

# Malaysia: Victim of America's "Irregular Warfare" Ops?

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*The issue of civil society groups receiving foreign funding has been a major point of discussion in Malaysia during recent times, causing controversy and drawing criticism from activists to members of Parliament alike.*

*Some activists tend to view Putrajaya's investigation into rights advocacy groups like SUARAM (a noted recipient of foreign funding) as a desperate attempt to stifle dissent and attack civil society. Former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has repeatedly warned of a foreign-funded destabilization campaign aimed at regime change in Malaysia – a claim that has been generally dismissed by Bersih goers and the like.*

*With the nation's 13th General Election looming, some see talk of "foreign plots" as tired rhetoric, while others fail to grasp the deeper machinations of foreign influence and do little more than finger pointing at political opponents. In this instance, the pages of a leaked US military document provide valuable insight into the nature of "foreign plots" potentially aimed against Malaysia.*

["TC 18-01 SPECIAL FORCES UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE"](#) is listed on the US Army's official website and can only be accessed by authorized officials within the American government ([a leaked copy has been made available and can be viewed by clicking here](#)). [1] The document is significant because it provides a step-by-step definition of Washington's "irregular warfare" and unconventional warfare tactics. The manual illustrates the sheer impunity with which the United States conducts its foreign policy, aimed at illegally interfering into the political affairs of foreign nations with an aim to destabilize and reorder them to further American economic interests; Dr. Christof Lehmann describes the manual as:

*"...a step by step guide of how to create, manipulate, co-opt and make use of a countries population, persons of special interest inside the country as well as expatriates, organizations inside as well as outside the country, towards a subversion. Beginning with manipulating dissent into demonstrations, the polarization of a population, riots and armed insurgencies that require action by security forces, and psychological warfare by means of media, step by step, in logical sequence, towards a full scale war, based on humanitarian principles and the pretext of bringing democracy and freedom." [2]*

The targets of the above mentioned irregular warfare operations are those states that have been unwilling to align themselves with American diplomatic and economic interests or

semi-compliant states that are strategically located and abundant in natural resources.

The manual describes meticulously orchestrated covert operations that are conducted in phases; beginning with psychologically influencing the target population through foreign-funded dissident news media organizations. Subsequently, targeted nations are infiltrated to provide training and equipment to dissident groups, until a political transition is imposed, by force if necessary.

The manual is classified “Restricted” with a “Destruction Notice”, and for obvious reasons – its pages lay bare the illegal and brutal nature of US foreign policy by means of supporting insurgent groups that would otherwise be called “terrorist organizations” (emphasis added):

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The Commander, United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), defines [Unconventional Warfare] UW as activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area. The intent of U.S. [Unconventional Warfare] UW efforts is to exploit a hostile power’s political, military, economic, and psychological vulnerabilities by developing and sustaining resistance forces to accomplish U.S. strategic objectives. For the foreseeable future, U.S. forces will predominantly engage in irregular warfare (IW) operations.”

The ongoing conflict in Syria and the unrest that overthrew Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 2011 are examples of the model proposed by this document being successfully utilized. In both countries, American organizations such as the National Endowment for Democracy and others both financially and rhetorically supported political opposition and activist groups. When protests in those countries gained momentum, reports of violence surfaced, often in the form of sniper fire, targeting both security personnel and civilians. In Libya, rebel groups were armed by Western nations despite confirmed reports of jihadist and extremist groups being the central component of the armed resistance. As a result, these armed militants did indeed topple the Libyan government, and have since been involved in [racially motivated mass killings](#) and the recent murder of US Ambassador Chris Stevens and four other American personnel in Benghazi. [3] The same tactics have been used in Syria, [where](#)

[jihadist groups have received weapons from US allies](#) such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and have reportedly used terrorist tactics such as [bomb making](#) and extrajudicial assassinations. [4] [5] The “Phases of Unconventional Warfare” are described in the manual and exactly match the US protocol undertaken in both Libya and Syria:

#### PHASE I: Preparation

Resistance and external sponsors conduct psychological preparation to unify population against established government or occupying power and prepare population to accept U.S. support.

#### PHASE II: Initial Contact

USG [United States Government] agencies coordinate with allied government-in-exile or resistance leadership for desired U.S. support.

#### PHASE III: Infiltration

SF [Special Forces] team infiltrates operational area, establishes communications with its base, and contacts resistance organization.

#### PHASE IV: Organization

SF [Special Forces] team organizes, trains, and equips resistance cadre. Emphasis is on developing infrastructure.

#### PHASE V: Buildup

SF [Special Forces] team assist cadre with expansion into an effective resistance organization. Limited combat operations may be conducted, but emphasis remains on development.

#### PHASE VI: Employment

UW [Unconventional Warfare] forces conduct combat operations until linkup with conventional forces or end hostilities.

#### PHASE VII: Transition

UW [Unconventional Warfare] forces revert to national control, shifting to regular forces or demobilizing.

Malaysia is not Syria or Libya; the social and political systems of these countries and their resistance movements are highly dissimilar and only so much can be taken from comparisons of this nature. Even so, it is essentially confirmed that the agitation Malaysia has experienced is not intended to promote a genuine democratic framework; its purpose is the gradual installation of a national government that is friendly to American interests by coaxing social unrest and shaping popular sentiment.

Just as described in Phase 1, “external sponsors conduct psychological preparation to unify population against established government,” it can be gathered that this first step has already been attempted. Bersih coalition leader Ambiga Sreenevasan has long admitted that her organization receives financial assistance from “external sponsors,” namely, the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Open Society Institute (OSI).

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) also annually provides \$100,000 (RM 317,260) to political news website Malaysiakini, widely considered to be the nation’s most pro-opposition news outlet. Premesh Chandran, Malaysiakini CEO, is a grantee of the Open Society Foundations and launched the news organization with a \$100,000 grant from the Soros-funded Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA). NED also provides \$90,000 (RM 285,516) to SUARAM. [6] Knowingly, or unknowingly, these organizations have received financial support from the US Embassy due to the controversial political discourse they espouse. Of course, the expression of dissent should never be denied, and although the Najib Razak administration has begun to move away from Mahathir’s administrative model by relaxing controls on expression, many still feel more can be done.

If the United States is pursuing the kind of policy described in the Unconventional Warfare manual, one can understand how foreign-funded rights advocacy groups may be perceived as threatening to Malaysian authorities, regardless of the politics and values they preach. Ostensibly, Malaysian authorities are concerned about the violence and insurrectionary behavior that have accompanied foreign-funded political movements in other countries once momentum built around them. Malaysia would not likely fall victim to an insurgency campaign anywhere near the scale seen in Syria. However, it would be unwise to dismiss the possibility of seeing the kind of violence that took shape in Thailand during the political unrest of 2010 if foreign elements continue to pursue “irregular warfare.” The possibility of political instability coming to fruition during the general election period may factor into explaining why the current government has not yet declared them.

The International Republican Institute (IRI) is chaired by US Senator John McCain, an ardent supporter of American and Israeli militarism, and annually receives \$802,122 (RM 2,544,670) from the NED for its Malaysian projects. McCain’s IRI played a crucial role in casting doubt on the validity of Russia’s 2011 presidential elections by funding several US-backed NGOs, particularly GOLOS, an independent electoral commission seeking to “expose voting irregularities.” The conduct of the organization has generated widespread criticism from Russian lawmakers and observer groups. Georgy Fyodorov, chief executive of Russian Observer Association Civil Control stated:

“They have a clear destabilizing tactic; they are carefully conditioning the public to hear some ‘breaking’ news of election fraud. The media will have a field day taping the ensuing clashes between pro-Kremlin and nationalist youth being dispersed by special

police. This kind of footage would dilute any remaining trust in Russian elections.” [7]

To dilute any remaining trust – that is the principle objective when one attempts to “conduct psychological preparation to unify population against established government.” Elections are seen as an opportunity to challenge the legitimacy of a political candidate or party, primarily by accusing the electoral system of being unfree or somehow outside of international norms. In the Malaysian context, ruling authorities have acknowledged that more could be done to reduce voting irregularities and have begun to work toward such ends. To accuse Malaysia’s electoral system of being illegitimate is a cinematic exaggeration, a myth pushed by foul Western endowments and foundations. Intelligent discontent is the mainspring of civilization, it is irrefutably valuable and channeling it comes with individual responsibilities. When foreign governments attempt to harness other people’s dissent for their own objectives, it is the greatest attack on dissent itself.

## Notes

[1] [TC 18-01 SPECIAL FORCES UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE](#), US Army, 2010

[2] [The Blueprint for the War Libya?](#) NSNBC, February 21, 2012

[3] [AU: Libya rebels killing black workers](#), CBS News, August 29, 2011

[4] [Rebel Arms Flow Is Said to Benefit Jihadists in Syria](#), The New York Times, October 14, 2012

[5] [Outgunned Syria rebels make shift to bombs](#), Reuters, April 30, 2012

[6] [Pro-Israel groups rooting for the Opposition](#), The Mole, September 27, 2012

[7] [Russian Press – Behind the Headlines, November 18](#), Ria Novosti, November 18, 2012

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