

"COUNTERINSURGENCY" AND RESEARCH IN 1970

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PREFATORY NOTE

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The title of this symposium, "What is R & D going to do to meet the challenge of counterinsurgency in 1970?" is embarrassingly permissive to the speaker. It allows him to feel he is sticking to the subject if he dwells on any one or on all of a long list of questions, such as:

"What is counterinsurgency? What do we now know about it? How much of what we know about it is attributable to R & D? What insurgencies are likely to be bothersome in 1970?"

As a non-expert in this field, my reaction to General Wienecke's invitation was like that of the child reared in the most permissive of progressive schools, who finally collapses under his burden of freedom and asks: "Do I have to do what I want to do again today instead of what you tell me to do?"

My diffidence about appearing here today is increased by the presence of so many experienced participants in counterinsurgency planning and operations.

Let me warn you that as a social scientist I tend to look upon counterinsurgency as fundamentally a political and policy problem -- that's to say, as a means of pursuing foreign policy aims.

I shall not put forward a menu of studies or an inventory of research needs. Instead I want to discuss some -- just some -- of the policy issues which involve counterinsurgency, which I think have a bearing on a strategy of research.

And let me assure you right now that my colleagues and I are aware of the enormous burdens carried by you

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people in government service. We know something of your needs, your frustrations and your responsibilities. We know also the difficulties of making wise choices in the organization and conduct of research. We have our share of scars from attempts to apply terribly scarce talents to problems that have baffled the best intellects in the research community. And we understand why government sponsors of research have to place their bets on favorites rather than on long shots in order to justify their choices. I shall not presume today to tell you what you should do. Instead, I'll offer some thoughts and I'll outline some problems which I think we've got to face.

#### Insurgencies and Insurgencies

The objectives of U. S. overseas internal defense policy are clear, even though they appear in a variety of policy formulations. Perhaps, they are best summarized as safeguarding and assisting less developed countries to fulfill their aspirations to remain free and independent from communism or other totalitarian domination or control.

It does not necessarily follow from this formulation that the U. S. must oppose revolutions per se. Revolutions are not always contrary to U. S. interests. The point is rather that each case of latent, incipient, or active non-communist insurgency ought to be examined on its merits in the light of U. S. interests.

U. S. policy recognizes that there are varieties of insurgencies, potential or actual, which stem from di-

verse sponsorships. As far as declaratory policy is concerned, we are concerned with all sources of political turbulence affecting U. S. interests in the less developed countries. When incipient violence becomes actual, we may confront any of the following:

(a) Anti-colonial wars, which may be either communist-backed "wars of national liberation" or wars for independence after the style of the Algerian struggle.

(b) Social revolutions, in which communists may play anything from insignificant to leading roles, and may represent the interests of Moscow, Peking, Havana, or indigenous rebels.

(c) Coups d'état -- again with or without major participation by communists of various stripes.

(d) Civil wars, perhaps complicated by leadership representing one or other of the communist centers, and conceivably further complicated by foreign involvement.

(e) Wars among small nations, and local limited acts of aggressions in various places.

Since 1950, most communist gains have been won through anti-colonial wars. Of course there were failures, as in the Philippines and Malaya. In fact, no peacefully decolonized country has ever become a communist property, though there have been some close shaves, Zanzibar for instance.

Meanwhile the number of territories still under Western colonial rule has shrunk to insignificance. Consequently anti-colonial wars will offer fewer opportunities to communists in the 1970's.

One of the things that troubles me about forecasts of the future world is the tendency to predict that future with little reference to what the United States does in the meantime to shape it. I feel skeptical when I see an analysis which says that in 1970 there will be 30 to 32 insurgencies in the world, which may or may not require at that time some form of U. S. intervention. I think we should weld into our forecasts the best estimates we can make concerning the future national policies of the United States and other big or medium powers. The postulation and analysis of policies and programs designed to influence the future strike me as more necessary than prophecies.

Of course it is true that even the greatest powers operate under constraints. The U. S. can influence, but we cannot determine, the character of the future world. The same may be said of the totalitarian dictatorships and oligarchies which we oppose. Like ourselves, the communist countries are constrained by limited resources, by political skills, by domestic pressures, by geography, by the will of others to follow their own paths, and by their basic goals and values. It follows that we need to look at future opportunities for the United States in terms of a pursuit of the desirable constrained by the limits of the possible. We should not expect to reach all our preferred objectives or to attain some sunlit peak where no further efforts are required of us. The world of the 1970's will be just as complicated and frustrating as the world of the sixties. To meet its problems we need a number of



contingency scenarios, analogous to contingency plans and contingency policies. An understanding of the mutual interaction of scenarios and policies is just as necessary for political and military planning with respect to the less developed countries as it is with respect to relations among the superpowers.

The most powerful of the world's communist parties see the underdeveloped countries less in terms of improving their welfare and stability than in terms of exploiting them so as to make trouble for the United States and its allies. At the same time, their own involvement is carefully controlled so as to minimize the chances of a head-on confrontation with the U. S.

Seeking to mobilize all potential sources of support, the communists have made the most of economic discontent and aspiring nationalism. The years of struggle against colonialism have had great appeal even for those people who didn't have to fight very hard for their own independence. So we find the communists trying to maintain the rallying cry of "national liberation" not only among tribal peoples with little or no understanding of the very concept of nationality, but also among the peoples of newly independent countries that have remained on close terms with their former imperial governors. The Soviet theoretical journal, Kommunist, is quite explicit about such tactics. Here is what it had to say in January 1962:

...The chief characteristic of the national liberation movement at this stage is that it is not directed against the colonial administrative regime alone but also against such forms of submission as economic enslavement, forced acceptance

of military blocs and bases, the establishment of puppet governments, etc. Consequently the national liberation struggle can only expand, and not merely in Africa, where there are still colonial administrative regimes in a number of countries, but also in Asia and Latin America....

In other words, any government in the so-called "third area" that accepts political, economic, military, or cultural relations with the West is considered, for operational purposes, a new form of colonial regime in relation to which a case for "liberation" can and should be built. The conception of disguised, or neo-colonialism has opened up new fields for communist agitation and subversion.

From our point of view, it is going to be less easy in the future to find out what is going on. Underground activities are obviously harder to detect than active insurgency such as the Vietnam case. Perhaps the case of the Dominican Republic is a foretaste of the kinds of dilemmas we shall confront increasingly in the future.

The older kinds of rather obvious, communist-inspired insurgency were difficult enough for us to anticipate fully. But we have learned some things about what our policies and operations should be for handling the more blatant forms of communist intervention. If we focus too completely on improving our methods for coping with such clear-cut forms of communist-dominated insurgency, we may be preparing to fight the last battle instead of preventing the next one.

The world is seldom free from violence, political unrest, and civil disorder. In the future it is going to become harder to assess how far any given social, political, or even military turmoil in a given place will develop unfavorably to our own interests. The main problem is to develop better criteria for assessing the future outcomes in terms of our own interests when such disturbances occur. The criterion now given top rank is the extent to which the allegiance and control of a severely disturbed area will pass to the communists. The involvement of Moscow, Peking, or Havana in a local power struggle will clearly affect U. S. interests, and differently according to which communist center is concerned. But what guidelines will we use when communists are involved or come to power without overt outside military help and without obvious internal aggression? Indonesia may well become the test case and not too far in the future.

One of our most important problems is how to assess the specific conditions which improve or lessen the likelihood for communists to convert local disorder into a purposeful political movement which, in turn, may lead to active insurgency. An integral part of such research and analysis is to learn to understand how the behavior of the United States itself, as well as of other big powers, can broaden or narrow the opportunities for the expansion of communist influence in this or that country long before the threat is clear-cut. This means of course that we just have

to understand the domestic conditions in certain countries with far greater subtlety and sophistication than we are able to do at present -- and by the "we" here I mean Americans collectively: in the research business, in universities, in government itself. And when I say "with sophistication and subtlety," I mean with coherent attention to the consequences for those countries of alternative courses of U. S. action, as well as for the interplay of political forces within each country.

As I suggested before, the example of the Dominican Republic may offer lessons that will be useful in making many tough decisions in the future. We must learn how to anticipate and then to gauge the threshold of intolerable communist influence. On our recognition of this threshold may depend our ability to act in a given local crisis with the least possible damage to our long-term position in the whole region within which the crisis has occurred. In a given situation, of course, decisions on what to do, when to do it, and how to do it, are matters of judgment and statesmanship rather than of clear-cut answers achieved through research. But it certainly is possible to take some of the guesswork out of particular decisions by providing an analysis of the environment within which these decisions must be made, especially the secondary and later effects on that environment.

We shall have to be more clear in our own minds in the future about what we are really afraid of, and about what aspects of social revolution in the underdeveloped areas are really inimical to our interests.

Does it help to base our calculations on a blanket disapproval of social revolution in other countries -- even violent social revolution? Can we afford to assume that wherever a social revolutionary movement exists it is being caused by or will be captured by communist organizations, so that we are impelled to do more and more to nip impending revolution in the bud lest we confront a communist fait accompli some weeks, months, or even years in the future? Are we more concerned over the means by which social change takes place in a country than over its ends? In other words, do we care mainly about the methods or about the ideologies of revolutionaries in other lands? Up to what point are we prepared to let revolution develop if there is more or less risk of communists coming to power? Will we be playing the communist game if we attempt to prevent local fires by capturing those whom we suspect of being potential arsonists even before their crimes have been attempted? All of these questions are primarily political, and their answers are of great importance if we are to conduct our affairs according to badly needed principles of preventive medicine or preventive politics. Counterinsurgent warfare or military intervention, as in the Dominican Republic, I would not view as preventive medicine but rather as emergency surgery. And as I indicated a few minutes ago, there is a danger when we reach the point of resorting to emergency surgery that we may encourage the disease to flare up some place else without having sufficiently assessed the implications in scope and in time.

Now let me turn to research strategy which, I think, offers a sense of direction for the early stages of preventive political action and programs, in a crisis situation, and in the actual conduct of active counter-insurgency.

First of all, we should remember that we already possess an enormous body of information. The literature is so vast that someone has compiled a bibliography some 30 pages long listing simply bibliographies dealing with the innumerable political, economic, cultural, and military aspects of the less developed world. We know what this literature covers, but we are much less certain about its quality and relevance. The research community places a great deal of emphasis and invests a lot of skill and ingenuity in the collection of information. I would say that a broad deficiency of the research literature is attention to systematic, thorough analyses of what is collected.

Some researchers may become planners and operators and some of them may even be good at it. But we researchers cannot assume that we have increased the wisdom of those responsible for counterinsurgency operations simply because we produce and sometimes are sponsors of a huge quantity of research output, even if that output were of high quality. Research results and the kind of intellectual discipline under which the researcher works have to be absorbed by the operator so that he can integrate what he gets from such sources

with his own experience and current responsibilities. One important task, then, is to educate the researcher to understand the needs and the processes of operations so that he, the researcher, can pick suitable topics for research and pursue them sensibly. Collaterally, there is room for vast improvement in the means by which operators can better make use of research. Here, I only point to a problem greatly in need of systematic study.

In order to devise and evaluate the kinds of policies and programs that will help prevent the erosion of U. S. interests and which are compatible with local aspirations, we need significant progress in the pertinent social sciences. In the social sciences the distinction between pure and applied research is much less clear-cut than it is in the physical sciences -- although I realize that even there the distinction is not terribly important in some fields. Let me give you just one example, and a very important one, to indicate the interplay between the pure and the applied. When we are involved in some way with a smaller country, we have difficulty in generalizing our experience of that involvement so that we can apply its lessons elsewhere. On the economic side alone, if we don't develop a better theory of economic development than we now have, we are not really able to determine the best ways to make economic assistance to a country serve even the isolated objective of maximizing that country's economic well-being. The better economists whom I know tell me that there is a great deal to be learned in a pure, economic-theory sense about how you get a country with a traditionally

stagnant and nonindustrialized economy to break out of its vicious circle of poverty. Yet, however little we really know about its longer-range effects, economic assistance is one of the major instruments that U. S. policy heavily relies on in the hope of preventing the conditions which are glibly believed to breed communists. Consequently I would say that research designed to increase our basic understanding of economic growth would serve practical ends, whether its applicability to preventive insurgency problems is immediately apparent or not. As for the impact of economic development on political stability, we have an abundance of myths and doctrines about it, but not much reliable knowledge.

There is a tendency on the part of government sponsors of research to adopt too narrow a conception of the research that can be useful for counterinsurgency purposes.

Parenthetically let me bring to your attention another problem arising in part from too much government-sponsor stress on a narrow conception of counterinsurgency research in foreign areas. That is the increasing difficulty of sending competent researchers into precisely those countries in which future trouble is already visible.

There is a general suspicion that foreign scholars are agents who are preparing the intelligence base for active intervention in their domestic affairs. Attention needs to be paid to the prospects of suitable access of researchers to such countries. I know that this very complex matter was brought to private foundation



attention just a few weeks ago. It doesn't help us get needed research done by trying to get sponsorship of it as research on "insurgency" or "counterinsurgency."

I will devote the remaining few minutes to the less latent but more active insurgency state of affairs. I promise to be just as sketchy here as heretofore.

Counterinsurgency requires a delicate orchestration among military, economic, political and other factors. I doubt that the present organizational competence of the U. S. is adequate to conduct the planning and operations of a number of line agencies and bureaucracies whose traditional functions are often far afield from the requirements of counterinsurgency. There are major difficulties in establishing adequate working relationships between the field and Washington and among the various U. S. groups in the field, a situation that seriously blurs and even undercuts our objectives. Our present organizational structure inhibits the flow of the very kind of information which is so vital to the sensible application of support and advice.

I suggest that one of the most critical areas for investigation by research people and by operators themselves is how American counterinsurgency activity can better be organized to meet the peculiar requirements of the subject -- requirements which encompass the ordinary conduct of foreign policy with troubled but as yet non-insurgency areas right through to the most active situations exemplified by Vietnam. Self-study and self-development are even more urgently needed than the proliferation of foreign area research programs which will go on anyhow.

Suppose we try to devise the qualifications for and the actual establishment of an elite counterinsurgency leadership corps within the U. S. Government. Suppose we were to attempt to assemble a small group of people, perhaps 25 to 50 or so, who are already skilled operators in the gamut of major functions under the political warfare concept -- policy planning, political action, military operations, intelligence, psychological warfare, police, economic warfare -- and researchers who are sensible and sophisticated in these matters. Suppose there were an opportunity to sequester the group for a year or more for additional intensive training, using demonstration problems, getting them to work together, and most important, having this "sub-culture" under continuous study and assessment by skilled observers and analysts.

The purposes of the observation of the intensive training effort would be both to assess the training needs and to improve the training process itself; to spot problems for research on how to select new additions to the leadership group; to do research on the procedures necessary for evaluations of effectiveness of the leadership group; and through intensive contact with the trainees, to gain further insight on research topics which could be suggested for others to undertake.

I'm not suggesting that training for counterinsurgency operations be limited to this one experimental group in an artificial environment, or that no training is now going on. On the contrary, a great need is for more

and better assessment of current training programs as measured by their relevance and effectiveness in the field. The successes, the failures, the omissions -- must be spotted with greater specificity and with faster feedback into the training cycle than we now seem able to do.

Let's carry this a step further. Assume that our trained elite corps represents a crackerjack political warfare force available to the highest councils of the U. S. Government for operational service. It would take a considerable amount of analysis by researchers and others to estimate and plan for the effects on conventional U. S. Government organization and operations of fully utilizing such a select force. Obviously such a group could be rendered ineffective very quickly unless it had a most unorthodox backing from the highest level of U. S. Government authority -- the President himself. He would have to be prepared to subordinate the usual agencies representing the United States abroad in the use of diplomatic, intelligence and other instruments of policy. This special force could not function unless the standard agencies were made to give way, yet be helpful to them in specific situations. Just imagine the inter-agency furor that would arise in Saigon if our ambassador, MACV, USIS, USOM and others were directed to conform to the central authority of this new team, even if the supreme head of it were given the full authority and responsibility which Prime Minister Churchill bestowed upon Templar in Malaya.

A comprehensive analysis and assessment of the how-to-do-it of such an approach, which tried to spell out its costs and effectiveness, would at the minimum be a way to better understand our own problems of conducting counterinsurgency operations, even if the outcome of the analysis checked the idea out in the negative.

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To sum up:

1. Let's trade off quantity for quality of research.
2. Let's search for better ways to put into the service of national policy what is already known through experience and through R & D.
3. The political cost of failure to prevent insurgency is terribly high and very hard to recoup by hard-to-achieve excellence in combatting insurgency once that point has been reached.
4. More study of our own capabilities and the consequences of our own policies, particularly at the high levels of strategic planning and organization, is a crying need.

If we concentrate on the problems of the foreigner to the neglect of our own, we may wind up with the logic of the alcoholic who had this experience: He discovered that when he mixed scotch and soda, he got drunk. The next night he tried bourbon and soda. Again he got drunk. The third night he switched to brandy and soda. Drunk again. Thereafter he gave up soda.