little is known about the Kachins prior to the 19th century. They are mentioned in

Johnston: School of Naval Command and Staff: The Tribal Soldier: A Study of Burmese history in the times of the early Burmese kings.<sup>6</sup> Their earliest sustained contact with the West was with American missionaries about 1878. This was followed by "pacification" of the Kachins by the British, a process requiring almost continual application of substantial military force from January 1886 until 1915 when armed Kachin resistance ended. From that time until Burmese independence in 1947, the Kachins were administered separately from the Burmese by the British.<sup>7</sup>

Social Structure. There are many tribes known as Kachin, but all of them share a common way of life. They have strong clan ties and common administrative systems. Descent is traced in the male line. Social stratification is based on clan membership, but there is no outward friction between noble and common clans, and intermarriage is not uncommon.<sup>8</sup>

Local governmental functions are carried out by tribal officials who exercise authority over their own tribe which may contain from a few villages to over a hundred. Tribal government consists of two basic systems: *gumsa*, the more widespread, and *gumlao*. Under the *gumsa* system, a tribal chieftain is called a *duwa* and is the supreme authority in the tribal area. The title is hereditary and the *duwa* has as his subordinate an *akyi* in each village who is advised and assisted in his duties by the *salanga* or council of elders.

Under the *gumlao* system there is no *duwa*. The village chief is elected and rules an individual village with the aid of the council of elders.<sup>9</sup>

Educational standards are low and only a few Kachins have good educations by Western standards.

Individual Characteristics. The Kachin are generally short and strongly built. They are experts in the jungle. Fiercely independent, they have often demonstrated great ethnic unity. They are extremely loyal and courageous and quick to learn. However, they are also revengeful and carry feuds for a long time.<sup>10</sup>

Customs and Taboos. As will be noted below, the animistic religious worship of the Kachins involves many spirits. This probably involves various peculiar customs and taboos.<sup>11</sup>

Medical and Health. All of the major tropical diseases are prevalent in this area. Malaria is widespread in the hills of the Kachin. Health and sanitation standards are poor.<sup>12</sup>

Religion. As previously noted, Christian missionaries have worked among the Kachins since the latter part of the last century with some success, and there may be a few Buddhist Kachins. All others would be classified as animists. The shamans, priests, and saga tellers are important personages in Kachin life.<sup>13</sup>

Economy. The Kachins are not active in a money economy. The majority practice a subsistence-type agriculture based on rice but including a wide variety of vegetables and other grains. Small quantities of rice, sugar cane, pineapples, and opium constitute their only commercial crops. Trade and commerce in the Kachin areas is in the hands of Indian, Chinese, Burmese, or Shan merchants.<sup>14</sup>

### Political.

Cohesiveness. Common language and other cultural similarities seem to override dialectical and regional differences when an external force appears. Divisive factors do appear, particularly in the *gumlao* villages, but on the whole, the group appears homogeneous, especially in the face of adversity.<sup>15</sup>

Attitude Toward the Government of Burma. The Kachin have rebelled against the Burmese many times.<sup>16</sup> They distrust all lowlanders, and their strong feelings of independence conflict with the Burmese' feeling of superiority toward hill people. The Kachins are aware that the Burmese consider them backward hill tribes who were pampered by the British.<sup>17</sup>

Attitude Toward Foreign Governments. At the time of World War II, the Kachins had probably come in contact with only representatives of the Japanese, Chinese, British, and American Governments on a meaningful basis. The brutality of the Japanese had quickly made them enemies, and the Kachins have a deep-seated distrust and dislike for the Chinese of long standing.<sup>18</sup> This animosity, on one occasion during World War II, took the form of a reprisal raid into China on which the Kachins destroyed nine Chinese villages.<sup>19</sup>

Johnston: School of Naval Command and Staff: The Tribal Soldier: A Study of  
After "pacification," the Kachins and the  
British enjoyed good relations. Under the British,  
the Kachins experienced their first social order and  
widespread educational and economic progress. They  
contributed heavily to the Burma Army, and in 1939  
constituted about one quarter of its strength,  
although only representing about one per cent of the  
population.<sup>20</sup>

Association with official Americans was limited  
to the campaign of World War II, which is covered  
below, although undoubtedly the good works of the  
missionaries made the association easier.

Attitude Toward Neighboring Tribes. Due to  
the dispersion of the Kachin, an exact evaluation is  
difficult. Drawing on inferences and isolated cases,  
they reportedly envy the Shan their better standard  
of living. They tend to look down on the Nagas and  
Lisu while maintaining good relations with the Chin  
and Lahu.

Military. The Kachins have a long history of  
military activity. In addition to defending their  
mountain homeland against all comers, regiments of  
Kachin mercenaries fought for the Burmese kings  
against their enemies, the Siamese and Mons.<sup>21</sup> They  
withstood the British Army for over 30 years and, as  
noted above, later provided a substantial portion of  
the famous Burma Rifles.<sup>22</sup>

Following the retreat of the Allies from Burma  
in 1942, the Kachins, with the Karens and Chins,  
provided the Burma Rifle units which fought as part  
of the British 14th Army.<sup>23</sup>

The Kachins operated extensively as guerrillas  
in Burma behind Japanese lines during World War II  
in the Kachin Rangers. This unit operated under the  
direction of American advisors and leaders from  
Service Unit Detachment 101 of the Office of Stra-  
tegic Services (OSS) from 1943 to 1945. According  
to Northern Combat Area Command sources, they pro-  
duced approximately 85 per cent of the usable in-  
telligence, rescued 574 downed Allied aviators,  
destroyed over 3,700 tons of supplies, and killed  
between six and ten thousand Japanese.<sup>24</sup> They also  
acted as a screening force for the U.S. 5307th  
Composite Unit Provisional, "Merrills' Marauders,"  
during Operation Galahad.<sup>25</sup> At their largest in  
February 1945, this unit numbered approximately 650  
Americans and 10,000 Rangers.<sup>26</sup>



The military proficiency of this organization was recognized in a Presidential Unit Citation issued 17 January 1946.<sup>27</sup> Major General Peers, U.S. Army, who served with them, stated, "It was the Kachins who wrote the splendid accomplishment of 101."<sup>28</sup>

Epilogue. After World War II the Kachins continued to form a major part of the Burmese Army and apparently served well. However, failure of the Burmese to provide adequate school facilities in the Kachin States, attempts to spread Buddhism and the Burmese language among them and finally the ceding of Kachin territory to Communist China, coupled with their inherent dislike for the Burmese, resulted in an armed rebellion. This rebellion has never been settled and is motivated by the Kachins' demands for independence.<sup>29</sup>

The Kachins are believed to be still receptive to Western contacts. However, there is a tendency to be disenchanted by the failure of support for their current struggle. They also have been subjected to intense anti-Western propaganda by both the Burmese Government and the Chinese.<sup>30</sup>

Alliance Factors. Certain conditions existed which were fundamental to the success of the alliance between the Kachins and the Americans and British. As identified by the writer, they are listed below:

- (1) The Kachins dominated a large portion of northern Burma, which was critical terrain in the campaign of North Burma.
- (2) The Kachins were a numerically large ethnic group with demonstrated homogeneous and organizational qualities which are based on a common language, clan loyalties, and a rather formal social structure.
- (3) The Kachins were experienced jungle fighters with centuries of tradition backing relatively modern experience. Modern weapons merely expanded an existing capability.
- (4) The Kachins and British had had good relations for a number of years, and while the British provided many internal

Johnston: School of Naval Command and Staff: The Tribal Soldier: A Study of advantages to the Kachin, such as schools, law and order, it is also apparent that the Kachin looked to the British as a bulwark against outsiders, Shan, Chinese, and Burmese.

(5) The Kachins had fear and distrust of their larger, more highly developed close neighbors.

(6) The Japanese provided a common enemy.

(7) Due to the similarity of the Americans and British, their obvious friendship and the reputation of American missionaries, the transfer of allegiance to the Americans where necessary was easy.

These factors obviously divide into those which are of greater value to one party or the other. In only the sixth is there a clear common purpose established. The motivational factors of greatest value to the Americans were satisfied with the expulsion of the Japanese from upper Burma; those of the British were naturally more complex and to greater or lesser extent lasted through the war to the independence of Burma. The major factors motivating the Kachins lasted far beyond those of its allies; thus, we see that they are still fighting for the same basic causes they had then.

#### VIETNAMESE TAI

This collective term is not exact and refers to the group of hill tribes in the northern part of Laos and the western part of Vietnam south of the Red River. This includes the White Tai, Black Tai, Red Tai, and those Meo living in this area.<sup>31</sup>

Locational Factors. The population of the groups enumerated above is roughly estimated at 400,000.<sup>32</sup>

Geographically, they are found in an area roughly described as 19<sup>0</sup> and 23<sup>0</sup> N and 103<sup>0</sup> and 105<sup>0</sup> E.<sup>33</sup> This is mountainous jungle terrain having few low areas and a number of eight to ten thousand-foot mountains.<sup>34</sup>

History. Both the Tai and the Meo have apparently migrated to their present location from

areas in China. In terms of arrival, the Tai groups who generally occupy the river valleys and upland plateaus came after the Vietnamese but centuries before the Meo, who only in the last century or two have arrived to take possession of the mountain tops.<sup>35</sup> The recent history of the area has been dominated by the White Tai under the Deo family. They entered into an alliance with the French in 1889 that ended only with the French defeat in Vietnam. The Tai affinity for the French was at least partly the results of the animosity between the Tai and the Vietnamese which was of long duration and great intensity.<sup>36</sup>

Social Structure. The Tai belong to patrilineal societies. They have a limited number of clans which are important and strong. Certain of these clans provide the sociopolitical elite as with the Deo family in the White Tai.

The Meo are essentially a more primitive people who are strongly oriented about the clan and among whom the village is generally the largest political group in this area. However, this is not necessarily so elsewhere as we shall see. In the area of consideration, the Meo have been dominated by the Tai in terms of taxes and labor, although they have also benefited from the Tai-French association.<sup>37</sup>

Individual Characteristics. The Meo and Tai are both short, sturdy, brown-skinned, black-haired people. The Tai tend to be of lighter skin than the Meo. Individuals of both groups tend to be intelligent, though generally uneducated. They learn fairly readily and have an engaging sense of humor. Once a friendship is made, they are steadfast, loyal friends.<sup>38</sup>

Customs and Taboos. Customs and taboos vary widely between tribes and areas. However, all of the groups have distinct customs and taboos connected with their religion. In groups which have had experience with Westerners, the people can be expected to be tolerant of ignorance of these rituals. However, in the remote areas, Dr. Fall warns that some customs and taboos are so important that failure to observe them can lead to loss of life.<sup>39</sup>

Health and Medical. As is common with all hill people in Southeast Asia, dietary deficiencies, primitive health and sanitation standards, lack of doctors and medicine, and the prevalence of tropical

Religion. All of the people included are considered animists and worship a variety of spirits. The Meo recognize a few Buddhist deities, although they are not Buddhist.<sup>41</sup>

Economy. These groups all engage in primitive agriculture. Rice and opium are the main money crops, although a variety of other grains, vegetables, and animals are raised. The rice culture of all groups is paddy or wet-land when possible, although swidden or upland predominates.

### Political.

Cohesiveness. The dominant family of the White Tai, the Deo, created a good deal of political cohesion at various times throughout the period 1885-1954, but the basic group remains the clan or the village and loyalties often fail to carry between villages. Probably the single factor creating the greatest cohesion was the establishment of the Tai Federation in 1948. This Federation was formed partly in payment for the aid of the Tai in reestablishing the French in Indochina after World War II. This separate status in the French Union was a great thing in the eyes of the Tai, but the Vietnamese deeply resented it.<sup>42</sup>

Attitude Toward the Vietnamese Government. As noted above, relations between the Tai, Meo, and the Vietnamese were not good. The hill people hated the Vietnamese for past events. The Vietnamese feared the mountains and hated and scorned the Tai and Meo. The Federation only formalized an already existing schism and was viewed by the Vietnamese as an amputation of part of their territory by the French.<sup>43</sup> It is notable, however, that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has continued some form of separate status for the Tai and Meo in an "Autonomous Region."<sup>44</sup>

Attitude Toward Foreign Government. The foreign governments with whom the Tai in this area have had any meaningful contact are the Chinese and the French. In view of the long history of Chinese sovereignty over this area, it is difficult to consider them foreign. However, the first alliance between the Tai and the French resulted in the Tai

Naval War College Review, Vol. 20 (1967), No. 1, Art. 5.  
breaking Chinese as well as Vietnamese affiliations  
in favor of the French.<sup>45</sup>

As regards their association with the French, it seems to have been particularly amiable, ending with the loyal support of the Tai during the War in Indochina. Apparently, the French, like the British in Burma, gave the hill tribes much better treatment than they had ever received from the dominant group, thereby gaining their loyalty. The motives behind this treatment are an interesting subject for speculation; however, they were apparently effective.<sup>46</sup>

Attitude Toward Neighboring Tribes. No significant attitudes toward neighboring tribes were noted during the period other than those resulting from alliances during the war.

Military. The Tai have a long history of tribal conflict. With the return of the French to Indochina in 1946, the Tai, including the Meos, took an active part in the French behalf. The first notable action was in 1947, when two Tai Mountaineer Battalions pushed the Viet Minh out of the Tai highlands between the Black and Red Rivers,<sup>47</sup> an area they reentered five years later in the strength of three divisions. Even then, in 1953, Giap was worried by 15,000 French-led guerrillas in his rear.<sup>48</sup> In 1954, over 5,000 Commandoes (guerrillas) operating in Laos and Vietnam, the Tai country, tied down from 7 to 14 Viet Minh Battalions. These guerrillas are credited with reconquering Phong Saly and Sam Neua Provinces, although they failed to take effective action against the flow of supplies into Dien Bien Phu.<sup>49</sup> However, by this time the French had evacuated Lai Chau, their main guerrilla supply base in the mountains, and the Viet Minh had "convinced" the Tai that the French couldn't win, sometimes by wiping out an entire village in reprisal for guerrilla action. With the departure of the French, the Tai villagers, out of desperation, went neutral.<sup>50</sup>

Epilogue. Subsequent to the French defeat, the surviving guerrillas and their French advisors were systematically hunted down and killed by the Viet Minh.

In 1957, a North Vietnamese publication carried a box score on guerrilla kills for a period the previous year.<sup>51</sup> The exact effect this extermination campaign has had on the Tai and Meo of this area and

Johnston: School of Naval Command and Staff: The Tribal Soldier: A Study of their present status is unknown. As previously noted, they have been associated with a Viet Minh designated Tai-Meo Autonomous Zone and the Communist writer, Burchett, lauds the imaginative handling of this minority problem by the Viet Minh,<sup>52</sup> so one would imagine they have been effectively subdued, at least for the present.

Alliance Factors. In extension of the method used in evaluating the Kachin-Allied Forces relationship previously, the alliance of the French and the Tai groups is examined below:

(1) The Tai Federation included a substantial portion of the area in North Vietnam, e.g., everything southwest of the Red River. Further, this area was the key to northern Laos.

(2) The Tai and their associates, the Meo, formed a sizeable block of the large minority group in North Vietnam. Although they lacked tribal homogeneity, the dominance of the White Tai represented by the Deo family, backed up by the French, had acted as a unifying agent for many years in dealings with outsiders including both the Chinese and Vietnamese.

(3) The Tai were fighting to maintain "their" country. The Federation formed in 1948 provided for autonomy under the French Union and thus insured freedom from Vietnamese domination.

(4) The French, since 1889, had stood in alliance with the Tai as a protector against outsiders.

(5) The Tai and Meo were experienced mountaineers and jungle fighters operating in their own mountainous homeland.

(6) A common enemy existed - the Viet Minh.

In this case, the French recognized the primary Tai motivation in 1948 when it formed the Tai Federation. Thus, they gained the allegiance of a sizeable group of mountaineers in a key area. The motivational factors involved here appear to have been closely aligned and prevented from full satisfaction

primarily by the defeat of the French. Recognition of some form of autonomy for the Tai by the Communists is indicative of the recognition by the Communists of the appeal of independence as a motivating factor to minority groups.

### MALAYAN CHINESE

The Chinese in Malaya constitute the largest overseas Chinese colony in the world and are the result of a centuries' old migration from China to Malaya. Although it is an old movement, the main activity has taken place under the British in the latter part of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th centuries.<sup>53</sup> They originated mainly in Kwangtung, Fukien, and Hainan Provinces and are divided into Hokkien, Tiuchiu, Cantonese, Hakka, and Hailam dialects or "tribes," among others.<sup>54</sup>

Locational Factors. The 1947 census of Malaya reflected 1,884,534 ethnic Chinese which incidently, compared to 2,427,834 Malaysians. Neither of these figures included Singapore, which had an additional 730,133 Chinese and 115,735 Malaysians.<sup>55</sup>

Excluding Singapore, approximately 90 per cent of the Chinese and slightly lesser proportion of the other races have settled in a belt about 40 miles wide along the west coast. In 1947, slightly over 50 per cent of the Chinese were classified as urban dwellers and over 40 per cent of them lived in towns of 40,000 or more, according to Del Fufo in his report on the Malayan census.<sup>56</sup> By 1947 about a half a million Chinese were living in the remote areas as squatters, having illegally taken up land and commenced farming. This move had started in the 1930's and was a fringe area operation primarily due to the prohibition against the Chinese owning land.<sup>57</sup>

Malaya is typical tropical jungle where not under cultivation, and the interior is mountainous and sparsely populated.

History. Under the British the influx of Chinese was welcomed and encouraged for they needed workers. The Malay tended to be disinterested in the profit motive: he would rather be happy than rich.<sup>58</sup> The Malay was further protected from life, by treaty, on his reservation. The Chinese, by contrast, were thrown on the market. They started as the laborers, clerks, and traders of Malaya, and by the beginning of World War II they were

Johnston; School of Naval Command and Staff; The Tribal Soldier: A Study of represented in every walk of life from beggar to millionaire. Their holdings in Malaya of some \$200 million were second only to Great Britain.<sup>59</sup> The Chinese, as elsewhere, had never been accepted as citizens of Malaya nor on their part had they ever broken with their motherland and attempted assimilation. As a result, they remained a huge minority of aggressive, hard-working people capable of great organization. At a later date, Robert Elegant stated that "the original trinity of modern Chinese imperialism was coolies, consuls and culture-mongers, to which has been added since 1949 a fourth element, aggressive Communism."<sup>60</sup>

The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was primarily a Chinese Association started in the 1920's, not apparently as an adjunct to the Chinese Communist Party. It functioned as a small well organized party from 1929 to 1937. In 1937 various Chinese relief fund-collecting organizations sprang up which were amalgamated under the title of the Anti-Enemy-Backing-Up-Society. This organization soon came under the control of the Party.<sup>61</sup> This organization became the screen for Communist operations in Malaya throughout World War II.<sup>62</sup>

Social Structure. The degree of organization enjoyed by the MCP at the beginning of World War II is considered noteworthy. After the Japanese victory, even early in 1942, the Chinese guerrillas had safe houses and local camps which permitted reasonably free travel throughout most of the country.<sup>63</sup> Control by the guerrilla general headquarters was absolute and all-embracing. Policy, discipline, ethics, and, above all, political ideology were entirely regulated from above, and as the penalty for disobedience was death, opposition in word or spirit was practically unknown.<sup>64</sup>

Individual Characteristics. The Chinese guerrillas were young, generally under 25 years; some were in their early teens. They were well disciplined and seemingly well motivated.<sup>65</sup> However, it is remarkable that, both in World War II and later during the Emergency, many turned informer due to personal grievances or general disillusionment, and probably were responsible for the greatest enemy successes.<sup>66</sup>

Customs and Taboos. None are considered pertinent to this study.



Medical and Health. Throughout the war, health supplies were critical. There were no doctors available, and in many cases native remedies were all that were available. Malaria and all other tropical diseases flourished, and at times seriously hampered any operations.<sup>67</sup>

Religion. Religion is not considered a pertinent factor.

Economy. The Chinese guerrillas had no productive economy. They relied almost exclusively on the Chinese civilian populace, with its considerable wealth, for support, and later on the air drops of the Allies. Small garden plots were tended in the jungle at various times without spectacular success.<sup>68</sup>

### Political.

Cohesiveness. In spite of the many dialects represented in the Malayan Chinese Colony, there has been a growing nationalism among the overseas Chinese since the 1930's that roughly parallels that of the mainland Chinese. This has been aided by the spread of Kuo Yiu, the new national language adopted in 1920.<sup>69</sup> During World War II, the Chinese were brought even closer by their hatred of the Japanese. During the bandit campaign, support was initially available on the strength of a Malayan Republic, with citizenship for Chinese, later due to the British position of treating all Chinese as Communists, and finally by terrorism.<sup>70</sup>

Attitude Toward the Government of Malaya. There was no Malayan Government as such during the war. The Japanese occupation force served as the government with some Malay support. During the Emergency, the Malayan Government was the enemy; an "independent" Malayan Government was the goal.

Attitude Toward Friendly Governments. Any government that was against the Japanese was a friend. As we shall see, the British Army and the Chinese guerrillas cooperated throughout the war. However, even then there were numerous incidents to support the comment of a British official to the effect that the main creed of the Backing-Up-Society was Communism and that it only used national salvation as a means to an end.<sup>71</sup> During the Emergency, there is no evidence of external governmental support for the Communists, but it must be presumed that all Communist governments were friendly.

Johnston: School of Naval Command and Staff: The Tribal Soldier: A Study of Attitude Toward Friendly Tribes. There are many examples of the Sakai or Samai supporting the Chinese throughout the war, both as guides and as safe houses.<sup>72</sup>

Military. The 101 Special Training School of the British attempted to form adequate stay-behind parties to organize guerrilla operations in December 1941.<sup>73</sup> This attempt was thwarted by the Japanese advance and resulted in a few poorly equipped teams of British officers going into the jungle to work with the Chinese. Little time had been available for prior training. Though well organized into seven anti-Japanese Regiments, the guerrillas knew nothing of weapons, and the British spent the next three years training them, although they were unable to properly equip them until 1944.<sup>74</sup> In January 1944 a military aid agreement was signed between representatives of the Allied Southeast Asia Command and the anti-Japanese Forces and their political wing, the Anti-Japanese Union. The Chinese agreed to help the Allies defeat the Japanese in return for arms and equipment and the provision that during the period of martial law following the reoccupation they would be responsible for the maintenance of law and order in Malaya.<sup>75</sup> After equipping the Chinese, the war ended before Malaya was invaded, and the Anti-Japanese Army was not called upon.

Epilogue. Many of the weapons that the Anti-Japanese Army buried rather than turn in in 1945 were dug up in 1948 when the Malayan Communist Party, now doing business as the Malayan Peoples Anti-British Army, began its "war of liberation."<sup>76</sup> Starting with about 4,000 of the British trained and equipped Chinese from the Anti-Japanese Army, this force kept 250,000 British and Commonwealth troops busy for the next ten years.

Alliance Factors. The major motivational factor behind the Chinese participation in the Malayan underground in World War II was the Communist Party with its teachings and discipline. Thus, what we are really looking for is what brought about this strange affiliation between the Imperial British and their avowed enemy.

- (1) The MCP and the British had a common enemy.
- (2) There was a large Chinese minority. Those in the underground were

*Naval War College Review, Vol. 20, [1967], No. 1, Art. 5*  
well organized and disciplined, primarily  
by the Communist Party.

(3) The central portion of Malaya is inhabited only by aboriginal tribes and is largely mountainous jungle and thus offered the guerrillas a suitable sanctuary.

(4) The Chinese affection for Mother China and hatred of Japan created a great deal of homogeneity among the Chinese in Malaya.

(5) The British provided arms and equipment and trained the Chinese in warfare.

(6) The Chinese felt universally that they were a suppressed minority and were highly resentful. The Communists had capitalized on this with their propaganda calling for an independent Malaya.

Here, again, we find great disparity among the motivational factors as they apply to each party. On the part of the Chinese, the British represented training and logistic support for the military arm of the Malayan Communist Party by whatever name it was called, and which functioned throughout the Emergency. As for the British, the Chinese offered a well organized ethnic group who would fight and who could obtain support throughout the country to aid in overthrowing the Japanese upon invasion.

#### SUMMATION

The ethnic groups in these case studies are separate, geographically dispersed, and were employed under generally dissimilar conditions. Upon comparison of the cases, it is apparent that they share the same characteristics. Inasmuch as they are common and of primary importance to either the establishment or maintenance of the various alliances, they are shown here as the fundamental "factors of alliance" for the employment of ethnic minorities in insurgent situations.

(1) A major geographical safe area was available in each case, either through tribal dominance or, in the case of Malaya,

Johnston: School of Naval Command and Staff: The Tribal Soldier: A Study of dominance through a lack of other meaningful population.

(2) The ethnic group was sizeable and had demonstrated organizational capability.

(3) In addition to an organizational ability, each group had also demonstrated a high degree of cohesion in the face of external threat.

(4) The desire for freedom from domination by the ethnic majority underlaid the association between the minority groups and its Western partner in each case.

(5) Medical and supply or other logistic support from the Western Ally was important, if not critical.

(6) In each case, there was a common enemy.

The absence of any reference to ideology may raise comment. However, the writer was unable to discern any evidence of widespread ideological basis to any alliance. Even in the case of the Malayan Chinese, the broad appeal to the membership was based on representation in some form of free Malayan government and hatred for the Japanese rather than any overt campaign of Communist ideology.<sup>77</sup>

#### **IV-APPLICATION OF ALLIANCE FACTORS**

In test, the characteristics listed in the last chapter will be examined to determine their presence and effect upon the alliances between the United States and certain tribal groups of Southeast Asia in the time frame 1954 to the present.

The cases studies will be the Meo in Laos and the Rhade in South Vietnam. Since these two groups were among the pilot groups in the United States' efforts to manipulate ethnic groups in this area, it was considered particularly appropriate to use them as test cases.

Existence of a Safe Area. The Meo control the mountain tops of northern Laos.<sup>1</sup> These vast and virtually trackless areas serve as redoubts in times of trouble, and due to the reputation of the Meo the Lao soldier or civilian is little inclined to penetrate this area. The lack of contiguous safe areas creates some problem, but the sparsely settled area and the skill of the Meo renders cross-country travel between redoubts reasonably safe. The one known major penetration of a Meo redoubt was the attack and seizure of Ban Padong by a heavily supported regular troop unit, alleged to be a DRV regiment, in 1961. The Meo simply evacuated the area, moving to another sanctuary.<sup>2</sup>

Size and Organization. Estimates of the size of the Meo group in Northern Laos range from a high of 500,000<sup>3</sup> to a more reasonable 60,000.<sup>4</sup> Their numbers may be vague, but their organizational capabilities are not. In wars of the past, the Great Chief appointed a C-in-C of Meo forces, who in turn established a widespread military organization with a chain of command consisting of *high* and *low* leaders. Even the *low* leaders had three officer subordinates, each of whom commanded from 60 to 100 men. This system was employed in the rebellion of 1919-1921 in Laos.<sup>5</sup> This organizational ability is apparently not limited to the military, as the Meo of Xieng Khouang have achieved considerable autonomy and have a nationally recognized leader in Touby Lyfoung who was in the 1960 Lao Government.<sup>6</sup> Touby was identified to the writer as the King of all the Meos on the Plaine des Jarres in 1959.

Demonstrated Cohesion. The Meo have long presented a homogeneous appearance to the world. Although organized on a village or clan basis, discipline is firm, and common threats, language, and tradition have created a reputation for cohesion.<sup>7</sup> However, in the Indochinese wars, they have fought divided in common with many peoples of Southeast Asia.<sup>8</sup> Phay Dong, an ex-village chief, organized the pro-Communist faction about 1946 according to Dommen<sup>9</sup> and Burchett.<sup>10</sup> The influence of this group is believed centered in extreme northern Laos as Touby and his military leader, General Vang Pao of the Royal Lao Army, a Meo, are credited with controlling all the Meo of Xieng Khouang Province.<sup>11</sup> Even with the split, the Meo have turned out to be the most

Johnston, School of Naval Command and Staff: The Tribal Soldier: A Study of reliable and anti-Communist fighters in Laos according to Dr. Fall,<sup>12</sup> and the writer tends to agree.

A Desire For Freedom. In addition to the rebellion of the Meo in Laos in 1919-1921, the history of the Meo in China records uprisings of major size in 1735-1740, 1795-1806, and 1854-1871. A Meo proverb says, "A small uprising every 30 years, a major one every sixty years."<sup>13</sup> Their history reflects constant migration apparently caused at least in part by attempts to escape domination. Autonomy has been their long-time goal. Bernotzik characterizes them as a warlike people who at the risk of lives and property resist any subjugation.<sup>14</sup> The Meo look with contempt on the Lao whom they say are afraid to fight the Communists and afraid of the Meo. The Lao delayed arming the Meo until the last moment in substantiation of this feeling.<sup>15</sup> A good deal of the success of Phay Dong has been probably attributable to the Communist propaganda regarding the autonomy of the Meo under the Communists.<sup>16</sup>

Requirement For Support. Opium is the Meo's money product. They must use much of this money for subsistence, e.g., the French were able to subdue the Meo in 1921 by cutting off their rice supply.<sup>17</sup> In 1961, the Meo, in return for their services against the Communists, asked for weapons, salt, and pants. During the summer of 1963 it was reported that 40 tons of supplies a day were being flown into the Meo, and that these were not war supplies.<sup>18</sup> Medical supplies and treatment are almost nonexistent. The use of standard first-aid equipment rates almost as a medical miracle, and in the writer's opinion the air evacuation capability for the wounded was of major importance in gaining their support.

A Common Enemy. During the First Indochina War, the Meo had ample opportunity to learn of the Communists by experience. The Viet Minh seized northern Laos in 1952 and they or the Pathet Lao held most of the Meo country from then until the consolidation of Laos in 1957. The Xieng Khouang Meo have had an opportunity to see both sides and have chosen the West. Their enemy is ours. They fought in 1961 and were reportedly fighting after the 1962 truce.<sup>19</sup> In March 1965 The New York Times reported that there is little doubt that the Meo are still fighting the Communists.<sup>20</sup>

Test Results. The alliance factors established in Chapter III are found to be present in the Meo-

United States affiliation and indicate that they have effects on that association comparable to that found in the previous cases.

## RHADE

Existence of a Safe Area. The Rhade and their associated tribes dominate the South Vietnamese highland and large areas of Cambodia. The Rhade themselves generally are found in the Dar Lac Plateau of the central highlands.<sup>21</sup>

Size and Organization. Estimates of the Rhade population range from 100,000 to 120,000 with almost half of them registered in Ban Me Thuot. While not exceedingly large themselves, they are generally considered the most important and strategically located of the Montagnard tribes.<sup>22</sup> Prior to the arrival of the French, there is no evidence of any tribal organization above the village level. Under the French, provinces and districts were organized and administered at first by the French, but finally there were a few Rhade district chiefs.<sup>23</sup> This was under the *Domaine de la Couronne* or Crown Domaine which placed the administration of the highlands directly under the head of the French Government and separate from the remainder of Indochina.<sup>24</sup> Subsequent to the Geneva Conference of 1954 and assumption of control by the Vietnamese, this organizational advance was not continued. Although the Rhade have a number of well educated people, they have no representation in the government and show little interest in Vietnam as a nation.<sup>25</sup>

Demonstrated Cohesion. Until recently, the Rhade have not demonstrated any remarkable tribal cohesion other than that resulting from clan relationships, common language, and customs.<sup>26</sup> Having been subjected to the whims of every invader of South Vietnam since the beginning of their history,<sup>27</sup> they have undoubtedly learned to draw together as a technique of survival. In 1964 a surprising demonstration of cohesion took place when several thousand Rhades manning outposts in Dar Lac Province rebelled against the Vietnamese and seized Ban Me Thuot.<sup>28</sup> This rebellion followed a proclamation calling for freedom made in the name of a *United Front of Struggle for the Oppressed Race* (FULRO), allegedly representing many Montagnard tribes, about which more will be said later.<sup>29</sup> This, of course, bespeaks cohesion not only within the tribe but among the tribes.

Johnston: School of Naval Command and Staff: The Tribal Soldier: A Study of A Desire For Freedom. Traditionally, contact with outsiders has been more disturbing than beneficial.<sup>30</sup> Contact with the Vietnamese has always been painful. During the French era, contact was limited as the Vietnamese were generally excluded from the highlands; however, after 1954, the Vietnamese took over. There is no history in the Rhade-Vietnamese relations other than that of conflict.<sup>31</sup> The Vietnamese consider the Rhade and other Montagnards savages and treat them as such. The French policy, on the other hand, was more paternalistic and protective.<sup>32</sup> The incident referred to above was a serious result of this inability to get along with the Vietnamese. In the rebellion, the Rhade massacred Vietnamese soldiers but didn't harm the American advisors stationed with them. It was only through the good offices of one of the American Army Officers that peace was restored. The Premier did not grant the autonomy demanded but promised reforms to include representation in government. The tribes signatory to this FULRO proclamation, which declared independence from South Vietnam, were the Rhade, Jarai, Bahnar, Sedang, Mnong, and ten other tribes representing probably 800,000 people.<sup>33</sup> The press has labeled FULRO anti-Communist; considerable evidence exists to the contrary.<sup>34</sup> Whether Viet-Cong inspired or not, this movement is active. As late as 20 December 1965 an attempt to raise the rebel flag in five provinces of the highlands: Quang Duc (Mnong), Phu Bon (Jarai), Dar Luc (Rhade), and Kontum (Sedang), was reported.<sup>35</sup> Some 50 Vietnamese casualties were reported while 200 Montagnards were said to have surrendered. Four of the rebels were condemned to death and 16 others sentenced to long terms in prison in the first trial to result from this aborted rebellion.<sup>36</sup>

Requirement For Support. The Rhade in common with the other Montagnards exist at the subsistence level. The need for educational and cultural programs is recognized, as evidenced by the demands made by the rebels on the government in the 19 September 1964 rebellion. Schools and medical aid were specifically required.<sup>37</sup> All sources agree that these are two of the most critical needs of the Rhade.

A Common Enemy. The Rhade give evidence of being substantially against the Viet-Cong. Considerable success has been reported in the training and employment of the Rhade by the U.S. Special Forces.<sup>38</sup> The same source has commented that to his knowledge no Viet-Cong attack against a Rhade-held outpost has



ever succeeded due to treachery among the garrison. On the other hand, there is and has been great Viet-Cong pressure on all the Montagnards. It has been estimated that from 5,000 to 6,000 Rhade went north with the Communists in 1954 and both Communist and Rhade Communist agents are known to have been working in the villages in the past few years.<sup>39</sup> However, it is widely felt that the majority of Montagnards would turn their back on the Viet-Cong if the government could offer protection. This, of course, is a stated reason for the emergence of FULRO protection.

Finally, it appears that in view of relations with the Vietnamese Government, the Montagnard sometimes shows little discrimination in his choice of enemy; as long as he is a Vietnamese, Viet-Cong or ARVN soldier makes little difference.<sup>40</sup>

A corollary to this type of situation existed in the uprising of the Sioux and other Indian tribes during the American Civil War.

Test Results. The Rhade, chosen because of their prominent position among the Montagnards and believed to present the same general characteristics as the other tribes, demonstrate the presence of the factors under consideration. However, one may question the effect that the apparent lack of a demonstrated tribal-wide organizational ability might have in dealing with them. One may also question FULRO, however, the significance here is the ability of FULRO to attract support rather than who is behind it. Assuming the widespread support for FULRO indicated in the press, then the question of which side can satisfy the conditions stated may well dictate the course of the war in the Vietnamese Highlands.

U.S. Position. A comment on the peculiar position of the United States in these two cases seems warranted. In each case, the recognized ally and friend of the tribes is not the parent government, but the United States. These people, in effect, are allies to the United States, concurrently with, not subordinate to, their own government. The Americans have replaced the French as the "big White Chief" in the eyes of the tribesman, to be fought for but cared by, so to speak. This creates serious problems in regard to the after effects of these alliances, which must be considered and planned for, beginning at the inception of the alliance. Otherwise, the

Johnston, School of Naval Command and Staff. The Tribal Soldier: A Study of United States stands in danger of destroying by internal means the very countries it hopes to save from the external aggression of Communism.

## V-CONCLUSIONS

It is impossible to establish a formula which will provide a solution to the manifold problems of subversive insurgency. Human behavior, particularly that of backward peoples exposed to the stimulus of modern political-military environment, defies such finite solution.

However, in the manipulation of ethnic peoples, there are certain characteristics of successful operations which are of such fundamental importance and so universal in nature that they must be considered principles. These are shown below.

### PRINCIPLES OF ETHNIC ALLIANCES

Size and Organization. The ethnic group should be of sufficient size and well enough organized to provide a significant force capable of efficient operation with a minimum of external leadership and training effort.

Geographical Domination. A safe area must be available which is large enough to hide the force and conceal its activities while secure enough to permit training, rest, and support activities. This doesn't necessarily have to be a rural area.

Cohesion. The ethnic group should possess a high degree of cohesion. Although closely allied to organization, it here refers to that quality of personal affiliation which creates a tightly knit group rather than the ability to accomplish anything. It reflects the discipline and esprit of a group. Cohesion makes organization infinitely easier.

Common Enemy. There should be a common enemy. It is possible to create an effective alliance without a common enemy, but it is impossible to maintain one, and the time lost in establishing the commonality of an enemy is valuable time wasted.

Logistic Support. Ethnic minorities will normally require major medical and logistic support, both civilian and military. Most ethnic minorities are found to be among the more backward people of the world, but even if this is not the case, broad spectrum civil action programs will provide essential augmentation to this type alliance.

Motivating Grievance. It is almost axiomatic that an ethnic minority will have major grievances against the ethnic majority under whose domination it exists. Dependent upon the mission, exploitation of these grievances can be undertaken only if the full effect of this action on relations with both groups, their relation with each other, and possible after effects is appreciated and planned for. The delicacy involved in effectively exploiting such a grievance cannot be overemphasized.

The application of these principles as guidelines in a given situation will indicate the relative military value of the various ethnic minorities in the area. In the manipulation of a selected group, the principles are mutually supporting and will provide a framework within which the actual plan for the alliance may be developed. Unsatisfactory conditions in regard to any one of these principles may be acceptable. However, it is essential that such deviation be recognized and that compensatory adjustments be made in the overall plan.

The principles are meant to be definitive, not exclusive, and it is possible that under different circumstances other principles will evolve. Excellent opportunities for further study and refinement of these principles are offered by the Lao, the Vietnamese, the Malay, and the Chinese minorities of Thailand. Further afield are the Karen, Kachin, Chin, and Shan minorities in Burma, and any number of Indonesian and African groups. The importance of these people and of our development of techniques for dealing effectively with them is apparent when their potential in Peoples' Wars of Liberation is recognized.

In the final analysis, the whole cause of world revolution hinges on the revolutionary struggles of the Asian,

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African and Latin American people who  
make up the overwhelming majority of  
the world's population. The socialist  
countries should regard it as their  
internationalist duty to support the  
peoples' revolutionary struggles in  
Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Lin Piao<sup>1</sup>

FOOTNOTES

I--Southeast Asia in Transition

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 160-203.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
4. Arthur J. Dommen, *Conflict in Laos* (New York: Praeger, 1964), p. 290.
5. Fisher, p. 497.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 198-199.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
8. Dommen, p. 22.
9. Lin Piao, "Long Live the Victory of the People's War," *Daily Report Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, Supplement 171 (4S), 3 September 1965, p. 19.
10. Dommen, p. 23.
11. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1965* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1965), p. 852.
12. Lin Piao, p. 26.
13. Fisher, p. 84.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 522.
15. Lin Piao, p. 20.
16. Mao Tse-tung, *Yu Chi Chan (Guerrilla Warfare)* Newport, R.I.: U.S. Naval War College, 1950), p. 2-36.

II--The People of Southeast Asia

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
3. Fisher, p. 488.
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5. Norman Lewis, *A Dragon Apparent* (New York: Scribner, 1951), p. 278.
6. Fisher, p. 535.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 468.
8. Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *Minority Problems in Southeast Asia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1955), p. 6.
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11. Thompson and Adloff, p. 158.
12. Robert S. Elegant, *The Dragon's Seed* (New York: St. Martin's, 1959), p. 215.
13. Thompson and Adloff, p. 161.
14. Fisher, p. 634.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 559.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 469.

### III--Case Studies in Tribal Warfare

1. LeBar, et al., p. 12.
2. Thompson and Adloff, p. 29.
3. cf. ante, p. 14.
4. See Appendix A.
5. LeBar, et al., p. 12.
6. William R. Peers and Dean Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), p. 50.

7. Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma* (London: Cresset, 1962), p. 379.
8. LeBar, et al., p. 16.
9. Edmund R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 268.
10. Peers and Brelis, p. 147.
11. LeBar, et al., p. 16.
12. Fisher, p. 55.
13. LeBar, et al., p. 17.
14. Leach, p. 143.
15. Fisher, p. 602.
16. Thompson and Adloff, p. 27.
17. John S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), p. 12.
18. Charlton Ogburn, Jr., *The Marauders* (New York: Harper, 1959), p. 105.
19. Peers and Brelis, p. 178.
20. Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 314.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 312.
22. Leach, p. 186.
23. Tinker, p. 318.
24. Peers and Brelis, p. 217.
25. Charles N. Hunter, *Galahad* (San Antonio, Texas: Naylor, 1963), p. 55.
26. Peers and Brelis, p. 220.
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30. *Ibid.*
31. LeBar, et al., p. 76, 220-226.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 72, 220-226.
33. See Appendix A.
34. U.S. Army Map Service, *Southeast Asia Road Map*, Series 5308, Sheets 1, 2 & 3 (U.S. Army Map Service, Far East, 1962), Sheet 3.
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39. *Ibid.*, 272.
40. Fisher, p. 55.
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42. Thompson and Adloff, p. 214.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
44. Michael Field, *The Prevailing Wind* (London: Methuen, 1965), p. 347.
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46. Fall, p. 277.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
48. Edgar O'Ballance, *The Indo-China War* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 201.
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70. Elegant, p. 201-208.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
72. Chapman, p. 217.
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77. Chapman, p. 154.

IV--Application of Alliance Factors

1. Appendix A., U.S. Army Map Service, Sheet 2.
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3. Dommen, p. 5.
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5. Frank M. LeBar and Adrienne Suddard, eds.  
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7. Lewis, p. 278.
8. Field, p. 31.
9. Dommen, p. 74-75.
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31. Howard Sochurek, "American Special Forces in Action in Viet-Nam," *National Geographic Magazine*, January 1965, p. 64.

32. Field, p. 328.

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**V--Conclusions**

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## **BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH**

Lieutenant Colonel Howard J. Johnston, U.S. Marine Corps, holds a B.S. from the University of Denver and has performed graduate study in Economics at the University of Florida.

Lieutenant Colonel Johnston has served in command billets at both the Company and Battalion levels and is a specialist in Intelligence. He was assigned as Assistant Naval Attaché for Air at Bangkok, Thailand for 30 months. During this period he traveled extensively in Thailand and Laos and experienced personal contact with many of the ethnic groups about which he has written.

Lieutenant Colonel Johnston is a graduate of the 1966 class of the School of Naval Command and Staff at the Naval War College. He is presently assigned to Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps.