The Achilles heel of British counterinsurgency: Violence and failure during the Cypriot emergency (1955-1959)

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1. Introduction

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, Britain's global influence had largely declined compared to its colonial peak. Yet, the British still take pride in one thing other powers did not achieve to the same extent: counterinsurgency operations (Dixon, 2009, p. 355). Utilising lessons from their decolonisation wars in the 1950s, the British army created a sophisticated counterinsurgency modus operandi, targeting the 'guilty few' whilst befriending the 'innocent many', minimising overall violence (French, 2012, p. 744). Alongside the political sphere, the perception that the British conducted their post-WWII counterinsurgency campaigns by trying to secure the 'hearts and minds' of the population has also gained significant prominence in academia (French, 2012, p. 758). Although scholars have extensively researched success cases, such as Malaya, they have experienced empirical shortcomings when assessing the failures. Success here can be contextually defined as "the military defeat of the insurgents in combination with the destruction of their organisation and their permanent isolation from the population, enforced in agreement with the population" (Ucko, 2014; Cohen, 2014).

Many academics have attempted to create frameworks predicting a counterinsurgency's likelihood of success (Kilcullen, 2006; Paul, Clarke, Grill , 2010; Hazelton, 2017). Arguably, the most important among them is David Galula, a French lieutenant colonel and renowned academic, who was the main inspiration behind the most prominent counterinsurgency handbook of the twenty-first century, the United States (US) Field Manual (FM) 3-24 (Porch, 2014; Rineheart, 2010, p. 40; Rid & Keaney, 2010, p. 63). He asserted that factors such as location, population size and economy can set the right ground for a successful counterinsurgency campaign (Galula, 2006, p.26). Yet, although he is widely considered the intellectual father of counterinsurgency, there are cases his framework cannot explain. One under-studied example is the Cyprus counterinsurgency, which adhered to all his requirements for success, yet failed as an operation (Dimitrakis, 2008). The British Empire could not limit the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA) operations, leading to the counterinsurgency's failure and subsequent decolonisation.

This deviation provides an interesting ground for further research concerning why some cases, such as the Cypriot one, deviate from Galula's (2006) theoretical expectations, and what alternative explanations can be given for their failure. Recognising that decolonisation wars form the base of counterinsurgency theory, and have undoubtedly affected modern

counterinsurgency practices, as signified by Galula's influence on FM 3-24, this research will focus on counterinsurgency in the colonial context. Hence, this thesis aims to explore this subject through the research question:

Why did the British counterinsurgency campaign in Cyprus fail?

The academic significance of this research is to fill the gaps in existing literature and enrich the ongoing debate regarding why counterinsurgency fails. Moreover, its social significance is to inform future military and government operations, which are based on such academic scholarship. Ultimately, the goal is to identify the factor(s) which led to the failure of the Cypriot counterinsurgency. To achieve this, first, a literature review will be conducted and the research gap will be identified. Then, a theoretical framework and methodology on which the subsequent analysis is based will be presented. Accordingly, the analysis will be divided into three phases, each of which will be analysed based on the strategy provided in the methodology section. Finally, the results will be discussed and interpreted to draw conclusions, whereupon the value and limitations of this research will be assessed.

2. Literature Review

This literature review explores and compares the work of prominent academics on colonial-era counterinsurgency, such as David Galula, John Nagl and Gian Gentile and attempts to unfold the debate around its practices and success indicators, eventually identifying a research gap.

2.1 Types of counterinsurgency

Considered to be the father of counterinsurgency studies, Galula asserts that the insurgent-counterinsurgent duo is asymmetrical in force, at least in the beginning (Galula, 2006, p. 5; Rineheart, 2010, p. 40; French, 2015). While insurgents typically start as clandestine groups, often without significant material resources, the counterinsurgent is usually an established government or authority enjoying international diplomatic recognition and a near-monopoly of tangible assets (Galula, 2006, p. 5; Byman, 2008). Due to this asymmetry, the insurgents cannot be victorious on a traditional battlefield, and hence they must gain advantages in other ways, or else risk failure. This imperative need for an alternative route leads to the battle shifting away from traditional wars and towards a fight for the consciousness and support of the population (Galula, 2006, p. 6).

Within this insurgency context, John Nagl argues that counterinsurgency can either have a population-centric or an enemy-centric approach. (Nagl, 2002; Rineheart, 2010, p. 41). Enemy-centric counterinsurgency involves defeating the enemy with sheer military force, whereas population-centric counterinsurgency involves a fight for the people's favour (Nagl, 2002). In the latter, insurgents and counterinsurgents share a goal: winning the support of the population, thereby gaining legitimacy (Rineheart, 2010, p. 40; Galula, 2006, p. 6). Recognising that a purely military approach is not attainable, the latter form of counterinsurgency makes a case for a 'political approach with military features' (Rineheart, 2010, p. 41). The features of this dual approach, as well as the arguments made for and against it, will be outlined below.

2.2 'Hearts and Minds' (population-centric counterinsurgency)

As mentioned above, the insurgents cannot build adequate internal strength to use against the authority or government without first winning the people's favour (Anderson, 2011). In response, the counterinsurgent's main objective is to isolate the insurgents from their main source of power, resources, and legitimacy: the population. On these premises, Smith (2001, p. 60) asserted that if the population considers that the benefits of supporting the government are greater than the risks of supporting the insurgents, then they will turn against the insurgents. So, the counterinsurgents typically employ a strategy composed of benefits such as public goods, protection and limiting violence, while also building infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals and housing, and promising governmental reforms (Galula, 2006; Rineheart, 2010, p.20). This logic was initially encapsulated in the so-called Briggs Plan, a successful strategy developed during the Malayan insurgency, which has since been used as the population-centric counterinsurgency blueprint (Ucko, 2014, p. 17; Smith, 2001).

Building on Galula's work and the Malayan experience, Rineheart (2010, p. 41) asserts that by winning the support of the local population, the counterinsurgent gains access to valuable intelligence about insurgent tactics, mechanisms, and most importantly, their whereabouts. This intelligence can be obtained through police, military and civilian avenues by utilising an array of methods. For example, using local police forces to infiltrate the social web, in public settings such as taverns and markets, thereafter extracting information about the insurgents (Clarck, 2006, pp. 13-14). By establishing these flows of information, and subsequent relationships between the authority and the population, trust is slowly built, and the perception that a future under the counterinsurgents is better than one under the insurgents

grows (Clarck, 2006, p. 13). Therefore, intelligence gathering serves a dual purpose: first, to collect information about the insurgents, to then locate and neutralise them, and second, to build trust between the counterinsurgent and the population, win them over, and eventually 'cut the bloodline' of the insurgency.

This established relationship and trust between the counterinsurgent and the population yields legitimacy (Clarck, 2006, p. 13). By being considered the better governing option, the counterinsurgents gain legitimacy, resulting in them being perceived as the rightful rulers, allowing for more power over preventing the spread of insurgent propaganda. Nagl (2002) concludes that perceived legitimacy can prevent insurgent recruitment, as the population would view insurgents as untrustworthy or illegitimate, and instead express support for the incumbent government.

2.3 Critiques of population-centric counterinsurgency

Although the redeeming qualities of population-centric counterinsurgency, such as the limitation of violence, have been established by major academics as described above, some argue against it. Porch (2013) and Gentile (2013), two of Galula's main critics, emphasise that even though the idea of a 'clean' and less violent war can seem very appealing, it ignores the inherently violent nature of warfare and hence it is patently false (Ucko, 2014, p. 162). It has also been argued that sheer military force (as opposed to population-centric means) can be used as an instrument to overturn the narrative that the insurgents are winning, isolate them from their supporter base and consequently suppress them (Paul et al., 2016, p. 1023).

Despite his criticisms of population-centric counterinsurgency, Gentile (2013, p. 6) argues that the Briggs Plan was a very detailed and well-planned operation which eventually won the 'hearts and minds' of the people, and quelled the communist insurgency. Ucko (2014, p. 164) directly contradicts him, arguing the catalyst was not solely the counterinsurgency strategy, but rather its combination with structural factors set out by the preceding century of colonialism. To further elaborate, the British forces' ability to carry out this strategy relied upon colonial structures, such as administration, infrastructure, and geographical and cultural knowledge collected throughout the occupation (Ucko, 2014, pp. 166-167). This infrastructure made diplomatic connections and intelligence flows between people and the British authorities possible.

2.4 Factors attributed to counterinsurgency success

Although Galula (2006) and his contemporaries wrote about their experiences in the colonial context, their academic contributions have largely informed current military operations and military handbooks. Most notably, the infamous US FM 3-24, which brings population-centric counterinsurgency back to the discursive forefront, while praising the British for their successful counterinsurgencies in the 20th century (Paul et. al., 2016; US Department of the Army, 2006). Considering that Galula has arguably been a core proponent of population-centric counterinsurgency and the most central influence on FM 3-24, the following paragraphs will explore the factors he argued would lead to a successful counterinsurgency (Porch, 2014; Rineheart, 2010, p. 40; Rid & Keaney, 2010, p. 63)

Drawing from his experiences in Algeria and Indochina, Galula (2006, p. 13) lists three core necessities for a (counter)insurgency to emerge and succeed: a cause for the insurgency, weakness (or strength) of the counterinsurgent and favourable structural factors. He also suggests that the different factors carry different levels of importance at different stages of a (counter)insurgency. In the beginning, the existence of a cause with the ability to concern and attract the largest number of supporters, like an anti-colonial one, is the most important factor (p.13). Following the establishment of a cause, the strength of the counterinsurgent determines whether the insurgency will be able to grow in scale (p. 19). By measuring a combination of factors such as the existence of a strong leadership figure, control over the armed and police forces, and the strength of the administrative sector, one can determine whether the insurgency will have the necessary ‘space’ to scale up or not. Since this research is focused on counterinsurgency success, it is assumed that the insurgency that will be studied has passed through the first two stages, to have a chance of conclusive success. Hence, while these two factors will inform the analysis, they will not be its major focus.

Should the insurgency make it through the evolving stage, the success of the (counter)insurgency is then largely determined by several structural factors. Galula (2006, p. 26) argues that these factors are vital for all stages of an insurgency, not just the beginning or end of the operation. Hrnčiar (2018, p. 87) justifies this permanent importance by emphasising that structural factors, being constant and unchangeable in the short term, cannot be affected by either side and hence constitute a stable factor which forms the opportunities and limits the capabilities of all actors operating in a specific area.

Galula (2006) lists seven factors which need to be present for a counterinsurgency to be successful. First, a country isolated by natural barriers, such as oceans, mountains, deserts and rivers, will largely favour the counterinsurgent, as it limits escape and support pathways for the insurgent (p. 26). Second and third, the counterinsurgent would have more chances of success in a smaller country with a concentrated population, as it is easier to control. Fourth and fifth, the 'simpler' the country's morphology & terrain is, for example, if it is a unified piece of land and not an archipelago, the easier it is to assert dominance over it (p. 26). Sixth, harsher climates largely favour counterinsurgents, as they have more resources and equipment to persevere through tough conditions. Seventh, more developed economies favour the counterinsurgents, as in such cases excessive levels of insurgent violence affect economic activity, which could lead to the population being hostile toward them, even if they were not initially (p. 27). Overall, as shown in *Figure 1*, Galula argues the 'ideal' situation for a counterinsurgent would be a small, island country, without complicated terrain along its borders, with a small population mostly living in towns and a non-primitive economy.

Figure 1. Morphology benefiting the counterinsurgent (Galula, 2006, p. 28)

Academics such as Porch (2014), Rineheart (2010) and Rid & Keaney (2010) have generally reached consensus about the importance and effectiveness of Galula's (2006) framework. Although it has the potential to explain many cases, such as the Malayan and Vietnam counterinsurgencies, there are some cases which escape this framework's explanatory power. For example, the case of the 1955-1959 British counterinsurgency in Cyprus deviates from Galula's framework: While it has all the structural factors Galula argues should lead to a successful counterinsurgency, the operation failed (Dimitrakis, 2008). To my knowledge, there is no research that challenges Galula's framework and attempts to answer *why* Cyprus defies this trend, ultimately pointing out other factor(s) which may affect counterinsurgency success. Having established the importance and reasoning behind choosing to explore this

specific research gap, this analysis aims to fill it by answering the explanatory research question :

Why did the British counterinsurgency campaign in Cyprus fail?

3. Theoretical Framework

Before embarking on the theoretical premises of this research, the variables must be conceptualised. The independent variable is the term 'counterinsurgency', and specifically population-centric counterinsurgency, commonly known as the 'hearts-and-minds' doctrine. In his definition, Moore (2007, p. 14) recognizes the dual political and military nature of counterinsurgency, yet does not adequately illustrate the goal of winning the public favour as described by Galula and others. Given the narrow scope of the research question, this is imperative to specify. Thus, his definition will be enhanced with Dixon's (2009, pp. 256-357) description of counterinsurgency, ultimately producing the working definition of counterinsurgency as *an integrated set of political, economic, social and security measures intended to build popular trust, end and prevent the recurrence or armed violence by separating the insurgents from the population, and create and maintain conditions for long-lasting stability by resolving the perceived underlying causes of an insurgency*.

The dependent variable is the term 'success', which has been subject to debate for decades, with academics still being inconclusive about the essence of successful counterinsurgency (Egnell, 2010; Johnston, 2012). Whereas in conventional wars success can roughly be conceptualised as victory in battle, the case is not so easy for counterinsurgency (Cohen, 2014). Cohen (2014) argued that even if an insurgent 'wins' on the battlefield, they may still lose the war, as was demonstrated in Vietnam, where the US won every engagement but in the end was unsuccessful. He concludes that a successful counterinsurgency must encompass both operational and political elements to holistically tackle the insurgency (p. 8). Ucko (2014) takes this logic further, asserting that victory is the military defeat of the counterinsurgents, the destruction of their organisation and their isolation from the population. Combining all the aforementioned features, the working definition of success for this paper is *the military defeat of the insurgents in combination with the destruction of their organisation and their permanent isolation from the population, enforced in agreement with the population*. Reversing this definition, counterinsurgency failure can be conceptualised as the *political defeat of the counterinsurgents, resulting in the population gravitating toward*

the insurgent side and ultimately to non-cooperation due to feelings of alienation, in combination with a likely military defeat of the counterinsurgent powers.

In the theoretical realm, Branch and Wood's (2010) theory about counterinsurgency operations highly resonates with this research. They argue that when counterinsurgents use excessive violence against the population to hamper their support for the insurgents, it backfires (pp. 6-12). Instead of turning people away from the insurgents, it alienates them from the counterinsurgents (p. 6). Through this, the insurgents enjoy increasing approval, intelligence gathering, legitimacy and recruitment from the wider population (p. 8). As they are not able to provide for the population nor build trust with them due to ongoing violence, the counterinsurgents will gradually forfeit their perceived legitimacy and popular favour, leading to the loss of 'hearts and minds' (p. 12). Considering the two requirements of success provided above, even if counterinsurgents succeed on the battlefield, this will not be sufficient for them to win the counterinsurgency altogether. In this context, violence against civilians refers to the use of force, both lethal and non-lethal, which is deliberately and indiscriminately targeted at the population, enacted either by individual soldiers and/or their organisations (Balcells & Stanton, 2021, p. 47).

This theory was chosen because it provides a comprehensive framework with which to answer the research question while recognising the dual political-military nature of counterinsurgency (Branch & Wood, 2010, p. 11). Based on the principle that success entails two parts and that excessive violence leads to failure on one of those two fronts, the theory here attempts to explain why in cases where Galula's (2006) structural factors are met and the odds are in favour of the counterinsurgency, the insurgency is successful instead. Thus, the main argument driving this research is that in Cyprus, the hearts-and-minds practice, when compared to its doctrine, allowed for excessive levels of violence which eventually alienated the population, inevitably leading to failure. Drawing from this, the following hypothesis was established:

H1: Increased violence employed by the counterinsurgent against the population leads to counterinsurgency failure.

4. Methodology, cases & data collection

4.1 Single case study

After reviewing a large body of work, the two primary methods to study counterinsurgencies identified were large-N studies and single-case studies, of which this research will utilise the latter (Cohen, 2014; Kalyvas, 1999; Johnston, 2012; Hazelton, 2017). Although both methods present benefits and drawbacks, large-N studies present a large disadvantage when dealing with the dual (political-military) definition of counterinsurgency success, as they tend to simplify the notion of success for research purposes (Cohen, 2014, p. 17). Yet, even though military victory is necessary for overall success, it alone cannot guarantee it (Moore, 2007). Hence, failing to account for the dual nature of success, large-N studies potentially cannot provide a comprehensive answer to the research question of this paper.

Conversely, by focusing on one case and analysing it extensively, single-case studies can distinguish the different facets of success (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 234). By virtue of this analytical depth, they make a case for increased internal validity, meaning they can adequately explain mechanisms within the specific case better than large-N studies can (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. p 235). Furthermore, as the chosen case will adhere to Galula's (2006) criteria, but not to his expectations, it can be considered a deviant case. When deviant cases are used alone, it is possible to explore the reasons behind said deviation in-depth, yielding better conclusions (Levy, 2008, p. 13). It should be noted that single-case studies usually do not provide too large of a scope so that their findings are easily generalisable or applicable to other cases, so they pose an issue of external validity (p. 235). Despite this limitation, the drawbacks identified for the large-N alternative outweigh those of the single case study for the purpose of answering the given research question. Hence a case will be used to delve deeper into a specific counterinsurgency and explore why it failed, despite its adherence to Galula's criteria.

Analysing this deviant case, this research will employ a within-case congruence procedure, seeking to make several paired observations of the two variables across different time points (Van Evera, 1997, p. 55). Through this, we will test whether the theory applies in this case: if increased violence does come with increased alienation, then the hypothesis is supported. If the data found does not support the theory, then it will be necessary to consider alternative explanations to the research question (Van Evera, 1997, p.77). To summarise, this research

will use a single-deviant case to perform a congruence procedure, testing whether the theory and hypothesis are supported, and hence whether they explain the Cypriot failure.

4.2 Case selection: Cyprus

After identifying the method used in this paper, the case to be analysed must be identified. First, it is necessary to narrow the pool of cases by time. As Galula (2006, p. 3) asserted when writing about his criteria in 1964, his research concerns counterinsurgencies with a character of national liberation. This notion is adjacent to the term 'classical counterinsurgencies': a struggle of one state, contained within one state, possibly with the existence of a neighbouring state acting as a haven for the insurgents (Rineheart, 2010, p. 41). Reviewed literature seems to have reached a consensus about attributing the classical counterinsurgency status to a specific period, which is roughly between 1945 and 1990 (Kilcullen, 2006; Ucko, 2014). Therefore, we are looking for a case after 1945 and before 1990, preferably closer to the period which Galula writes about, which is until 1960.

Second, to research the cause of failure, the chosen counterinsurgency needs to have failed, meaning that the counterinsurgent must have been unable to secure a military victory in combination with isolating the insurgents from the population. Third, this paper specifically explores population-centric counterinsurgency, and because of this focused scope, it seeks a case where the counterinsurgent has had experience with this type of counterinsurgency before, to avoid attributing the failure to inexperience. Fourth, the case needs to fit Galula's seven requirements for a successful counterinsurgency.

Applying these four criteria, we are looking for a British counterinsurgency that has been widely acknowledged as a failure between 1945 and 1960 and fits into Galula's (2006) requirements. Of all the counterinsurgencies within this period, the only one which fits all the criteria is the Cypriot counterinsurgency. The Cypriot case, occurring from 1955 to 1959, ultimately failed in 1959 (Dimitrakis, 2008). Prior to this, the British had already fought in Malaya and Kenya, technically providing them with enough experience. Additionally, it fits Galula's requirements for a successful counterinsurgency: a small island country with no complex morphology, with a small population of around 500.000 Greek and Turkish Cypriots who lived in urban as well as rural environments and had a non-primitive economy (French, 2015).

4.3 Operationalisation & data collection

With the case of Cyprus in mind, the data collection methods and means of analysis will be discussed shortly. The main hypothesis of this research is that increasing levels of violence lead to the alienation of the population and eventual failure of the counterinsurgency. To test this hypothesis through a congruence procedure, one needs to measure whether increased and excessive violence was present, and to what degree this alienated the population across the five years of the Cypriot counterinsurgency (Van Evera, 1997, p. 55).

In pursuit of this, violence will be operationalised by factors identified in the literature as indicators of lethal and non-lethal violence. More specifically these include civilian casualties caused by counterinsurgent fire, mass curfews, cordon and search operations where detainees were taken, amount of detainees in prisons and detention camps, mass punishment such as imposition of collective fines, and number of troops (Schroden, 2009, pp. 719-720; French, 2015, pp. 11-13; Siroky & Dzutsati, 2015, p. 817). Similarly, alienation and non-cooperation will be operationalised by using three indicators. First, non-cooperation will be operationalised through the number of citizens insurgents were recruiting at a given time, which signifies that said citizens were supporting the insurgent group and by extension not supporting the counterinsurgent (Trinquier, 2008). Second, alienation will be measured by examining British approval rates, and the general stance of Cypriots toward the British through polls and newspaper articles of the time. Third, the means of intelligence gathering by the British military, as found throughout the literature will be assessed. Information acquisition through direct means (ie. Cypriot informants) indicates that cooperation and alienation are low, and vice-versa (Rineheart, 2010).

In order to obtain the necessary data, the sources of this analysis will mostly be secondary (Johnston, 2014). This means that this research will rely on data other academics have collected on the Cyprus insurgency and will analyse them under the given theoretical prism to answer the research question. The data identified in the literature is both of qualitative and quantitative nature, and this paper will integrate both in a single qualitative analysis. Importantly, overreliance and potential bias will be avoided by comparing and cross-checking data from many different articles and books (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 201).

5. Analysis

5.1 Historical Background

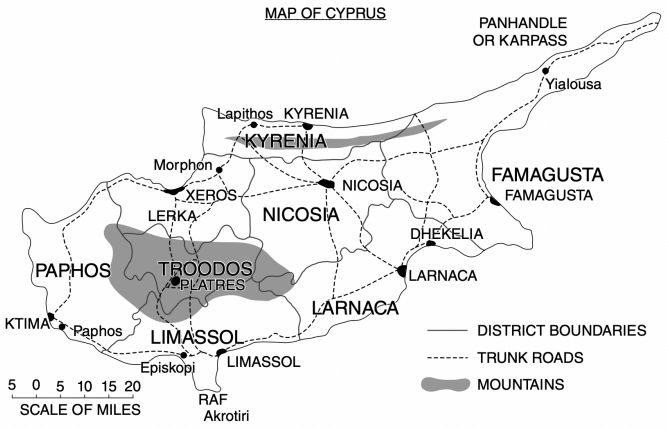

Figure 2. Map of Cyprus (French, 2015)

The initially Greek-speaking island of Cyprus (*Figure 2.*) has a long history of occupation. From 1571 to 1878 it was controlled by the Ottoman Empire, leading to the development of a Turkish-speaking minority, which, as per the 1954 census, accounted for around 17 per cent of the 521,375 total population, while Greeks made up approximately 80 per cent (French, 2015, p. 14). From 1878 until 1960 the British Empire took control of Cyprus, importantly, not through right of conquest, but through the Cyprus convention and later via the Lausanne treaty, gaining sovereignty over the island (p. 12). The relatively peaceful transition meant that Cypriots did not encounter state repression and violence for generations. Hence, introducing violence in the counterinsurgency, despite it being less extreme than in Kenya and Malaya, had a significant effect on the social web, as even low levels of repression were new to Cypriots (Robbins, 2012).

A major political idea brewing within the Greek circles of the island which differentiated it from other liberation movements of the time was that of *enosis,* meaning Cypriot union with Greece (French, 2015, p. 30). *Enosis* stemmed from the *Megali Idea* (the Great Idea), an ideological concept emerging from the Greek 1821 Independence War that sought to unite all Greek-speaking populations, wherever they were, under a single Greek State (Hatzis, 2019, p. 1). A major proponent of this idea was the Cypriot Orthodox Church, led by Archbishop Makarios II who from 1950 onward led a rally of nationalist organisations under the Ethnanarchy Council as well as a diplomatic race with the support of the Greek government, both with the goal of self-determination and *enosis* (Scarinzi, 2021, p. 209).

On the other side of the negotiation table, Britain refused a complete form of self-government, and suggested a form of internal self-government for the Cypriots, with the condition that the island would remain within the Commonwealth (Holland, 2002, p. 26). Considering this plan would not allow for *enosis*, Archbishop Makarios II appointed the experienced Greek colonel, Georgios Grivas, to lead an anti-imperial struggle, demanding full independence from British rule and eventual *enosis* (French, 2015). Grivas created the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA) whereupon he initially trained and recruited around 100 fighters who were divided into urban and rural (village) gangs, while also accumulating a support network of around 600 people who would provide food, shelter, and intelligence about the British (pp. 56-57).

Knowing they could not secure a direct military victory, EOKA used disruptive tactics and political violence to reach their goals. This included bombings of British buildings, political assassinations and hit-and-run operations with the ultimate goal of provoking, frustrating and exposing British repression (French, 2015, p. 48). The disruptive campaign started on 1 April 1955, with a series of explosions targeting government buildings in Limassol, Nicosia and Larnaca. After diplomatic attempts to curb the insurrection failed, Field-Marshal Sir John Harding was appointed governor of Cyprus and declared a state of emergency on 26 November (Scarinzi, 2021, p. 210). During his campaign, the Church's political role became increasingly constrained, peaking with the deportation of Archbishop Makarios II in March 1956 (French, 2015, p. 93). Furthermore, there were attempts to eliminate EOKA guerrillas and their supporters, by employing a range of violent tactics, both targeted and indiscriminate.

In October 1957, General Hugh Foot replaced General Harding, under whom Cyprus plunged into inter-communal violence, resulting from British propaganda attempts to divide the Greek and Turkish Cypriots (Robbins, 2012). While the newly created Turkish paramilitary organisation, Turk Mudya Eskilat (TMT) attacked and expelled Greek Cypriots from Turkish-majority areas, EOKA carried out a range of attacks against Turkish citizens, British soldiers and civilians (Loizos, 1988). Ultimately, the population was divided between Greek Cypriots who supported EOKA and Turkish Cypriots who were either neutral or supported the TMT (Scarinzi, 2021, p. 217). Eventually, Britain concluded that retaining the island and continuing the counterinsurgency was unattainable, which resulted in the endorsement of negotiations between the Turkish and Greek states. These three-party negotiations came into

fruition in February 1959, with the London treaty declaring Cyprus would become independent with Greece, Turkey and Britain guaranteeing its sovereignty and the British maintaining their military bases (Scarinzi, 2021, p. 212). Archbishop Makarios was allowed to return to Cyprus, and Grivas accepted the compromise of liberation but *non-enosis* and ordered EOKA's fighters to cease hostilities (Scarinzi, 2021, p. 213). Ultimately, the British suffered a definite defeat in the political aspect of the counterinsurgency and partial defeat in the military aspect, thus crippling their efforts, eventually failing to retain their colony (Scarinzi, 2021, p. 217, Holland, 2002; French, 2015).

5.2. Initial British violence & operation 'Forward to Victory' (April to November 1955)

Having established the historical background of the Cypriot case, it will now be analysed through the methodology outlined in Chapter 4. Specifically, the analysis will be conducted by dividing the counterinsurgency campaign into three temporal phases which coincide with a change in governorship and counterinsurgency tactics. In the first phase, in line with the theoretical expectations, an initial increase of violence on the island alongside the beginning of popular alienation is anticipated.

As mentioned above, EOKA started operating in early April 1955 and at the time, the British, led by General Robert Armitage, viewed the insurgents only as a 'few hard-core right-wing nationalist extremists' who wished to cause disruption, overlooking EOKA's demand for liberation and *enosis* as part of the *Megali Idea* (Holland, 2002, p. 55). Drawing from this perception, they assumed the insurgency would rapidly dwindle, as long as they isolated those extremists from the social web by capturing them. This is evident from the fact that, initially, the British power in Cyprus was both poorly prepared and equipped and lacked both military strength and training (French, 2015, p. 75). More specifically, by late June the army's garrison numbered about 6.500 people across all ranks, which was insufficient to monitor the entire area where EOKA operated (the villages, the big towns of Limassol, Famagusta and Larnaca, and the mountains) (Holland, 2002, p. 60). At this stage, the counterinsurgency repertoire did not include mass curfews, abrupt killings of civilians, house searches, detention camps or other measures of non-lethal violence such as extreme religious oppression.

Realising the difficulties and weaknesses the British were facing, EOKA seized the opportunity and, with very limited numbers of fighters and supporters, carried out 204 attacks mostly focused on government buildings and inflicting one British casualty, at the end of

June 1955 (Holland, 2002). French (2015, p. 79), drawing from military documents and parliament proceedings, found that this killing prompted the British to take more drastic measures. Consequently, Governor Armitage sought permission to enforce the Detention of Persons Law, which allowed the British to detain anyone without trial, or restrict their place of residence (p. 80). The goals of this policy were three: to limit EOKA activity, to demonstrate the power of the British empire and intimidate citizens from joining EOKA, and to convince citizens they would use this power to protect them from EOKA. This policy prompted EOKA to start operation 'Forward to Victory', with which the insurgency was about to scale up in October 1955. Henceforth, EOKA numbered 55 attacks in 20 days, including riots, ambushes, and attacks on soldiers, signalling that the British oppressive policies would be met with reactions (p. 84). Antoniades (2016), using newspapers and leaflets to assess British acceptance in Cyprus, supports the theoretical expectations and argues that this law was the first of a series of violent measures which had an undoubted effect on the consequent EOKA mobilisation and intensity of their operations.

Overall, this phase of the insurgency can be characterised as the beginning, where EOKA started to make use of their cause and government weaknesses to make their presence known and withstand initial repression (Galula, 2006). Interpreting this evidence from the perspective of Branch and Wood's (2010) theory, what becomes clear is that this tension follows the anticipated causal path. The counterinsurgency started with a limited number of British forces and few violent tactics on the island, as well as limited numbers of EOKA fighters or popular support for the organisation. In response to increasing British manpower and violence, the Greek-Cypriot community started sending recruits to EOKA's ranks, evidenced by the increase in insurgent attacks coinciding with the escalation of violence.

5.3. Emergency, violence & losing 'hearts and minds' (November 1955 to October 1957)

In light of increasing tension, the British government thought of General Armitage as unfit for the role of suppressing the Cypriot insurgency, and so in November 1955, he was replaced by Field Marshal Sir John Harding (Mallinson, 2005, p. 32). Following the theoretical expectations, in this second phase, a swift increase of violence through multiple avenues, leading to increased alienation of the population is anticipated.

5.3.1 Emergency regulations

Having visited the island multiple times, Harding had made clear that counterinsurgency is a primarily military operation, and defeating EOKA required waging superior military power against them (Mallinson, 2005, p. 32). On November 26, he deemed that the only way to retain order on the island while defeating EOKA would be to declare a state of emergency, akin to other British counterinsurgencies, for example in Kenya a few years prior (Simpson, 1995, p. 655; French, 2015, p. 55). Once in a state of emergency, the Governor could maintain the façade of following the law, while free to create or break any laws by invoking said state of emergency. One of the first laws introduced was the death penalty for anyone charged with illegally possessing weapons, including explosives (French, 2015, p. 233).

5.3.2 Escalating suppression and infringement of Cypriot honour

Within this context, by the end of December 1955, the British government would have 17,000 soldiers on the island, nearly three times the amount of April the same year. These soldiers conducted search operations, created and ran detention camps, detained people on the street, and allegedly used extreme torture methods while interrogating (Dimitrakis, 2008). According to Antoniades (2016), who collected data by analysing three Cypriot newspapers, the securitisation of the island was increasingly intense, and as a result, many civilians were victims of violence and detention. Witnessing the ill-treatment of their families, the dignity and honour of Greek-Cypriots was irreparably damaged, leading to substantial feelings of resentment toward the British occupiers (p. 8).

These feelings were evident after Grivas, identifying an opportunity, published leaflets calling on civilians to resist the searches, characteristically concluding with the phrase 'We shall acquire our freedom either now or never!' (French, 2015, p. 83). Many did take this call, viewing EOKA as a vehicle with which they could reclaim their pride, and so by January 1956, EOKA numbered about '750 village members in 68 mountain groups, 53 mountain guerrillas divided into 7 groups, and 220 members in 45 town groups' (French, 2015, p. 84). Simultaneously, EOKA's operations reached a peak in December and January, numbering around 110 each month, double the amount recorded in October (Holland, 2002). This rise in both active members and incidents supports the hypothesis (*H*), clearly demonstrating that because of the rise in securitisation and violence, more and more people were mobilised against the British.

5.3.3 Religious repression

Believing the reason why EOKA and the *enosis* movement persevered was the propaganda spread by the Orthodox Church, the British proceeded to a move of religious oppression by arresting and deporting Archbishop Makarios II (Holland, 2002, p. 116). This move signalled that the British did not respect and were not willing to protect the Cypriots' faith, which was an inseparable part of their Greek-Orthodox identity. This created a deep dissent for the government and turned people, even those who were initially supportive of the British, on EOKA's side, evidenced by the 142 attacks in May 1956, the highest number up to this point, protesting the Archbishop's deportation (French, 2015, p. 108).

5.3.4 Mass punishment

After securing an important intelligence breakthrough by acquiring one of Grivas' diaries, the British ravaged EOKA from its original village hideouts and forced Grivas into hiding in Limassol (Martin, 1993, p. 71). The British interpreted this as a success of their oppressive policies and decided to continue by enforcing five kinds of mass punishment: mass fines, mass curfews, evictions, closing public entertainment spaces, and movement restrictions (French, 2015, p. 136). As Cypriots had proven they could not be intimidated by the British, these mass punishments only fed their anger and, as expected, pushed them into Grivas' arms, whose attacks admittedly reached their prime after the organisation was pushed into an urban environment. By June, when attacks numbered 144, EOKA's ranks had been reassembled, and including the support network likely numbered up to 25.000 according to British government estimates and EOKA documents (French, 2015 p. 55).

5.3.5 British torture & EOKA intimidation

By December 1956, British soldiers on the island reached 31.000, their all-time high and almost double that of one year prior (Scarinzi, 2021, p. 209). Left with no option but to physically remove any 'suspicious and disruptive elements', the British began detaining Cypriots en masse, concentrating them in detention centres and police stations for weeks, until they faced trial. Many reported torture being used to extract information, something confirmed by the ambassador of the International Committee of the Red Cross who visited the detention centres upon international outrage for the alleged interrogation methods (French, 2015, p. 69).

Torture methods were, however, actually successful in extracting information from some detainees, which seriously threatened EOKA's operations (Slack, 2019, p. 102). Consequently, Grivas issued a leaflet, reminding the (holy) oaths EOKA members undertook when joining the organisation, swearing secrecy until death (Holland, 2002). He further announced that all traitors, both known and suspected, would be killed on the spot, for breaking their oaths. With time, the notion of treason broadened, eventually including 'any person of any race or religion that stood against the struggle, not only by giving information to the British but also by tearing up leaflets, opposing the leaders or voicing their discontent with EOKA (Holland, 2002). Through this, EOKA and Grivas essentially promised death to any potential opponents, in an attempt to deter the population from siding with the British in such a crucial time for the struggle. Such was the public assassination of eighty to ninety Greek and Turkish Cypriots from 1956 to 1959 who in some way opposed EOKA's agenda (French, 2015, p. 162).

What can be derived from this data using Branch and Wood's (2010) theory is that during this phase, the establishment of tough emergency regulations, religious repression, mass punishment and torture, largely alienated Cypriots from British forces. As expected, instances where British favour was hampered by their repressive policies are identifiable throughout this phase, as underscored by the increasing tension after each escalation of violence. Furthermore, the identified intimidation from EOKA's side is beyond the theory's expectations and will be assessed in the discussion section of this paper.

5.4. Persistence, inter-communal violence & the end (December 1957 to February 1959)

After British propaganda about the dangers EOKA posed to the Turkish community led to the rise of intercommunal violence, General Harding was deemed incapable of managing the situation and was replaced by General Hugh Foot in December 1957 (Robbins, 2012). During this last phase of the counterinsurgency, it is expected to observe even higher, persisting levels of British violence accompanied by sustained support for the insurgents, to the point where the British deem the situation unsalvageable and decide to withdraw from the island.

Only five days after Foot's arrival, there was week-long rioting in Nicosia, and almost all Greek-Cypriot school children went on strike, to grab the UN's attention in light of the General Assembly, where the Cypriot issue would be discussed in early December (French, 2015, p. 283). In response, Foot continued fighting EOKA through oppressive means. In

January, there was still one soldier per Greek Cypriot household on the island, while mass detention continued, with entire towns being placed under curfew for days, enraging the local population (Walton, 2013, p. 308). One example was that of Famagusta in October 1958, where the killing of one British officer prompted a town-wide curfew for days. There, around one thousand detainees were taken to detention camps and soldiers unleashed violence against civilians, breaking Greek-Cypriot shop windows and houses or beating them with batons until they would denounce EOKA (Novo, 2012).

Meeting Branch and Wood's (2010) expectations, this was met with great discontent by the Greek Cypriots, who, on EOKA's call, began a boycott campaign against British products, and Government-run schools (French, 2015, p. 256). As evidenced by the rates of attendance in government schools and sales records of British products, the boycott was largely successful and most Greek Cypriots participated (p. 256). Notably, Greek-Cypriots were largely intimidated into boycotting British products, and would often be searched by EOKA combatants after they exited shops. If British products were found they were destroyed on the spot (Holland, 2002). This also shows that violence toward civilians was enacted by EOKA, in a successful attempt to gain popular support through all means.

As described in the historical background section, persisting EOKA attacks in combination with increased intercommunal tensions eventually made London realise that controlling the island while fighting on two fronts (Greek and Turkish insurgents) was impossible (Scarinzi, 2021, p. 212). Hence, the London Treaty was drafted in February 1959 and Cyprus became independent. Using Branch and Wood (2010) to interpret the data from this phase, the causal mechanisms leading to counterinsurgency loss are clear. Due to mass punishments and continuing violence, the Greek-Cypriots' support for EOKA endured, while TMT attacks started taking place. As anticipated, the continuous violence throughout these years completely alienated the Greek population to the point where siding with the British was impossible, ultimately making London give up on retaining the colony.

5.5. Discussion of results

The results stemming from this analysis provide support for the driving hypothesis of this paper, showing that as British violence and oppression increased, popular alienation also increased. Specific events during each phase were identified and pointed out throughout the analysis, whereupon British actions had a clear and direct effect on the level of popular

alienation. This support manifested both in a practical (recruitees, informants, material support), as well as a political (obvious public discontent with the British) manner. Eventually, this led to the clear loss of Cypriot 'hearts and minds', and the failure of the operation.

An interesting mechanism which transcends the theoretical expectations of the paper is that oppression, violence and intimidation by EOKA also increased the popular support they enjoyed. Especially after the second phase of the counterinsurgency, EOKA's traitor policy became brutal and direct, which led to the effective intimidation of the population into siding with the insurgents. This exceeds the initial hypothesis of this paper, which suggested that only violence from the counterinsurgent leads to counterinsurgency failure, and hence requires further attention.

A perspective which can explain this outcome is Kilcullen's (2006, p. 114) theory, which asserts that violence from each side (insurgent-counterinsurgent) can be interpreted differently and can have varying effects on the population. Given the insurgent side is fighting for national liberation or change in leadership, it offers the population an appealing chance to a new way of life and hence can be seen as inspiring, appealing to the emotions and hopes of the people (p. 114). Because of this, they are largely judged by what they say, not always by what they do. Hence, by utilising their cause to appeal to people's hopes and emotions, they can also enforce a degree of oppression without reaction, as their words are usually more important than their actions. On the contrary, since the counterinsurgent's authority is being challenged, it is only natural that they fight for stability, and for the situation to remain the same as pre-insurgency (p. 115). Their case for 'sameness' is less appealing to the majority of the population, and thus they are usually only judged by their actions and not their words. Along this logic, populations are more willing to endure insurgent violence than counterinsurgent violence, explaining why counterinsurgent violence drives people away, while insurgent violence can draw them, as witnessed in the case of Cyprus.

6. Conclusion

Circling back to the objective of this paper, the findings match and transcend the theoretical expectations posed by Branch and Wood's (2010) theory and hence point to an answer to the question 'Why did the British counterinsurgency campaign in Cyprus fail?'. The evidence

supports the hypothesis (*H*), showing that increasing violence from the side of the counterinsurgent leads to societal alienation and eventual failure of the counterinsurgency. However, the evidence also unexpectedly transcends the initial expectations, as it posits that violence from the insurgents intimidates and mobilises the population in favour of the insurgency. Hence, the answer provided to the research question is that increasing violence, both from the insurgent and the counterinsurgent, led to the failure of the counterinsurgency operation, due to societal intimidation and alienation, respectively. Ultimately, revisiting the connection of the research question to Galula's (2006) principles, the theoretical prism, supported by the results, provides a plausible explanation about how and why violence led to the failure of the counterinsurgency, filling the gap Galula's work could not answer.

This research is relevant for various reasons and concerns multiple stakeholders. First, the study's academic significance is that it demonstrated the broad applicability of Branch and Wood's (2010) theory, as well as the importance of considering insurgent violence as a possible reason behind counterinsurgency failure. In doing so, it paves the way for other academics to explore whether the unexpected theory-building aspect of this paper, the effect of insurgent violence on the population, holds true in other cases, ultimately increasing the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study's societal significance is that it emphasises the need for governmental and military stakeholders to look back on colonial cases, from which current counterinsurgency research draws its base practices, and use academic research such as this, to inform military and governmental operations more holistically. This could be especially beneficial for the US and their FM 3-24 handbook, which particularly draws on Galula's ideas which, evidently, cannot always explain cases efficiently.

Although significant, this research also poses some limitations. To begin with, the narrow scope and length limitations of the paper prevented extensive analysis of all confounding factors to the failure of the counterinsurgency. Although the focus on violence yielded support for the hypothesis and provided substantial results, factors such as outside influence by Greece and Turkey were not assessed in depth. This limitation can warrant future research about the effect of Greek and Turkish propaganda and politics in combination with the levels of violence which led to the failure of the counterinsurgency. Lastly, the uniqueness of the single Cypriot case (insurgency driven by *enosis* idea) means that the generalisability of the findings is still untested. This limitation can enable future research to use the Cypriot case

and the results of this paper in a comparative manner, to draw similarities and differences between other colonial, or modern cases.

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