

STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES OF RESISTANCE WARFARE

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The ultimate objective of most resistance movements is the complete overthrow and destruction of the ruling government under which its members live and the replacement of that government with one more suitable to the Resistance.

The Resistance may be satisfied with more limited results, such as the change of certain government policies or replacement of certain government officials. Such compromises can never be considered a complete victory for the Resistance and may lead to its ultimate defeat.

When hard pressed by Resistance forces, the government in power will often offer such compromises. In this way, they will hope to involve the Resistance leaders in time consuming negotiations, expose them to possible arrest or create dissension among the members as to whether or not the government offer should be accepted. History has shown that to accept such compromises is almost always a mistake. As soon as the government forces have consolidated their position, they are sure to renounce their modified policies and to implement even stricter controls than before.

There are several tried and proven methods by which governments can be replaced by force:

1. A plot (or coup d'etat) is a clandestine action by a small group of people, designed to overthrow the top leaders. Secrecy is of utmost importance, which limits the number of people who can have fore-knowledge of a plot. Those taking part are usually persons of fairly high rank within the government hierarchy. By having ready access to the top government officials, they can easily capture them physically.

Depending on the form of government, the plotters can either declare themselves the new government or they may issue orders "in the name of" the captured government officials till their power is consolidated.

It is obvious that a coup d'etat is much easier where the government power rests with a single dictator or very small group. A coup d'etat is practically impossible in a nation having a complex bureaucracy with power divided among several different branches. Most successful plots of the past have been carried out by high ranking military officers or by civilians with the backing of military forces.

2. Civil war may occur where dissatisfaction with the government is primarily confined to a certain geographical area. In this case, local political leaders represent the people in their areas. When the desire for separation is sufficiently strong, these local political leaders, with the support of the people and some military units in their area, will declare a "state of independence". Usually, the national government will try to occupy the area of dissent with their own troops and those areas that have broken away will defend their terrain by fairly conventional military tactics. The American "revolution" of 1775 was actually a civil war.
3. A true revolution is an explosive revolt by masses of people. It almost always occurs suddenly. Although a revolutionary condition may smoulder for years, its actual outbreak is usually a surprise to all concerned. Where government forces are so oppressive, corrupt or inefficient that the patience of the population becomes exhausted, any spark of violence at the right psychological moment may set off a violent revolution. Revolutions are usually effective against domestic governments (France, 1789; China, 1911; Russia, 1917) but not so against occupying powers (for example, the East Germans and Hungarian uprisings).
4. An "insurgency" is a planned series of events resulting in a protracted conflict, first to achieve intermediate objectives, and then proceed in a step by step manner to total overthrow of the existing regime. Recent examples include Malaya (1948-1962), Cuba (1957-1959).

The form of government, size of the nation, degree of industrial development all have a great influence on the type of revolutionary activity that may be most effective.

Violent conflict, such as terrorism or guerrilla warfare are only specialized tools of a planned insurgency. The conflict is mainly political and psychological. Any type of violence especially in the early stages of the conflict, is used only to promote political ends that cannot be obtained by non-violent means.

The Strategy of Insurrection

By the very nature of the conflict, an enormous difference exists between the strength of the insurgent (Resistance) and the counter insurgent (government in power). This difference is greatest at the very beginning when the insurgent forces may consist of only a few individuals while the government controls massive armed forces, police, most communications, news media, the administrative apparatus and has at least passive support of the population. Except possibly in the later stages of an insurgency, control of territory is of no importance. Support of the people is the critical factor. The government in power can use a wide range of legal and pseudo-legal means to force its will upon the general population. The insurgent has only the choice of persuasion or terrorism to influence the people.

The means which the insurgents will use in their effort to control the population will largely depend on the type of government in power and secondarily on the character of the people. Where open political opposition to the government is permitted, an insurgency can reach an advanced stage by purely legal means. Individual members of the insurgent group will take full advantage of such legal protection as may be afforded by the courts. The government that wishes to maintain the pretext of democracy cannot violate the insurgents' rights too openly without risking loss of support by the general population. In this case, the insurgent will probably attempt to gain support from the people by propaganda means.

Where the general population is hostile to the insurgent, or where the government does not allow open opposition, or where the government has full control of the news media, then the insurgent may resort to terrorism.

Terrorism is a facet of psychological warfare. Its purpose is to neutralize the population. If the insurgents cannot gain the willing support of the people, then they will attempt to deny the government that support. If the insurgent forces commit numerous acts of terrorism and are seldom caught, the people lose faith in the government's ability to protect them. For this purpose, indiscriminate assassinations, bombings and sabotage will suffice. If the insurgent can limit his attacks to unpopular public figures and to traitors in their own ranks, the people may gradually align their support and sympathies with the insurgent.

Contrary to popular opinion, there is little propaganda value to be gained from assassination of top public officials... they are too far removed from the people. For maximum psychological affect, the best victims are the minor bureaucrats who maintain daily contact with the general population.

Whereas the government in power has a great advantage in material assets, the situation is reversed as far as immaterial assets are concerned. The insurgent has greater flexibility as to both strategy and tactics. The insurgent can act while the counter insurgent must react. The insurgent can, for the most part, choose his own time to initiate the conflict. This is not to say that the insurgent will necessarily be the first to use violence.

Disorder is the normal state of things. It is cheap to produce and costly to prevent. If the government in power is to maintain its position, then it must maintain order among the population. To create disorder is a major objective of the insurgent. If the Resistance movement blows up a bridge, then every bridge must be guarded and the cost is enormous. An anonymous phone call to the effect that there is a bomb hidden on a certain airplane costs a dime and takes a few minutes. To hold and search the plane takes lots of time and money; it creates confusion, disrupts schedules and causes annoyance to their enemy out of all proportion to the efforts required of the insurgent.

These vast differences in the amount of time, money, people and material available to the two conflicting forces dominates the nature of the conflict from beginning to end. The insurgent is fluid where the counterinsurgent is rigid. The insurgent has little to lose while the counterinsurgent has much to lose. The insurgent has the inspiration of his cause and the hope of better days to come. The counterinsurgent must stand on his record-- good or bad as it may be.

The counter-insurgent (government in power) will usually control the major means for the dissemination of propaganda. The insurgent (Resistance movement) has the best material for his propaganda message. The government is judged by its actions and propaganda must always be a secondary weapon. The insurgent is not obliged to prove. He is judged more by his promises than by his action. With sufficiently good propaganda, a resistance movement can win in spite of many other difficulties.

Requirements for Successful Insurgency

The possible success or failure of an attempted insurgency will be most influenced by four conditions.

1. A cause (for complaint).
2. Favorable political climate.
3. An intelligent and technically competent population.
4. A fairly moderate geographic environment.
5. Outside support in the later stages.
6. A history of previous successful revolutions in that area.

The cause must appeal to a sufficiently large percentage of the population. It must be lasting and be something that the counterinsurgent cannot adopt without weakening their own position. The insurgent cause need not be limited to a single complaint and there is no reason for not changing causes if a new one seems more attractive.

The political climate has a considerable effect on the type of resistance organization that develops-- as well as on its chances for success. An insurgency is initially weak and gains strength slowly. The people generally are not much concerned. Thus early counter action that may be taken by government leaders is important.

The more skilled and educated the general population, the better their chances of a successful insurgent once they become involved in such action. At the same time a population that has much to lose by way of property or personal comfort will be less inclined to risk such loss in defense of a principle.

Climate and outside support are important only in the later military phases of insurgent activity. Dependence on outside support can probably be avoided by a high degree of proficiency in the improvisation of supplies and in the skillful conduct of psychological operations.

Where the nation's history includes previous cases where the established government has been overthrown will naturally increase the insurgents confidence in ultimate victory.

Counter-Resistance Tactics

Assume that the government in power is genuinely corrupt and assume also that the resistance movement has good organization and determined leaders. Under these conditions a patriotic resistance movement in a country such as the United States would be difficult to destroy by anything short of total police-state tactics. The longer it is allowed to continue the more difficult it would be to stop. To use totalitarian tactics against the resistance would cost the government too high a price in loss of popular support. What then might they do to combat a growing resistance movement still in its early stages?

Here are some of the possible courses of action open to the government in power:

1. Act directly against the organization leaders. This would be the easiest and surest way to destroy a budding insurgency and would be done without hesitation in countries where there is no pretext of democracy.

Where the government pretends to rule by consent of the people such action leads to a multitude of problems. On what grounds are arrests to be justified? Where is the line to be drawn between subversion and legitimate political opposition? Will the publicity of arrest and trial do the resistance more good than harm? Will normal legal procedures be effective? Will the arrested leaders become martyrs to the resistance?

Generally speaking, arrest of the insurgent leaders is not the best answer to the counter insurgents problem. If they do resort to such action, then the arrests must be made on other than political grounds. Some other violation of the law, real or invented, must be found as an excuse for such arrests.

2. Indirect action against the cause of discontent. This amounts to removing the cause for which the insurgent is fighting. Where this can be done it has a good chance of success.

In the Philippines, Magseysay's success against Huks was as much due to his political reforms as to military action. By ridding his government of corrupt politicians guaranteeing fair elections, eliminating discriminatory taxation, etc. he robbed the Huks of their cause and eliminated the major reasons for the peoples' discontent.

If the present government of the United States is concerned about the growing "right wing" movement their solution is very simple: live up to their oaths of office, eliminate waste, corruption and treason among government officials, take a strong stand against communism abroad and against socialism at home. By these acts, sincerely implemented, the government could end the "right wing threat" in a Year's time.

3. Infiltration of the Insurgent movement. In the early stages of a resistance movement, leadership is all important. History is full of small organizations that have floundered because the original few members could not agree and the movement split apart into many different groups.

A young resistance movement is comparatively inexperienced and easy to infiltrate with agents that will help the organization disintegrate. If this does not succeed they can at least report on its progress.

There have been numerous attempts to infiltrate the Minutemen and some of the early efforts hurt the organization badly. The principal tactic of these infiltrators has been to spread distrust among the members, to spread rumors of poor security at national headquarters, to discredit the leaders and generally cause people to lose confidence in the organization.

As any resistance movement becomes more experienced the danger from infiltration is reduced. Not only will the resistance become more efficient in detecting infiltrators but the more important positions will have already been filled with people of proven loyalty.

4. By propaganda and other means the government may try to strengthen the political support of the people and also strengthen its administrative apparatus. The bureaucracy of every government has a life of its own, more or less independent of the top political leaders. This bureaucracy takes care of the day to day routine of managing the country. If this bureaucracy is efficient it can survive many crisis among top leaders. If the administrative bureaucracy is weak, then even a popular government may be easily overthrown.

5. The government police or military agencies may be content to keep the insurgent movement under observation and wait for some good excuse to launch an all-out attack against them. This was the tactic used by the FBI against the German-American Bund prior to World War II. As the Bund grew and recruited new members, several were FBI infiltrators. By this infiltration, mail covers and similar surveillance the FBI knew almost the entire membership. When the United States declared war against Germany the FBI closed in quickly to arrest hundreds of people in a few days time.

In many cases, searches were made, property seized and persons arrested without warrant. Police-state tactics were the rule rather than the exception. The government was able to take such action in time of war without rousing the ire of the general population. To a large extent this waiting and watching tactic is being used with the patriotic movement today.

Although it seems doubtful that the government will have either reason or excuse to make mass arrests of known conservatives within the near future, this possibility should not be discounted entirely. Conservative organizations should keep secret as much as possible, the identity of their members. Our best protection however, comes from counter infiltration to give warning of such arrests. Unless some unforeseen event should change the course of world history, most patriotic Americans will ultimately be forced to change their identities and seek refuge with a resistance movement as their only chance for survival.

By that time the danger to the individual will not be affected adversely by joining the resistance movement. Each citizen will be dealt with in accordance with his age, education, profession, etc. Each will be tolerated, imprisoned or executed depending only on the degree to which the dictatorship may consider his general class as a danger to its continued power or as slave labor to be exploited to its own advantage.

To those considered as enemies of the state, the resistance movement will be the only refuge. No matter how bad things become, members of the resistance can expect such help or protection as their fellow members are able to provide. Those who do not join the resistance will perish alone. Many will attempt to join too late and will be refused because the resistance can no longer risk the loss of security by taking in new members.

In their suppression of the growing resistance movement, every government will sooner or later abandon the pretext of democracy. Guarantees of civil rights will no longer be honored. They must ultimately resort to force; first by the civil police, then by government secret police, and finally by the regular armed forces.

Every government has three principal means of maintaining its control over the people:

(a) The political bureaucracy that keeps track of the people, their movements, income, employment, etc. Where bureaucratic control is very strict, such as in the communist countries, insurgency is a desperate gamble at best. Where there is no personal privacy and informers are everywhere there is little chance to spread ideas, make contacts and find new recruits. These are reasons why we must build our basic organization while sufficient political freedom still exists for such activities to be most effective.

(b) The police forces are the first agents that the government in power will use against insurgent forces. They will, for as long as possible, maintain the pretext that insurgent forces are irresponsible criminal elements rather than legitimate political dissent.

Until the insurgents expose themselves by open violence or illegal acts there is little the police can do, provided that a reasonably fair judicial system remains. If the insurgent cause is just they may (and should) gain considerable support within the police forces. Such supporters can give warning of impending arrests, provide a source of at least a few arms when other sources are limited and help in many other ways. If civilian police agencies are properly infiltrated, they can be an asset rather than a threat to the insurgent cause. Secret police type organizations are a much greater threat to a resistance movement than conventional police.

(c) The armed forces can be the major strength of the established government or a major threat. In nations with a past history of military coups they are a much more likely threat than in countries such as the United States where the officer corps is well indoctrinated to acceptance of civilian authority.

The numerical size of the armed forces, their equipment, political beliefs of the individual soldiers, and time lapse before they are used will all effect their efficiency when finally used against resistance forces.

Geographic considerations-- Resistance forces, especially those engaged in violence, will often prefer to work along political boundaries. By moving from one side to the other of such political boundaries, the insurgents may lessen pressure against them, or at least make it more difficult for different government forces to coordinate their operations.

The counterinsurgent is favored by:

(a) A country isolated by natural barriers which confine the resistance to a certain defined area and make outside supply difficult.

(b) A country easy to compartmentalize by internal barriers such as deep wide rivers, etc.

(c) Severe climate due to the governments better facilities for supply and transportation.

(d) Population largely confined to cities and towns with a relatively small rural population.

The resistance forces are favored by:

(a) Large size of the country where they operate. The larger the country, the more difficult it is for any government to control and the guerrilla elements have more room to maneuver.

(b) Large numbers of people. The bigger the population the more difficult it is to police them or locate resistance agents among them.

(c) A widely scattered population with a high percentage of the people living on farms and in small villages.

(d) Long international borders, especially if there are other countries sympathetic to the insurgent.

(e) Rugged and difficult terrain where tanks and similar heavy equipment cannot go.

(f) Reasonably mild temperatures and fairly dry climate so that guerrillas can live out of doors and still keep their arms and equipment in good condition.

The degree of industrial development can favor either side. A highly civilized country is vulnerable to an intense wave of terrorism of short duration. If however, the reign of terrorism and sabotage lasts too long, the people will have their regular way of life too badly disrupted and will turn against the insurgent.

Types of Organization

There are several different types of organizational structure that may be used by resistance movements. The principal difference between these various forms lies in the centralization of command and the lines of communications.

On one hand, we may have an organization with a strong central command, a military type of organization and strong lines of continuous communication. This type of organization is practical only during the last phases in which the guerrilla bands have reached such size and strength as to be fairly immune to the enemy's military forces. When the insurgent controls sizeable pieces of territory which he can use as a secure base of operations a strong central command can exist with reasonable safety. As the guerrilla bands gradually form into conventional army units, a more conventional type of military organization is necessary. In the early stages of the insurgency, such an organizational structure would simply compromise the security of the underground and lead to its early destruction.

At the other extreme, there is the "phantom cell" system as now used in Cuba. These cells exist completely separate from one another. They never include more than two or three close friends. Most "cells" are actually one person working completely alone. If one cell is captured by the enemy they cannot inform on any other cell because they know nothing at all about any other cell.

These phantom cells commit numerous small acts of sabotage, paint slogans on walls, may occasionally carry out an assassination and by various other means try to keep the spirit of resistance alive in the people. New members are not recruited to such an organization. It is simply hoped that others will "catch on" to the idea and begin acting on their own. Of all possible types of organization the "phantom cell" structure is most secure. Unfortunately, it is also the least effective. They lack coordination and outside motivation necessary for a fight lasting many years. Limited to their own sources of supply and inadequate information about the enemy they can reach a certain stage but no further. They may cripple their enemy but they cannot replace him.

An effective resistance group must be a compromise between these two extremes of security and efficiency. To provide this proper balance is one of the most important functions of leadership and also one of the most difficult. As security is improved the general members will complain about the resulting loss of efficiency. With each security leak (and some are inevitable) the leaders will be criticized for poor security. No organization can hope to function smoothly until all concerned understand this problem and appreciate fully how difficult it is.

As one example, we can examine the organization of the anti-French FLN (National Liberation Front) as it operated in Algeria.

The FLN constituted the parent organization and was essentially political in nature. It operated throughout all Algeria and had political headquarters outside the country where the top leaders were relatively safe. Algeria itself was divided into a number of completely separate zones with no cross communication.

One of these zones was ZAA (Autonomous Zone of Algiers). In charge of the zone was a political-military leader who had under him three assistants (1) A political assistant in charge of local FLN operations, (2) a military assistant in charge of operations for the ALN (National Liberation Army), and (3) an assistant for external liaison and intelligence. Together these four made up the Zonal Council.

The city of Algiers and its suburbs was divided into three regions: Eastern, Central and Western. Each region was divided and subdivided into a number of sectors and districts.

In each district the FLN and the ALN worked side by side but coordination between them was provided at the regional level. Both groups were very particular in choosing new members and tried only to keep their membership up to a certain level. The relative importance placed on political vs. military activity may be judged by the fact that in each district the desired strength of the FLN was 127 members including leaders, organizers and political activists. The ALN had as its desired strength 35 members including officers and combat troops.

Both organizations relied heavily on letter drops, dead drops and couriers to pass commands and communications between them. Seldom did direct contact occur between different levels of the organization and lateral communications between groups was strictly forbidden.

At the group level the FLN also had some armed troops of its own (that were not part of the ALN) to maintain internal discipline. In addition, at the group level the FLN maintained contact with a separate organization of terrorists.

Small bombs were the principal weapon used by the terrorists. This organization was compartmentalized into four groups: (1) to make bodies of the bombs, (2) to fill these bombs with explosives, (3) to fuse the bombs and deliver them to (4) the bomb placers who threw them at their targets or left them to be exploded by timing devices.

The account given here describes the FLN-ALN organizations after they had reached a fairly advanced degree of maturity. We can be fairly certain that they used a much less formal chain of command during their earlier stages of development.

The Complete Resistance Movement

During the past fifty years a considerable number of different underground movements have been formed, by necessity, to resist areas of dictatorial power. The time, local conditions and nature of the enemy has varied considerably. In some cases the underground consisted of only a few staunch patriots who fought against enormous odds till they were nearly all killed. In other cases the underground merely assisted in the ultimate liberation of their homelands by friendly allies.

To some extent at least, each of these groups has studied the techniques of their predecessors and profited by their mistakes. Some principles have been developed which seem to apply universally while other rules must be modified to meet circumstances and conditions.

It has been the communists who have developed the concept of total war and in response to this threat those who have fought for individual freedom have developed the concept of total resistance.

Previous dictators have demanded only that their subjects submit to discipline and aid materially in the dictator's plans for further conquests. This is not nearly enough to satisfy the demands of the communists.

The communist-socialist bureaucrats cannot stand to think of themselves as parasites. Therefore, they don't want anyone else to think of them as parasites. The communists are not satisfied that their slaves obey them. They require also that others should think as they think and believe as they believe.

Other would-be conquerors have used propaganda as an aid to military conquest. The communists use military conquest as a means of forcing the captive people to submit more completely to further propaganda. Military defeat means the end of an ordinary war. In the war against communism military defeat means just the beginning of the real battle.

The concept of total resistance includes not only military defense but must also include every conceivable method of keeping alive the spirit of defiance, the hope of freedom and beliefs in the dignity of the individual.