

Inculcating Professionalism in Defence for National Development: With Special Reference to KESBAN Concept

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Abstract-*The paper seeks to explain the basic preconditions that influence the success of KESBAN operations in Malaysia, outlining what is believed to be the major factors that need to be considered in planning KESBAN strategy. The factors include command and control, organisation and approaches and priorities to be considered. Professional competency, clear chain of command and good coordination and cooperation among the agencies involved are the keys to successful KESBAN strategy.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The security and development approach in nation building was first introduced by the British in Malaya during the period of the first Emergency that took place from 1948 to 1960. It was later continued and further developed by the independent Malayan (later Malaysian) government to develop the country to what it is now.

When the concept was first started, the two formidable challenges faced by the British was firstly, to defeat the armed Communist insurgency movement that sought to take over the country through armed struggle; and secondly to prepare the country physically and psychologically for independence.

The task was made more difficult as the population make up of the young country consisted of diverse racial, cultural and religious groups.

Security and development or in Malay "Keselamatan dan Pembangunan" (in short KESBAN) was a two pronged approach strategy to defeat the insurgent movement as well as to develop the country. It was planned at the national level and organised with an hierarchical structure and chain of command that goes down to district and village levels.

Similar concept was also applied by the Americans during the Vietnam War but the result was not encouraging despite the involvement of the experts who were acknowledged as the architects of Malayan KESBAN. Another recent attempts at introducing KESBAN were in Iraq and Afghanistan - where the outcomes were also not that encouraging.

As a caveat it must be admitted that the KESBAN concept is not a "one size that fits all concept". The strategic application of KESBAN must be carried out with judicious consideration of various factors.

For Sri Lanka the KESBAN concept that needs to be adopted - if it needs to adopt one, will have to be tailored to fit in its national strategic objectives. The threat of armed insurgent movement is no longer there but the process of nation building and development will still need to continue. For Sri Lanka the security aspect of KESBAN is still relevant but the weightage may now be tilted more towards the development aspect.

The security-development strategy may have to incorporate firstly, in the security prong - the healing process of the wounds that were inflicted as a result of decades long civil war; and the development prong that is designed to develop the country, economically, physically and psychologically.

The Malaysian experience in KESBAN has taught us some lessons as what is believed to be principles or guidelines that may have to be adhered to ensure the successful implementation of the program. The following are the key principles identified.

II. PRINCIPLES

The first principle is the principle of supremacy of the democratic civilian control of the operations. In Malaysia, from the period of the first emergency to the last days that led to the final defeat of the Communist insurgency in 1990, all the security apparatus and other supporting agencies were placed under the control of the National Security Council (NSC). The NSC was chaired by the Prime Minister who took the hands-on approach in the day-to-day operations of the Council. The Prime Minister received his advice from the Armed Forces Chief and the Inspector General of Police. The heads of other government departments were also incorporated into the Council. The advantage of this approach is that it provides a well-considered, clear, well-coordinated top down instruction that is understood and will be implemented by all. The approach taken is similar to that adopted in Total Defence where everybody has a role to

play and each one of them understands where they fit-in in the overall plan.

The second principle is the principle of the unity of the chain of command. Whilst the NSC exists at Federal level, similar subordinate organisations were replicated at state, districts and local levels. At state level the State Security Council (SESEC) was headed by the Chief Minister while the local army commander in the state and the state Chief Police Office served as the main security advisors. At district level, the subordinate council would be headed by the district officers where the local battalion commanders and Officers Commanding Police District (OCPDs) served as the security commanders and advisors. The existence of this chain of command allowed for the clear passage of information down to the lowest level.

The third principle is the principle of comprehensive or total involvement. In KESBAN the security aspect of the operations was entrusted to the military and the police. Other civilian departments were aware of this. They were also given the responsibility to assist the military and the police in some relevant supporting roles. They understood the big picture and were well prepared to play their respective roles. Among the government departments that played active supporting roles include the Public Works Department, Broadcasting and Information Department, Department of the Rural Development and Welfare Department. On the development aspect, other government departments depending on the tasks given would be playing the leading roles. In this respect the military and the police would be playing supporting roles, providing protection and security so that these departments would be able to perform their tasks unhindered and free from security threats.

The fourth principle is the principle of people centric approach. KESBAN was essentially a counter insurgency strategy where the requirement of winning the hearts and minds of the population far outweighs the need to capture and hold ground. In KESBAN the areas under control were categorised as black, white or grey depending on the level of allegiance shown by the population towards the government. Black area status was assigned to areas that were mainly sympathetic to the enemy while White area status was given to areas that were free from the enemy's influence. The ultimate objective was to turn all areas into White areas. Toward this end the judicious planning and execution of psychological operations coordinated with development activities and security operations was essential. In compelling the people to support the government efforts

were made to highlight the positive effects of development and why their support is needed to facilitate further development efforts, which ultimately would be to their benefit.

The fifth principle is the principle of winning hearts and minds of the population. This is the corollary of the earlier people centric approach mentioned earlier. KESBAN operation was also essentially small units operations. Soldiers that were normally trained to exercise maximum force and violence in the face of the enemy had to be trained to be patient and compassionate, and to treat civilians with respect and dignity. In this respect, junior commanders and the NCOs played key leadership roles. As part of security operations, soldiers also carried out voluntary development projects to assist the relevant civilian authorities in uplifting the quality of life of the population. It was not uncommon to see engineer units being involved in the building of roads, community halls, places of worship and other facilities for the community, or medical units giving medical and dental treatment as part of the military hearts and minds operations.

The above five principles mentioned are not the cardinal or gospel truth principles that must be adhered to. They are just mere guidelines that complement and sometimes may overlap with each other.

III. MALAYSIA'S EXPERIENCE IN TRAINING, EDUCATION AND ORGANIZATION

In KESBAN where the military, police and the civilian agencies are required to work together as a team, personnel from one agency may also need to know how the other agency works. In Malaysia cross training programs were commonly introduced to facilitate better inter-agency coordination. It was common for civilian officers from the Malaysian Civil Service or officers from the Royal Malaysian Police to attend certain specific army courses to familiarise themselves with the manner how the army conduct its operations, or for army officers to attend courses organised by Malaysian Civil Service at its Institute of Public Administration.

Malaysian experience in KESBAN also led us to discover the importance of establishing a sui generis organisation where the KESBAN concept – due to operational requirements need to be exercised in a more coherent manner. Rajang Area Security Command (RASCOC) was organised along a brigade group organisation to deal with the threat of North Kalimantan Communist Party (NKCP) and the need to develop a society that were scattered, isolated and spread over a large area. Left

unattended the society would be vulnerable to the possible exploitation of the NKCP.

To perform this unique function RASCOM was formed with a civilian CEO as the head of the organisation. The CEO was assisted by a military brigade commander who was essentially the operational commander of the organisation. The RASCOM military commander has under him three Principle Staff Officers (PSO), - the military, the police and the civilian PSO. These PSOs were responsible in coordinating the activities of the various units and departments under their charge. During its heyday RASCOM was the showcase organization that epitomised Malaysia's successful implementation of KESBAN. RASCOM was disbanded after the successful defeat of the NKCP by the Malaysian government. Following its disbandment RASCOM reverted back to an ordinary infantry brigade organisation.

IV. CONCLUSION

Running a KESBAN operation is like conducting an orchestra. The musical instruments are of diverse types. Yet they all contribute toward creating the same music. Every single musician has to be good at playing his musical instrument. They all read the same note. They also follow the lead from one single conductor who is in charge of the performance.

KESBAN is similar in that it requires a high level of professionalism being practiced by the various agencies involved. Good coordination and efficient passage of information being channeled down to the lowest level - and more importantly places people as its prime target. Just like good music that is pleasant to hear would appeal to the audience, good KESBAN strategy would attract the hearts and minds of the people.