**IRD 214: INSURGENCY AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY**

**WEEK 2: *A CONCEPTUAL LOOK AT INSURGENCY AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY***

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Here, a conceptual understanding of the nuanced components that make up the concepts in this course is broken down and presented. The intention is for easy identification and familiarization with the various component terms.

**2.1. DEFINITION OF INSURGENCY AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY**

**2.1.1. DEFINITION OF INSURGENCY**

An Insurgency can be said to be **asymmetric warfare** because it is focused on **avoiding the strength** of the **adversaries** and **exploiting their weakness**. Hence, Insurgency connotes a **strategy of offensive action** against that of **mass force action**, to tackle **enemies’ soft spots** at a **decisive moment**. For the **US MILITARY**, Insurgency is defined as an **organized movement** aimed at the overthrow of a **constituted government** or **to seize, nullify** as well as **challenge political control of a region,** through the useof **violence, subversion and armed conflict**. For **O’Neill,** he defined the concept as “a struggle between **non-ruling groups** and **ruling authorities**, in which the **non-ruling group** consciously use **political resources** (e.g. **organizational expertise, propaganda** and **demonstration**) and **violence** to **destroy, reformulate** or **sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics**”. Lastly, Insurgency can be regarded as protracted **political-military activities** directed towards **wholly or partially controlling the resources of a country** through the use of **irregular military forces** and **political organization**.

Insurgency differs from **other revolutionary movements** in the **use of violence** to achieve **political goals**. As such, Insurgencies are usually internal struggles within a state which usually connotes a protracted **political** and **military struggle** designed to weaken the **existing government power**, **control** and **legitimacy** while **increasing those of the insurgent**. Hence, Insurgency is seen as **an intra-state conflict**. It does not mean that **insurgents cannot have external support** or **join their cause to those of external structures (if they are in line with their aspirations)**. As a result of such, modern insurgent can **cross multiple borders**. The aim of an insurgency is the use of **organized violence** or **rebellion** to topple an existing government. At the onset of the Insurgency, the few ring leaders or activist in their attempt to overthrow the government will try to recruit a limited number of people for direct participation in their movement and to mobilize a large part of the total population as supporters and occasional helper. Hence, propaganda becomes a tool used by the insurgents to garnish domestic and international support. Insurgency activities include guerilla warfare, terrorism, political mobilization (propaganda, recruitment, front and cover party organization and international activities. They are three critical components for an insurgency to emerge, and they are **Opportunity, Motive and Means.**

* + 1. **DEFINITION OF COUNTER-INSURGENCY**

The US military defines counter-insurgency as the combination of measure undertaken by **governments** and their **multinational support partners** to defeat an insurgent. Counter-Insurgency is popularly abbreviated as **COIN**. For an effective counter-insurgency strategy, **COIN** makes use of all instrument of **national power** to **integrate** and **synchronize** the **political, security, legal, economic, development** and **psychological activities** carried out by the **host country** (i.e. the country where the Insurgency is occurring) or and **its allies** (i.e. external support) to create a **holistic approach** aimed at **weakening the insurgents** while simultaneously **bolstering the government legitimacy in the eyes of the population. COIN** is a blend of **civilian** and **military efforts**.