

PATTERNS OF INSURGENCY: STRATEGIES AND DOCTRINES

A. V. CHANDRASEKARAN

A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely, so gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another....

— Mao Tse-tung

National liberation movements do not emerge one fine day out of the mind of some superman or at the instigation of some foreign power. They are born out of popular discontent. They emerge over long periods to combat oppressive conditions and express aspirations for a different kind of society. They are, in short, the agents of class and national struggles.

Beginning in a modest way in the 19th century, and achieving great force in the 20th, the contradictions of the capitalist world economy have led to the rise of a network of anti-systemic movements. These movements have taken different forms, sometimes emphasising their class character, sometimes emphasising their national character, usually doing a bit of both. They basically seek to counter the oppression of the world system and, in their more radicalised version, to destroy it.¹

* Group Captain **A.V. Chandrasekaran** is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi.

1. Aquino de Braganca, ed., *The African Liberation Reader: Documents of National Liberation Movements* (London: Zed Press, 1982), pp. 1-2.

Even to speak of a “pattern of an insurgency” is something of a misnomer, as there are probably a number of patterns in insurgencies, split between the orthodox pattern, to the bourgeois-nationalist pattern, and the *jihadist* pattern. One expert compares them to flocks of birds or schools of fish that suddenly group, travel in formation, and then disperse—all without any central command. Two general patterns for insurgencies emerge from the history of past revolutionary wars. One is based essentially on the theory and experience of the Chinese Communists and was offered by Liu Shao-ch’i as a blueprint for revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries. The second pattern is the bourgeois or the nationalist pattern which limits itself to seizure of power and the post-insurgency operations as secondary preoccupations.

During the Cold War, an insurgency’s ‘home’ was usually a country, but an insurgency could also arise within a subdivision of a country. By contrast, an insurgency today is more likely to cross borders, particularly those drawn without respect for ethnic, cultural, or religious realities. In past anti-colonial, nationalist and Marxist “wars of liberation,” the ruling government and its insurgent adversaries fought over the crucial, complex issue of legitimacy; that is, which government was thought to be the rightful authority. Governments claim legitimacy based on history, ideology, culture, economics, force—and, at times, political representation. Before the decline of the Soviet Union, Marxist, nationalist, or in the case of Afghanistan, religious ideology buttressed the insurgency’s claims to legitimacy, but specific grievances against the ruling regime usually supplied the most compelling arguments for the claim to legitimacy. In any struggle for allegiances, the ruling regime might not be able to coopt the insurgency’s ideology, but it might be able to challenge its claims to legitimacy by addressing and resolving grievances. Mao Tse-tung spoke of guerrillas as fish in the sea, a metaphor that suggests that a great sea of support exists and that fish cannot survive outside it.

Violence is central to war. Insurgents attack government institutions and personnel, counter-insurgent troops, and the pro-government population. Government institutions under attack include administrative

offices and agents as well as economic and political infrastructure. Counter-insurgents respond by attacking insurgent leaders (perhaps already formed into a shadow government), insurgent forces, and their committed supporters. But while violence is central, it is important to draw a distinction between the kinds of violence involved.

Counter-insurgency works best when it identifies an enemy and concentrates only on him.

In his classic work on insurgency, *War in the Shadows*, Robert Asprey differentiates between what he calls quantitative violence and qualitative violence. Quantitative violence is essentially indiscriminate. We can measure it in quantitative terms, for example, by the number of rounds fired, tons of bombs dropped, or bodies counted. In conventional war, troops being fired upon from a village would likely call in an air strike, but insurgents faced with the same situation would be more apt to target village leaders and kill them, but in such a way as to leave a lasting impression of terror. To put it bluntly, in quantitative violence, how many you kill matters; but in qualitative violence, who you kill matters.²

Quantitative violence is appropriate against insurgents organised and equipped for conventional war as witnessed in the decimation of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka.. But, more often, counter-insurgency works best when it identifies an enemy and concentrates only on him. The use of violence leaves a deadly residue. Those who are harmed or whose family and friends have been victimised, do not embrace the perpetrators of violence but harbour hatred and seek retribution against them. Killing large numbers of insurgents might not weaken the enemy but simply gain him new adherents. The Shining Path, which had lost scores of cadres to Peruvian counter-insurgent forces, is yet to die down. During the Cold War, outside powers complicated the dynamics of insurgency because outside supporters viewed such conflicts as limited war in Clausewitzian terms and it suited their political and strategic purposes. The United States and the erstwhile USSR were the biggest perpetrators of such phenomena.

2. Robert P. Asprey, *War in the Shadows* (London: Macdonald and Jane Publishers, 1975), Ch 27, pp. 387-399.

PATTERNS OF INSURGENCY

The Orthodox Pattern (Communist)

The orthodox pattern, which existed primarily in colonial and semi-colonial territories sought a *social revolution* on the lines of Marx and Lenin to alter the existing order. In the 20th century, Mao's *On Guerrilla Warfare* became the bible of global insurgencies. Mao was considered to be a practical and theoretical authority in people's wars of liberation – movements to overthrow traditional or colonial-imperialist masters. He converted Karl Marx's theory of the inevitable revolt of the proletariat (industrial working class) into a strategy for the mobilisation of the largely agrarian society of China. Revolutionary warfare continues to influence current insurgencies. Today, nine of ten insurgencies in the world are Maoist in scope. Mao, under the tutelage of hardline Marxists such as Li Ta-Chao and Chen Tu-Hsiu, became convinced that a new China can only be created on the basis of the doctrines of Marx and Lenin. In order to achieve his objective, he started the mission by following five steps.

The First Step: Creation of a Party

In 1921, in keeping with the fundamental principles of Marxism and Leninism, Mao Tse-tung formed the Communist Party of China in Shanghai. The new party concentrated on organising the Chinese proletariat into trade unions which was a resounding success. The labour population, close to two million, was ill-paid, ill-treated and, ill-fed and, hence, extremely receptive to the Communist propaganda. Mao did not hesitate to use all the resources at his disposal, including party newspapers, youth movements, schools, clandestine movements and was also instrumental in organising close to one hundred strikes, both big and small, which were all hugely successful. Simultaneously, the peasants were also included; as David Gaulula, noted counter insurgency expert, has brought out, the inclusion of peasants was a *sine qua non*, as the coming armed struggle would have to be fought in the rural areas and the chance of success largely depended on the support of the peasantry residing in the rural areas.³

3. David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2008), Ch-3, pp. 30-31.

The intensity and the vicissitudes of the long struggles ahead make it imperative that the party be strong, disciplined, and tested. The party should not end up being a loose organisation likely to break apart, countering any turns in the party policy nor succumbing to the reactions of the counter-insurgents. It is of the utmost importance that the party should not disintegrate, basking in victory, when the Communist reforms are to be implemented and when allies turn enemies. Mao also harped upon democratic centralism, criticism and self-criticism as well. The volunteers to the party would be effectively screened using the easy criterion of class origin, and also making the applicants' sponsors responsible for both present and future behaviour. It is essential that the purity of the party be maintained through regular weeding out, and deviators from orthodoxy either won back by conciliatory methods or expelled if not confessing their errors.

The Second Step: United Front

An individual party, without the support of allies or likeminded parties, is more likely to fail in the face of an onslaught by the counter-insurgent forces. So to achieve success, a large united front is required even if it has to have some dubious allies whose use should be curbed short of the point where they can endanger the basic tenets of the organisation. The solution to this problem would be the "salami tactic" whereby the allies would be weeded out once the party is firmly in power. The party, in order to maintain its identity, can enter into alliances with other parties, neither merging with them nor absorbing them. The party's platform at any given time during the conflict must contain something that appeals to each ally, and nothing that may be too objectionable to them. The actual post-war intentions need to be kept secret, known only to the top leadership.

The party further would work even if required clandestinely to channel its actions in the direction so chosen by the party and to prevent any split in the united front. The party would require an excellent intelligence apparatus to achieve this aim.

The Third Step: Protracted War Through Guerrilla Warfare

The Communists recognise that initially the balance of forces is likely to be in favour of the government they intend to overthrow. The process of changing this balance may be long and difficult and one cannot expect early success. They stress this by preparing their cadres for a protracted war using guerrilla methods, thus, forestalling any disillusionment that may occur should there be no early victory.

There is no secret about the ingredients of guerrilla warfare—at the purely tactical level it so closely resembles its parent, irregular or partisan warfare, that to the uninstructed there seems to be no distinction between them. It is the injection of ideology into guerrilla operations that transforms partisan warfare into revolutionary war.

Mao Tse-tung wrote many years ago, “A trained and disciplined guerrilla is much more than a patriotic peasant, workman, or student armed with an antiquated homemade bomb. His indoctrination begins even before he is taught to shoot accurately, and it is unceasing. The end product is an intensely loyal and politically alert fighting man.”

The insurgent may seize power merely by political play and subversion. Failing to do so, an armed struggle would be the logical continuation. Mao argues that guerrilla warfare is not an end in itself but should be promoted as a strategic auxiliary to orthodox operations without assigning it the primary position in the war strategy or substituting it for the mobile and positional warfare conducted by orthodox forces. The Chinese Communists assert that armed struggle is both necessary and inescapable, and are of the firm conviction that a victory needs to be won by force, and that ‘liberation’ must neither be granted nor gained by compromise. They have their following reasons to substantiate their claim;

- A local revolutionary war is a part of the global war against capitalism and imperialism and a military victory against the local enemy is indeed a victory against the global enemy and ultimately contributes to his defeat.
- On seizing power after an armed struggle, the insurgent is sure that his victory is complete, and his authority absolute. The polarised population

on account of the war reveals enemies and friends, and further facilitates implementing the Communist programmes.

- By winning through his own effort, the party consolidates itself, acquires experience, analyses shortcomings, cures its teething problems, eliminates the weak links and chooses the right leader.

The ultimate goal is the creation of the insurgent's military power which needs to be achieved progressively and guerrilla warfare is the only possible course of action to begin with.

Mao emphasises a three-pronged strategy on the conduct of guerrilla operations.

Phase one emphasises devotion to the organisation, and preservation of bases in isolated and difficult terrains. The volunteers are indoctrinated, trained and the propagandists set course in small groups, not numbering more than three, to persuade and convince the inhabitants of the neighbouring countryside to enlist their support. This is primarily carried out to ensure building an effective belt to ensure uninterrupted supply of food, recruits and information.

Phase two advocates increasing the tempo of the operation by multiplying acts of sabotage and liquidation of collaborationists and reactionary elements. The vulnerable military and police outposts are identified and attacked to step up psychological operations to demoralise the enemy. The attacks achieve yet another aim of seizing arms, ammunition, medical supplies and radios desperately required to enhance strength. The guerrilla force, becoming better equipped with increased capabilities, immediately dispatches political agents to indoctrinate the inhabitants of peripheral districts to be absorbed into the expanding "liberated areas".

Phase three is the decisive and final stroke wherein the enemy's destruction is ensured by orthodox military operations, placing the guerrilla operations in a subsidiary role. The hallmark of this phase is flexibility of operations. Mao echoes Clausewitz and insists on subordinating combat to an overall political strategy.

Further, Mao, while advocating guerrilla warfare, insists that the basis of guerrilla discipline must be the individual conscience, and only pure and clean volunteers willing to fight would be able achieve the desired success. Mao was strongly against guerrillas being subjected to revolutionary discipline such as physical beatings or tongue lashings. He was strong in his convictions that the self-imposed discipline by the guerrilla is able to understand the reason for fighting and the reason for obeying, which by itself transforms into a tower of strength and also harmonises the relationships between the officers and the soldiers. Mao was also emphatic on the emancipation of his men which should not only be tolerated but discussed as well. He insisted that the officers live under the same conditions as their men to ensure the officers gain admiration and confidence from the men which is so vital in war.

The Fourth Step: Strategic Equilibrium Phase / Movement Warfare

Guerrilla warfare alone cannot win a war against a resolute enemy. A prolonged guerrilla activity, despite its cost-effectiveness and ability to survive constant counter-insurgency efforts, also has the potential to alienate the local population. It calls for the enemy being confronted on his own ground for which an insurgent army has to be created. If this regular army is created prematurely without proper training, it may lead to disaster. So it is essential that a guerrilla army be created first and the best guerrilla units may be transformed into regular troops, gaining from a company level to even a division level.

Mao also lists six ways in which guerrilla units are originally formed which are:

- Fundamental type: Formed from people automatically springing and taking up arms to oppose the invader. In this case, background and experience are not considered important and only courage is seen as essential.
- By peasant guerrillas.
- By units of local militia.
- By enemy deserters.

- By former bandits.
- By bandit groups.

Each category poses a special set of problems in recruiting and organising but it is a worthwhile effort – as the ancient Chinese saying goes on to explain, the seas and rivers are deep because they absorb the waters of the small streams.

To offset the shortages of arms and ammunition, capturing from the enemy is the tactic best adopted by the insurgents. Mao terms this as ‘commercial operations’ as they are conceived and executed to bring more gains than losses. The territorial pattern of the insurgent’s strategy is brought out by his aim of changing the occupied areas into guerrilla areas, guerrilla areas into guerrilla bases, and these into regular bases. In order to achieve this, Mao assigned a number of responsibilities to his commanders and cadres of the Red Army on the conduct of guerrilla warfare such as;

- To exterminate small forces of the enemy.
- To harass and weaken large forces.
- To attack enemy lines of communication.
- To establish bases capable of supporting independent operations in the enemy’s rear.
- To force the enemy to disperse his strength.
- To coordinate all these activities with those of regular armies on distant battle fronts.
- Select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attacking from the west.
- Avoid the solid, attack the hollow.
- Deliver a lightning blow and seek a lightning decision.
- While engaging a stronger army, the guerrillas are to withdraw when the army advances, harass it when he stops, strike it when it is weary, and pursue it when it withdraws.
- In guerrilla strategy, the enemy’s rear, flanks, and other vulnerable spots are his vital points, and there he must be harassed, attacked, dispersed, exhausted and annihilated.

The Fifth Step: The Strategic Offensive Phase / Annihilation Campaign

Mao Tse-tung grasped all the Clausewitzian themes, including the annihilation of the enemy as the goal of defence: a logical interpretation of the prolonged conflict. He adds "...campaigns of annihilation are the means of attaining the objective of strategic attrition." The series of victories ensures the growth of insurgent strength and decrease in the opposition strength when the fatal blow is expected to be struck at the enemy. The annihilation campaign will have to consider the following factors:

- Strength of the enemy's military assets.
- Solidity of his political structure.
- Subversive activity of the enemy's underground agents.
- The insurgent's own psychological superiority.

Once these factors are ensured, the insurgent operations would accelerate, beginning with a series of offensives aimed at the complete destruction of the enemy.

Mao's long fight for, and eventual conquest of, China was a model copied by various insurgent groups the world over and included the Algerian rebels, the Viet Minh, Cuban insurgents, Shining Path of Peru, Malayan Communists, and to a large extent the Mujahideen of both the Soviet era and today.

MAO'S INFLUENCE IN VIETNAM

Ho Cho Minh and Gen Giap, the architects of the Viet Minh victory over both the French and the Americans had wholeheartedly accepted that Mao Tse-tung led the Chinese Revolution to its absolute victory, using a combination of his ingenuity and famed guerrilla tactics. Owing to the geographical, historical, economic, and cultural conditions, the Chinese Revolution exerted a great influence on the Vietnamese Revolution, which learnt from its experiences. Ho Cho Minh and Giap, though familiar with Mao's theory of protracted warfare, had wanted to avoid the guerrilla phase of fighting called for by Mao. But they were not able to sustain a regular army and quietly reverted to guerrilla style operations. Both accepted their

errors and Giap introduced the three phases of Mao's style of war which went on to become the Vietnamese doctrine and is explained below

- Strategic defence: A passive resistance to wear the enemy down while both regular and irregular Viet Minh units reorganised and built up strength.
- Extensive guerrilla attacks as well as a continued propaganda—subversion effort.
- General counter-offensive to defeat the enemy.

MAO'S INFLUENCE ON SENDERO LUMINOSO (SHINING PATH)

Abimael Guzman founded the Communist Party of Peru in 1970 and continued in it for a decade, but dissatisfied with the leadership of the Communist Party of Peru, the Red Flag, he took up arms against the Peruvian government and broke away with his own group to form the "Shining Path" in 1980. He was an ardent follower of the orthodox pattern of insurgency and was greatly influenced by Mao. He proudly proclaimed himself as the "Fourth Sword of Marxism" after Marx, Lenin and Mao. The Peruvian case amply demonstrates how a small number of well trained, highly motivated, and organised militants can work together, organise internal support, and take a nation of over 20 million to the brink of near collapse within 10 years. There can be little doubt of Guzman's debt to Chinese Maoism. His doctrines were all prominent themes of Maoist thought. More specifically, the style of the Shining Path mimicked the Cultural Revolution, in both personal behaviour and public life. Guzman visited China thrice and was captivated by the success of Maoism.⁴

The Shining Path Doctrine

- Blending of mass mobilisation techniques of both rural and urban insurgencies.
- Blending of both military and political-psychological elements to conduct a true 'people's war.'

4. Orin Starn, *Maoism in the Andes: The Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path and the Refusal of History* in www.latinamericanstudies/peru/shining_path, accessed on June, 2011.

- Primacy of 'class struggle.'
- Need to combat imperialism.
- Importance of the vanguard party.
- Revolutionary violence essential to overthrow the old order.

In high risk social movements, membership becomes fully socialised into an insular and ideologically based network where the demands associated with participation are unbending. The member's place in the organisation and the activities he is expected to engage in become the centre of his existence. The internal strength of such a movement is the result of intense organisational work through which a mass base of support is created. The base is created by the indoctrination efforts directed by the leadership that considers translating the ideology into action as its primary task. Once institutionalised, high-risk social movements (to include revolutionary insurgencies) become professionalised. The organisation is able to outlive its charismatic founder(s) and become routinised. The Shining Path is a perfect example of this kind of movement and is very much alive despite the incarceration of its main leaders for close to two decades.⁵

THE BOURGEOIS-NATIONALIST PATTERN

The bourgeois-nationalist pattern occurs in established and independent states that focus on the act of power changing hands rather than installing a new order. The bourgeois struggle involves deep-rooted issues that are accepted or ignored by the ruling class. It is basically a short-cut, bypassing the long and demanding work of building a solid platform in the form of a party, an armed wing and with solid support from the population. Through violence, the bourgeois-nationalist insurgent establishes his movement quickly though he does not necessarily feel obligated to initiate a Maoist type political arm or offer other alternatives to the government. In this, pattern, a small group, or cadre of insurgents engages in blind and random terrorism soon after establishing the group. The idea being that random

5. Shultz H. Richard, "Global Insurgency Strategy and the Salafi Jihad Movement" *INSS Occasional Paper* 66, April 2008.

bombings, arson and assassinations, conducted in a spectacular fashion by concentrated, coordinated and synchronised waves, will attract publicity for the cause and recruit new members.

The phase of blind terrorism is followed by one of more selected terrorism. Once successful, this pattern will then rejoin the orthodox pattern. The revolutionary struggle of the second model involves deep-rooted issues that are accepted, or ignored by the ruling class. "The goal of the insurgent is limited to the seizure of power; post insurgency problems, as secondary preoccupations, are shelved..." Through violence, the bourgeois-nationalist insurgent establishes his movement quickly though he does not necessarily feel obligated to initiate a Maoist-type political arm or offer other alternatives to the government. Here the insurgent seeks publicity through random terrorism and then isolates the population from the government through terrorist acts aimed specifically at the government and its symbols of power. In some respects, the bourgeois-nationalist pattern expedites Mao's orthodox pattern by using spectacular attacks more than propaganda and other activities to accelerate eroding civilian confidence in the government. The random violence patterns of Iraq's Sunni rejectionists follow the bourgeois-nationalist pattern though they differ from their Al Qaeda partners who desire to establish a Pan-Islamic Caliphate. Overall, Iraq's insurgency was more akin to bourgeois-nationalist insurgency. The insurgency carried out by the JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) in Sri Lanka was also an example of the bourgeois pattern.

There are two steps which explain the bourgeois pattern of insurgency, as given below.

First Step—Blind Terrorism

The aim of this method is to garner publicity for the movement and its cause so as to attract attention and lateral supporters. In order to achieve this, the insurgents often resort to random terrorism, bombings, arson and assassinations. These acts are conducted in as spectacular a fashion as possible through concentrated, coordinated, and synchronised waves. The advantage this kind of operation offers is the requirement of a limited number of men to carry out.

The Second Step—Selective Terrorism

This phase quickly follows the first and the aims are to isolate the counter-insurgent from the masses, to involve the population in the struggle, and to obtain the complicity of the masses. Insurgents only have to demonstrate that they can best protect a population or, far easier, inflict enough mayhem and destruction to demonstrate that the existing authorities cannot. Insurgents can exert leverage by convincing a population that peace will return only if the insurgents gain what they demand. Insurgents can be effective by destruction, and it is always easier to destroy than to create. It requires the genius of a Leonardo Da Vinci to paint a portrait of Mona Lisa, but it only takes the malevolence of a maniac with a box cutter to rip it to shreds. The fear is spread in various parts of the country by targeting low ranking government officials who work more closely with the populace, mainly policemen, mailmen, mayors, councillors and teachers. Killing high ranking counter-insurgent politicians serves very little purpose for they are too far removed from the population for their deaths to serve as examples.

The insurgents also set about collecting money from the populace with a single motto that those paying money are considered part of the support, and those refusing to pay are considered traitors and are simply executed. In order to involve the population further, a simple *mots d'ordres* is circulated, including boycotting of tobacco. After that, anyone found smoking is simply executed. Those executed normally are found with a tag explaining the reason for the execution and that they were condemned by a revolutionary tribunal.

Bridges are simply blown away, severing the links the people can have with counter-insurgent forces, ensure that the populace is left with no alternative. The killing in Afghanistan of people found guilty of watching television, girls in both Afghanistan and Waziristan areas of Pakistan being targeted for going to school, and men found shaving their beards in these areas being targeted, all fall under this category. The number of village elders killed in Pakistan by the Tehreek-e-Taliban is an illustration this kind of violence.

JIHADIST PATTERN

Conventional national militaries train, think, and fight according to their doctrines. To date, however, America and the West have not sufficiently appreciated that Al Qaeda, too, is fighting the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan according to a doctrine of its own. That doctrine has been developed from the group's experiences during the Afghan War against the Red Army, and has matured through each of the insurgencies in which bin Laden's fighters have

since been involved, from Eritrea to Xinjiang to Mindanao. In presenting their doctrine, Al Qaeda's strategists also have tipped their turbans to the significant lessons they have learned from Sun Tzu, Clausewitz, Mao, General Giap, and even Ahmed Shah Masood, as well from the training manuals of the US and UK Marines and Special Forces. Ironically, Al Qaeda strategists have discussed all of these matters for years in their Internet journals, the insurgency-related work of five of the group's strategists: the late Abu-Hajer Abd-al-Aziz al-Muqrin, Abu Ubyad al-Qureshi, Abu-Ayman al-Hilali, Abd-al-Hadi, and Sayf-al-Din al-Ansari. These writings discuss the need to conduct the political and military facets of an insurgency in tandem. They are especially worth reviewing now because of the success Al Qaeda is having in using its doctrine against US-led forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Al Qaeda Doctrine in Iraq and Afghanistan: The Military: The prominent features of the Al Qaeda military doctrine are explained below:

- 'Religious obligation' is the central point on which Al Qaeda's insurgency doctrine was and is grounded. Osama bin Laden and—since the US-led invasion of Iraq—hundreds of Islamist leaders and clerics have declared a "defensive *jihad*" against the United States, a form of *jihad* that mandates the participation of every Muslim through taking up arms, financial donations, prayers, providing safe havens, or some

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other form of support. This is what Abu-HajerAbd-al-Aziz al-Muqrin called the “First Axis of *Jihad*,” the axis that requires complete victory over the infidels, a goal that “is not subject to discussion” and which permits “no half-solutions” and “no bargaining.” In this form of *jihad*, however, bin Laden and Al Qaeda’s strategists have firmly declared that universal participation does not mean that each Muslim acts on his or her own, but rather they act in unity with other Muslims. “A feeling of [individual] responsibility,” Sayf-al-Din al-Ansari explained, “does not mean embodying *jihad* in scattered individual actions. The feeling needs to be deepened by striving for well-planned actions emanating from a position of collective activity.”

- The ‘collective activity’ is what Saudi theologian and strategist al-Muqrin termed the “Second Axis of *Jihad*,” the one that covers military strategy and operations, and features a doctrine that is ‘flexible,’ depends on conditions and circumstances, and can easily accept half-solutions. The Mujahideen have achieved this adaptability based on practical experience and field results. This implies that the *jihad* military doctrine is constantly changing, thus, denying America the chance to master it and train its troops on how to confront it decisively. The insurgents’ doctrine must address all aspects of the country and society in which the war is being fought. Further, working in an organisation dedicated to *jihad* “requires a fundamental working knowledge of planning, administration, security, psychology, sociology, history, geography, politics, strategy, law, education, preaching, and military science, not to mention religious knowledge.”
- In terms of fighting the US-led coalitions in Iraq and Afghanistan, Muqrin spoke for each Al Qaeda strategist when he explained that Islamist forces must be prepared to fight a “**long war of attrition**,” a struggle in which “the enemy of God will feel that it is impossible to finish off the Mujahideen’s military power.” In both the Iraqi and Afghan “arenas of *jihad*,” the overriding goal for Mujahideen leaders should be to prepare to fight the mightiest military power on earth; the insurgent leadership, must “know the enemy it is fighting.” The Mujahideen chiefs must be

“psychologically prepared for the worst” and, on this basis, they must build an organisation “so if one link falls, whatever its organizational size is, the organization [as a whole] does not suffer lethal blows.” Before the widespread attacks begin, it is essential that leaders conduct extensive “reconnaissance and surveillance operations to find the enemies’ weak points,” and also to “build a vital and dynamic database on each target, as well as every change in enemy movements in all regions [of the country] before taking any action.”

- When military operations based on this data are ready to begin, Muqrin urged the Mujahideen to follow “**the 1,000-wound**” policy of guerrilla war with the goal of prolonging the war to “exhaust” the enemy’s patience and resources, and to avoid set-piece battles and attacks on “hardened targets” that would be too costly in terms of Mujahideen casualties. The enemy can be exhausted without fighting any real battles with him. Al Qaeda’s strategists believe that they could find no better foe than the Americans against whom to implement this doctrine. The Americans love “fixed bases,” and even in the field, their combat forces are awkward, with troops who are “highly paid and overloaded with comfort facilities that often restrict their movements.” The key to victory lies in a simple reality that it is important to understand that the American bases are, “known and immovable,” while those of the Mujahideen are “light and movable.”

AL QAEDA DOCTRINE IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN: THE MEDIA

Among the strategists referenced in this article, the Saudi theologian and strategist al-Muqrin most thoroughly discussed the essential interconnectedness of the military and media dimensions of insurgency. He argued that the military and media campaigns must be accelerated simultaneously. While Al Qaeda’s military doctrine required that the Mujahideen wage war in all areas of Afghanistan and Iraq, this widespread activity was no less essential from the perspective of influencing the Muslim and Western worlds. Such demonstrations, moreover, will stimulate donors to increase funding for the Mujahideen. This is considered vital, since “*jihad*

eats up enormous funds” and those funds are “the nerves of the *ji*had.” In addition, broad and continuous Mujahideen military activity will send a warning “through the language of blood or fire” to the people of nations allied with America that “their governments are getting them involved in wars and conflicts with which they have nothing to do.”

The insurgency doctrine used by Al Qaeda has been evolving for more than a quarter-century, and is designed to defeat conventional Western military forces. It calls for the group’s fighters to be able to fight in the mountains, in desert regions, in maritime conditions, and to be able conduct what Muqrin refers to as “covert action” in urban areas. These multifaceted military operations must be matched by the Mujahideen “excelling in their organised media action.”⁶

The *ji*hadist strategists further outlined that for the Islamist *Ji*had movement spearheaded by the Al Qaeda to execute a global version of the national level revolutionary insurgent strategy, it would have to meet five requirements or conditions.

First Requirement

Conceptualise an ideology that performs the same functions as those adopted by high risk social movements. This entails developing a series of frames to: (1) describe the social and political problems requiring immediate and drastic action; (2) propose a new idealised system to replace the depraved one that resonated with the population; and (3) identify steps to bring this to fruition.

Second Requirement

An innovative leadership that can conceptualise that ideology and establish an embryonic organisation capable of operationalising it to begin to attract and recruit a critical mass of supporters. In the incipient phase of insurgency, these are first order tasks.

6. Maj Jan L Rueschhoff, US Army, *Old Book New Lessons: Mao, Osama, and the Global Qutbist*, Dissertation submitted to the US Marine College in 2007, pp. 9-18.

Third Requirement

Establish an infrastructure capable of fighting a protracted global insurgency. To do so, a process is needed to draw and bind individuals to the movement. That process inculcates the movement's ideology and narrative into those attracted to it. To do so, new facilitators, information systems and networked organisations are required to be substituted for this normally localised face to face approach.

Fourth Requirement

As the incipient stage proceeds, a global insurgency (as with its national level revolutionary insurgency counterparts) enters a period of protracted or "long war." In doing so, it has to set out for itself (1) where it intends to fight (the area of operations); and (2) how it intends to do so (the organisational infrastructure and war-fighting tactics they intend to use).

Fifth Requirement

To execute a global insurgency, the *jihadists* would have to employ an array of political, psychological, and paramilitary methods within their areas of operations to target both near and far enemies.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF ALL INSURGENT DOCTRINES

There are certain basic characteristics which would stand firm in all insurgent doctrines evolved over a century'

- **Political Primacy of the Struggle:** In a conventional war, politics will act as an instrument of war. In an insurgency, the converse applies: the violent actions undertaken by the military arm of the insurgency are not the main effort but merely actions to support the propaganda struggle which, in turn, contributes to the overall political struggle. Classical insurgency is first and foremost a political struggle, so all actions must be evaluated against their political effect before being undertaken.
- **The Population is the Objective:** If the insurgents succeed in alienating the population from the government, controlling them physically and winning their support, then the insurgency will eventually succeed. The

fight is primarily '*for the people*' and '*amongst the people*'. The support of the population, thus, becomes the *sine qua non* for the insurgents, as they require the support of the people for food, shelter, information and sometimes weapons. The insurgents make full use of their ability to dissipate into the populace, something Mao described as being able to swim like fish in the water.

- **Role of Propaganda:** The insurgents need their actions to reach far and wide, and propaganda is one of the main characteristics in all insurgent doctrines. To achieve this, insurgents will build their rhetoric on a narrative that explains the origin of the struggle, its objective and purpose. It is essential to gather support from the population and to undermine the government's views.
- **A Protracted Struggle:** An insurgency is a methodical and painstakingly long and often slow process of rallying support and building strength. Mao's fight against the Chinese nationalists and the Japanese occupation took 22 years, Ho Cho Minh's struggle against the French, Americans and South Vietnamese took 30 years, the Malayan insurgency lasted 12 years, the Algerian insurgency 8 years, and the Afghan insurgency has crossed 10 years and no end seems to be in sight. When the political platform and the organisation are being built by the cadres, it is imperative to avoid a confrontation with the government forces as they are bound to be wiped out. In the beginning, the insurgents' operational objective would be to avoid defeat, whereas the counter-insurgents desperately would need an early victory. When no decisive results are forthcoming, the insurgents will continue growing in force and, thus, rendering it much harder for the government to counter them. One of the insurgent's primary assets is patience, while impatience would be the counter-insurgent's liability.
- **Asymmetry in Resources and Motivation:** The relationship between the insurgents and the counter-insurgents is from the outset characterised by an asymmetry that will gradually be reduced as the insurgency gains support and resources. In the initial stages of the struggle, the counter-insurgents will have at their disposal an overwhelming advantage

in tangible resources, formal diplomatic recognition, control of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of national power, a grip on the administration, police, financial, agricultural and industrial resources and control of the transport and communication facilities and, most importantly, command of the armed forces. Against these formidable resources, the insurgents have only the ideological power of their cause which, though formidable, will have to counter the government might. The government has everything but a cause, and the insurgents have nothing but a cause. The insurgents strategy would be to turn their intangible assets into concrete ones.

- **Asymmetry in Organisation:** Any classical insurgency will always be built around a core group or cadre of very dedicated members organised centrally and hierarchically. The actual armed struggle, however, will be conducted by small and independent units operating outside of direct and continuous control from the political leadership. They are guided in their actions by a common idea or a vision. The counter-insurgent, on the contrary, is normally rigid in his approach, not amenable to changes. These rigid forces, often doctrinally based on the conventional military wisdom of mass, will have great problems in defeating the more fluid and networked insurgent organisation that very quickly can disperse into the population or into rough terrain. On the contrary, the large military units of the counter-insurgents present a larger footprint in the engagement phase, and they tend to be slow, noisy and highly visible, making them easy targets.

CONCLUSION

The citizens' anger at political repression or desperate poverty is not a sufficient condition for an insurgency. Their anger is effectively channeled by the insurgent organisation against the state to garner and win their support. In order to achieve their objectives, the insurgents draw out doctrines based on past experiences of famous guerrilla movements or borrow thoughts from the greatest thinkers like Mao, Giap, Carlos Marighela, and Guzman. The doctrines are primarily to offset the weakness and disadvantages the

insurgents are likely to encounter during various phases of their conflicts with the counter-insurgent troops. The government forces, though numerically weak, are definitely strong on the quality of their troops and equipment, and, on the contrary, the insurgents, by their sheer numbers are strong numerically but weak qualitatively. These issues are all taken into consideration during the development of tactics and doctrines and all the strategies are based on these conceptions.