

Vietnam: The First Internal Settlement

by
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INTRODUCTION

In two previous articles in this journal this author has explored the theory of the “internal settlement” as a failed political counterinsurgency strategy used by white settlers in Southern Africa and by the Salvadoran military in Central America.¹ This present article deals with the “Bao Dai solution” under which the French continued to fight a colonial war in Vietnam from March 1949 to July 1954. As in El Salvador, the internal settlement was successful in attracting American support – in even greater quantities than was granted to El Salvador. But because the French army in Vietnam was a white-led one, similar to the Rhodesian security forces and the South African Defense Force (SADF), and the French were outsiders comparable to the white settlers in Rhodesia and the South Africans in Namibia, this article will mainly compare the Bao Dai internal settlement with the Rhodesian and Namibian internal settlements.²

INTERNAL SETTLEMENTS

For the purpose of this article the following definition of internal settlement will apply:

A regime which comes to power through an accord between an incumbent minority regime and leaders from the majority for the purpose of granting the existing regime greater legitimacy, both internally and externally, but involving terms falling short of those demanded by the “external” leaders affiliated with the insurgency.

For the case of Vietnam the term “colonial” is appropriate; for Southern Africa and El Salvador we can replace it with “minority” for this definition. The internal leaders are those who are opposed to the use of armed struggle as a method of liberation or have fallen out with those associated with the armed struggle. The “external” leaders are those associated with the armed struggle – the political wing of the insurgency.

There is, however, one major problem in applying the theory of internal settlements to the Bao Dai regime.³ Whereas, in Southern Africa and in El Salvador the nationalist leaders associated with the guerrillas were either in prison or in exile abroad, the leaders of the Vietminh operated from inside the country. Thus, they cannot be considered to be “external nationalists.” But if it is remembered that the Rhodesian coining of the term⁴ was a propaganda ploy meant to deligitimize the nationalist credentials of the Patriotic Front leaders, we can appreciate that geographic reality in this distinction is of little importance. Both the French, and later the Americans, treated the Vietminh leadership as Communists subservient to

international communism rather than as nationalists. For the Rhodesians and South Africans, “external nationalist leader” was simply another euphemism for “Marxist terrorist.” If we can use it in this sense it does apply to the Vietminh leadership.

Internal settlements may have up to three basic goals. These goals are first, to avoid or end economic sanctions or to win foreign economic and military aid. In Southern Africa the lifting or avoidance of economic sanctions was the prime motivator behind the internal settlement. For the purposes of settlements outside of Southern Africa this negative incentive can be transferred into a positive one: the attraction of foreign economic and military aid. Second is to win popular support for the regime by coopting popular figures. Third is to cause defections from the ranks of the guerrillas. In Southern Africa all the internal settlements so far implemented have failed in all of these three goals.⁵ In El Salvador and Vietnam the internal settlements achieved their first, and primary, goal by failed at the other two.

VIETNAM BACKGROUND

Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) was conquered by the French over a period of thirty-five years between 1858 and 1893.⁶ Vietnam was subsequently divided into three parts: Cochin China, in the south; Annam, in the center; and Tongkin, in the north. In 1941 the Vichy regime in Indochina signed a series of cooperation treaties with Japan and were left in place by the latter to administer the country. In March 1945 the Japanese suddenly turned on the French and conquered the country. The Japanese appointed the hereditary emperor, Bao Dai, as ruler, until they surrendered to American and British representatives in August 1945.

In September 1945 a state of *de facto* war broke out between the returning French authorities and the Vietminh nationalists led by Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap. The Vietminh were nationalists with a Communist leadership. The French quickly reconquered the south (later South Vietnam) but did not make a real effort to reconquer the north (later North Vietnam) until November 1946 when they shelled Haiphong causing between 6,000 and 20,000 casualties.⁷ In December 1946 the Viet Minh declared formal war against France and the war began officially.

ORIGINS OF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT

In Vietnam a “Bao Dai solution” took some time to materialize. During 1945 and early 1946 Bao Dai was nominally the “senior advisor” to Ho Chi Minh but was in reality a man without influence in Hanoi. In March 1946, Ho sent Bao Dai on a mission to China, and the latter then visited Hong Kong and took up residence there. In late 1947, he went to Europe, first Geneva and then France, where he remained during 1948 and the spring of 1949, except to return to Vietnam in June 1948 to witness the granting of “independence” to the Nguyen Van Xuan government.⁸ He thus remained in exile for three years until he finally returned to take nominal power as chief of state of the Associated State of Vietnam. Former American ambassador to France, William C. Bullitt met with Bao Dai in Hong Kong in October 1947 and

then in Geneva two months later and came away impressed. Bullitt later wrote in an article for *Life* magazine that a solution to the way lay in granting power to a man like Bao Dai, who was not mentioned by name.⁹ But Indochina scholar Bernard Fall credits French General Le Bris, who commanded Central Vietnam in 1945-46, with coming up with the Bao Dai solution in December 1946.¹⁰

Bao Dai had almost no support in either the north (Tongkin) or the south (Cochin China) and only limited support in central Vietnam (Annam) where the traditional capital of the Vietnamese monarchy was located in Hue. One British journalist wrote that Bao Dai was “scarcely known outside of ... Annam.”¹¹ But he was a figure around which anti-Vietminh politicians and groups could rally. For this reason French politicians came up with the “Bao Dai solution” of forming a puppet government around Bao Dai in order to both consolidate support within France for the war and to gain American support for the French effort. It is also likely that these Frenchmen believed that Bao Dai could create popular support for French rule, or at least that he had more hope of doing so than did a French governor.

For two years, starting in late 1947 after the negotiations between the French and the Vietminh had broken down irreparably and a Vietminh court had reportedly sentenced Bao Dai to death,¹² the French negotiated off and on with Bao Dai and wore him down until he finally accepted nominal independence emptied of all content. Joseph Buttinger in discussing the Bao Dai solution describes the classic dilemma of the internal settlement.

But the fundamental problem of the French could not be solved by political intrigue. The success of the Bao Dai scheme depended on the fulfillment of conditions which would make the plan useless for the French, for only a truly nationalist government could gain popular support. No regime that failed to fight for independence could ever become a viable anti-Communist force.¹³

The French, led by High Commissioner Emile Bollaert, began in 1947 to maneuver Bao Dai into a settlement by pretending to pursue one with Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh. Bollaert even sent Philip Caput, a French Socialist opposed to the “Bao Dai solution,” to Hong Kong and leaked word that he was to open contact with the Vietminh. On 5 June 1948 General Nguyen Van Xuan, the first Vietnamese appointed to that rank in the French army, formed a government and the French publicly granted “independence” to Vietnam in the presence of Bao Dai. A month later Bao Dai disassociated himself from this government in a letter to Bollaert.

In January 1949, the Chinese communists took Peking and their eventual control of all of mainland China became only a matter of time. This promised to bring the Americans into the role of containing communism in Indochina as they were then opposing it in Europe. Bao Dai convinced himself that with the support of the Americans he could maneuver the French out of Vietnam if he first got into power on French terms.¹⁴ Bao Dai also had a reputation as a playboy with a taste for high living. He could not afford to live in style in exile forever. So in January he began negotiations in Paris with France. In March 1949, France for the second

time in two years granted independence to Vietnam under Bao Dai.

Bao Dai took up power as chief of state on 1 January 1950. But he spent most of the next four years big game hunting in Dalat, in the central highlands, or in France on government business. Although he liked Hanoi, he was said to hate Saigon, especially after the capital was deserted for his inauguration ceremony. He never returned for more than a few days during his entire time in power.¹⁵ The United States recognized the new government in February 1950, along with the associated states of Laos and Cambodia and sent a legation to Saigon. Britain also recognized the new government but was more critical of the French for not granting it sufficient independence.¹⁶ Britain balanced its recognition of the Bao Dai regime with a recognition of the communist government in China.¹⁷

One French journalist described Bao Dai's strategy in dealing with the French as one of calculated obstructionism which stopped short of outright defiance.

He saw more clearly than anyone that the real forces opposing one another in Vietnam were international Communism and the U.S.A. France was too weak, too far away, too lacking in purpose and political stability to play a decisive part in Asia. The right course therefore was not to be too friendly with her, nor yet to oppose her systematically, since after all she was there, holding the field, and without the Expeditionary Force there would be a Vietminh avalanche. As Bao Dai saw it, the result of this was an unstable situation that would last until the great underlying realities of the world had decided Indochina's fate. He had to hold out until then by the use of intelligence. He had to obstruct everything. He had to obstruct France, which wanted to draw him along too far; but he also had to obstruct the U.S.A., which wanted to make use of him before the time was ripe. 'I will neither be the puppet of the French,' he said, 'nor a lemon for the Americans to squeeze.'¹⁸

In Rhodesia the internal settlement agreement came about after the collapse of the Geneva conference in December 1976. The conference split the nationalists into two groups: those with armies and those without. The Organization of African United (OAU) supported the former by recognizing the Patriotic Front as the sole legitimate representative of the Zimbabwean people in July 1977. This had left both Abel Muzorewa and Ndabaningi Sithole politically isolated. The whites, pressured by an escalation of the war along with continued sanctions and increased white emigration, decided to coopt Sithole and Muzorewa. They gambled that they could still retain real power in their own hands and yet win foreign recognition and a lifting of sanctions following elections for a "majority rule" government.

They spent the next year trying to get Muzorewa to negotiate with them. But Muzorewa, who was out of the country for much of 1977, evaded their overtures until November 1977. Negotiations began in mid-December 1977 and lasted for three months until mid-February 1978, when an agreement was concluded.¹⁹

During the negotiations Ian Smith threatened to negotiate with Joshua Nkomo, the weaker and more moderate of the two Patriotic Front leaders, and he had actually made contact with him in November. Muzorewa also feared a settlement between Smith and Sithole which by-passed him.

THE INTERNAL PARTIES

Bao Dai's support rested upon the French and a collection of anti-Vietminh parties and individuals. These included the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai, religious sects which were a unique blend of eastern and western religions; the remnants of a 1920s nationalist party known by its acronym, the VNQDD; the Dai Viet, a right-wing nationalist party that had once allegedly plotted terror attacks against French civilians;²⁰ and some Buddhist and Catholic groups. However, some of these groups merely maneuvered within Bao Dai's regime in order to gain power and were not really loyal to him personally. In May and June 1949, the French Chief of Staff, General Georges Revers, went on a study tour to Vietnam and assessed Bao Dai's support. The secret report, which was leaked to the press, was highly critical of the limits placed on Bao Dai's regime and on the composition of Bao Dai's support. Revers described Bao Dai as having "a government composed of twenty representatives of phantom parties, the best organized of which would have difficulty in rallying twenty-five adherents."²¹

The two independent nationalists with the most credibility, Ngo Dinh Diem and Nguyen Manh Ha, refused to join any pro-French government unless complete independence was granted. The former would become the first president of South Vietnam from October 1955 until November 1963 and was briefly a minister of the interior under the French in the early 1930s. The latter was Ho Chi Minh's economic minister in 1945-46 until Ho fled Hanoi. Bao Dai twice offered the premiership to Diem, in 1945 under the Japanese and in 1949 under the French, and was both times turned down.

The Dai Viet, which had entered the Bao Dai government in June 1949, soon realized that it could not benefit from being inside the government and left. It began to virulently attack the government from the outside as well as Bao Dai and the French in order to refurbish its nationalist image. Several prominent administrators, including the governor Tonkin and the mayors of Hanoi and Haiphong, were Dai Viet members. Security Minister Tam in the Tran Van Huu government, acting upon orders from High Commissioner General de Lattre, ousted the Dai Viet members from their administrative offices and conducted a purge to silence the Dai Viet.²²

The Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects both had private armies and alternately made alliances or truces with both the Vietminh and the Bao Dai regime at various times during the war. The Cao Dai had a private army of some 3,800 regular troops and 10,000 local auxiliaries who guarded its territory. They also bribed the Vietminh to not attack their territory. By 1953, schisms had broken the Caodaists into twelve separate sects, of whom all but one were aligned with the Vietminh.²³

The Hoa Hao was another sect, founded in 1939, which formed its own private army in 1944, from anti-French converts to the new religion. In 1945, it was protected by the Japanese and it grew quite powerful southwest of Saigon in the Mekong Delta area. In September 1945, the Vietminh murdered hundreds of Hoa Hao in the village of Can Tho after negotiations on a common anti-French front had failed. One of the sect's leaders, Tran Van Soai, retaliated by butchering suspected Vietminh in the surrounding area. When the French intervened he began organizing operations against the French Expeditionary Corps in June 1946. In April 1947, the Vietminh executed the founding prophet of the Hoa Hao whom they had earlier arrested. Tran Van Soai immediately took his private army and aligned himself with the French who made him a general in charge of protecting the area where the sect predominated.²⁴ The Hoa Hao also occasionally fought against the Cao Dai.²⁵

A third private army, the Binh Xuyen, was led by a bandit warlord named Le Van Vien, popularly known as Bay Vien. Bay Vien was a former convict, who had escaped from a French prison, and pirate who organized the Binh Xuyen – a group of petty thieves – as a group of Chinese pirates that operated on the Saigon River robbing passengers and collecting protection tolls. Bay Vien collaborated with the Japanese during World War II and then led his followers in attacks on the French in Saigon in September 1945.²⁶ For the next two years he was aligned with the Vietminh until 1947, when he joined the National United Front, a third force forming in opposition to both the Vietminh and the French. Authors disagree as to whether it was this offense or the withholding of taxes collected in the name of the Vietminh that led to an attempt to eliminate him.²⁷ In May 1948, he was invited to a meeting of guerrilla commanders in a Vietminh stronghold west of Saigon. Nguyen Binh, the commander of the southern resistance, attempted to murder Bay Vien and his lieutenants at the meeting, but Bay Vien managed to escape. In the ensuing battle Bay Vien lost more than a thousand of his men, but avenged himself by wiping out the Vietminh's agents and murder squads in Saigon. He then allied himself with the French and was installed as the first colonel in the Vietnamese army once Bao Dai became head of state.²⁸

In 1950, through a campaign of kidnapping and bombings, Bay Vien wrested control of the Grande Monde casino district of Cholon, a Saigon suburb, from the ethnic Chinese who controlled it. Bao Dai supported Bay Vien against his own prime minister, Huu, in exchange for a bigger cut from the proceeds of the Grande Monde. One journalist, possibly exaggerating slightly, claims that, "The whole of Vietnamese policy in 1950 was concerned with the bitter struggle between the head of the state and the head of the government over the Grande Monde."²⁹

Bao Dai soon appointed him a general, and in uniform he inspected the casinos of the Grande Monde.³⁰ By 1954 he controlled not only brothels, casinos, the criminal underworld of the Grande Monde, and an opium factory, but also the police forces of Cholon and Saigon.³¹ Between 1950 and 1955, General Le Van Vien was a major power in southern Vietnam until Diem finally made war on him and the sects in his first major act after deposing Bao Dai as head of state in a rigged referendum.³²

Bao Dai was nominally head of state but in reality his office was only a sinecure that allowed him to split the profits with Bay Vien who shared control of Vietnam with the French, the Vietminh, and the sects. Because of the calibre of the leaders involved, the Vietnamese internal settlement can best be compared to the Namibian internal settlement which was the least generous to the black majority of the two internal settlements in Southern Africa.

The Rhodesian internal settlement, in contrast to the Namibian and Vietnamese settlements, was between the Rhodesian Front government on the one hand, and three black parties – two of them nationalist – on the other. These three parties included: ZUPO;³³ the Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole's rump of ZANU;³⁴ and Bishop Abel Muzorewa's UANC.³⁵ The first party was actually created by the Rhodesian government and its leader was basically acting as an agent of the Rhodesian Front during the negotiations. This left Sithole's ZANU, which had little popular support or members, and the UANC, which in 1977 was the most popular party in the country.³⁶ Muzorewa and Sithole had actually been "external leaders" during the mid-1970s from late 1974 until mid-1977.³⁷

TERMS OF THE AGREEMENTS

In Vietnam the French had a very simple device for retaining control: the independence agreement left them in charge of defense and foreign affairs and domestic affairs were to be covered by a series of protocols negotiated in the future. This blank check allowed the French to negotiate the agreements on their terms. A dozen protocols were signed on 30 December 1949, and in November 1950 an agreement was finally reached on the currency. Two regions of Vietnam were also left under the direct control of the French: the areas inhabited by the Thai ethnic minority in the north and by the Montagnards (Meo) in the south.³⁸ In many ways this "independence" was similar to that granted by Britain to Egypt in 1927, which left Britain in charge of the canal zone until 1954 when guerrillas finally forced them out.

Their main concession to the Vietnamese was to prop up the currency, the Vietnamese piaster, at an artificially high exchange rate with the French franc, 17 to 1 instead of the market rate of 7-10 to 1. A new class of Vietnamese millionaires was created by those who obtained permission to trade in currency. Finally, in 1953, the French unilaterally devalued the piaster in violation of the protocol.³⁹

What this amounted to was the Bao Dai regime slowly wringing a series of concessions from the French as the military situation deteriorated. This is similar to what the Irish Free State did from 1921 to 1938, but without the burden of 300,000 foreign soldiers present.⁴⁰ The gradual nature of the concessions deprived them of any psychological value for winning popular support. Francois Mitterand, then a young deputy in the French parliament, asked rhetorically: "We have granted Viet-Nam 'full independence' eighteen times since 1949. Isn't it about time we did it just once, but for good?"⁴¹

In the African internal settlements the black majority was granted control of the legislature while the whites retained control of the executive branch through a number of devices. In Rhodesia the internal settlement agreement called for "no political interference" in the civil service, judiciary, military and police.⁴² Each of these agencies was controlled under the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia constitution of 1979 by a three-four man committee dominated numerically by members of the old regime and headed by a chairman with a specified rank or position, which would have been impossible for a black to have obtained. Thus, judges continued to be Rhodesian Front party hacks and there were only a handful of black officers in the Rhodesian security forces in 1979.⁴³

In Namibia the device was to let real power devolve to the second tier ethnic authorities. This left the whites in control of most of the country, including the best farming lands and the main cities. The blacks were confined to ethnic homelands located on the periphery of the territory. Restaurants and bars in Windhoek remained segregated throughout the 1980s even though they had become integrated in Rhodesia under the internal settlement. Statues and place names associated with South African apartheid figures remained in official use.⁴⁴

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

The Indochina War began with the French shelling the Vietnamese quarter of Haiphong from the harbor and then sending in airstrikes, which resulted in some six thousand dead.⁴⁵ Subsequently, the French were to use airstrikes against villages that were considered hostile. Artillery, napalm and conventional bombs were used as "prophylactics" by the French army to ward off the threat of attack. The French air force commander, General Chassin, thought that the war could be won by air power as he readily conceded that the Vietminh were as good as French troops and that the nationalists had more information.⁴⁶

In Algeria the French gained a reputation for torture.⁴⁷ Even if French troops and legionnaires did not behave in a similar fashion in Vietnam the indifference of the French commanders to civilian casualties was enough to alienate the population without deliberate cruelty. But in any case it was not necessary for the French to be particularly brutal to arouse nationalist sentiment, it was only necessary for them to be there. The Vietnamese, after centuries of foreign occupation by the Chinese and then the French, had become a highly nationalistic people by 1946. The French had brutally conquered Vietnam only sixty years before the war. The French army was composed of Europeans, Arabs, and Africans who did not speak the language, were racially distinct from the Vietnamese, and who were enforcing a foreign occupation. Out of such raw material both repression and popular resistance are created.

In 1950, when American aid to Vietnam began, some half-dozen Vietnamese battalions existed. By the spring of 1953 this number had risen to sixty, totalling about 150,000 men. Among these 150,000 there were only about 2,600 Vietnamese officers, with only a handful above the rank of major, so the French lent the Vietnamese army 7,000 officers to lead its forces.⁴⁸ By the end of 1953, the number

of Vietnamese troops in the French army had risen to 205,000. In 1953, the French, the Bao Dai and various Vietnamese auxiliary forces fighting the Vietminh numbered some 420,000 compared to between 300,000 and 400,000 Vietminh regulars, guerrillas and militia.⁴⁹ This was not the scale of ratio that could defeat a popular insurgency and is comparable to the dilemma that the Rhodesians faced in 1979.

In the north the Saigon government had no power at all and very little in the south outside of Saigon and the other main cities.⁵⁰ Most Vietnamese had contact with the regime through soldiers or policemen who, as in Southern Africa, behaved the same after “independence” or “majority rule” as before. The Bao Dai governments were based on collaborators and high ranking military officers, the same sort that made up the Saigon regime after the fall of Diem in 1963. These were not the type of people to complain about the way the French conducted the war, just as they did not later interfere with the way the Americans ran their war.

During the last two years of the Rhodesian bush war, which overlapped with the internal settlement, the white leaders in effective control of the country were the commanders of the armed forces who would order cross border raids into Mozambique and Zambia without even bothering to consult their civilian counterparts until after the fact.⁵¹ This pattern began under the Rhodesian Front and continued after the UANC was in charge of the government.⁵² The insurgency also escalated a month after the initiation of the internal settlement in March 1978, as the Patriotic Front attempted to demonstrate that there could be no peace without it.

In Rhodesia a number of massacres occurred during 1978 and 1979, which eroded support for the internal settlement both internally and abroad.⁵³ In both Rhodesia and Namibia the killing of guerrillas was a much higher priority for the white militaries than was the avoidance of civilian casualties in crossfire. In Rhodesia a number of protected villages – similar to the strategic hamlets of Vietnam of the 1960s – were “opened up,” that is, closed down, in late 1978 and during 1979.⁵⁴ But by the end of 1978, over ninety percent of Rhodesia was under martial law with the members of the security forces having indemnity to act in “good faith” to maintain law and order.⁵⁵ The Rhodesian army and the British South Africa Police did not change their conduct because of any political arrangements in Salisbury.⁵⁶

Likewise, the behavior of the SADF in the operational area of Namibia remained the same. During the internal settlement the entire area along the Angolan border was under martial law. The notorious *Kovoet* (Afrikaans for crowbar) gained a reputation both for effectiveness and for brutality.⁵⁷ In Namibia the percentage of blacks in the military was much lower than in Rhodesia and the lack of a common language and knowledge of local customs may have caused white troops to behave harshly even if they were predisposed to treat blacks well.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENTS

The first victory for the Bao Dai solution was in the French National Assembly, which on 29 January 1950 voted 396 to 193 to ratify the agreements with Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam by which these countries entered into the French Union. The Socialists enthusiastically supported the government in opposition to the communists.⁵⁸

The next victory was on 7 February 1950, when both Britain and the United States recognized the Bao Dai regime and the governments of Cambodia and Laos. By the end of February, France had already asked the United States for military and economic aid for Indochina. But the French wanted to receive it only on their own terms: directly to the French forces rather than through Bao Dai. The French Commander in Chief in Indochina, General Marcel Carpentier, threatened to resign if America gave the aid to the Vietnamese. In March 1950, two US warships dropped anchor in Da Nang harbor to demonstrate support for Bao Dai and the Vietminh organized riots in the city. Vietnamese police on the scene refused to deal with the rioters and the government had to call on the French for support. The French welcomed this show of Vietnamese impotence; in their negotiations with the Americans on aid the French insisted that they were indispensable in Indochina.⁵⁹

The first American aid to Vietnam arrived in May 1950, and was speeded up after the outbreak of the war in Korea a month later.⁶⁰ American aid to Indochina, most of which went to Vietnam, amounted to \$23.5 million annually from 1950-54, and was given directly to the three governments involved. This was greatly resented by the French who saw this as a loss of face, particularly when the American Embassy publicized the aid in rural areas.⁶¹ The direct American aid to Vietnam and US pressure on the French for more freedom in Vietnam was undermined by US military aid to the French war effort and by the American need for French cooperation on European rearmament. Bao Dai's first prime minister, Nguyen Phan Long, was dismissed under French pressure largely because he was considered to be too pro-American.⁶²

In September 1953, the US made a special \$385 million economic and military aid grant to spur the war effort and \$800 million was marked under the Mutual Security Act for the war in 1954. Regularly scheduled American payments accounted for 40 percent of the war budget in Vietnam for the period 1951-54, but this rose to 60 percent following the special grant of September 1953 and to 78% by mid-1954. Military aid included B-26 bombers, C-119 cargo planes, F-8 Bearcat fighter bombers, tanks, trucks, arms, ammunition and medical supplies.⁶³ The first two figures of aid percentages are comparable to what Pretoria was providing for Salisbury in 1978-79. The roughly \$1.28 billion that the US provided in economic and military aid to the war against the Vietminh compares to roughly \$4 billion in aid to the Salvadoran government between 1981 and 1989, with over a billion of this latter figure as military aid. But of course when expressed in real terms the amount sent to Vietnam was much greater: somewhat more in 1980s dollars than the \$1.5 million per day given to the Salvadoran government by 1984.⁶⁴

In Vietnam the final solution was more of a military victory than a negotiated solution. Bao Dai presided over several governments between 1950 and 1954, each one more subservient to the French. After Diem declined the premiership, Bao Dai in January 1950 turned to Nguyen Phan Long, an influential editor from South Vietnam, who attempted to appease the nationalist resistance. For this, the French forced Bao Dai to drop him in May. Nguyen complained to one Australian journalist that French officials were “fighting hand and foot to delay the transfer of power in the departments of police and justice.”⁶⁵ The next premier was Tran Van Huu, who had succeeded Xuan as governor of South Vietnam. Huu, a wealthy landowner and businessman, was friendlier to the French and less well disposed to the resistance, which did nothing to improve the popular image of the Bao Dai regime. Huu was himself a French citizen.⁶⁶

The Huu government lasted for two years until Huu was replaced by Security Minister Nguyen Van Tam, who was known as being “entirely devoted to the French.”⁶⁷ The change occurred because French commander General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, wanted to eliminate nationalist dissent by suppressing anti-Vietminh nationalist critics of the Bao Dai regime and of the French. He knew that Tam, whom Tran Van Huu had called a “French patriot,”⁶⁸ could be trusted to carry out the job. With Tam’s appointment “every nationalist knew that the Bao Dai solution was dead.”⁶⁹ Tam’s government lasted until December 1953, when he was forced to resign after his mistress involved him in a financial scandal. He was replaced by a Vietnamese diplomat, Prince Buu-Loc, who had worked for German radio in Paris during World War II.⁷⁰

Some journalists were writing off the Bao Dai regime before this even occurred. Denis Warner wrote that, “It was apparent within months that the Bao Dai experiment was a failure.”⁷¹ Bernard Fall concurred with that, at least in psychological terms.⁷² Warner dismissed Bao Dai as an “inactive French puppet.”⁷³ He explained in a piece written at the time of Dien Bien Phu why the experiment had failed.

Bao Dai gathered around his Parisian Vietnamese who were more French than the French. They came primarily from Cochinchina, the southern most state in Vietnam ... If they represented anybody, it was not the men and women most intimately concerned with the Northern war. When the war was a stalemate, the political situation also hung fire. The real political decline began with the military reverses. One speeds the other. Defeat on the battlefield is defeat also in every peasant cottage.⁷⁴

After the Bao Dai regime was appointed the war went progressively worse for the French. By 1950 Giap commanded a regular army of 60,000 men. By the beginning of the battle of Dien Bien Phu in March 1954, the communists had over 300,000 men and women under arms. They confronted a 420,000 man French-Vietnamese army that was spread out over Vietnam defending fixed positions. Although no conscripts were fighting in Vietnam, the French were tired of the war and its cost. They agreed to a Geneva Conference on East Asian security

affairs in April 1954, which would deal with both Korea and Indochina. The day before the conference turned to Indochina, the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu surrendered after a two month siege. The French decided to get out of Vietnam. Their last hope had been that the Americans would intervene directly with direct air support in the battle, but President Eisenhower vetoed this idea.⁷⁵

Most politically conscious blacks in Rhodesia who were not already supporting the Patriotic Front (or part of the internal settlement) gave up on the internal settlement within about six weeks of the signing of the Salisbury Agreement of 3 March 1978. In early April 1978, Byron Hove, a London attorney who was a leading member of Muzorewa's UANC and the co-minister of law and order, publicly criticized the police and called for the Africanization of the force. Hove was promptly fired by the white minister and the Executive Council supported this action. Muzorewa initially threatened to resign but then backed down. Hove returned to London. Urban blacks knew who had the real power in Salisbury.⁷⁶

Following elections in April 1979, open dissension broke out between the two leading nationalist parties of the settlement. Ndabaningi Sithole, declared the elections to have been fraudulent after Muzorewa's UANC won 51 seats to his ZANU's 12.⁷⁷ In June seven members of the UANC defected to form an ethnic Zezuru party, leaving Muzorewa dependent on the white Rhodesian Front for a parliamentary majority. The following month the Rhodesian army crushed the private army of Sithole's ZANU killing 180 "auxiliaries."⁷⁸ Following the internal settlement the various members of the Executive Council travelled to London and Washington in attempts to win recognition for the internal settlement.⁷⁹ They received polite audiences, but no promises and no recognition, if any, would occur until after elections and the installation of a new black government. When Margaret Thatcher was elected prime minister in Britain in May 1979, the Rhodesians thought they would at last be recognized as Thatcher had publicly praised the elections of the previous month. However, Foreign Minister Lord Carrington persuaded Thatcher to hold off until he had had a chance to discuss the matter with the Commonwealth in August.

At the August Commonwealth summit in Lusaka a plan was hatched for an all-parties conference to be held in London in the near future to reach a negotiated settlement between the internal settlement and the insurgent Patriotic Front. This conference, at Lancaster House, lasted from September to mid-December 1979, and resulted in a plan to hold elections under Commonwealth supervision in February 1980, followed by independence in 1980.⁸⁰ Muzorewa gave up "power" to the British who ruled through Lord Soames and the Rhodesian military. The two parties of the Patriotic Front won between them 78 out of the 80 black seats up for election. The white leadership completely failed to predict this result.⁸¹ "Marxist terrorist" Robert Mugabe became prime minister in April 1980, in exchange for granting the whites 20 parliamentary seats, white pensions, and the security of white property for seven years.

Before the internal elections had even taken place in Namibia in December 1978, the Western Contact Group had condemned the internal settlement and said that it would not lead to a solution. The Contact Group refused to implement economic sanctions over Namibia against South Africa. At the same time, Pretoria never transferred ultimate responsibility for the territory to the black government in Windhoek. This allowed Pretoria more flexibility diplomatically as it pursued a doubletrack strategy of negotiating externally while preparing an internal settlement within.

The Turnhalle settlement collapsed in early 1983, as internal differences within the DTA between the Republican Party and the Ovambo ethnic party led to the resignation of Chairman Dirk Mudge. A second set of negotiations began in November 1983, which finally resulted in a government being installed in Windhoek in June 1985.⁸² This government remained in place, if not really in power, until South Africa negotiated a solution to the Namibian standoff in December 1988, following military reversals in southern Angola earlier that year. At the peace negotiations in Brazzaville in 1988, as at the Geneva Conference on Korea and Indochina in 1954, the parties to the internal settlement were totally absent as their colonial partners negotiated the fate of the country without them.

CONCLUSION

All internal settlements fail because they consist of "too little, too late." Before the colonial or minority regime decides to embark on an internal settlement, the insurgency must be successful enough that the elite in power fears losing control if it does not attempt an internal settlement. This by definition means that the insurgency has some popular support. The insurgent leadership need not itself be popular for the insurgency to have popular support.

The best chance of an internal settlement succeeding in defeating the insurgency is when it is led by figures who are more popular than the leaders of the insurgency. This was the case in Rhodesia and in El Salvador, but not in Vietnam, Namibia, or South Africa. Insurgent leaders who leave the armed struggle usually are not popular afterwards. A potentially very attractive partner for an internal settlement is a genuine traditional leader, revered by the peasant population, not the pseudo variety created by the whites in Southern Africa. Such a figure is Prince Nordon Sihanouk who would have been a powerful asset in the hands of the Vietnamese regime in Phnom Penh. He was used by the Americans and Chinese to build support for the anti-Vietnamese coalition led by the notorious Khmer Rouge forces of Pol Pot.

The ruling elite must empower its new partners with real authority over both domestic economic and social matters and over the security forces for the internal settlement to succeed. The Rhodesian and Salvadoran internal settlements lost their base of popular support because the majority leaders had no effective control over the security forces; the latter continued to behave as they had before the internal settlement. The military was an authority answerable to no one in both El Salvador

and Rhodesia during the internal settlements. In Vietnam control over defense affairs was explicitly excluded from the authority of the Bao Dai regime. And in Namibia the SADF was answerable only to the administrator-general and the cabinet in Pretoria.

To succeed in its third goal of winning popular support an internal settlement must also improve the lives of the majority who inhabit the area where the insurgency is taking place. This means carrying out land reform, providing medical support, rooting out corruption, and instituting other economic and social reforms. This can be deduced by comparing the failed internal settlements with successful counterinsurgency efforts in places like Malaya and the Philippines. But it is very difficult to effect reforms successfully during a war. By the time that an internal settlement takes place it is usually too late to implement widespread reforms, especially against the wishes of the old elite.

If the insurgency has failed to spread throughout the countryside, a vigorous government may defeat it by reforming in the areas not yet controlled by the insurgents and slowly expanding its control. The best prospects for this militarily were in Namibia, where the insurgency was confined to northern Namibia along the Angolan border, and in South Africa. The worst prospects were in Rhodesia and Vietnam with El Salvador falling somewhere in between. But usually, the internal settlement only improves the lives of an elite of members of the parties entering into the settlement on behalf of the majority. The Rhodesian internal settlement allowed a black elite to escape apartheid in the cities and a lucky few to buy their own farmland. The Namibian internal settlement enriched a class of corrupt ethnic leaders. The Vietnamese and Salvadoran settlements served only to let a new class in on the spoils of corruption.

What then are internal settlements successful at? They are successful at attracting and maintaining outside support for the ruling elite and its counterinsurgency effort by making them appear respectable. Salisbury entered into the internal settlement under pressure from Pretoria, which was funding about half of its defense expenses. The American embassy in San Salvador put considerable pressure on the Salvadoran military on behalf of Jose Duarte and the Christian Democrats during the early 1980s. And there was internal pressure within France for a political solution to the war that bypassed the communists. This became the "Bao Dai solution." All of these internal settlements permitted the counterinsurgency to continue until it was either no longer viable militarily or economically (Rhodesia, Vietnam) or until an acceptable solution could be worked out with the insurgents (El Salvador, Namibia, Rhodesia).

It is interesting that the two internal settlements supported by the United States included ones involving both nationalist collaborators and traditional collaborators, and the same is true of the two rejected by the United States. So clearly the type of partners involved in the internal settlements was not a critical determinant of whether or not the United States recognized the settlement and aided it. Rather, the important factor was whether or not the internal settlements took place

in countries that had a special status under international law. Rhodesia was an outlaw regime, Namibia was considered to be under illegal South African occupation whereas El Salvador was independent and Vietnam was "independent." And even if Vietnam was not really independent, colonialism was still semi-respectable in the West in the early fifties. It is not coincidence that all of these internal settlements occurred during the Cold War. Colonialism and anti-communism became intertwined in a manner that benefitted the former and damaged the latter; nationalism and communism converged in the same anti-colonial liberation movements.

Endnotes

1. See Thomas G. Mitchell, "The Internal Settlement: A Counterinsurgency Strategy," *Conflict Quarterly*, 12, no. 1 (Winter 1992), pp. 7-24; and "El Salvador: The Failure of a Successful Internal Settlement," *Conflict Quarterly*, 13, no. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 42-63. In the latter case the failure was only partial because, although the internal settlement failed to attract lasting popular support, it did attract outside support from the United States in the form of foreign aid, military advisors and training of Salvadoran troops in the United States.
2. Unless otherwise indicated, the source for the Rhodesian and Namibian portions of this article is Thomas G. Mitchell, "Black Faces, White Heads: Internal Settlements in Southern Africa," (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1990).
3. Interested readers should see the article on El Salvador cited above for the theoretical problems in applying this theory to that country.
4. By Premier Ian Smith in November 1977.
5. These internal settlements are: the Zimbabwe-Rhodesian settlement of 1978-79; the Turnhalle settlement of 1978-82, and the Transitional Government of National Unity of 1985-88 in Namibia; and the Tricameral parliament (1984-present) and the National Council (1986-89) in South Africa. The National Council fell apart before it could be implemented and a regional internal settlement in Natal, the KwaNatal Indaba, was negotiated but never implemented.
6. Unless otherwise noted the source for the Vietnam portions of this article is Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Political History* (New York: Praeger, 1968), chapters 12-14, pp. 244-353. Buttinger's book is an abridgement of an earlier two volume history, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled* (1967) and most of the material used is from chapter 13 of the 1968 volume, pp. 277-314.
7. The lower figure is the one generally accepted.
8. Stephen Pan and Daniel Lyons, *Vietnam Crisis* (New York: East Asian Research Institute, 1966), p. 69.
9. The article was William Bullitt, "The Saddest War," *Life*, 29 December 1947, cited in Pan and Lyons, *Vietnam Crisis*, p. 69. See Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1955), p. 60 for context.
10. Bernard Fall, *The Two Vietnams* (New York: Praeger, 1963), p. 209. He places Bao Dai at the ceremony in June 1948 on p. 213.
11. Bernard Newman, *Background to Vietnam* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1965), p. 97.
12. Fall, *Two Vietnams*, p. 209.
13. Buttinger, *Vietnam*, p. 286.
14. This interpretation is based on Buttinger, *ibid.*, p. 308.
15. Fall, *Two Vietnams*, p. 215.
16. Shaplen, *Lost Revolution*, p. 65.
17. Denis Warner, *The Last Confucian* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 57.

18. Lucien Bodard, *The Quicksand War: Prelude to Vietnam* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), p. 236.
19. On the background to the internal settlement, see A.J. Wills, *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa: Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe*, 4th ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 436-39; and Robert Rinehart, "Historical Setting," in *Zimbabwe: A Country Study* (Washington: Department of the Army, 1983), pp. 59-63. On the negotiations, see Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock, "*Rhodesians Never Die*" (London: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 212-15.
20. See Shaplen, *Lost Revolution*, p. 29. Australian journalist Denis Warner refers to the party as fascist in his *The Last Confucian*.
21. Ellen Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), p. 246.
22. Buttinger, *Vietnam*, pp. 313-14.
23. Newman, *Background to Vietnam*, p. 61; see pp. 56-61 for background on the Cao Dai.
24. Warner, *Last Confucian*, pp. 97-98.
25. Newman, *Background to Vietnam*, p. 62.
26. See Warner, *Last Confucian*, 95; and Newman, *Background to Vietnam*, p. 62.
27. See Warner, *Last Confucian*, p. 95 for the first version, and Bodard, *Quicksand War*, p. 113 for the second.
28. Warner, *Last Confucian*, p. 95.
29. Bodard, *Quicksand War*, p. 111.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
31. Warner, *Last Confucian*, p. 96.
32. See *ibid.*, pp. 99-106 for this story.
33. Zimbabwe United People's Organization created in December 1976 by Senator-Chiefs Jeremiah Chirau and Kaiser Ndiweni at the behest of the Rhodesian Ministry of Internal Affairs.
34. Zimbabwe African National Union founded in 1963 with Sithole as its first president until 1974. Robert Mugabe took over in 1977.
35. United African National Council first called that in late 1976 but formed from antecedents created in December 1971 and December 1974 respectively.
36. Muzorewa had from December 1971 until December 1974 led the internal front for the two banned liberation movements and from December 1974 to October 1976 was the nominal leader of the nationalist movement. He had considerable popular support in the cities and ethnic support among the Manyika tribe of the Shona people. Because of his moderation he was popular with Western politicians in Britain and the United States. As a moderate with widespread popular and international support he was the ideal internal candidate for a settlement. Sithole's support lay mainly in the non-white business community; see Wills, *History of Central Africa*, p. 439.
37. Muzorewa went into exile in December 1974 and returned in October 1976 (although he travelled abroad throughout much of 1977), whereas Sithole left the country in 1975 and returned in July 1977.
38. Buttinger, *Vietnam*, pp. 308-09.
39. *Ibid.* pp. 340-41.
40. When it stopped allowing the British to use the treaty ports in southern Ireland.
41. Quoted by Fall, *Two Vietnams*, p. 221.
42. Godwin and Hancock, "*Rhodesians Never Die*", p. 214.
43. The first black officers in the Rhodesian army were only commissioned in 1977. See Michael Beaubien, "The 'New' Rhodesian Constitution: Illusion of Majority Rule," *Southern Africa*, (March 1979) for details on the commissions, as well as Rinehart, "Historical Setting," p. 64.
44. For details on Namibian life after the Turnhalle settlement, see the chapter on the settlement in Alfred Moleah, *Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation* (Wilmington, DE: Disa Press, 1983).

45. Warner, *Last Confucian*, pp. 53. See also John T. McAlister, *Vietnam: The Origins of Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1969), p. 309.
46. Warner, *Last Confucian*, pp. 63-65, 71. Bernard Fall confirms this opinion in his *Street Without Joy*, (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1961), pp. 104-05.
47. On this see the writings of Frantz Fanon, especially *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: The Free Press, 1966), who as a psychiatrist in Algeria treated both French torturers and their victims.
48. Shaplen, *Lost Revolution*, p. 81.
49. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina*, p. 287.
50. In theory the Bao Dai regime controlled all of Vietnam, but in practice nearly all of its administrators were in the south. But many villages in the north under French control did take part in local elections in 1953. The French controlled the Red River valley and delta up to and including Hanoi and much of the upper Tongking coast.
51. For signs that Combined Operations head General Peter Wall's status had surpassed that of Smith's among ordinary whites, see Godwin and Hancock, "*Rhodesians Never Die*," pp. 262-63.
52. See a statement by Gretchen Eick to the Congressional hearings on Rhodesian Sanctions. *Economic Sanctions Against Rhodesia* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1979), p. 237.
53. See the document submitted by Sister Janice McLaughlin on behalf of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Rhodesia to hearings on Rhodesian sanctions in the House of Representatives, May 1979. *Economic Sanctions Against Rhodesia*, pp. 467-73.
54. On protected villages (PVs) see Godwin and Hancock, "*Rhodesians Never Die*", pp. 103-07, 235.
55. Statement by former Ambassador Robert Good to Congressional hearings on lifting Rhodesian sanctions. *Economic Sanctions Against Rhodesia*, p. 197.
56. This can be readily ascertained by a reading of the bimonthly *Focus*, the newsletter of the International Defence and Aid Fund of London. The newsletter deals with political and human rights issues in Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa. For specific details on major incidents in Rhodesia see the Rhodesian chapter in Mitchell, "Black Faces."
57. *Koevoet* was a special police anti-terrorist (paramilitary) unit in Namibia. On the conduct of the SADF see note 24. This reputation was similar to that of the Selous Scouts in Rhodesia. Both of these units were very successful in killing guerrillas and it is impossible for an outsider to determine if their reputations for brutality were earned or merely a tactic used to discredit the most effective anti-guerrilla units.
58. Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina*, p. 270.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 271.
60. Earlier American aid had been in the form of economic aid under the Marshall Plan, which France diverted to its war effort.
61. Shaplen, *Lost Revolution*, pp. 83-89.
62. Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina*, p. 274.
63. Melvin Gurtov, *The First Vietnam Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 24-25.
64. The total figure is from *Newsweek*, 27 November 1989; the daily figure is from *Time*, 3 April 1989; and the figure for military aid is from James LeMoyné, "El Salvador's Forgotten War," *Foreign Affairs*, 3 (1989), pp. 105-29.
65. Warner, *Last Confucian*, p. 57.
66. Shaplen, *Lost Revolution*, p. 68.
67. Buttinger, *Vietnam*, pp. 311-16.
68. Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina*, p. 282.
69. Buttinger, *Vietnam*, p. 314. On the various Bao Dai governments see *ibid.*, pp. 311-16; and Hammer, *Struggle for Indochina*, pp. 272-282.

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70. Fall, *Street Without Joy*, p. 222.
71. Warner, *Last Confucian*, p. 54.
72. Fall, *The Two Vietnams*, p. 216.
73. Warner, *Last Confucian*, p. 54.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.
75. Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Radford was in favor as was Vice-President Nixon. See Robert F. Randle, *Geneva 1954* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 53-71.
76. See Godwin and Hancock, "*Rhodesians Never Die*," pp. 222-24 for details; also Wills, *History of Central Africa*, p. 443.
77. See Rinehart, "Historical Setting," p. 65.
78. The auxiliaries were private armies loyal to Muzorewa and Sithole created by the Ministry of Internal Affairs out of unemployed youths from the bush. Sithole's auxiliaries also included a few former guerrillas or youths who had gone for military training before Sithole joined the internal settlement.
79. Sithole went to London in April and the entire Executive Council went to Washington separately in October. On the latter trip see Godwin and Hancock, "*Rhodesians Never Die*," pp. 235-36.
80. For background on Lancaster House, see Wills, *History of Central Africa*, pp. 448-49; Rinehart, "Historical Setting," pp. 65-68; and Godwin and Hancock, "*Rhodesians Never Die*," pp. 259-65.
81. See Wills, *History of Central Africa*, pp. 453-54; and Godwin and Hancock "*Rhodesians Never Die*," pp. 272, 277 for the vote.
82. The Transitional Government of National Unity.