

Policing Society in Counterinsurgency[©]

It is common practice in counterinsurgency to augment the police with military assets. This practice requires that military forces operate in a continuum from heavily armed police through the spectrum of operations to full on combat. This use of the military in other than traditional roles, illuminates a question, what is the police role in society and how does the military assist in this function during crisis?

This question principally arises because the military is attempting to augment the police in an effort that is not military centric. Traditionally the military is seen as a tool of force; the means to destroy an enemy's capability to fight. This ability is not optimal in most counterinsurgent conflicts.¹ This excess ability is because insurgency is a socio-political phenomenon, which develops a guerrilla force as a byproduct. A political opportunity existed for a resistance movement to grow into a counter-state. This counter-state develops in authority over time, if unchecked by the government, with an eventual armed wing. The armed wing, or guerrillas use violence as a tool; a tool to demonstrate the weakness of the state and the strength of the insurgency. The net result is a growth in the authority of the insurgency over the population.

How did this situation arise? For whatever reason the power elite of the state lost authority and influence. This loss can be from political or military defeat, rapid fluctuation in wealth and status or a shift in political or societal norms. From this opportunity, groups mobilized and grew in ability and strength to challenge the state. Normally police function as the states physical manifestation of authority over the population. The police act as a form of formal social control. When deviant behavior is organized and mobilized into an insurgent movement, it exceeds the police capacity to control society. The military augment the police role of providing formal social control.

Stan Cohen defines social control as, "Those organized responses to crime, delinquency and allied forms of deviant behavior and/or socially problematic behavior

¹ This attrition based warfare capability is of little use until the third strategic phase is achieved in insurgency. Once the insurgents are in War of Movement the military can use its powers in an optimal manner, but by this point much of the population is lost to the insurgent side of the conflict.

which are actually conceived of as such, whether in the reactive sense (after the putative act has taken place or the actor been identified) or in the proactive sense (to prevent the act).”² This definition is broad for its use in counterinsurgency, but it provides a foundation for understanding that social control is a mechanism to maintain a level of normalcy in a state. Joint Publication 1-02 defines of insurgency, “As an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and conflict.” Insurgency then, is a states failure in maintaining social control, when an allied form of deviant behavior confronts it. The military’s role is to assist the police in regaining formal social control. The military assists the police because the level of organization of the insurgent group exceeds the capabilities of the police to control it.

The term social control infers the use of proactive means to achieve results. Although social control is exerted in predictive forms, through the development of proactive social controls it can also be seen in its reactive form as well. To understand, and ultimately create and maintain social control both forms are necessary. In both forms, proactive and reactive, social control exerts influence upon the individuals in society. Collectively, this process reproduces combined attitudes, values norms and practices of a society.³ Informal social controls are prevalent in upward social control.⁴ This upward control is the manifestation of the common beliefs and cultural frame of the society’s weaker class exerted upon the more powerful. The power elite maintain the ability to modify or adopt formal controls and provide downward social control onto the less powerful sections of a society, but the less powerful have the ability to shape the informal controls, which over time shifts the perception of formal control.

The police maintain social control through the “policing” of society. Policing is the function of maintaining formal and informal social control. Formal social control differs from informal social control in its intent. Formal social control has the purposeful organization and function of diagnosis, persuasion, intervention, and coercion that aims to deal with deviancy of different kinds. Informal social control instills particular norms

² Cohen, Stan. *Visions of Social Control*. Polity Press (Cambridge, 1985). pp 3

³ Innes, Martin. *Understanding Social Control: Deviance crime and social order*. Open University Press, (England, 2003). pp 6

⁴ Black, D. *The Behavior of Law*. Academic Press, (New York, 1976).

and knowledge in the conditions of existence of society without being the primary purpose. The critical difference between this informal control and that of formal control is the intent.

Governments provide informal social control in many unintended ways. Schools provide a prime example of informal social control. Schools instill norms and values within future citizens, but the primary purpose is not to create social control it merely develops as part of the educational process. Police are an excellent example of a government's effort to provide formal social control. The police fulfill three roles in their function of maintaining social control. The first role is that of Crime management. Crime management is the detection and prevention of criminal acts. Principally this is seen as a reactive element of policing. In crime management the security forces (in western societies these are usually the police) within a society don't seek to prevent the crime, but to solve it and bring the culprits to justice. This function works because it maintains the impression on society that law and order are in place. This impression management serves to engender society to the task of enforcing the law.⁵ within insurgencies this impression or perception of civil order is lost. Those civic entities tasked with achieving this impression are failing.

The second role is order management. Order management seeks to resolve conflict at the lowest level possible. To police order within a society elements of security forces seek to resolve conflicts before they become criminal. Alternately, if the act is criminal the police have the ability to resolve the underlying issue before the criminal acts escalate. Similarly, the effectiveness of this requires that the police or security agency maintain a level of legitimacy in the population. A common example of this is police involvement in domestic disputes. If a dispute between neighbors has not escalated to the point where battery or assault has occurred responding officers look to resolve the issue without resorting to arrest. The police act as "honest brokers" with the intent of not laying judgment, but precluding any escalation.⁶

The third role is that of security management. This is a generic function of the visible manifestation of the states authority over its territory. In this role security

⁵ Manning, P. *Police Work*. Waverland Press, (Prospect Heights, 1997).

⁶ Not being a peace officer this statement is made without having formal training in responding to domestic incidents.

management, “Restricts the exposure of members of the public to an array of material risks and dangers, alongside a more subjective reassurance function, that should the need arise someone charged with exerting control over a troublesome situation.”⁷ This function of security management lacks a concrete example because it is the maintenance of a perception. Society remains stable when the perception of security is maintained, this lack of perceived security leads to instability.

In an insurgency, the states police or security apparatus is ineffective in fulfilling these roles of policing. In conjunction with this, a degradation of informal control leads to a situation where insurgents can thrive. It requires a disruption of both formal and informal controls to create the political opportunity for rebellion to flourish. This concept of opportunity fits within a structuralist approach to revolution. Jeff Goodwin in his description of the state centered approach to insurgency examines the causal mechanisms of revolution processes whereby the state shapes, enables or constrains socio-political, cultural, and economic phenomenon.⁸ The state has the ability to shape the environment the insurgency grows with-in. Opportunity is partly, if not mostly, due to the state’s approach to exerting control over society.

The police or security forces of the state use differing strategies to achieve and maintain control. There are three contemporary perspectives to achieving this control. The first approach is community policing. Community policing is an economy of force measure. Through the development of closer ties between the local population and the security forces the quality and amount of information increases. This increase in qualitative and quantitative information adds to the efficiency of the policing conducted by the security forces. This increase effectiveness has the effect of bolstering the confidence in the police and therefore the willingness to work with them. This community policing hinges on the police conducting foot patrols on a regular route. The bond that is forged between the population and the police through recurring contact cannot be mimicked with any other tactic. The weakness to this approach in counterinsurgency policing is that the informal social controls of the society have

⁷ Innes., pp 65

⁸ Goodwin, Jeff. “The State-Centered Perspective on Revolutions: Strengths and Limitations.” *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991*. Cambridge (Cambridge University Press, 2001). pp 35-64.

weakened or collapsed to such an extent that there is a lack of informal social leaders to provide guidance and encourage the link or cooperation with the police.

Zero Tolerance Policing was made famous in New York City for its success in turning around the crime rate. Zero Tolerance Policing relies on three principles for success: early intervention, controlling trivial offenses, and reducing petty crime. The first principle is early intervention. Through the prevention of any escalation of criminal acts, processing and solving the crime is not only easier but establishes a more manageable work load. This early intervention principle supports the second principle of Zero Tolerance Policing, controlling trivial offenses. Controlling even trivial offenses serves to create or repair the “broken windows” in a community. By controlling even trivial offenses the third principle is supported, which is reducing⁹ petty crime. The core belief driving Zero Tolerance Policing is that context plays a significant role in the actions of a population. If a neighborhood has “broken windows”, then the population feels that there are no restrictions on their actions and that the governing authorities responsible for policing either are incompetent or do not care. This broken windows concept behind policing was developed by James Wilson and George Kelling.¹⁰ According to their epidemic theory of crime, crime itself is contagious and has a tipping point in physical manifestation within a neighborhood.¹¹ Zero tolerance policing was used in New York City to physically change the surroundings while enforcing even misdemeanor crimes. The net effect of this was an overhaul of the social context. From an anthropological perspective, the superstructure of the city changed to deter crime.

New York City did not achieve this success in Zero Tolerance Policing through a shift in tactics alone. The police force increased in size by over 12,000 officers.¹² The command and control structure of the New York Police Department (NYPD) was changed as well. The physical command and control structure increased to disseminate intelligence and commands in a timelier manner. Authority was delegated to subordinate commanders and the misdemeanor stops were used to increase intelligence from the

¹⁰ Gladwell, Malcolm. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Back Bay Books, (New York, 2000). pp 138-142

Innes., pp 69-71

¹¹ Ibid., pp 133-145

¹² Innes., pp 70

street. The Zero Tolerance Policing model employed in New York City was not the most economical, in relation to other techniques, like community policing, but the effect is definitive.

The final modern policing model in Intelligence led policing. In this method, the interface with the civilian population is conducted to gain intelligence, which is used to head off criminal events. This requires more undercover work than other policing models and requires establishing networks of informants. One major flaw in this policing model is a tendency to focus on the usual suspects. Established intelligence networks provide information on the same specified targets within a community. Criminal activity outside of the established networks will not be intercepted and police are relegated to their traditional crime solving pattern.

With an understanding of formal and informal social control and how security forces, in western societies the police, maintain formal social control a more developed understanding of the military's role in counterinsurgency can be developed. Insurgencies grow because there exists an opportunity in the society. This opportunity grew from a shift or change in the informal social controls already in place in the society. This is compounded by the inability of the governmental organizations ability to provide formal social control over the growing threat. By the time a military is involved in an insurgency simply augmenting the police on patrol will no longer suffice to re-establish social control. The military forces must adopt a hybrid of the policing strategies described above to regain control.

The military brings with it similar abilities as those described in the augmentation of the NYPD. The use of the military in counterinsurgency provides the increased work force, command and control, rapid deployment, and ability to relentlessly follow up that was the hallmark of the NYPD success. What the military lacks is the expertise of conducting intelligence led policing and community policing. Effective policing utilizes elements of all three police practices; the result is that formal social control maintains order when deviant entities lash out.

Military units that are involved in counterinsurgency are called upon to provide social control where those elements of society that normally provide social control have failed. This means that the military is providing more than traditional police functions,

but is called upon to operate across the spectrum of society where social control is required. The paradox is that the military is ill suited to provide the formal social control because of its training, but is capable from the command, control and a manpower stance. What the military usually lacks is a mindset, or vision of how it should provide formal control and rebuild informal social control. The challenge to commanders is providing the proper guidance to their units so they can succeed in counterinsurgency.