

REBELLION AND AUTHORITY:  
MYTHS AND REALITIES RECONSIDERED

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I. ATTITUDES AND VOCABULARY

Insurgency and counterinsurgency is a subject that Americans find especially difficult to view with dispassion. We approach it with a divided sense of identification and commitment, that contrasts sharply, for example, with the approach usually adopted toward these problems by the British. On the one hand, we're disposed to believe -- often too readily -- that communist conspiracy is ubiquitous and overwhelming. (Indeed, one of the reasons we're inclined to fight insurgency wars with techniques and forces -- air strikes, heavy artillery, etc. -- largely drawn from conventional war experience is that we magnify the military dimensions of communist efforts.) On the other hand, we're disposed to view the insurgent cause with sympathy and attachment, because our own tradition originated in insurgency and revolution. A part of the Jeffersonian heritage is a contemporary disposition to embrace the symbols and slogans of "popular" uprisings, and to feel uncomfortable if we don't. We tend to identify with Robin Hood and the Minutemen, and to reject the Sheriff of Nottingham and the Redcoats. It offends us to be cast as counterinsurgents, and this sense of offense impedes cool, let alone cold, analysis. Our

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The order in which the authors' names appear has been based on the random flip of a coin, rather than the arbitrary sequence of the alphabet.

feelings interfere perhaps more with careful analysis of this problem than of others that are also within the wide domain of political and economic development in the third world.

As a result, discussions and studies of insurgency are replete with anecdotes, and assertions, but one finds little application of sensible, let alone scientific, methodology. Explicit hypotheses confronted by data are rare. Writers and commentators seldom suggest or recognize that there is a high probability that assertions they make may be wrong. Affirmations are made about what policies should be followed and what mistakes have been made, with almost no attempt to formulate and test the implicit assumptions and models underlying the assertions.

In a book that we are working on, we are trying to make a step toward developing a standard vocabulary for describing insurgency problems, and toward formulating some hypotheses about these matters in a form where they can be tested. One vocabulary change we want to make is to substitute for "insurgency" and "counterinsurgency" the terms "rebellion" and "authority." "Insurgency" and "counterinsurgency" have been used so frequently and loosely that they have lost whatever precise content they may have had. They have become "color" terms that convey an emotional tenor, and frequently one that is different from what is intended. (For example, in most of the third world, the term "insurgents" really connotes the "good guys," rather than the "bad guys." In Mexico City one of the main boulevards is the Avenida de los Insurgentes.) The conventional terminology is thus evocative rather than accurately descriptive.

As the dictionary defines it, "insurgency" is distinguished from "rebellion" by the lack of organization in the former case. Rebellion is organized, as well as open and armed, resistance, whereas insurgency is defined as a revolt "not reaching the proportions of an organized revolution." (Underscoring added.) Since it's precisely the organizational aspects of insurgency that we think are central for its strength, as well as for its analysis, "rebellion" seems to us a more useful term.

Next, consider the term "authority" in contrast to "counter-insurgency." In developing and strengthening capabilities to deter rebellion, or to fight it if deterrence fails, a structure of authority is required that possesses and uses various controls, and that employs information-feedback to learn how these controls are affecting their intended targets. Now, it is clear that authority can be employed for good or bad purposes; and for purposes that are congenial or hostile to American interests. These purposes should be of central importance in policy formulation, but they oughtn't to be the primary concern of analytical work that, in principle, could be put to use by either side. It is pedestrian to observe that much of the third world is in the midst of far-reaching and uneven social, political and economic changes; and that the frequently disruptive effects of these changes provide a fertile ground for rebellions to grow and to be manipulated. Still, if one wants to deal analytically with the problem of rebellion (against Ky or Castro), or its control (by Ky or Castro), the problem must be "factored out" of the larger set of questions concerning social and economic change to which it is related. In deterring or fighting rebellions or in helping them emerge and advance toward victory, what needs to be factored out and made central to the discussion is the question of authority and control, and of instruments to effectuate this authority and control. We will return to this point later.

Another vocabulary change that we would make is to transfer some of the terminology that has proven useful in analytical work on strategy to the analysis of rebellion and authority. Terms like "deterrence," "coercion," "targeting," "counterforce," "counter-value," and "damage-limiting," may be more useful than the familiar contrasts in which most of the discussion now takes place; for example, "political" vs. "military," "hearts-and-minds" vs. "troops-and-weapons," "doves" vs. "hawks," and so forth.

## II. "HEARTS-AND-MINDS"

One central issue in attempting this clarification of vocabulary and theory is related to certain slogans that litter the field: for

example, "popular support," "winning the hearts and minds of the people," the "fish-in-the-sea" analogy, etc. The doctrines and beliefs that center around these catch-phrases provide a litmus test that distinguishes most of the views encountered in this field from that which we are working on.\*

There are at least two versions of this "hearts-and-minds" (HAM) or "popular-support" line of reasoning: an extreme variant, and a more moderate one.

The extreme "hearts-and-minds" view of rebellion emphasizes the preferences and attitudes of some key constituency (be it "mass," urban elite, or religious or ethnic group). As influences on preferences and attitudes, the HAM view usually focuses on poverty, often coupled with popular awareness of conspicuous consumption by the favored few. As solutions, the HAM view looks to economic development, or, more simply, at income-raising activities.

The HAM view also stresses the role of social, political and economic inequities, as well as the effects of "corruption" and nepotism in widening inequalities of income and privilege. These disparities breed resentment, it is contended, and they strongly influence popular attitudes and preferences. According to this view, solutions lie in mitigating or eliminating such inequalities by economic redistribution, by social reform and by political democracy.

As a third ingredient in the solution, the HAM view envisages charismatic leadership by a "populist" figure. The charismatic leader must be a "popular" leader, and a "man of the people." He is the kind of a man that Maysaysay was, or perhaps has been transformed into by a process of building a legend around a core of truth.

Thus, the major components of the authority-building, counter-rebellion program that accompanies the hearts-and-minds view focus on

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\*For an earlier formulation of this view, see Charles Wolf, Jr., Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: New Myths and Old Realities, The RAND Corporation, P-3132-1, July 1965.

economic betterment, on redistribution and reform, and on a particular quality of government leadership. And the entire process of conflict between insurgents and counterinsurgents, between "rebels" and the established order, is viewed as analogous to a popular election in which the progress of the conflict depends on, and reflects, the distribution of popular preferences. Indeed, the insurgency's emergence is itself often viewed as a reflection of the government's loss of a preliminary heat in a subliminal popularity contest. Progress of the conflict is analogous to progress of an electoral campaign: the "people" judge the contest, and express the preferences that determine its outcome.

Finally, the HAM view stresses one side of the distinction between "endogeny" and "exogeny": between the sources of rebellion that are internal to the country, and those that are externally generated and managed. The HAM view is strongly on the side of "endogeny," compared to some other views that are equally extreme on the side of the exogenous conspiracy, that we will touch on later.

In summary, this set of views: (a) emphasizes popular preferences; (b) looks at the conflict in terms of electoral analogies; (c) stresses endogeny and minimizes exogeny, and (d) focuses on economic benefits, redistribution, democracy, and "populist" leadership as remedies.

There is also a more moderate set of views that can be put in the broad HAM category. This version focuses on the malperformance of government as the source of the insurgency. The malperformance is held to consist both of bad actions and of inactions: actions that increase poverty, or inequity, or the population's sense of grievance; or that fail to alleviate these conditions. The remedy advocated is "effective government," and "institution-building." The aim is to develop an effective structure of institutions and public services that induce the population to identify with the authority, to feel that the authority cares and is disposed to act in the public interest.

In this view, there's perhaps less emphasis on popular preferences and volition than in the more extreme variant, but the emphasis is

still on the demand side of the insurgency problem; that is to say, on the receptivity of the environment for insurgency, and on the readiness of the population to enlist in, and be enlisted by, the rebellion. There is, again, a sort of "representational" and "democracy-in-action" view of the process by which a solution must be arrived at, however it comes out.

Of course, in any categorization of this sort differences are likely to be overdrawn. Frequently both views coexist in one person at different times, or even at the same time. Both views appear repeatedly, for example, in writings on Vietnam by such journalists as Shaplen, Mechlin, and Halberstam, and in much of Roger Hilsman's work on these problems.

### III. SOME CRITICAL COMMENTS ON "HEARTS-AND-MINDS"

Before trying to elaborate an alternative approach, a brief critique of the aforementioned views is in order.

First, the emphasis by the more extreme version on popular preferences rather than opportunities, in trying to explain the behavior of a particular population segment, is unwarranted. Unfortunately, events cannot be tidied sufficiently so that the attitudes and sympathies (preferences) of the population can be readily separated from the opportunities open to them to express these preferences and sympathies. The distinction that we're suggesting is more familiar in economics than political science: between a preference function that shows the wishes of a behavioral unit; and a (production) possibilities function, that shows the opportunities that are available for achieving these wishes -- that is, for acting. It's the failure to distinguish between preferences and opportunities, and between strategies or instruments that may be used for influencing each that characterizes the HAM views.

If one thinks of economic and social improvement programs in terms of influencing preferences, one expects that the population will prefer and favor the side that is providing the benefits.



Focusing on the preference side of the ledger is legitimate, but it is only part of the problem of explaining behavior. The other part involves the effect on opportunities or capabilities, and this effect may offset the preference effect. For example, the provision of benefits to the population through AID-type projects typically raises income. Hence, opportunities to use resources are widened. While there may be an effect on preferences, there will certainly be an effect on opportunities. The income effect places additional resources in the hands of a particular group which can be allocated between activities that support the government side, and activities that support the insurgent side. This "income effect" may or may not dominate the "preference effect" resulting from the economic and social improvement programs. If the income effect dominates, the rebellion will be strengthened as a result of the government's benefits. Whether or not the dominance works one way or the other is a matter for investigation. It is also a matter that will be influenced by the criteria that determine the dispensing of the benefits.\* But the point can be crucial in choosing policies, and it is a point that the HAM views, and most writings in this field, fail to recognize.

As to the more moderate version of the hearts-and-minds view, the equation that is suggested between effective government, and counter-insurgency (and/or authority), is open to two criticisms. First, it runs the risk of being tautologous: an identity, not an equation. Usually, the impression that is conveyed by this view is that the only way "effective government" can be recognized is by its ability to control rebellion. If it's effective, it controls the rebellion; if it controls the rebellion, it's effective. If the advocate of this view is to avoid tautology, he has to specify criteria for evaluating "effective government" that are independent of its ability to counter insurgency.

Now, if tautology is avoided, this moderate view remains vulnerable to a second criticism: "effective government" is too ambitious

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\* Ibid., pp. 6-7, 22-23.

and too unrealistic a requirement for dealing with insurgency situations or threats. The authors of this paper are as enthusiastic as others are for "effective" (democratically-oriented and progressive) government, and for economic and social development. But to say that this is what has to be accomplished to deal with insurgency is to specify too ambitious a set of requirements to be interesting or useful. Pies in the sky are too remote to be tasty. Of course, it may be that it is only in the sky that some pies can be produced and consumed; but we ought to make sure that there are no mundane sources before grasping at inaccessible ones.

#### IV. AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

The alternative approach to insurgency that we want to discuss is, at this stage, conceptual not empirical. Essentially, it attempts to analyze rebellion as a system and as an organizational technique. Let us consider what that means in the environment of the less-developed countries (LDCs), what its implications are for explaining behavior, and what its implications are for "authority-building," "counter-rebellion," or counterinsurgency programs.

First, the view of the LDC environment that underlies this approach is that these societies are highly vulnerable to rebellion, and likely to remain so. This is not to say that it's necessarily in the interests of Mao, Ho, Castro or Brezhnev to exploit this vulnerability. (In fact, we may not have insurgencies in Latin America in the near future precisely because there's very little in it for external powers, aside from Cuba, and perhaps not for Cuba, either). But the vulnerability is manifest, nonetheless. The cleavages, and frictions (social, political, economic, ethnic, etc.) endemic in the LDCs are too familiar to need elaboration. The result is to provide opportunities for organizationally-sophisticated rebellions to get started, gain momentum and erupt into "liberation wars." All this is equally familiar, and does not need to be labored here.\*

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\*Ibid., pp. 7-10.

This view of the LDC environment leads to emphasis on the supply side of the problem rather than the demand side. In effect, what we're saying is that in the LDC environment there is a high level of receptivity or demand for rebellion. Whatever the attempts that will be made to influence this demand, it is likely to remain high for the foreseeable future.

If the demand is likely to be high and inelastic,\* the problem for those who want to influence outcomes becomes how to act on the supply side; how to make the process of organizing an insurgency easier or more difficult. To do that you have to understand what an insurgent organization is, in general terms and in particular cases, and in detail. You have to understand how the insurgent organization functions; how it recruits; how it trains, how it gets supplies; how it pays for them; how it gets information; how it launches an operation; how it evaluates whether an operation is good or bad; how it selects targets. In contrast to the HAM view which stresses the LDC environment and the demand side, what the alternative approach stresses is the insurgent system and the supply side. Just as Gimbel's should study Macy's, and Chrysler should study General Motors to meet or beat the competition, so the Vietnamese (and the U.S.) governments have to study and understand the operations and structure of the NLF, the PRP, and the COSVN to improve operations against them.

Counter-rebellion can then be divided into four tasks or levels relating to the supply side of the insurgency.

(1) One aspect is concerned with influencing the costs and the amounts of the inputs that the insurgent system gets, whether exogenous or endogenous. We mentioned earlier the unwarranted tendency for the hearts-and-minds view to focus on "endogeny," and to diminish or neglect "exogeny." This is unwarranted because, in principle, external sources of inputs are substitutable for internal ones. We have to find out to what extent and on what terms such substitutions are made. Even

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\*That is, inelastic with respect to attempts to reduce it.

if supply were primarily based on endogenous sources, you still would have to know where the inputs come from, and how and what payments are made for them. You still have to look inside the insurgent organization if you are to find out how to make it blossom or wither. The fact that inputs are endogenous doesn't mean that input sources, costs, and means of delivery are less pertinent.

This is a case where the ethnocentricity (perhaps ethnoeccentricity would be better), that we mentioned at the outset, often interferes with analytical work. There's a tendency for American analysts to say an insurgency is an endogenous movement, and therefore the way to deal with it is by influencing internal attitudes and preferences. The associated contention is that exogeny must be demonstrated first if one is to argue that an insurgency either can be controlled or -- to jump over into policy -- needs to be controlled at all. (There may be something in the latter argument: the interests of the United States in controlling rebellion in the third world may be sensitive to the extent to which the rebellion's inputs are externally derived.) But the distinction invites evasion. Money is transferable, and resources are fungible. Resources (e.g., money) that are high value, low bulk, and hence not readily visible, can be transferred from an external source, and exchanged for inputs of higher bulk and lower value (food and unskilled labor), that are procured locally.

Controlling input costs and sources can't be dismissed, whether they're endogenous or exogenous.

(2) The second task of control concerns the process by which these inputs are used and converted into the activities of the insurgent system. For this you also need to "get inside" the organization, to view it from within. In order to impede the operation by which inputs are converted into outputs, you have to "be" there. You have to infiltrate the insurgency (which is obviously easier to say than to do). Ingenuity, effort and resources must be deployed in a different way from the way resources would be deployed if the authority were only concerned with destroying outputs (the third stage of counter-rebellion).

(3) A rebellion obtains inputs and converts them, through a production-organizational mechanism, into various activities: "terror" (an often vague term which we shall replace by a set of more specific categories); small unit actions, or company or battalion-sized actions; sabotage; or "governmental" activities in the areas the insurgency controls. Certainly an important part of counter-rebellion and authority-strengthening is destroying these outputs, but it isn't the whole task. The tasks discussed earlier are important, as well. To distinguish the first two stages from the third, one might say that the first two are counter-production controls;\* the third, destroying outputs, is a purely counter-force effort whose aim is directly to destroy the rebellion's forces.

(4) The final element in the control process is in some sense analogous to what in the strategic, nuclear war context is called "passive defense." Both in military and in civil defense, this is the business of hardening (of building shelters for weapons or people) on the one hand, and of evacuating or dispersing (again, populations or, e.g., bombers) on the other hand. In counter-rebellion, the comparable task is to harden the insurgency's targets so they can withstand more of the insurgent activities. This is essentially what is involved when fortified hamlets and refugee camps are built up, and when improvements are made in the mechanism of authority, of police work, and of the information flows on which control depends. (When "self-defense" forces are built up to weaken the rebellion's attacks, we are in the realm of "active" defense). The aim of defense -- both "active" and "passive" -- is to increase the country's ability to absorb the outputs of the insurgent system without diminishing the authority's control.

For each of these four tasks or levels of control, there are corresponding activities and programs. The evaluation of what programs

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\* A term absent from the vocabulary of current strategic analysis, which has, until now, mostly looked at novel wars of a brevity that makes intra-war production insignificant for the war's outcome.

are effective and what are not, should be formulated in terms of how well a given program does one or more of these tasks. In effect, the first task is to raise the costs of the rebellion's operations. The second is to reduce its physical productivity (by impeding the conversion mechanism). Finally, the third and fourth tasks both try to reduce the value of the rebellion's "product," by counterforce operations and active plus passive defense operations, respectively.

#### V. CONCLUSION

We've been discussing rebellion as a singular phenomenon, although it is obviously plural. There are different stages and different intensities. We've also been talking primarily about an on-going insurgency. One should ask how do you anticipate rebellions, help them to be born and grow, or deter them from getting started and from developing into an advanced stage like that in Vietnam, if they do start. What are the implications of what we've been saying for the fostering or prevention of rebellion, as well as its control or counter-control at an early stage?

To answer these questions would require more time and space than we have here. (That is partly what our book intends to do.) But a few comments may be made, in conclusion, on these questions and on their implications for research and analysis. A governmental authority that wishes to improve its deterrence and war-fighting capabilities in this context has to improve its capability to maintain accurate and timely surveillance of what is going on in the country, and has to increase the difficulties that face a potential rebellion. Now, this means the authority's ability must be sharpened for observing the process of recruitment, and of financial and logistic operations, and the organizational development of the rebellion as it starts, and in other cases where it has started. If you wanted to learn something about the process by which a successful business firm got started so that you could perhaps repeat it, or hinder it in other industries, you would study how the firm was set up; where the leadership and management came from and how they operated; where it bought its inputs,

what production processes it used to convert these inputs into a marketable product; how it forecast changing consumer tastes and accommodated to or influenced them; what distribution system it used; how important were particular individuals, as distinct from the entire organization, at different stages of the process of growth, and so on. In terms of research and analysis, this is exactly what needs to be done to increase our understanding of rebellion, and to improve both our intellectual and our operational equipment for controlling or inciting rebellion, and for building or demolishing authority. We must understand the organization and operations of past insurgencies better. And anticipating and controlling present or potential rebellions requires that the same observation and understanding be sought as a continuing objective of researchers and operators concerned with these problems.

Finally, we should make one thing clear. We're not arguing against trying to win the hearts and minds of the people, and to do all manner of good things. We have a strong taste for them. They're good things to do (usually), and they're often interesting. Nation-building is a fine activity, and its interest content is high. Winning hearts and minds, influencing preferences, and establishing rapport between public institutions and the populace is a worthy task to which ingenuity and resources should be directed. However, contrary to prevalent doctrine, we don't think this is the principal way to get at the problem of rebellion (insurgency). Control of insurgency should not be viewed as identical with nation-building and with economic, social and political development in the underdeveloped world. Counter-rebellion is an important problem, and a difficult program in its own right, but it is not the same as modernization and development. The former is a smaller universe than the latter.

To some extent, this point is simply a difference between the long and the short run. We would rather say it is the difference between dealing effectively with the problem of deterring or counter-ing rebellion, and not dealing with it. One may lose control over the long-run by neglecting the short-run.

It is desirable for both research and policy purposes to separate the control of rebellion from all the other problems in the third world. If the separation isn't made, everything ramifies into everything else. If rebellion is tied in with all of these other problems to which it has, admittedly, some relationship, the result is to hinder improved understanding and operations concerned with the control of rebellion itself. As mentioned earlier, you have to "factor out" a problem in order to deal with it. When the problem becomes embedded in everything else, it becomes unmanageable. Research and policy in this field should be more modest in setting goals if it is to be more successful in reaching them.



