

INSURGENCY AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY

Joe-Akunne Chiamaka O.

Department of Psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Abstract

Insurgency is the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region. The common man engages in this activity because he has more to gain in resisting the government rather than supporting it, and is willing to risk death. Although insurgency has been categorised as this, there are issues that lead to it, some of which is believed to be caused by bad governance. Counterinsurgency is an armed political competition with the insurgents and its fundamental goal is control over the environment, population and the enemy. It employs different approaches in curbing insurgency which most of the time fail. Good governance and the rule of law help reduce state vulnerability to insurgency, while effective intelligence, continuous pursuit of the insurgents, and weeding government forces' saboteurs prelude successful counterinsurgency.

Keywords: *Insurgency, Counterinsurgency, Military Psychology*

Introduction

The purpose of government is to secure the political, economic and collective wellbeing of the citizenry. Obi-Nwosu, (2006), asserts that security of lives and property, food security, education, and fostering cohesion among the citizenry are among the primary functions of every government. These definitions lend weight to the observation that it is dissatisfaction with certain conditions in a state that transforms a portion of the population into an insurgency. Hence, develops when the common man believes he has more to gain by resisting the government rather than supporting it, and is willing to risk death in violent confrontation to achieve his goals, which may be to overthrow an existing government, expel an occupying power, or change the existing system.

According to the United States Government Counter Insurgency Guide (2009), insurgency is the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region. It is a strategy adopted by groups which cannot attain their political objectives through conventional means or by a quick seizure of power. It is used by those too weak to do otherwise. Kennedy (1962), sees insurgency as another type of war, which although new in its intensity, but ancient in its origin and described it as war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins, war by ambush instead of by combat, by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him. He went on to say that it is a form of warfare uniquely adapted to what has been strangely called wars of liberation, to undermine the efforts of new and poor countries to maintain the freedom that they have finally achieved.

Insurgency could also be said to a protracted political-military struggle directed toward subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government or occupying power and completely or partially controlling the resources of a territory through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations. It is characterized by protracted, asymmetric violence, ambiguity, the use of complex terrain (jungles, mountains, urban areas), psychological warfare, and political mobilization, all designed to protect the insurgents and eventually alter the balance of power in their favour.

Further, the United State Government went on to say that insurgency is an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use subversion and armed conflict. Insurgents

are seen to avoid battle space where they are weakest rather focus on places where they can operate on more equal footing. They try to postpone decisive action, avoid defeat, sustain themselves, expand their support and hope that over time, the power balance changes in their favour.

Insurgent groups often is seen to pursue common objective, these objectives are summarised as follows:

- (a) Undercutting the ability of the government to provide the population security and public service, including utilities, education and Justice.
- (b) Provoke the government into committing abuses that drive neutral civilians toward the insurgent and solidify the loyalty of insurgent supporters.
- (c) Undermine international support for the government and if possible, gains International recognition or assistance for the insurgency.
- (d) Obtain the active or passive support of the population.

According to Metz and Millen (2003), insurgency takes two forms, namely.

National Insurgencies: Here the primary antagonists are the insurgents and a national government which has at least some degree of legitimacy and support.

Liberation Insurgencies: Whose goal is to liberate their nation from alien occupation, that is foreign occupation.

However, the United States government, in their 2012 guide to the analysis of insurgency stated that the goals of an insurgency most often fall into one of these five categories:

Revolutionary Insurgency: they seek to replace the existing political order with an entirely different system, often entailing transformation of the economic and social structures.

Reformist Insurgency: They do not aim to change the existing political order but instead, seek to compel the government to alter its policies or undertake political, economic or social reforms.

Separatist Insurgency: They seek independence for a specific region. In some cases, the region in question spans existing national boundaries.

Resistance Insurgency: They seek to compel a occupying power to withdraw from a given territory.

Commercialist Insurgency: They are motivated by the acquisition of wealth or material resources, political power to them is simply a tool for seizing and controlling access to wealth.

There are two commonly observed stages in the development of an insurgency namely.

- a) The first stage normally called the fledging or embryonic stage. At this stage insurgency simmers and smoulders but does not boil over, thus insurgency remains largely inconspicuous. It is vulnerable at this stage that it can effectively be crushed before it takes off. At this stage, the insurgents maintain a low profile for their campaign, as they cannot confront the might of the law-enforcement agencies. At this stage, the first part of the frustration-aggression hypothesis by Dollard and Miller (1939) plays out, where it is seen that insurgents are at the frustration stage thus driven by frustration.
- b) The second stage: At this stage insurgent set down to galvanize their ideas into actions. They adopt a bolder approach and begin to act against law-enforcement agencies. They attempt to make their presence felt and demonstrate their conviction and strength. Insurgency is believed to evolve into conspicuousness as insurgent face the police and security forces, they also mature

and overcome. At this stage, the second part of the frustration-aggression hypothesis by Dollard and Miller (1939) plays out, where it is seen that insurgents being frustrated begin to showcase aggressive behaviour such as violence.

Probable causes of Insurgency

Insurgency is caused by a lot of issues, these issues seem to be resultants of bad governance. Some of the most frequently advised reasons include;

- (a) Demand for recognition
- (b) Tribal affinities
- (c) Personal Envy
- (d) Petty conflicts
- (e) Weak or corrupt government
- (f) Greed for power
- (g) Scourge of ethnic conflict
- (h) Poor economic development.

Thus insurgency could be said to be a conflict and is largely caused by factors arising from differences in language, religion, race, territory and culture.

Two psychological theories could be used to explain the development of insurgency especially the boko haram insurgency in Nigeria.

§ Karl Max Conflict theory:

It stated that a society is in a state of perpetual conflict due to competition for limited resources. This competition tends to put society off-balance because when individuals or groups in society begin to struggle to maximize their share or advocate their own interest of the limited resources that exist, this struggle inevitably leads to conflict and competition, thus may degenerate to insurgency. For example the boko haram insurgency in Nigeria, the *almageries* (believed to be boko haram) pointed out to the government that they do not want western education but the government did not listen to their thoughts as such it brought about misunderstanding which lead to conflict.

§ Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis:

It was proposed by John Dollard, Miller et al in 1939 and modified by Miller, Barker et al in 1941. It suggests that aggression is the result of blocking or frustrating a person's efforts to attain a goal. The theory argues that frustration causes aggression and this act could lead to violence. The relevance of this theory to the insurgency of boko haram is seen when viewed alongside the widespread poverty in Northern Nigeria. Poverty though endemic throughout Nigeria, the rate is highest in the North (Ogege, S. O. 2013). This is a negative condition caused not by the willingness of the people to work but by bad governance. This failure of governance breeds frustrated expectations. It is possible that the *almageris* extremely poor and deprived who have over the years served the rich and extremely rich in the North have come to self-realisation and decided to fight over frustration, hence persons were readily available to be recruited under the auspice of boko haram as a destructive political agent.

COUNTERINSURGENCY

Counter insurgency would be referred to as COIN in the course of this paper. COIN is the blend of comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat, contain insurgency and address its root causes. It is a complex effort that integrates the full range of civilian and military agencies. It is often more Population-Centric (focused on securing and controlling a given population) than Enemy-Centric (focused on defeating a particular enemy group). COIN is an extremely difficult undertaking, which is highly controversial politically, involves a series of ambiguous events that are

extremely difficult to interpret and often requires vastly more resources and time than initially anticipated.

The intent of a COIN campaign is to build popular support for a government while marginalizing the insurgents. At times COIN strategies are seen to usually focus on the population rather than the enemy and it seeks to reinforce the legitimacy of the affected government while reducing insurgent influence. Thus COIN is an armed political competition with the insurgents and its fundamental goal is control over the environment, population, the enemy and the level of security.

COIN is a struggle for legitimacy, the government seeks to prove that it can provide the basic necessities for the people and that it can do better than the insurgents. COIN strives to protect the population from the insurgents, they also seek to separate civilians from insurgents through population control measures, including censuses, identification cards, check points and curfews.

Counterinsurgency Approaches.

The approach a government employ in dealing with an insurgency can be broadly categorized by whether its primary focus is on attacking the insurgents, securing the population or punishing the insurgents and their supporters. Each approach employs violence and military force against the insurgents and each may use elements central to the others, but they differ in their emphasis. The approach a government chooses will probably depend on the country's historical experience, culture, military capabilities and form of government, as well as the character of the insurgency.

These approaches include:

- a. **Enemy-Centric Approach:** This approach emphasizes the destruction of insurgent fighters and infrastructure. It is often characterized by heavy reliance on search and destroy. Security forces operate in near continuous pursuit of the insurgents.
- b. **Population-Centric Approach:** This approach emphasizes on securing the population and bolstering its support for the government, operations to destroy the insurgents are secondary but also important. This approach is characterized by a clear-bold-build approach -by which security forces clear an area of insurgents, maintain a presence in the area to prevent the insurgents from returning, and enable governance and development project that build support for the government and give the population a stake in maintaining security.
- c. **Authoritarian Approach:** It seeks to punish not only the insurgents but also the population that supports them. This method eschews basic counter insurgency best practices-such as minimal use of force/appropriate respect for human rights and winning over the population-seeking instead to make the cost of supporting the insurgents unbearable. Many colonial powers historically employed this approach, but probably only countries with authoritarian government that are unconcerned with international opinion are likely to use this approach in the future.

Success in Counter Insurgency

Success in counter insurgency is an issue that is very vital, it is the end result of the counter insurgency approaches or strategies. A COIN effort may be deemed successful when the following conditions are met:

- i. The affected government is seen as legitimate, controlling social, political, economic and security institutions that meet the populations needs, including adequate mechanisms to address the grievances that may have fueled support of the Insurgency.
- ii. The insurgent movement and their leaders are co-opted, marginalised or separated from the population.

- iii. Armed insurgent forces have dissolved or has been demobilized and/or reintegrated into the political, economic and social structures of the country.
- iv. The government has adequate capacity and willingness to address the root causes of insurgency (opportunity, motive and means), government corruption is reduced and good governance increases.

Trinquier (1961) also suggested three (3) principle that could help in curbing insurgency.

- Separate the guerrillas from the population that supports him.
- Occupy the zones that the guerrillas previously operated from, making the area dangerous for the insurgents and turning the people against the guerrilla movement.
- Coordinate actions over a wide area and for a long enough time that the guerrilla is denied access to the population centres that could support him.

In the same vein, Thompson (1966) also outlined five basic principles for a successful counter insurgency namely;

- The government must have a clear political aim, to establish and maintain a free, independent and united country which is politically and economically stable and viable.
- The government must function in accordance with the law.
- The government must have an overall plan.
- The government must give priority to defeating political subversion, not the guerrillas.
- In the guerrilla phase of an insurgency, a government must secure its base areas first.

Conclusion

Thus, it should be noted that it is usually far harder to totally eliminate insurgent activity than it is to reduce it as a significant threat to the affected government. Sabotage and failure of intelligence are two factors that contribute to the failure of COIN. If there are moles in the military and they tend to leak information gathered for countering the enemy, it automatically weakens the efforts of the government as such elimination of insurgency becomes a hard problem. Thus the writer feels that insurgency especially that of Nigeria (Boko haram insurgency), is something that could be controlled.

It is necessary to then say that the state government should look into addressing the issues of poverty especially in the Northern states likewise making sure that the resources of the state are properly distributed. They should also try to control the leak in information and sabotage in the government as all these measures will in one way or the other help to avoid unnecessary competition that leads to conflict.

REFERENCES

- Dollard, J., Miller. (1939). The hypothesis suggests that the failure to obtain a desired or expected goal leads to aggressive behaviour. *Frustration and Aggression*, Yale University, Press, New Haven.
- Karl M. (1971). Preface to a contribution to the critique of political economy. Tr. S. W. Ryazanskaya, Dobb. London: Lawrence and Whishart.
- Kennedy, J. F. (1962). Remarks at West Point to the graduating class of the U. S. Military Academy. *The American Presidency Project*.

- Melton, S.L (20 13) Aligning FM 3-24 Counter Insurgency with Reality. *Small Wars Journal* Metz, S. and Raymond, A.M (2003). Future war/future Battle space. The strategic role of American land power. Carlisle barrack, Pa! U.S Army war College Strategic Studies Institute.
- Miller, Barker et al (1941). Symposium on the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis, *Psychological Review*, 48, 337 - 366.
- Ogege, S. O. (2013). Insecurity and Sustainable Development: The Boko Haram Debacle in Nigeria. *American International Journal of Social Science*, 2(7), 82 - 88.
- Schaefer R W (). *The Economics of Insurgencies*. A Framework for Analyzing Contemporary Insurgency Movements with a Focus an Exposing Economic Vulnerabilities.
- Thompson, R (1966). *Defeating Communist Insurgency. The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*. New York. F.Apraeges.
- Tomes, RR (2004) Relearning Counter Insurgency Warfare. *Parameters*. 34 (1), 16 - 28
- Trinquier, R (1961) *Modem Warfare! A French View of Counter Insurgency*.
- United States Government (2009) *Counter Insurgency guide*.
- United States Government (2012) *Guide to the Analysis of insurgency*.