

# UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT COUNTERINSURGENCY GUIDE, 2009

## November 23, 2019

### Summary

- This guide gives a detailed explanation on the importance of good governance and how to build it through the parallel development and balance of political, security, economic, and information structures as well as civilian's needs in order to delegitimize an insurgent group.
- The strategy discusses how insurgents succeed when they operate in regions of instability and exhaust a government by elongating a conflict.
- While it briefly acknowledges the choices and structures of insurgent groups, the strategy fails to describe the complexities of these organizations.

### Relationship Between the State and Insurgents

- This strategy rightfully makes the argument that it is important for government forces to unite the political, security, economic, and information structures of a country in a more effective manner than the insurgents can.
  - If a legitimate government can ensure their own position of dominance in the relation to the insurgent group, they are much more likely to outlast the rebel forces.
- By taking a population-centric approach, counterinsurgent actors must strike a balance in information dissemination and information censorship; an excess of information will lead individuals to being apathetic towards the conflict while tight control of information will cause mistrust in the government.
- This strategy correctly demonstrates the importance of developing effective governance structures in order to gain the support and confidence of a local population.
  - By establishing good governance structures, counterinsurgency actors can separate a dependent population from an insurgent group by providing civilians with necessary social services.
- The guide clearly illustrates the various dangers and threats that are presented locally, regionally, and globally because of state failure.
  - Failed states are more likely to host organizations that commit transnational attacks and have their own citizen partake in political violence as well as become targets of political violence.
- This strategy adequately describes how counterinsurgency actors must ensure the stability of a region since unstable states can become safe havens for insurgent organizations.
  - By ensuring that safe havens for an insurgent group cannot be established, counterinsurgents actors removed spaces for groups to plan and prepare in secrecy.
- The strategy explains that state sponsorship ensures the longevity and success of insurgent groups, but it does not mention that state sponsorship can increase the chances of a group being eliminated.
- This strategy acknowledges that it is in a government's the best interest to attempt to break down an insurgent group by weakening their organizational control and their influence in the community.

- This strategy outlines that insurgents who rebel against state actors often follow a series of steps that lengthens a conflict in order to gain an advantage by exhausting the government.
- The strategy highlights the difficult choices insurgents must make between expanding their organization and then increasing the efficiency but sacrificing their security.
  - Understanding this dilemma allows counterinsurgent forces to be more aware of the organizational strains felt by insurgent organizations and how to efficiently utilize them to weaken the group.
- This strategy fails to discuss that a strong, charismatic leader or group of leaders can mobilize a population in favor of their own cause and inspire them to act against a government.
- This strategy acknowledges that the insurgents are evolving to organize their groups based upon networks rather than hierarchies, but it fails to describe how counterinsurgency actors can exploit the failures of networks.
  - By understanding that networks are more susceptible to security breaches, counterinsurgency actors can better craft policy that delegitimizes insurgents while building good governance.
- This strategy neglects to describe how strategy, tactics, and optimism generated from other groups' success can transcend borders.
  - This strategy does not outline a plan on how to manage the political situations that are occurring in neighboring countries and how this could impact the counterinsurgency process.

## **Background**

- This strategy was written in 2009 primarily by the Department of Defense, the State Department, and the US Agency for International Development along with the assistance of six other government agencies.
- This strategy describes a plan that can be molded to counter insurgent groups through the parallel development of politics, security, economics, and information channels to establish control.
- The overarching goal of this strategy is to develop a plan that will prevent the conditions of a successful insurgency from emerging by developing a government and addressing community grievances.
- In order to ensure the longterm success of a counterinsurgency operation, this guide encourages patience and the need for integrated planning by all counterinsurgent actors and continuous monitoring and evaluations of the state as well as periodic assessments of the program.