

Presentation VII: Indigenous forces in COIN: An ugly, yet necessary tradeoff?

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Abstract—Indigenous forces (IF) have been utilized throughout numerous counterinsurgency (COIN) campaigns across the 20th and 20st centuries to varying degrees of success. The question posed in this presentation pertains to the feasibility of IF in future COIN operations, based on three primary case studies that are used to examine the benefits and detriments of previous strategic and operational employments.

This presentation finds that like all COIN practices, the use of IF - whether that be as standalone units outside of the regular chain of command, or as embedded units within a greater conventional force - is context-sensitive.

Different variables, including socioeconomic development, cultural norms, ethnic mix, tolerance for cultural clashes, and operational priorities all either aid or diminish the effective employment of IF.

I. PROBLEM STATEMENT

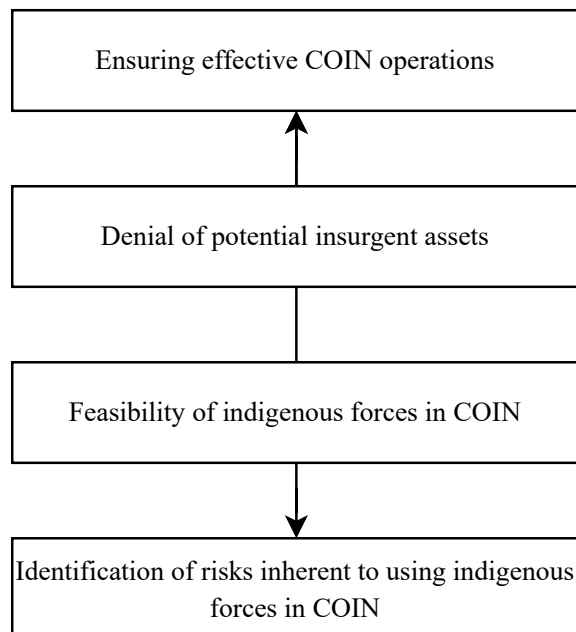


Fig. 1: Fig. 1: Why-What Model (Annamalai et al., 2013)

II. PROBLEM CONTEXT

A. Base Factors

- Heavy use of manpower (James, 2006)
- Mono-ethnic vs. multi-ethnic regions
 - See Dagestan v. Chechnya (Souleimanov, 2015) or Vietnam (Cassidy, 2006)
- Degree of urbanization
- Socioeconomic disparity and overall performance
- Blurred line between law enforcement and military operations (James, 2006)

B. Mechanisms of Control

- How do you ensure loyalty?
 - Exploit ethnic conflict
 - Blooding: compromising the ability of IF to join insurgent activities
 - Financial and physical security
 - Kinship structures/nepotism
 - Training

C. Incentives to cooperate with non-native COIN

- Financial
- Kinship
- Military
- Legal
- Honor
- Survival
- Legal

D. Cultural Considerations for Integration within military hierarchy

- Time (9 O'clock vs Iraqi 9 O'clock)
- Tribal vs. non-tribal social hierarchy
- Sub-rosa arrangements
- Level of education

III. SYSTEM ANALYSIS

A. Case Study: Philippine–American War (1899-1902)

- Employment of Philippine Scouts from the Macabebes tribe, recruitment of the merchant cadre and Muslim population in several areas - different motivations!
 - Macabebes harbored long-time hate towards the Tagalogs (majority of the insurgents)
 - Merchants lost prestige due to insurgency activities
 - Americans gathered Muslim support on religious grounds against Catholic insurgents
- Used for reconnaissance, infiltration, strategy of massive patrol saturation, formation of extra policing forces, gathering field intelligence
- A great example of different possible motivations for joining IF initiatives, successful case of implementing IF (even though in not as large in numbers - 15 000 by the end of the war)

B. Case Study: Algerian War (1954-1962)

- Focus on incorporating Algerians into French forces (almost 25 % at the end of the war)
 - Increased legitimacy of the COIN forces
- Harkas, Makhan and civilian affairs auxiliaries; Sections Administratives Spécialisées (SAS); turncoat insurgents
 - Lessons learned from War in Indochina - posting IF (mostly Harkas) close to their homes = reduce the risk of retaliation against families, and increases motivation!
 - SAS - led by officers expert in Arabic affairs, the predecessor of CORDS (Vietnam), or Provincial Reconstruction Teams (Afghanistan)
 - ! Very successful, targeted by the insurgents, problem with finding 'qualified' workforce and individuals
- Some IF implementation elements are successful (SAS, Harkas), trouble with coordinating political agenda with military approach, unwillingness to use IF in combat situations

C. Case Study: Vietnam War (1955-1975)

- Formation of Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG), Marine Corps Combined Action Program (CAP) and Civil Operations and Rural Development and Support (CORDS) program
 - Recruitment of the Montagnards tribes
- Phoenix program - forming units out of Viet Cong turncoats
 - Efficient COIN strategy X risky strategy (potential for purposeful infiltration)
 - After the Tet offensive (1968) very prominent, huge spike in numbers (up to over 47 000)
- Focus on reconnaissance and infiltration missions, territory denial to insurgents and 'Hearts and Minds' operations
- Considered a somewhat successful case of using IF (CIDG and CAP initiatives viewed positively), the failure, in the end, was mainly due to domestic pressure.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

A. Advantages of indigenous forces

- Increased manpower (and decreasing potential manpower for the insurgency at the same time).
- Increased ability to make use of indigenous knowledge of the terrain, and human geography.
- Through the utilization of turncoats, outside forces can gain legitimacy by deploying IF.

B. Disadvantages of indigenous forces

- Risk of low combat morale
- Uncertainty and risk in investing resources into assets that may not provide desired outcomes.
- Issues persist in embedding IF into larger command structures

C. Key takeaways

- 1) Must be willing to allow turncoats into ranks of COIN -i source of intelligence
- 2) Administrators and experts familiar with local culture and language are necessary
- 3) Feasible in both mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic scenarios. However, there is an increase in risk management and the magnitude of risk complexity

V. QUESTIONS FOR AUDIENCE

- Q_1 : If an indigenous COIN force is to be raised from an ethnic minority, what attributes should that minority possess on average compared to their neighbors?
- Q_2 : If and what cultural idiosyncrasies can be tolerated by a foreign COIN force using IF, and for how long?
- Q_3 : Is it worth attempting to subordinate an IF fighter's motivation to some greater (foreign) narrative?

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