

## **The Yin and Yang of Counterinsurgency in Urban Terrain**

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### **Biographical Sketch:**

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It is a long-standing truism that insurgencies derive their strength from the people. By extension, the struggle between the insurgency and counterinsurgency ultimately revolves around control of the population.<sup>1</sup> In this regard, urban areas, be they cities or village clusters in a province, provide insurgencies with the necessary resources to gather strength.<sup>2</sup>

The role of cities in insurgency warfare will assume ever increasing import as migration trends continue unabated, particularly in the developing world.<sup>3</sup> Because the development of urban utilities and services has not kept pace with migration in the developing world, insurgents can tap into any consequential discontent or use the poor development to denounce the legitimacy of the government.<sup>4</sup>

Modern insurgents are not compelled to subscribe to any one category of insurgency. In fact, for counterinsurgency practitioners, attempting to categorize an inchoate insurgency as fitting a certain mold can lead to military operations working at cross purposes, and a counterinsurgency strategy beset by confusion and contradictions.<sup>5</sup> Certainly, there have been urban centric insurgencies as advocated by Lenin and Carlos Marighella, but the historical success rate is abysmal.<sup>6</sup> And although Maoist strategy advocated growing an insurgency in rural areas, it did not eschew urban areas completely. In fact, one of Mao's guerilla war principles specifically advises: "Take small and medium cities and extensive rural areas first; take big cities later."<sup>7</sup>

Some of the most pernicious insurgencies in modern history, Malaya (1948-1960), Algeria (1954-1960), Indochina/Vietnam (1946-1975), Chechnya (1995-2000), and currently Iraq (to a degree) employed a mix of insurgency warfare in urban and rural areas in order to establish a Yin and Yang dynamic for defeating the established government. Mao's Yin and Yang theory espouses the interactive synergism of strengths and weaknesses. In essence, the insurgent attempts to turn his weaknesses into strength and the enemy's strengths into weakness.<sup>8</sup>

In pursuit of this Yin and Yang dynamic, urban areas afford insurgents significant advantages. An urban insurgency becomes an excellent platform for propaganda because it reaches a large audience,

ties down large numbers of government forces, and provides intelligence and sustenance for insurgents in rural areas. Because of these advantages, the government cannot ignore an urban insurgency and must devote substantial resources to combating it—exponentially more than the insurgents devote—which usually results in the diminution of security forces in rural areas. If forced to decide, a government will surrender rural areas to insurgents but cannot tolerate the loss of a major city. Because insurgencies in general are prolonged conflicts and urban terrain provides ample sanctuaries, more and more government forces may become embroiled in the urban conflict; the rural insurgency in turn has the freedom to establish sanctuaries unmolested, progressively seize more territory including local urban areas, and eventually create the conditions for the defeat of the government security forces or cause the collapse of the government's will through exhaustion.

This article will first focus on patterns of insurgency warfare in urban areas, drawing on salient lessons from the aforementioned insurgencies and highlighting the essential role of propaganda, provocations, terrorism, and the eventual exhaustion of the security forces. Second, this article will address the strategic and operational counterinsurgency imperatives in urban areas: progressive combing of insurgent dominated areas, establishing control, empowering the people, and inoculating the urban area from insurgent re-infiltration.

One caveat bears underscoring. Counterinsurgency operations in urban terrain are just part of the overall counterinsurgency strategy. The government cannot make retention of urban areas the centerpiece of its campaign to the exclusion of overarching strategic factors, such as the perceived legitimacy of the government, the origins and causes that unify the insurgent movement, and the assistance of external and domestic sources to name a few. In the same regard, the military cannot remain as the primary counterinsurgency instrument throughout. Its task is to set the security conditions for the other instruments of power to take effect. In point of fact, a counterinsurgency czar, perhaps a former police commissioner, with authority over all agencies (not just the military) is needed for the proper prosecution of the conflict. Hence, to ignore strategic factors in pursuit of tactical advantages risks strategic defeat.

### **Patterns of Insurgency Warfare in Urban Areas**

On the face of it, conducting an insurgency in a major urban area is a daunting task. It is there that the government is most formidable and secure. In peaceful times, this is undoubtedly true, but in times of state power fluxes (e.g., the aftermath of a major war or the fall of a government) militants have an opportunity to establish a sanctuary in an urban area immediately, such as occurred in Grozny, Fallujah and Baghdad, or during the course of a widespread insurgency, such as in Algiers and Saigon. Hence, government distraction and temporary weakness create the opportunity for urban insurgencies to take root.

At the strategic level, the urban insurgency serves as a propaganda platform and vehicle for insurgency's legitimization. Dr. Steven Metz describes insurgency war as "'armed theater' where the antagonists are playing to an audience at the same time they interact with each other..."<sup>9</sup> Within this context, urban areas represent the center stage of the conflict complete with lime lights for the international audience. Historical experience suggests that an incident in the hinterland receives scant international attention, but an incident in a city, be it an act of terrorism or clash between combatants, receives amplified, immediate, and world-wide coverage.

Insurgent provocations (atrocities, assassinations, and terrorist acts) aim to induce the government to react in a heavy handed manner for the purpose of propaganda and further alienation of the populace.<sup>10</sup> Successful propaganda may sway domestic opinion in favor of the insurgent cause, but the real coup is to internationalize the conflict—this is the real prize because it opens tremendous opportunities for the insurgents to exploit.<sup>11</sup> The paradox of provocations is that insurgents are rarely condemned for the terrorist acts they commit. But if the government overreacts, the domestic and international outcry is swift and vociferous. To this end, the insurgent weapon of choice is the video camera. If the insurgents can garner international sympathy, they can gain state sponsors, increase recruitment, and bring to bear increasing international pressure to fetter the government's counterinsurgency initiatives.<sup>12</sup> Particularly noteworthy is the insurgency's use of the domestic and international legal systems as weapons to undercut the government's efforts.<sup>13</sup>

At the operational level, terrorist acts serve to co-opt the population. Roger Trinquier avers that "The *sine qua non* of victory in *modern warfare* is the unconditional support of a population....If it [popular support] does not exist, it must be secured by every possible means, the most effective of which is *terrorism*."<sup>14</sup> Trinquier continues:

The goal of modern warfare is control of the populace, and terrorism is a particularly appropriate weapon, since it aims directly at the inhabitant. In the street, at work, at home, the citizen lives continually under the threat of violent death. In the presence of this permanent danger surrounding him, he has the depressing feeling of being an isolated and defenseless target. The fact that public authority and the police are no longer capable of ensuring his security adds to his distress. He loses confidence in the state whose inherent mission it is to guarantee his safety. He is more and more drawn to the side of the terrorists, who alone are able to protect him.<sup>15</sup>

In his book, *Inside the Green Berets*, Charles Simpson concludes that survival is uppermost in the citizen's mind. Allegiance to the government is contingent on its ability to protect the citizens from the insurgents as well as their standard of living. As long as they feel the insurgents have the capability to inflict retribution, the populace will reserve their support to the insurgents.<sup>16</sup> Obviously, fear is not the only incentive for cooperation. Ideological indoctrination will create a loyal base of adherents, as Mao patiently instructed, but for the rest, intimidation is critical.<sup>17</sup> It is little wonder that the majority of the population becomes, as described by Major General Chiarelli, fence-sitters.<sup>18</sup>

Under siege, law enforcement and local government authorities are in no position to protect the citizens. Many will already be victims of assassinations, and their successors will unlikely respond effectively. As the insurgent pattern in Malaya, French Indochina, South Vietnam, and Algeria illustrate, one of the initial acts of insurgents is the systematic elimination of urban officials in order to sever the central government's local authority and to create a power vacuum, which the insurgent network will fill.<sup>19</sup> By assuming the role of a local functioning government, the insurgents can assume greater administration for the prosecution of the conflict, with greater revenues from taxation, more efficient use of labor and resources for military expenditures, and conscription.

Insurgents find natural allies with the existing criminal underground. As it serves everyone's interest to expel government authority, petty criminals, gangs, and organized crime readily cooperate or even join the ranks of the insurgency. Accustomed to conducting illegal activities and avoiding law enforcement, these groups can eagerly assist insurgents with terrorist acts, intimidation, and extortion, as well as theft (robbery, burglary, drug transactions, etc.).<sup>20</sup>

In response the government brings in the military to re-assert its authority and eliminate the insurgents. Untrained in counterinsurgency warfare and unaccustomed to interacting with civilians, the military often plays into the insurgents' hands by the indiscriminate use of deadly force, mass arrests, collective punishment, and disruption of daily life.<sup>21</sup> Besides feeding insurgent propaganda, heavy handed military measures inspire a steady stream of recruits for the insurgent movement, either because of the alienation engendered by the military's brutality, out of a romantic sense of adventure, or because the insurgent's defiance creates a David and Goliath image.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, the introduction of military forces results in a sharp increase of violence and hatred, hindering a diplomatic solution and marginalizing moderate officials—both insurgent and government.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps most importantly, the social contract between the government and citizens becomes unhinged if the security forces are unable to stymie insurgent attacks while simultaneously disrupting daily commerce, services, work, and standard of living. In this way the insurgents gain a certain amount of legitimacy by framing the security forces as oppressors rather than protectors in the eyes of the populace.<sup>24</sup>

Once the local populace begins providing security, intelligence, shelter, sustenance, weapons, supply, and recruits, the military cannot counter the insurgents effectively.<sup>25</sup> Brigadier Gavin Bullock asserts that as long as noncombatants are present, military power becomes circumscribed because “in any future counterinsurgency operation, military action will be conducted under the critical scrutiny of the law, the media, human rights organizations, and other international bodies such as the European Court.”<sup>26</sup>

The burden of time usually weighs more heavily on the shoulders of the government. An urban insurgent sanctuary provides benefits to the rural insurgents in terms of training, financing, sustenance, intelligence, and manpower. The possession of a major city also provides greater legitimacy if the

insurgency can frame it as part of a popular uprising. Without urban areas, the insurgency cannot gain strength. Moreover, as Jennifer Taw and Bruce Hoffman see it, urban insurgents may seek to tie up security forces in cities for extended periods in order to give the insurgency in rural areas greater operational freedom and improve the correlation of forces.<sup>27</sup> Mired in an urban conflict, the military is caught on the horns of a dilemma, which strikes at the heart of Yin and Yang. It must conclude the urban operation quickly in order to address the deterioration of security in rural areas. But by hastily concluding the urban operation, the cleansing of the urban area is incomplete and the insurgents simply continue the struggle at a pace of their choosing. If the military remains concentrated in the urban area, the rural insurgency has the leisure to gain strength. Even if the military is successful in expelling the insurgents, they have a remarkable ability to return later, starting the struggle anew. The government could raise more military units to address both the rural and urban insurgency, but in view of the prolonged nature of an insurgency, the drain on the treasury will become pronounced, leading to higher taxes and greater discontent among the citizens. Raising and training soldiers is time consuming, which the insurgents will use to their advantage to propagate. Because, in theory, upwards of a twenty-to-one ratio in security forces is needed to defeat an insurgency, if the insurgency continues to grow unabated, the government cannot keep pace.<sup>28</sup> Hence, the existing security forces are compelled to scurry about the country attempting to stamp out insurgent outbreaks. This is how the military becomes exhausted and the state coffers exhausted.

### **Out Yining the Yang**

The urban counterinsurgency operation is tailored to the degree of insurgent entrenchment. Naturally, early detection and action against a burgeoning underground movement is the most effective and economical way to deal with an urban insurgency, but governments rarely recognize let alone admit the threat of an insurgency until it has become a major threat. Usually, specific city quarters become insurgent strongholds before the government recognizes the threat, and in rare cases an entire city will fall to the insurgents before the government can react. Thus to ensure that all aspects of an urban counterinsurgency campaign are covered, this article will address the worst case, the liberation of a city.

Because wholesale casualties and destruction only serve the insurgent cause, the government must make an active effort to limit the damage. This approach may not be possible in view of the insurgents' efforts to provoke the use of significant military force, but the government can use some finesse to turn the tables.

At the earliest opportunity the government should infiltrate intelligence teams (ideally people indigenous to the city) into the insurgent dominant areas. Their main mission is to collect information passively and remain unobtrusive. In preparation of the military operation, these teams identify insurgent leaders and areas the insurgents are preparing for defense through their own informants.<sup>29</sup> Pinpointing the insurgent strongholds substantially helps the military shape its plan of attack.

The government prepares the political ground by waging a public awareness campaign (TV, internet, radio, newspapers, and leaflets) leading up to the military offensive.<sup>30</sup> The messages are aimed at the inhabitants, which the government refers to as insurgent hostages. The economic message reflects regret that the inhabitants must suffer economic and other hardships because of the insurgents and promises to rebuild and return the utilities once the urban area is secured and returned to normalcy. The government can sow uncertainty among the insurgents by requesting the citizenry assist the government forces with information on the insurgents whenever possible. The salient feature of the public awareness campaign is to counter insurgent propaganda and attempts to portray the insurgents as victims.

The government and its security forces must bear in mind that the benchmark of success is gaining control of the urban area (the population in reality) and not simply a high body count. The government must declare this goal repeatedly in order to preempt the media's slant that escaped insurgents signifies a failure. Understanding this vector of intent is critical to the overall counterinsurgency campaign because perceived failure enhances the image of the insurgency.<sup>31</sup>

The thrust of the urban operation is to force surviving insurgents into the rural areas, placing them into unfamiliar territory, where they become fugitives without immediate access to resources and the succor of the local population. Here, the urban insurgents are at their most vulnerable state. Trinquier deduces that insurgents invest substantial time and resources into their area of responsibility, all of which

is lost once they are forced into unfamiliar territory. "He cannot live among a populace he has not previously organized and subjected to his will."<sup>32</sup>

In view of this stratagem, the military's first step is to surround the urban area in order to isolate it. Realistically, the military will not have the means (primarily due to limited numbers) to seal off the urban area completely, so many insurgents will find a way through the net, but as the Russians demonstrated in Grozny 2000, surrounding the urban area constricts the flow of logistics (supplies, reinforcements) as well as making it more difficult for insurgents to withdraw as an organized force.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the use of advanced sensors enhances the isolation of the city and provides a greater opportunity to eliminate key insurgent leaders.

Isolation is a subtle technique of inducing the insurgents to quit the urban area without a fight. During this stage, the government urges the inhabitants to depart for their own safety.<sup>34</sup> Not all will depart, and adroit insurgents will try to prevent the wholesale departure of the urban population since they help shield the insurgents from military firepower, but more importantly, they become a source of propaganda as a result of collateral damage. Providing an outlet for the inhabitants portrays the government in a favorable light since it reflects the government's concern for its citizens *even if it means some insurgents will escape with them.*

The government should process the temporary refugees through camps for humanitarian reasons as well as issuing identification cards and ration cards. As part of the processing, the officials ascertain the location of the individual or family's residence (using an alpha-numeric grid map of the city as described later) as part of the census and to assist in their return to their homes. Taking the time and effort to process the people prior to their return to their homes will pay significant dividends later. The processing effort may well yield some insurgents, but the government should not bank on it.

Critical to the counterinsurgency effort is inculcating into the soldier's mind that this is not a grand cordon and search mission to uncover hidden insurgents, weapons, and explosives but to sweep the urban area of active insurgent resistance. They need to realize that there is not an insurgent behind every dwelling door nor is every family harboring one.<sup>35</sup> Bruce Hoffman asserts that historically, cordon and

search operations are counter productive because they destroy property, disrupt daily routines, frighten families, and generally alienate the inhabitants.<sup>36</sup> The tacit attitude of the civilians is “We are not the enemy so why are you treating us as though we are?” This is not to suggest that sweeping an urban area is not dangerous, it is a deadly serious operation, but soldiers can be on guard without terrifying the inhabitants in the process. Cordon and search operations may not propel the local populace into the arms of the insurgents, but they certainly will not result in cooperation with government forces either; without that cooperation, no intelligence will be forthcoming on the insurgent cells, and without intelligence, dismantling the insurgent network becomes infinitely more difficult.<sup>37</sup>

The military’s initial sweep of the urban area is designed to eliminate insurgents intent on fighting. Incidentally, the greater the mix of indigenous security forces vice coalition forces, the greater the perceived legitimacy of the government.<sup>38</sup> Because of the strategic implications of collateral damage, the choice of weapon systems is critical. The first weapon system of choice to accompany infantry is the tank (or assault gun). When properly protected and guided into firing positions by infantry, tanks provide the requisite firepower to destroy fortified buildings, bunkers, and similar fighting position with precision. The psychologically effect must be underscored because insurgents view these armored behemoths as daunting, especially upon observing the effects on fellow insurgent positions.<sup>39</sup> The presence of tanks encourages insurgents to flee their prepared positions, limiting the amount of collateral damage. Moreover, tanks provide scant propaganda value to the insurgents because their precise direct fire capabilities are directed at the immediate insurgent threat. A large contingent of trained snipers is equally as important, not only for their precision fires but also their demoralizing effect on insurgent leadership, snipers, and key weapons (e.g., rocket propelled grenades, machine guns, and mortars).<sup>40</sup> Mortars and artillery should be limited to counter battery fire if necessary, but sparingly since insurgents will claim and televise the effects of collateral damage (whether real or contrived). Moreover, indiscriminate artillery and mortar fires will assuredly turn the inhabitants against the government troops, making it much harder to gain their cooperation in the post combat phase.<sup>41</sup> Mortar smoke rounds on the other hand can provide a significant edge to the military equipped with thermal sights, particularly on sniper rifles,

tanks, and bunker buster weapons. Blanketing an insurgent stronghold with smoke maximizes insurgent confusion and losses with no commensurate casualties. Despite its great accuracy and effectiveness, air power should be reserved for the surrounding rural areas because collateral bomb damage is the insurgent's most desired propaganda tool and most readily consumed by the world. Security forces must constantly bear in mind that in insurgency warfare, the international audience tends to sympathize with the insurgents and is quick to condemn perceived excessive force by the government.

During this phase, the government must continue to win the war of ideas by means of informing and persuading the public as well as challenging insurgent propaganda. The government must take the offensive with its public awareness campaign because simply refuting insurgent propaganda places it on the defensive, giving some credence to insurgent claims. The government must make a substantial investment in a sophisticated public awareness campaign to ensure its efforts are portrayed with accuracy. If the government loses the information war, it stands to lose international approbation or acquiescence.<sup>42</sup> Embedded reporters, combat video crews, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) have a powerful effect on international perceptions of the struggle. Every instance of insurgent chicanery and violations of international law must be fully covered and repeated frequently for effect. Every government error and abuse by soldiers must equally be covered with concurrent government action in order to show the government as responsible to its citizens. Too often, governments attempt to portray themselves as infallible and appear nonplussed when errors or abuses emerge which insurgents fully exploit for propaganda effect. The byword is: "Get ahead of the story."

For most parts of the urban area, soldiers go door-to-door to verify the absence of insurgents. Soldiers remain polite, smile, and knock on doors for access. Culturally aware soldiers are critical in preventing unintended insults, mistreatment, as well as religious and social offenses, which can alienate the populace.<sup>43</sup> Soldiers ask only a couple of key questions<sup>43</sup> privately with individuals (e.g., identification of insurgent money collectors; identification of activists; or the location of odd chemical smells) and note any evasive mannerisms.<sup>44</sup> Because time does not permit it and because they are untrained, soldiers do not engage in interrogation of the inhabitants—this is the purview of law enforcement. However, soldiers

do provide the police about suspicious behavior or leads on insurgents. It is worth noting that denunciation of neighbors for various reasons (grudges) are common and have nothing to do with the insurgency. The police are the most experienced and trained for discerning dissembling, and as they are indigenous, they are much more likely to spot an insurgent than soldiers, especially coalition soldiers. One may be tempted to forgo the use of the military and rely on the police to regain control of the urban area, but this would be a grave error. The police are only organized and equipped to protect the citizenry in times of peace, and only the army brings the training, weapons, and organization to defeat active enemy insurgents.<sup>45</sup>

### **Inoculating the Urban Area**

Once the urban area is swept of active insurgent fighters, the government establishes control of the urban area and prepares it for defense against insurgent re-infiltration.<sup>46</sup> In order to regain control of the population, the government establishes an organization to counter insurgent subversion. Trinquier recommended a neighborhood watch system (*gridding*) which the French successfully applied in Algeria:

1) Similar to the enemy organization, the government employs an organizational pyramid, appointing the principal leader, who applies an alpha-numeric grid system to the urban area as well as dividing the city into districts and appointing district leaders. Each district leader further divides his district into sectors, appointing sector leaders. The process of subdivision continues down to local overseers in direct contact with and responsible for the inhabitants of a residential building or group of houses (4-5 families). Each pyramid leader must be vetted and held accountable for their assistants (each leader chooses two assistants) and subordinate pyramid leaders. Local police forces, which are familiar with their assigned neighborhoods, work with the pyramid leaders to investigate tips on insurgents or insurgent activities.<sup>47</sup>

2) In conjunction with its sweep of the urban area, the military takes a census and provides this to the pyramid leadership. Once the census is complete, the local overseers are responsible for keeping the census current. Pyramid leaders should have ties to the community (business or influential family). Concurrently, using the census as a baseline, the local government establishes identification card offices

to which citizens report for their ID cards and ration cards. The identification card discloses the origin of the cardholder using the *gridding* designation system (e.g. A.2.b.9.). Because many urban areas in the developing world do not have addresses and street names, the designation system becomes a necessity. This system permits the government to enlist the assistance of the population to identify and provide information quickly on new individuals settling in neighborhoods, that is, possible insurgents attempting to re-infiltrate.<sup>48</sup>

3) Citizens are aware of insurgent activities but are often reluctant to inform out of fear of reprisal. Frequent contacts and meetings between the authorities and the populace are important as a means of gathering information without unduly identifying the informants. The government needs to train selected agents on techniques for passing information secretly (letter drops, telephone, dead drops, etc.). The agents are inserted into the local community in order to alert the government of insurgent agent infiltrations--the first echelon of the insurgency. Government agents, well paid and able to provide information quickly, are the best way of keeping the government apprised of enemy intentions. The best agents are former insurgents that have turned during interrogation. Since many of them have been impressed into insurgent service, they are more likely to collaborate if compensated well and provided with protection. For some, having them openly denounce their former leaders will be enough to assure their loyalty as long as they are protected.<sup>49</sup>

Given the technological advances since Trinquier's time, informers can provide information to law enforcement and pyramid leaders using cell phones and the internet confidentially. The government can actively enlist the help of its citizens in identifying insurgents by providing a tips hotline, website, or email address on flyers, radio, and television.

Once the government determines that control of the urban area has become manageable, law enforcement assumes the lead in rooting out remaining insurgent cells. Only a small military presence is needed as a quick reaction force and as a trainer of the local militia. For cities, a company or battalion and for village clusters, a platoon or a squad will suffice. The rest of the military is initially deployed to the surrounding rural areas for small unit operations to hunt down fugitive insurgents and then to other

insurgent areas. But there should be no doubt that the main effort of police forces should be in urban areas, where they can apply their expertise most effectively in the area of greatest payoff.<sup>50</sup> In anticipation of the critical role law enforcement will play in counterinsurgency, a substantive investment in training is necessary to expunge corruption within the police ranks. Corrupt policemen will drive people into the arms of the insurgency as readily as military heavy-handedness.

Realistically, the military and police will apprehend few insurgents during the initial sweep of the urban area. The rooting out of the insurgency cells that have gone underground relies on detective work, arrests and interrogations. According to Trinquier, the number of interrogation teams should increase as specific citizens will likely emerge with more information once they realize their information can be given confidentially. Once the information is verified, the police and military forces are able to place additional insurgents into custody. He also advises the immediate establishment of a curfew to enhance security and restricting arrests to nighttime. Anyone caught outside during curfew is immediately detained and questioned. The police arrest suspect individuals and interrogate them immediately to determine the identity and location of their immediate superiors or contacts, which the police should arrest before the curfew expires. Ironically, in Trinquier's experience, the higher echelon insurgency leadership and enemy intellectuals talk most easily and quickly, leading to the progressive unraveling of the insurgency network.<sup>51</sup>

The turning of insurgents, particularly key leaders, to the government cause represents a major coup in the counterinsurgency effort. John Nagl recounts that the British employed cooperative former insurgents to persuade fellow insurgents to surrender, convince the populace that the government cause was legitimate, and to provide insights into the insurgent psyche. Moreover, rehabilitated insurgents can serve as special scouts or advisors with the military.<sup>52</sup>

Conversely, the government should expect insurgent espionage penetration of its government agencies, law enforcement and military forces. Insurgent use of espionage is integral to their intelligence apparatus, so the government must have a counter espionage campaign plan. The use of informants, sting

operations, and undercover internal affairs officers to name the most salient means, is effective in combating insurgent espionage efforts.<sup>53</sup>

The establishment and training of local militias (ideally one per city quarter or village) serves two purposes: the militia reacts to immediate threats, undergirded by the military quick reaction force and the police; and the militia provides a psychological boost of self protection against insurgent intimidation.<sup>54</sup> The military trains the local militia and instructors, as well as issuing assault rifles for militiamen to maintain in their homes. Safekeeping weapons at home versus an armory permits militiamen to muster more quickly against threats and disperses the weapons, preventing insurgents from capturing small arms in a raid on the armory. While the odds are that a few militia members will defect to the insurgents with their weapons, the effect on the overall defense of the urban area will be slight, and the benefits of having a local militia far outweigh any defections.<sup>55</sup> Trinquier stressed the necessity of militias. "Since the stake in *modern warfare* is the control of the populace, the first objective is to assure the people their protection by giving them the means of defending themselves, especially against terrorism."<sup>56</sup>

Once the populace feels relatively secure, the government can concentrate on winning the hearts and minds element.<sup>57</sup> This is not a sequential event and may occur in some sectors while active fighting is occurring in others.<sup>58</sup> However, before revitalization can take effect, the violence must be brought down to manageable levels. Foremost, the people must feel relatively secure from insurgent intimidation. Particularly noteworthy in Iraq is the positive correlation between urban revitalization and reduced insurgent activities.<sup>59</sup>

As envisioned in Afghanistan, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) are a superb vehicle for revitalizing the local economy as well as improving utilities, services, and reconstruction.<sup>60</sup> To provide local security, indigenous military forces (versus coalition forces) should comprise the PRT security element, in order for the local population to draw a positive connection with the central government, increasing its legitimacy. Subscribing to the old adage, "teach a man to fish..." the PRT should comprise trainers of skilled labor, equipment personnel, employment agency managers and paymasters, as well as

soliciting the expertise of other agencies, such as USAID, NGOs, IOs...etc. The central idea is to create a job market among the local populace, which may be partially or unskilled laborers. In this manner, the PRT provides a job, gives on-the-job training, and pays salaries for work projects. Local businesses become revitalized as the local population now has spending money, and the people have a personal investment in the reconstruction projects. PRTs are the most substantive way to reward liberated urban areas, and urban areas that remain loyal for that matter. They are also integral to showing progress and restoring hope throughout the country through the public awareness campaign and normal media channels.

Local elections are essential to securing the legitimacy of the urban government and should occur as soon as possible. Many of the original authorities will have fallen victim to insurgent assassinations and new elections represents a fresh start. The census and issuance of identification cards provide sufficient, accurate prerequisites for expediting the elections. Under the auspices of UN election oversight, newly elected officials enjoy a honeymoon period of popularity, which they can use to motivate the people into revitalizing their areas.

The public awareness campaign never ends. The local government must not relax its media efforts of keeping the populace informed, using persuasion to win or maintain the allegiance of the people, and to refute insurgent propaganda. A sophisticated media campaign maintains an audience through entertainment (music, theater productions, etc.) while weaving in themes to undermine the insurgency. News stories of new construction projects, government progress, and other successes instill hope and a sense of pride. If the government is remiss in this critical counterinsurgency component, the insurgents will claim credit for improving conditions, advance their usual repertoire of conspiracies, and discredit government progress. Knowledge and hope are the insurgent's greatest threats.

### **Conclusions**

An insurgent seizure of a major city is a rare occurrence but the measures described in this article can be applied against insurgent sanctuaries no matter how small or large. Hence, the government can apply them to an insurgent-held city sector or village cluster. Inoculation of urban areas is not just

applicable to liberated urban areas either. In fact, every urban area should be inoculated as a matter of course in order to prevent insurgents swept out of one urban sanctuary infiltrating into another.

A successfully executed counterinsurgency operation in urban terrain expels insurgents from their greatest source of recruits, sustenance, resources, and most critically propaganda. Insurgent fugitives are at their weakest in the immediate aftermath of their expulsion since they have no time to secure the cooperation of the local populace for sustenance and security. The military forces operating in small teams in the surrounding areas have an excellent opportunity to run the fugitives to ground before they have an opportunity to gain refuge. Additionally, assuming the fugitives will drift towards other insurgent dominated areas, the government can better focus its security forces against these areas, again relying on small unit operations to locate remote bases and wandering bands of insurgents for destruction by the full panoply of firepower. The inoculation of urban areas permits the military to concentrate its forces in rural areas rather than remaining enmeshed in the complex dynamics associated with urban areas.

Compatible with Andrew Krepinevich's oil-spot strategy, counterinsurgency operations in urban areas permit the government to allocate its forces and resources in a coherent and effective fashion.<sup>61</sup> By providing the urban populace with security and then securing their hearts and minds, the government gains control of the vast majority of its total population, leaving the insurgency to wither on the vine. Will this result in the capitulation of the insurgents? No, not in the conventional sense. Insurgencies have a tendency to smolder on for years even when their cause is lost.<sup>62</sup> But once the tide has turned the government will find it easier to manage and eventually stamp it out without losing its soul in the process.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard B. Fall, Roger Trinquier, and Mao Tsetung among others stress this facet of insurgency warfare to explain how revolutionary warfare differs from conventional warfare. It must be noted, however, that gaining compliance either through coercion or popular support is a subset of this control. Understanding this dynamic relationship between the insurgent and the populace is essential to establishing the government's counterinsurgency strategy. Bernard B. Fall, "The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Naval War College Press* (Winter 1998), 1. Internet, <http://www.nwc.navy.mil/press/review/1998/winter/art5-w98.htm>; Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*. Translation by Daniel Lee (New York: Praeger Publisher, 1964), 104; Mao Tsetung, *Mao's Little*

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*Red Book: Quotations of Chairman Mao Tsetung*, Chapter 8. People's War, Internet, [http://freedom.orlingrabbe.com/lfetimes/red\\_book.htm](http://freedom.orlingrabbe.com/lfetimes/red_book.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Village clusters do not provide the same propaganda value as major cities, but they provide the necessary base for an insurgency to gather strength or recover from reverses. Hence in formulating a counterinsurgency strategy, the government should regard village clusters like the sectors of a city.

<sup>3</sup> The migration trend shows that the percentage of the world's population in urban areas has risen from 17 percent in 1950 to 50 percent in 2000 and will likely continue. Jennifer Morrison TAW and Bruce Hoffman, "The Urbanization of Insurgency," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2004), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Peter W. Chiarelli and Patrick R. Michaelis, "Winning the Peace: The Requirement for Full-Spectrum Operations," *Military Review* (July-August, 2005), 5.

<sup>5</sup> The British categorize insurgent strategies as follows: 1) Conspiratorial—urban centric coup d'état, ideally in the capital; 2) Protracted Popular War—Mao's People's War based in rural areas and spreading outward in three phases; 3) Military Focus—quick military success to inspire the masses to flock to the winner; 4) Urban Insurgency—an extended campaign of insurgent terrorist acts and government reprisals that lead to a mass movement and climate of collapse; and 5) Isolated Terrorism—exploiting modern society's complexity and high technology, militants use terrorist acts and subsequent threats of greater attacks for extortion. U.K. Army Field Manual Volume 1 Combine Arms Operations, *Counter Insurgency Operations: Strategic and Operational Guidelines* (United Kingdom: Ministry of Defense, July 2001), A-1-10, A-1-11; Bard E. O'Neill covers these insurgency strategies in greater detail. Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (USA: Brassey's, Inc., 1990) 31-50.

<sup>6</sup> O'Neill, 57.

<sup>7</sup> Mao Tsetung, *Mao's Little Red Book*, Chapter 8, People's War.

<sup>8</sup> Mao Tsetung, *On Guerilla Warfare*, Translated by Samuel B. Griffith II (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 25-26.

<sup>9</sup> Steven Metz and Raymond Millen, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in 21st Century: Reconceptualizing Threat and Response*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, November 2004), 29.

<sup>10</sup> O'Neill, 80-81.

<sup>11</sup> Note the Algerian insurgency's demonstrable use of propaganda to woo international sympathy from 1956 onward. Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*, Revised Edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 231-250.

<sup>12</sup> O'Neill, 114-116.

<sup>13</sup> Trinquier observed that in order to hinder or derail counterinsurgent activities, the militants will attempt to use the legal system in their favor; that is to have terrorists recognized as criminals and insurgent members classified as "minor peacetime offenders." A vitriolic press campaign in the home country and abroad seeks to curtail the counterinsurgency tactics by demanding a return to the peacetime laws. Trinquier, 47-48; Note also "Lesson 18: Prison and Detention Centers," *The Al Qaeda Training Manual*, 17. Internet, <http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/trainingmanual.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Trinquier, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Trinquier, 16-17.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Bruce Hoffman, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq," *Occasional Paper*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, June 2004), 15; Trinquier reached the same conclusion. "A few brutalities, such as savagely executed preventive assassinations in the surrounding villages, will cow the inhabitants into providing the maintenance of the bands and will discourage them from giving useful information to the authorities. Trinquier, 24.

<sup>17</sup> *Mao's Little Red Book*, Chapter 4, Chapter 9, Chapter 11, Chapter 12, Chapter 13, Chapter 29, and Chapter 30.

<sup>18</sup> Chiarelli and Michaelis, 6.

<sup>19</sup> John Nagl, Bernard Fall, Alistair Horne, and Roger Trinquier duly note the widespread assassinations of local officials to sever the central government authority in urban areas, and Carlos Marighella listed assassination as the number one principle. Trinquier, 36; Horne, 112, 351; John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2002), 62, 123; Bernard Fall, *Street Without Joy* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1964), 133-134, 351; Bernard B. Fall, "The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," 7; Carlos Marighella, *Manual of The Urban Guerrilla* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Documentary Publications, 1985), 49.

<sup>20</sup> Organized crime can range from First Generation Street Gangs, oriented on protecting their "turf" and engaged in petty crime to Second Generation Street Gangs, involved in drug trafficking and market protection encompassing a greater geographical area, to third Generation Street Gangs dealing in drug marketing as a transnational criminal

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organization seeking political and economic spheres of domination. Max G. Manwaring, *Street Gangs: the New Urban Insurgency* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, March 2005), 2. 9-11.

<sup>21</sup> Horne noted that although the French 25th Airborne Division successfully hunted down and eliminated the core *Front de Libération Nationale* (F.L.N.) insurgents by the end of 1954, the profligate use of indiscriminate arrests (2,000 alone following the 1 November 1954 F.L.N. attacks), *ratissages* (brutal clearing operations), reprisals, indiscriminate firepower, and "collective responsibility" proved the primary incentive for F.L.N. recruitment. One completely innocent prisoner warned, "In six months' time people like me will be overtaken. It will be too late for any pacific solution." Prison turned out to be an excellent recruiting and training center for the F.L.N. Horne, 96-98, 102-104, 111, 113-115.

<sup>22</sup> By 1955 three factors contributed to increased F.L.N. recruitment: alienation provoked by French repression; F.L.N. ability to survive against French military efforts along with daring raids, proclamations, and targeted executions; and the escalation of the conflict through the use of terror, indiscriminate atrocities, and the emergence of new leaders and new policies. Horne, 129; the Palestinian Intifada demonstrates the powerful image of a small resolute resistance armed with stones facing the superbly equipped and trained Israeli Defense Forces. Within months, Israel lost its image as a victim state to one of oppressor. Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (St Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004), 89-110.

<sup>23</sup> Forced conscription is another recruitment tool. Insurgents can threaten to harm the recruit's family or co-opt him/her into the conspiracy by forcing them to commit a crime, such as delivering a bomb or murdering a minor official. Horne, 133-134.

<sup>24</sup> Hoffman, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 16.

<sup>25</sup> Urbano, *Fighting in the Streets: A Manual of Urban Guerrilla Warfare* (New Jersey: Barricade Books, Inc. 1991), 10, 12. Robert Tabor reached the same conclusion: "The population, as should be clear by now, is the key to the entire struggle...it is the population which is doing the struggling. The guerrilla, who is of the people in a way which the government soldier cannot be (for if the regime were not alienated from the people, whence the revolution?), fights with the support of the noncombatant civilian populace: It is his camouflage, his quartermaster, his recruiting office, his communications network, and his efficient, all-seeing intelligence service. Without the consent and active aid of the people, the guerrilla would be merely a bandit, and could not long survive." Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare* (Washington DC: Brassey's INC, 2002), 11-12.

<sup>26</sup> Gavin Bulloch, "Military Doctrine and Counterinsurgency: A British Perspective," *Parameters* (U.S. Army War College, Summer 1996), 1. Internet: [http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/96 summer/bulloch.htm](http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/96%20summer/bulloch.htm).

<sup>27</sup> Jennifer Morrison Taw and Bruce Hoffman, "The Urbanization of Insurgency," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2004), ix.

<sup>28</sup> Explaining the difficulties in isolating and destroying guerrilla forces, Fall explains that sealing off of enemy forces required a friendly to enemy ratio of "15 to 1 or even 20 to 1, for the enemy had in its favor an intimate knowledge of the terrain, the advantage of defensive organization, and the sympathy of the population." Fall states that in Malaya, a force of 250,000 British, Commonwealth and militia required 12 years to destroy 8,000 Communist guerrillas. Fall, *Street Without Joy*, 171-172.

<sup>29</sup> Prior to the 2000 Battle of Grozny, the Russians employed Grozny's former mayor, Bislan Gantemirov, and his militia to glean information on Chechen rebels in the town from the local populace. Grau and Thomas, Internet.

<sup>30</sup> Applying some lessons learned from the previous two battles of Grozny (1995 and 1996), the Russians waged an effective information campaign in the media, "reporting their version of events and thereby keeping the populace of the side of federal forces..." Grau and Thomas, Internet.

<sup>31</sup> Failed counter guerrilla operations served only to heighten the prestige of the F.L.N.: "a steady flow of the uncommitted began to join the F.L.N.--'more impressed by their cunning and agility than by our ineffectual power", comments Leulliette [a young French soldier]." Horne, 102.

<sup>32</sup> Trinquier, 63.

<sup>33</sup> Lester W. Grau and Timothy L. Thomas, "Russian Lessons Learned From the Battle For Grozny," (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, April 2000). Internet.

<sup>34</sup> Isolation and the noncombatant evacuation of Fallujah prior to the November 2004 battle, deprived the insurgents of the propaganda value of a large clash.

<sup>35</sup> Major General Peter Chiarelli assessed that the insurgents in Baghdad were/are relatively few (perhaps 100 to 200 total) and cellular in organization, but this small number wreaked havoc beyond the number of active insurgents and perhaps gave the illusion of greater numbers. Chiarelli and Michaelis, 6; Andrew Krepinevich assesses that determining the actual numbers of insurgents in Iraq is impossible because the difference among full time, part time,

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and co-opted insurgents is indistinguishable. Andrew Krepinevich, "How to Win in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 84, No. 5 (September/October 2005), 100-101.

<sup>36</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq," *Occasional Paper*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, June 2004), 6.

<sup>37</sup> Taw and Hoffman, 21.

<sup>38</sup> MG Chiarelli stresses this lesson from Iraq. Chiarelli and Michaelis, 9.

<sup>39</sup> This objective corresponds with the Coalition force's desires for the operation in Fallujah. Thom Shanker and John Kifner, "Suited to Guerillas, a Dusty Town Poses Tricky Perils," *New York Times* (April 25, 2004), Internet.

<sup>40</sup> Timothy L. Thomas, "The Battle of Grozny: Deadly Classroom for Urban Combat," *Parameters* (U.S. Army War College, Summer 1999), 94.

<sup>41</sup> A typical Chechen tactic was to move a weapon system into or near a school or hospital, fire a couple of rounds then depart quickly. The Soviet counter fire response resulted in collateral damage, which the inhabitants blamed entirely on the Soviets. Thomas, 94.

<sup>42</sup> Bernard Fall once observed that the French in Algeria won militarily but was internationally reviled. IN this sense, military victory was meaningless because the military had lost its soul. Fall, "The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," 7; The Russians ensured its viewpoint was presented throughout the fighting in Grozny in 2000. Lester W. Grau and Timothy L. Thomas, "Russian Lessons Learned From the Battle For Grozny," (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, April 2000). Internet.

<sup>43</sup> Grau and Thomas, Internet.

<sup>44</sup> Trinquier, 45.

<sup>45</sup> Trinquier, 51.

<sup>46</sup> After the Russians seized and garrisoned Grozny in January 1995, Chechen insurgents infiltrated back in and pushed the garrison out in August 1996. Grau and Thomas, Internet.

<sup>47</sup> Trinquier, 30-33

<sup>48</sup> Trinquier, 32.

<sup>49</sup> Trinquier, 35-38.

<sup>50</sup> MG Chiarelli criticized the siphoning off of policemen from neighborhood beats to strike force operations or bureaucratic duties had a detrimental effect on establishing an environment of security among the population. Chiarelli and Michaelis, 8.

<sup>51</sup> Trinquier, 44-46.

<sup>52</sup> Nagl, 93-95, 100.

<sup>53</sup> Referencing the failure of a French operation in Indochina, Bernard Fall concluded, "Of course, the Communists had been informed of the operation, as they usually are, either by the cumbersomeness of our preparations or by spies infiltrating among the Vietnamese cooks and shoe-shine boys and girl friends and other paraphernalia with which the French units in Indochina are always bogged down. Fall 112.

<sup>54</sup> The British created Home Guard militias, which effectively resisted Malayan insurgents. By the end of 1953, the Home Guard comprised 250,000 militiamen. Nagl, 100.

<sup>55</sup> This fear may be overblown. The Malayan Home Guards lost only 103 weapons of the 89,000 issues. Nagl, 100.

<sup>56</sup> Trinquier, 29.

<sup>57</sup> Arguably, the security guarantee is part of winning the hearts and minds, but too often counterinsurgency strategies pay scant attention to this critical component and focus solely on reconstruction, economic assistance, medical care, etc. as though the struggle is about one of popularity rather than survival. Because of this inclination, I separate the security guarantee from hearts and minds.

<sup>58</sup> MG Chiarelli warns that in stability and support operations, thinking sequentially (in phases) will not lead to the desired ends. Chiarelli and Michaelis, 15.

<sup>59</sup> Chiarelli and Michaelis, 10-14.

<sup>60</sup> As demonstrated in Iraq, the military can do these tasks very effectively (See Chiarelli and Michaelis, 10-14) but to the detriment of applying relentless pressure on insurgents. PRTs can take the burden off the military.

<sup>61</sup> Krepinevich, 94-97.

<sup>62</sup> The Malayan insurgency continued another six years after there was no doubt of British and the new Malayan government's success.