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REVOLUTION AND THE PHILIPPINE INSURRECTION

Counter Insurgency Operations During the American Revolution and the Philippine Insurrection

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## Abstract

In 1790s America, the colonists rebelled and fought the British troops sent by the government across the Atlantic. The British troops main mission was enforce the law imposed by the monarchy. In 1899, the American government also sent troops to the newly acquired Philippine islands to quell a rebellion. Both countries experienced waging a counterinsurgency campaign in their territories across the seas and at different continents. Although the time periods were different, each country dealt with these issues both in a political and military manner. The British failed in their campaign and in the end gave their colony its independence. The United States however, crushed the rebellion, helped reconstruct the nation and then gave the Philippines its independence.

The British forces failed to win their counter insurgency campaign in 1790, while the Americans were successful during the Philippine Insurrection because of the difference of government policies and military tactics they used.

During colonial America in 1770, the British government was determined to exert its authority over the colonists. The growing crisis was a result of the British government establishing taxation over the colonial trade. The British won the war with the France but came with a high price. Taxing the colonies was a solution the imperial government came up with to replenish the treasury. The British sent seven thousand troops to Boston in 1768. The British Soldiers' mission was to enforce the Tea Acts which the Bostonians openly defied.

The Bostonians saw the presence of the British Soldiers as a threat and regarded them with contempt. To add to the tension, the majority of the British Soldiers were Catholics, poorly paid, and were allowed to seek employment on their off duty time. The off duty British Soldiers worked for less pay than the local laborers, because of this, they became a threat and competition in the eyes of the local population. The hatred for the British Soldiers reached its highest point during the "Boston Massacre". The incident occurred when British Soldiers tried to break up a crowd at a customs office. When the Soldiers tried to disperse the crowd, they were bombarded with objects forcing them to shoot in defense. Eleven people were shot, five died of their wounds (Boyer, 2008, p 150).

To make the situation for Americans worse in 1774, the British Parliament enacted the "Intolerable Acts". The four laws that the parliament enacted were a result of the Bostonians open defiance of the Tea Acts. The third act was known as the "Murder Act". This allowed the

British Soldiers justification in killing anyone who defied royal authority in Massachusetts. The fourth act was called the “Quartering Act”. This law allowed British Soldiers to occupy empty private dwellings and mandatory support by the local citizens. The Intolerable Acts proved to be the breaking point of the colonists. It led to the forming of the Continental Congress. The Continental Congress, at first attempted a passive rebellion by boycotting trade with England. They also petitioned the parliament to end the Coercive Acts. In 1775, the colonial patriots headed by the Continental Congress established numerous provincial congresses. These congresses posed as a problem for the existing assemblies headed by the governors. In April 19, 1775, the British government sent seven hundred Soldiers to arrest these patriots in Boston. At Lexington they met seventy minutemen whom they engaged in a skirmish. One British Soldier was wounded and eight minutemen killed. When the British moved on to Concord they tasted their first guerrilla warfare against the colonist during a running battle. The British suffered 273 casualties to only 92 colonists. It was victory for the colonists. This event led to the attack of the British Garrison in Boston by twenty thousand patriots (Boyer, 2008, p151).

Three weeks after the battle in Concord, the second Continental Congress established an American continental army. George Washington was appointed as the commander. One of the continental army’s first battles was Bunker Hill. During this battle, the colonial army was entrenched and attacked by 2,200 British Soldiers. The British suffered 1,154 casualties compared to 311 colonists. In May 1775, Washington’s irregular troops captured Fort Ticonderoga and Crown Point. In March 17, 1776, the British were outnumbered and evacuated Boston (Boyer, 2008, p 152).

After the Spanish American War in December 1898, Spain seceded the Philippines to the United States. At this time, the Filipino revolutionaries had majority of the islands under control.

This was possible because of American help when the Filipinos were fighting the Spaniards. Unlike their Cuban counterparts, the Filipinos refused to hand over control to the American authorities. They proclaimed General Emilio Aguinaldo as their leader and initiated a war for their independence. However, when General Aguinaldo's troop was crushed by a far superior American force he resorted to guerilla warfare. The Filipino guerillas honed their guerilla tactics during the war with Spain so they clearly had an advantage. They were familiar with the territory, well acclimated to the tropical climate, and they easily blended with the local population. General Aguinaldo knew he could never defeat the American forces. His aim was to harass and undermine the will of the Americans and force them to relinquish their authority.

Faced with guerilla warfare, the U.S. Army senior leadership adapted their tactics by spreading outposts all over the archipelago. From these outposts, the Army conducted search and destroy missions with Soldiers numbering from fifty to a hundred. They conducted most of these missions at night and were very successful. Learning from their experiences during the Indian wars, the U.S. Army began to hire Filipino Scouts to work for them. This eventually grew and hired paramilitary police, local police, and local militias. The U.S. military also devoted their attention in intelligence gathering, paying informants, and issuing travel cards and passes to the natives (Birtle, 1998, p 122).

In the winter of 1898, President McKinley ordered General Otis to "win the confidence, respect, and admiration of the inhabitants of the Philippines". General Otis ordered his men to strictly follow the president's policy of attraction. Violators were punished. The Soldiers focused on winning the hearts and minds of the population. Schools were built; Soldiers volunteered to teach, built roads, and spread sanitation. The most important part of the program was the establishment of municipal governments which were held by Filipinos. When General McArthur

took command of the U.S. Forces in the Philippines, he advocated the amnesty program for all prisoners and paid whoever surrendered a rifle. In 1900, the McKinley administration transferred legislative powers from military to civilian. In 1901, Howard Taft became the governor general of the Philippine islands.

The policy of attraction was not enough to beat the Philippine insurrection. In 1901, the senior leaders in Manila introduced the "policy of chastisement". It consisted of banning food into the rebel areas and the launching of punitive campaigns. Hostile populated villages were set to the torch. Their crops and houses were burned to the ground. This action prevented or erased the rebels' logistical bases. The Army also established curfews and were ordered to kill any men found near telegraph pole or out in the roads at night. General McArthur used his 70,000 troops to enforce his new policy. His plan was to undermine the will of the people to resist (Birtle, 1998, p 129).

By late 1900, refugees started to flow into American controlled towns. They built stockades to keep the desperate guerillas and bandits out. At the same time, the U.S. commanders established a technique called concentration. It consisted of relocating isolated villages in areas where U.S. troops can provide security, control and prevent the villagers from providing food to the insurgents. By the spring of 1901, and by the time Howard Taft became the governor general of the Philippines, the U.S. campaign of chastisement was showing signs of success. When General Chaffee replaced General McArthur, his job was to end the war by defeating two remaining rebel generals. He assigned General Bell to subdue General Miguel Malvar of Southern Luzon, and Brigadier General Jacob H. Smith to capture General Vicente Lukban of the island of Samar (Birtle, 1998, p 135).

The failure of the British to defeat insurgency in colonial America was in contrast to the

success of the U.S. Army during the Philippine insurrection. There were three critical factors that led to the failure of the British and the victory of the U.S. armed forces. First, the government policy of the British was intended to pressure the colonials in submitting to their will. In contrast, U.S. administration employed the policy of attraction. Second, the British force was not used to facing irregular armies like the colonial army. They did not adapt to the guerilla tactics of the early continental army. In contrast, the U.S. in the Philippines adapted to guerilla warfare. They established small maneuverable outposts throughout the archipelago and conducted their counter guerilla operations effectively. Third, the British Soldiers were treated with contempt by the local population. The Quartering Act compounded this by allowing British troops to occupy residences for themselves and live off the population. The Murder Act also allowed the Soldiers to kill with impunity as long as they were supposedly enforcing the royal law. In contrast, The U.S. Soldiers in the Philippines were ordered to respect the population and win the hearts and minds of the Filipinos. The U.S. Army however, could not win the war alone with the policy of attraction. It was forced to add the policy of chastisement, assert its authority, and in the end forced the rebels to surrender.

The British forces failed to win their counter insurgency campaign in 1790, while the Americans were successful during the Philippine Insurrection because of the difference of government policies and military tactics they used. The British government was intent on asserting its authority and passed laws that infuriated the colonials. In doing so, they lost a lot of loyalists, because during this crisis the loyalists were asking for reform and did not intend to break away from England. The British government also made a tragic mistake by not treating the colonists as equals but as subjects. The British troops also underestimated the continental Army and did not treat it as an equal, worst of all, the British never adapted to the fighting style of the

American Army. The United States government on the other hand, was a key contributor to the success of the U.S. Armed forces in crushing the Philippine Rebellion of 1899. President McKinley's orders to treat the Filipino population with respect and dignity won majority of the people's hearts and minds. The rest was accomplished by the Army through reconstruction operations and aggressive tactics in dealing with the insurgents. The military tactics employed by the U.S. Army proved to be adaptive, flexible and above all, effective. The combined political agenda and military actions employed by the United States were instrumental in successfully defeating the insurgency in the Philippine islands.

In conclusion, based on the lessons learned from the United States of America's past military history, it is not the first time U.S. Soldiers faced counter insurgency operations. The U.S. armed forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are employing one of the most effective forms of combat. It is called winning the hearts and minds of the people. In Iraq, just like the U.S. Army did during the Indian wars and the Philippine insurrection, they are hiring locals to help them fight the insurgents. Another familiar tactic used in Iraq is the numerous establishments of outposts in populated areas. Units stay in these areas, provide security, interact with the people, and conduct operations. Above all, these units are doing their best to win the hearts and minds of the people.

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