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Tactics employed in Counter-insurgency operations

INTRODUCTION

Counter-insurgency can be referred to those political, economic, psychological, military, paramilitary and civil actions performed against the activities of revolutionaries, guerrillas and insurgents. Counter-insurgency is a counter-attack against insurgents. Insurgency, on the other hand, is an act of rebellion, a revolt against the established authorities or government. According to O' Neil, insurgency refers to the asymmetric warfare between non-ruling groups and ruling authorities. The insurgents aim to (in most cases) seize power and they apply means such as terrorism, direct action, propaganda and civil disobedience. Thus,Counter insurgency is a struggle for legitimacy. The government's goal is to completely put an end to insurgency or terrorist attacks, deter insurgents, protect itself from subversion while proving its legitimacy, authority and power. In going about counterinsurgency, the government applies tactics. Tactics can be defined as the means to achieve an objective. It answers 'how' an operation should be carried out in a short term frame and on a smaller scale. The term tactic is not necessarily the master plan, it just refers to the way Counter-insurgents will execute the plan that supports their strategy. There are three different approaches to counter an insurgency and they all have to be applied by certain tactics. These approaches are; the enemy-centric approach —that is, the focus is mainly to destroy the insurgency fighters and its infrastructure. It involves heavy military operations to get rid of insurgents. The second approach is population-centric. The government aims to secure the population support, as insurgencies are population oriented, winning the people to the side of the government will ensure that these insurgency groups die down. The third is the authoritarian approach, that means the focus is on the punishment of the insurgents and their supporters. These are approaches to strategy and planning for a Counter-insurgency. However, how these plans are executed is by the tactics used. These can involve violence or be non-violent. These tactics will be discussed in this paper.

TACTICS

Insurgencies are largely people-oriented, that is, insurgents need people's support for

funding, new recruits and a high chance to achieve their aim. Thus, insurgents try to incite the public against the government. Their strategy is to win the public over so in a situation where a coup or an illegal overthrow of the established authority occurs, this insurgent group will not face public opposition or have their legitimacy questioned. The tactics they apply to go with this strategy can be in the form of; providing alternative services that the government failed to provide such as security, in this way power and authority of the government are undermined; insurgents can also in a way provoke the government into committing atrocities which can make neutral civilians sympathise with these insurgents. However, to prevent this, The Counter-insurgents can provide social amenities, oversee economic, legal and political reforms (perhaps ensuring representation in government for marginalised ethnic groups), therefore they are able to address grievances of the public and perhaps that of the insurgents. The government might also set up programmes that teach civic responsibility and leadership, this way the people can learn how to respond to the insurgency crisis and ensure the youths do not take part in the insurgency. These are tactics used by the government to secure the population's support and can be collectively called **public diplomacy**. With less support by the public, insurgency group activities are likely to die down.

Secondly, Counter-insurgents can employ population control or transfer, popularly referred to as 'drain the swamp'. This is when people living in a particular geographical area infiltrated with insurgents are forcefully evacuated to another area. This thus deprives insurgents of cover, support and resources from the locals.

Other tactics can be used when Counter-insurgency operations focus more on defeating 'the enemy'. Here, most resources are applied to suppress and dissuade insurgents. Counter insurgents can decide to undermine the strength, principles and popularity of Insurgency groups. This can be done through the use of national identity campaigns emphasising nationalism, shared values and interests. Thus, undermining group identity. This works where a particular group feels left out from the rest of society or neglected or not accepted. By making this group feel accepted, the authorities have avoided insurgents from capitalising on that.

Another tactic to suppress insurgencies is by disarming insurgents. Most insurgency

groups, for example, Boko Haram in Nigeria illegally import arms into the country. Tighter border restrictions and security can be implemented to stop the inflow of illegal weapons. The Nigerian Army since the rise of Boko Haram attacks has intercepted 10s of vehicles carrying illegal weapons supposedly for Boko Haram from outside the country. As weapons are needed to forcefully gain power, restricting insurgents ability to gain these weapons will ensure their defeat. However, due to economic treaties and the need to import commodities such as food for Nigeria's vast population, border restrictions might be opposed by the public and neighbouring countries. Also, most of these illegal arms coming into the country are camouflaged as these commodities. Thus, this tactic is not always effective. Nevertheless, there are more tactics that Counter-insurgents can apply to destabilize insurgents.

Cordon and search are described as a military tactic in Counter-insurgency operations. A premise suspected to house weapons of insurgents is held off and thoroughly searched. This is because there is little intelligence on where weapons of these insurgents are kept. This is also used when Counter-insurgents choose the clear and hold strategy. Air-to-ground attacks, another military tactic, can also be used against sure targets.

Another tactic employed in Counter-insurgency operations in terms of destabilising the insurgency group is targeting and getting rid of the insurgents' leader, which can be done through the knowledge of insurgents hideouts by information from a mole in the group. With insider knowledge of the group's activities, Counter-insurgents know when the group is likely to attack, where arms are kept, dynamics of the group and its strategy. Thus, it is easier to defeat insurgents by planting a mole, a spy to spy out the group or in some cases, a disloyal member who defects from the group to side with Counter-insurgents can be used. However, trusting such a member is a problem as he is likely to switch sides. Other ways of intelligence gathering can be through drone and aircraft surveillance.

Furthermore, Counter-insurgents or the government can also seek external assistance and help when its military is inadequate, this can be done through effective diplomacy and maintaining strong ties with neighbours States and militarily and technologically powerful allies. For example, Nigeria's military troops acted as external assistance for the Liberian government in its civil war of 1985–1989. In other words, security forces expansion and reorganisation will be enforced.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Counter-insurgents employ tactics to execute their plan in accordance with the strategy. Although the word strategy and tactic are used interchangeably in multiple texts, their definition is quite different. Tactic answers 'how?' and strategy 'why?' Tactics used in counter operations can range from legal and social reforms, public diplomacy, civic education, population transfer, promotion of national identity to undermine group's identity, border control, disarmament, Air-to-ground attacks, information gatherings such as planting moles in the enemy group and security forces expansion for effectiveness and discipline.

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