

FRENCH RESISTANCE IN WORLD WAR TWO

AGENDA

- Background
- Theory
- Insurgent Strategy
- Operational Template
- Tactics
- System
- Sources and Questions

“Throughout France the Resistance had been of inestimable value in the campaign. Without their great assistance the liberation of France would have consumed a much longer time and meant greater losses to ourselves.”

Gen Dwight D. Eisenhower

BACKGROUND

- 22 June 1940 Marshal Henri-Philippe Petain signs armistice with Germany
- Divides France into 2 parts: German occupied (3/5th) and Vichy governed (2/5th)
- Shortly thereafter several resistance groups begin to fight on both fronts
- By 11 Nov 1942 two parts unite and German forces control all of France



THEORY

- Structuralist (State-Centered) approach
 - No political opportunity
 - No state capacity
 - Total state autonomy (Petain later Hitler)
- Vichy France was entirely under the rule of Petain; eventually entire country under German occupation
- French people lost all rights and were subject to brutal questioning and rule of the German occupying forces

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

- 1.5 million French soldiers became POWs following the armistice in 1940
- French government (people) paid occupation costs of Germans
- Jewish persecution: Mass arrests, concentration camps, confiscation of property and businesses, prohibited from working in most professions
- LOSS OF FREEDOM

RESISTANCE STRATEGY

- Low Profile- members operated in secret to avoid arrest and execution by Gestapo
- Inside-Out and Outside-In- resistance concentrated in population centers (cities) but also in rural areas
- Grass-roots- sabotage, intelligence gathering, targets of opportunities



SIMPLE YET EFFECTIVE

- Between Jan and June 1943 there were 130 acts of sabotage a month
- By September 1943 attacks numbered 530 monthly



The 7 Dynamics of an Insurgency

- LEADERSHIP
- IDEOLOGY
- OBJECTIVE
- ENVIRONMENT/ GEOGRAPHY
- EXTERNAL SUPPORT
- PHASING
- TIMING

Leadership

- General Charles DeGaulle escapes to France, calls on French citizens to resist
- 8 distinct resistance groups form under different leadership
- Jean Moulin, managed to bring the eight leaders together and unite them as the Conseil National de la Resistance under his leadership

Ideology

- Each of the major 8 major resistance groups in France were found on different principles
- Each of the different groups was founded primarily on either political beliefs or geographic affiliations

Objective

- The objective of the French Resistance units was clear: The liberation of France from the Nazi German occupiers
- They also had follow on goals for the post-liberation France such as universal suffrage and equality for all citizens

Environment/Geography

- The geography of France, as well the social environment, promoted strong regional affiliations
- These affiliations were the unifying factor in the formation of resistance groups

External Support

- The French Resistance was armed, supplied and trained by agents from the OSS (US) and SOE (UK) throughout the war
- Many allied and French resistance operations were mutually supported, with the French carrying out delayed/disrupting operations for the Allies

BOSS

- Battlefield operating systems are a listing of critical tactical activities.
- They include but are not limited to intelligence, maneuver, fire support, mobility and survivability, air defense, combat service support, and command and control

Intelligence

- The French resistance had the advantage of being the indigenous personnel in the particular regions
- This gave them the advantage of local humint
- Resistance was supplied with Allied intelligence, as well as ran double agents against the Germans to collect Intel

Maneuver/Mobility and Survivability

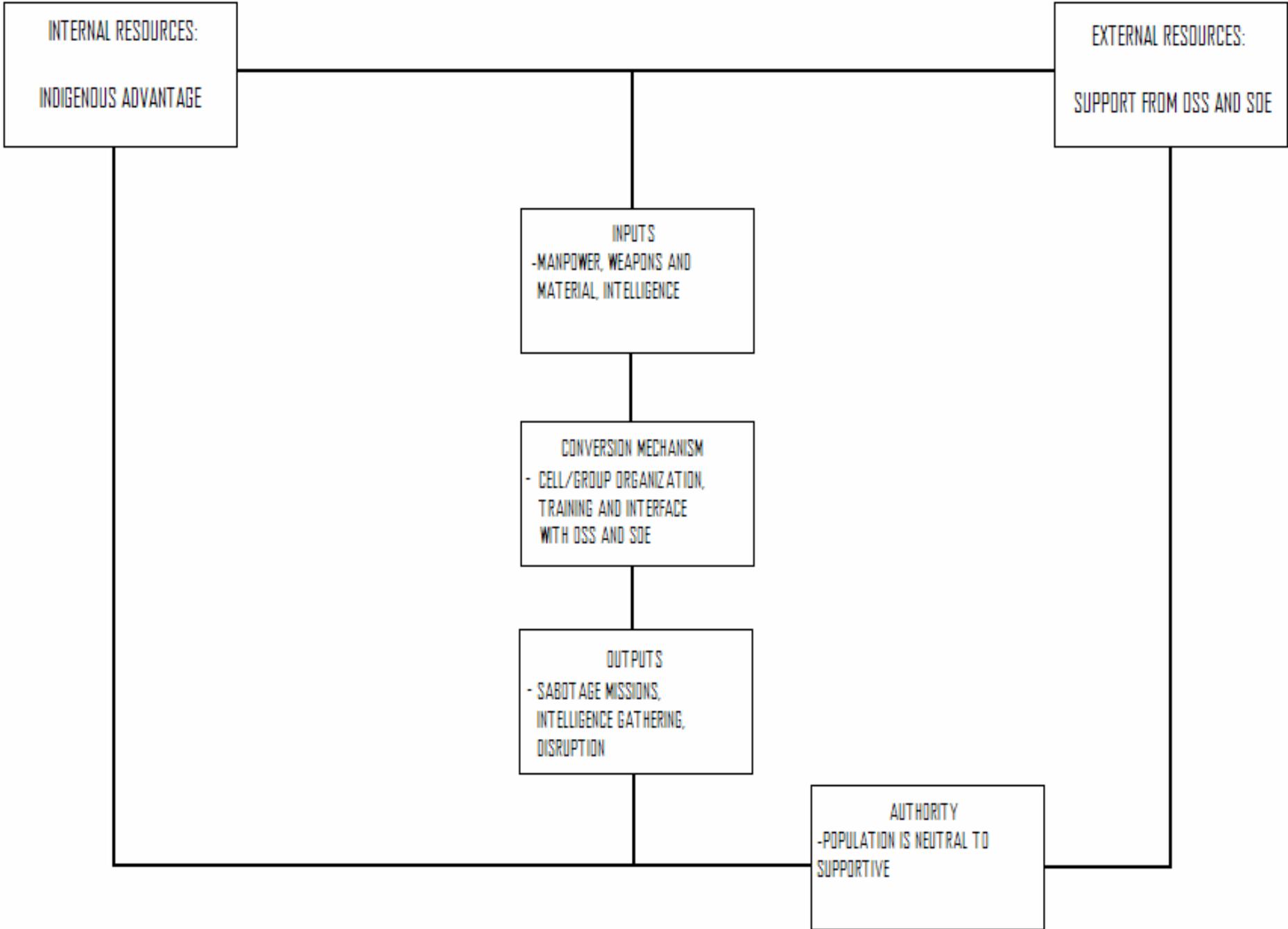
- Since the majority of resistance groups were regionally oriented, they knew the lay of the land and could create a mobility advantage for themselves
- The resistance groups had the advantage of being able to melt away into the countryside or into plain sight

Combat Service Support

- The resistance was supplied with weapons and equipment by the Allies through the use of air drops through the French country side
- Also used the resources they already had available in the regions in which they operated

Command and Control

- The resistance had distinct levels of command
- Local cell leadership which fell under one of 8 regional cell leaders and finally the ultimate control of General Charles DeGaulle and the Supreme Allied Commander
- Use of coded messages over BBC and the guidance of OSS and SOE operatives were used to coordinate and control resistance operations



SOURCES

<https://www.expeditionexchange.com/wedco/march.jpg>

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<http://www.anythinganywhere.com/commerce/military/matchbook.htm>

<http://www.lourdes.edu/History/ONH/Resistance.PDF>

<http://history.acusd.edu/gen/WW2Timeline/oss3.html>

<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/2WWfreefrench.htm>

QUESTIONS?

