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Subject: Civic Activities of the Military, Southeast Asia

Note: In operations against communist guerrillas and other dissidents in the past few years, some of the armed forces in Southeast Asia evolved an operational doctrine of assisting the civilian population, to bring about a "brotherhood" between the soldiers and the civilians. The initial reason was elementary: to win over the people to help the Army in finding and fighting an enemy who hid among the population. The Armed Forces of the Philippines, under Magsaysay's leadership as Secretary of National Defense, developed this doctrine to a high degree in defeating the communist Huks. Observers from Malaya, Vietnam, Laos, and Burma visited the Philippines to study this doctrine in the field, and took home with them many operational ideas which have since been further adopted and developed to fit local needs.

The President's Committee to Study U.S. Military Assistance Programs, (the Draper Committee), is interested in the concept of training and using military personnel in economic development projects as a contribution to the stability of a nation. Thus, to assist in a study of this subject, brief interviews were held with military personnel in each of the countries visited by the Anderson Subcommittee in January-February 1959. Admittedly, time was limited, so that the information collected is far from being definitive. The following are the findings on the subject, noted in the order of the trip's itinerary: the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, and Indonesia.

A. The Philippines

1. The initial engagement of the Philippine Army in civic activities was in 1950, as an integral part of the campaign against the communist Huks who were recruiting most of their support in central Luzon, principally from tenant farmers who were being exploited by landlords and bankers in a near-feudal system of economic peonage. The main propaganda theme of the communists was "land for the landless". As a result, the first civil actions of the Army were primarily agrarian ones.

2. These activities were organized in a staff section directly under the civilian Secretary of National Defense, with liaison with the General Staff, and with an organization as part of the TO&Es of Military Area headquarters and Battalion Combat Teams, (that is, the field organization of the Army). Originally, this organization was named Psychological Warfare, but was soon re-named Civil Affairs. On 15 December 1950, another

organization known as the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) was established, directly under the Secretary of National Defense, with an ambitious mission (see Annex A) whose major points were the rehabilitation of surrendered Huks and the opening of new lands and opportunities. U.S. officers with JUSMAG acted as advisors to both Psychological Warfare/Civil Affairs and EDCOR organizations.

3. In the combat battalions, the battalion commander and his civil affairs officer would meet with the barrio (village) lieutenant and other responsible civilians, to work out relationships between troops and civilians, methods of protecting farmers from guerrilla raids during planting and harvest, and barrio self-defense. This led to further discussions of barrio needs and the Army's initiation of actions to help, starting with escorting Department of Agriculture agents into combat areas to help the farmers and eventually using troop labor to build barrio grammar schools, pure water wells, and other public works. Noting that tenant farmers were mostly unrepresented legally in court cases involving agrarian land problems, the Army quietly sponsored a number of its Judge Advocate officers to appear in court in civilian clothes to represent the tenant farmers. Civilians wounded in the fire fights between the Army and the Huks were treated in Army hospitals. One foreign correspondent wrote: "I have seen many armies, but this one beats them all. This is an army with a social conscience."

4. Later, to infuse the government with a "can do" spirit and with executive talent, Magsaysay placed a number of Army officers throughout the government. One became his Executive Secretary when he was President. Another was general manager of the government-owned Manila Railroad Company. These officers, numbering more than a hundred, were later transferred back to Army duties.

5. Perhaps the most sensitive use of the armed forces in civil activities was in ensuring the freedom of the elections of 1951 and 1953. The Presidential election of 1949 was believed by many Filipinos to have been markedly dishonest, not only through trickery, but through the terrorism of political thugs. This belief was energetically exploited by the communist Huks, who pointed out that the only way the people could really change the government was by helping the Huks do it by force. It was estimated that about 1-1/2 million Filipinos (of the 18-million population then) were sympathizing with the Huks by 1951. The Army felt that a demonstrably free election, with freedom of speech and freedom of movement by all candidates regardless of party, truly secret balloting, and an honest count, would bring the Constitutional processes back to life; the people would defend a government they believed to be their own and refuse to help an armed rebellion against it.

6. The Commission on Elections believed this also, and, with a remarkable lack of publicity, asked the Army for help. The Army put its plan into operation, using college ROTC cadets to police the quieter precincts and using regular troops to protect candidates and their audiences from thugs, as well as to protect the polls in districts where violence was expected. The Army also used its communications system to inform the Commission on Elections and public news media of the vote count as rapidly as possible after the polls closed, to discourage ballot-stuffing and fraudulent count. The 1951 and 1953 elections were not only notably honest and made public heroes of the troops, but also turned public support dramatically away from the Huk movement and to the government.

7. EDCOR

a. The major civic endeavor of the Armed Forces of the Philippines is the Economic Development Corps, (EDCOR), whose aims are given in Annex A. It was initiated at the end of 1950 to rehabilitate Huk prisoners held by the Army, but grew in scope during 1951-1954. Four farm communities were constructed, a vocational rehabilitation center established, and one complete barrio moved and re-established in a more favorable area. The farm communities were recruited from selected Huk prisoners, volunteer retired military personnel, and civilian applicants. The EDCOR military strength was reduced in February 1958 to augment Army training units, two farm units were deactivated on 1 July 1958, but the EDCOR organization is still functioning. As of 31 December 1958, the EDCOR farms had a population of 5,175.

b. The first two farm communities were established in 1951 in Mindanao (at Kapatagan, Lanao, and Buldon, Cotabato) in unusually wild territory, the first in a bandit-infested backlands and the second in deep, virgin jungle. The Army moved small units to the area, (the standard became a unit of 12 officers and 91 enlisted men), to scrape in dirt roads, establish security, and to construct initial housing to receive the settlers upon arrival. Troops and settlers then worked together to clear the jungle for farming, to construct family housing and community centers, schools, chapels, and dispensaries, to operate sawmills, to put in wells, to build markets, and to construct sanitary facilities. The Army arranged for the settlers to earn title to the land, handling the legal difficulties of land ownership in the Philippines; EDCOR land is owned by homestead patent and by Torrens title. Similar procedures were followed in establishing the next two farm communities, at Echague, Isabela, in 1953, and at Midsayap, Cotabato, in 1954. The EDCOR administration reports that healthy progress is being made in making these farm communities independent, in collecting reimbursable indebtedness from the settlers, and in the security and stability of the entire areas surrounding the communities, (which rapidly filled up with other settlers once the

EDCOR pioneered the area). No organized resurgence of dissidence has been observed.

c. Two other EDCOR projects are worthy of mention. One is the Rehabilitation Center; the second is the moving and re-establishment of a barrio. The EDCOR Rehabilitation Center was founded by Magsaysay as a means for vocational training of surrendered Huks, who had broken with communist doctrine, had given assistance to the Army, and who needed a fresh start in life. A small wood-working shop was established in part of an Army warehouse, and this Center soon started producing furniture for barracks and Army officers, with profits going to the workers. This has been a highly successful enterprise.

d. While the establishment of EDCOR farms in Mindanao was a dramatic undertaking, the scene was far removed from the major combat zone in central Luzon. An example of the Army's offer of "all-out friendship" to those who needed it, (or "all-out force" to those who insisted on fighting), close at hand where it could be seen, was necessary to induce civilian cooperation and Huk surrenders. The Army selected San Luis, Pampanga, the center of Huk activities and the home town of the Huk military chief, Luis Taruc, where bad economic conditions had been strongly exploited by communists in obtaining support for the Huks. The Army survey of the area showed one barrio of San Luis willing to be helped by the Army, and government land several miles away across the river in the rough Candaba Swamp vacant and available for homesteading. The barrio volunteered, and the Army moved the barrio to the new site. The Army cleared and drained the new area for housing and farming. It bridged the river, moved the more substantial houses, built new housing to replace houses which couldn't be moved, put in fresh water wells, built a grammar school for the children, and helped the farmers with seed and agricultural advice to plant the land. Word of this undertaking spread rapidly by word-of-mouth (the so-called "bamboo telegraph") and many Huks surrendered, stating that they refused to fight against troops who were so helping the families of the Huks. Magsaysay believed this action was more decisive than the deployment of several battalion combat teams.

B. Vietnam

1. The Vietnamese Armed Forces came into being towards the end of the Franco-Vietminh War and are young military organizations, not even a decade old. Neither the war-time cadre, nor present members who were former suppletifs or militia under French leadership, had much experience in the civil activities which are part of successful combat against guerrilla forces, such as the Vietminh. Letourneau and other French leaders attempted such programs, but they weren't sustained efforts; civil actions were an integral part of "Operation Atlante", which held some

promise of success but was cut short by diversion of forces to Dien Bien Phu and then the cease-fire of the Geneva Agreement of 1954.

2. The terms of the Geneva Agreement, however, brought about conditions in Vietnam which forced the Army into an intense civil activities program by 1955. The Agreement provided for the withdrawal of forces on both sides to zones where they could then embark for transportation to either communist North Vietnam or free South Vietnam, with these transfers being gradually phased out in the Spring of 1955. In free Vietnam south of the 17th Parallel, the government had a most difficult time establishing its administration and security in the initial zones vacated by the Vietminh in free Vietnam. There were few trained or experienced civil administrators; the police were poorly equipped and lacked training; civil communications were bad or non-existent. The Army was the only national organization in being which could carry out the government's will; it had executive and administrative ability, adequate strength, discipline, and communications; if the government in Saigon wanted an action carried out effectively in the provinces, in the last weeks of 1954, its only sure way of doing so was through the Army, (which had just been reformed into loyalty to the government, after some plotting to overthrow the government).

3. Pacification

a. At the end of 1954, President Ngo Dinh Diem issued a National Security directive which placed all insecure provinces under military authority. Provinces in zones being evacuated by Vietminh forces were included in those to be administered by the military. The Presidential directive also provided for the phasing out of military authority as civilian administrators became available and capable; (this was carried out later, harmoniously and effectively). The operational doctrine for the take-over of zones evacuated by the Vietminh was known as "pacification". U.S. and French officers in the combined Training Relations and Instruction Mission (TRIM), under the U.S. Chief of MAAG, advised the Vietnamese on pacification operations.

b. The two largest pacification campaigns were undertaken in the early months of 1955, in Camau in the far south and in Quang Ngai-Binh Dinh provinces of the central coastal region. The first used military forces of about brigade strength, while the second had forces about the strength of a corps. Lessons learned in the Camau campaign were studied by general staff planners and applied to the Quang Ngai-Binh Dinh campaign. Essentially, these operations were march-ins by the troops and the establishment of free government in the area. Both had been combat zones of the eight-year war just finished, and had suffered. Roads and railroads needed rehabilitation; bridges, schools, hospitals, and markets had to be rebuilt; the population needed medical care and, in many places, needed food and clothing; there were still armed bands in the area and farms and villages

needed protection. Troops for these campaigns were given special training in courtesy towards the civilians, (including how to answer communist propaganda), in disbursing of aid, in construction, and in administrative procedures. As a result of good planning, training, and operations by the military, effective government and security were quickly established in the pacification areas, much of the war-torn economy was rehabilitated, and the communist organizations left behind were revealed by the population, (along with a great many hidden caches of arms and equipment).

c. Similar pacification measures were taken in actions against rebellious sect forces in the western regions and in the jungle-foothill regions north of Saigon. The latter operation experimented with building a force around a small Army cadre (used for central administration and for patrols into the further reaches of the jungle), and making use of civil police forces and civilian administrative teams; the operation was not wholly successful and was eventually strengthened with Army troops.

4. Cooperation with Civilian Organizations

a. During the pacification campaigns, the Vietnamese Army learned to work closely with two notable civilian organizations, which are worth mentioning here as an indication of team-work employed to bring stability to a free nation. The organizations were "Operation Brotherhood" of the International Jaycees and the Vietnamese government's Civic Action. These two organizations of volunteers brought high morale and an ideal, unselfish spirit to the campaigns.

b. "Operation Brotherhood" was originally staffed by Filipino volunteer doctors, dentists, and nurses, who established a large clinic to treat refugees in the Saigon-Cholon area. They volunteered to enter Camau with Army pacification forces, which they did, establishing their first medical clinic on the roadside, using packing crates as dispensing tables and treating all comers gratis, while cleaning a building for use as a hospital. Later, small field teams of Filipino doctors and nurses went out into the countryside with Vietnamese Army patrols, giving inoculations and teaching public health measures. This same pattern was followed in the Quang Ngai-Binh Dinh campaign. Eventually, medical personnel of many other nations of the free world joined the Operation Brotherhood work in Vietnam. They trained Vietnamese as hospital aides, taught first-aid, sanitation, and food preparation to the villagers, and guided community development, as well as performed medical services. A Filipino "fish pond" constructed on a farm near the 17th Parallel became a much talked-about symbol of what the free people of the world could do, word of it spreading through the communist north.

c. "Civic Action" was established as a civilian organization to bring public administration to the villages of Vietnam; it was placed under

the Ministry of Defense initially, for support and for coordinated operations with the Army in pacification work. Civil service employees of all Ministries were asked to volunteer. Selected candidates were then trained, in small teams, to live a village life of some hardship, to do useful work with their hands, and to dress like farmers in "calico noir". Teams of four men would then enter a village, enlist the help of villagers in building a community house, (for meetings of village elders, a first-aid clinic, and an information room where news of the government was posted), a school house, and a public market. The four-man team would then give on-the-job training to volunteer villagers in teaching, in village administration, in first-aid, in sanitation, in public works (wells, street drainage, pit latrines, and so forth) and in agricultural methods. Once the local villagers were trained, the Civic Action team would move on to another village. They went by foot or bicycle. These teams moved in right after the Army patrols. A number of these unarmed civilians were killed by dissident guerrillas. The Civic Action organization was later transferred to be directly under the President, to permit full participation of all Ministries in its operations.

5. Current Activities

a. The Vietnamese Army has continued the civil activities it commenced during the pacification campaigns, but has transferred its major work to the High Plateau area, building and improving roads and bridges, bringing government administration to the nomad tribes of the mountains and jungle, and assisting pioneer settlers build new communities. Much of the current activity centers around small outposts established in the more remote areas paralleling the Vietnamese borders with Laos and Cambodia. Rough roads are scraped in to these outposts, the jungle cleared for farming, and security established to protect the new communities. 28 of these outposts had been established by February 1959. The new communities are attracting hardy pioneers to virgin lands that they will be willing to protect, adding new security to borders that have long been vulnerable to Vietminh cross-country tactics.

b. Besides the impressive shoe-making, uniform manufacturing, and equipment rehabilitation activities of the Vietnamese Army Quartermaster seen during the Anderson Subcommittee's visit in February 1959, a number of other Army activities were reported by U.S. officers with MAAG-Vietnam. Much of this activity occurs when the families of troops move into an area, starting a new community which soon attracts other settlers and merchants, and requires considerable public works to make the community habitable.

c. At Song Mau, in the coastal region between Saigon and Nha Trang, the Senior Advisor, 5th Infantry Division, reported that the troops assisted the civil population in digging drainage ditches, constructing bridges, installing water mains and outlets, maintaining roads, constructing homes,

fighting fires, and performing medical services. The Senior Advisor, II Corps, at Ban Me Thuot in the High Plateau, reported that the troops there not only engage in many of these same activities, but also constructed a church, an elementary school and secondary school in the town of Ban Me Thuot, built a "Brotherhood Center" at Dak Nong, and operate elementary schools in the area, with an enrollment of 6,358. Other advisors in remote areas reported the conduct of adult education classes, the distribution of medical supplies, the instruction of mountain tribesmen in sanitation and disease-prevention, the spraying of houses and farm buildings with DDT, and the construction of public toilets.

d. The Senior Advisor at the Vietnamese Military Academy, in Dalat, reported cadet community betterment projects in this more sophisticated area. Cadet projects included tree planting, road repair, distribution of books and magazines, and semi-annual parties for children in the area. At Da Nang, Tourane, Army medical personnel administered anti-cholera vaccine and malaria treatments to more than 3,000 of the population. The Advisor at Duc My reported that the 45th Regiment devoted five weeks in July and August 1958 to the construction of housing in the area south of Ban Me Thuot for political refugees. At Ban Me Thuot, also, soldiers of II Corps have built and are operating a maternity hospital.

C. Thailand

In Thailand, there was little opportunity to discuss the civil activities of the armed forces. The Revolutionary Party of Field Marshal Srisdi Dhanarajata is in control of the government, with a number of Army officers managing various bureaus and governmental affairs, as well as assisting in the drafting of a new Constitution for Thailand. With this position in the government, it is apparent that the Army has a definite interest in all civil activities contributing to the stability and security of the nation.

D. Laos

1. Laos is a small country, sparsely settled, with few roads or other means of communication. As a new nation, its government has been faced with many problems, but none more serious than the need to unify the different ethnic and regional groups into one nation administered by an effective government. This problem is compounded by external pressures from across ill-defined borders in jungle and mountainous terrain; as Prime Minister Phoui Sananikone described it, "history has placed us next to large countries who think differently than we do". At its birth, Laos had only a handful of trained or experienced administrators, few means to help them get around the country to establish effective government, and an armed rebellion which dominated two of its provinces. The only government organization existing in much of the country with some executive ability, with

sufficient strength and discipline to accomplish tasks set by the central authority, with loyalty to the government, and with means of communication, was the Army. It was natural and logical for the Lao National Army to become an instrument of the government in undertaking civil activities. It was the single, most cohesive force in being throughout the new nation.

2. The major civil activity of the Lao National Army is "Civic Action". This was organized in 1956 by Ouane Ratikoun, the present Chief of Staff, who had been the combat commander of Army forces fighting the communist Pathet Lao in the two rebellious provinces, and who saw the need for a loyal army to help unify the country when the Pathet Lao were integrated later, as happened. Initially, Civic Action was carried out by combat troops who were given tasks of public works, education, welfare, information, and health in their security operations. Although the Army undertook these tasks with some vigor, there was a need for full coordination of all government ministries in this work. Thus, Colonel Oudone Sananikone, who had been in charge of the Army's Civic Action program, was transferred to the civil government, as overall Civic Action coordinator; at present, he is the Secretary of State for Social Affairs. The Army, with its nation-wide organization and ability to get things done, has been tasked with making a success of Civic Action and, through it, organizing civil government for each tasseng, (there are 877 tassengs in Laos, a political division roughly equivalent to a small county in the U.S.).

3. The Army's Civic Action operation consists of training and operating military personnel in 6-man teams. Training consists of four weeks of classroom instruction and one week of practical work. Their subjects include not only military matters such as security operations and village auto-defense, but also elementary education, civics, public works, youth organization, public health, and agriculture. The team leader is the liaison with the head-man of the tasseng, assisting him in establishing local government. Each of the other team members has specific tasks: security and information, education (mostly in helping the bonzes start schools), public works (mostly in initiating self-help projects; as one officer explained, if the people build something themselves, they will voluntarily maintain it--if it is done for them, they will expect others to maintain it), agriculture, and health. The first tasseng operation is to have a tasseng center built; General Ouane explained that the Army takes a hand in this so that the people will recognize it as a government center, which they don't when the head-man of the tasseng uses his own house as the center.

4. In the First Military Region, 75 team leaders have been trained and 56 Civic Action teams are operating. No training has been undertaken yet in the Second Region. 30 teams have been formed in the Third Region. In the Fourth Region, 160 non-commissioned officers are now in training

as prospective Civic Action team leaders.

5. In addition to Civic Action, the Lao National Army has been working closely with Filipino "Operation Brotherhood" medical teams in the provinces. The teamwork and operations in helping the civil population are somewhat similar to those undertaken in Vietnam by the Army and the Filipino medical teams there. This evidence of interest in their welfare by other free people has been most heartening for the Laos.

E. Cambodia

As in Thailand, there was little opportunity in Cambodia to discuss the civil activities of the armed forces. It was noted, however, that Prince Sihanouk was popularizing a physical labor program for government officials, as an idea he had picked up while visiting communist China. In this program, government officials spend a number of hours each week laboring on public works projects or on farm lands. It is possible that this program can be extended to include officers of the armed forces.

F. Burma

1. Civil activities by the Burmese armed forces are a development of the successful campaigns against most of the insurgent forces who controlled considerable areas of Burma in 1953. Help by the military to villagers and the rehabilitation of captured or surrendered insurgents proved so helpful to the combat operations of the Burmese armed forces, (in finding insurgent forces hidden among the villages and in the self-defense of villages), that civil action has become part of their doctrine, not only in current operations against communist insurgents, but in assisting the Burmese armed forces' role of bringing stability and unity to Burma.

2. In the Burmese Army, civil action is a command responsibility and is of major concern to both the General Staff and the Brigade Commanders. The Army helps villagers in raising their general health and sanitation, in improving agriculture, in education, and in youth activities; (the Army is the moving force in Boy Scouting). Along the Chinese border, the Army has undertaken a program of public works, social welfare, education (with soldiers teaching in primary schools), and health, to raise the standard of living and to assist in extending the administration of the government. In Rangoon, the Army sponsored and actively participated in a drive to clean up the city, making it more livable for its inhabitants, and is currently directing and assisting in a road improvement program. In the Brigade Areas throughout Burma, the Brigade Commander is a member of the District Council which is extending governmental administration and assistance to the people in this basic political unit of the nation; the District Council members are the Brigade Commander, the District Commissioner,

and District representatives of Ministries such as Forestry and Agriculture.

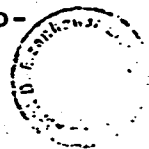
3. The Army has undertaken a number of projects to rehabilitate former insurgents by teaching them skills and placing them to be useful members of the community. The most successful projects to date have been in Akyab, where former insurgents now operate a coastal shipping line and civilian bus lines. Army officers said that they had had mixed results from agrarian resettlement projects; one project was listed as a failure due to the laziness of the former insurgents, who apparently had become insurgents in the first place to escape from the responsibility of making a living in their home villages, having a liking for the carefree life in insurgent camps and the ease of obtaining food, clothing and money at the point of a gun. Other projects, in rice lands and fisheries in the Irrawaddy Delta, and in forestry areas, have been more successful. The Army is planning new projects to open up farming lands and settle pioneer areas.

G. Indonesia

1. The Indonesian Army, as the "exponent of the 1945 Revolution", feels itself to be close to the Indonesian people and to the spirit of "merdeka". As such, it desires to engage in civil activities to a larger extent than is possible at the present time in its campaigns against several dissident forces. Medical supplies are short. Rice, which the Army hoped to distribute in areas of food shortage, was unobtainable at a time of need, in a way which would permit Army distribution. Although engineering equipment is definitely needed by the Army for its planned programs, the need for weapons has had to take priority. Even so, the Army has been able to undertake a number of civil activities, including some rice distribution, some agricultural assistance, and some rehabilitation work in combat areas where it is too dangerous for civil authorities to work.

2. The Army Engineers hope to become more fully engaged in civil activities and are quite aware of the need for economic development in Indonesia and exactly how engineering skills they possess can be best employed to help the nation. At present, the Army Engineers are operating their own technical training programs, constructing roads and bridges, undertaking flood control work, constructing landing strips, and building barracks and other Army installations. The major flood control work is being done in the Brantas River area of East Java by an Engineer battalion based at Malang, including tunneling through a mountain. Post Engineers are currently at work on the construction of 8 battalion barracks sites, (of 34 such sites), to permit the Army to move from occupancy of public buildings such as schools and banks, so that the buildings can be turned back for civilian use. Also, the Engineers have just finished constructing a small harbor in North Sumatra, to open up Atjeh for trade and closer relations with other areas of Indonesia.

3. Army Engineers have been working closely with the Ministries of Agriculture, of Mining, and of Industries, in plans for an organized method of developing the nation. These plans envision the creation of Construction Battalions, recruited from Army veterans and civilian volunteers, built around a cadre of trained Army Engineers. A training program is planned to turn out 2,000 technicians yearly in equipment operation and maintenance, surveying, and similar skills. They hope to train many of the officers in the U.S., if possible, but plan to train the technicians in Indonesia. The planned use of these Construction Battalions will be in developing beach landing areas instead of costly port facilities, operating LSTs to these landings, constructing dirt roads from these landing areas into the interior, opening up areas for development of mineral resources and agricultural potentials, and providing for the settlement of fertile, but vacant lands. Present planning is mostly on the potentials, and providing for the settlement of fertile, but vacant lands. Present planning is mostly on the potentials of Sumatra and Sulawesi.



H. Conclusion

As can be seen in the foregoing, Southeast Asia offers examples of a wide variety of civil activities by military forces. Most of them contribute heavily to the economy, stability, and unity of nations born in an era of conflict when combat or terrorism rule out the use of civil organizations, and in nations where the military often offer the only national organization able to represent a government throughout its territory. However, the prime lesson for a military man lies in the practical, successful doctrine developed by Southeast Asian military forces and leaders in their operations against guerrilla forces. The ideas in this doctrine are exportable and need not be confined to one geographical area. They are worth study.