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**QUESTION:** IN NOT MORE THAN THREE PAGES DISCUSS THE TACTICS EMPLOYED IN COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS.

**INTRODUCTION**

Similar to insurgency, counterinsurgency is also a misconceived term or concept. While insurgency is often replaced with insurrection and guerrilla warfare among others, counterinsurgency is also used interchangeably with counter-guerrilla operations and countering irregular warfare, etcetera. Counterinsurgency can be defined as a holistic approach embarked upon by government forces and their multinational partners or sponsors to contain, diminish or eliminate an insurgency. The U.S. Government defines counterinsurgency as ‘comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes’ (U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide, 2009).[[1]](#footnote-1) Counterinsurgency is a proactive approach involving all elements of national power; even down to the tactical level. Its operations may include tactical planning, development and analysis of intelligence; training as well as information engagement. In order for a counterinsurgency operation to be successful in the long run the operation has to be based on a long-term political strategy. Two main approaches have been succinctly identified in the theory and practice of counterinsurgency namely; the *enemy-centric* approach and the *population-centric* approach (Plakoudas, 2015).[[2]](#footnote-2) While the former is completely focused on the defeat of the insurgent group, the latter has its aim set on securing and controlling the population. In the act of countering an insurgency, the counter insurgents have to keep sights on these core objectives; defending their own legitimacy as the one and only authority, terminating the insurgents, the achievement of unity of effort, advance trustworthy propaganda and intelligence services, refuting the insurgents of their source of both internal and external backing, and obtain educe a foreign intervention.

David Galula identifies four main courses of action which indicate the tactics to be adopted by counterinsurgents. The first is acting directly on the insurgent leaders, the second is acting indirectly, the third is infiltrating the insurgency to make it ineffective and the fourth is the build-up or bolstering of political system. (Galula, 2006).[[3]](#footnote-3)

**DIRECT ACTION AGAINST INSURGENT LEADERS**

This involves taking action in the early stages of an insurgency. At this point, it may not be recognized by the population as an insurgency as the movement may not have a life of its own, rather depending on its leader. The idea is to deprive the insurgents of any form of physical possibility of building up its movement. This can be done by apprehending the insurgency leader, limiting their capability to contact people, prohibiting their organization and prosecuting them in the court.[[4]](#footnote-4) Galula acknowledged that this tactic is hardly ever plausible in a democratic government but easily done in a totalitarian government. To him, one of two circumstances may occur: one, the counterinsurgent government may have previously provided itself with special laws and powers intended to deal with insurgencies; in which case the only problem is to act without drawing unwarranted publicity which is disadvantageous in a case where the insurgency has gained popular support. Two, the possibility of the counterinsurgents not being equipped with the necessary powers beforehand in which case, acting against the insurgency leads to numerous complications as arrests have to be justified on credible basis. In view of that, it can be concluded that the direct action tactic is only successful under the conditions that the insurgency has insignificant appeal, the counterinsurgents have legal power to act and the counterinsurgent can put a stop to publicity for the insurgency.

**INDIRECT ACTION AGAINST THE INSURGENTS**

This tactic basically attempts to tackle the insurgents without having any direct contact with them. The counterinsurgents make use of counterintelligence in the sense that the counterinsurgents attempts to deprive the insurgents of a good cause. That is, the government tries to solve the basic problems of the country which are more often than not, the cause of insurgencies. But this is highly difficult to achieve as some problems, which then become a cause, based on, e.g. geographical factors are not susceptible to solution. For example, the question of whether there is a solution to the racial problem in South Africa. It goes without that it is near impossible to create a solution to this problem as it will keep on as long as two races live there.

**INFILTRATING THE INSURGENCY**

This tactic is easier employed in the earlier stages of an insurgency. At this point, the insurgent groups are necessarily inexperienced making it easier for an infiltration by agents to take place. Their aim is to gain the trust of the members and leaders then proceed to disintegrate and derail the insurgency from within. If by any chance this is unsuccessful, they resort to reporting the activities of the insurgency, all the while sticking to their cover.

**BUIL-UP OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM**

The political component of a counterinsurgent’s strategy has been narrowly associated with the imperative of “good governance”, that is, the need for a counterinsurgent to provide lawful and just governance to the populace (Plakoudas, 2015).[[5]](#footnote-5) Most of the counterinsurgent’s efforts in revolutionary war tend to build a political machine at the grass roots in order to isolate the insurgent from the population forever. This strategy should be easier to implement in a preventive manner rather than when the insurgents have already seized the control of the population.

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1. Quoted from (U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide, 2009) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Strategy in Counterinsurgency: a Distilled Approach (2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Retrieved from Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice (2006) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice (2006) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Retrieved from Strategy in Counterinsurgency: A Distilled Approach (2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)