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Paramilitary Groups: Local Alliances in Counterinsurgency Operations

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Local allies are central to counterinsurgency campaigns, but their role is not well understood beyond the provision of general political support and access to local knowledge. This paper examines the organization of local allies into paramilitary groups within the context of the three-step recruit-withdraw-renegotiate strategy adopted by counterinsurgents. After describing the model, I use four brief case studies of Iraq, Algeria, the Indian Punjab, and Colombia to illustrate the general process. I conclude with a section laying out general principles of paramilitary management.

Recruit, Withdraw, Renegotiate

Military invasions seldom produce lasting victory against insurgencies, but they create the opportunity for identifying potential local allies. It is not important who the ally is so long as the insurgents come to see them as the collaborators and an irreconcilable enemy; the government could distribute low-grade weapons generally to see who resisted and who passed the weapon to the other side. Since the thing the government lacks most is information, this is a way to discover who's who. The organizing and arming of groups outside the government creates a direct challenge to the rebels who are trying to impose their own order. The better organized and better armed these groups are, that is, the more robust the paramilitary formation, the greater the challenge the rebels perceive. A civil war ensues during which the government withdraws from the conflict. The extent and duration of the withdrawal depends on the specific conditions of the cases, but the intent to let the local competition play itself out.

If the paramilitaries do a good job and the rebels are losing, the counterinsurgents offer the insurgents a peace deal. If the deal is taken, the government moves to disarm, demobilize, or disengage the paramilitaries from the conflict. The government can bribe them, absorb them into the regular police or the military, and if everything fails physically disarm the groups.

More often, however, the insurgents are better motivated than the paramilitaries and appear to be prevailing in the civil war. If this happens, the army returns to strengthen the paramilitaries more. In a few iterations of this process, the paramilitaries become more efficient and motivated to fight the rebels from having to continue fighting in the civil war. The growing violence of the civil war also justifies counterinsurgent escalation in the use of force and allows increasingly harsh measures necessary for eliminating insurgencies. Now the government, assured of local allies and access to local knowledge, can conduct an offensive campaign to kill key rebel leaders and grind the insurgency to a halt.

There are risks involved in the strategy of course: the biggest is the possibility that the rebels and the local allies might cut a side-deal. Ethnic, religious, ideological, political, and personal differences preclude reconciliation, but arming competing groups in a way that creates a direct challenge to

rebel authority marks an unbreachable line. A well-funded and well-armed paramilitary formation not only produces mistrust, but also ensures that the rebels cannot score an easy victory and obviate a polarizing civil war necessary for the strategy to succeed.

This incentive to fund and arm paramilitaries, however, increases the possibility of the paramilitaries becoming too powerful and rejecting government control. This becomes more likely when the insurgents are able to secure independent means of funding separate from the government. Access to drugs, minerals, and other natural resources or another state or an ethnic diaspora can become the sources of independent support. Sometimes as a result, paramilitary groups will scuttle peace deals to further their own longevity. The government mitigates these risks with slow starts to alliances, working with competing groups to see which is the most competent and the most amenable, and judiciously managing the money flow.

The strategy can still fail to secure loyal local allies, keep paramilitary groups in check, and certainly, the government often stumbles upon it rather than coming to it purposively, but it is a pattern of counterinsurgency success that remains unrecognized in the policy and the scholarly literature. Any war needs an internal mobilization to match the threat. The general logic of the supports that idea: counterinsurgent governments, usually through a process of trial and error, draw sharper lines in the population and shore up their own support before launching the final assault against the insurgency. The model is contingent with different outcomes possible at decision-points in a Markov tree.

Iraq

The most prominent recent case of counterinsurgency success is that of Iraq. A large number of Iraqi Sunnis, after years of backing the insurgency, decided to support the American effort in the country. Why? Popular accounts of the Sunni turnaround argue that it was a consequence of al-Qaeda imposing its fundamentalist views on tribal Sunni culture, of young turks riding roughshod over tribal elders, and even compelling fathers to marry their girls to Islamist fighters. But these explanations assume that al-Qaeda leaders were not thinking very much at all. From what we know about al-Qaeda, and based on their success in infiltrating tribal Afghan society in much the same way, this characterization of the organization seems improbable. Moreover, it is unclear why these problems would erupt three years after the insurgency began as a joint enterprise between tribal Sunni, Baathists, and al-Qaeda. To the contrary, we should expect alliance bonds to strengthen because of fighting together against a common enemy.

To explain the timing, which would make the story of the Sunni turnaround more compelling, we have to look at the civil war of 2006 and 2007. The US contributed to the civil war by invading the country and by arming Shia paramilitary groups. These groups existed previously, but were ragtag. The Al-Badr militia and even the Mahdi Army became well-funded and well-armed entities only after the US invasion. Iran contributed to their revitalization, but not nearly as much as the US. With the first-ever Shia rise in Iraq consolidating through elections, the Sunni, led by Al-Qaeda in Iraq, took the war to the Shia, who were seen as collaborating with the US. Once the Sunni began to bomb Shia mosques, the rearmed Shia responded with a savage campaign on ethnic cleansing that routed the Sunni in Baghdad. With the civil war certain to produce a Shia victory, the embattled Sunnis turned to the United States for help and promised to help to end the insurgency.

It was in this larger context that the surge worked. The surge's success has been puzzling. How were more troops in Baghdad going to reduce the violence presumably emanating from the Sunni Triangle? In this version of the story, the surge did not target the insurgency, but the Shia

paramilitaries after the US had struck a peace deal with the Sunni tribes. The surge froze the ethnic cleansing of Baghdad: the Shia could not proceed any further with it and the Sunni could not come back to undo what had been done. Once the Shia were reassured that the Sunni were not going to come back, it became possible to ask for the more extreme elements of the Shia paramilitaries to be disarmed. The logic of the Mahdi Army, looking for its share of the Shia rise to power, fell apart in this fashion.

No account of the war suggests that America deliberately ignited the Shia-Sunni conflict to take advantage of it. Yet it is hard to deny the cycle of recruitment, abandonment, and renegotiation of local alliances. The search for local allies in Iraq naturally brought up the Shia. Once the Shia became armed and organized, they became a strong contender of power in the Iraq, upending decades of Sunni rule in the country. Because the Shia presented a legitimate and robust claim to rule Iraq, Shia-Sunni reconciliation became increasingly improbable. Once the Shia mosques were attacked, retribution was inevitable. Finally, without the threat of Shia victory, dramatically manifested in the ethnic cleansing of Baghdad, it is doubtful that the Sunni would have turned to the United States so completely.

Commentaries about the surge success catching many people unaware suggest further that the positive outcomes were not guaranteed. At each step, the outcomes of the process remained contingent. The Shia may not have accepted recruitment as collaborators of the United States. The civil war may not have happened—the Sunni may have sought Shia cooperation to fight against the invading Americans. No one really knew how big of an effort was necessary to ensure that the Shia became a competitive faction in Iraqi politics after decades of subjugation. The Shia victory in the civil war was not certain. The Sunni might in fact have won were it not for effective organization and leadership of the Shia paramilitaries, an artifact of American assistance. If the Sunni won the civil war, the direction of the US strategy would have been different. The US would have to renegotiate with the Shia to form death squads that targeted specific insurgency leaders. This strategy was tried with the Special Police Commandos. Even now, final political reconciliation between the Shia and the Sunni remains uncertain. The Sunni resurgence with the Awakening movement has probably made apex sectarian cooperation in Iraq less likely seeing that they can now function as their own separate entity. It is this possibility that leads a strong war opponent such as President Obama to accept the necessity for keeping 50,000 American troops indefinitely in Iraq.

Algeria

If the American strategy in Iraq was somewhat serendipitous, the Algerian campaign against Islamists in the early nineties was appears to have been more deliberate. An insurgency broke out in Algeria after the country's military-backed government cancelled parliamentary elections in 1992, which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was expected to win. The FIS had an Islamist agenda, which included the imposition of *sharia,* which was opposed by the National Liberation Front (FLN) government that had itself won national freedom from France in a brutal insurgency campaign. The FIS was outlawed and the military arrested thousands of its supporters and sympathizers were sent to prison camps. FIS supporters not caught in the dragnet organized themselves into two umbrella groups: Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), which was the armed wing of the FIS, and breakaway group of radical called the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). The insurgent groups found safe havens in the mountains in the northeastern part of the country and the rebellion grew in strength over the next couple of years as the government's counterinsurgency efforts faltered.

Then ahead of the 1995 general elections, which had taken on political significance due to government efforts to negotiate with the FIS, the Algerian army launched a major push into the

liberated zones where the insurgents held sway. In particular, the army invaded a GIA stronghold, an inverted triangle south of Algiers called Mitidja. As the army cleared a village or a town of rebels, it established self-defense groups called the Patriots. The set-up unfolded into spiraling cycles of revenge and retribution. In an effort to deter collaborators, the GIA conducted a series of massacres of entire families, even entire villages, associated with the Patriots. Stathis Kalyvas, who investigated the logic of the massacres, has argued that the GIA was quite rational in resorting to spectacular violence in an effort to stem its losses in the region. What was puzzling, however, was that the army did not step forward forcefully to defend its local allies. Here Kalyvas finds that the government purposefully allowed the insurgents to consolidate within the so-called "Triangle of Death" in an effort to consolidate its own support in the rest of the country. This support not only allowed the harsh counterinsurgency campaign that followed, but also the massacres weaned the moderate AIS away from the radical GIA. The AIS declared a unilateral ceasefire in 1997. In Mitidja, the massacres created sufficient motivation for retribution among Patriot families that the GIA became increasingly isolated in an area it has virtually ruled not to long ago. Sporadic GIA violence continued, but the group was finished as a political force.

The process in Algeria differed from the process in Iraq. There was greater deliberation in planning the strategy in Algeria. Moreover, the government returned to the fray on the side of the paramilitary groups and together these forces went after the remaining rebels. In Iraq, the incumbent authority renegotiated its position with rebels and used forces to prevent the rebels and the paramilitaries from altering the ground realities emerging from the civil war.

Indian Punjab

A similar story emerges from Indian counterinsurgency campaign against Sikh extremists in the Punjab. The Sikh rebellion began in four districts bordering Pakistan. The region was a hotbed of Sikh ethnic nationalism and the ability to cross the border gave the rebels access to resources and safety when required. Military action on the Golden Temple in 1984 radicalized moderate Sikhs. The Indian government sent the federal police, the Central Reserve Police Force, to restore order, but the CRPF did not have the local knowledge to mount an efficient counterinsurgency campiagn or the size and capacity to suppress the rebellion with force. Finally, the Indian Army was sent to occupy the state in 1990. The Army's strategy put pressure on the rebels, but failed to alter the course of the rebellion itself. Rather than eliminate the insurgency, Army operations, focused on the border districts, squeezed the militancy into the rest of the state.

In 1992, K.P.S. Gill became the Punjab state police chief. Gill decided that the problem had become too big. He needed to isolate the insurgency to the three border districts even allowing the rebels to consolidate there. He lobbied to disperse the Army across the state, but had limited success since the Army was unwilling to devolve command authority lower than the battalion. He sought to transform the state police department by bringing in officers from outside the state and giving them extraordinary operational authority. One of the tasks these police officers had was to raise and arm village defense committees in each community in their areas. Armed villagers were expected to refuse rebel demand for food and shelter. The insurgent response targeted the members of the self-defense groups and their families. Gill moved to build confidence among his local allies by giving members special police powers. The powers were left undefined and allowed great latitude to arrest and detain and shoot to kill. Eventually the rebels began to congregate back to the border districts where they had the greatest popular support. Once insurgent violence in the rest of the state fell, Gill created special task forces, in many cases using former members of the self-defense groups, to target and eliminate specific rebel leaders.

Gill's approach did not abandon the local allies completely. But his village defense committee system created a series of seemingly pro-government outposts without direct state protection. The committee members and their families were vulnerable to rebel attacks—and these did come soon after their formation. Gill was also quicker to absorb the special police officers and the village defense committee members—and most importantly their young sons who were prime targets of insurgent recruiting—into the state police department. These are differences that reflect the particular conditions in Indian Punjab—the special police officer, for example, was pre-existing practice in India going back the the British. But in trajectory of counterinsurgency was similar to Iraq and Algeria—and even the duration of the process, about 18 months, was similar across the cases.

Colombia

Colombia is a case that has defined the risks of paramilitary groups. In the mid-seventies, the country experienced a growing leftist insurgent violence. President Turbay gave the military extraordinary powers of arrest and detention through decree 1923 known as the Statute of Security. Army chief Fernando Landazabal knew that his forces were not capable of fighting the guerrillas alone. The guerrillas were fighting a total war, *la combinacion de todas las formas de lucha*—the combination of all forms of struggle. He sought outside help issuing a series of directives designed to raise self-defense groups (the Counter-Guerrilla Manual of 1979; the Manual of Combat against Bandits or Guerrillas Resolution 0014 of June 25, 1982, and the Regulation of Counter-Guerrilla Combat). He asked his officers to work with businessmen, landowners, ranchers, and other groups vulnerable to the guerrillas to raise paramilitary forces.

In a long Colombian tradition of self-defense, those affected by guerrilla depredations had already begun organizing themselves under the threat of guerrilla kidnapping and extortion. But it was at a meeting called by the Colombian army in Puerto Boyaca in 1982 where a hat was passed around to collect the money to field the first paramilitary group. Landazabal's army continued to supervise. The XIV Army Brigade established in Puerto Boyaca, Medellin, and later stationed in Cimitarra and Puerto Berrio became the coordinator of paramilitary activity.

The drug lords who were beginning to acquire vast tracts of property with their criminal wealth more independently adopted Landazabal's initiative. Like other landowners, the guerrillas also threatened them. When the guerrillas kidnapped the daughter of one of the drug lords in the hope of ransom, the drug lords organized their own paramilitary group the MAS to kill the rebels and their families. The Colombian army did not care that the criminal resources funding the paramilitary groups so long as they were being used to fight the leftists.

The initial onslaught destroyed the urban guerrilla groups such as the M-19. President Betancur came into office in 1982 and seeing a political opening offered a general amnesty to the guerrillas. He even initiated negotiations with the FARC, the rural guerilla group that had grown in strength while the others were being eliminated by the paramilitaries. The talks resulted in the formation of *Union Patriotica* (UP), a political party with the backing of the FARC, the rural guerrilla group that managed to survive the paramilitary onslaught, and the Communist Party of Colombia. The UP burst into popularity. In 1986, it fielded a presidential candidate who got more votes than any other leftist did in the past. But Betancur was not able to disarm the paramilitary groups. In a second wave of violence, the paramilitary groups assassinated key members of the UP and many of the party's candidates for office, including its presidential hopeful. These attacks widened and intensified after the 1988 devolution of power law that introduced elections for the officers of mayors and town councilors across the country.

Over the last twenty years, the dimensions of the paramilitary problem in Colombia changed, but the trajectory remains set since the mid-eighties. The paramilitary groups became for all practical purposes another rebellion against the state. In an effort to rehabilitate the groups to their old role, paramilitary leader Carlos Castana, formed an umbrella organization called the United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia (AUC) and rearticulated Landazabal's justification in the late-nineties. AUC even set up a website with information about various units and organization. But Castana was known to be a drug lord himself. His mysterious death finally weakened the AUC. President Uribe's term has seen a very public and deliberate effort, backed by US assistance, to reassert state control over Colombia's paramilitary group.

The counterinsurgency strategy failed in Colombia in part because the state could not disarm the paramilitaries after Betancur had struck his peace deal. Once the drug money began to finance paramilitary groups, the state was outmatched. Eventually, the cartels corrupted the paramilitary groups by using the argument of self-defense—and their enormous new resources—both to protect themselves from state action under U.S. pressure. The Colombian counterinsurgency effort has since faltered—the FARC continues to be a threat though it is depleted—because the paramilitaries turned rebels. Despite the failure, the case illustrates the central role played by local allies. Other cases from the Russians in Chechnya to the American campaign in Afghanistan show similar rough-and-tumble in counterinsurgency practice.

Principles of Paramilitary Management

What can we learn from the empirical cases? First, our knowledge of counterinsurgency process is nebulous. Specifically, we talk a lot about local support, but beyond access to local knowledge, we do not provide causal mechanisms of local support can bring victory.

Local Allies

The hearts and minds theory, the predominant school of counterinsurgency thinking, sidesteps the issue of how local allies help win campaigns. It treats local support as the objective of counterinsurgency operations. Once local support is won, the government can claim political legitimacy. The remaining effort is a mechanical matter of military pursuit. This misses the point that winning local support in practice implies the support of a local faction. How does winning over a faction translate into winning the war?

To win even that support, the hearts and minds approach suggests a combination of carrots and sticks, a helping hand with development and military measures that make support for the rebellion appear to be futile. In practice, the hearts and minds strategy has worked as a hearts-first strategy providing foreign aid for economic and political development in the hope of winning political allegiance. Contrary to the theory's expectations, development aid has repeatedly encouraged insurgency by providing new cause and means to rebels. The leakage of American resources—from development funds to C-rations and ammunition—allowed the Viet Cong to keep fighting as much as it made it possible for South Vietnamese officials to stand their ground. In the contemporary world, leakage of humanitarian relief to civil war fighters remains a similar moral hazard.

On the other side of the counterinsurgency debate, proponents of coercion play down the importance of local allies. They argue that the government—or the rebels—did not have to win over the local population so long as they could extract all the support they needed. Even sullen support was good enough. The government use tough security measures to raise the cost of supporting to the rebels for villages and neighborhoods. What is hard to see, however, is how this is possible without escalating

the violence and risking further alienation of the population? Without willing allies, it is virtually impossible for the government to shore up their own supporters and establish government by some consent.

In both models, there is something of assumption that who we fight with and with how much vigor is a matter political preference. Winning over local allies required exploiting ethnic, ideological, or other major differences. Thus, in Malaya, the British promise of decolonization won over the majority Malay population and isolated the insurgency in the ethnic Chinese community. In Vietnam, the CIA used U.S. Special Forces teams to build Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) from mountains tribes on the Laos border who were ethnically separate from the Vietnamese. In Kashmir, paramilitary groups recruited from the hill Gujjars communities served as the sword arm of the Indian Army's fight against the rebellion of the valley Muslims.

What if these differences are not available? Theater commanders may be able to work with ethnic differences, but battalion commanders are restricted to smaller areas of responsibility where ethnic and political differences may not be visible. The new U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual opines at some length the importance of commanders "mapping the human terrain," but who has the time to cultivate such detailed local knowledge? What battalion commander about to deploy can find the time to get up to speed on social and cultural anthropology? He can devote some resources to this effort, but it is never going to be enough. In addition, what happens until such knowledge is gained?

How to Recruit Local Allies

A military commander in a counterinsurgency environment must decide on local allies. While political preference and ethnic division provide general sorting mechanisms, local knowledge is necessary. Ideally, the commander's team would have the time and resources to learn the social and cultural anthropology of his area of responsibility. The US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual makes this case. The commander may be able to use the services of existing experts. The US Army, for example, has put trained anthropologists in Human Terrain Teams directly with military units in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some military forces and commanders may do this better than others. US counterinsurgency commanders coming to Iraq and Afghanistan will clearly have greater difficulty than Pakistani commanders with experience of the Frontier. No matter the advantages, there is bound to be an information deficit, especially since war makes societies more, not less, inscrutable.

The biggest recruitment decision comes when it is time to give a group weapons, training, and command capacity over another. It is a decision taken deliberately. Intelligence agencies and senior political and military managers weigh in. The empirical evidence, however, suggests an inherently dangerous trial and error process may be unavoidable. To mitigate risk, the quality of the weapons can be sacrificed, competing groups may be armed to provide some balance, but the risk must be taken. The consequences of the weapons falling into rebel hands can be alleviated by preparing for tactical withdrawal into fortified positions strong enough to withstand attacks using the weapons he handed out.

There is a tendency to see local ally recruitment as a secret enterprise, but it should be conducted out in the open even as the cost of endangering the parties involved. It is important to keep in mind that it does not matter who the ally is so long as the rebels see the ally as the enemy. The possibility of local collaboration is a grave threat to the rebels being able to maintain their anonymity. Armed

local collaborators even provide an alternative security structure and challenge rebel rule. Open recruitment presents these challenges directly to the rebels, inviting them to strike at the allies.

Types of paramilitary groups

The better organized, funded, and armed a set of local allies are, the greater the chance they will pose an irreconcilable threat to the rebels and precipitate the polarizing civil war necessary for the strategy to succeed. However, the better organized the local allies are the greater the likelihood of them wanting to act independently from the interests of the government. Further, since the insurgency presents a diffused threat and requires a decentralized response, there is tension between need for hierarchy in paramilitary organization and the need for autonomy in paramilitary action. We know that hierarchy improves coordination, but autonomy signals resolve far more effectively because independent groups with their preferences are unlikely to the swayed by fickle leaderships.

The internal organization of paramilitary groups depends on how these competing questions are answered in light of the nature of the insurgent threat. Where the threat is dispersed, a loose militia organization may be useful. Where rebel leaders display strong control over insurgents, a task force with a designated commander and small number of capable operators may be better.

Paramilitary organization tends to converge on three ideal-types: the militia, the task force, and the constabulary. The militia is the most localized; the self-defense groups in the case studies described above fall in this category. They are relatively easy to raise and the most vulnerable to rebel attacks, but they are the least capable. This is the category where the trial and error is entirely unavoidable.

The task forces combine local allies and external counterinsurgents and are usually formed to target specific rebels. The task forces could function as death squads—especially when they are given wide latitude in targeting. Because they provide offensive power and function autonomously, they are the most dangerous from the point of view of incumbent control. However, they are usually small in number and government makes some effort to exercise direct control over them.

The constabulary organization is a uniformed body with a well-defined hierarchy but still outside the counterinsurgent military structure. The format is most amenable to providing an alternative security structure to the rebels, but they are also the most vulnerable to infiltration and it takes long periods of separation from the society to train them into a useful force.

Managing Autonomy

The logic of the paramilitary structure is to produce autonomy for military and political reasons. Autonomy is essential during the withdrawal phase when the government allows the local competition to play out. In most cases, the governments pass legislation authorizing the groups to signal long-term commitment to the allies and to the rebels. However, independence, especially in the control of armed forces, raises the possibility of coups. The paramilitary may not be powerful enough to conduct coups, but they can whittle away at the interest of the government.

The greatest danger lies in an alliance between the rebels and the paramilitaries against the government. While a rebel-paramilitary alliance is a possibility, especially in the early stages, the risk is often exaggerated. Once a paramilitary group is armed, organized, and publicly committed to fighting the insurgents, it becomes very difficult for them to go back on this. Conversely, if a group accepts weapons from the government, the rebels remain suspicious of them until they turn over their weapons and organization to them. Therefore, as long as the paramilitary group maintains an independent existence, the rebels will see them as threatening.

Empirically, the steadfastness of paramilitary groups is quite remarkable; the more independent they are, the more steadfast, they appear to be. This is possibly because of the self-selecting nature of process. Only those truly committed to fighting the rebels expose themselves to risk of retaliation. Consequently, paramilitaries are rarely the first to defect. They assert their position in the internal security function and demand larger budgets or greater support (depending on their degree of delegation), but disloyalty is structurally difficult. Even after Colombia's self-defense groups became thoroughly enmeshed in drug trafficking, they continued to pursue their anti-guerrilla political agenda with vigor, in fact more so, with the extra resources they now possessed. What changed, however, is U.S. pressure on Bogotá to stop using narcotics to support counterinsurgency. Colombia's paramilitaries have also resisted demobilization.

Renegotiation

For paramilitary groups, so much these creatures of the state policy, to become disloyal to the initial logic of the creation, the change must come from the principals. A new government may come into office. The government might change its preferences due to international and domestic pressures exogenous to the conflict. Most importantly, from the perspective of the model being described here, the government's preferences might also change endogenously during the course of the conflict. If the rebels are put on the defensive and seem ready to compromise, the government will have to convince the paramilitary groups to end the war and agree to some final disposition of their members.

If paramilitary groups are unable to stand up to the rebel onslaught in the civil war, the government must step into reorganize the groups.

The renegotiation process in failure is somewhat easier because it involves adding to paramilitary strength. There may be resistance from specific paramilitary leaders, but since the logic of their creation remains in tact paramilitary cohesion is not disturbed. Ending the war presents bigger challenges. Here the government has three kinds of options: a) formalizing groups more and more: militias into constabularies, and perhaps even absorbing them into the police department or the army; b) withdrawing support to group and allowing it to atrophy; this is difficult if the group has developed independent resource base; and c) physically disarming groups unwilling to accept the new terms of negotiation.

Conclusion

Because professional armies prefer not to fight irregular wars for political and military reasons, they recruit, fund, arm, and organize local allies into armed groups operating outside the military hierarchy. However, the process is a not linear. Instead, the government recruits, withdraw, and then renegotiate their local alliances. It is repeated over to get it right. Extant counterinsurgency theory, which is sensitive to escalation control and accusations of abuse of power, does not highlight this frankly brutal approach that still allows the government keeps their hands relatively clean. There are risks involved in the strategy, which the government seek to manage them rather than avoid the approach altogether. Indeed, the three-step process is what counterinsurgent leaders come to eventually through accident or purpose.