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Question: Discuss the tactics employed in counter insurgency operations

Counterinsurgency which can be known as (COIN) can be defined as the comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously contain insurgency and address its root causes.

COIN is an extremely

complex undertaking, which demands of policy makers a detailed understanding of

their own specialist field, but also a broad knowledge of a wide variety of related disciplines.

However COIN approaches must be adaptable and agile. Where as strategies will usually be focused primarily on the population rather than the enemy and will seek to reinforce the legitimacy of the affected government while reducing insurgent influence.

This are and can often only be achieved in concert with political reform to improve the quality

of governance and address underlying grievances, many of which may be legitimate

Counterinsurgency can also be defined as the measures suggested, to meant to suppress an insurgency and in the long run create an enabling political environment for the establishment of a functional state capable of ensuring sustainable security. These goals are, however, difficult to achieve under conditions of state collapse given the virtual absence of a functional government.

Political strategy

Political strategy is the key function in a COIN effort, because it provides a framework (of political reconciliation, reform, popular mobilization and governmental capacity-building) around which all other programs and activities are organized.

the progress of a COIN campaign is only as good as the political strategy it supports. Where the political strategy is vague, unrealistic, or lacking in support from domestic or international stakeholders, the campaign is unlikely to succeed, whatever the efficiency of individual programs. An effective political strategy focuses on strengthening the government’s capability and capacity to response

Security

In COIN scenarios, the term security is frequently used to refer to the degree to which the government can suppress insurgent activity in an area. However, the

concept of ‘Human Security’ is a more complex metric which can only be measured

through the collation of individual perceptions across a community. The paramount

concern is the absence of physical violence, but other relevant factors include

maintenance of laws, the protection of human rights, freedom to conduct economic

activity, public safety (fire, ambulance, etc.) and public health (safe drinking water,

sanitation, etc.). COIN emphasis on physical security is not necessarily an indicator

that the wider concept of human security is not important, but more a case of imperative and sequencing. The end state of providing human security should be implicit in the wider efforts to improve the standard of governance down to the local level.

Information

Information is the foundation for all other activities, and provides the linkages that

allow discrete functional elements to cooperate as an integrated whole. The collection, formulation, storage and dissemination of information are crucial in shaping

perceptions of the conflict by all stakeholders.

In COIN, the information flow can be roughly divided into that information which

we wish to assimilate in order to inform our approach; i.e. knowledge and that

information which we wish to disseminate in order to influence populations. At the

same time, as counterinsurgents we are also interested in impeding the information flow of insurgent groups; both their intelligence collection and their ability to

influence.

• Knowledge: In COIN, decisions at all levels must be based on a detailed

understanding and awareness of the environment. No COIN strategy can be

better than the degree of understanding on which it is based. The information required to engender this understanding encompasses a far broader range of

subjects than would normally fall under the auspices of military intelligence.

In conventional warfare, decision makers mostly require intelligence about the

enemy, but in COIN they primarily need intelligence about the population.

COIN intelligence must therefore incorporate the spectrum of characteristics

of a nation’s system of systems, including political, military, economic, sociocultural, infrastructural, informational and environmental knowledge.

At the strategic level, understanding is required of the population factors

behind the insurgency, its stage of progression, the reforms required to address

its causes, and the willingness and ability of the affected government to make

those reforms and the implications of foreign intervention.

At the operational level, understanding is required of the strengths and vulnerabilities of the insurgent strategy, the strengths and weaknesses of the affected

government and the requirements of the population. Continuous feedback on

the degree of success of ongoing COIN efforts is also critical.

At the tactical level, understanding is required of the identity of active insurgents, their networks, logistics, capabilities and intent. It is also very useful

to understand the views, concerns and sympathies of non-combatant civilians

in order to influence them, gain additional intelligence and further isolate the

insurgents. Almost all forms of intelligence collection have a role in COIN,

but historically, intelligence gathered from human sources (including civilians,

agents and captured/reconciled insurgents) has made the greatest contribution

to success.

The economic and development function: The economic and development function in COIN includes immediate humanitarian relief and the provision of essential services such as safe water, sanitation,

basic heath care, livelihood assistance, and primary education, as well as longer term programs for development of infrastructure to support agricultural, industrial,

educational, medical and commercial activities. It also includes efforts to build

the absorptive capacity of local economies and generate government and societal revenues from economic activity (much of which may previously have been

illicit or informal). Assistance in effective resource and infrastructure management,

including construction of key infrastructure, may be critically important to COIN

efforts. It must be tailored to the affected government’s willingness to undertake

key reforms, capacity to absorb support, and ability to manage its outcomes.

The first principle for most development agencies is to ensure that their activities

‘do no harm’ and cultivate sustainable benefits in the regions concerned. They seek

to ensure this through an in depth assessment of the background situation followed

by the application of program management tools to give continuous evaluation and

adjustment.

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