

Mobilizing Soldiers Within the Enemy's Ranks: The Development of Revolutionary Soldier Mobilization in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh, 1954–1960

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the development and implementation of soldier mobilization (*binh van*) conducted by revolutionary forces in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh during the period 1954–1960, a critical phase following the Geneva Agreement and preceding the escalation of the Vietnam War. Focusing on this strategically important urban and suburban area, the study analyzes how soldier mobilization functioned as a distinctive form of political struggle aimed at influencing soldiers, officers, and civil servants within the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) military and administrative system.

Drawing upon historical documents, Party resolutions, archival materials, and existing scholarship, the article employs historical and logical methods to reconstruct the process of organizing, expanding, and adapting soldier mobilization activities under changing political and military conditions. The findings demonstrate that, despite severe repression by the United States and the RVN administration, revolutionary forces gradually established internal networks, mobilized sections of enemy personnel, and integrated soldier mobilization with political and armed struggles.

The article argues that soldier mobilization in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh was not merely a supporting activity but constituted a strategic offensive dimension within the broader revolutionary struggle. Its development contributed to the formation of the three-pronged strategy of military struggle, political struggle, and soldier mobilization, thereby enhancing the revolutionary movement's capacity to expand influence and organize resistance. The historical experience of this process provides valuable insights into the role of political mobilization in asymmetric conflicts and contributes to a deeper understanding of revolutionary strategies during the Vietnam War.

KEYWORDS: Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh; soldier mobilization (*binh van*); political struggle; revolutionary networks; Republic of Vietnam (RVN); liberation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Vietnamese people's resistance war against French colonialism ended with a victorious outcome, culminating in the signing of the Geneva Agreement on July 20, 1954. The participating countries at the Geneva Conference recognized Vietnam's independence, unity, and territorial integrity. According to the provisions of the Agreement, the 17th parallel was designated as a temporary military demarcation line for the regrouping and transfer of forces between the two regions of North and South Vietnam. Within a two-year period (from July 1954 to July 1956), consultations and a nationwide general election were scheduled to achieve national reunification. However, the representative of the United States government attending the conference did not sign the Agreement. Since 1950, the United States had intervened in the French war in Indochina, providing assistance to France while simultaneously pursuing the ambition of replacing France and establishing exclusive control over Indochina through a new form of colonial warfare. The strategic objective of the United States was to suppress the revolutionary movement in Southern Vietnam, transform the region into a new American-dependent territory, and establish it as a forward military base in Southeast Asia, serving as a launching point for military actions against Northern Vietnam.

This study focuses on analyzing the soldier mobilization campaign (*binh van*) conducted in the Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh battlefield during the period 1954–1960, a form of struggle that inherited the tradition of “tam cong” (psychological influence and persuasion) in Vietnamese military history. Through reconstructing the distinctive process of struggle undertaken by the people and revolutionary forces in Saigon–Gia Dinh, the article clarifies the popular and comprehensive nature of the resistance movement while providing a deeper interpretation of the strategic role of soldier mobilization as a crucial factor contributing to the overall victory. On this basis, the study draws historical lessons that provide valuable references for contemporary mass mobilization practices.

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Research Gap and Contribution

Over the past several decades, the Vietnamese people's resistance war against the United States for national salvation has attracted extensive scholarly attention from both Vietnamese and international researchers through diverse analytical approaches. Existing studies have examined various aspects of the conflict, including military strategies, guerrilla warfare, political struggles, revolutionary organization, U.S. policies, the administration of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), and social transformations in Southern Vietnam. These studies have significantly contributed to a deeper understanding of the historical process. However, soldier mobilization (*binh van*)—as a distinctive form of political struggle aimed at influencing, persuading, and organizing forces within the ranks of the opposing side—has not yet received scholarly attention commensurate with its strategic importance and historical significance.

In particular, the period from the signing of the Geneva Agreement in 1954 to the broader development of the resistance war against the United States for national salvation (1954–1960) represented a crucial stage in the formation and consolidation of revolutionary strategies in Southern Vietnam. Under conditions of severe repression by the United States and the RVN administration, the establishment of revolutionary networks within the opposing military, police, and administrative apparatus, as well as efforts to transform the political awareness and attitudes of a segment of Saigon's soldiers and officials, became strategically significant tasks. Nevertheless, existing scholarship has primarily focused on armed struggle, mass political movements, or the formation of revolutionary forces, while the organization, implementation, and transformation of soldier mobilization during the early years following the Geneva Agreement remain insufficiently examined, particularly in the strategically important area of Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh.

Approaching soldier mobilization as an integral component of the resistance war against the United States for national salvation, this article examines the formation, organization, and development of soldier mobilization activities in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh during 1954–1960. Through analysis of revolutionary leadership orientations, organizational methods, the establishment of internal networks, and the coordination between soldier mobilization, political struggle, and armed struggle, the article demonstrates that soldier mobilization was not merely a supporting activity for other fronts of resistance, but also constituted a strategic offensive aimed at influencing an important segment of the opposing military and political system.

This study contributes to a broader understanding of the operational mechanisms of the resistance war against the United States under conditions of asymmetric power relations, in which revolutionary forces relied not only on military capabilities but also on political mobilization within the structures of the opposing side. Furthermore, through the case of Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh, the article sheds light on the formation and development of the “three-pronged strategy” (*military struggle, political struggle, and soldier mobilization*), providing additional perspectives on the organization of forces, political mobilization, and the construction of a people's war strategy during the Vietnamese resistance war against the United States.

Research methodology

General research approach: The article is based on the methodological foundations of dialectical materialism, historical materialism, and the perspectives of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Specific research methods: The study combines two primary approaches: the historical method and the logical method.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Characteristics and Contextual Factors Affecting Soldier Mobilization Work in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh

2.1.1. Overview of Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh

The city of Saigon, part of Cholon, and Gia Dinh Province were administratively integrated into the region known as Saigon–Gia Dinh. This area bordered Tay Ninh Province to the north, Thu Dau Mot (Binh Duong) and Bien Hoa provinces to the east, Tan An Province (Long An) to the west, and extended southward to the sea. During the process of invading Vietnam, the United States and the government of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) selected Saigon–Gia Dinh as the capital of the RVN regime, making it the political, military, and economic center, as well as the regional command hub for the United States' war efforts.

The United States and the RVN government made extensive efforts to consolidate and strengthen the protection of this strategic area while developing its economy to serve the war of aggression. Consequently, Saigon–Gia Dinh became a major center for the consumption of American goods and the introduction of American lifestyles and cultural values, reflecting efforts to maintain its strategic position throughout the implementation of successive American war strategies in Vietnam. The region also became the focal point of contradictions between the United States–RVN forces and other political forces on one side, and the revolutionary forces and the people of Saigon–Gia Dinh on the other.

Therefore, the people of Saigon–Gia Dinh directly experienced severe oppression, exploitation, and repression under the harsh and coercive governing policies and methods of the United States and the RVN administration. This area became a highly intense and complex arena of confrontation between revolutionary forces and the United States military, allied forces, and the RVN government across military, political, and soldier mobilization fronts. Within these fields of struggle, soldier mobilization work in Saigon–Gia

Mobilizing Soldiers Within the Enemy's Ranks: The Development of Revolutionary Soldier Mobilization in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh, 1954–1960

Dinh during the period 1961–1975 played an important role, contributing significantly to the victory of the resistance war against the United States, the liberation of Southern Vietnam, and national reunification.

From the perspective of the revolutionary forces, Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh was divided into urban inner-city areas and rural suburban zones. During the period 1961–1975, this region was organized into three strategic resistance zones, each with distinct objectives and operational approaches:

1. Liberated base areas: Armed struggle constituted the primary form of resistance, with the objectives of protecting and expanding revolutionary bases, and defeating enemy operations of sweeping, pacification, and territorial encroachment.
2. Suburban contested areas: These areas combined armed struggle with political struggle, focusing on encirclement operations, the establishment and expansion of combat bases such as urban guerrilla enclaves (*lôm du kích*), and the development of revolutionary control through village and commune-level resistance structures. These activities aimed to eliminate oppressive local forces, dismantle enemy control mechanisms, and implement the strategy of the “three-pronged offensive” (*three-front coordination of military, political, and mass mobilization struggles*) to gain influence and control.
3. Inner-city areas: Political struggle served as the primary method, flexibly combined with armed struggle and soldier mobilization activities. Revolutionary forces focused on developing underground networks within the urban population, strengthening intelligence and communication systems, and overcoming the challenges posed by operating in densely populated urban environments.

At the end of 1959 and the beginning of 1960, Gia Dinh Province was merged by the Nam Bo Regional Party Committee into the Saigon–Cholon Zone, which was subsequently renamed the Saigon–Gia Dinh Zone.

Thus, each resistance zone was assigned appropriate forms of struggle by the Saigon–Gia Dinh Party Committee, enabling the effective mobilization of the combined strength of armed forces and the population. This strategy reflected the flexibility and creativity of the revolutionary movement during the resistance process, while contributing to the maintenance of combat determination and the achievement of revolutionary objectives.

2.1.2. Historical Context and U.S. Policies in Southern Vietnam

From the mid-1950s to the late 1960s, the national liberation movements in many colonial countries achieved significant victories. The three revolutionary currents in the world, with their objectives of peace, national independence, democracy, and social progress, posed increasing challenges to imperialism and reactionary forces, including the United States. The national liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America threatened the influence and political dominance of imperial powers.

In order to establish and maintain its global position, the United States pursued a global strategy aimed at expanding its military presence and political influence worldwide while supporting and protecting its strategic interests and those of its allies in key regions. “After the Second World War, the United States possessed more than 2,200 military bases across continents, seven naval fleets deployed throughout the oceans, and military missions and advisors operating in 45 countries around the world. It also developed various advanced weapons systems, including B-52 and B-47 strategic bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles equipped with nuclear warheads, intermediate-range missiles, and nuclear-powered submarines carrying tactical nuclear weapons” (Vo Van Sen (ed.), 2011, p. 10).

This global context intensified contradictions between national liberation movements and the United States, particularly in the Asia–Pacific region. The U.S. global strategy, especially within the framework of the Cold War and later through its intervention in Vietnam, was primarily aimed at preventing what Washington perceived as the expansion of communism and national liberation movements that threatened American influence and strategic interests. To achieve these objectives, the United States implemented various military and political strategies intended to suppress the Vietnamese revolutionary movement.

To implement this policy, the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) government under President Ngo Dinh Diem was established with U.S. backing on July 7, 1954, two weeks before the signing of the Geneva Agreement. The primary purpose was to construct a model of neo-colonial governance in Southern Vietnam. Between 1956 and 1959, the United States–Diem administration intensified campaigns of arrest and repression against patriots and revolutionary activists through the extremely harsh policies of “denouncing communists” (*to cong*) and “eliminating communists” (*diet cong*). These actions constituted systematic violations of the Geneva Agreement and placed the revolutionary movement in Southern Vietnam in a period of severe difficulty and strategic challenges.

According to the Resolution on Soldier Mobilization Work for 1958–1959, the situation was assessed as follows:

“To implement their political objectives, they intensified repression, terrorism, and exploitation against the people of Southern Vietnam; sought to permanently divide the country; actively prepared for renewed warfare; and transformed Southern Vietnam into a military base and a new colony of the United States” (Resolution on Soldier Mobilization Work, 1958–1959, p. 1).

After Saigon became the capital of the RVN government, the escalation of warfare and the influx of rural populations into the city, together with migration flows from Northern Vietnam to the South, caused the population of Saigon–Gia Dinh to increase rapidly. The majority of newcomers consisted of workers and low-income laborers, who represented a significant proportion of the population in Southern Vietnam (approximately 10% of the region’s population). The urban population comprised long-established

Mobilizing Soldiers Within the Enemy's Ranks: The Development of Revolutionary Soldier Mobilization in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh, 1954–1960

residents of Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh, migrants from other regions, including approximately 240,000 people migrating from Northern Vietnam, and around half a million ethnic Chinese residents.

In Saigon Municipality, unemployment became increasingly widespread as a result of rapid population growth. The city's slum areas accommodated approximately 40% of the urban population. Contrary to the image of a prosperous and modern city center, a large proportion of residents lived in severely overcrowded conditions with inadequate sanitation and limited access to healthcare services, despite significant investment in infrastructure development and transportation systems in central districts.

The rapid transformation of social life in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh and Southern Vietnam reflected the broader characteristics of the United States' neo-colonial strategy. Saigon became a symbolic representation of neo-colonial governance and the comprehensive political, military, and economic power exercised by the United States and the RVN administration in Southern Vietnam.

2.2. The People's National Democratic Revolution in Southern Vietnam and the Emergence of Soldier Mobilization as One of the Three-Pronged Offensive Strategies during the Resistance War against the United States

2.2.1. Strategic Orientation and Preparations for Soldier Mobilization Work

In pursuit of peace and the implementation of a nationwide general election for reunification, the Vietnamese people and armed forces strictly complied with the Geneva Agreement. Revolutionary forces in Southern Vietnam were regrouped and transferred to designated areas, while military units were relocated to Northern Vietnam within the stipulated timeframe. However, the United States refused to implement the Geneva Agreement, established the Ngo Dinh Diem government as a U.S.-supported administration, rejected consultations on general elections, and suppressed resistance activists and patriotic citizens engaged in political struggles demanding civil rights, democracy, and peace.

In October 1954, in response to the new revolutionary situation, the Nam Bo Regional Party Committee was established, headed by Le Duan, a Politburo member, as Secretary. At the same time, a strategic plan for soldier mobilization work was developed, and the Soldier Mobilization Committee of the Nam Bo Regional Party Committee was established (October 1954), with Phan Van Dang (alias Hai Van), a Standing Committee member of the Regional Party Committee, appointed as its head.

“The General Political Department of the Vietnam People's Army also sent many cadres who had previously conducted enemy mobilization work in the French-occupied areas of Northern Vietnam, including many comrades who had served as provincial party committee members, district party committee members, district military commanders, and deputy district military commanders, through various routes to the South. Their mission was to directly mobilize soldiers recruited into the French army from Northern Vietnam and to strengthen the organizational system responsible for directing this work” (General Political Department of the Vietnam People's Army, 2002, p. 62).

In December 1956, the revolutionary line for Southern Vietnam was adopted, affirming that: “To resist the United States–Diem forces, the people of Southern Vietnam had only one path of national salvation and self-liberation: the path of revolution; apart from the revolutionary path, there was no other way” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2002a, p. 785).

From July 1954 to 1956, the political struggle became increasingly intense between, on the one hand, the Vietnamese people demanding the strict implementation of the Geneva Agreement, and, on the other hand, the United States, France, and the Ngo Dinh Diem administration. During this period, soldier mobilization and mass mobilization activities were emphasized by Party organizations across rural, urban, ethnic minority, and religious areas through diverse forms of open, legal, and semi-legal struggle. Revolutionary organizations focused on building core supporters and, through these networks, identifying and mobilizing active masses who could influence broader sections of the population.

Political campaigns were expanded to unite the people, clarify the objectives of political struggle, encourage proactive political resistance against opposing forces, attract and differentiate among segments of RVN soldiers, and limit the enemy's ability to suppress and terrorize the revolutionary movement and the population.

According to the Resolution on Soldier Mobilization Work for 1958–1959:

“Soldier mobilization work is an important strategic task and a revolutionary mobilization effort among soldiers in Southern Vietnam. Based on the worker–peasant–soldier alliance to overthrow the United States–Diem regime, this work must be carried out by the entire population and the entire Party, under the direct leadership of local Party committees” (Resolution on Soldier Mobilization Work, p. 4).

The Resolution of the 15th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party (January 1959) assessed the situation in Southern Vietnam and defined the fundamental tasks of the southern revolution:

“To liberate Southern Vietnam from the domination of imperialism and feudalism, achieve national independence and land for the tillers, complete the people's national democratic revolution in Southern Vietnam, and build a peaceful, unified, independent, democratic, and prosperous Vietnam” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2002b, p. 81).

Mobilizing Soldiers Within the Enemy's Ranks: The Development of Revolutionary Soldier Mobilization in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh, 1954–1960

Based on the strength of the masses, the revolutionary movement combined political and armed struggles to overthrow the U.S.-supported administration and establish a national democratic coalition government in Southern Vietnam. The 15th Plenary Session of the Central Committee stated:

“The United States is the most aggressive imperialist power; therefore, under certain conditions, the uprising of the people of Southern Vietnam could develop into a prolonged armed struggle... and the final victory would certainly belong to us” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2002b, p. 85).

The Resolution emphasized the need to strengthen united front activities in order to expand national solidarity, consolidate and develop the Party organization in Southern Vietnam, and ensure its capacity to lead the revolutionary movement toward victory.

The Fourth Conference of the Nam Bo Regional Party Committee (November 1959) determined:

“The current process of the people's national democratic revolution in Southern Vietnam is a process of building, consolidating, and developing mass movements in political, economic, and cultural struggles, progressing from lower forms of struggle to higher forms, from gradually weakening the enemy to creating fundamental transformations that undermine the enemy administration from its foundations, ultimately leading to mass uprisings to overthrow the United States–Diem regime when favorable domestic and international conditions emerge. This process is a difficult, complex, and arduous struggle between our forces and the enemy to realize the aspirations of peace, reunification, independence, democracy, and improved living conditions for the people” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2002b, p. 986).

Troop proselytizing in service of counter-raid operations. Policy: Win over enemy soldiers, foster a normal atmosphere to prevent tension in relations between soldiers and civilians, and defeat the enemy's plot to pit soldiers against the people.

There are many ways to implement this: Establish family-like relations, becoming adopted brothers, sisters, or mothers to suit the emotional longing of soldiers far from home. Share and evoke mutual hardships to build mutual understanding between soldiers and civilians. Foster production relations between soldiers and civilians, turning enemy posts into production sites, and transforming the enemy posts' barbed wire into trellises for gourds and loofahs. Foster relations through cultural activities, inviting soldiers to play music, play soccer, and socialize with the youth; by interacting in this manner, it is unlikely they would later turn their backs to beat or kill the youth. (*Report on several experiences of the Southern Region regarding the struggle against terrorism, building armed propaganda forces, and Party building*, (1959), p. 26)

Through the practical experience of the revolutionary movement in Southern Vietnam, particularly the lessons drawn from the Dong Khoi movement in Ben Tre Province (1960), the Nam Bo Regional Party Committee and inter-provincial Party committees from Central Vietnam to the Southwest region launched the second wave of Dong Khoi uprisings in September 1960. The method of struggle combined three coordinated fronts: military struggle, political struggle, and soldier–enemy mobilization (*binh van*). From this point onward, these three-pronged strategies became the consistent method of struggle throughout the war.

Whereas enemy mobilization (*dich van*) during the resistance against French colonialism primarily aimed at weakening and fragmenting opposing forces and establishing internal networks (*nhan moi*) to support military operations against the enemy, soldier mobilization during the resistance against the United States became an offensive front closely integrated with political and military offensives. Together, these formed the three-pronged strategy of military struggle, political struggle, and soldier mobilization, with the ultimate objective of gradually building the worker–peasant–soldier alliance and advancing toward the seizure of political power.

2.2.2. The Implementation Process of Soldier Mobilization Work in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh from 1954 to 1960

Soldier mobilization work in the Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh battlefield during the resistance war against the United States in general, and particularly during the period 1954–1960, represented a continuation and creative development of Vietnam's traditional strategy of defeating enemies through *tam cong* (psychological persuasion and influence) in the nation's defensive wars. This activity achieved significant initial results in mobilizing and influencing enemy forces.

From July 1954 to mid-1956, soldier mobilization work in the Saigon–Gia Dinh battlefield developed strongly alongside mass political movements. Revolutionary forces established numerous underground networks within the armed forces and administrative apparatus of the RVN, while simultaneously contributing to the mobilization and neutralization of armed religious sect forces. During 1955–1956, the Soldier Mobilization Committee of the Nam Bo Regional Party Committee operated directly in Saigon–Cholon. This provided favorable conditions for coordination with the Saigon–Cholon Soldier Mobilization Committee in organizing operations targeting security forces, key political and military institutions of the RVN administration, military branches, supply depots, and strategically important enemy bases.

During this period, the primary objective of soldier mobilization work was to establish revolutionary foundations among RVN soldiers, organize revolutionary forces within enemy ranks, and gradually build the worker–peasant–soldier alliance. At the same time, the Central Party permitted the establishment of Party cells and youth organization branches according to the principle of isolated and clandestine operation. Soldier mobilization employed diverse forms and forces, particularly relying on the role of the local population. Propaganda and persuasion activities were conducted skillfully under legal and semi-legal conditions while maintaining an orientation toward political offensive.

Mobilizing Soldiers Within the Enemy's Ranks: The Development of Revolutionary Soldier Mobilization in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh, 1954–1960

Saigon–Cholon served as a major destination for cadres transferred from various regions. Cadres operating legally had opportunities to contact RVN soldiers, discuss political and social developments, and conduct persuasion and mobilization activities. Through family relations, relatives, friendships, former teachers, and written correspondence sent to soldiers' and officials' families, revolutionary activists explained policies, discouraged harmful actions, and encouraged appropriate attitudes toward the civilian population. Party members transferred from other areas also utilized social relationships to obtain legal documents, identity papers, and information about enemy search operations, thereby helping cadres and Party leaders avoid detection.

In the inner-city areas of Saigon–Cholon, the establishment of revolutionary networks within the RVN military and administrative system was not only carried out by specialized soldier mobilization organizations but also involved various Party departments, mass organizations, and social groups. Despite severe repression by the United States and the RVN administration, popular resistance movements continued to develop actively, particularly with the important participation of women's organizations.

The Internal Operations Teams (*Doi cong tac noi tuyen*) of the Nam Bo Regional Party Committee's Soldier Mobilization Committee and the Saigon–Cholon Soldier Mobilization Committee simultaneously developed networks within major RVN military branches, military agencies, and local security forces. In addition, under the direction of the Nam Bo Regional Party Committee, inter-provincial and provincial Party committees in Eastern, Central, and Southwestern Southern Vietnam sought opportunities to establish networks among enemy personnel originating from their localities who were stationed in Saigon–Cholon, and then transferred these contacts to revolutionary organizations in the area.

By the end of 1956, Saigon–Cholon had established more than 400 internal contacts, including soldiers, officers, police personnel, security forces, and officials of the RVN administration. During the two years 1955–1956, internal revolutionary networks developed rapidly and extensively.

However, from 1957 to mid-1959, the United States and the RVN administration intensified violent repression against the revolutionary movement, expanded campaigns of “denouncing communists” and “eliminating communists,” established “agricultural settlement zones” and “prosperity zones,” and dismantled former revolutionary base areas. In Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh, many cadres and Party members were arrested, while numerous mass organizations and Party cells were destroyed by the enemy. Internal networks within the RVN military and administration were exposed and collapsed on a large scale.

Only several internal networks within the Office of the Special Commissioner for Civil Affairs and the Military Engineering Department remained operational. The organizational apparatus responsible for soldier mobilization under the Nam Bo Regional Party Committee and Saigon–Cholon suffered serious losses. In rural Gia Dinh, U.S.-RVN forces tightened their control mechanisms, establishing the “five-house mutual security system” (*ngu gia lien bao*) in controlled areas to monitor the population and prevent the expansion of revolutionary activities. In response, the Gia Dinh Provincial Party Committee reorganized Party cells, classified exposed and non-exposed cells, and developed protection measures.

Implementing the Political Bureau's Resolution (June 1956) and the Nam Bo Regional Party Committee's Resolution (December 1956), by the end of 1957 Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh established armed units, teams, and groups. The Saigon–Cholon Soldier Mobilization Committee formed armed propaganda units, with weapons supplied through internal revolutionary networks. By the end of 1957, in coordination with other provinces, particularly those in Eastern Southern Vietnam, activities aimed at attacking U.S. forces and eliminating oppressive local elements rapidly developed into a widespread movement.

On June 5, 1959, Ngo Dinh Diem issued Law 10/59, establishing special mobile military courts with 21 offenses subject to immediate execution, targeting individuals accused of “disturbing public security.” Party organizations and revolutionary networks were severely suppressed. The Nam Bo Regional Party Committee's Soldier Mobilization Committee was forced to withdraw from Saigon–Cholon, leaving only a number of undetected cadres in urban areas to maintain internal networks and mass organizations.

The Fourth Conference of the Nam Bo Regional Party Committee (November 1959) issued a resolution emphasizing the urgent advancement of soldier mobilization work. The fundamental objective was:

“To cause the disintegration of the enemy army's morale and organizational structure, creating favorable conditions for a successful uprising to seize power with minimal bloodshed through the establishment of the worker–peasant–soldier alliance under the leadership of the Party” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2002b, p. 1000).

From late 1959 to 1960, the revolutionary movement among the people and armed forces of Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh expanded, combining armed struggle, political struggle, and soldier mobilization to restore revolutionary networks in many communes. Although soldier mobilization was still in its initial stage, it demonstrated significant innovations in methods and content. Internal networks gradually fulfilled their roles according to practical conditions. The three coordinated fronts of armed struggle, political struggle, and soldier mobilization became interconnected in carrying out partial uprisings.

In 1960, soldier mobilization made new advances, contributing to the creation of favorable conditions and revolutionary strength for the expansion of simultaneous uprisings. Influenced by widespread uprisings in other provinces, Saigon–Gia Dinh consolidated and strengthened its revolutionary forces after the heavy losses of previous years. Mass movements combining political forces, soldier mobilization, and armed self-defense forces developed throughout the districts.

Mobilizing Soldiers Within the Enemy's Ranks: The Development of Revolutionary Soldier Mobilization in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh, 1954–1960

By February 1960, suburban districts of Saigon–Gia Dinh witnessed widespread three-pronged revolutionary actions that enabled revolutionary forces to establish control over many areas. The Dong Khoi-style uprising involved the coordination of three forces: local armed forces, mass political forces, and revolutionary networks within the RVN military and administration. The three-pronged strategy emerged and developed gradually from lower to higher levels, following practical conditions and opening possibilities for the consolidation of the worker–peasant–soldier alliance under unified Party leadership.

The period 1954–1960 can be divided into three stages:

First stage (late 1954–1956): The movement was primarily characterized by political struggle demanding implementation of the Geneva Agreement, combined with the construction of revolutionary networks and the expansion of mass movements.

Second stage (1957–mid-1959): Due to severe repression by the United States and the RVN administration, the revolutionary movement encountered significant difficulties and suffered heavy losses. Although strong mass support and revolutionary elements existed within the RVN military and administration, the movement lacked appropriate strategies and methods to counter enemy repression effectively. Consequently, many areas became passive and defensive. Internal operations failed to fully comply with principles of secrecy and isolated organization, resulting in serious damage to soldier mobilization structures and internal networks. Despite these difficulties, the people and revolutionary forces of Saigon–Gia Dinh gradually overcame obstacles, initiated armed resistance, and step by step combined the three fronts of armed struggle, political struggle, and soldier mobilization. Activities aimed at eliminating oppressive forces, dismantling enemy control mechanisms, and developing revolutionary bases contributed to qualitative improvements in soldier mobilization work.

Third stage (late 1959–1960): Following the implementation of the 15th Central Committee Resolution and the Fourth Resolution of the Nam Bo Regional Party Committee, Saigon–Gia Dinh strengthened revolutionary networks within the RVN military and administration, combined political struggle with armed uprisings, eliminated oppressive local structures, expanded liberated areas, and participated in the broader Dong Khoi movement throughout Southern Vietnam. The three-pronged strategy continued to develop creatively, with soldier mobilization becoming an indispensable component.

The three-pronged strategy represented a creative product of revolutionary struggle during this period. It gradually developed into an effective instrument contributing to the comprehensive strength of the people's war. The formation and development of this strategy were closely associated with the emergence and maturation of soldier mobilization as an offensive front.

Overall, during the period 1954–1960, soldier mobilization work conducted by the people and revolutionary forces of Saigon–Gia Dinh began as a revolutionary mobilization campaign and later developed into a broader offensive movement involving the population, soldiers' families, and internal networks within the RVN military and administration.

Therefore, the Saigon–Gia Dinh Party Committee faced the requirement of providing timely leadership and direction to overcome weaknesses, strengthen existing advantages, and adapt soldier mobilization work to the changing demands of the revolutionary struggle in the new period.

CONCLUSION

Soldier mobilization work in the Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh battlefield during the period 1954–1960 achieved significant initial results, laying an important foundation for the further comprehensive and diversified development of this strategic form of struggle throughout the resistance war against the United States.

From the early stages, Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh became the political center of resistance activities in Southern Vietnam. The revolutionary struggle in this region involved the expansion of propaganda, persuasion, and the establishment of revolutionary networks among RVN soldiers, officers, and civil servants. These networks not only served local political objectives but also played a strategic role in supporting revolutionary tasks in this key battlefield, thereby contributing to broader political objectives throughout Southern Vietnam.

Soldier mobilization work in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh during the first years following the Geneva Agreement (July 1954–1960) was a challenging process marked by numerous difficulties and obstacles. Revolutionary policies and strategic orientations were initially incomplete and, at certain times, failed to fully respond to rapidly changing circumstances. Meanwhile, the enemy intensified severe repression against mass movements, causing revolutionary organizations to suffer significant losses and, at times, placing them in a difficult and fragmented situation.

Cadres assigned to conduct soldier mobilization work in Saigon–Gia Dinh, although able to operate under legal cover, initially lacked sufficient experience and appropriate methods for organizing activities. They had limited experience in combining legal, illegal, and semi-legal forms of operation. During the early period of favorable conditions, many cadres lacked adequate vigilance and failed to ensure strict principles of secrecy and isolation in the operation of internal networks. These shortcomings created substantial challenges for the implementation of soldier mobilization activities.

Nevertheless, under the timely guidance and direction of the Central Party and the Nam Bo Regional Party Committee, soldier mobilization work conducted by the people and revolutionary forces of Saigon–Gia Dinh gradually became more organized, developed steadily, and improved in effectiveness. As the revolutionary movement expanded, networks established within local

Mobilizing Soldiers Within the Enemy's Ranks: The Development of Revolutionary Soldier Mobilization in Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh, 1954–1960

coercive and administrative structures coordinated with mass organizations, soldiers' families, and armed self-defense forces to launch partial uprisings.

Through this process, soldier mobilization gradually became a strategic offensive front targeting the RVN military and administrative system. It contributed to strengthening political struggle in urban areas and became an essential component of the three-pronged strategy—military struggle, political struggle, and soldier mobilization—in suburban areas. The experience of Saigon–Cholon–Gia Dinh during 1954–1960 demonstrated the strategic importance of mobilizing forces within the opposing system and provided a significant foundation for the subsequent development of revolutionary warfare in Southern Vietnam.

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