



Research Paper

## Low-Intensity Conflict Operations in South East Asia and Far East: Concepts and Practice

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### Abstract:

*Low-intensity conflict (LIC) operations have been a significant aspect of military and security dynamics in Southeast Asia and the Far East. This paper gives an in-depth analysis of LIC operations in the region, examining their concepts, historical context, strategies, case studies, challenges, and implications. Low-intensity conflict (LIC) operations refer to military, paramilitary, and political actions conducted by states or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives without engaging in full-scale conventional warfare. In Southeast Asia and the Far East, the region has witnessed numerous instances of LIC operations, characterized by insurgency, terrorism, ethnic conflicts, and territorial disputes. The paper delves into the concepts and practices of LIC operations in the context of Southeast Asia and the Far East, highlighting key examples and their implications.*

**Keywords:** *Low-intensity conflict, Military activities, Malavan emergency, Vietnam war, Terrorism, Insurgencies.*

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### I. Introduction:

Low-intensity conflict encompasses a spectrum of military and non-military activities characterized by limited scope, duration, and intensity. Common features include irregular warfare, asymmetric tactics, political subversion, propaganda, and covert operations. LIC operations often involve non-state actors, such as insurgent groups, terrorists, and guerrilla fighters, challenging the authority and legitimacy of the state.

### Historical Context of LIC Operations in South East Asia and Far East:

The region has a long history of insurgency, rebellion, and ethnic conflicts dating back to colonial and post-colonial periods. Examples include the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960). Communist insurgency in Thailand (1965-1983) Naxalite insurgency in India, and the ongoing conflicts in Myanmar, Philippines, and Indonesia. Cold War dynamics and ideological rivalries fueled proxy wars and insurgent movements, with external powers supporting opposing factions.

### Objectives and Strategies of LIC Operations:

The objectives of LIC operations vary but often include destabilizing the government, gaining territorial control, and promoting political, ideological or ethnic agendas. Strategies employed by insurgent groups and state actors may include guerrilla warfare sabotage assassination, propaganda, and psychological operations. Counterinsurgency (COIN) strategies focus on winning hearts and minds, building local partnerships and addressing grievances to undermine support for insurgents.

### Case Studies of LIC Operations:

#### (a) Malavan Emergency (1948-1960)

The Malayan Emergency was a protracted conflict between British colonial authorities and Communist insurgents led by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). British counterinsurgency efforts focused on the Hearts and Minds campaign, resettlement programs, and military operations to isolate and defeat the insurgents. The conflict ended with the defeat of the MCP and the establishment of an independent Malaya in 1957.

#### (b) Vietnam War (1955-1975)

The Vietnam War was a complex LIC operation involving the United States, South Vietnam and communist insurgents supported by North Vietnam. The conflict witnessed conventional and unconventional warfare tactics, including guerrilla warfare, counterinsurgency, and strategic bombing campaigns. Despite massive military intervention by the United States, the war ended in 1975 with the reunification of Vietnam under communist rule.

**(c) Insurgencies in Myanmar and Philippines**

Myanmar has faced multiple insurgencies by ethnic armed groups seeking autonomy or independence, including the Karen Kachin, and Rohingya communities. The Philippines has grappled with insurgent groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) New People's Army (NPA), and Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) operating in various regions. Both countries have employed military operations, peace negotiations, and development programs to address the root causes of insurgency and promote reconciliation.

**(d) Terrorism in Indonesia and Malaysia**

Indonesia and Malaysia have experienced terrorist attacks by Islamist extremist groups, such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and Abu Sayyaf, linked to global jihadist networks. Both countries have implemented counterterrorism measures, including intelligence sharing law enforcement operations, and community engagement, to combat the threat of terrorism.

**Challenges and Implications of LIC Operations:**

LIC operations pose numerous challenges for governments, including the erosion of state authority, humanitarian crises, and human rights abuses. The involvement of external factors, such as neighbouring states or international terrorist networks, complicates efforts to resolve conflicts and achieve lasting peace. LIC operations require comprehensive strategies that integrate the military, political, economic and social measures to address the root causes of conflict and build sustainable peace.

**II. Conclusions:**

Low-intensity conflict operations in Southeast Asia and the Far East have been characterized by insurgency, terrorism, and ethnic conflicts, challenging the stability and security of the region. Understanding the concepts and practices of LIC operations is essential for policymakers, military strategists, and peacebuilders to develop effective strategies to address the root causes of conflict, promote reconciliation, and build resilient societies.

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