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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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PHASED INSURGENCY THEORY:

RAMADI

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTERS OF MILITARY STUDIES

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AY 07-08

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26 FEB 2008

26 FEB 2008

# Report Documentation Page

*Form Approved*  
*OMB No. 0704-0188*

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1. REPORT DATE <b>2008</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2008 to 00-00-2008</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Phased Insurgency Theory: Ramadi</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, 2076 South Street, Marine Corps Control Development Command, Quantico, VA, 22134-5068</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>29</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

## Executive Summary

**Title:** Phased Insurgency Theory: Ramadi

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**Thesis:** A critical analysis of the Ramadi-Al Anbar model provides insight into the phases of insurgency relative to how these phases affect the counterinsurgent's operational design in the forms of defining the metrics for progress, designing a campaign to win and hold popular support, creating security, establishing effective popular government, and developing realistic expectations of time in relation to endstate.

**Discussion:** Many counterinsurgency theorists and insurgent writers alike signal the counterinsurgency designer to view insurgencies as a phased maturation process that evolves as new compounds or ideas are introduced within the system. The heart of the system is the people and their support. As the support of the populace evolves, it follows a sometimes seemingly random and unpredictable wave. The counterinsurgency operational designer must seek to understand where the insurgency or insurgencies exist in phases of maturation or de-maturation in order to combat them effectively. Due to the multilateral, complex, and varying nature of insurgencies, it is a mistake for the counterinsurgency designer to attempt to jam insurgencies into a numbered set of distinct phases. To do so is to discount the uniqueness of each insurgent organization, sub-movement, and outside influencer or organizations. Instead, the operational designer must seek to understand the maturity of each insurgent element or sub-element and the populace, why it is at a particular point, and what factors in relation to the populace can influence the element to further evolve or devolve. Only then can the counterinsurgent seek to influence the system at key times or points within the insurgent life cycle or system. Understanding the phases and life cycles within an insurgency is crucial for effectively planning and succeeding in counterinsurgency operations.

**Conclusion:** Every insurgency is unique, but all move through phases of evolution or devolution. No system or phased model behaves the same, but understanding the life cycles of the human environment and its relationship to the development of insurrection helps the planner to set conditions for success. The phased model is not a recipe for success. Rather, it is a way to understand the elements within an insurrectional system, analyze what caused their position within the system, understand their motivations, and predict their reaction to future actions by outside compounds (i.e., U.S. Forces, AQI). Once this is understood, leverage points may be uncovered that set the conditions for fault lines. These fault lines may then be exploited to induce a phase change and tip popular support as was the case with the tribes and AQI in the Ramadi-Al Anbar area.

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## Preface

The following thesis is a result of the author's experience as the Operations Officer for Second Battalion, Fourth Marines, in Ramadi, Iraq from February 2004 to October 2004 and his continued study of the area. This continued study would not have been possible without the many subsequent discussions of the area with my peers who followed as battalion Operations Officers and Executive Officers in Ramadi. These discussions not only provided insight but some closure to a topic and place that became part of us. In the end, it attempts to frame the chaos that is inherent in counterinsurgency planning and execution with windows of order. This thesis represents the culmination of a year of learning that would not have been possible without LtCol B.J. Payne, Dr. Eric Shibuya, Dr. Paul Gelpi, and my mentor Dr. J.W. Gordon.

## THEORY OF PHASED INSURGENCY

The nature of operational design for counterinsurgency has always been a complex, intricate, and delicate task. The planner or policymaker seeks to find simple, familiar, and often kinetic solutions to a multilayered problem of ideas, passions, and politics that are often only tempered by a blend of time and appropriate actions. The counterinsurgent's design logic meshes the simple with the brute to reach a strategic accord. This method often proves costly in treasure and time, and it rarely brings the system it attempts to affect into a stable state. The Ramadi- Al Anbar model, from 2003 to the present, demonstrates a superb, complex insurgent system for the counterinsurgent operational designer to study and analyze.

Throughout history, many theorists have attempted to frame the development of insurgencies. Mao Tse-Tung offers counterinsurgency designers three distinct phases on which to plan for, evaluate, design against, and combat. Mao saw insurgencies as protracted and evolving as "Phase I (organization, consolidation, and preservation), Phase II (progressive expansion), and Phase III (decision, or destruction of the enemy)."<sup>1</sup> David Galula in *Counterinsurgency Warfare* offers two phased patterns that insurgencies generally follow. Galula saw insurgencies forming and maturing as an Orthodox Pattern: Communist (Creation of a Party, United Front, Guerrilla Warfare, Movement Warfare, Annihilation Campaign) and a Bourgeois-Nationalist Pattern: Shortcut (Blind Terrorism, Selective Terrorism, integration into Orthodox Pattern if necessary)<sup>2</sup>. Carl Von Clausewitz in *On War* conveys the changing character of war. He argues that the deeper an army drives or the longer it remains in a foreign territory, "the moment an invader enters enemy territory, the nature of the operational theater changes."<sup>3</sup> These theorists signal the counterinsurgency designer to view insurgencies as a

phased maturation process that evolves as new compounds or ideas are introduced within the system. The heart of the system is the people and their support. As the support of the populace evolves, it follows a sometimes seemingly random and unpredictable wave. The counterinsurgency operational designer must seek to understand where the insurgency or insurgencies exist in phases of maturation or de-maturation in order to combat them effectively.

Due to the multilateral, complex, and varying nature of insurgencies, it is a mistake for the counterinsurgency designer to attempt to jam insurgencies into three distinct phases. To do so is to discount the uniqueness of each insurgent organization, sub-movement, and outside influencer or organizations. Instead, the operational designer must understand the maturity of each insurgent element or sub-element, why it is at a particular point, and what factors in relation to the populace can influence the element to further evolve or devolve. Only then can the counterinsurgent seek to influence the system at key times or points within the insurgent life cycle or system. Understanding the phases and life cycles within an insurgency is crucial for effectively planning and succeeding in counterinsurgency operations. An old saying has it, all insurgencies are local what works against one may be irrelevant to another. Many missteps, wasted movements, overreactions, and setbacks occur if it is not understood where the insurgency is within its phased life cycle, where it is trying to go, and whom it seeks to influence or effect to get there as evidenced by contemporary, counterinsurgency writers from David Kilcullen to Thomas Ricks. A critical analysis of the Ramadi-Al Anbar model provides insight into the phases of insurgency and how these phases affect the counterinsurgents' operational design. This analysis will examine the phases in terms of defining the metrics for progress, designing a campaign to win and hold popular support, creating security, establishing effective popular government, and developing realistic expectations of time in relation to endstate.

## HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE RAMADI INSURGENCY

### Pre-Regime Removal

Ramadi, a city of more than 350,000 people (predominantly Sunni) sits on the banks of the Euphrates River and is the capital of Al Anbar Province. For centuries, the area has been a hub of trade and smuggling from the desert to the Mediterranean. In the 1800's, the Ottoman Empire occupied and controlled the area. To organize this occupation, the hosts of tribes were loosely brought under the control of the Dulaim tribal confederation.<sup>4</sup> After the Mesopotamian Campaign of 1917, the British attempted to use this organization to control the area during its occupation. They met with resistance throughout their occupation and until Iraq's independence in 1932. In 1968, Saddam Hussein began his rise to power and sought to reinforce the prominence of the Sunni minority. Saddam Hussein filled the ranks of his army, special forces, and intelligence services with loyalists from the Ramadi and surrounding Al Anbar tribes or Dulaim confederation. This was his method to control the troublesome area and its tribes. During the years that followed, Saddam experienced several rebellions from the tribes of Ramadi. A combination of force and incentives extinguished these rebellions.<sup>5</sup> As war with America drew to an inevitable certainty in late 2002, Saddam began opening the can to a ready-made insurgency. Ramadi, then a community of current and retired army, special forces, and intelligence services officers, provided much of the substance to his plan for an asymmetrical fight.<sup>6</sup> Prior to hostilities, in the words of the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, "Iraq would fight very differently from 1991, when vastly superior coalition forces outclassed its conventional military."<sup>7</sup> The extent of the cohesion, organization, and timing of this plan continues to remain under debate.

## Post Regime Removal

At the close of the initial United States and Coalition Forces invasion in May of 2003, Ramadi remained fairly untouched, spared the fate of many other cities. A Florida National Guard battalion occupied Ramadi proper until relieved by a U.S. Marine battalion in February 2004. During this yearlong period of pregnant pause and relative calm, the insurgency began to grow legs and transition from a planning and organization phase to an organization and action phase. Little to no action or influence by the Coalition Provisional Authority marked this period within Ramadi. In April of 2004, Ramadi exploded in three days of chaos and fighting between the sole U.S. Marine battalion securing and stabilizing the city and thousands of fighters. The offensive in Ramadi would end with over a hundred Marine casualties. The insurgents found themselves tactically defeated, with hundreds of dead, and their spirits temporarily broken.<sup>8</sup> This offensive was driven by the complex blend of a natural reaction to occupation, anger due to perceived disenfranchisement of Bathist and Former Regime Loyalist (FRL), retribution due to the mistreatment of Iraqis in other parts of Al Anbar, a perceived minimalization of the power of the Sheikhs, religious motivation, and the beginnings of outside extremists influence. It was arguably composed of a mix of Former Regime Loyalist and Army Officers, extremist elements (local and foreign), criminals, emotional tagalongs, and tribes.<sup>9</sup> From this experience, the many insurgent groups began to mature in their organization and coordination.

As time passed, to combat the insurgent sway over the populace and the explosive security situation, the U.S. military presence in Ramadi grew from one battalion to four by 2006. Throughout 2004 to early 2007, the U.S. military fought a sage mix of aggressive information, civil-military, and discriminatory combat operations. Never fully achieving unity of command or effort, by late 2006, the Ramadi insurgency can be described broadly as a set of elements

reacting to the U.S. presence and a set of elements influenced by or members of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). As a result of time, the maturation of an insurgent identity establishment phase, an improved security situation due to wise U.S. military actions and deployment, and the Murder and Intimidation Campaign by Al Qaeda in Iraq, a large rift developed between the two broad Ramadi insurgency groups (Former Regime Elements and AQI). This rift turned the tide of the insurgency, moved the tribes to side with the U.S. forces, and marked a near end to violence and AQI in the Ramadi-Al Anbar area.

The Ramadi example shows a loosely planned insurgency oriented toward organizing and fighting an occupier in its first phase. The insurgency gains the consensus of the masses in the second phase with the help of the tribes and AQI, although remains slightly fractured by different goals. These fractures along with strategic mistakes by AQI, and a patient, persistent presence by U.S. forces drove a wedge between the tribal masses and AQI in the third phase. The fourth and ongoing phase is exploitation of the U.S.- Al Anbar Tribal Alliance. The complex dynamics that played out with the numerous Former Regime Elements and AQI and each elements unique timing, phasing and goals are a key characteristic described in *Counterinsurgency, MCWP 3-33.5*.<sup>10</sup>

## **METRICS FOR PROGRESS AND PHASES**

In conducting operational design for the Ramadi insurgency during the period after the initial invasion, the designer is tempted to focus metrics for progress purely on infrastructure, economic, and governmental improvements. As seen above, this discounts the phased reaction within the system to occupation, the generation of insurgent momentum up the wave of popular support, and length of the historical insurgency life cycle. The First Marine Division recognized

that a small insurgency might develop prior to its deployment in 2004 to Al Anbar and based its metrics for progress on its success in dealing with the tribes, Former Regime Elements, and foreign fighters. The design focused on driving a fault line between the radical elements and the masses through a coordinated effort along security and stability Logical Lines of Operations or plays.<sup>11</sup> These Logical Lines of Operation provided the commander's vision for resolution and moved with the fluidity of the environment. As is the nature of counterinsurgency, this proved extremely challenging to execute in the short term, for high expectations, world perception, and time-driven, quantifiable statistics (i.e. number of attacks) often drive the priority of metrics. The problem of developing accurate metrics for success based on the enemy and the environment itself was further complicated by a complex assortment of insurgent sub-elements that were in a separate phase of evolution. Finally, there was the populace whose initial natural instincts made it adverse to a foreign presence.

In hindsight, when evaluating the initial phases of the maturation of the insurgency and the natural reaction of the populace, a large influx of troops, an inclusion of the former Iraqi Army, and sensitivity to tribal disenfranchisement seem to be the solution to the security situation, which prevented progress in all other areas. This method may have set the conditions for a quicker solution; however, it discounts the problems that arise when a new compound is introduced into a complex system. The system of interaction between the insurgents and the populace was growing and thriving on the logical idea that the occupier was bad and therefore fellow Muslim insurgents must be good. Only time and evidence could mitigate an ideological issue this natural and powerful. Metrics that are too aggressive kinetically or non-kinetically can set conditions that cause adverse reactions in the system. The First Marine Division and the U.S. military units operating within Ramadi rapidly adjusted to this, set less statistically tangible

metrics based on co-opting the tribal powerbase, and provided a reliable, persistent, presence to compete against the Al Qaeda brand. The most powerful step for success in the campaign in Al Anbar came when the tribes of the provincial capital united against AQI and formed an alliance with the U.S. military.

## **POPULAR SUPPORT AND PHASES**

### **Popular Support**

Popular support became the defining metric and achieving it was not possible without a clear understanding of the phases of maturation within the insurgent and mass population system and providing the populace with something that resembled what they wanted. Once this understanding was developed and the conditions were set, the answer to the design problem became, when phased maturation permitted, the use of the tribes as a leverage-point and thereby drive a fault line between AQI and their center of gravity, the populace. This theory, on the surface, seems rather straightforward and easy to execute. However, it requires a firm understanding of the phase each actor is in within the system, what caused the actor to evolve to that point, what the actor's motivation and endstate is, and what to introduce within the system to alter it to the counterinsurgents' favor. By late 2006, the system within Ramadi could be broken into three broad groups: the masses (tribes), Al Qaeda in Iraq, and the Coalition Forces (U.S., Iraqi Security Forces, Iraqi Army).

### **The Masses (Tribes)**

As stated in the historical review, above, the mass population of Ramadi in the months following the invasion gathered its senses, attempted to ascertain what it believed, establish its

identity, and where its interest lay. The initial reaction or first phase was a wait and see what America will do by some and a visceral reaction to foreign occupation by others. This created many local insurgent elements and sub-elements. Some of these elements were criminal, some Former Regime Loyalists, and some simply swayed or co-opted by the threats and euphoria.<sup>12</sup> The wide variety of insurgent elements operated with little unity of effort or command. This created a sense of chaos within the populace, the U.S. military, and the system as a whole. For, if the populace and insurgents did not understand their identity, exactly what they stood for, or with whom they sided, how could the counterinsurgent attempt to combat these elements and ideals? This condition within the system should be counted as a natural state of post-regime removal. The second phase saw the insurgency mature within the populace as cultural and security conditions on the ground made anti-Americanism the logical choice. However, the insurgency never truly gained unity of command or effort. This may be in part due to the introduction of AQI and foreign extremist elements in phase one that at first seemed appealing and later subverted the original idea. In phase three of tribal-populace maturation, a fracture, or fault-line developed between the masses and AQI. A key player in this occurrence was Sheikh Sattar of the Abu Risha tribe.<sup>13</sup> Sheikh Sattar, along with numerous other tribal leaders, led the masses away from the subverted ideas of Al Qaeda and their Murder-Intimidation Campaign. His alliance with the U.S. provided a subtle assurance of a near term without Shia domination or exploitation by the central government.

### **Al Qaeda in Iraq**

Al Qaeda in Iraq and the foreign extremists associated with it followed a phased model very similar to that of the Bourgeois-Nationalist Pattern (Shortcut) described by Galula in *Counterinsurgency Warfare* and seemed to ignore the Mao model. In the Galula model “the goal

of the insurgent is limited to the seizure of power; post insurgency problems, as secondary preoccupations, are shelved for the time being.”<sup>14</sup> This pattern consists of a series of phases. The first phase is Blind Terrorism in which acts of terrorism or control are exerted in order to attract latent supporters. The second phase is Selective Terrorism aimed at isolating the counterinsurgent from the masses. In step three, the insurgent joins Galula’s Orthodox Pattern with full-scale guerrilla warfare.<sup>15</sup> Al Qaeda in Iraq understood the vulnerabilities of the masses during the masses (Tribal) phase one and two, and exploited these vulnerabilities. Contrary to the Mao and Galula models, AQI made critical errors in design and execution in phase two. Through extremist tactics oriented not only at Coalition Forces, but also at their base of support, AQI effectively isolated themselves from their target audience. The mass executions, assassination of Sheikhs, disrespect to the dead, and attempted forced marriage of the tribal daughters caused their maturation and stature within the system to devolve. The tipping point, however, would not have occurred had it not been for the steady and coherent campaign design and execution of the U.S. military.

### **Coalition Forces**

The third actor within the system was the Coalition Forces. Once the Coalition Forces within the Ramadi area understood what the broad categories of actors within the system were and what motivated them, they were able to set the conditions to take advantage of the fault-line that developed to gain popular support. This fault-line was a product of time and action. As stated earlier, the natural phases of the human reaction to occupation and disruption needed to take place in order for true closure to occur. The actions of the Coalition Forces after the initial invasion cannot be discounted in helping to trigger this fault-line. The Coalition Forces from the beginning sought to “establish a secure local environment for the indigenous population so they

could pursue their economic, social, cultural, and political well-being and achieve some degree of local normalcy.”<sup>16</sup> They blended this design with a mostly discrete, discriminate, neutralization of the irreconcilable Former Regime Elements and foreign fighters.<sup>17</sup> However, many bloody, large-scale operations were needed to sufficiently defeat the insurgent’s ability to mass. These operations were carried out as discriminately as possible in keeping with the “no better friend, no worst enemy” message. A patient, persistent message aimed at the right audience at the right times allowed the coalition to capitalize on the fractures that surfaced during masses’ (tribal) phase three. Without a clear understanding of the human environment and its phased evolution and readiness for change, this would not have been possible.

#### **SECURITY ENVIRONMENT AND PHASES**

As seen above, designing a secure environment during the initial phases of an insurgency can prove to be an almost impossible challenge until the human environment matures and sorts out its loyalties. It is incumbent on the operational planner and commander to understand the different actors within the system and how they view their role within it. Until true support of the populace is gained, it is difficult to achieve even a modicum of security, and conversely it is difficult to achieve popular support without a secure environment. Therefore, the campaign designer must seek to establish a diverse security apparatus, take away the economic incentive to join the insurgency, and separate the masses from the insurgent threat. This is accomplished through a patient analysis and application of the above and an appreciation for each element’s phased maturation.

## **Security Apparatus**

In the masses (tribal), phase one, the U.S. battalions in Ramadi and their higher headquarters immediately began creating a local police force and an Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) or Iraqi National Guard (ING). During phase one and the early stages of phase two, these organizations were highly dysfunctional and corrupt, but provided a framework for exploitation when popular support tipped to the favor of the counterinsurgent. Early on, it is easy to become disillusioned with the lack of immediate effectiveness in coalition created security organizations; however, they are an integral part of setting the conditions for a tipping point in subsequent phases and a show of partnership and good faith. This partnership develops the small bonds that become leverage points in the phased maturation of the human environment. When interacting with the above security organizations and subsequently the Iraqi Army through local commanders, Military Transition Teams, and Provincial Reconstruction Teams, relationships and bonds develop which facilitate a change in the system. This interaction is the grassroots effort to influence a change in the phase of the populace. In Ramadi, this phase change or tipping occurred with the creation of the Al Anbar Salvation Council (ASC) in response to the strategic missteps of AQI. This event encouraged the Ramadi-Al Anbar area tribes to support and join the security forces.<sup>18</sup>

## **Economic Incentive**

Along with the idea or logic that fuels the insurgency, economic incentive is one of the most powerful tools the insurgent has to co-opt popular support. This is especially true in the chaotic times that follow full-scale conflict. An understanding of how economic incentive fuels

the popular support of the insurgency in each phase is imperative for the operational designer. For a lack of economic incentives at the micro and macro level can have an immediate, dramatic impact on the security environment. In the masses (tribal), phase one, of Ramadi, U.S. Military forces aggressively pursued economic incentives. These incentives sought to use small venture capital to create new businesses, pay the security forces, enact Coalitional Provisional Authority large projects, generate competitive bidding on construction projects and infrastructure repair, and improve quality of life. Due to the chaos in phase one and two of the masses (tribes), these incentives proved seemingly fruitless. Tribes were funded to construct a project, only to have the project blown up by another tribe or destroy the project secretly itself to gain more funding and power over competing tribes or insurgent groups. In actuality, however, these actions were not fruitless at all. They set the conditions and built trust that facilitated a phase change, improvement in the security environment, and a strategic fault-line.

### **Separating the Masses from the Threat**

The third element for security, separating the masses from the insurgent threat, is a product of a sound campaign design of the first two elements and a robust and capable occupation-liberation force. The occupation or liberation force must cover the gap during the chaos of the initial phases that results from an impotent local security apparatus and a broken economy. As in Ramadi, the liberation force must immediately identify and gain influence over the current and predicted future power brokers. This is an inexact science due to the chaotic nature of the system until it settles into a semi-predictable rhythm. The merits of this theory are best exemplified by the strategic gains that resulted from the coalition's partnering with Sheikh Sattar as early as February of 2004. The important aspect is to build as many relationships as possible and come from a position of strength. This position of strength is only gained by robust

forces, with the numbers to destroy the insurrectional apparatus, and permanently occupy and hold ground. Once the ground is held these forces must provide a modicum of security that enables trust and physical-social infrastructure to be built. David Galula states:

The population, therefore, becomes the objective for the counterinsurgent as it was for his enemy. Its tacit support, its submission to law and order, its consensus- taken for granted in normal times- have been undermined by the insurgent's activity. And the truth is that the insurgent, with his organization at the grassroots, is tactically the strongest of opponents where it counts, at the population level. This is where the fight has to be conducted, in spite of the counterinsurgent's ideological handicap and in spite of the head start gained by the insurgent in organizing the population.<sup>19</sup>

The result of this design sets the conditions for a tipping or phase change. This is best evidenced in the masses (tribal) phase three. Four U.S. battalions reinforced with Iraqi Army and Security Forces fought into the city of Ramadi and occupied permanent outposts over a period of months. This act enabled the proliferation of local participation in security, more effective and permanent economic incentives, and gave the tribal leaders the security they needed to broker an alliance with the U.S. military. These actions, conducted at the precise time and phase, combined with missteps by AQI, injected the population with hope and effectively eliminated AQI's ability to operate within Ramadi.

#### **EFFECTIVE/POPULAR GOVERNMENT AND PHASES**

As stated in the introduction, the counterinsurgency operational designer must understand where the insurgency or insurgencies exist in phases of maturation or de-maturation in order to combat them effectively. Once a vague understanding of this is achieved, as witnessed in the previous sections, designing and implementing a plan to achieve effective, popular government becomes troublesome immediately following post-regime removal. The chaotic nature of this

phase, combined with the confusion resulting from a power vacuum, puts the counterinsurgent at a distinct disadvantage. As in Ramadi from 2003 to 2006, the government is naturally seen as a puppet of the occupier by the masses that react to the propaganda and coercion of their Former Regime Loyalist brothers and fellow Muslim terrorist cells. This held especially true in the Ramadi- Al Anbar area where Saddam protected the Sunni minority from the Shia majority.

In the Masses (tribal) Phase One and Two, the bulk of the population found a perceived or forced sanctuary under the insurgent umbrella. This nullified the power of the Provincial Governor, Ramadi City Mayor, and Police Chief even though the tribes freely appointed them. These officials worked closely with U.S. forces, made vital inroads to the populace and tribes, and demonstrated the U.S. forces desire for Iraqi self-governance. However, many of the officials were co-opted by the insurgents or forced to play both sides. Daily interaction with government officials, a transition of authority, free elections, and tribal involvement all seemed like small successes leading nowhere in Phases One and Two. These small successes proved to be vital lubrication to move the system to the tipping point. Without the daily interaction of the Division, Brigade, Battalion, and Interagency Staff, a more serious condition of lawlessness would have prevailed and the local government's push to empower the tribes through the Al Anbar Salvation Council would not have occurred.<sup>20</sup> This active government involvement during the most troublesome times created strategic relationships and kinships that overshadowed the tribes' prior alliances with Al Qaeda in Iraq. Through their strategic missteps, AQI not only sabotaged their bid for power, but ended anti-U.S. sentiment and attacks for the short term. According to Galula's model, AQI should have been in one of its least vulnerable phases during this period.<sup>21</sup> They instead triggered the masses to shift overwhelming support to the U.S. backed local government and tribal union. This event demonstrates that with proper

design and implementation the wave of popular support can be shifted to the favor of the counterinsurgent in any phase. Knowing the leverage points and recognizing each elements needs in each phase proves vital to operational design.

## **EXPECTATION OF TIME/PHASE IN RELATION TO ENDSTATE**

### **Time/Phase and Endstate**

The Marine Corps Small Wars Manual warns the designer “it will be difficult and hazardous to wage war successfully under such circumstances. Undoubtedly it will require time and adequate forces.”<sup>22</sup> Expectations in relation to time drive many planners and commanders in their operational design to employ tactics, exert metrics, and set conditions that may actually cause harm to the system and the endstate of the campaign. Much of this is a result of a self-imposed logic that “if it is done quicker it will be better.” This logic results in overly aggressive combat actions that isolate the populace, a focus on how many construction projects are in the pipeline rather than setting the security conditions for them to become a reality, and the disenfranchisement of a segment of the population before it is really understood who they are and the power they wield. Every insurgency is unique, but all move through phases of evolution or devolution. Understanding the maturity of the populace as it relates to the insurgent cause and the maturity of the insurgent elements and sub-elements helps the campaign designer better plan for resources and time in relation to endstate. In the Small Wars Journal, David Kilcullen states:

As we all know, there is no such thing as a “standard” counterinsurgency. Indeed, the basic definition of counterinsurgency is “the full range of measures that a government and its partners take to defeat an insurgency.” In other words, the set of counterinsurgency measures adopted depends on the character of the insurgency: the nature of counterinsurgency is not fixed, but shifting; it evolves in response to changes in the form of insurgency. This means that there is no standard set of metrics, benchmarks or operational techniques that apply to all

insurgencies, or remain valid for any single insurgency throughout its life-cycle. And there are no fixed "laws" of counterinsurgency, except for the sole simple but difficult requirement to first understand the environment, then diagnose the problem, in detail and in its own terms, then build a tailored set of situation-specific techniques to deal with it.<sup>23</sup>

The counterinsurgent designer must be careful not to apply his desired phases to those of the insurgency. As Kilcullen emphasizes, the problem must be understood in its own terms. The designer's campaign plan must be based on his knowledge of the environment, its actors, and their reaction to his operations based upon their current and future needs within the system. Insurgencies are a living system or life-cycle that morph or react to the compounds that are introduced to them. Merely viewing overwhelming force, precision firepower, technology, economic influence, unsurpassable barriers, or kind actions as the answer to an end without understanding their interaction within the system is a recipe for failure and waste. Bernard Fall confirms this by stressing that:

the America public (and the military specialist as well) is being drowned by what the well-known military expert Hanson W. Baldwin calls "the muddy verbosity and the pompous profundity that are beginning to mask the whole subject of counterinsurgency and guerilla war." Of late, too many amateur counterinsurgency cooks have had their hands at stirring the revolutionary warfare broth, concentrating on tactics that are not new and often erroneous; or on gadgets that are expensive to produce and usually more trouble than they are worth. But very few people seem to have the courage to point to the ultimate shortcomings of any wholly military solution to the guerilla problem, or to stress the potential boomerang effect of phony reforms or *ersatz* ideologies.<sup>24</sup>

Once the phased evolution of each of the major actors within the system is understood and a plan implemented, continuous evaluation of the effects of the plan must occur. This evaluation must not contain self-imposed goals or time requirements; however, it must be realistic and sensitive to the effect home-country national will has on operation-based requirements and time. A delicate balance must be achieved in order to stay pure to the strategic end. Clausewitz writes

that “If we keep in mind that war springs from some political purpose, it is natural that the prime cause of its existence will remain the supreme consideration in conducting it... Policy, then, will permeate all military operations, and, in so far as their violent nature will admit, it will have a continuous influence on them.”<sup>25</sup> In this fact lies the strength of the insurgent, and the importance for our thorough and continuous study of his relation to the system and time.

### **Ramadi Time/Phase and Endstate**

The Ramadi- Al Anbar insurgency problem effectively demonstrates some of the above dilemmas. When the First Marine Division designed its campaign plan for this area and its provincial capital, Ramadi, the three other major elements within the system (population, Former Regime Loyalist, Foreign Extremist/AQI) were in an immature evolution stage. An outside glance at the system painted a picture of rapid success due to the relatively low levels of violence in the months following the initial invasion. Planners approached this problem with a very cautious optimism. As depicted in First Marine Division’s Design for Operation Iraqi Freedom II in MCWP 3-33.5, the First Marine Division and subordinate units within the Ramadi area planned along two logical lines of operations (Diminish Support for the Insurgency and Neutralize Bad Actors).<sup>26</sup>

The units within Ramadi from 2004 to 2007 constantly adjusted the blend of these two lines in order to best effect the system. The initial blend weighted the effort to Diminish Support for the Insurgency through a focus on governance, economics, essential services, and security force development. Changes in the system that were caused by the introduction of a new compound and natural human reaction to a perceived occupation caused the units within Ramadi to quickly adjust the blend. The rapid maturation of the insurgent effort, or phase jump, required

a shift in focus to Neutralizing the Bad Actors. This phase jump or maturation, increased the time and resources needed to gain the support of the populace and pursue support operations. Had it not been for the discriminate blend and adjustment of the two logical lines of operations and vigilant information operations by the U.S. and Iraqi Forces between 2004 and 2007, the tipping might not have occurred. A continuous display of faith and partnership to the Iraqi people, even during the most bloody combat operations, set the conditions for a rapid phase change or tipping. The many battalions that continued to court the Sheikhs, support the local government, influence the tribes, prop up the security forces, conduct infrastructure repair, and infuse the economy even during the most trying of times influenced this tipping. The Small Wars Manual supports this idea, stating, "The solution of such problems being basically a political adjustment, the military measures to be applied must be of secondary importance and should be applied only to such extent as to permit the continuation of peaceful corrective measures."<sup>27</sup> The success of this design hinged on the strategic misstep and flawed ideology of AQI. Through an understanding of the parts of the system and patience in relation to time and phase, a campaign objective was met.

## **CONCLUSION AND ROAD AHEAD**

### **Conclusion**

As stated in the thesis, the insurgency in Ramadi and its relation to the populace demonstrates an intricate, complex system for the counterinsurgent operational designer to study and analyze. This model conveys an example of a phased maturation process and how these phases affect the counterinsurgent's operational design. No system or phased model behaves the same, but understanding the life cycles of the human environment and its relationship to the

development of insurrection helps the planner to set conditions for success. The phased model is not a recipe for success. Rather, it is a way to understand the elements within an insurrectional system, analyze what caused their position within the system, understand their motivations, and predict their reaction to future actions by outside compounds (i.e., U.S. Forces, AQI). Once this is understood, leverage points maybe uncovered that set the conditions for fault lines. These fault lines may then be exploited to induce a phase change and tip popular support as was the case with the tribes and AQI in the Ramadi-Al Anbar area.

### **The Road Ahead**

At the writing of this document, Ramadi and Al Anbar sit far ahead of where they were projected a year ago. As stated earlier, this is a direct result of understanding the system and its leverage points, exploiting these leverage points, and strategic mistakes by Al Qaeda in Iraq. The fragility of the system and its current balance remains obscured and hinges on a wide variety of variables. These variables include but are not limited to: the sustainability of tribal support, the influence economics had on this equation and its longevity, the reaction that will surely occur when the Province is forced to rely and blend with the Shia led government, the long-term sustainability of the system as U.S. Forces inevitably draw down, or an upsurge in foreign extremist influence be it Iranian or AQI. David Galula gives further insight on the challenges of sustaining long-term counterinsurgent warfare in the following passage:

True modern means of transportation—particularly helicopters, when available—allow the counterinsurgent to combine strength with swiftness. True, systematic large-scale operations, because of their very size, alleviate somewhat the intelligence and mobility deficiency of the counterinsurgent. Nevertheless, conventional operations by themselves have at best no more effect than a fly swatter. Some guerrillas are bound to be caught, but new recruits will replace them as fast as they are lost. If the counterinsurgent operations are sustained over

a period of months, the guerilla losses may not be so easily replaced. The question is, can the counterinsurgent operations be sustained? If the counterinsurgent is so strong as to be able to saturate the entire country with garrisons, military operations along conventional lines will, of course, work. The insurgent unable to grow beyond a certain level, will slowly wither away. But saturation can seldom be afforded.<sup>28</sup>

Operational designers today must predict what will trigger the next phase change or tipping that results in a devolution within the current system. Conditions must be set to prevent this phase change or rapidly correct it. A continuous analysis of the major elements within the system and their reaction to change will provide valuable clues to what may cause the next phase change.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps. *Mao Tse-tung on Guerilla Warfare, FMFRP 12-18*. (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, 5 April 1989) 21.

<sup>2</sup> David Galula. *Counterinsurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice*. (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006) 29-40.

<sup>3</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz. *On War*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989) 567.

<sup>4</sup> "Ar Ramadi." *Global Security.Org*. January 21, 2007.  
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/ramadiyah.htm> (accessed December 20, 2007).

Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006) 105.

<sup>5</sup> Hashim, 107.

<sup>6</sup> Hashim, 1, 129.

<sup>7</sup> Hashim, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Bing West. *No True Glory*. (New York, New York: Bantam Books, 2005) 132-133.

<sup>9</sup> West, 132.

Joe Winslow. "Post Deployment Brief History and Museums Division." *Marine Corps Center for Lesson Learned*. March 2, 2005. [www.mccl.usmc.mil](http://www.mccl.usmc.mil) (accessed December 19, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps. *Counterinsurgency, MCWP 3-33.5*. Washington, D.C.: Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, 15 December 2006. 1-17.

<sup>11</sup> *Counterinsurgency, MCWP 3-33.5*. 4-7.

<sup>12</sup> Hashim, 151-161.

West, 132.

<sup>13</sup> Center of International Research Issues Research. "Iraq's Sunni Arabs Confront 'the Islamic State of Iraq'." *Global Issues Report*, May 2, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Galula, 39.

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<sup>15</sup> Galula, 39-42.

<sup>16</sup> *Counterinsurgency, MCWP 3-33.5. 4-7.*

<sup>17</sup> *Counterinsurgency, MCWP 3-33.5. 4-7.*

<sup>18</sup> Center of International Research Issues Research, 2 May 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Galula, 52.

<sup>20</sup> Center of International Research Issues Research, 2 May 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Galula, 42.

<sup>22</sup> Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps. *Small Wars Manual, FMFRP 12-15.* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, 22 December 1990). 15.

<sup>23</sup> David Kilcullen. Anatomy of a Tribal Revolt. *Small Wars Journal*. August 29, 2007. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/08/anatomy-of-a-tribal-revolt/> (accessed December 21, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Bernard B. Fall. *Street Without Joy.* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972) 372.

<sup>25</sup> Clausewitz, 87.

<sup>26</sup> *Counterinsurgency, MCWP 3-33.5, 4-7&8.*

<sup>27</sup> *Small Wars Manual, FMFRP 12-15, 16.*

<sup>28</sup> Galula, 51.

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