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## SSI Monograph

# DAVID GALULA: HIS LIFE AND INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

Ann Marlowe

August 2010

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## FOREWORD

The authors of Field Manual (FM) 3-24, Counterinsurgency, of whom the most famous is General David Petraeus, write, “Of the many books that were influential in the writing of [FM] 3-24, perhaps none was as important as David Galula’s Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice.” (University of Chicago Edition, Foreword)

Yet almost nothing has been published about the life and intellectual context of Galula, who died of a sudden illness while at the height of his intellectual achievements, at the age of 48, in 1967.

Little in Galula’s career was predictable, and much of his brilliant work reflects his varied and rich life. Though he is best known for writing about his experiences as a captain and major in the French Army in Algeria, Galula had almost completely formed his theories before taking command. Like Forrest Gump, Galula seems to have turned up everywhere that a military theorist of his time needed to be.

Galula grew up in Tunisia and Morocco, was educated at St. Cyr, fought with the Free French from North Africa to Toulon, and then was taken under the wing of a noted Sinologist in the French Army. Learning Chinese in Beijing, he immersed himself in the Chinese Civil War—to the extent of being captured by Mao’s troops—and spent nearly a decade in China and Hong Kong. Close observation of the Vietnam War and the Greek Civil War rounded out his experience of insurgency.

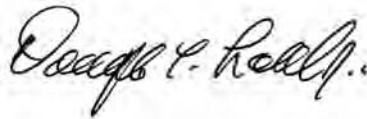
Galula knew many of the major figures in counterinsurgency. Even before fighting in Algeria, Galula was noticed by General Raoul Salan, who was later

famous for his leadership of the OAS (Organization of the Secret Army). When Galula arrived in Algeria as a junior commander, he was in the thick of the practical implementation of the ideas of French theorist-practitioners like Charles Lacheroy and Roger Trinquier. General Edward Lansdale was an early admirer who helped bring Galula to the United States, where he did the war college and think tank circuit during the first flourishing of counterinsurgency (COIN) theory in the early 1960s. General William Westmoreland helped Galula get an appointment at Harvard's Center for International Affairs, where he wrote one of his two books.

These books represent the intersection of two powerful streams of thought, neither well known in the Anglosphere. The older was the tradition of French colonial warfare, which reflected France's experiences colonizing Algeria, Indochina, and Africa in the mid 1800s. The newer body of work flourished in the late 1950s and early 1960s and was aimed at defeating Communist insurgents inspired by Mao's theories of protracted war. The French branch of this theorizing, *guerre revolutionnaire* or revolutionary war theory, fell into obscurity in the United States after the French relinquished Algeria and ended the terrorist activities of the OAS.

When Galula lived in the United States off and on between 1960 and 1963, he participated in the first American awakening to COIN under the auspices of President John Kennedy. But the voluminous literature produced during this period – not to mention that of *guerre revolutionnaire* – had been forgotten by all but a few military historians by the publication in December 2006 of the U.S. Army *Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency*. So Galula's eventual fame belongs to the COIN fever of our time, not his own.

Ms. Marlowe hopes that these notes towards an intellectual biography will foster a more measured and nuanced view of counterinsurgency doctrine in the U.S. military. This in turn should enable the practitioner to make decisions on the use of COIN in the battlespace with a fuller awareness of its context, strengths, and weaknesses.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr." in a cursive script.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.  
Director  
Strategic Studies Institute





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ANN MARLOWE, a visiting fellow at the Hudson Institute, is a writer and businesswoman based in New York City. She travels frequently to Afghanistan and publishes often on Afghanistan's politics, economy, culture and the U.S. counterinsurgency there. Ms. Marlowe is a regular guest on the John Batchelor radio show discussing Afghanistan and counterinsurgency. She has also spoken on Afghanistan to the U.S. Army, the U.S. Army War College, the U.S. State Department, and college students. She was a Media Fellow at the Hoover Institution in 2009. Ms. Marlowe's articles frequently appear in the op-ed pages of *The Wall Street Journal* and in the *Weekly Standard*. Her blogs on the links between war and art and on the cultural context of counterinsurgency for World Affairs are available from [www.worldaffairsjournal.org/new/blogs/marlowe](http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/new/blogs/marlowe). Ms. Marlowe holds a B.A. in philosophy *magna cum laude* from Harvard University and an MBA in finance from Columbia University's Graduate School of Business, and has studied classical philosophy in the Ph.D. program at Harvard University.

## SUMMARY

This monograph attempts to place David Galula's intellectual achievement in relation to both his life experiences and his time. It is not an assessment of the worth of his ideas, though it may be useful for those who wish to make such an evaluation.

The beginning of this monograph is comprised of 3 sections that discuss the history of Galula's two books, *Counterinsurgency Warfare* and *Pacification in Algeria*. The first section outlines the less-than-straightforward publication history of the books and their initial reception. The second section looks at the context in which they appeared, the early 1960s flourishing of writing on counterinsurgency. In the third section, Generals Charles Krulak (Marine Combined Action Platoons [CAP]) and Edward Lansdale are presented as the ancestors of today's population-centric COIN.

The remainder of the monograph has 6 sections that outline in chronological order what is known about Galula's life. This account is based mainly on the author's interviews, along with some archival research and a recently published French master's thesis. The first section covers Galula's birth to his service in World War II. The second section follows him through his "journey to the East," his years in revolutionary China where he forged his thoughts on COIN. The third section, "Countering Mao," discusses how Galula and his contemporary counterinsurgency theorists consciously aimed at defeating Mao's doctrine of revolutionary war. In the fourth section, Galula's time in Greece and Hong Kong is discussed. The fifth section concerns the rise of *guerre revolutionnaire* theory among senior officers in the French Army and the re-

lationship of Galula's thought to this body of work. The sixth section follows Galula during his 2-year command in Algeria, and the last section discusses his final years, including his work in the United States, his publication of a novel, and his untimely death.



## DAVID GALULA: HIS LIFE AND INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

### INTRODUCTION

It is a safe bet that if the United States had not found itself—or to be more accurate, identified itself—as fighting an insurgency in Iraq sometime in 2003, “David Galula” would still be a nearly forgotten name. In 2003, his two books on counterinsurgency had been out of print for forty years. One, *Pacification in Algeria*, had never really been published at all; written as a study for RAND, it was classified until 2005.

One of the characteristics which makes Galula’s work so robust—its infusion with both the French and Anglo-American counterinsurgency traditions—also left him an intellectual orphan. In his lifetime, Galula had the bad luck to be an expert who wrote in English about a conflict mainly of interest to the French. Still worse, the Algerian war was tainted for Americans by the shadows of colonialism and torture. Though Galula was in the United States during the early years of the American involvement in the Vietnam War, he seems to have had only a fleeting influence on those who formed our strategy.

In France, counterinsurgency theory had enjoyed a great flourishing in the 1950s and 1960s, as the French Army fought successively in Indochina, Suez, and Algeria. But the stars of this movement, a group of colonels including Roger Trinquier and Charles Lacheroy, were already famous before Galula began to write. In the context of the French tradition of *guerre revolutionnaire*, there was little novelty in Galula’s approach.

By 2006, when FM 3-24 brought Anglophone writers back into the game, the French had less reason to

be absorbed in counterinsurgency studies. So even after Galula's works were republished in English—and translated for the first time into French, nearly 40 years after his death—he remains almost unknown to the nation whose uniform he wore for most of his adult life.

Before looking at the story behind Galula's books, it is worth noting that this monograph does not aim to either validate his theories or to critique them. There is ammunition here both for readers inclined to blame Galula for what some call a "strategy of tactics" in our current wars, and for readers who think we would have won those wars conclusively had we only followed him more closely. It is possible that both opinions are partially true.

This monograph makes it clear that Galula had broad experience as an observer of insurgency, but scant experience of command, and no command at an operational level. It also makes it clear that the American military has alternately embraced and shunned counterinsurgency doctrines, for reasons that in hindsight can look very much like chance.

## **GALULA'S TWO BOOKS**

### **Their Early Reception and Rediscovery.**

One of the most remarkable cases of intellectual influence in recent years is the story of how a 1964 academic study by a virtually unknown French officer became one of the chief sources for today's American COIN doctrine. The authors of FM 3-24, of whom the most famous is General David Petraeus, write, "Of the many books that were influential in the writing of Field Manual 3-24, perhaps none was as important as

David Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare*." (University of Chicago edition)

FM 3-24 was downloaded 1.5 million times just in its first month after being posted on U.S. military websites in December 2006. (University of Chicago edition, p. xvii, available from [books.google.com/books?id=lbyFW9-eCUJ4C&pg=PR17&lpg=PR17&dq=counterinsurgency+field+manual+3-24++copies+sold&source=bl&ots=seQO OmozCp&sig=Fsb0i\\_xMftIfogpiLXD40t\\_7Epc](https://books.google.com/books?id=lbyFW9-eCUJ4C&pg=PR17&lpg=PR17&dq=counterinsurgency+field+manual+3-24++copies+sold&source=bl&ots=seQO OmozCp&sig=Fsb0i_xMftIfogpiLXD40t_7Epc)) Soldiers about to deploy to Afghanistan and Iraq had scrambled to find out who this Galula was.

By the time FM 3-24 appeared, population-centric COIN had been sufficiently forgotten so that Galula's practices were a revelation. In Iraq and Afghanistan, American troops had been living on large, highly protected installations known as forward operating bases (FOBs). They would patrol in the villages and cities where the people lived, but vanish at night into the FOBs. These were "forward" in the sense of being in the provinces, but not "forward" in any sense that mattered.

As Galula put it with typical wit, the counterinsurgent's forces:

. . . must be deployed where the population actually lives and not on positions deemed to possess a military value. A military unit can spend the entire war in so-called strategic positions without contributing anything to the insurgent's defeat . . . Forces should not be wasted in traditionally commanding positions, for in revolutionary warfare, these positions generally command nothing. (*Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 78)

On a strategic level, the writers of FM 3-24 drew broader lessons from Galula. Co-author Dr. Conrad

Crane says that the main insights unique from Galula were:

1. Revolutionary war is unfair, most rules favor the insurgent.
2. Information operations permeate everything.
3. Counterinsurgents must recognize insurgency exists, deal with root causes. (Conrad Crane, personal communication, April 6, 2009)

FM 3-24 directly reflects Galula—and no other theorist—in emphasizing the need for “unity of effort: integrating civilian and military activities.” This is the title of Chapter 2, which begins with the following quote from Galula:

Essential though it is, the military action is secondary to the political one, its primary purpose being to afford the political power enough freedom to work safely with the population. (*Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 63)

It is interesting to speculate why Galula, alone among COIN theorists of his day, devoted so much attention to these issues. Robert Thompson does not, perhaps because he could take for granted a competent colonial administration in Malaya. The British COIN theorist John Mackinlay has recently noted that colonial administrations “played a most important part” in British COIN. “It was the resident colonial staff who designed the counterinsurgent strategy and provided the political insight to design the campaign objectives and resuscitate the state’s authority.” (Mackinlay, p. 51)

Trinquier, too, pays no attention at all to establishing governance, or to what has come to be known as “armed social work.” This is perhaps because he served



either in Algiers itself, where lack of governance was not the problem, or along the Tunisian border, where his task was closer to conventional maneuver warfare.

American thinkers were ahead of their British and French equivalents in recognizing the importance of what came to be called civil affairs in combating insurgents. This may have been because in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and especially once John F. Kennedy (JFK) became President, American elites believed that socio-economic progress was a key weapon in combating Communist subversion. (It was only late in the Algerian War, by contrast, that the French gave much thought to improving the opportunities available to Algerians not of European extraction.)

In Vietnam, Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MACV) and General William Westmoreland believed in the importance of pacification. Historian Andrew Birtle notes,

In the military's opinion, pacification was the necessary precursor for achieving the type of systematic socioeconomic and political reforms that Americans generally thought were necessary to redress the underlying causes of revolutionary ferment, a process that MACV termed nation building. (Birtle, 2007, p. 387)

As Birtle discusses,

In 1967 alone the U.S. military either built or repaired 31,000 houses, 83 hospitals, 180 kilometers of irrigation systems, 200 churches, 380 dispensaries, 225 market places, 72 orphanages, 1052 schools, and over 2,000 wells, while dispensing 10,286,677 medical treatments and 41,573 tons of food and commodities. (Birtle, 2007, p. 397)

The American military embraced similar good works in Afghanistan, though much of the American public seems unaware of this fact. Opinions vary as to whether these interventions lead to pacification. Research conducted in Iraq and the Philippines by two professors, Jacob Shapiro and Eli Berman, and an Army Colonel, Joe Felter, suggests that

. . . we find a robust negative correlation between unemployment and attacks against government and allied forces and no significant relationship between unemployment and the rate of insurgent attacks that kill civilians. (Berman, Felter, Shapiro, Abstract, p. 1)

Galula, operating in remote rural areas, stated, “Algeria was grossly under administered. The fact explains much of what happened.” (*Pacification*, p. 23) Galula also addresses a dilemma that the United States faces in Afghanistan, the militarization of aid that occurs when the military is more capable than the host country government and more well-resourced than American civilian institutions like the State Department:

. . . the counterinsurgent government is exposed to a dual temptation: to assign political, police and other tasks to the armed forces; to let the military direct the entire process—if not in the whole country, at least in some areas. The first one cannot be avoided. To confine soldiers to purely military functions, while urgent and vital tasks have to be done, would be senseless. The soldier must then be prepared to become a propagandist, a social worker, a civil engineer, a school-teacher, a nurse, or a boy scout. But only for as long as he cannot be replaced, for it is better to entrust civilian tasks to civilians. This, incidentally, is what the Chinese Communists have always tended to do. . . .

The second temptation— to let the military direct the entire process— on the other hand, this is so dangerous that it must be resisted at all costs. (*Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 62)

Intellectuals in and out of the military, concerned with the progress of the American counterinsurgency in Iraq, embraced Galula's observations and prescriptions, and his works. Even now, it is virtually impossible to find Galula's two books available online for below their list price, a sure sign that the market considers their contents valuable. Michael Rich, who republished *Pacification in Algeria* at the RAND Corporation, says it has been downloaded about 20,000 times since June 28, 2006; 2,100 copies have been sold. (Michael Rich, personal communication, February 22, 2010.)

In his lifetime, Galula's works had been the victim of bad luck and bad timing. His first book, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958*, is a minutely detailed account of his activities first as a captain and then as a major conducting ground-level counterinsurgency in two impoverished rural areas of Algeria. While it is a gripping, almost novelistic account, appreciating *Pacification* requires more background on the Algerian war than most American readers have today.

Galula's strategy focused on providing security to the people, not on chasing the guerrillas who harassed them, and his approach became known in military circles as "population-centric." Galula insisted that "the objective is the population," not territory. (Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, p. xxiv; *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 58) Victory for the counterinsurgent is not just the elimination of the insurgent forces, it is, again in Galula's phrase, "the permanent isolation of the insur-

gent from the population.” (Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 54)

*Pacification* was classified as “confidential” when written as a report for the RAND Corporation in 1962 and thus could not be cited in unclassified publications. The reason may be that at the time, Algeria was in turmoil and some of the commanders he referred to were active in the *Organisation de l’Armee Secrete* (OAS), the French terrorist organization aimed at keeping Algeria French. Senior French military men like Paul Aussaresses, Jean Larteguy, Jacques Massu, Raoul Salan, and Trinquier, who were associated with the French equivalent of counterinsurgency doctrine, *guerre revolutionnaire*, were also tainted with rumors of torture during the Battle of Algiers, or with later participation in the OAS.

The OAS was linked with the enemies the United States had just defeated in World War II. They were supported by the Spanish falangists—Hitler’s allies— and many had fascist sympathies. After the OAS began a desperation campaign of killing French security forces, the whole notion of counterinsurgency as practiced in Algeria fell under suspicion. Peter Paret expressed a common feeling in 1964: “the central concepts of pacification and of subversion are either identical or at a short remove from one another.” (Paret, p. 120)

Then, too, in the United States, sentiment was often on the side of the Algerian rebels. Anti-colonialism was the order of the day. President Kennedy was fashionably anti-colonialist, and while still a senator, spoke in favor of Algerian independence. His July 2, 1957, speech, the longest of his Senate career, was titled, “Imperialism—The Enemy of Freedom.” Kennedy argued that the Algerians deserved freedom

on its merits, but he also noted that it would be hard to deny it to them in the long run. He quoted General Orde Wingate on the ability of insurgents to fight asymmetric conflicts if the population was “favorable to penetration.”

Though the participants in the OAS were mainly amnestied in 1968, *Pacification* was only declassified in 2005. In October 2005, military writer Thomas Ricks approached RAND Executive Vice-President Michael Rich and the book was reissued in early 2006. It is still far less known than Galula’s second book, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, which he wrote as a research associate at Harvard University’s Center of International Affairs in 1962-63.

*Counterinsurgency Warfare* was published in 1964 by Praeger, which put out about a dozen other books on counterinsurgency in the early 1960s. This is Galula’s more theoretical and general book, and does not require a familiarity with the Algerian war. Weighing in at barely a third the length of *Pacification*, it is more adapted to the classroom and to the scant leisure time of commanders.

At the time *Counterinsurgency Warfare* received a small flutter of attention. *Counterinsurgency Warfare* was cited as “the ‘how-to’ book in the field—and the best of them all” in the French Indochina expert Bernard Fall’s 1964 *Street Without Joy*. (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, originally published 1961) In February 1964, *The New York Times* gave it a brief review along with the far better-known French Colonel Roger Trinquier’s book, *Modern Warfare*, but the critic Hanson Baldwin praised the reactionary Trinquier and gave Galula just a grudging sentence:

another retired officer, attempts—somewhat more successfully than others who have tried it in the past—

a collection and definition of the terms and “laws” and principles of counterinsurgency operations. (February 24, 1964, p. 23)

In May 1964, a then-prominent American journalist, Eric Larrabee, mentioned Galula’s book in a round-up article for Harpers, “Books on guerrilla warfare—fifteen years overdue.” (May 1964, pp. 120-123, available from [www.harpers.org/subjects/EricLarrabee](http://www.harpers.org/subjects/EricLarrabee)) But Larrabee placed *Counterinsurgency Warfare* in the deadly—sounding category of “High Policy.”

*Counterinsurgency Warfare* gained little traction outside military circles. Military intellectuals cited *Counterinsurgency Warfare* regularly in bibliographies and endnotes in the 1980s and 1990s—notably Krepinevich’s 1984 *The Army and Vietnam* (p. 277)—which is how the authors of FM 3-24 came to read it in their days as students. But it eventually went out of print, and was republished only through a complex chain of recent events in which Thomas Ricks again played a major role.

### **Galula’s Books and the American Flourishing and Forgetting of COIN.**

At the time Galula wrote, COIN was in the air much as it is today. Combating Communist insurgency was as urgent a task as defeating Al Qaeda is now. Mao was much studied, for the same reasons we now read the Quran and jihadist doctrine. Thus Larrabee’s roundup of books on what was then called “guerrilla warfare” takes for granted that a fashionable audience will be interested in the subject.

The American popularization of COIN theory began in 1958 with a best-selling novel by two former

military men, *The Ugly American*, which sold over five million copies (the U.S. population was 179 million at the time). Co-authors William Lederer and Eugene Burdick—respectively a Navy Captain and a Lieutenant Commander who had consulted at the U.S. Naval War College—have a character, Major “Tex” Wolcheck, reflect on how to stop the series of defeats he sees being inflicted on the French Legionnaires around Hanoi in 1954: “When I was in Korea, I picked up a book by Mao Tse-tung. . . . I hate what he stands for, but he does have a kind of genius.” (*op cit*, p. 127)

In the Epilogue, Lederer and Burdick point out that the essentials of Mao’s doctrine were available in English in 1934, and: “. . . the battles which led to Dien Bien Phu were classic examples of the Mao pattern. And yet our military missions advised, and the French went down to defeat, without having studied Mao’s writings.” (*Ugly American*, p. 279)

*The Ugly American* was still on the best-seller lists during the 1960 Presidential campaign, and its most influential fan was John F. Kennedy. While a senator, Kennedy and five other opinion leaders bought an advertisement in *The New York Times*, saying that they had sent copies of *The Ugly American* to every senator. (Cuordileone, p. 220)

Kennedy’s advocacy of COIN had been formed by visits to Indochina during the Viet Minh struggle against the French. (O’Brien, p. 231) In the fall of 1951, then-Congressman Kennedy went with his brother, Robert, to Saigon, where he sought out experienced journalists such as Seymour Topping (who, we will see, had shared a house with David Galula in Beijing in 1946) to help him see past the falsely optimistic French briefings.

On January 18, 1961, 2 days before taking office, JFK set up the new Special Group, Counterinsurgency (SGCI), headed by General Maxwell Taylor, designed as a way to jumpstart the military transformation to COIN. Unfortunately, it contained no real COIN experts. (Krepinevich, p. 31, 34)

The contrast with Kennedy's predecessor could not be greater. President Dwight Eisenhower stated, "I saw no sense in wasting manpower in costly small wars . . ." (*Mandate for Change, 1953-1956*, Garden City, NJ: 1963; *The Future of Deterrence in US Strategy*, pdf file available from [www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=AD687071&Location=U2](http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=AD687071&Location=U2)) According to Rusk's right hand man for Vietnam, Roger Hilsman, JFK was reading the special issue of the *Marine Corps Gazette* on guerrilla warfare the day before his State of the Union address on January 10, 1962. This included Griffith's 1941 translation of Mao. Kennedy sent a letter to the editors recommending the volume to "every Marine" 6 days later; the letter was later bound with the book (published in 1962 as *The Guerrilla – and How to Fight Him*).

Hilsman—a West Point graduate who had fought in Burma and worked for the Office of Strategic Services in World War II—was the author of a paper in this special issue. He conducted a study for the President on how to respond to the Viet Cong outside the maneuver war. Hilsman notes in his memoir that circa 1961-62, Kennedy's National Security Advisor Walt Rostow and others were trying to figure out how to win guerrilla wars. "Other pioneering work was going on in the Pentagon, in CIA, in the Agency for International Development, and particularly at Fort Bragg." (Hilsman, p. 425)



Kennedy's advocacy of studying counterinsurgency had a huge influence on the spread of the doctrine. In his brilliant 1982 Duke Master's thesis, then-Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Bowman has documented the near-frenzy of COIN activity in the Kennedy administration. Bowman, a retired colonel who passed away in 2009, would later teach at West Point and head the U.S. Army War College Military History Institute. Bowman notes that Kennedy made it clear that promotions to general officer would depend on COIN expertise. So it is no surprise that Secretary of the Army Elvis Stahr, Jr., wrote on February 8, 1962, that ". . . guerrilla warfare is actually being fought in many parts of the world today, and the ultimate fate of freedom could well rest in the hands of the so-called irregular troops involved." (*Army Information Digest*, quoted in Bowman thesis, February 8, 1962, p. 76)

Kennedy tried hard to remold the American military. He doubled the size of the Special Forces from 2,000 to nearly 5,000. The first Special Warfare Staff Officer Course trained 527 officers in 1961, its first year, and 1,212 officers in 1962. A "Counterinsurgency Course" for colonels and generals was offered in May 1962. (Bowman, p. 90) The Howze Board Report of January 28, 1962, advocated the "creation of an experimental unit to develop tactical doctrine for counterinsurgency." (Bowman, p. 81) The Board also predicted that special warfare might become typical of future conflicts. (Bowman, p. 84) Helicopters were added to conventional Army brigades for the mobility demanded by the new type of warfare. (Bowman, p. 105)

As Andrew Birtle chronicles, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in January 1961, the Army began a 6-week counterinsurgency course that was aimed at the

groups the Army thought would use it most, foreign armies and their American advisors. (Birtle, p. 257) The Army Infantry School offered a voluntary 40-hour course on Vietnam by 1963. (Birtle, 2007, p. 265) The United States Military Academy was not far behind, with Mao, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Truong Chinh as required reading for cadets starting in 1962. (Birtle, 2007, p. 261)

Predictably, a pile of publications by ambitious officers followed these signposts. Bowman tallies them:

The Army published a book, *Readings in Counter-Guerrilla Operations* (Special Warfare School, April, 1961) while *Army* devoted its March 1962 issue to COIN. A year later, The Special Operations Research Office, under contract to the Army, published *A Counterinsurgency Bibliography* which contained 965 different sources concerned with counterinsurgency. (Bowman, p. 103)

Even after Kennedy's assassination in November 1963, COIN retained momentum. In October 1964, Army Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson viewed COIN as "the major mission in the foreseeable future. (footnote to letter from Johnson to Lieutenant General Dwight E. Beach, October 29, 1964, quoted in Bowman, p. 116) Robert Taber's Castro-sympathizing analysis of Mao, *The War of the Flea* (1965), was so interesting to the American military that they bought up the whole first printing. By 1965, the Army Infantry School "was operating two mock South Vietnamese villages" to train troops. (Birtle, 2007, p. 265)

*Counterinsurgency Warfare* likely had a minor influence on American thinking about Vietnam. A fine young French scholar, Elie Tenenbaum, has located a March 1968 proposal sent by Ambassador-at-large

Henry Cabot Lodge to President Lyndon Johnson for replacing “search and destroy” missions in Vietnam by “house by house” policing, “much as was done by General Massu in Algiers and which is set forth in Galula’s book *Counterinsurgency Warfare*.” (Tenenbaum, p. 183) As Tenenbaum notes, 3 months later Johnson relieved General Westmoreland, replacing him with General Creighton Abrams, who put an end to the “search and destroy” operations Lodge criticized.

Tenenbaum has discovered that one of the documents setting forth the concepts of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program, a formerly classified USAID study from September 25, 1967, called *Counter-Insurgency and Nation Building*, cites *Pacification in Algeria*. (“Counter-Insurgency and Nation Building: A Study with Emphasis on Southeast Asia,” Secret, Report, September 25, 1967, United States Agency for International Development, Philippines Collection, item No. PH00182, Digital National Security Archives [DNSA], p. 68. Cited by Tenenbaum, p. 157) Also, Tennenbaum notes that one of the architects of the Phoenix Program in Vietnam, Nelson Brickham, was “very taken” by Galula’s *Counterinsurgency Warfare* and carted it all over Vietnam with him. (according to Phoenix historian Douglas Valentine, quoted by Tenenbaum, pp. 168-169)

The top-down imposition of COIN on the American Army during Kennedy’s administration was not sufficient to make a lasting impact. But to understand the context of Galula’s books, it is important to know that COIN theory was never wholly forgotten by the American military. Bowman’s master’s thesis is cited by Andrew Krepinevich. Yet while Krepinevich’s indictment of the Army’s failure to use COIN has become accepted wisdom, Bowman’s more nuanced assessment has been ignored.

One reason may be that Krepinevich's view satisfied a need for the Army to lacerate itself for its failures in Vietnam. Many military intellectuals, and much of the general population, assumed that the United States failed to win in Vietnam because we failed to use appropriate strategies. Specifically, we fought a big war when we should have fought small wars, and we were enemy-centric when we should have been population-centric.

In the first years of this century, some military intellectuals began to challenge these views. They have argued that, as one influential article by Dale Andrade has it, "Westmoreland Was Right" (Andrade, 2008) and his strategies usually appropriate to the stage of the insurgency he faced. "The reality," wrote Andrade, "is that the Communists were able to employ simultaneously both main forces and a potent guerrilla structure throughout South Vietnam, and any strategy that ignored one or the other was doomed to failure." (Andrade, 2008)

One influential revisionist is historian Andrew J. Birtle, whose magisterial *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1942-1976* (2007) details the surprisingly strong commitment of the American military to counterinsurgency. "Even those who criticized some aspects of the Army's operations in Vietnam generally agreed that Westmoreland's prioritization made sense," Birtle argues, pointing to the 1966 A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam (PROVN) report. "Westmoreland," he says, "believed in both small- and large-unit maneuvers." (Birtle, 2007, pp. 370-371)

Another revisionist is the head of the military history department at West Point, Colonel Gian Gentile. He has argued that COIN was not appropriate for all

phases of the Vietnam War, and that today's emphasis on COIN is producing just as stifling an intellectual conformity as the preference for "massive retaliation" did in the 1950s. This is the last thing Galula would have wanted. If there is anything to take away from his two books, it is the rigor, analytical sophistication, and capacity for self-criticism that he brought to his task.

### **Beginnings of American COIN Practice: Krulak and Lansdale.**

Any bright young American officer today can rattle off the mantra of population-centric COIN, "The center of gravity is the people." ("The civilian population is the center of gravity," FM 3-24, p. xxv.) "Center of gravity" is the English translation of an old concept in German military writing—older even than Clausewitz, who made it famous. The German 19th century war theorist argued that

. . . For Alexander, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII, and Frederick the Great, the center of gravity was *their army*. . . . In countries subject to domestic strife, the center of gravity is generally *the capital* . . . in popular uprisings it is *the personalities of the leaders and public opinion*. (Clausewitz, Book VIII, Section 4, p. 596)

Population-centric COIN is a species of this last genus of Clausewitz's taxonomy, and deliberately placing small numbers of one's soldiers among the people they are protecting, while simultaneously using them to lead public-works projects, the innovation that recommended Galula to the American military.

In population-centered COIN, the insurgent is gradually separated from the people who provide his

support, until his existence becomes first precarious and then irrelevant. Galula's men were living in detachments of a dozen or so in each of the major villages. They focused not on chasing the insurgents, but enlisting the cooperation of the Algerian people. They had also brought peace to his fractious area, at least while Galula was there. Galula was probably the first person to write about how to do this, though by no means the first modern commander to practice it.

The U.S. Marines had worked with local security forces in villages in the Dominican Republic during 1916-22 in a program that was copied successfully in Vietnam on a small scale from 1965-71 in the form of the "Combined Action Platoons" (CAPs).

While Galula's men were stationed among the Algerians and worked with Algerian security forces, they were not actually in the same small units. The 5,000 CAPs Marines were. They were led by Lieutenant General Victor Krulak, Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency Activities for the Joint Chiefs between 1962 and 1964 and later commander of all Marines in the Pacific from 1964 to 1968. In Krulak's later account:

A Marine squad composed of carefully screened volunteers who already had some combat experience was given basic instruction in Vietnamese culture and customs and then combined with a Popular Forces platoon. The Marine squad leader—a sergeant or corporal—commanded the combined force in tactical operations, and the Popular Forces platoon leader was his operational assistant. (available from [smallwarsjournal.com/documents/krulack.htm](http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/krulack.htm))

Krulak mentions a few sources for the idea for the CAPS. One was Marine history.

. . . The Combined Action idea had been applied with success before – in Haiti (1915-34), in Nicaragua (1926-33) and, probably most effectively, in Santo Domingo (1916-22). There the Marines organized, trained, and directed a new national police force, the Guardia Nacional, later to become the Policia Nacional. . . . Led by a Marine officer and including 10 to 15 Dominicans and two or three Marine enlisted men, these mixed groups successfully brought a measure of peace to their small communities. (available from [smallwarsjournal.com/documents/krulack.htm](http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/krulack.htm))

But the theoretical basis drew upon the counsel of a British general serving as head of the British Advisory Mission in Vietnam:

Several meetings with Sir Robert Thompson, who contributed so much to the British victory over the guerillas in Malaya, established a set of basic counterinsurgency principles in my mind. Thompson said, “The peoples’ trust is primary. It will come hard because they are fearful and suspicious. Protection is the most important thing you can bring them. After that comes health. And, after that, many things—land, prosperity, education, and privacy to name a few.” (available from [smallwarsjournal.com/documents/krulack.htm](http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/krulack.htm))

The American Army forgot Krulak’s CAPs, though Krulak lived until December 2008 and was a frequent television commentator and contributor to military blogs. The Army also forgot a nearer example who might well have influenced Krulak—General Edward Geary Lansdale. He helped set up the democratic governments of the Philippines and South Vietnam and tirelessly evangelized for the study of Mao and his theories.

Lansdale was a charismatic, if controversial, figure whose ideas leached out to the general public through

a sympathetic portrayal as “Colonel Hillandale” in *The Ugly American*. He also appeared as Alden Pyle in Graham Greene’s 1955 *The Quiet American*, though the character is very different, and in a distorted form as Teryman in Jean Larteguy’s 1962 *Yellow Fever*.

Lansdale worked to elect and then to help Philippine President Magsaysay defeat the Communist Huk guerrillas and establish a responsive democratic government (1950-53).

In a talk at the Air Force Academy on May 25, 1962, Lansdale outlined the nature of the Communist guerrilla threat and how Americans should counter it. His very first point was, “The enemy’s objective is to win control of the people living on the battlefield. When he wins them, he wins all else.” (Transcript courtesy of Rufus Phillips)

In his 1972 memoir *In the Midst of Wars* – very much worth reading as a spur to imaginative practice, but to be taken cautiously as history – Lansdale insists again and again on the need to understand Communist doctrine. He argued with his superiors in Washington about the need to ensure a fair election in the Philippines: “They failed to grasp the political nature of ‘people’s warfare,’ such as the Huks had attempted to wage. I found myself quoting Mao Tse-tung to them, from one of his lectures to military officers in a Yenan cave classroom early in World War II.” (Lansdale, p. 105)

Yet, because of Krulak’s enmity, and his own awkwardness at dealing with bureaucracy, the vastly talented Lansdale did not have much influence in Vietnam policy after 1955. And because he and Krulak fought bitterly for influence with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, neither was as effective as he could have been. History’s revenge has been decades of relative obscurity.



## GALULA'S LIFE

### Galula's Early Years (1919-44).

When Galula's works were anointed as COIN masterworks in 2006-07, almost no biographical information about him was available. Galula had died at the age of 48 in 1967, and though he merited an obit in the *New York Times* ("David Galula, 48, French Army Aide," *The New York Times* [May 12, 1967], p. 47), his name was kept alive only in specialized military "small wars" circles.

Galula's widow, Ruth Morgan Galula, nearing 88, is quick and articulate, and has an astonishingly good memory for the details of her husband's life. In 1963, General Edward Lansdale wrote of Mrs. Galula as possessing "considerable intelligence and poise of her own." (Edward Lansdale letter, Lansdale Papers, Hoover Archives, September 20, 1963)

What follows incorporates Ruth Galula's recollections as told to the author in a series of telephone interviews in the winter of 2009 as well as telephone interviews with David Galula's paternal first cousin, Magda Galula Ericsson, and various friends of the couple from China and Hong Kong.

Little in Galula's early life suggested that he would become a major military theoretician, least of all in English. David Galula was born on January 10, 1919, to a prosperous Jewish merchant clan of Sfax, Tunisia. He was the sixth of seven children, and the only boy. His parents, Julie Cohen and Albert Galula, were first cousins through their mothers, a common arrangement among Sephardic Jews.

David's great-grandfather had been a rich merchant of Tunis. His grandfather, also David Galula,

was an olive oil producer and the *doyen* or dean of the Jewish community in Sfax. The family proudly disavowed the “*pieds noir*” label and believed that they were descended not from European immigrants but from indigenous Jews. There is a town called Galula near the Libyan border of Tunisia, and the Galula family says that residents converted to Judaism about 2,000 years ago.

The Galulas were secular and worldly, and there were intellectuals and scientists in the family as well as businesspeople. Mrs. Galula recalls that one of David’s cousins was a chess champion.

Until the generation of Albert Galula, the Galulas had spoken Judeo-Arabic at home. The boys had received a traditional religious education, while the girls received some instruction at home. But by the 1920s, life was changing. David’s mother, Julie Cohen, and her four sisters were unusual in having been sent to school. Albert and his brothers attended lycées (secondary education in France). And on October 28, 1924, David’s father, Albert Galula, obtained French citizenship for himself and his children, including David; this would not have been automatic for Tunisians.

After a business partnership with his wife’s brother went bankrupt in a hail of mutual recriminations, Albert moved his family to Avenue Poeymirau in Casablanca, Morocco. There David attended one of the best lycées in the overseas départements, Lycée Lyautard. None of Albert’s four brothers had much of a success in business either, and at this point the family was in reduced circumstances, but still considered itself elite. While the North African Jewish middle classes preferred the government-subsidized American InterContinental University (AIU) religious schools, the upper class sent its children to the secular lycées.

Galula was a bad student who preferred to play hooky, going horseback riding or swimming. (Galula would be a passionate horseman throughout his life.) David's father took him out of school and put him to work as a school prefect, which he enjoyed – so much so that his father returned him to school.

David's father, Albert Galula, was charming, brilliant and a great raconteur – a description many have applied to David as well. But at a certain point, David's father gave up on his financial responsibilities to the family, spending his time regaling his coterie at Casablanca's cafes with famously entertaining stories. By the time David was in lycée, his older sisters supported the family as milliners. Those of his sisters who married wed outside their faith, perhaps because they had no dowries. One married an American sergeant stationed in Tunisia and moved to St. Louis, Missouri. Two sisters never wed.

One of David's maternal aunts, Mathilde, had married a French officer, Colonel Albert Pastier, and David became fascinated with the idea of attending St. Cyr and following in his footsteps. It might not seem surprising that a Jewish boy growing up under the shadow of Hitler's Germany thought of preparing to defend France, or himself. There were anti-Jewish riots in Sfax in 1932, and a pogrom that killed 23 Jews in Constantine, Algeria, in 1934. (Laskier, p. 56) But the French Army was at the nadir of its prestige in the mid 1930s, much like the American Army just after the Vietnam War. It was also a self-perpetuating caste; in 1928, 50 percent of St. Cyr cadets were themselves officers' sons. (Ambler, p. 139)

Whether out of fascination with a military career or the realization that his family's finances were on precarious footing, the young David Galula returned to the Casablanca Lycée. He received his *baccalaureate*,

then went to live with his aunt and uncle in Limoges to prepare for the Saint Cyr entrance exam. "Normally it takes 2 years to do that, but he managed to do it in 1 year since he was nearing the age limit," Mrs. Galula explained. Today, most St. Cyr cadets enter around age 21 after having completed 2 years of civilian university work post-*baccalaureate*; they graduate after 3 years with a master's degree.

What would Galula have learned at Saint-Cyr? Probably little that would have been of use in the coming war. The French Army of the late 1930s was inward-looking, defensive, and chagrined at the inexperienced draftees who formed the bulk of the enlisted ranks. In 1928 the term of conscription had been limited to just 1 year; the French Left was determined not to allow a strong professional army that might encroach on civilian government.

Elizabeth Kier has detailed how the French Army was aware of the German focus on tank warfare, and its use of conscripts in mechanized warfare, but was unable to imagine the combination of these two developments and how they would shortly overwhelm the Maginot Line. (Kier, pp. 63-65)

But at St. Cyr, Galula would have studied something that would prove invaluable to him in Algeria: the long history of French colonial warfare. This is never far from his mind in his writings. Discussing Algeria in *Pacification*, he alludes to earlier counterinsurgencies in North Africa: "It soon became obvious that military operations alone could not defeat the rebels. The population had to be protected, controlled, won over, and isolated from the rebels. This is how we had pacified Morocco in the 1920s and early 1930s." (*Pacification*, p. 23)

Galula graduated from St. Cyr in 1939, and France declared war on Germany in September. By June

1940, the Germans had taken Paris. Colonel Pastier, a Catholic active in the Resistance, was denounced to the Nazis and eventually killed in the Dachau concentration camp in Germany. To keep the young officer out of trouble and doing something useful for the Free French cause—the Vichy regime would eventually expel all Jews from the officer corps—the French Army sent Galula to work as a spy in Tangier, Morocco, where his cover was working for a (real) cousin's business.

Once Casablanca was taken by the Allies in November 1942, Galula rejoined the regular army, fighting under General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny in the recapture of Elba (June 1944) and Toulon, where the Germans surrendered on August 28, 1944.

Around this point, Captain—later Colonel—Jacques Guillermaz became Galula's commanding officer. This was an extraordinary stroke of luck; Guillermaz, who had been posted to Beijing as military attaché in 1937, was already an accomplished Sinologist, and a friend of Chou Enlai. A better mentor in Mao's revolutionary warfare theory could hardly be imagined. Guillermaz chose Galula as one of three officers to accompany him to China when he took up his duties there as French military attaché.

### **Journey to the East (1945-56).**

In 1945, David spent 6 months in Chungking (Chongqing), China, and then was sent to Beiping (Beijing) for language training. He gained a written Chinese vocabulary of 5,000 characters, according to his widow, and spoke Chinese fluently, but in a limited context, mainly military.

It was in China that Galula also honed his English skills. Mrs. Galula recalls that her husband perfected his spoken English in China in order to communicate with his Chinese language instructors, but that he always spoke English with a thick French accent that belied his large vocabulary and fluency. Colonel Fielding Greaves (Ret.), who was a friend of the Galulas a few years later in Hong Kong, says that David Galula spoke English faster than anyone he had ever heard, with a “machine gun delivery” that was difficult to understand until one was used to it. (Interview with the author, April 15, 2009)

In Beijing, Galula encountered a fellow-student, the young American journalist Seymour Topping. Decades later, Topping would base the character of “Jean Leone” in his 1999 novel *The Peking Letter*, on the young David Galula.

Jean Leone invites the narrator to share his traditional Chinese house with him, just as Galula did with Topping. Leone is depicted as a worldly cynic who frequented the “joy girls” of the city’s brothels, and a connoisseur of fine food and wine. (A film version of *The Peking Letter* is now in preproduction, so it is possible that Topping’s version of young Galula will reach a wide audience.)

Topping, still sharp at 88, stated that Galula “had a lust for life” and was a “fun-loving guy,” who “enjoyed life a good deal and liked good wine and food and had a very good Chinese cook.” He recalled touring Chinese wine shops and tea houses with Galula. (Telephone interview with author, February 13, 2009)

In April 1947, Galula took off for a solo trip into the interior, but was captured by Chinese Communists. Galula was fiercely anti-Communist (Fielding Greaves interview with the author, April 15, 2009)

but admits in *Counterinsurgency Warfare* that his captors treated him well in the week he was held. (p. 35) Their focus on indoctrination made a deep impression on him, and so did their awareness of the need to befriend the local people. Years later, when Galula spoke of his experience at a 1962 RAND Corporation symposium on counterinsurgency, he told how the Communists holding him captive asked permission from a village family to billet Galula with them, and declined any refreshments. (Hosmer, 1962, p. 76) While Galula knew Europeans who were held by the Communists for months, he was released through the help of the Marshall mission (Ruth Galula, Seymour Topping interviews).

By this point, Galula and his European and American friends were fascinated by Mao and his doctrines—and they knew they had to understand them to oppose them. They spoke of Mao and the civil war “all the time,” according to Seymour Topping. Galula likely studied Mao in English; his Chinese would not have been sufficient, and Mao was only translated into French in 1950.

### **Countering Mao.**

Mao is crucial for the history of COIN theory. Before Mao wrote, there was no sense that counterinsurgency had to be an explicit doctrine. Mao begot COIN as theory. Galula and other counterinsurgents’ emphasis on isolating the insurgent from the population is simply the flip side of Mao’s insistence that the insurgent draws his support only from the people.

One particular insight of Mao was cited again and again by the 1960s’ counterinsurgents, and it contains the essence of today’s population-centric COIN:

Many people think it impossible for guerrillas to exist for long in the enemy's rear. Such a belief reveals lack of comprehension of the relationship that should exist between the people and the troops. The former may be likened to water, the latter to the fish who inhabit it. Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, Chapter 6, 1937. (available from [www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/1937/guerrilla-warfare/ch06.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/1937/guerrilla-warfare/ch06.htm))

This famous fish analogy was quoted in an American policy article in 1943 by a man David Galula might well have known or known of, George Uhlmann. He had worked for the French Consular Services in Beijing before the war, and then enlisted in the French Navy. He made his way across the territory controlled by Mao's forces in the spring of 1942 and reported on his experience in the Far Eastern Survey in 1943. (available from [www.jstor.org/pss/3022972](http://www.jstor.org/pss/3022972)) The fish analogy was also a favorite of the French *guerre revolutionnaire* theorists (Paret, p. 11) who were active in the senior ranks of the French Army while Galula was a junior officer.

Mao's influence spread to the West relatively quickly. His major publications begin in 1926, and in 1937, American Communist fellow-traveler Edgar Snow published the adulatory *Red Star Over China*. A bestseller at the time and forgotten today, Snow's book is perhaps most interesting for what is not in it: any mention of Mao's more sophisticated ideas about "protracted war." Perhaps he simply had not formulated them yet, didn't describe them to Snow, or perhaps Snow thought they would bore his American readers.

By 1938, according to Jacques Guillermaz's history of Communist China, Mao was teaching at "a sort



of staff college” for Communist revolutionaries, and the elements of his doctrine had taken shape. (Guillermaz, p. 329) In 1941, Marine captain Samuel Griffith II translated Mao’s military writings into English for the first time for the *Marine Corps Gazette*.

Griffith wrote in his translator’s note that Mao was probably correct to claim that his unlimited guerrilla war conducted over vast distances with a long time horizon was something new: “We in the Marine Corps have as yet encountered nothing but relatively primitive and strictly limited guerrilla war. Thus, what Mao has written of this new type of guerrilla war may be of interest to us.” (Griffith p. 38) The success of Mao’s army was drawing the attention of military intellectuals; it was obvious that something new and deadly had entered the world stage. By the time Mao had driven the Nationalist Chinese out of China in January 1949, American, British, and French officers studied Mao feverishly, aware that they would have to fight against his disciples.

In 1962, as part of the flourishing of COIN under President Kennedy discussed above, Griffith – by then a retired brigadier general – published a book of Mao’s writings, *On Guerilla Warfare*. He also translated Mao’s great influence, Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*. A copy of this last, inscribed by the author to Galula, was among the books in Galula’s possession at his death in 1967. According to Ruth Morgan Galula, Griffith and Galula may have met: Griffith commanded a Marine regiment in northern China right after the end of World War II. Gene Hanrahan’s 1952 translation of formative texts of Chinese guerrilla warfare, *Chinese Communist Guerrilla Tactics*, was also in Galula’s possession at his death. (Galula family interviews)

Mao rethought almost every conventional notion of warfare, including what a battlefield victory looks like. As the Israeli military historian, Martin Van Creveld, writes,

From the Austrians at Ulm in 1805, all the way down to the Egyptian Third Army at Suez in 1972, the story of modern strategy is always the same. Large armed formations are regarded as having been defeated—and, equally important, regard themselves as having been defeated—as soon as they are surrounded and their lines of communication are severed. (*The Transformation of War*, p. 91)

Yet when Chiang Kai-shek's armies surrounded his forces in 1934, Mao did not surrender—he retreated on the epochal “Long March” of 9,600 kilometers. He went on to philosophize about his dilemma. In “On Protracted War,” a very influential series of lectures that Mao delivered in the spring of 1938 to strategize the resistance against the Japanese occupation of China, he considers the ideas of “inside” and “outside,” of what it means to be surrounded, and the relativity of the concept.

From one perspective, the revolutionary forces are “strategically encircled by the enemy,” in another, “if one considers all the guerrilla base areas together,” the revolutionaries “surround a great many enemy forces.” (available from [www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswo2\\_09.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswo2_09.htm))

Of course, it is important to recognize the roots of Mao's writing on strategy in the 3,000 year-old tradition of Chinese war theory and even in the Chinese game of “Go”. (“Go” is the more commonly known Japanese word for a game that is called Wei-ch'i [Wei Qi] in China.) This is described by Gilles Deleuze

and Felix Guatteri as “. . . war without battle lines, with neither confrontation nor retreat, without battles even: pure strategy. . . . hess codes and decodes space, whereas Go proceeds altogether differently, territorializing or territorializing it . . .”(A *Thousand Plateaus*, p. 353) For Mao, even victory is a matter of having the right point of view – and his views were heard deep within the American foreign policy establishment in Vietnam. Edward L. Katzenbach, at the time an American deputy assistant secretary of defense, wrote in 1962:

Although Mao never states it quite this way . . . his fundamental belief is that only those who will admit defeat can be defeated. . . . Or, conversely, when the populace admits defeat, the forces in the field might just as well surrender or withdraw. (quoted by Katzenbach in *The Guerrilla*, p. 17)

Similarly, Marine Lieutenant General Victor Krulak echoed Mao in saying of the Vietnam War, “It has no front lines. The battlefield is in the minds of 16 or 17 million people.”(available from [smallwarsjournal.com/documents/krulak.htm](http://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/krulak.htm))

Galula sounded a similar note when he explained that the counterinsurgent’s forces

. . . must be deployed where the population actually lives and not on positions deemed to possess a military value. A military unit can spend the entire war in so-called strategic positions without contributing anything to the insurgent’s defeat. Forces should not be wasted in traditionally commanding positions, for in revolutionary warfare, these positions generally command nothing. (*Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 78)

And again, "The strategy of conventional warfare prescribes the conquest of the enemy's territory, the destruction of his forces. The trouble here is that the enemy holds no territory and refuses to fight for it." (*Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 50)

## **Greece and Hong Kong.**

At a diplomatic reception in Nanking on September 16, 1948, Galula met Ruth Morgan, then a recent University of Minnesota graduate from an established, cultivated American family and one of the first crops of young women recruited by the State Department to work overseas. "At that time they had a policy of not staffing people in countries where they spoke the language," Mrs. Galula recalls, "and I spoke Spanish, so they sent me to China!"

Ruth Morgan was working at the American Embassy in Chiang Kai Shek's then-capital, Nanking, and Galula was visiting his boss, Jacques Guillermez, the French military attaché, who was stationed there. Ruth and David became engaged just a month after meeting, though they did not wed until August 1949 because the French Army had stringent rules governing the marriage between an officer and a foreign citizen.

In November 1948, the engaged couple left China, where the Communists were shortly to seize control, to visit their families. (In Casablanca, David's mother "had already chosen a lovely wealthy girl for David" in accordance with local Jewish custom, according to Ruth Galula, "but whatever David wanted was good for her.")

Galula then went to Thessalonika to work as an observer with the United Nations Special Commission on the Balkans, where he witnessed the last months

of a cruel, ruinous civil war (1946-49). The National Popular Liberation Army (ELAS), which had fought the Axis occupiers, would have given Galula a chance to see Maoist principles used outside of China. "Consciously following Mao's 10 military principles," ELAS "avoided unfavorable confrontations, concentrating their forces against weak government detachments and small villages . . ." (Birtle, 2007, p. 42)

The government forces that ultimately won were advised first by the British and then the American military. Sensible tactical advice from the Americans to the Greek National Army, combined with brutal measures by the government, and the fortuitous loss of Tito's support, turned the tide against the guerrillas. It is possible that Galula – now a bringer of doctrine to the U.S. military – first saw effective COIN operations in Greece under U.S. auspices. American advisors "emphasized small-unit patrol and combat skills, night operations to catch the guerrillas by surprise" and deemphasized the use of air power and mechanized vehicles. (Birtle, 2007, pp. 47-48)

Morgan and Galula were finally married in August 1949 as the Greek civil war drew to a close. Galula did not write much of the Greek Civil War, commenting briefly in *Counterinsurgency Warfare* that the insurgents failed because they lacked a cause. (*Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 12)

"David was bored," his widow says. "There wasn't much to do once the war was over. So he went back to Paris to do *Deuxieme Bureau* work." The Second Bureau of the General Staff, though technically dissolved in 1940, is the informal term for France's military intelligence service.

Meanwhile, the Communists had taken control in China, and Chiang Kai Shek set up his government

in Taiwan in March 1950. In January 1951, Lieutenant Colonel Guillermez left China for Hong Kong. When his mentor left his post in Hong Kong in June 1951, Galula left the *Deuxieme Bureau* in Paris to become French military attaché in Hong Kong.

From June 1951 to February 1956—almost two 3-year tours of duty—the Galulas lead a glamorous life in Hong Kong, living in the French Bank Building at the top of the Peak and enjoying a constant round of parties and amusements. “David became an expert golfer,” Ruth notes; Fielding Greaves recalls sailing with him. Greaves calls Galula “fearless,” recounting a night when David and Ruth Galula were the only guests to brave a “terrible hurricane” to attend a party at Greaves’ house. “They had to go over a fallen tree in a convertible Morris Minor.” (interview with author, April 15, 2009)

Galula met Joseph Alsop, a celebrity journalist with the *Saturday Evening Post* who later visited him and wrote about his work in Algeria. (I have been unable to track down any reference to Galula in Alsop’s work online.) He apparently also met Henry Luce who, Ruth Galula says, was taken with him.

But all was not fine food, golf, and glamour. Mrs. Galula notes that the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu on May 7, 1954, was traumatic for her husband; 20 percent of his St. Cyr classmates died in Indochina. “David was very critical of Roosevelt’s foreign policy there. It was Nixon who was pushing President Eisenhower to do more to help the French at Dien Bien Phu.” (The United States provided some bombers to support the French forces, but Eisenhower was opposed to intervention.)

The French war against the Viet Minh was the third insurgency Galula was able to study at close range,

counting Mao's rebellion as the first and the Greek war as the second.

Perhaps the most influential acquaintance from the Hong Kong period for Galula's later career was Colonel (later General) Edward Lansdale, who wrote that he met Galula "in Hongkong about 1955." From a job reference letter he wrote for Galula in September 1963:

I had heard of him for some years, largely from Americans whose judgment I respect, and in most laudatory terms of his intelligent perception of events in China. Thus, on our first social meeting, I probed rather insistently for his views on the China situation. I was struck by the clarity with which he expressed himself in English, which is not his native tongue, and by the depth of his understanding of events. He showed such a rare talent that I urged him to write a book, an urging which was seconded by some of the top-drawer American news correspondents then in Hongkong. He felt that he was unable to write while still in military service. . . . I was happy to lend a hand in making it possible for him to give some lectures to various U.S. military groups while he was attending our Staff College at Norfolk and later, participate both in a RAND symposium on insurgency and in U.S. academic pursuits. (Edward Lansdale letter, Lansdale Papers, September 20, 1963, to Christian Herter, Jr.)

In *Pacification*, Galula mentions two trips to Manila, "and long talks with officials involved in the struggle against the communist Huks." (p. 69) He does not mention Lansdale's name here, or indeed anywhere, but this passage may well refer to him among others. There was a Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) conference in Manila on July 20, 1955, attended by Colonel Charles Lacheroy and perhaps by then-Colonel Lansdale (*The Unquiet American*, p. 179) but it is unclear if Galula attended.

Galula made another famous acquaintance in this period, General Raoul Salan, commander in chief of French forces in Indochina from 1952-53. Salan, who would later command French forces in Algeria and achieve notoriety for his involvement with the OAS, passed through Hong Kong; all the French officers fighting in Indochina came for rest and relaxation (R&R) with their wives, and Mrs. Galula says that Salan was aware of David's thinking on counterinsurgency even at this stage.

During his Hong Kong years, Mrs. Galula recalls that her husband traveled monthly or more to Indochina and debriefed former prisoners of the Communists who returned from mainland China, some of whom had been brainwashed. Mrs. Galula remembers extensive travel in Southeast Asia with her husband, including a long trip to Taiwan, where they stayed at the Japanese-style house of the French military attaché, and a week in Singapore for a 1954 conference I have been unable to identify, but where Ruth Galula believes her husband may have met General Robert Thompson. The couple paid a visit to Bangkok to see Guillermaz who was stationed there as French military attaché from 1952-56, Guillermaz was also—on the strength of his friendship with Chou Enlai—a counselor to the French delegation at the Geneva talks after the French surrender at Dien Bien Phu on May 7, 1954.

### **The “Guerre Revolutionnaire” Context For Galula.**

Galula published his first *Notes on Pacification* in November 1956, 3 months into Algeria, at a point when most American company commanders will tell you they are just starting to get the lay of the land in



a new deployment. One might suspect that nearly all his ideas about COIN were formed before he even arrived in Algeria.

Indeed, at the very beginning of *Pacification in Algeria* Galula writes that after 11 years focused on Chinese affairs, “I felt I had learned enough about insurgencies, and I wanted to test certain theories I had formed on counterinsurgency warfare.” (p. 1)

Paul Paret has given a good summary of this period in his book *French Revolutionary Warfare*. During the period Galula spent in Hong Kong, Colonel Charles Lacheroy and others had begun developing the theory of *guerre revolutionnaire*. Lacheroy was 13 years older than Galula, but they passed through many of the same formative career experiences: St. Cyr, World War II, Asia, and Algeria. Lacheroy – who served on the staff of General de Lattre de Tassigny though likely did not know the much more junior Galula during the North African campaign – headed France’s colonial warfare school, the *Centre d’études asiatiques et africaines* (CEAA), in the 1950s.

In April 1956, the French established the *Service d’Action Psychologique et de’Information* (SAPI). This was titularly a public relations office, but its head, Lacheroy, used it as a platform for his theories about *guerre revolutionnaire*. (Paret, p. 55) SAPI was brought down to the field level after the Battle of Algiers was won by the French forces, in the summer and fall of 1957, with a regional bureau in Algiers as well.

These became known as the Fifth Bureaus (*5es bureau d’action psychologique*) and had two responsibilities: “protecting French morale and unity of purpose” on the one hand, and taking “the psychological war to the enemy in order to rob him of his supporters and destroy his will to fight.” (Paret, p. 56)

Lacheroy was appointed head of the *Cinquieme Bureau* (Fifth Bureau) on May 13, 1958. The *Cinquieme Bureau* acquired a reputation for black ops and subversion. French intelligence advisor Constantin Melnick, writing in a September 1967 RAND Report for the office of the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, viewed the influence of *guerre revolutionnaire* theory as “exaggerated.” (Melnick, p. 18) Melnick says that the Fifth Bureaus are nearly the only “practical application systematically introduced into the French Army.” (Melnick, p. 19) In his view, the descent of many of the *guerre revolutionnaire* theorists into the OAS’s terror campaign is “inexplicable without faith in the magical qualities of this theory.” (Melnick, p. 21)

Colonel Jean Gardes, who followed Lacheroy as head of the Fifth Bureau, was one of the senior officers who took part in the “week of the barricades,” January 24 to February 1, 1960. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, De Gaulle disbanded the Fifth Bureaus on February 15, 1960. (available from [www.journal.dnd.ca/v08/no4/pahlavi-eng.asp](http://www.journal.dnd.ca/v08/no4/pahlavi-eng.asp)) Some officers chose the Army over France; Lacheroy was one. He was among the plotters against De Gaulle in the April 1961 coup attempt, and, after it failed, he lived underground, fighting in the OAS. (He was sentenced to death in absentia, amnestied with most of the rest of the senior OAS in 1968, and died at the age of 99 in 2005.)

As a military intellectual, Lacheroy organized conferences in Bien Hoa in November 1952 and in late 1955. Given that Galula was in Hong Kong at this point, it is quite possible the two crossed paths, but Galula does not mention it.

Galula’s Operational Zone in Algeria was explicitly an experimental zone – one of several set up by the

French command in Algeria – where methods were to be tried and later expanded to other zones if proven successful. Peter Paret discussed an *Operation Pilote* to the east of Oran that was hailed as a remarkable success; he included a long report from Colonel Cazelles, who was in charge. Cazelle's actions seem similar to Galula's. (Paget, pp. 81ff )

Galula says that when he arrived, he was “pleasantly surprised . . . to find that the principles of revolutionary warfare seemed to be generally understood and that considerable effort had been devoted to adapt our methods and our means to them.” (*Pacification*, p. 258, Appendix) There was even a school for “revolutionary warfare” (*guerre revolutionnaire*) in Arzew, Algeria, at the time. Paret says that “nearly all regular and reserve officers serving in Algeria” passed through it. (p. 70)

General Salan, in his *Memoires*, mentions an 800-page guide he had prepared for his troops, *Instruction specialiste de contre-guerilla*. (Salan, *Algerie francaise*, pp. 269-270) (I have been unable to find a copy of this undoubtedly favorite with the troops, though there must be plenty of copies used as doorstops in Algerian homes.)

This study of counterinsurgency represented continuity with the French military's intellectual tradition. And from the start, French COIN was what is now called “population-centric” rather than “enemy-centric.” The idea that the population is the center of gravity lurks just beneath the surface in the writings of the generals who expanded France's colonial empire. Galula had studied them at Saint Cyr.

Even at the very beginning of the French involvement in Algeria, which they invaded in 1839, the French military understood that the population was

their objective. Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in his 1842 *Report on Algeria*, “We faced not a real army, but the population itself.”

In 1895, General Francois-Jacques-Andres Duchemin, commander in chief of the French forces occupying Indochina, wrote of the piracy problem in Tonkin, “The pirate is a plant which grows only on certain grounds. The most efficient method is to render the ground unsuitable to him. . . . There are no pirates in completely organized countries.” (Earle, p. 234)

The French tradition—represented by names like Duchemin and also Gallieni and Lyautey (after whom Galula’s *lycée* was named)—was condensed in English in a chapter of a popular 1944 volume, Edward Mead Earle’s *Makers of Modern Strategy*. Jean Gottman, better known as a theorist of human geography, summed up the French tradition for Earle’s book by observing that colonial warfare “aims not at the destruction of the enemy but at the organization of the conquered peoples and territory under a particular control.” (Earle, p. 234)

These French forerunners sound quite a bit like population-centric COIN theorists today. Indeed, German military scholar Thomas Rid has said that if Galula didn’t conceal his roots in the French tradition of colonial warfare, he certainly did not go out of his way to bring them to the attention of his American audience. (Rid says that much of Galula’s writings only repeated in English what had long been common knowledge in French.)

But there is a difference between Galula and these early pacifiers, and it is important: they were not countering Mao’s theories of revolutionary or protracted war. Their insurgents didn’t have an ideology beyond wanting the colonial invaders gone. But Lacheroy’s, Trinquier’s, and Galula’s did.

Galula's November 1956 report was published anonymously in a French military journal for the Algerian counterinsurgency, *Contact* (p. 257). It was leaked to *Le Monde*, which, Galula says,

... devoted two pages of its valuable space for 3 days showing how "fascism was guiding the French Army in Algeria." *L'Humanite*, the communist daily, published twisted excerpts from *Le Monde* and promised to disclose the name of this "Captain from Kabylia." (*Pacification*, footnote, p. 150)

At this time, many other French officers—though more of field-grade rank than captains—were also publishing reports on their COIN tactics in various French military journals. Why did Galula not give his American readers some sense of this context?

First of all, *Pacification* was a report, never edited for a general audience. Also, for a military-intellectual audience of the time, it might not have been necessary to explain this. At the time Galula wrote, COIN was a hot topic in American military circles. Indeed, a *guerre revolutionnaire* theorist-practitioner far better known than Galula was already teaching American officers while Galula wrote his two books.

Colonel Paul Aussaresses began teaching at the Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg in May 1961 and in fact brought the reactionary COIN theorist Roger Trinquier's *La Guerre Moderne* in manuscript with him to America, as Elie Tenenbaum notes. Aussaresses had served under Trinquier, who had been second in command under General Massu during the battle of Algiers. Trinquier's book—similar in doctrine to Galula's in many respects, but without Galula's genius or wit—had not yet been published even in French. (p. 98) Trinquier—born 11 years earlier—spent years in

China with the French military before World War II, and learned Chinese. (Trinquier, pp. xii-xiii)

Aussaresses had done the dirty work for Colonel Massu during the Battle of Algiers, as well as more conventional intelligence work. He went on to become the military attaché at the French embassy in Washington, and then taught at Fort Bragg. Tenenbaum documents not only his influence on his students, including those who designed the Phoenix Program in Vietnam, but his background in the Jedburghs behind the lines in World War II.

### **Galula In Algeria, Summer 1956-Summer 1958.**

In 1956, Galula volunteered to fight in Algeria. According to his widow, he felt guilty about having missed the war in Indochina. Leaving his post in Hong Kong in February 1956, he took a 4-month leave, deploying to Algeria on August 1, 1956. (*Pacification* p. 1)

Galula had a personal stake in this fight. His country of birth, Tunisia, and the country where he grew up, Morocco, had both received independence from France, in 1956. Galula's immediate and extended families were still living in French North Africa, mainly in Tunisia, though an uncle was in Algiers.

In Algeria, Galula was reunited with his mentor, Guillermaz, now a full colonel and taking command of a regiment. Guillermaz is likely the "sector commander . . . with whom I have been closely associated for much of my military career" mentioned on p. 217 of *Pacification in Algeria*.

In 1956, when he first lead men into battle, Galula was already 37. This is 5 to 10 years older than American captains would be today. In the post-World War II period, mid-level officer promotions in the French

Army were blocked by a demographic bulge. Between 1948-55, the average age of a captain was 34 years and 8 months. (Ambler, p. 101) Trinquier was a captain until he was 39 (Trinquier, p. xiv.)

Galula's relatively mature age may explain some of his confidence in his first command. But then, as we have seen, he was also able to draw upon not only his first-hand, specialist's knowledge of Mao's guerilla warfare, but the long French tradition of colonial warfare and of intellectual openness to innovation in this area.

In his first Algerian assignment, Galula led about 100 men in Djebel Aissa Mimoun, a mountain district so backward many inhabitants did not even have outhouses. In the description Galula later gave at the April 1962 RAND symposium, he notes that in one of his areas of operations, there was only one school with 60 seats for a district of 20,000 people.

His plan involved "establishing ourselves in the villages in order to renew contacts with the population," "controlling the population," and "winning it over." (*Pacification*, p. 261) After 3 months, he reported, he had his men living in the villages. Of course, many Algerians spoke French, making this tactic much easier than it would be for an American company in Afghanistan or Iraq. But they had not received one tip or bit of actionable intelligence; he admitted to "failure" at this point in winning over the population. (*Pacification*, p. 261)

Galula then analyzed the causes of the failure in three bullet points: "lack of adaptation of our units to their task, lack of systemism in our actions, lack of firmness toward the population." This latter is often forgotten by Americans; Galula wrote "We certainly must show the carrot in our left hand, but only if we

brandish the stick in our right hand." (*Pacification*, p. 261). He regularly employed fines to motivate villagers to good behavior, including fining families whose children did not go to school. (RAND symposium, p. 77)

Galula's eventual success in Djebel Aissa Mimoun attracted the notice of higher commanders. In March 1958, he was transferred to another area, Bourj Menaiel, where he became a deputy commander upon promotion to Major. Here Galula was reunited with Guillermaz, now a full colonel and taking command of a regiment in which Galula was to serve. Another acquaintance, General Salan, had taken a command in Algeria in December 1956.

Still, imaginative officers like Galula had no ultimate impact on the war. It ran its course according to the dynamics of French politics. The Galulas were in Algiers for the 1958 coup when General Salan and General Jacques Massu, the paratroop commander, demanded the return of Charles de Gaulle to political power in France.

Mrs. Galula remembers that they returned secretly to Bourj Menaiel by ambulance, where the people were celebrating the news that under de Gaulle, the French would stay in Algeria. The people of Aissa Mimoun requested that Galula be appointed *prefet* of Kabylia, a higher-level job which he politely refused, but his commander chose him as his representative to the Bordj Menaiel Committee of Public Welfare. (*Pacification*, p. 236)

David's cousin, Magda Ericsson, says that David was in a cell of four people, including Salan, that advised de Gaulle at this point, and that he was close to Salan, but I have not found his name in Salan's *Memoires* or any account of the May events. On the other hand, Galula's explanation that he happened to be in



Algiers that week for a training program and literally slept through the night of the coup also seems disingenuous. (*Pacification*, p. 234)

Galula's 2-year deployment in Algeria drew to a close. He tells us that in June 1958 (as de Gaulle came to power again, and Salan became commander in chief in Algeria), his services were requested by the "Psychological Action Branch" of the Ministry of Defense, which he joined after his command ended in August. This sounds as if it was the SAPI that was headed by Lacheroy. Mrs. Galula does not recall exactly, but remembers that Galula's immediate subordinate in the office was Henri de France, son of the Bourbon pretender to the French throne.

If Galula was working at SAPI, it was in its waning days. By this time, the activities of renegade Army officers in Algeria were putting *guerre revolutionnaire* in shadow. In the fall of 1958, De Gaulle, worried about the growing political involvement of the Army, replaced Salan with the less-ideological Challe; a purge of most of the celebrated evangelists for *guerre revolutionnaire* took place. (available from [www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vo8/no4/pahlavi-eng.asp](http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vo8/no4/pahlavi-eng.asp))

The 5th Bureaus were more and more taking the side of the *colons* against the French government. In December 1959, the chief of the Fifth Bureau in Algiers, Colonel Gardes, was removed for excessive political activism. Riots followed, and in February, 1960, de Gaulle abolished the Fifth Bureau, dividing their responsibilities between the Second and Third Bureaus. (Paret, pp. 77-79)

By the summer of 1959, Galula was working in French military intelligence in the *Deuxième Bureau* in Paris. Mrs. Galula recalls that he was in President de Gaulle's "crisis office." His boss was Colonel Brillault.

At this point Galula had been promoted to a *chef de battalion*, midway between our major and lieutenant colonel. He and his wife had also adopted a son, Daniel, born April 21, 1959.

Galula may have returned to Algeria after his command ended, though his widow does not remember any trips. He says he returned to Aissa Mimoun “for the last time in May 1959.” (*Pacification*, p. 208) This is not, of course, the same as saying he returned for the **only** time in May 1959.

### **Galula in America and His Final Years (1960-67).**

The years 1961-62 were painful times for those who had fought to keep Algeria French. De Gaulle decided that Algeria would vote on its independence on January 8, 1961. The results were 75 percent in favor overall, but 40 percent of the electorate abstained, honoring a National Liberation Front (FLN) boycott. The cause of *Algerie francaise* was lost, but the OAS began its terror campaign to keep Algeria French. Retired General Salan returned to Algeria to spearhead the unsuccessful April 21, 1961, putsch against De Gaulle. He then went underground, leading – or perhaps serving as a respectable figurehead for – the OAS.

On June 17, 1962, the OAS and FLN signed a ceasefire, and 350,000 *pieds-noirs* left Algeria. The Oran massacre in July impelled a further exodus, with 250,000 European residents of Oran departing. Eventually 1.4 million refugees left for France; the *pieds-noirs*, numbering about a million, had comprised about 10 percent of the population of Algeria, but Algerian Muslims who had sympathized with the French cause left too. In the months following independence, between 50,000 and 150,000 Algerian Muslims who had taken the French side were murdered by the victors—a

probability that had weighed heavily on many French soldiers and formed part of the *causus belli* of the OAS. ("French historians estimate that somewhere between 50,000 and 150,000 *Harkis* [Algerian Muslim auxiliaries who served with the French army] and members of their families were killed by the FLN or by lynch mobs in Algeria," available from [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algerian\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algerian_War))

No provision had been made for this massive population transfer, which took place in chaos. (None of Galula's relatives were among the refugees; they left years later.)

In August 1962, an OAS sympathizer tried to assassinate de Gaulle, the incident that was fictionalized in *Day of the Jackal*.

By all accounts, Galula stayed clear of French and Algerian politics at this time. According to his widow, Galula venerated de Gaulle, and agreed with him that Algerian independence "was not the right thing to do but it was the necessary thing." (Interview with Ruth Morgan Galula) Lansdale has written that Galula avoided "entanglement in right and left extremist activities." (Edward Lansdale letter, Hoover Archives, September 20, 1963)

The French Army was not the place for a counterinsurgent in the early 1960s, but the U.S. military surely was. At this time, COIN was nearly as fashionable in American military circles as it is today.

Between 1960 and 1963, during this explosion of interest in COIN, Galula spent a considerable amount of time in the United States . . . His first long visit was in 1960 for 6 months of study at the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia. His French army evaluation at this time is cited in the preface to the French edition of *Counterinsurgency Warfare*: "A lively and vivacious intelligence, sometimes a little disorganized

but always effective. Neither lacking in initiative nor originality, Galula gains by not being restricted. Not to be lost sight of in the interest of the Army." (p. xx, my translation)

In April 1962, Galula participated in a now-legendary RAND symposium in Arlington, Virginia, which gathered a group of counterinsurgents for 4 days of discussions. The participants included Bohannon, Frank Kitson, Lansdale, Rufus Phillips, and Lansdale's former colleague in the Philippines, Colonel Napoleon Valeriano. There are no direct quotations in the published proceedings (which are available for download or purchase on RAND's website), but Galula's remarks are consistent with his two published books.

Still, whether out of heartbreak over Algeria, discouragement about promotion, or simply the desire to support his family more comfortably, Galula resigned from the French army in 1962. He may have gone to RAND's Santa Monica office for a few months to write *Pacification*, but Stephen Hosmer, who knew Galula then as a RAND employee, did not remember. In March 1962, he joined Harvard's Center for International Affairs (CIFA), where General William Westmoreland, then the West Point superintendent and later commander of U.S. forces in South Vietnam, helped him obtain a position as research associate.

It may seem surprising that Westmoreland, the alleged exponent of large-scale maneuver warfare at all costs, would go out of his way to help Galula, whose name is identified with population-centric COIN. Yet Andrew Birtle has pointed out that "Westmoreland's interest in small-unit counterinsurgency actions was long-standing. As the commander of the 101st Airborne Division in the early 1960s, he had started one

of the first small-unit counter guerrilla training courses in the Army.” (Birtle, 2008, p. 1229) Moreover, in late 1964, Westmoreland would persuade South Vietnamese commanders in Binh Dinh province “to divide their forces into small detachments and disperse them across the villages to establish security and control the population.” (Moyar, p. 153)

At Harvard, Galula became close friends with Henry Kissinger, associate director of the center and head of Harvard’s Defense Studies Program. The Galula and Kissinger families knew each other, and one of Kissinger’s children was a playmate of Galula’s son. But the center’s head, Robert Bowie, was at daggers drawn with Kissinger (*Kissinger* by Walter Isaacson, p. 95) and thought Galula was a “reactionary.” What the Galulas had hoped would be a long-term Harvard appointment was to end in November 1963.

The Galulas wanted to live in the United States, and David wanted to find employment that would better support his family. French military pay at the time lagged not only historic levels, but also the far from lavish pay of American and British officers. (Ambler, pp. 96-101)

In September 1963, Galula was interviewing with Mobil Oil, and General Lansdale wrote the reference letter quoted from above. But this job, like most of the positions which would have made full use of Galula’s talents and expertise, required a security clearance, for which he would have had to give up his French citizenship. This he refused to do. By the time President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, Galula was back in Paris.

In January 1964, he went to work in Paris for Thomson-Houston, a multinational manufacturer of long-range radar equipment, in Paris. The family lived first

at Savigny sur Orge, outside Paris, but in 1965 bought a house near Arpajon.

Galula had enough free time in 1964 to try his hand at a novel, *The Tiger's Whiskers* (1965) which, like his other books, he wrote in English. It was translated into French, Spanish, Italian, and German and apparently was expected to sell widely. As far as I can tell, it did not. Galula published under the pen name of Jean Caran. According to Ruth Galula, "Caran" is an allusion to Caran d'Ache, a well-known Swiss brand of drawing crayons; Galula was constantly sketching, even in meetings. He was apparently an excellent artist. (Ruth Galula interview) So "Caran" is a pen name that is literally a pen's name.

The novel is written in an English of such high style that it is hard to believe the author spoke the language with a thick accent. Set in mid-1950s Hong Kong and showing a thorough knowledge of both the diplomatic milieu and the humbler sections of Chinese society there, the novel is also devastatingly anti-Communist. It is, however, little more than a frothy amusement.

It seems that Galula kept his hand in the military intellectual world at this time. In September 1964, Galula participated in an Institute for Strategic Studies conference at Oxford, UK, whose proceedings were published in 1965 as *China and the Peace of Asia* (Alastair Buchan, ed., *China and the Peace of Asia*, London, UK: Chatto & Windus for the Institute for Strategic Studies, 1965, 253 pp. Bibliog, Studies in International Security, p. 9.)

Galula's 10-page contribution is not a major work, and seems to have had little impact at the time. Of five reviews found online, three did not mention Galula's essay, one of 13 contributions. One reviewer, Theodore Roff, noted "French Major David Galula's less-than-

routine "Subversion and Insurgency in Asia" (*The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4, August 1966, p. 800) and the other, written by British China specialist John Gittings (who is still publishing reviews), singled out Galula's essay harshly: "A more ruthless editor would have . . . pruned Major Galula's trite remarks on "Subversion and Insurgency in Asia." (*The China Quarterly*, No. 26, April-June 1966, pp. 184-187.)

The essay is by no means trite; it is, rather, fearlessly unconventional. Galula dares ask why, given Chinese goals of spreading Communism and weak new states in Asia, there have been no new revolutionary wars in Asia: "Where, then, is the great prairie fire that was supposed to inflame all Asia?" (*The China Quarterly*, p. 175)

His explanation is that the Chinese "have failed to realize how lucky they were in the course of their revolutionary war" (*The China Quarterly*, p. 180). Their "orthodox pattern for revolution" (*The China Quarterly*, p. 180) isn't so easily replicable; "Can anyone possibly imagine that other insurgents would benefit from the same amount of luck?" Galula predicts that the Chinese will eventually have to abandon their habitual methods and "initiate a campaign of blind terrorism." (*The China Quarterly*, p. 181) This will lead to selective terrorism, and then to orthodox guerilla warfare.

Galula's predictions would come true, but not within his lifetime. But his analysis of the war in Vietnam suggests that a Galula book on that conflict would have had much to offer:

The enormous advantage of this process lies in the fact that a basic cause is not absolutely necessary to the insurgent in order to initiate a revolutionary war. After a brief but sustained period of violence, the war itself becomes the main issue. . . . Is this not precisely what

the Vietcong did in South Vietnam, for what cause did they claim? They could not pretend they were fighting against colonialism, since it was gone, nor for land reform, since land is plentiful in South Vietnam. They simply created chaos and capitalised on it. . . . This short-cut pattern is, in other words, purely conventional aggression in unconventional trappings.

This essay has, to my knowledge, not been discussed since the Galula revival in this century. It is possible that other essays exist; it is hard to believe Galula did not find the need to comment on the Vietnamese war between 1964 and his death.

In 1966, Galula accepted a London job as a civilian liaison officer for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Air Defense Ground Environment Consortium to study long range radar equipment; he had obtained the job through a former classmate at the Lycée Lyautey in Casablanca. The position required a security clearance, Ruth Galula recalls. Ruth traveled to London in February and March 1967 to find a house and enroll Daniel at the Lycée Français.

Around this time, Galula was having digestive problems, and eventually his American boss persuaded him to get a check-up at the American Hospital in Paris. The Galulas flew to Paris on April 1, 1967, and David was feeling so ill that he went directly from the airport to the hospital. After a week, the doctors told his wife there was nothing they could do for him; he had small cell or oat cell carcinoma of the lungs. In his last weeks, he reread de Gaulle's memoirs. On May 11, 1967, he was dead. He is buried in the cemetery of La Norville.



## CONCLUSION

It is heartening that Galula's work was rediscovered, because he was a theoretical genius and such a good writer that *Pacification* can be enjoyed even as a military yarn. But behind this story, another, more depressing one emerges. From the mid-1950s to the end of the Vietnam War, theories similar to Galula's were practiced and in some cases were successful. Other brilliant men were first celebrated and then forgotten. But most of them are still obscure.

Compared with many of his contemporaries, Galula has had a great deal of posthumous luck. But this, ironically, is all too appropriate in the field of counterinsurgency. For as the United States learns the lessons of its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the role played by personality looms increasingly large. Success depends heavily on the personality of leaders—both of the government that the counterinsurgents are trying to support, and of the counterinsurgents themselves.

While some of Galula's success is doubtless due to his good ideas, some is probably due to his personality. As he notes, the two commanders who followed him, as well as his immediate predecessor, were shot dead by rebels. (*Pacification*, pp. 163, 208) Galula is universally recalled as charming, pleasant to be around, brilliant, and energetic. These traits help a good deal with military leadership, both directly and indirectly. He was also physically daring and intellectually curious.

Sometimes tiny measures can make the difference between success and failure, and they may have more to do with a commander's tastes and talents than doctrine. For example, Ruth Galula recalls that her husband would go horseback riding through his

area of operations every morning. Though he does not discuss this in *Pacification*, Galula notes that riding through the mountainous Aissa Mimoun allowed one to reach areas inaccessible to the automobile.

Indeed, Galula says, back in the day when district administrators rode horses, showing the face of the government and learning firsthand about the condition of the population, they were much more effective than after the advent of the automobile (*Pacification*, p. 37) This brings to mind the contemporary insight that counterinsurgents get much better results getting out of their Humvees and interacting on foot with the local population.

Andrew Birtle has argued that part of the reason for the eclipse of COIN theory in the post-Vietnam years was that “the emerging doctrine was both overblown and oversold.” (Birtle, 2007, p. 488) The idealistic view that societies could be reformed in a Western model and salvaged from Communist subversion led to disappointment.

This disillusionment not only produced a backlash that helped undermine the war effort in Vietnam, but hastened the speed with which government institutions turned their backs on COIN in the early 1970s. (Birtle, 2007, p. 488)

Galula had the odd historical luck not to have been a part of the COIN fever of his day, but of ours. And his faintly cynical, always realistic works, especially *Pacification in Algeria*, may, ironically, be more congenial to the jaundiced perspective of post-Iraq America than they were to the enthusiasts of Camelot.

## **GALULA CHRONOLOGY AFTER AUGUST 1958**

August 1958—Galula finishes second assignment in Algeria, joins “Psychological Action Branch” of Ministry of Defense

December 19, 1958—Salan is replaced as head of civil and military powers in Algeria

January 4, 1959—Salan becomes military governor of Paris

January 8, 1959—Gaullist Michel Debre becomes Prime Minister

May 1959—Galula says in Pacification that he makes last visit to Aissa Mimoun

January 24, 1960—putsch attempt in Algiers; Galula at War College in Norfolk

June 1960—Salans moves to Algiers

January 1961—Galula in Paris, Deuxieme Bureau, under Colonel Brillault; Algeria conducts referendum on independence

April 25, 1961—putsch attempt; Challe arrested; Salan and Jouhard go underground

July 11, 1961—Salan, Jouhaud, Gardy, Argoud, Godard, Broizat, Gardes and Lacheroy condemned to death

September 6, 1961—Salan in Algiers

January 8, 1962 – internal purges in OAS

March 1962 – Galula at CIFA

March 18, 1962 – Evian accords signed

April 14, 1962 – Pompidou replaces Debre as Prime Minister

April 20, 1962 – Salan is arrested; Galula participates in RAND symposium on COIN

June 1962 – ceasefire between OAS and FLN

1962 – Galula resigns from French military service

September 1963 – Galula asks Lansdale for job reference for Mobil

November 1963 – Galula back in Paris

January 1964 – Galula joins Thomson-Houston

1965 – publication of *The Tiger's Whiskers*

Fall 1966 – Galula goes to London to begin work on radar project

May 11, 1967 – Galula dies

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