

Strategic covert action



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Strategic Covert Action Number Department Part Question The role of covert action as a tool of strategic decision-making is far-reaching and multifaceted. First, covert action allows for the gathering of secret intelligence. This secret intelligence is more reliable and accurate a source of information, compared to information that has been gathered through conventional means. This is especially applicable to the crafting of foreign policy. Seldom do host or target countries classify some their information and this blurs decision making, and thereby making covert action expedient. The US could have lost the Cold War to strategic blunders had it not engaged its CIA in acts of espionage and propaganda.

Having the aforementioned accurate information will help a state to identify a point of priority and to respond accurately and appropriately [by for instance funding, making legislation, using diplomacy, and/ or engaging in military combat or proxy war] (Loch, 1989, 75).

Question 2

In the event that an intelligence agency is the same that uses secret information to carry-out executive decisions to engage in covert action, there is likely to be an absence of accountability. Again, the conflict that this trend is likely to herald is the usurpation of the roles of the foreign affairs docket and its offices. When an intelligence agency uses secret information to carry-out executive decisions to engage in covert action other important aspects such as accountability and oversight are easily bypassed and excesses become a reality.

Question 3

There is a strong and clear point of convergence between the use of covert action support the practice of state-craft and the use of covert action to

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carry out actions to further security, military, economic, and business interests. This makes it impossible to disassociate the use of covert action from supporting the practice of state-craft and furtherance of security, military, economic, and business interests. This is because covert action supports the practice of state-craft [achieving, consolidating and wielding power to control outcomes, actors, issues and events in international relations]. Indisputably, this power is also used to consolidate and perpetuate a state's security, military, economic, and business interests.

SCOTT

Part 2:

Question 1

Why is the subject of covert action suffering a deficiency of serious study?

The specific subject of covert action has suffered a lack of serious and in-depth study because of the failure to produce theoretical concepts to explain instruments of foreign policy such as diplomacy, trade and force. It is because of this failure to address the theoretical concepts to explain instruments of foreign policy that the nature and scope of covert action has never been analysed. It is for this reason that many political scientists and academicians have seldom made an attempt to determine whether covert action is to be viewed as a consistent tool of statecraft or as a weapon of last resort, or as an instrument for perpetuating security, economic, political and strategic interests. As far as far as analysis and criticisms on the same are not done, it becomes automatic that studies on the same topic will be scantily addressed.

Question 2

How can studies be done on covert action by an outsider?

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It is a fact that the very clandestine nature of covert action bars any interested civilian from studying the subject. The classified nature of information on covert action also hinders studies on the same. Nevertheless, learners can make use of authorised and unauthorised disclosures on covert action. Some genres of these disclosures are pieces of journalism, memoirs, archives, defectors, judicial investigations and whistleblowers' accounts. A learner may then use generic questions on the agendas and objectives of information providers, so as to address concerns about the integrity and veracity of the information provided. The tenability of this proposition is underscored by the fact that KGB active engagements were understood by revelations from defectors. These defectors in turn have their accounts sanctioned by the intelligence agencies they have worked with. Critical and team thinking may be used to evaluate the lucidity of information provided (Scott, n. d., 165-7).

References

Loch, K. J. 1989. " Covert Action and Accountability: Decision-Making for America's Secret Foreign Policy." *International Studies Quarterly*, 33 (1), 81-99.

Scott, L. (n. d.). *Secret Intelligence, Covert Action and Clandestine Diplomacy* (Class Notes).