





# BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF INSURGENCY AND THE WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH AS COUNTER INSURGENCY (PHILIPPINES SETTING)

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## **JCSP 43**

# Exercise Solo Flight

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#### EXERCISE SOLO FLIGHT – EXERCICE SOLO FLIGHT

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#### Introduction

The complex insurgency problem must be studied carefully and must be addressed in a logical manner. Common failures in identifying basic characteristics of insurgency happen when we don't learn from small mistakes of the past insurgencies. The Logic of Failure is "when we fail to solve a problem, we fail because we tend to make a small mistake here, a small mistake there, and these mistakes add up." <sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to identify the basic characteristics of insurgency and evaluate the link with each other and explore in order to address the insurgency problem. It has been proven in various military campaigns all over the world that military means alone are not the right solution in combating the insurgency problem. It needs to utilize all the government agencies to have different roles and tasks to accomplish in order to deal with the insurgency problem.

"The final tactic used by the British to bring a successful end to the Malayan Emergency was to use a multi-faceted, 'whole of government' approach to counterinsurgency. The introduction of civil-military communities effectively united military, police and civil administration branches, with a unified purpose."

The Whole of Government Approach in combating the modern insurgency must also be reevaluated and reassessed if it needs to change the strategy, especially with the effect of technological advances and the fast changing attitudes of the populace. Liddell Hart, a British historian, mentions the impact of the changing attitudes of various populace on insurgencies,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Dietrich Dorner, *The Logic of Failure: Recognizing and Avoiding Error in Complex Situations* (New York: A Merloyd Lawrence Book, 1997), 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Karl Hack, "The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 3 (2009): 388.

"campaigns of this kind are more likely to continue because it is the only kind of war that fits the conditions of the modern age, while being at the same time well suited to take advantage of social discontent, racial ferment and nationalist fervours."

#### **Insurgency**

The insurgency problem is as old as regular warfare. Nations who have been defeated by a stronger nation have adapted a new strategy to continue its legitimacy and project their existence in an underground movement. On the other hand, insurgents organized political component and its armed components continue to recruit members to destabilize and overthrow the weak government. The U. S. Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-24*, *Counterinsurgency* basically defined insurgency as;

"An insurgency is an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control...Insurgents use all available tools—political (including diplomatic),informational (including appeals to religious, ethnic, or ideological beliefs), military, and economic—to overthrow the existing authority."

#### **Basic Characteristics of Insurgency in Philippines Setting**

This paper will look at the insurgency context in the Philippines setting. It will illustrate the basic characteristics of insurgency and why insurgency problems still exist in the nation.

The three (3) primary insurgency threat groups in the country are the Southern

Philippines Secessionist Groups: Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Frank H. Zimmerman, Why Insurgents Fail: Examining Post-World War II Failed Insurgencies Utilizing the Prerequisites of Successful Insurgencies as a Framework (Monterey California Naval Postgraduate School, 2007),3. 4United States Department of the Army, FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 15 December 2006). 1-1.

liberation Front (MILF); the Abu Sayyaf Group which is supported by ISIS and Jemaah Islamiyah networks from Indonesia; and lastly, the Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army, National Democratic Front (CPP, NPA, NDF).

What are common among the three insurgency groups? I would argue, the following: The insurgents have the populace support; Insurgents have a cause to fight for what they believed; Philippines is an archipelagic island which is suited for good freedom of movement; and finally, insurgency exists because of weak and corrupt government. "Communist leadership saw a chance to seize national power at a time when the newly-proclaimed Philippine Republic was in obvious distress as a result of a monetary crisis, graft in high office and mounting peasant unrest." <sup>5</sup> This paper will expound in the succeeding pages the details of the four basic characteristics of Philippine insurgency.

#### The Insurgents Have the Populace Support

I would strongly argue that the Whole of Government Approach is now the trend on conceptualizing and in making the operational level campaign design to defeat the insurgents. Paying more particular attention on how the stability operation will be executed and supporting the new government. "In order to win the support of the population, the population needs to believe that the government will succeed. This is achieved through good governance, capacity building and the use of psychological operations."

The insurgency movement in the Philippines initially had the elements and the upper hand to strengthen the insurgency recruitment of members. Insurgents have significant advantage

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Eduardo Lachica, *The Huks: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Paul Dixon. *The British Approach to Counterinsurgency: From Malaya and Northern Ireland to Iraq and Afghanistan* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 357.

because of local populace support. To gain populace support, they capitalized on a number of grievances such as poor implementation of the land reform program (land for the masses), no delivery of basic needs such as medical and health care for the poor, not creating jobs for the masses to buy basic food and water, victims of human rights and social injustice (*justice is for the rich people only because poor people cannot afford to pay lawyers*), expensive and below par quality of elementary and secondary education, no electricity at the remote areas, limited farm to market road at the isolated places to sell their products, no government program for water irrigation and many other agricultural related issues. All these problems raised by the insurgents can be attributed to the corruption in the Philippine government.

"Thus, for centuries, "land for the landless" has been the peasants' cry, and the peasants' hunger for land has been our nation's most pressing problem. This has led to the common saying among our people that social justice can be achieved only by one of two ways: either a land reform or revolution. Our history of the past four centuries is one of successive uprisings, and their basic cause has always been the peasants' hunger for land."

Insurgency recruitment in the far flung rural areas is viable due to the absence of government security sector. "A government that is unable to provide adequate security for the local populace cannot expect their support, while a government that does so can expect their support." The Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police cannot sustain their presence due to logistical limitations and lack of personnel. The civilian populace in these remote places had more time to talk with the insurgents. Either the civilians are intimidated or no option left but to cooperate, since no government security sector can protect them regularly, 24 hours, 7 days a week. "When individuals within the populace simply do not do

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Luis Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger: The Story of an Asian Guerilla Fighter* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Frank H. Zimmerman, Why Insurgents Fail: Examining Post-World War II Failed Insurgencies Utilizing the Prerequisites of Successful Insurgencies as a Framework (Monterey California Naval Postgraduate School, 2007), 28.

anything to deter the insurgency, they are passively supporting the insurgency through their inaction and lack of support for the government."

Normally patrols of the government forces will only last for a week just to check the area and thereafter the patrol will go back to their detachment, leaving again the populace in the hands of the insurgents. The insurgents have the luxury of time to live with populace, to eat with them, to sleep and to work together with the people. Through these efforts the insurgents will enjoy the support of the populace.

#### The Insurgents Have a Cause to Fight for What They Believe In

Insurgency in the Philippines setting based their causes and accused the government of corruption, human rights violations and undelivered land reforms. "The corruption of the Philippine government was an issue that had wider appeal with both the rural and urban populaces perceiving extensive government corruption." These are the common political issues and have been used by the insurgents to recruit members in colleges to replace its aging cadre and at the same time they use these as propaganda to deceive the uneducated people in the remote places. "Insurgents start with nothing but a cause and grow to strength, while the counterinsurgents start with everything but a cause and gradually decline in strength to the point of weakness."

Human rights abuses and extra judicial killings during the 1970's Marcos regime at the height of the communist insurgency are just some of the social injustices used as propaganda up

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>Frank H. Zimmerman, Why Insurgents Fail: Examining Post-World War II Failed Insurgencies Utilizing the Prerequisites of Successful Insurgencies as a Framework (Monterey California Naval Postgraduate School, 2007), 26

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>Ibid...60

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peacekeeping* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), 29.

to the present time. The *Jabidah massacre on 18 March 1968* which resulted to 23 Muslim military trainees slaughtered by the Philippine government soldiers during their military training in the Philippine Corrigidor Island was the main cause and the rise of the Muslim secessionist in the southern part of the country. Not to disregard also the land grabbing issues raised by the Muslims in Central Mindanao, Philippines. The Muslims always claimed it as their ancestral domain properties, long before the propagation of Christianity in the Muslim land.

Land reform program was the main cause to fight for the landless. The rift between the landlords and elites of the country vs the majority landless populace was agitated by the insurgents to revolt against their landlords. The clamor of physically demanding work in the field under the heat of the sun with low salary for labor force were added issues used as propaganda to recruit members in the insurgency movement. "... the insurgent's morale and determination to fight are, to a large extent, dependent on having a worthwhile cause to fight for." <sup>12</sup>

"Common propaganda themes included: land reform; corruption and injustice of the federal government; and charges of U.S. imperialism and colonialism. All of these propaganda themes were very effective among the Philippine populace." <sup>13</sup>

The issues mentioned above basically comprised the causes to fight and revolt against the Philippine government.

# Philippines is An Archipelagic Island Which is Suited for Good Freedom of Movement of Insurgents

"The role of geography in insurgency is critical to success." The Philippines is the second largest archipelago in the world with 7,107 islands. It is positioned in Southeastern Asia, directly east of Vietnam and northeast of Malaysia. It is surrounded by bodies of water including

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Julian Paget, Counter-Insurgency Campaigning (London: Faber and Faber, 1967) 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Andrew R. Molnar, et. al. *Philippines (1946-1954), In Undergrounds in Insurgent, Revolutionary, and Resistance Warfare* (Washington D.C.: The American University, 1963) 323.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Julian Paget, Counter-Insurgency Campaigning (London: Faber and Faber, 1967) 24.

the Philippine Sea, South China Sea, the Pacific Ocean, and Celebes Sea. Its total area is 300,000 square kilometers, wherein 298,170 square kilometer is made up of land and another 1,830 square kilometer is made up of water. The total land area, it is slightly larger than Arizona and its terrain is mostly mountains which is easy for the insurgents to hide in the jungle. "Size can affect the ability of the authority to govern effectively. The greater the size of a country, the more difficult it is for an authority to control it." <sup>15</sup>

Philippines has fertile land and can grow almost all crops whole year round and this can provide food for the insurgents. Insurgents can plant their crops in far flung areas and can also depend on the communal farm established by their masses. Water is also abundant in the jungle and with the support of the local populace in the area they can supply enough water for the insurgents.

Due to a widely dispersed area and lack of government forces in insurgent bases, the insurgents moved freely and conducted their recruitment efforts, discussing their propaganda and weaknesses of the government. Insurgents were small in grouping and highly mobile which is difficult for the government forces to fix and destroy them in one terrain. "Insurgents will seldom attempt to retain terrain, because to do so places the initiative in the hands of the counterinsurgent force, and also deprives the insurgents of their greatest advantage, mobility." <sup>16</sup>

#### **Insurgency Exists Because of the Weak and Corrupt Government**

A corrupt government is the best prerequisite for the insurgency to succeed. A responsible government aims to improve the lives of its citizens. Basically, the government has two fundamental tasks. First is to create wealth and second is to distribute the wealth. The second

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968) 35-36.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Julian Paget, Counter-Insurgency Campaigning (London: Faber and Faber, 1967) 25-26.

task which is to distribute the wealth is the more challenging task and this is where temptation and corruption starts. It is not distributed but pocketed by some government officials. Whatever the government does to achieve this aim or to carry out these two tasks, it must be explained and communicated to the citizens so that the citizens can understand and support its program.

As a sign of weak government, the party list system was integrated in the House of Representatives. "The 1987 Constitution of the Philippines created the Party List System purportedly under represented community sectors or groups, including labor, peasant, urban poor, indigenous cultural, women youth and other sectors as may be defined by law may participate in the party list election." This is a way of infiltrating the government in the guise of the political party of the different threat groups in the Philippines.

Due to reason that the insurgents are enjoying the populace support, they have the chance to win a congressional seat in the House of Representatives. Winning a seat means you have the opportunity to have resources that can be channeled to the cause of the insurgents. Given the corrupt culture of the government officials in the Philippines, they can realign government projects and can use their funds in the procurement of fire arms and ammunitions using the intelligence funds allocated to the Congressmen. In Philippines setting, intelligence fund is not subject for auditing and accounting. This process has been abused by the seating local and national executives which are also a source of corruption.

Strict implementation of the rule of law is a big problem in bringing the culprits to justice and it is a sign of weakness of the government. In the judiciary branch, judges and prosecutors can be bribed by the rich and powerful politicians to their favor or can be threatened by the insurgents because the government cannot protect these prosecutors and judges. In some cases

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Republic Act No. 7941, An Act Providing for the Election of Party-List Representatives Through the Party-List System, And Appropriating Funds Therefor. http://www.comelec.gov.ph/laws/republic\_acts/ra\_7941.html.

poor people who are victims of social injustice cannot afford to hire lawyers so they would rather ask the help of the insurgents to seek vengeance. This situation will be in favor for the insurgents because they can use terror to create disorder and malign the legitimacy of the government: "Insurgents succeed by sowing chaos and disorder anywhere; the government fails unless it maintains a degree of order everywhere." <sup>18</sup>

There are a lot of laws being passed, however, implementation of the law is the main problem due to a complex culture and corrupt practices in the Philippine society.

#### Counterinsurgency and "The Whole of Government Approach"

The official U.S. Department of Defense definition of counterinsurgency is "those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat an insurgency." <sup>19</sup>

#### Winning the Populace Support

Winning the battle without predicting the future challenges or analyzing the outcome of military approach to the populace is a sign of poor mission analysis and a future government failure. In counter insurgency campaign, it is not about winning the battle but winning the populace support and the control of the population:

"An insurgent movement is a war for the people. It stands to reason that the government measures must be directed to restoring government authority and law and order

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 15 December 2006).1-2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>United States Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02 Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 128.

throughout the country, so that control over the population can be regained at its support won."<sup>20</sup>

The government must take seriously the issues raised when dealing with the grievances of the people and understanding the operational environment where the counterinsurgency forces will be deployed. This understanding will help in the conception of the operational military campaign design involving the different government departments such as Defense, Interior and Local Government, Education, Health, Justice, Agriculture, Energy, Public Works and Highways, Trade and industry, Social Welfare and other government agencies. Fighting insurgency successfully, it needs to have a deep sense of situational awareness of the conflict and apply the Whole of Government Approach.

I would argue that mastery of Civil-Military Relation is a crucial factor in winning the hearts and minds of the local people. To win the sympathy of the mass base of the insurgents, the soldiers need to review the military doctrine on how to conduct the Civil-Military Operation and all soldiers must undergo training on this particular operation before deployment. Training and educating soldiers on the importance of human rights and the responsibilities that goes along with it will help their organization attain its objective. This approach also reminds us of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs<sup>21</sup> in which delivery of basic government services is paramount. The government must treat the people well, feed them properly, provide food and shelter, provide sense of security and belongingness and elevate their self-esteem.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Robert G. Thompson. Studies in International Security: 10, Defeating Communist Insurgency, The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam (New York: Frederick A. Praeger) 51.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Saul McLeod, "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs." (Updated 2014): http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html.

#### **Address Grievances**

Much has been studied that the rising power of public opinion is a great tool to combat insurgency. If the government can eradicate corruption, deliver properly the basic government services, looking thoroughly for the welfare of the masses, avoid social injustice and implement land reform program to the general public, it can change the perception of the populace. These reforms will increase the legitimacy of the Philippine government as Andrew R Molinar argues, "...led to the turning of the public opinion toward the government." It will be hard for the insurgents to recruit new members because there is no more cause to fight for. And populace support in the rural areas will now turn the tide and isolate the insurgents and it will be easy for government forces to track because they cannot mingle with the civilians.

#### **Deny Freedom of Movement**

Asians have the "Fish and Water Theory of Mao Tze Tung" which is still effective in describing any insurgency situation. The fish symbolizes the insurgent and the water symbolizes the populace support. In order for the insurgent (fish) to be protected, he must have the tremendous support of the populace (water). Drain the water and the fish will die. In Philippines setting, the rebels were greatly supported by the masses or the people. To win the hearts and minds of the local populace, soldiers and other government officials are required to understand the national strategic end state and the meaning of Center of Gravity which is winning the populace support.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Andrew R. Molnar, et. al. *Philippines (1946-1954), In Undergrounds in Insurgent, Revolutionary, and Resistance Warfare* (Washington D.C.: The American University, 1963) 325.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>Revolutionary Communist League of Britain, "The Theory and Practice of Mao," (September 1986): https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/uk.hightide/mao.htm.

#### **Responsible and Transparent Government**

Better governance and no systematic corruption, security of the populace, and development in the countryside is the main core that the government must seriously take into account in conceptualizing comprehensive government anti-insurgency campaign. Efficient and effective governance addresses the basic needs of the people in the countryside and protect the people from insurgents will show credibility in their legitimacy to rule. By delaying the people's expectation due to corruption and personal gains of the public officials will have a trickle effect to the campaign. Time is essential in addressing insurgency problems.

Andrew Krepinevich argues,

"...time allows the insurgent to develop a strong organization and consolidate his base of power. Furthermore the longer the duration of an insurgency the more likely there will be errors in judgment by the authority. These errors in judgment are usually due to the authority's increasing sense of futility and frustration as they try to meet their populace's expectation of a short and decisive conflict. In an effort to meet this expectation the authority will usually take shortcuts in an effort to defeat an insurgency." <sup>24</sup>

Propaganda by deeds is always better than propaganda by words or unfulfilled promise. What the government cannot provide, surely the insurgents will find ways to give that to the populace. The security issue of the people living at the countryside is often than not a challenge for the government. To provide security is a 24-hour obligation so that the daily activities of the people will not be hampered by the insurgents. However, government cannot provide always the security because of the remoteness of the place. Thus, when there are no security personnel, the people are again intimidated, afraid and extorted when insurgents visit the place losing the legitimacy of the government to protect its citizens. To address this security issue, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>Andrew Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1988) 8.

government must provide security detachments and frequent security visibility which will also need additional personnel, funds and logistics to sustain.

People are the political objective of the insurgents and must be controlled by the armed group: "The political aim is to gain control over the population, starting in the rural areas and to destroy the government's prestige and authority." The larger the mass base the better is the freedom of movement, more taxation and quality intelligence collection of the insurgents. A common failure of the government is defeating the insurgents as their main objective not populace as the focus. The government is sending more troops into the jungle to have a decisive battle. According to former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger,

"The basic equation of guerrilla war is as simple as it is difficult to execute: the guerrilla army wins as long as it can keep from losing; the conventional army is bound to lose unless it wins decisively." <sup>26</sup>

They need to find, fix and destroy the enemy rather than focusing on the center of gravity which is the populace.

Winning the hearts and mind of the people and providing valid reason to support the government's effort to defeat insurgency in order for the people to have a conducive environment ready for sustainable development.

#### Other factors

The use of high end information technology and the social media is making an impact in the counter insurgency effort of the government. In the modern world of drones and satellites, these capabilities have contributed much in targeting and surgical military operation against the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>Robert G. Thompson. Studies in International Security: 10, Defeating Communist Insurgency, The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam (New York: Frederick A. Praeger) 29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 629.

insurgents avoiding civilian collateral damage. The government must allocate resources for the improvement of information technology and the use of social media to gain the public opinion and propaganda in favor of the government. Almost everyone is using cellphones and messages can be forwarded in the cellphones. Cellphones are disadvantage to the insurgents because it's a tool to track the location of the insurgents if they are not aware of the capabilities and not strict in using the cellphone. On the other hand, social media is a dangerous tool used by the insurgents. In the case of the ISIS, they have been successful in using social media in their recruitment efforts all over the world.

Finally, the government must have a collective effort to monitor and stop whatever financial external support coming from other countries or terrorist organizations. This is to include non-government offices fronting as organizations to help the people in the rural areas when in fact they are affiliated with the legal fronts of the communist party. The unique party list system in the Philippines is a source of fund for the armed groups. Since intelligence funds are not subject for auditing, these intelligence funds of the different party list affiliated with the communist party of the Philippines are most of the time used to support insurgent's activities, procure propaganda materials, armaments and ammunitions for the armed group.

#### **Conclusion**

This paper illustrated and identified the basic characteristics of insurgency in Philippines setting. Making operational level counter-insurgency campaign plan in defeating an insurgency is a very complex process. Hard lessons from history remind us that simple military solutions to a complex insurgency problem cannot solve the irregular warfare by itself. The government and its dedicated leaders must study and carefully analyze the basic characteristics why insurgency

problems still exist in the Philippines, while other nations are successful in their comprehensive counter-insurgency campaign in other regions. In the words of Robert R. Leonard, understand that "...wars that last longer than expected challenge constitutions, destroy domestic harmony, and cause governments to fall." <sup>27</sup>

The government must utilize all available resources and capabilities in the execution of effective and efficient counter-insurgency campaign. Strictly adhere to the government line of operation with an end state of a long term strategic defeat of the formidable adversary rather than a short term military tactical victory.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>Robert R. Leonhard, *Fighting by Minutes: Time and the Art of War* (Westport, Connecticut:Praeger, 1994), 53.

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