**INSURGENCY AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY (IRD 214)**

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

**Research Question:** Discuss the tactics employed in counter-insurgency operations.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Every government cherishes its internal and external sovereignty as always. Meaning if a violent movement springs up to challenge this authority and is noticed, a series of actions could ensue to quell, weaken and combat these opposing forces. This form of struggle has existed long before the rise of conventional armies in ancient Mesopotamia around 3000 BC, and births the whole idea of what is now known as Counter-insurgency.

Having seen irregular warfare groups bring nations to their knees, this tool has become the go-to option for state enemies. Fueled by chiefly, a lack of effective governance, an insurgency involves an armed movement that seeks to challenge, nullify or seize the political power of a state. These increasingly prevalent forces have a common objective of gaining control of a particular territory/population, alongside certain resources through a guerilla or terrorist-like approach.

Then counter-insurgency, as the prefix suggests, is the organized strategy that entails all the measures used to tackle insurgencies. In its most efficient form, involves a combination of a government’s psychological, economic, military and political devices, as well as even allying nations to combat these group(s).

Noteworthy, is that the government carries out counter-insurgency operations while trying its best to maintain its legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Ideally, the government keeps the security and safety of its citizens in check, keeps popular opinion abreast, while working to improve or sustain its legitimacy.Multinationals, non-governmental organizations, and the news media are also likely to be on this warfront, and the government could interact with them constructively, and interestingly, use them to actualize certain objectives, even though they are outside the martial space.

Counter-insurgency does involve a lot of planning — both long-term and short-term kinds. The short-term arrangements and plans used in this struggle are called the tactics, while the long-term plans are the strategies. These are the two approaches that constitute seminal pieces of the ‘counter-insurgency puzzle’.

So, in view of the research question, the tactics of counter-insurgency are those short-term and swift activities employed on a recurrent basis, by governments anytime they face insurgent forces.

**TACTICS OF COUNTER-INSURGENCY**

From population control to open diplomacy, these plans do not only aim arrest or kill insurgents, but also use this scope to garner local government support, intelligence management or severing foreign insurgency links.

These tactics could involve making strategic reorganizations and reforms to quell and destabilize insurgency support. These reforms could be economic, social, political or otherwise in nature. For example, in the 1940s, the Philippine government used tenancy and other social reforms to eliminate the landlord-peasant discrepancies, thereby eroding the rural support base of the Huk Insurgency (*Steinberg David,*2009). Also, in the 1970s, Burman government forces arrest an insurgency by replacing a 'people's government,' in the Mong Yu region which insurgents set up (*Guyot James*,2009) However, sometimes, the reforms that can resolve an insurgency can also be threatening to the government’s hold on power, so, governments can choose to contain rather than eliminate such insurgent(s) (*U.S Government,*2012).

With strategic and efficient communication means, public diplomacy is another great tool in the hands of those combating insurgents. It could be carried out through [international broadcasting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_broadcasting" \o "International broadcasting), personal contact, radio stations or the internet, the government could disseminate a paradigm-shifting, completely different, yet appealing philosophy to the population targeted. Ideally, it keeps to this newly made ideas, fulfilling its promises and terms with the aim to make the local population feel secure, safe, and more aligned with the counterinsurgency efforts; trust the goals and purposes of the counterinsurgency efforts, as opposed to the insurgents’. In 2010, through in-person outreach, the U.S Marine carried out public diplomacy operations in Afghanistan, and even went as far as giving candies to children. (*FAS*,2009).

Another example of the tactics are militarily orchestrated air operations. It involves combing a particular region aerially for insurgents or their paraphernalia, air-to-ground attacks or providing quick evacuation and deployment means for combatants. To give an instance, in Sudan, following the government’s long-established strategy of using militias in the civil war in southern Sudan from 1983 to 2004, Janjaweed operations were well coordinated and synchronized with lots of air force attacks (*Alex Waal,*2008).

Additionally, or alternatively, governments could also use the tactic of population/terrain control. Possibly with an intel of where insurgent roots are established, the government can embark on a repositioning or relocation of a targeted population just to put insurgents out of their ‘comfort zones’ and sustenance base. As a form of terrain control, the government can set up certain structures that can make the insurgents’ covert operations harder. They can also carry out thorough vehicle and personnel checking in suspected localities to keep account of who dwell there. In the 1970’s, this tactic was used by Thailand in their fight against Communist guerrillas with their decision to evacuate civilians from seven Northern areas—including a 50-mile strip along the Mekong River border with Laos— and the accelerated construction of strategic highways through Communist-infiltrated areas, still in the North. (*Wyatt David et al,*2008)

Lastly, which is basically a counterinsurgency game of ‘hide and seek’, are military based search operations also known as Cordon and Search. With the aim of arresting insurgents and seizing/destroying their paraphernalia, a certain area is isolated and a search of suspected buildings or sites ensues. Based on the accuracy of intelligence, it could be a movement to contact, a raid, a deliberate attack, or an area reconnaissance. These type of systematic search operations were used in Mozambique, in the fight against the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) of the 1980s. Here, Mozambican and Zimbabwean troops discovered a major MNR base and found weapons, medical supplies and even documented proof of their support coming from South Africa. (*Malyn Newitt,*2010). Also, in the ongoing intervention of Uthe .S in Iraq, the U.S military has incorporated this tactic to their counterinsurgency plans against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

**CONCLUSION**

It is safe to say that at the time of my writing this paper, a state(s) are concurrently dealing with an insurgency. This goes to show that counter-insurgency is an inseparable fragment of statehood. This paper goes ahead to break down some of the noticeably used tactics in this process.

However, as rich as these tactics may seem, there are lots of legal and ethical intricacies to them. For example, the debate on the use of force when there is dangerous stealth that insurgents wield within the civilian population. These are part of the dynamics that may challenge these tactics as efficient devices of counter-insurgency, but, that is indubitably a ‘topic for another day’.

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