

Counterinsurgency Campaigns of the Plains Indian and Korean Wars

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There are many reasons as to why counterinsurgency campaigns become a success or a failure for Soldiers and their leaders. This paper will compare and contrast two such campaigns and the reasons why each either succeeded or failed. Ideology of leaders, their ability to adapt to cultural changes and modify tactics, and the ability to integrate indigenous populations into the campaign are the three most critical of these.

The counterinsurgency campaign used against the Apache Indians during the Plains Indian Wars was a greater success than the campaign used against the North Koreans during the Korean War due to the use of indigenous scouts, guerilla tactics, and collaborators used to infiltrate hostile groups. These were the critical factors leading to success against the Apache, and failure against the North Koreans.

Though there are many factors that lead to these successes and failures, I will deal with the factors outlined previously to support my statement. MG George Crook used all three factors in his operations against the Apache Indians. He adopted the techniques from his successes during the American Civil War in his plan to end the insurgency.

In order to accomplish his mission, MG Crook deemed it necessary to have an understanding of the operating environment he was in. He was adept at becoming familiar with the land, the people, and cultures of the people, and expected the same of his subordinate commanders. He was an excellent tactician and was very successful in using small, mobile columns, as well as guerilla tactics when conducting surprise attacks and ambushes against the Apache, which were lessons learned by previous Army commanders in a much harder fashion. MG Crook used Indian scouts to track movement, and to infiltrate insurgent bands in order to disrupt coordination of insurgent attacks, and gather intelligence. He also wrote about using Indian scouts to locate or

apprehend criminals and the use of Indian jury panels to convict them, thus instilling Western civilization values into the Apache culture in an attempt to remold them in the image of what was referred to as the White Man's Culture. This was important as MG Crook needed to win the hearts and minds of the Apache in order to break the insurgency and resistance of the people regarding trusting the Soldiers and the U.S. Government.

In contrast, during the Korean War, the U.S. Army did not have a good understanding of the operating environment. The Army leadership never really adapted to their environment, partly due to constant changes in leadership and differing ideologies of those leaders as to how the best way to win the war was. The U.S. Army continued to use World War II tactics to fight the war with the idea that superior weapons would alone turn the war in their favor. The Army also used only a handful of indigenous people as scouts as they did not fully trust them. They also heavily relied on a South Korean Army that was infiltrated even more so by the North Koreans, and ill-equipped. There was little attempt to familiarize themselves with the land, the people, and their culture.

In the area of cultural awareness, MG Crook learned how the Indian gained and received respect within their culture. He used this to develop programs that he later used as leverage to persuade the Apache how it would be to their benefit for them to cooperate and the rewards that came with cooperation to their way of life and coexistence with the Army and the settlers. He learned that respect as a warrior and as a purveyor of truth in words and deeds carried equal importance to the Apache. By interaction with the Apache in regards to Soldier's conduct towards the Indians, addressing their issues, treatment of prisoners, and ensuring as little loss of life among women and children during battle as

possible, he could show that the Army was more a friend than enemy to be feared.

Although when necessary; the Army would take an equally hard stance toward insurgents, providing even-handed justice.

Conversely, there was little attempt to become culturally aware of the Korean ways and ideology by the U. S. Army. It was further magnified by the fact that the typical North Korean wanted little to do with Western ideology when it came to culture at the time. It should be addressed that the Army did make large strides in reaching the South Korean Army when it came to training and tactics sharing, but were slow to adopt tactics that the Koreans used which were very effective and successful for their northern counterparts and insurgent population. Each Army independently policed their own Soldiers, and outside of training, had little to do with each other in most cases.

The U.S. Army's operation in the beginning of the Plains Indians War was to pacify and restrain the Indian, ultimately confining them to reservations. In using similar tactics against the insurgent Apaches as they had used against the Army, the Army was able to accomplish this mission. The Apache were still masters of their area with regard to familiarity, and were much more proficient in desert warfare and more adaptive to the climate than their Army counterparts, but as the Army adapted, so turned the tide of the insurgency. The Army learned that chasing the Apache across the countryside was less productive and lacked a clear tactical goal. For the most part it was just roaming the desert in hopes of tracking down the Indian, and finding out later that the Apache had attacked a key target when the Soldiers were spread thin. The Army failed to understand the culture of the Indian in working as one in order to deceive, disrupt, and kill as many

Soldiers as possible. The Indian culture toward honesty, loyalty, and courage was missing from some of the Army commanders previously sent to quell the insurgency as they used trickery and false promises together with harsh treatment of men, women and children to complete the mission with little success.

The success of the Army in overcoming and ending the insurgency was due to MG Crook and his ideas of adapting to the style of battle used against them and becoming more culturally aware of the reasons why the Apache insurgents were fighting. Also, with the leadership being equally adaptive to his plan of battle by using agile battle tactics and understanding who his enemy was from a Soldier's perspective, success was achieved. Gaining the trust and confidence of the Apache people also divided the insurgent's ranks and created a larger division from the non-combatants allowing the Army to focus on a single mission and a clear purpose.

The U.S. Army's operation at the outset of hostilities in Korea was to maintain the status quo and render the North Koreans ineffective and thereby end the conflict with the capitulation of the North Korean government, thus unifying Korea. In using World War II tactics against a mostly guerilla led insurgency, the Army tactics proved most ineffective. The United States also greatly underestimated the North Korean and Chinese Army's abilities. Once the Chinese entered the conflict, the U.S. and South Korean Army's were outnumbered with no clear plan for a withdrawal. This was due to leadership misunderstanding the operating environment in which they were in, and a failure to adapt to changing battle tactics.

In conclusion, success against the Apache insurgency relied upon understanding the operating environment, adapting to cultural differences, and changing battle tactics that were ineffective. Once MG Crook understood this and acted on the information gathered to develop a mission focused plan, the insurgency was quickly eliminated. The choices he made in how the Army conducted themselves and their operations, led to his success on the battlefield and homefront. Using the local population as scouts and infiltrators was a proven weapon the General had used during the Civil War and proved effective again, as did many of his ideas he carried over from the Civil War to end the Apache insurgency. It is unfortunate that these ideologies were not carried over and better used during the Korean War. In an attempt to use weapon superiority as a primary means to end the insurgency in Korea, the Army failed in accomplishing the objective. Had there been a more clear understanding of the operating environment and more cultural awareness, the Army may have been able to achieve similar results with the insurgents rather than the status quo we have today.

We as Soldiers cannot make assumptions of insurgents capabilities based on what we perceive those capabilities to be. We cannot make decisions based on our culture when confronted with a vastly different cultural view. Tactics and operating environment have proven over the centuries to be turning points in many wars and insurgent campaigns, but equally important in today's world is the need to be culturally aware of the peoples where the fight is. We have seen this in Iraq and Afghanistan, and have seen the U.S. Army adapt and change to meet this and become successful. Once the initial combat is done, we need to become insurgent oriented. We must learn from their culture,

adapt to their tactics, and have a clear understanding of the mission and the road to achieving it. Only then, can we say our mission has been a success.

### References

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