

IRD 211: Strategies of Revolutionary Warfare

WEEK 4: *Dimensions of the Strategies of Revolutionary Warfare*

4.0. INTRODUCTION

4.1. STRATEGIES OF REVOLUTIONARY WARFARE

Strategies of revolutionary warfare connote the act and science of marshalling resources, hinged on all levels of possible calculations, which are geared within acceptable bounds of risks, to change a structure or policies by force or otherwise, using political and social mobilization integrated with unconventional warfare. It is mostly achieved with a defined or formatted plan and the powers of supporting structure to achieve objectives.

Strategies of Revolutionary Warfare differs from other, conflict inducing activities, some of which are examined below:

Riots: Isolated acts protest, that spring up suddenly and can involve acts of violence. They may include political motives short of sabotage, sub-revolutionary fundamental, that may or may not lead to revolutionary change.

Terror: Such are of violence, conducted to induce in a population fear and psychological torture, that squeeze from them the confidence of safety. It could be done as a means of Rebellion/Insurrection/Militant opposition to an authority.

Coup d'etat: Aimed at the overthrow of the political leadership, usually involves a small group within the government structure. Not necessarily linked to fundamental change.

Revolutionary Warfare: Overthrow of an existing political system via unconventional means. It tends to seek to change an old regime to a new order

Civil war: Violent open conflict within a society (between conflicting groups) resulting from an attempt to seize or maintain power.

4.2. DIMENSIONS

Several dimensions exist in contemplating the strategies to be adopted in Revolutionary Warfare. It does not elevate one perspective above the others. Still, it serves as a window in understanding the aspects that shape the types of Revolutionary Warfare that are deployed at any particular time. Hence, it is of note that a revolutionary campaign has internal as well as external dimensions, and also military and non-military dimensions. These dimensions are complementary, with the non-military dimension being more important than military actions.

4.2.1. POLITICAL DIMENSION

Here, this deals with the political facet of revolutionary warfare. This dimension of revolutionary warfare has been enriched by the contribution of Mao Tse-tung

(China) and Vo Nguyen Giap (Vietnam). They both emphasized the importance of the political dimension of revolutionary warfare. Here, great emphasis is placed on the political mobilization/factors/struggle, especially when revolutionaries are considering their strategies for revolutionary warfare. The two main objectives of Revolutionary Movements/Campaign in the political dimension are

1). To alienate the population from the Government.

AND

2). To de-legitimize Government Institutions.

The First objective seeks to gain popular support from the populace via tactics of winning hearts and minds. It lays the foundation for how the strategies of revolutionary warfare can blossom. Mao regarded popular support concerning guerilla warfare as a must, stating "revolutionaries must be to the population as water is to fish."

The Second objective aim is to establish parallel or alternative government institutions and administrative networks that displaced those of the current regime. Mao regarded this as the policy of creating a 'state within a state'.

Granted, the political dimension inherent objectives, various strategies of revolutionary warfare find their comfort zone. It is accurate as it is with popular

support that insurgents gain intelligence, shelter and supplies as well as recruits. The same goes for other strategies of revolutionary warfare.

4.2.2. PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION

This dimension encompasses the utilization of the revolutionary theory medium of propaganda to serve as a well oiled tool kit suitable to win over popular support and to discredit a current regime. Here, the intention of the revolutionary group is designed to target the psyche of the population and the current regime. For a terrorist organization, this could be to capture or create a climate of fear whereby the morale of the civilian and military element of the Government slowly disintegrate. The same goes for other revolutionary organization as the battle for them is in the psychology of target; they thus design their operation to achieve psychological impacts. Also, for such movements, their military actions are given their importance in political and psychological terms rather than in military terms. Hence, their actions are geared towards creating publicity for them through spectacular acts of sabotage or attacks (armed propaganda), as well as in goading a government to overreact towards their revolutionary activities.

4.2.3. IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSION

For this dimension, it entails the ideological message of revolutionary groups which resonate with their audience. It connotes the propagation of the values and

ideological tenets of a new order that a revolutionary movement seeks to achieve and the discrediting of those of the current Government. This dimension is carried out at the cultural and ideological level via tagging the present system as corrupt and the revolutionary movement as pure.

4.2.4. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIMENSION

In furthering their aims, a revolutionary movement in areas under their control attempt to set-up new economic and social institutions representing the values of their movement. They engage in the exploitation of social and economic grievance against a population, and if such grievance does not exist, they can create one. Revolutionaries also attempt to set-up an economic base for their war effort. They also target the economic base of the Government with the intention to create economic chaos and discourage investors. In this process, the activities of the revolutionaries may make the cost of war on the Government to be unacceptable.

4.2.5. EXTERNAL (INTERNATIONAL) DIMENSION

In this dimension, the scope is widened to include multiple actors involved in the revolutionary agenda. These actors are usually composed of an internal actor that is on the ground to champion the revolutionary movement and an external actor that is not necessarily on the ground but nonetheless gives important support for the revolution. Here, despite the importance placed by revolutionary philosopher on

self-reliance, a revolutionary movement gaining external support (moral and/or material) especially from neighbouring states, is of great help. Such aid could in the form of direct or indirect interventions by parties external to the issues. The tactic adopted by revolutionary here is to attempt to isolate the current target system by influencing world opinion and gaining support for sanction against such a state. Another tactic that can be employed here is by gaining international recognition as the sole and authentic representatives or participating as an observer in international organizations.

4.2.6. THE MILITARY DIMENSION

Here, the military objectives of the revolutionary movement come into consideration. The strategy of revolutionary warfare in this dimension elicits a protracted nature of the campaign which undergoes several stages. This stage can be considered to include

- 1) **The Strategic Defensive Stage:** Here, the foundation of the revolutionary movement are built)
- 2) **The Equilibrium Stage:** Here, the movement expands to gain a stalemate situation with the current regime)

3) **The Counter-offensive Stage:** Here, a weakened and targeted government is challenged by the revolutionaries in a conventional battle or via means that attempts a seizure of power from the current regime.