



What's left of the counterinsurgency theories? 1/4

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In the course of a historical review of techniques designed to combat insurgencies, Benjamin Hamm examines the current appropriateness of these techniques in the theatres of operations in which the French armies are engaged. This is an opportunity for him to make a strong plea for the need for the population to support the action taken by the military.

he counterinsurgent reaches a position of strength when his power is embedded in a political organization issuing from, and firmly supported by the population " wrote Lieutenant-Colonel David Galula (1919-1967) in his 1964 book Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice . Focused on the support of the population, the "Galula" theories will form the cornerstone of American and then NATO counterinsurgency doctrines, the need for which reappeared in the 2000s in Afghan and Iraqi theatres.

As for the United States, the engagement in Afghanistan marks a turning point for France, which is moving from stabilization or peacekeeping operations (Somalia, former Yugoslavia) - that is, from the "stabilization" to the "peacekeeping" operations (Somalia, former Yugoslavia) - to the "stabilization" operations (Somalia, former Yugoslavia).from stabilisation or peacekeeping operations (Somalia, former Yugoslavia) - i.e. operations without an identified adversary - to theatres where the adversary, the Taleb, is designated but hidden among the population. It is precisely in response to the Afghan stalemate that

the "Petraeusian" doctrine has emerged.¹ of counter-insurgency. Spread within NATO and translated by the Allies, this doctrine proposes a refoundation of Western engagement strategies centred on the population's support. Should France therefore "relearn" how to "wage war" within the population? This seems rather paradoxical in view of the history of its commitments.

Indeed, in the 19th and 20th centuries, France was involved in many operations requiring the development of the population. From revolutionary and imperial wars (Vendée, Spain) to decolonisation movements and their attempts to contain them (in Algeria, Indochina) and colonial conquests (Algeria, Madagascar), France has conducted counter-insurgency operations on numerous occasions.

However, the term counterinsurgency² because associated with those times, still divides today. Of Anglo-Saxon origin, it designates what was formerly called "counter-guerrilla", "counter-subversion", "pacification"... or even more recently "stabilization" or "counter-rebellion", in historically and historiographically marked contexts. However, it is during these operations - and without going back on the legitimacy of governments to conduct them - that French armies have acquired tactical and strategic know-how in the field of engagement within populations.

Today, as France is called upon to engage in theatres within the populations themselves (Sangaris, Serval, Barkhane), it is pertinent to question the strategic and tactical legacy of counter-insurgency. This article intends to demonstrate that, far from having disappeared, counterinsurgency has adapted to ethical and technological developments, while preserving its fundamentals: the population stake, civil-military coordination and adaptability as a tactical primacy.

¹ Tenenbaum, Élie: Partisans et centurions: une histoire de la guerre irrégulière au XXe siècle, Perrin, 2018, Paris, p. 11.

² The American counterinsurgency manual FM 3-24, published in 2006 under the direction of General David Petraeus, whose content was later transposed into the doctrines of NATO and France, defines counterinsurgency as "...the use of a counterinsurgency as a tactical, tactical, and tactical method of warfare..." all political, economic, social, military, legal, and psychological activities, institutional or otherwise, necessary to neutralize an insurgency and to address the main reasons for public dissatisfaction".

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