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Question: In not more than 3 pages, discuss the tactics employed in counter-insurgency operations?

Counterinsurgency is the use of all rudiments of a nation's authority as well as combined-arms operations and psychological, political, financial, intelligence, and diplomatic operations to conquer an insurgency. An insurgency is a well thought out rebellion that uses violent and nonviolent means to defeat an existing government or to extract control away, either de jure or de facto, over part of its territory. Insurgencies naturally have political or religious motivation but illegal gangs can also become powerful enough to endanger a state's authority. Most insurgencies make use of a combination of guerrilla and terrorist tactics the previous are hit-and-run attacks focussed primarily at government security forces, the latter are attacks concentrating primarily against civilians supported by propaganda and political organizing.

Successfully countering an insurgency will involve skilfully commanders to harmonize multiple lines of operations, acting in performance with host-nation forces with representatives of other government agencies. International organizations, non-governmental organizations, as well as the news media are also likely to be there on the battlefield, and the successful leader must interact with them constructively, and if possible use them to attain campaign objectives, even though they are outside the military chain of command.

The foundation of successful counter-insurgency is to acquire intelligence and to identify an enemy that frequently hides in plain sight. Some of that intelligence can be acquired by technological means, but there is no replacement for the situational awareness provided by security forces who on a daily basis are in contact with the population. Only by living among the people and shielding them from insurgent threats can a military force gain the people's trust and as a result acquire the understanding necessary to target insurgent cadres.

The political element of a counter-insurgent’s tactic has been narrowly linked with the

imperative of good governance, that is the need for a counter-insurgent to provide legitimate and just governance to the population. In a wider sense, David Kilcullen (an Australian theorist and consultant on COIN) has claimed that the political deeds in COIN serve four main functions: rallying public support for the government, reinforcing the institutional capacity of the state mechanism, providing law-abiding and capable governance to the people, and promoting the social reintegration of the insurgents. In other words, the political factor of the counter-insurgent’s strategy primarily targets the population.

The diplomatic element in COIN pertains to the hard work of the counter-insurgents to neutralise external aid to the insurgents and, at the same time, assemble outside support for their own cause. Since external support has been recognised as a major factor and even the most significant determinant of victory for the insurgents, the decrease of external assistance to the insurgents promises to improve a counter-insurgent’s forecast of success. The vigorous propagandization of an influential cause and the continuous support from powerful outside allies tend to further increase the effectiveness of the counter-insurgent’s diplomatic campaign. For instance, the new military rule in Egypt which seized the reins of authority by overthrowing the designated Islamist government successfully portrays inside and outside Egypt the armed resistance of the Egyptian Islamists as jihadist terrorism and profits from continuous support from powerful Arab and non-Arab countries (.Saudi Arabia and Russia) – in sharp dissimilarity to the Egyptian Islamists who receive deteriorating international support and sympathy.

The counter-insurgent’s economic policy can prove critical in determining the result of a conflict that revolves around the issue of population control. In a wider sense, such a policy performs the key functions of the civil section of a COIN movement namely, providing public services (public health) and emergency humanitarian relief to the populace reinforcing the regimes capacity-building potential (through reforms in the state equipment) and securing sustainable economic growth. How the counterinsurgent should execute an economic policy still remain a source for contention: should the economic actions be treated simply as an adjunct to the counter-insurgent’s politico-military efforts or should the strategy of the counter-insurgent revolve around the economic element Anyhow, economic measures cannot secure victory alone instead, they should be complemented with politico-military actions.

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References:

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