



Irregular Warfare Message of the Month: July 2008

Golden Parachutes in an Era of Persistent Conflict:
Why there are No Such Things as Terrorist Organizations

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The word *terrorist* and the phrase *terrorist organization* are dangerous misnomers. Their use only serves to complicate the strategic picture and make the formation of effective policy difficult—if not impossible. *Terrorists* and *terrorist organizations* can be more specifically identified if they are associated with the organization they are serving.

In the realm of unconventional warfare and low intensity conflict, terrorism is a tactic employed in both organized crime and insurgencies to satisfy both strategic and tactical requirements. In this war, the meaning of words is critical: they command resources and direct national efforts. As a consequence, accurately identifying the threat is of the utmost priority.

What does this mean for the Global War on Terrorism—or perhaps more aptly, what is Al Qaeda?

Al Qaeda is an enabling organization. It has been misidentified because of its historical ties with insurgency, its broad ideology, and its claimed strategic intent. However, organizationally, Al Qaeda has been in a state of decomposition following its failures in Africa during the late 1990s, which has slowly drawn it away from its stated aspirations. This erosion is slowly taking Al Qaeda through a process of devolution toward organized crime, away from insurgency or social movement.

The parallels between insurgency and organized crime are based on the similarity of their methods to satisfy their operational and tactical requirements. The strongest difference between the two types of organizations is largely dependent on the end state each pursues. In insurgency, the stated goal is to replace the government, while in organized crime the stated goal is to amass resources in spite of the system. For Al Qaeda, this process is a byproduct of its force structure. By actively pursuing the strategic option to operate as semiautonomous cells, Al Qaeda has lost its ability to progress forward organizationally, and has instead become identified by the behavior and achievements of its cells.

As a consequence, Al Qaeda builds its ideological support by hinging utopian goals with religious fervor to support the continuation of illicit activities and violence in support of unrealistic and intangible goals. In order to overcome the problems afforded by distance and identity, Al Qaeda exploits Islam and fans the flames of social discontent in an effort to insert itself into a population—but resentment is not enough to sustain any movement.

Symptomatic of this problem, Al Qaeda lacks the ability to mass the amount of resources or coordinated efforts that would allow it to develop a counter-state or create social programs to

an extent that would otherwise allow them to establish its legitimacy within the population. Instead, Al Qaeda builds its legitimacy through paramilitary activity and terrorism. By failing to provide tangible alternatives or address the needs of the populace, Al Qaeda's usefulness within a population is guaranteed only as long as there is some negative externality for the population to align against; they must solicit a third party reaction against the population to remain relevant. Ideologically and operationally, Al Qaeda is organized around this weakness.

This paper will demonstrate that Al Qaeda can be viewed as an evolving system passing through a decomposing cycle. Through the context of this cycle, certain vulnerabilities emerge that can be exploited at a national level to support the Global War on Terrorism.

REDEFINING THE PROBLEM

We didn't lose the game; we just ran out of time.

-- Vince Lombardi

The first challenge confronting policymakers lies in accurately defining the problem. In this effort, the meaning of words shape strategies and dictate the allocation of precious resources and national effort. So what *is* Al Qaeda, and how do we fight *it*?

Al Qaeda is initially difficult to classify because of its roots in insurgency current behavior. At the strategic level, much of the rhetoric used by the ideologues of the movement sounds heavily rooted in insurgency strategy, but in practice their appeals are superficially ambiguous. Al Qaeda has consistently failed to espouse a consistent message at the tactical level, and as a consequence has continued to fail to develop a large mass base or functioning counter-state. Instead, the loosely associated cells that represent Al Qaeda's tactical level behave more like small organized crime elements.

At the tactical level, insurgencies operate in the same capacity as organized crime in order to satisfy needs by performing illicit acts. Al Qaeda is more difficult to define because of its dual alignment with crime, and contemporary Salafism. Under an ideological banner, Al Qaeda and affiliated movements have tried to develop a mass base by combining religious ideology with feelings of victimization and resentment to create a gateway for radicalization. However, neither of these elements is enough to sustain any movement for extended periods of time. Al Qaeda has succeeded, however, in its efforts to exploit common religious beliefs to overcome problems associated with distance and identity as the organization attempts to spread to distant populations. In order to be successful an insurgency must espouse specific causes and address specific needs that are relevant to the people, but Al Qaeda has shown a limited capacity to even accomplish this first task.

So if Al Qaeda ideologically behaves like an insurgency, but in practice operates like an element of organized crime, what is it? Perhaps the best answer is that Al Qaeda is an enabling organization. Driven by their own ideology, Al Qaeda grows by acting like an ideological magnet in an effort to attract likeminded organizations or cells to participate in *jihād*. They exchange a brand name with smaller groups as a form of loaner legitimacy similar to franchises. On its own, Al Qaeda's entire existence is dependent upon the expectation of reaction from an external force to aggravate a population into mobilizing—its pattern is transparent and predictable. Al Qaeda inserts itself into a third party population, inspires a reaction from either the host nation or a third party source, then arms the population to fight back in response to the reaction. This parasitic effect seems to be a superficial assumption that the techniques that worked for the mujahedeen against the Soviets in Afghanistan will work again on a global scale.

Organizationally, as Al Qaeda attempts to align itself with disaffected populations it does little to make good on its ideological promises—but why? The decision to operate as semi-autonomous cells has caused significant problems for Al Qaeda. The strength of operating as an organizationally flat network without clear hierarchy is that it makes Al Qaeda extremely difficult to root out, discredit, and destroy. Al Qaeda has succeeded in using this modus operandi to form and maintain a strategic high-command and a lower tactical command—but the organization lacks a functioning operational level. This choice, perhaps a byproduct of the early counterterrorism successes, would be similar to the United States military deciding to eliminate all of the field grade officers from its ranks: although the organization would continue to exist, what would happen to its capabilities?

By lacking an operational level, Al Qaeda has undercut its ability to operate in a coordinated manner for extended periods of time, and instead has been reduced to such an extent that it is capable of only enjoying short term tactical successes. Without an operational layer, Al Qaeda lacks the capability to effectively organize, communicate, or implement the widespread changes required of the organization to remain relevant to the shifting needs of the local populations in order to advance its strategic efforts. These problems are only magnified by the franchise method of expansion Al Qaeda has adopted. By failing to assimilate smaller organizations other than in name, the ability of Al Qaeda to maintain a clear organizational focus is increasingly more difficult and prone to fracturing over time. Evidence of this inability to focus is visible in Al Qaeda's operational and strategic failures in Africa in the late 1990s, where, as an organization, it was unable to produce neither an effective insurgency nor a consistent ideological message. The decision to attack the United States on September 11, 2001, was in part an effort to recover from these failures and regain its focus, but the underestimation of the US response to the attacks, combined with the inability to effectively mobilize the necessary resources to a fight western power, has left Al Qaeda in a state of decay.

This decomposition has further limited the ability of Al Qaeda to root itself within a population on the basis of providing solutions to popular grievances because it cannot risk operating in the open—instead, Al Qaeda has been forced to solicit legitimacy on the basis of paramilitary activity. A strategically limiting factor, this predilection towards violence, rather than addressing the day to day needs of the local populace, has not only retarded Al Qaeda's potential usefulness to the population, but has made the tactical use of violence commonplace in communities where Al Qaeda attempts to operate.

In its progression toward organized crime, elements of law enforcement must be energized within any counterinsurgency efforts. Al Qaeda cells have backed their operations with a broad range of illicit activities to include: prostitution and kidnapping to drugs, torture and murder. The use of criminal acts to satisfy basic requirements has created vulnerability by increasing potential exposure to law enforcement, as cells attempt to satisfy their own logistic requirements at a tactical level.

In Figure 1, as seen below, Al Qaeda is shown to occupy the area of the spectrum between insurgency and organized crime. It is important to note that Al Qaeda's position is not fixed on this spectrum and may be dependent on location. Its definition is dependent on its behavior. In a broader context, elements from both the operational and tactical functions of both

insurgency and organized crime fall into this mid-ground along with Al Qaeda. But what does the distinction matter? Although both counter-organized crime efforts and counterinsurgency require robust policing capability to address effectively, the measure and focus of applied strategic effort remains very different. To progress forward with this approach to Al Qaeda, we will need to clearly define both insurgency and organized crime.



Figure 1: The Sliding Scale from Insurgency to Organized Crime

The Department of Defense defines insurgency as, "An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict." However, this definition further is expanded by the description of an insurgency provided in FM 100-20, Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict as:

An insurgency is an organized, armed political struggle whose goal may be the seizure of power through revolutionary takeover and replacement of the existing government. In some cases, however, an insurgency's goals may be more limited. For example, the insurgency may intend to break away from government control and establish an autonomous state within traditional ethnic or religious territorial bounds. The insurgency may also only intend to extract limited political concessions unattainable through less violent means.¹

The contest between an insurgency and a ruling government is one of legitimacy. Each player strives to demonstrate that it is better capable of meeting the needs and expectations of the

¹ Army Field Manual. 100-20, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict*. (Department of the Army: Washington DC), 4: 2-0.

people. The effort of the contestants is to capture the loyalty of the uncommitted majority through some combination of intimidation, promises of reform, and appeal to grievances. This struggle may take place within any political or economic system as long as there are sufficient conditions that contribute to the dissatisfaction of one or more segments governed by that system. Insurgency is a product of unsatisfactory conditions, social change, and a belief in the possibility for improvement.² Organized crime, however, is not as concerned with winning over the population, and instead is focused on exploiting an existing system—not replacing it. To be successful, organized crime does not require the support of the people, it only requires complicity.

The Federal Bureau of Investigations defines organized crime as:

*Any group having some manner of a formalized structure and whose primary objective is to obtain money through illegal activities. Such groups maintain their position through the use of actual or threatened violence, corrupt public officials, graft, or extortion, and generally have a significant impact on the people in their locales, region, or the country as a whole.*³

From this context, Al Qaeda can be viewed as similar to organized crime because of its parasitic relationship with the Taliban. They used the existing structures in Afghanistan to train and equip their own forces at the expense to the Afghani people. Al Qaeda's role in Afghanistan was limited to strong arm activities rather than the day to day functions of the government. The difference between Al Qaeda and organized crime is where the money goes. In organized crime, money is made for the benefit of strategic leadership, while in Al Qaeda money raised through illegal means supports tactical level cells. Without clear and tangible goals, Al Qaeda is caught in a cycle where it operates to exist, and existence is its only end state.

Another significant difference between insurgency and organized crime lies at the strategic objectives of each organization. At their most basic levels, organized crime and insurgency employ similar organizational structures in the form of three subgroups, broadly characterized as the underground, the guerrillas, and the auxiliary. Although the personnel associated with these roles will not quantify themselves as members of the underground, guerrillas, or auxiliaries—these are academic delineations—their recognition is critical. By delineating the subgroups based on their function within the organization, strategies may be developed to specifically degrade or target each subgroup in more manageable pieces. The relationship between these roles becomes complicated due to the overlapping functions between subgroups. This overlap makes it possible for a person to be a member of multiple subgroups, depending on their role within the organization.

² Ibid., 5: 3-0.

³Federal Bureau of Investigations. "Organized Crime: Glossary." Accessed 23 January 2008. Taken From: <<http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/orgcrime/glossary.htm>>.

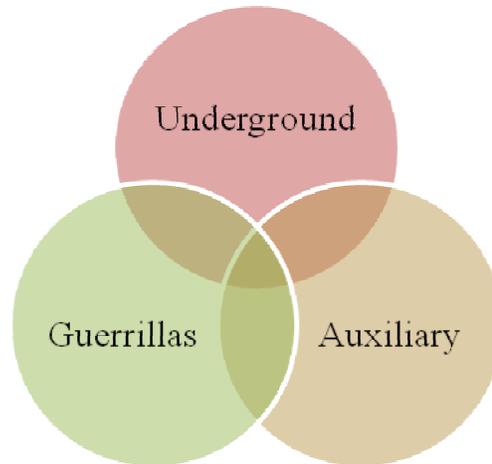


Figure 2: The Subgroups of Insurgency and Organized Crime

The underground is responsible for subversion, sabotage, intelligence collection and other compartmentalized activities. The underground has the ability to conduct operations in areas inaccessible to the guerrillas. These are areas under government, military, or police control. The underground performs these functions in urban terrain by operating in small, compartmentalized cells and utilizing safe houses. Activities are conducted with a minimum of contact between personnel in a manner that does not draw attention to unusual acts. The core underground cadre survives by maintaining secrecy, compartmentalizing information, and having other members of the organization assume most of the risk.

The guerrilla is a group of irregular, predominantly indigenous personnel, organized along military lines to conduct military and paramilitary operations. Its primary purpose is to carry out combat operations. In both insurgency and organized crime, these activities include, but are not limited to assaults, raids, ambushes, shootings, and assassinations. The leadership for either organized crime or insurgency may be located among the guerrilla force.

The auxiliary, sometimes referred to as the mass base, is the portion of the population that provides support to the organization. In insurgency, this population consists of the supporters of the movement and represents its center of gravity. The form of support they provide is flexible and can take the form of logistics, labor, or intelligence, along with a wide range of other services. Members of the auxiliary can range from part-time to full-time members of the organization who maintain their normal positions within the community. Members are recruited and indoctrinated by cadre who disseminate instructions, procedures, and ideology provided by the organization's leadership.⁴

⁴Army Field Manual 3-07-22 *Counter Insurgency Operations*. (Department of the Army: Washington DC, 2004), 1-3.

The strategic application of resources is allocated differently when combating organized crime and insurgency because of the structural size and focus of each subgroup. Due to huge differences in strategic priority, the centers of gravity for each type of organization are drastically different. As seen in the depiction below, the allocation of state resources is inverted when addressing the subgroups of each threat.

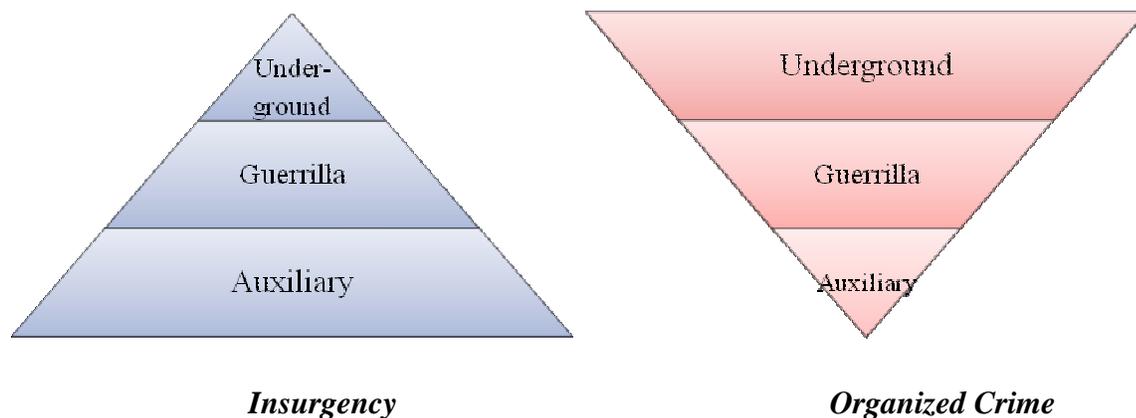


Figure 3: Contrasting Strategic Application of Force

In recognizing their similarities at the tactical level, techniques that are effective for combating organized crime may be equally effective against insurgency. Making this leap allows the state to leverage both its military and police strengths against the weight of the problem by making it possible to exploit commonality.

A tool employed by both organized crime and insurgency is terrorism. Terrorism is a tactic with expansive ramifications. The Department of Defense defines terrorism as, “The calculated use of violence or threat of violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.”

However, the word *terrorist* or the phrase *terrorist organization* is dangerously misleading. A person that commits an act of terrorism can be quantified as either an insurgent or a criminal, or identified more specifically by the role he/she plays within the organization. An organization that uses terrorism as a means to pursue its goals can also be quantified more specifically than simply as a *terrorist organization*. In the realm of unconventional warfare and low intensity conflict, terrorism is a tactic employed by both insurgencies and organized crime to satisfy both strategic and tactical requirements. By attempting to group all organizations and persons who use terror together, the process of creating appropriate strategic responses has become more difficult.

So if Al Qaeda is neither insurgency nor organized crime, how does a state leverage its strengths to combat this threat? The answer lies in viewing the organization as a system.

VIEWING THE PROBLEM AS A SYSTEM⁵

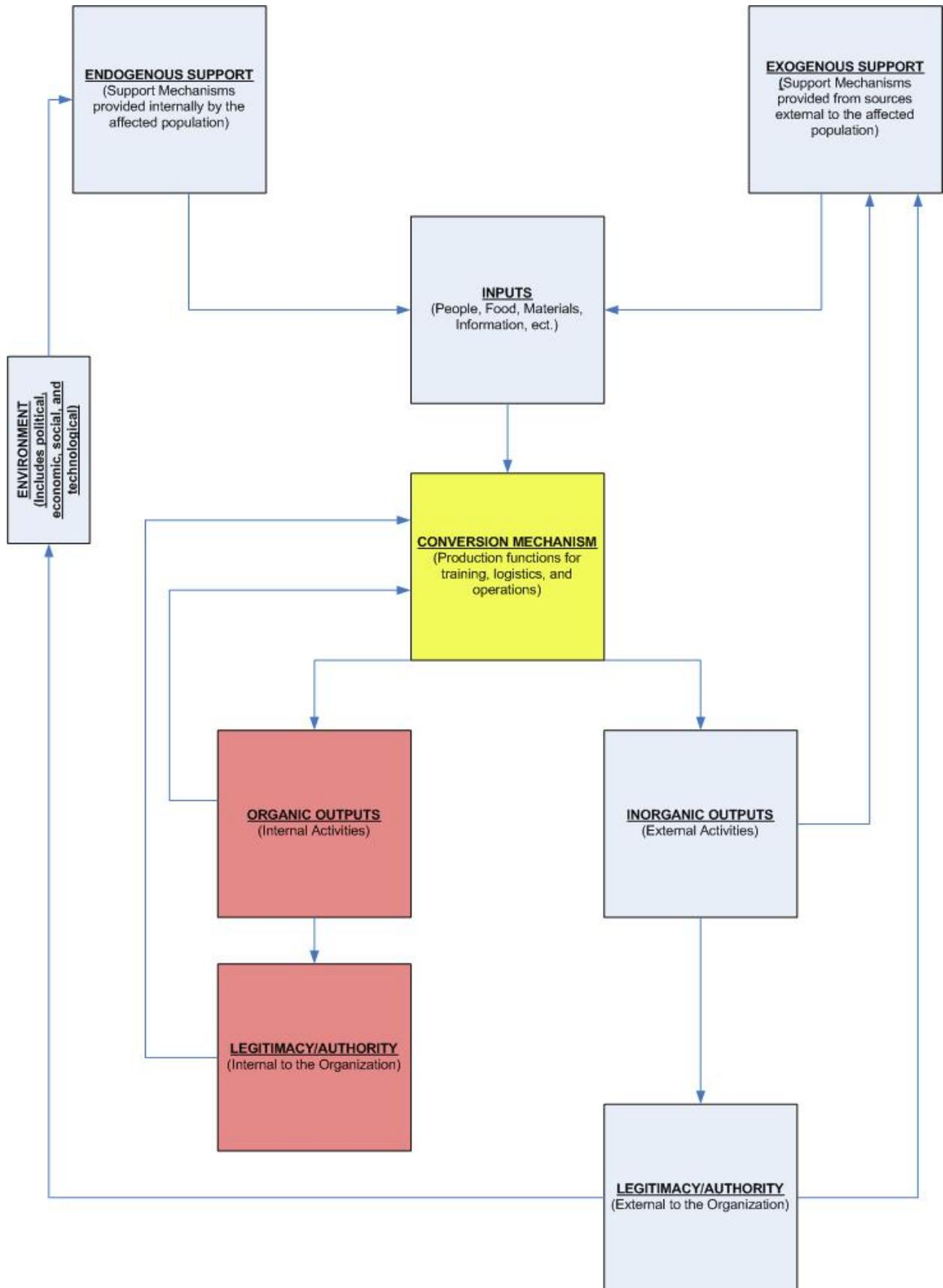
"The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."

--Albert Einstein

Al Qaeda must be combated effectively on two fronts. The first option lies in exploiting Al Qaeda through its supply and economic vulnerabilities. The second option is the application of preventative measures, aimed at future populations that may be sympathetic to Al Qaeda or similar movements. As Al Qaeda continues to decompose from insurgency toward organized crime, a strategy must be developed that can adapt to meet a changing threat from location to location, sometimes within the same country. This decomposition offers the United States and its partners a critical opportunity. Al Qaeda has become slave to its source of legitimacy—its ability to conduct paramilitary operations—which offers its greatest vulnerability. This requirement to produce outputs makes it possible to view Al Qaeda and similar organizations as a system. The proposed structure of the system is shown on the following page.

⁵ This section is based on a collection of readings produced by RAND regarding insurgency as a system. Written in 1970 by Nathaniel Wolfe and Charles Leites, *Rebellion and Authority*, has proven to be indispensable in the construction of this portion of the paper.

The proposed model was built in part using the suggestions made in *Rebellion and Authority* in conjunction with models proposed to view organizations as open systems interacting with their environment, which the original models proposed by RAND failed to adequately address. The original model proposed by Leites and Wolf is available in Annex C.



The benefit of viewing the organization as a system is discovered through evaluating its functional components—operations, personnel, production, et cetera. By assessing the performance and vulnerabilities of each element, distinguishing it from the whole organization, or other elements within, specific courses of action emerge to combat the functions of the organization.

The systems approach to viewing insurgency was originally proposed by Nathan Wolfe and Charles Leites in *Rebellion and Authority*, but failed to adequately address the sociological factors internal to the organization, in favor of viewing an organization independent of its environment. With slight modification to the original model, organizations can be viewed as wholes—complex entities composed of social, psychological, economical, and structural elements that interact not just with each other, but with their environment. Now, this modified model can be used at both strategic and tactical levels to examine the targeted organization as whole, or in parts. By assessing the organization from a holistic perspective, their internal and external pressures and constraints help to reveal vulnerabilities to the processes that make the organization function. The size, shape, complexity, purpose, and functions of cells can vary considerably, but there are certain characteristics that appear to be common.⁶ There are four basic interdependent components that remain consistent from cell to cell:

1. **The ideological component**, which espouses the goals, values, and the desired future state of the organization. These are the organization’s basic standards that must be subscribed to for the purpose of satisfying its expressed function.
2. **The social component**, which focuses on the interactions of both the individual and the group. These interactions include behavior and motivation, status and role relationships, group dynamics, and influence systems. This component is impacted by personality, emotions, aspirations, values, and the attitudes of the people within the organization. It is additionally influenced by task, organizational structure, external environment, and leadership within the organization.
3. **The structural component**, which illustrates the patterns of relationships within the organization. It is further defined by the way tasks are organized and coordinated. Structure is defined by roles, rules, and procedures. This component is impacted by patterns of authority, methods of communications, workflow, and both the internal and external environment.
4. **The technical component**, which reflects the equipment, information, and knowledge. This refers to the “how to” of accomplishing organizational tasks. This includes the knowledge required for performance of the goals and values, as well as the techniques and processes used to aggregate inputs to produce outputs.

The model operates on the assumption that insurgencies and organized crime both require inputs of people, food, material, and information to operate. These inputs are provided by internal sources (endogenous) and external sources (exogenous). The level of support derived from each type of source varies from organization to organization, and is a reflection of the operating environment.

⁶ These four elements are specifically defined in a series of writings discussing the complex nature of open organizations and their component parts. The intention of these articles was in part to describe the relationship between an organization and its environment.

Inputs are converted to produce outputs. These outputs can be broadly divided into two categories—organic and inorganic—based on how they are expended or consumed. Inorganic outputs are defined by the external activities of the organization, to include paramilitary activities, along with goods and services that are consumed by or expended upon external sources. The organic outputs are defined by the internal activities of the organization, which includes payment, transfer of supplies, communications, and the goods and services that are consumed or expended upon internal sources.

The production of outputs is meant to help establish and advance the perception of legitimacy and authority. As a consequence of there being two types of outputs, there are two types of legitimacy and authority, one internal to the organization and one external. Distinguishing the types of legitimacy is essential to understanding the functions of the organizations. Understanding the interplay between an organization and its environment, and an organization and its membership is essential for intelligence analysts to accurately assess the capabilities and vulnerabilities of these organizations.

The desired end state this model supports revolves around the idea of denying these organizations access to the population by forcing them to expend resources on survival, rather than on operational activity.⁷ Using the model, six options for disrupting the system emerge:

1. **Counter Inputs**, which is an effort to counter the production capabilities of the organization by denying or reducing an organization's access to critical inputs. This concept assumes that the population, whether willingly or not, provides the majority of the necessary inputs to the organization.
2. **Counter Conversion Mechanism**, which is defined by an effort to reduce or eliminate the efficiency of the organization to produce. Dependent on successful efforts to identify critical conversion mechanisms to be effective, this strategy is extremely contextual. For example, its application may include disrupting the operation of safe zones at a strategic level, and bomb-making facilities at a tactical level. The counter conversion mechanism technique is meant to exploit and deny the tangible requirements necessary for the organization to bring inputs together to produce outputs. This approach is highly dependent on accurate and timely intelligence.
3. **Counter Organic Outputs**, which is an effort to reduce the efficiency of internal activities of the organization. These activities include payment, transfer of supplies, communications, and the administrative functions of the organization. These outputs are most susceptible to non-kinetic effects, to include psychological operations.
4. **Counter Inorganic Outputs**, which is an effort to reduce the effectiveness of external activities of the organization. These activities include paramilitary

⁷ An example of the use of this methodology to exploit an organization's inputs would consist of:

- Identifying critical inputs
- Identifying potential substitutes for those inputs
- Prepare substitutes for action
- Defeat or deny the original Input
- Counter the enemy as he evolves to the substitutes and template his evolution to apply it to other components of the fight.

operations, money laundering, counterfeiting, and drug trafficking. These activities do not directly affect the population, but do allow the organization to continue to mass resources as a result of secondary effects.

5. **Counter Legitimacy and Authority Internal** to the organization by creating an environment of friction and distrust within the organization to create divisions between individuals, cells, and the leadership of the organization. These outputs are most susceptible to non-kinetic effects, to include information and psychological operations directed at specific elements and subgroups within the organization.
6. **Counter Legitimacy and Authority External** to the organization by creating a defensive buffer between the population and the organization. This includes Foreign Internal Defense and Internal Defense and Development efforts conducted alongside the host nation to address both the social grievances of the population and increase the policing capacity of the state. These efforts must be augmented by robust information and civil affairs operations, with the expressed purpose of bolstering the legitimacy of the host nation government.

The strength of this model is that it recaptures the initiative to the fight. By closely examining the structures the enemy uses to support his efforts, the United States can leverage its material resources to exploit critical organizational functions in an effort to force organizations to expend their resources on survival rather than on operational activities. This shift in expended effort means that these organizations are no longer effectively accessing the population.

The strategic level application of the systems approach yields legitimacy to the host nation via the control mechanisms applied to the population. For examples one can look to the mechanisms that already exist in the United States. Consider the opportunities that are available to law enforcement as a result of state control over the roadways. Vehicle registrations, licensing requirements, and speed limits are all examples of this control. These control mechanisms also produce information about the population that supports other efforts by the law enforcement community. Additionally, control over critical resources available to the common good creates a more restrictive environment for those who would chose to operate outside of it.

The increase in control, if achieved with the complicity of the population, not only increases the legitimacy and authority of the affected government, but also creates the rising conditions for competition between multiple organizations. Iraq is ideal for this type of strategy because of the large number of groups that claim to operate within its borders.

Consider the existence of multiple competing organizations in a specific area. In the first phase of applying the model, intelligence regarding the needs, operations, and goals of each organization is developed. As a picture of each organization grows, accurately identifying commonality becomes the critical priority and the key determinant to the successful application of this process. Common factors may include, but are not limited to ideology, goals, resources, and geographic areas. It is important to note, however that the identified common resources should be exploited on the basis of their support for both the military and nonmilitary efforts of each organization.

As shown in the figure on the following page, there is one thing, or group of things, that is common to all three organizations. This commonality becomes the first priority for the host nation. The other three areas that encompass the commonalities between two organizations become second priority, and should continue to be studied, developed, and primed for exploitation. It is important to note that while some commonalities are shared by some organizations, they are not shared by all. This means that the amount or type of overlap between “organization one” and “organization two” is not equal to the amount of common factors between “organization one” and “organization three,” and so on and so forth.

In addition to the identification of these shared resources, potential substitutes are also identified and prepared for exploitation. These alternatives are identified and prepared for exploitation so that government forces may counter the enemy as he evolves. This effort on the part of the government has two intentions. The first goal is to recapture the initiative, and begin placing the organization in the position where it is forced to react. The second goal is to force the targeted organizations in a direction where their resources are consumed on survival, rather than in supporting operational activity.

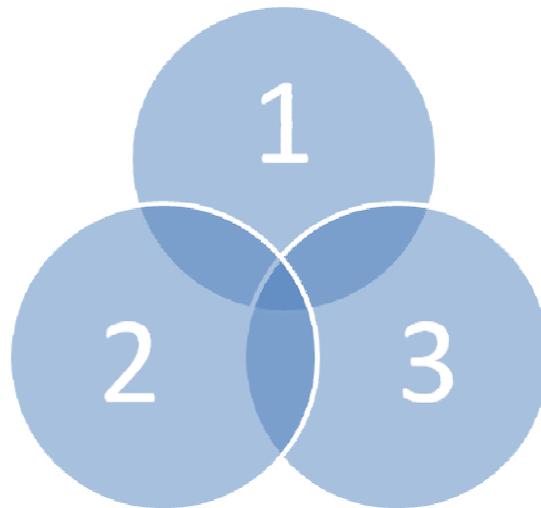


Figure 4: Phase, Grouping and Identifying Commonality

During Phase II, the commonalities are targeted and exploited and the enemy organization is countered as he attempts to evolve to the prepared substitutes. The evolution of these organizations to substitutes must be closely studied, and serve as the basis for the continued application of this process. Additionally, priority for the exploitation of common factors must be based on the capabilities of each organization; this example assumes all three organizations are equal in operational capability. The purpose of targeting commonality is to drive a wedge between previously indifferent/cooperating organizations. Dividing the groups must be completed in such a manner that it supports or increases the legitimacy of the government.

Techniques that succeeded in dividing the organizations, but undermine the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the population, are not viable options. As common factors continue to be exploited, the sharing, cooperation, and indifference between each of the organizations ceases as the sustainment of individual organizational needs becomes increasingly difficult.



Figure 5: Phase II, Dividing the Organizations

Phase III begins with infighting between groups. As resources become increasingly less available, the onset of violence between groups shifts organizational focus away from the government and the population, and towards the competition. As activity between groups increases, government forces continue to restrict common factors and focus their efforts on preventing the groups from unifying. In either instance the state must leverage all elements of national power toward maintaining these divisions.

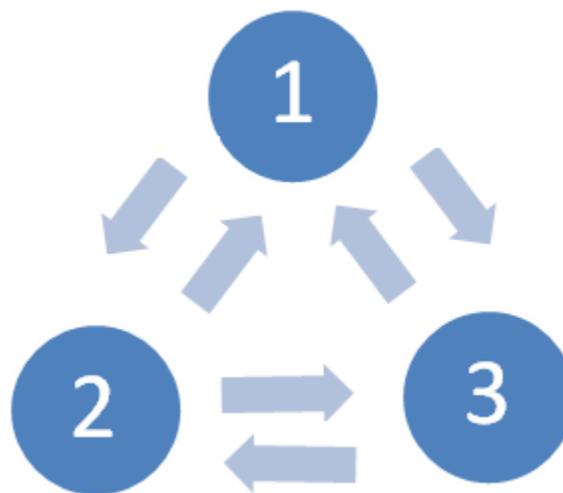


Figure 6: Phase III A, Infighting between Organizations

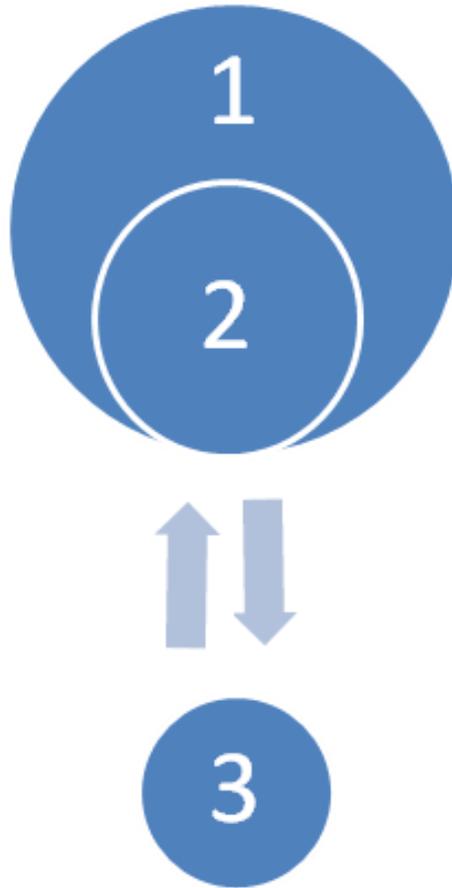


Figure 7: Phase III, Infighting leads to the merger of Organizations

During this phase, violence will most likely increase and create doubts regarding the stability and the legitimacy of the government. As each organization becomes more strained as a result of dwindling resources, its demands on the population will rise. These demands may manifest in the form of coercion and acts of terrorism. The government must plan for these internal security problems and shape its information and military operations to reflect this expectation. However, the temptation of government forces to immediately begin targeting these warring organizations must be sharply avoided. During this phase, the focus of government forces should be to engage the population and to monitor the level of violence between the warring parties as they progress toward Phase IV.

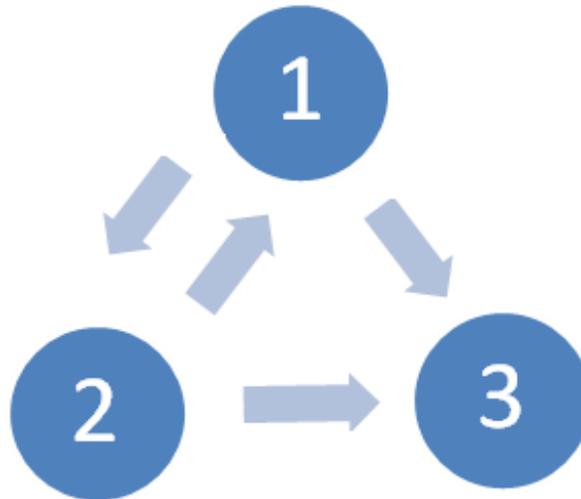


Figure 8: Phase IV, Isolation and Destruction

Both Phase III and Phase IV are characterized by information operations that continue to drive a wedge between the organizations and the population. In the transition from Phase III to Phase IV, golden parachutes are offered by the government to subgroups within each organization, to include the provision of amnesty programs, in an effort to bleed off the membership of each organization. Throughout this process the organizations, and the personnel within them, continue to be monitored until one reaches a point where it is no longer capable of sustained combat operations. At this point, the escalating inter-organizational violence has reached a level where the afflicted organization can be targeted with conventional military force.

The constraint of this method is that its success is contingent on reliable intelligence. It is also important to note that its application may change from location to location and at different levels of operations. In other words, the decomposition of an organization in one area may not be at the same rate in another. This also implies that common factors between organizations may equally vary from place to place. By shifting the state's resources into more proactive roles, the initiative can be maintained in light of predictive failures, so long as these failures are closely examined and their lessons broadly disseminated in an effort to embrace organizational learning at all levels.

The intent of this model is not meant to imply that all strategies can be viewed strictly in terms of cost benefit relationships, nor is it supposed to suggest that the solution lies in brutalizing the population to a point where the cost of participating is not worth the benefit of membership. Instead, its intent is to help identify the heart of the organization and seeks to target its efficiencies. The central concept that serves as the basis for this model is the idea that it is possible to erode an organization from the inside out by degrading its ability to produce outputs. The supported end state is not to kill—on the contrary, it is to place these organizations in a position where they are forced to expend 100% of their resources/efforts on survival, as

opposed to accessing the population. Killing is a byproduct of success and will, ideally, be the concern of the local population as was the case in Al Anbar, now referred to as the Sunni awakening.⁸

⁸ The suggested application of this model to exploit common resources is based on the writings and lectures of Dean Newman and the other authors of the *Irregular Warfare Message of the Month*. Having written multiple papers, Dean Newman's work has either directly or indirectly influenced the author's work in this portion of the paper. The primary text used in support of this model was *Sowing Dissension in Insurgencies*, and is available at <http://www.usma.edu/dmi/IWmsgs/Sowing_Dissension.pdf>. The elemental changes suggested to the original Leites and Wolf model, were in part due to the lectures and guidance received by the author from Jamie Spies throughout the course of 2007.

THE DECOMPOSING CYCLE

“What the peasant wants to know is: Does the government mean to win the war? Because if not, he will have to support the insurgent.”

--Sir Robert Thompson

Defeating Communist Insurgency:

The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam

Today, the Middle East finds itself surrounded by an ever-modernizing world. History illustrates that every instance of rapid modernization for a society has been a traumatic process. The modern histories of the United States, Europe, and East Asia, the only places in the world where this transition has been successfully accomplished, bear the scars of this process: the near-extermination of Native Americans, the violence of our own Civil War, World Wars I and II, the Bolshevik Revolution, Hitler’s Holocaust, the rise of Japanese fascism, the Chinese revolution, and the “Great Leap Forward.”⁹

So the question becomes: Can we expect the Middle East to do any better?

Since the late 19th century, Salafi movements have used similar processes to mobilize a population to support initial recruitment for radicalization. Through a process of radicalization, members may become active participants in the military operations of the movement.¹⁰ Products of this process are most readily visible today via the internet, where resentment of the generalized West is the subject of countless websites and publications.

Radicalism is borne of the diplomatic, economic, social, political, and cultural crises of a society. Its causes are often all-encompassing and spring from a history of systemic failures. Rapid demographic growth and urbanization, in addition to educational changes, are among the causes of high unemployment and increasing poverty in the Middle East.¹¹ Compounded by government policy failures and uneven development, significant portions of the Middle East have become potentially susceptible to extremist ideologies.

Although the potential causes for uprisings are as numerous as human conditions, Al Qaeda and similar movements use the ideological banner of contemporary Salafism to build a

⁹ Alan Richards. “Socio-Economic Roots of Radicalism? Towards Explaining the appeal of Islamic Radicals.” *Strategic Studies Institute*. (July 2003): 1-5.

¹⁰ Army Field Manual. *FM 3-07-22 Counter Insurgency Operations*. (Department of the Army: Washington DC, 2004), 1-3.

¹¹ Richards, 1-5.

movement on the cultivation of resentment within the population. Resentment alone, however, is not enough to sustain any movement. In order to be successful, the movement must continue to espouse causes that are relevant to the population. A strategically limiting factor in current movements, these organizations are prone to build legitimacy on operational activity, as opposed to meeting the day to day needs of the local population. The popular desire to resist must be maintained by a movement in order to accomplish its political goals. Thus, the insurgency mounts a political challenge to the state through the formation of, or desire to, create a counter-state.¹²

In the case of Salafi movements, the insurgency's leadership must provide the necessary organizational and managerial skills to transform regions into an effective base for armed political activities. Simultaneously it becomes the responsibility of the cadre to accomplish this same transformation at both the community and individual levels. What results, as in any armed conflict, is a contest between resource mobilization and force deployment. Economic and supply efficiencies determine the degree of success achieved by the organization and ultimately govern the movement's ability to function.

The desire to form a counter-state is borne in part from necessity: the insurgency's need to meet the day-to-day needs of its center of gravity—the population—in order to retain power. While religious ideology has served as a catalyst for Salafi movements, and resentment has served as a gateway for radicalization, neither of these elements has proven to be enough to sustain a movement. As in any political campaign, all levels of support are relative. The goal is mobilization so that the enemy may be defeated. To be successful, support must be gained in whatever proportion is necessary to sustain an insurgency, or, from the counterinsurgent's perspective, to defeat it. This support can only be maintained in the long term through established legitimacy derived from successful social programs.¹³

Operational and tactical use of violence as a strategy has become increasingly commonplace. Objects of violence can be anything an organization deems to be obstructions to their cause. This can be host nation forces, foreign forces, aid workers, civilians who do not accept the organization's claims, cultural targets, and infrastructure. Nonetheless, the long term application of violence can be detrimental to the movement if it is not linked to a vision of a better life. As a result of its inability to address the needs of the people, violence must be complimented by a variety of nonviolent activities. If done effectively, this combination will act as a potent weapon in any external propaganda war and assist in recruiting. Both HAMAS and Hezbollah have recognized this necessity to such an extent that they have both fielded units charged with nonviolent action meant to compliment the violent activities conducted by the parent organization.

But, if these movements are successful, what will occur after the *enemy's* defeat? What will the emerging government look like and how will it function? What will the socio-economic ramifications be, and how will they affect regional stability? If allowed to persist, Salafi

¹²Army Field Manual. *FM 3-07-22 Counter Insurgency Operations*. (Department of the Army: Washington DC, 2004), 1-3 to 1-4.

¹³Army Field Manual. *FM 3-07-22 Counterinsurgency Operations*. (Department of the Army: Washington DC, 2004), 1-2 to 1-4

extremist movements pass through a three stage cycle. This cycle is the byproduct of the inability of these movements to mass the adequate resources necessary to establish social welfare programs and effective governance.

In Stage I, ideologues mobilize the population around an underlying theme of common resentment and progress through the evolutionary phases of insurgency: latent and insipient, guerrilla warfare, and eventually war of movement.¹⁴ As the movement gains relative success and progresses to Stage II, the counter-state takes on Socialist-like qualities, to include the centralization of military, economic, and political power.

Similar to Marx, the ideologues for the rebellion will have developed the architecture for revolution without an effective plan for the maintenance of the governmental structures the movement strove to establish. Without a unified vision, the centralization of governmental powers, in tandem with the inability to effectively enter the world economy, will give way to widespread corruption and fracturing as the government fails to meet the needs of its population.

As the resurgence of social grievances begins to emerge within a population already familiar with rebellion, the knee jerk reaction of the government is the restriction of individual freedoms as the movement enters Stage III. Governmental structures in Stage III become fascist in nature as the government continues to fail to provide the population with tangible solutions. The persistent restriction of individual freedoms and a seemingly unresponsive, yet oppressive, government, will ultimately set the escalating conditions for new ideologues to begin mobilizing the population for rebellion against a corrupted regime, as the cycle once again enters Stage I.

The predictive nature of this cycle makes interdicting, and even stalling, the progression of Salafi extremist movements possible. Though constrained to the limitations of this paper, we will examine both the Taliban and Al Qaeda's limited successes in Afghanistan through the suggested cycle. This cycle will be used as the foundation to discuss possible alternative approaches and solutions.

¹⁴ Army Field Manual. *90-8 Counter-guerrilla Operations*, Department of the Army: Washington DC, 1986), 1-3 to 1-4.

STAGE I: MOBILIZATION AND CONFLICT

“Not believing in force is the same as not believing in gravity.”

--Leon Trotsky

The Question of Revolutionary Force

In Stage I, ideologues mobilize the population around an underlying theme of common resentment and progress through the evolutionary phases of insurgency: latent and insipient, guerrilla warfare, and eventually, war of movement.¹⁵ There are three basic requirements that must be satisfied to mobilize a population for armed conflict. First, the movement must find people who will either fight or support those who fight. Second, it needs the means of force, including weapons and the basics of survival. Finally, it needs the ability to exercise direction. While there are other potentially problematic issues to address, such as the need to develop a defensive base or intelligence capabilities, these issues are not necessary in the same manner as the three main requirements.¹⁶

Readily visible in propaganda, the perception of continued injustice and feelings of frustration are available to these organizations as tools that can be used for recruitment and sustainment. These tensions are amplified by the perception that both local and traditional cultural systems are being consumed by external forces.¹⁷ In order to sustain the belief that the organization is progressing towards a common good, the armed group must be capable of directing its forces and linking its military activities to the idea of a better life.¹⁸

The Afghan mass revolt began as a revolution without leadership. During the struggle against the Soviets, Afghan ethnic and religious groups developed a degree of solidarity that had not been present since the war of independence against the British in 1919.¹⁹ At the beginning, the uprisings were fueled by the unfulfilled expectations of the population; it was not until later that the multitude of social grievances coalesced under the common banner of jihad. From 1978 until 1979, the people did not mobilize in the name of an ideology against the communists. In fact, militants were rare, even in urban areas, and their rhetoric was initially meaningless to a

¹⁵ The phases of insurgency referred to in this paper are described in: *FM 3-05-201 Special Forces Unconventional Operations*. An outline of the event based progression of each phase is available at the end of this text in Appendix A.

¹⁶ Anthony Vince. “The Problems of Mobilization and the Analysis of Armed Groups.” *Parameters*, Vol XXXVI, No. 1. (Spring 2006), 51-55.

¹⁷ Fathali Moghaddam. “The Staircase to Terrorism.” *American Psychologist*. Vol. 60, No. 2 (February-March 2005), 161-167.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁹ Neamatollah Nojumi. *Rise of the Taliban*. (New York: PALGRAVE, 2002), 207.

population whose literacy was as underdeveloped as their concept of central government. Political parties were not established until after the popular uprising began.²⁰

Support for emerging groups of mujahedeen grew from very specific local grievances and initial recruitment efforts were reliant upon common tribal and religious affiliations. In response to the growing disillusionment, the communist government adopted increasing violent policies directed at entire elements of the population in an effort to stave off popular rebellion.²¹ It was the oppressive policies enacted by the Soviets that alienated enough of the population to make organized revolution possible.

As the insurgency progressed, religious interpretation was applied to the conflict and Islam was used as a means to justify popular rebellions. The use of religion as a mobilizing force gave the movement direction. Mosques were used as platforms to put forth rhetoric meant to convince the hesitant to support the fighting; while fighters used mosques as staging areas prior to attacks.²² Villages evolved into military frontlines and served as the main grounds for the formation of guerrilla groups.²³ The mobilization of urban centers to support the combat operations of the mujahedeen during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan led to the destruction of thousands of villages and towns, leaving a large percentage of the Afghan population displaced internally or as refugees in neighboring countries.²⁴ This huge displaced population provided an ample number of fighters to continue to fuel the mujahedeen ranks throughout the country.

Following the withdrawal of the Soviet Union in 1988, the United States, having achieved its strategic goal, lost interest in Afghanistan. The international aid agencies, along with the United Nations, that had supported the mujahedeen reduced their humanitarian assistance rather than continuing to support the unfolding civil war.²⁵ The power vacuum left behind was filled by the influence of neighboring states and regional countries. These countries were, and continue to be, responsible for instigating various mujahedeen groups within Afghanistan on the basis of similar religious, ethnic, and/or political grounds in an effort to exert influence over future Afghan governments. This has been a major factor in the ongoing civil war in Afghanistan.²⁶

The Saudis were financially one of the major supporters of the Afghan mujahedeen during the Soviet occupation, and continued to support the resistance afterward. The Saudis' aim in the post-Soviet withdrawal period was to safeguard their investment by continuing to support groups that were aligned with their Salafi school of Islam and opposed to Iran.²⁷ However, in 1996, help came in the form of Pakistan's Interior Ministry. With Pakistani assistance, training,

²⁰ Gilles Dorransoro. *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan 1979 to the Present*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 105-106.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

²² *Ibid.*, 106-107.

²³ Nojumi, 213.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 221.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 223.

²⁶ Nabi Misdaq. *Afghanistan: Political Frailty and Foreign Interference*. (New York: Routledge, 2006): 216-217.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 216.

and weaponry, the Taliban were able to capitalize on internal disorganization and strife to seize control of Kabul along with eighty percent of the country, and found the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.²⁸

The Taliban's popularity with the Afghan people surprised the country's other warring factions. Under the direction of Mullah Muhammad Omar, the Taliban brought about this order through the institution of a very strict interpretation of *Sharia*, or Islamic law. Many Afghans, weary of conflict and anarchy, were relieved to see the corrupt and brutal warlords of the early 1990s replaced by the devout Taliban, who had at this point shown limited success in eliminating corruption, restoring peace, and allowing commerce to resume.²⁹

²⁸ Meredith Runion. *The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations: The History of Afghanistan*. (Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 2007): 120.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

STAGE II: GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTER-STATE

“Victory for the Islamic movements...cannot be attained unless these movements possess an Islamic base in the heart of the Arab region.”

--Ayman al Zawahiri

Bin Laden Deputy, 2001

The basic tenets of leftist movements include the elimination of private property and ownership and forfeiture of the means of production to the community, rather than by one individual. These tenets also include the abolishment of religion. This combination of leftist ideals with Islam does not require the abolishment of religion, rather the abolishment of non-Islamic religions. What does remain consistent from ideologue to ideologue is the centralization of economic, political, and military powers under a single unified party.

If a Salafi movement were to gain relative success to progress to Stage II, the formation of the counter-state is necessary to manage the economic and supply efficiencies necessary to the movement. The formation of a counter-state is born in part from necessity. The insurgency, driven by its need to meet the day-to-day needs of its center of gravity—the population—must begin to maintain formalized structures in order to retain power. The insurgency’s leadership must provide organizational and managerial skills to transform regions into an effective base for armed political activities. Simultaneously it becomes the responsibility of local cadre to accomplish this same transformation at both the community and individual levels. What results is a contest of resource mobilization and force deployment. Economic and supply efficiencies drive the activities of the insurgency and ultimately decide if, or to what extent, the movement can effectively function.³⁰

While guerrillas conduct the military operations of the movement, strategically they exist to establish local control, expand the shadow government, and protect the developing counter-state.³¹ In its ideology, the movement establishes the precepts of a political alternative to the existing governing structures by offering a counter-state to the growing mass base.³² Although it is difficult to determine the exact moment when a counter-state is born, the symptoms make its formation predictable.

³⁰Army Field Manual. 3-07-22 *Counterinsurgency Operations*. (Department of the Army: Washington DC, 2004), 1-1 to 1-2.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid

One of the first signs of this progression is the development of an underground economy, visible in the formation of extensive black markets. The typology of a counter-state not only springs from its ideological foundation, but from the methods used to establish its legitimacy. For the Taliban in Afghanistan and Al Qaeda in Iraq, the perception of legitimacy is achieved and maintained through violence and continued paramilitary activity. These operations create a massive demand for resources, and as a result, social programs fail to effectively surface.

In addition to developing resource strains, the requirements for developed safe zones from which the organization can operate become increasingly important to the survival of the movement. The perceived need to conduct protracted military operations, instead of establishing welfare programs, places Al Qaeda, uniquely, in a modern day “catch 22.” They are faced with the option of either shifting from their existing operational paradigm in order to establish visible social welfare programs at the expense of maintaining a low profile, or they can continue to do business as normal at the risk of organizational stagnation. This developmental flaw gives way to a war-based economy at the expense of the population.

When the Taliban first seized power, they quickly made efforts to eliminate the drug trade in Afghanistan. However, with the civil war continuing and no other equivalent source of income, the Taliban used drug cultivation and production to support their operational needs.³³ During this time the economy shifted from an economic system that was based on agriculture and livestock production to a war-based economy fueled by drug trafficking and production. This shift caused the agricultural sector to be unable to meet the needs of the local population. As a large portion of fertile land in the southwest portion of the country was converted into opium fields, the desire to raise money to support war diverted cultivation from efforts to meet the needs of the population.³⁴

Their alignment with Al Qaeda was equally pragmatic. The need for resources to support paramilitary operations is what ultimately caused the economic shift towards opium production in Afghanistan, and in part is what led the Taliban to align with Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda.

Following the siege of Kabul in 1996, bin Laden sought to form an alliance with the Taliban, on the basis of similar fundamentalist views and a shared distaste of the generalized West. For the Taliban, bin Laden was not solely a rich Saudi capable of providing the money and military aid they needed; he was also a man that had a proven record of being able to mobilize large numbers of men to fight. Bin Laden had been popular with the mujahedeen groups that operated from Pakistan during the Soviet occupation.³⁵ In this war-based economy, owning more rifles and controlling a larger number of armed men became the main source of legitimacy, and so, bin Laden offered an opportunity.³⁶ The Taliban welcomed bin Laden, and in exchange for their support bin Laden gave the Taliban huge sums of money. Both stood to gain from the developing relationship.

³³ Runion, 126.

³⁴ Nojumi, 213-214.

³⁵ Nabi Misdaq. *Afghanistan: Political Frailty and Foreign Interference*. (New York: Routledge, 2006): 243.

³⁶ Nojumi, 213.

After reestablishing camps in southern Afghanistan, bin Laden raised the call for jihad against the west and their allies. Together, from 1997 through 2001, the Taliban and Al Qaeda worked together to establish training camps to support the jihad as well as fighters that could be integrated into the Taliban military.³⁷

³⁷ Runion, 126-127.

STAGE III: A FAILING GOVERNMENT AND THE RISE OF FASCISM

“He who did well in war just earns the right to begin doing well in peace.”

--Robert Browning

Luria

Once in Stage III, systemic problems will once again emerge. Like Marx, the ideologues for the movement have developed the architecture for their movement, but not an effective plan for the maintenance or formation of the governmental structures the movement strove to establish. The lack of a unified vision and the centralization of governmental powers, compounded by the inability to enter the world economy, will give way to widespread corruption and fracturing as the government fails to meet the needs of its population. As the resurgence of social grievances begins to emerge within a population already familiar with rebellion, the knee jerk reaction of the existing government will be twofold:

1. Identification of a scapegoat
2. The formation of increasingly harsh policies and the extreme restriction of individual freedoms

Attempts to mobilize the population around common resentment will fail, as the political environment begins to collapse back into Stage I.

The opium that fueled the armies with the resources to fight was produced at the expense of the Afghan people. As a result, local communities that had previously been able to survive by allying with one or both sides of the conflict were now starving.³⁸ The problem was compounded by the Taliban’s inability to integrate the nation into the global economy. This problem went largely undiagnosed by the movement’s leadership because the ideology from which the movement sprang expressly forbade this strategic option. Had this problem been diagnosed, integration still would have proven difficult because the country lacks a wide industrial base or an educated work force.

The closest the Taliban came to being integrated into the global economy, ironically, was through its smuggling operations and opium production. The allowance of both of these economic activities was largely condemned by the international community. In July 2000, the Taliban, showing its first signs of weakness, succumbed to international pressure and attempted to crack down on opium cultivation. Unfortunately, because they were without an alternative,

³⁸ Nojumi, 213-214.

the elimination of opium as a source of income abruptly deprived thousands of Afghans of their only source of earnings and only further aggravated social grievances. In addition to unemployment actually rising during the period of Taliban rule from 1996 through 2001, the Taliban also failed to end the civil war still ravaging the country.³⁹ The inability of the Taliban to overcome ethnic and religious divides, or address social grievances beyond that of mutual resentment, made the demobilization of the guerrilla bands that challenged the Soviets impossible. The Taliban also proved to be unsuccessful in improving the conditions in cities, where access to food and clean water remained sporadic at best. A continuing drought and a very harsh winter, lasting from 2000 through 2001, brought famine and served only to increase the dissonance felt by the population.

Unable to satisfy the needs of a population well-versed in rebellion, the Taliban began to show signs of progression towards fascism within the first two years of taking power. Initially unifying a majority of the population by combining a platform of piousness and images of an imperialistic West as the cause of Afghani ills, the collapse of the Taliban into fascism was less than surprising. The conditions were already set to produce no other result. Springing from the ideological context of the movement, all governmental structures were grounded by Islamic principles. The merger of religious rhetoric and governance that initially provided the local leadership with the ability to instantly identify with the population also paved the way for fascism to develop by providing the moral underpinnings to justify atrocity and repression.

As is historically consistent with other fascist movements, the symptoms of this decline included the following: the merger of religion and government, control of the mass media, blatant disregard of basic human rights, restriction of expression, and obsession with crime and punishment. Public executions and punishments became commonplace at Afghan soccer stadiums. Men were required to wear beards, and subjected to beatings if they refused. Most shocking to the West was the Taliban's treatment of women. When the Taliban took Kabul, they immediately denied women the right to go to school. Moreover, women were barred from working outside the home, precipitating a crisis in healthcare and education. Women were also prohibited from leaving their homes without a male relative—those that did so risked being beaten, even shot, by officers of the "Ministry for the Protection of Virtue and Prevention of Vice."⁴⁰ Media was either sympathetic to the movement or directly controlled by the government. In order to root out "non-Islamic" influence, the major tenets of the religion were in direct opposition to the government's policies or actions. As efforts to stabilize the country continued to fail, the Taliban, with the help of bin Laden, engaged in war crimes against ethnic and religious minorities across the country.⁴¹

Brutal policies, combined by the inability of either Al Qaeda or the Taliban to actually address the day to day needs of the population, resulted in only worsening living conditions and in elevating social grievances. Because the factors that allowed rebellion to grow within the population are still unanswered, the door for political entrepreneurs to raise analogous movements remains open—once again setting the conditions to reenter Stage I of the cycle.

³⁹ Richards, 19-20.

⁴⁰ Runion, 121-122.

⁴¹ Nojumi, 221.

IMPLICATIONS

“A single spark can start a prairie fire.”

--The Weather Underground

Prairie Fire: The Politics of

Revolutionary Imperialism

It is important to note at this point that duration spent in each stage of the cycle is relative to the achievements of the movement's objectives, where the true challenge seems to lie in locating the next scapegoat in order to retain its relevancy with the population. Each time an effected region passes through this cycle, the associated movements become more heavily rooted in violence, as seen similarly in the evolution of HAMAS and al Fatah in Palestine.

The nature of Al Qaeda's progression through this cycle makes predicting the next high profile attack against the United States possible. Due to the necessity to remain relevant to a population, the next attack will occur when Al Qaeda no longer has an enemy to mobilize the population against in theater. For the United States, the likelihood of attack will dramatically increase following either the success or failure of military operations in either Iraq or Afghanistan. The attempt to once again inspire a strong military reaction from the United States will be reflective of an organizational need by Al Qaeda to continue paramilitary activities to support its legitimacy within a population.

NATIONAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

“There is nothing controversial about combating an insurgency by improving the lot of the population.”

--Wade Markel

Draining the Swamp:

The British Strategy of

Population Control

Any strategy adopted by the United States must include integration of pacified regions into the world market, improved intelligence cooperation for covert activities, pre-established concrete steps to address secular conflicts, and recognition of the limits of the US military and its Coalition partners in the face of this emerging multidimensional threat.

First and foremost, the United States must recognize that our past policies have, at the very least, contributed to the origins of current security challenges. New policies must be written, and the primary and secondary implications of those policies on the affected masses should be strongly considered before implementation. Prior to taking military action, the consideration of diplomatic, informational, economic, social, and political effects must be considered at all levels of command.

Second, the United States government must establish common language to be used by all of its subordinate agencies. Words like terrorism, insurgency, and organized crime all command different resources based on their definitions. The simplification afforded by common language at the national level will ease the process of identifying and addressing future threats by clarifying the roles of the affected government agencies.

Third, the application of religious terms must be eliminated as a tool to describe Al Qaeda and similar organizations. Addressing Al Qaeda for what it is—criminal in nature—will allow the United States to appeal to the universal human sentiment that criminals are bad, and criminality is unacceptable regardless of its motivation. By terming Al Qaeda’s members as criminals, and their capture as arrests, the United States can begin to separate these movements from positive connotations of jihad and martyrdom in mainstream Islam, and instead associate them with the moral bankruptcy they have to offer.

Fourth, we must accept that military action only represents a small part of this challenge, but it is a fight we cannot afford to lose. Increasing technology gaps between the United States and future threats will create conditions where irregular warfare is the only feasible option left to our enemies. We must not become so obsessed with rapid military victory that we sacrifice specific political aims. The “day after” must always be considered. Failure to consider low intensity conflict as a potential response of future operations is irresponsible at best. While engaging in these operations, military strategies must include the provision of alternatives to the enemy in an effort to undermine his forces. These alternatives, termed golden parachutes, will form a cornerstone of any successful strategy by providing combatants with an easy way out.

Fifth, to enjoy long term success, the United States must make huge efforts to reduce its signature within the Central Command Area of Operations.⁴² Military pursuits should be conducted jointly with local police and military organizations, while operational successes are attributed to the Host Nation. This strategic end can also be satisfied by improved intelligence cooperation for covert activities; however, developed success in these activities will be dependent on unified intelligence efforts supported by functioning language and cultural training programs.

Sixth, the United States must work with the European Union to establish non-kinetic metrics to measure success in an effort to divorce ourselves from strictly quantitative assessments. Along with these metrics, a clear plan must be developed to assist in the management of rising expectations by a population to assist in setting realistic goals.

Seventh, the United States must take advantage of ideological differences between factions of Salafi movements, while simultaneously launching protracted information and civil affairs operations aimed at addressing the grievances of afflicted communities. The ideologues of these movements have failed to mobilize and unite the masses and middle classes of the majority of Arab countries in any semblance of a unified effort. They are not overtly supported by any government, and have largely lost Afghanistan as a staging ground. To exploit this opportunity, the United States must join with existing Muslim regimes and set aside ambitious goals of globalized democratic revolution until the violent Salafi movement is contained and stability is reestablished within the region.

Lastly, policy makers must be made aware of the strategies of Al Qaeda and likeminded organizations. As a result of limited external support mechanisms, combined with the inability to achieve long term mass mobilization, the current strategy adopted by these ideologues is one of provocation on an international scale, as was the case on September 11, 2001. For these organizations, initial success is dependent on their ability to inspire knee jerk reactions from the West in an effort to create a cycle of violence and repression, from which the masses can be mobilized. Although the American invasion of Afghanistan failed to achieve this end on a large scale, the invasion and perceived occupation of Iraq may create the conditions required by Al Qaeda and likeminded organizations for success. If American politicians and strategists fail to understand and exploit this tactic, the United States will continue to succeed only in turning the neutral middle portions of the population into hardened enemies.

⁴² See Appendix B for a map of the US Central Command Area of Operations.

APPENDIX A: Phases of Insurgency

According to current US Unconventional Warfare doctrine, as insurgency progresses it passes through the three phases. In each phase the leadership of the insurgency must accomplish certain tasks in order to be successful. These tasks, broken down by each phase include, but are not limited to:

Phase I: Latent and Insipient

- Recruit, organize, train cadre, muster popular support
- Discrediting the existing government and its programs.
- Infiltrates key government organizations
- Establishes support networks in order to obtain the necessary resources to act.
- Organizes or develops cooperative relationships with legitimate political action groups to develop popular support for political and military activities.
- Develops sources for external support

Phase II: Guerrilla Warfare

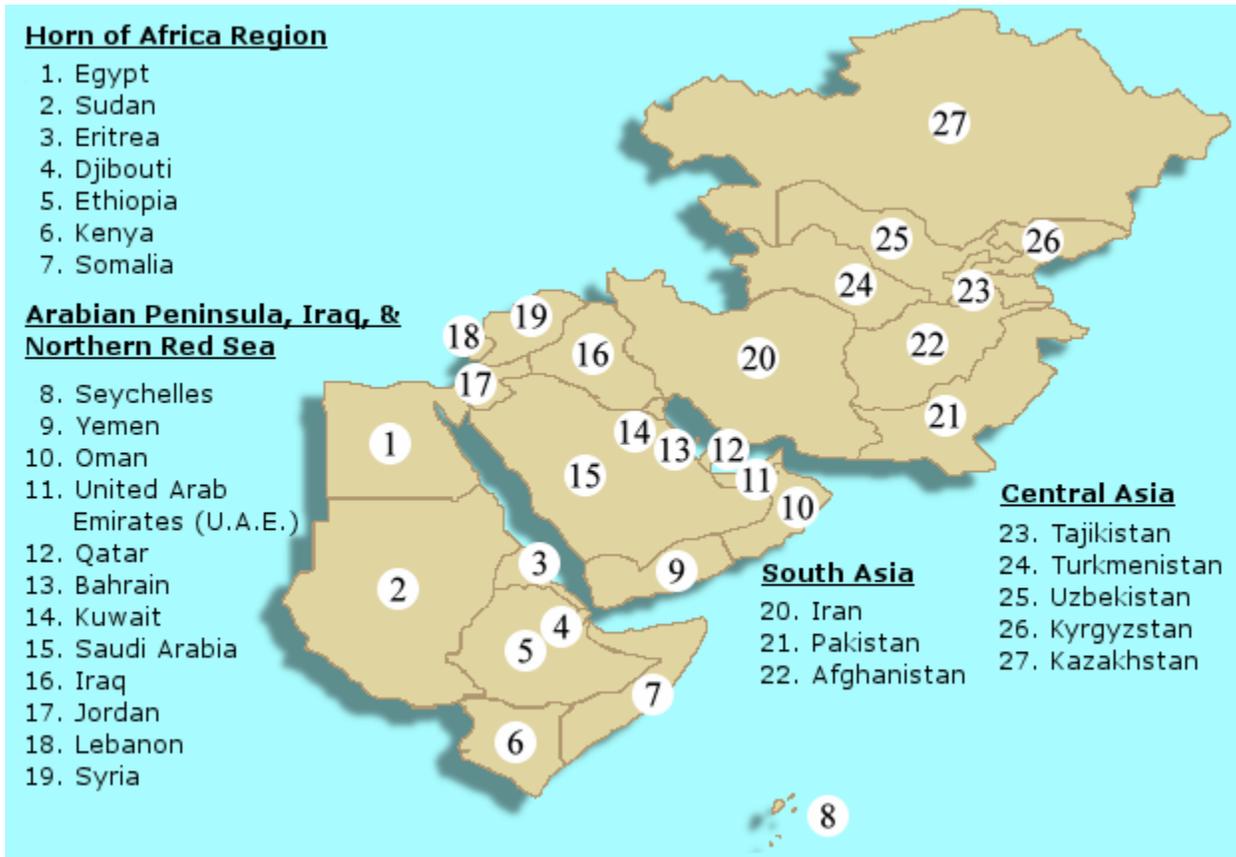
Overt Guerrilla Warfare begins with armed political action receiving support from clandestine cellular networks. Subversive activities that openly challenge the control and legitimacy of the established authority begin. Recruiting efforts become more aggressive as people lose faith with the established system.

Phase III: War of Movement

- Establishes and effective civil administration
- Establish an effective military organization
- Provide established social and economic development
- Continued mobilization of the populations to support the resistance organization.
- Protect the population from hostile actions⁴³

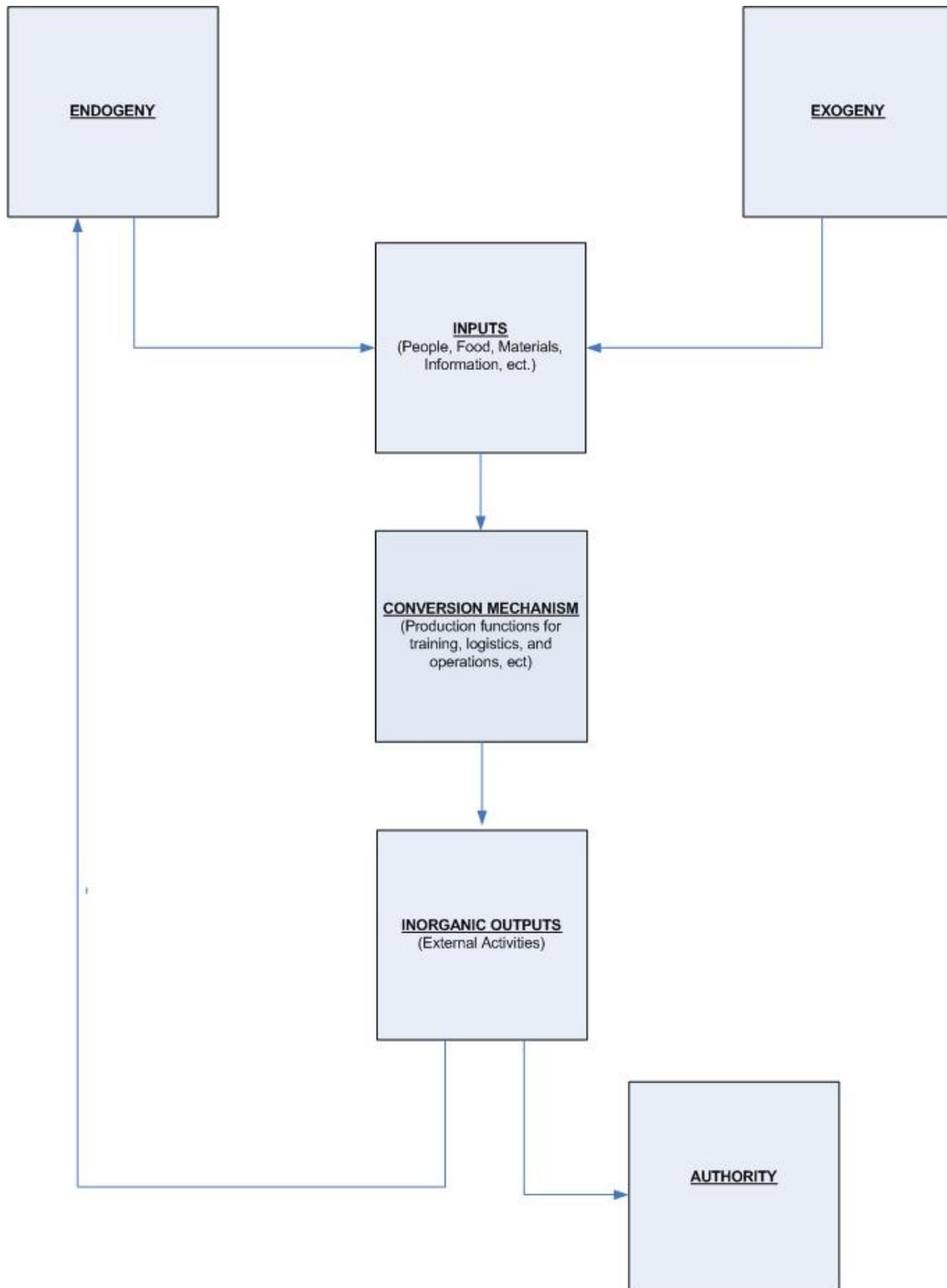
⁴³*Army Field Manual 3-05-201 Special Forces Unconventional Operations.* Department of the Army, Washington DC. 1-7 to 1-11.

APPENDIX B: Central Command Areas of Operation⁴⁴



⁴⁴ Taken from: http://www.arcent.army.mil/images/aor_maps/map_placeholder.gif

APPENDIX C: Rebellion and Authority



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