



## **A Model for Population-Centered Warfare: A Conceptual Framework for Analyzing and Understanding the Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency**

**James A. Gavrilis**

One of the most profound changes the U.S. military must make to be effective at countering insurgency is to shift strategic centers of gravity from the physical to the human aspects of warfare.

The nature of counterinsurgency, or unconventional warfare, differs from conventional warfare in a very important way: the population is the center of gravity. We say this, but what does it mean? How does it change operations? How do we implement this idea? Many of our military leaders are still trying to answer these questions. Our military has a predisposition to focus on enemy forces and capabilities and the confrontation between friendly and enemy forces, with little emphasis on the social or political context within which the confrontation takes place.

The change to seeing the population as the center of gravity is a major shift for conventional forces. It is a serious adjustment from our current and predominantly conventional military thinking about warfare. Although this idea has been discussed and debated in military and academic circles for at least a decade, the shift has not been made by all. However, this critical re-focusing is required for successful counterinsurgency campaigns, for countering terrorism in the long term, and for successful conduct of stability operations, or any form of irregular, hybrid, or population-centered warfare.

This focus on human factors in warfare has major implications for how the U.S. trains, organizes, and equips its forces, as well as where resources are allocated in order to better prepare for and conduct counterinsurgency. And this shift runs counter to the thinking that military hardware and high technology can solve military problems, which may be true if the military problems are kinetic. But technological and physically-defined solutions can be void of human factors, factors which underpin successful counterinsurgency. I have found that technology can enable counterinsurgency operations, but population-centered operations are not dependent on technology. The recent demands for increasing the number of U.S. Civil Affairs units are an indicator that some operational leaders recognize that a population-centered approach has merit.

Many soldiers and junior leaders have discovered, on the ground, that a change in center of gravity is required. Also, General Petraeus appears to have realized the need for this shift and implemented many of the changes required for a successful counterinsurgency campaign in 2007 and 2008 in Iraq. But many in our military have not understood or made this intellectual transition. True, not all wars will be counterinsurgencies, and we cannot discount conventional warfare capabilities. Still, in counterinsurgency we should not try to apply conventional systems and strategies to what is at root an unconventional war. Most likely, future adversaries will combine unconventional with conventional means, or fall back on unconventional warfare when conventional means fail. Unconventional warfare is as much a part of the continuum of war as conventional warfare is.

Most importantly, changing our strategic center of gravity has major implications for how we build strategies and campaigns. In order to be effective in counterinsurgency, the U.S. military must have a conceptual framework on which to hang counterinsurgency principles, to make sense of the battle, and to guide its planning, operations, and policies and strategy. The U.S. military will need a model that will assist in shaping operations that will win repeatedly in diverse places and assist in transferring not only applicable tactical lessons but also theoretical lessons from Iraq to Afghanistan and one that helps link security and development efforts.

The military has added missions, such as protecting the population, to its tasks, and is trying to apply best practices to its operations, many times in a hit and miss fashion. And efforts have been underway for some time to understand the social networks and tribal characteristics of our adversaries. But no coherent map of the human terrain has been placed in a political-military context forming a picture of the popular support battlefield. Some in the military are recognizing irregular warfare and the idea that the population is key and that intangibles are factors in these kinds of conflicts, but no real comprehensive conceptual framework has emerged to actually change military perspectives and give a sound population focus to military strategies, operations or campaigns. Current graphs have been enemy focused, depicting insurgent and terrorist organizations only. We need something to prevent our efforts from being counterproductive, contradictory, haphazard, and ineffective.

To this end, I developed a model for population-centered warfare to operationalize counterinsurgency principles. The model is built around five key structural components: 1) a graph of popular support and the level of intensity of that support; 2) the population or “human terrain,” including the political sentiments, characteristics, and vulnerabilities of the population; 3) the actors, including the government, insurgents, and external supporters; 4) government and insurgent goals, strategies, and their associated activities, to include military engagements; and 5) the relationships between the actors, goals, activities, and the population. The model provides a conceptual map of the battle for human terrain and can be applied at the local, provincial, and national levels anywhere there is conflict. It provides a focus for intelligence and information gathering, provides a unified purpose and direction for military and civilian efforts, shows how to translate military operations into political victories, and shows what to measure to determine if our efforts are progressing toward our goals or not. It gives coherence to our efforts and is a tool for analysis and decision making. Lastly, it is general enough to assist in applying counterinsurgency principles to Afghanistan without the problem of applying Iraq specific programs inappropriately to Afghanistan.

## Conventional vs. Unconventional

One reason why we have not seen counterinsurgency conceptual models may be because conventional forces and systems are not focused on the population; they are oriented to the kinetic and physical aspects of combat. Conventional military forces and systems are designed to find and destroy enemy formations hidden in physical terrain. The focus is on machines, tanks, planes, ships, forts, structures, and even the industrial capacity to make tanks, planes, and ships. Strategic locations, such as Baghdad, the national capital, and strategic formations, such as the Iraqi Republican Guard, are centers of gravity. Current military models, such as the Air-Land Battle Doctrine, reflect this. Conventional intelligence preparations of the battlefield also reflect this and focus on physical attributes such as key terrain, avenues of approach, fields of fire and lines of observation, and enemy locations, size and activity. Our intelligence systems and our military maps and graphics are oriented toward determining these physical aspects.

While in Iraq with the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, I recall conducting joint operations with conventional forces. During coordination, I observed their maps and graphics of Baghdad and the surrounding areas. What struck me was that there were only friendly graphics. There were no enemy graphics, that is, they were not prepared or trained for counterinsurgency. There were no population or political overlays. I remember the planners staring at their empty map trying to figure out what to do and where to conduct operations and raids.

To be sure, conventional doctrine treats people as part of the physical terrain that must be managed so not to interfere with or be hurt by military operations. A brigade commander who is assigned a mission of seizing a bridge over a river (a military mission oriented on a physical aspect of the battlefield) can bypass or go through a village that is between his unit and the bridge. Both are perfectly sound in conventional doctrine. If he goes through, he will need to take a few measures to prevent the population from interfering with his military mission. He may need to direct the local people to stay off of the main roads so traffic doesn't block his route through the village. He may also need to ensure that the people are not starving if the village now falls behind his lines, or under his control. To mitigate the effects of populations on achieving his military mission, he interacts with the people to prevent interference and to prevent large scale humanitarian disaster. But this is treating people as part of the physical terrain, like weather conditions, road conditions, or restrictive terrain.

In Iraq, initially, most of our forces approached the population in this fashion. For a number of years our forces wanted to have nothing to do with the Iraqi people and didn't. In essence the people were viewed as an aspect of the physical terrain. Although our national training centers now have improved--to include real civilian role-players, Iraqi villages on their simulated battlefields, and present problems associated with civilians to the military training there--nevertheless, the people are still considered part of the physical terrain. On the other hand, in counterinsurgency the people are the military mission, are the objectives.

Over time, our forces began to interact with local Iraqis because it improved their targeting; they could get more accurate information about the locations of insurgents and terrorists. Or they interacted with local Iraqis to get information on where improvised explosive devices were

planted to improve force protection. However, these interactions still kept the Iraqis as an aspect of the battlefield and not as the goal of the battle itself.

Adjustments have been made to reorient our battlefield operating systems from finding enemy tanks, planes, and bases to finding insurgents and terrorists and urban guerrillas hiding in the population. But counterinsurgency is more than finding human targets hiding in human terrain. This is still only enemy oriented and neglects the population as the center of gravity.

In counterinsurgency, people are not part of terrain; they *are* the terrain. The battle is over “human terrain.” Conventional warfare is about gaining ground, taking more territory, and destroying your opponent’s military power. Counterinsurgency is about gaining human terrain, winning popular support, and preventing your opponent from winning popular support. Counterinsurgency is a shift from the physical to the human terrain.

And because humans are the contested terrain, human factors of war become more important. Insurgency and counterinsurgency include political warfare, psychological warfare, and information warfare. Persuasion and communication are the tools that have impact. More important than finding *who* the enemy is and *who* supports the enemy is winning the support of the population as a whole.

One doesn’t need to understand local customs to fire and maneuver and destroy enemy forces. But counterinsurgency requires language skills, cross-cultural communications skills, and cultural awareness. Understanding demographics, religion, and the economics of an area is required. Understanding the people and their motivations becomes vital. Relationships with the population are mandatory. Focusing on the people and not the enemy is most effective in counterinsurgency. Intelligence preparations of the battlefield must include political, economic, and demographic map overlays.

Counterinsurgency is a political, economic, and informational competition, a competition of narratives, of service provision, in effect, a competition of governance. The political is primary and is more important than the military. That is, the battle is between alternate governments and their control over the population. Power vacuums matter.

Counterinsurgency has a constructive side that many overlook. It is just as important, I say more important, than the destructive side. In this competition for the population, we must build a better alternative form of government and outperform the adversary. When there is a low level of security, performance gains legitimacy just as much as participation or consultation. The intent in counterinsurgency is to develop governmental legitimacy and support, and not solely the use of force to destroy opposition. When you broaden your approach to counterinsurgency to include nation-building, not only do you get a closer relationship with the population and more information from them, you are also building a political alternative to the insurgency’s shadow government.

Our military is certainly accepting counterinsurgency more today than in the past, certainly more than after the Vietnam War. The military has established a counterinsurgency academy in Iraq and a counterinsurgency center of excellence at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and put a lot of

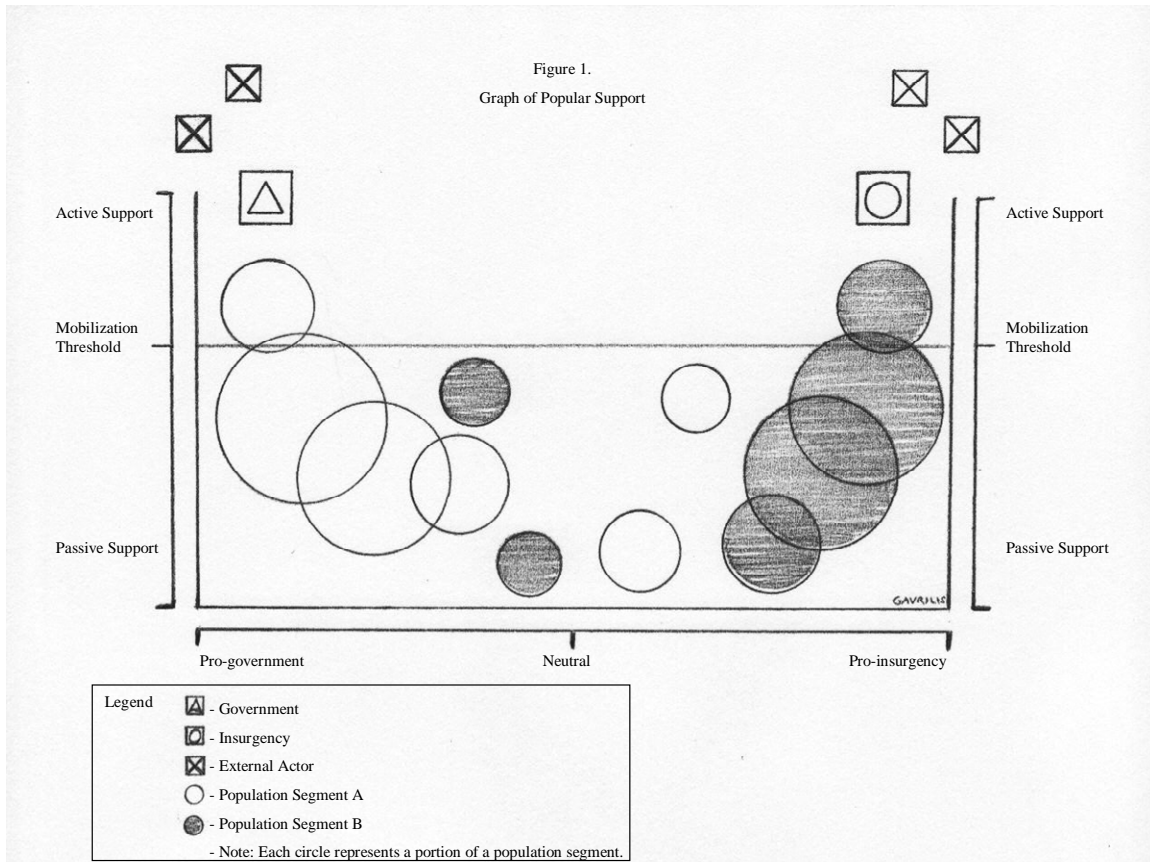
intellectual energy into re-writing the field manual for counterinsurgency. And the Center for Army Lessons Learned has distributed numerous tactical lessons. But this acceptance of the mission of counterinsurgency must be accompanied by a real understanding of insurgency and counterinsurgency, and by more sophisticated methods for analyzing, depicting the battle, and conceptualizing population-centered warfare.

### **A Model for Population-Centered Warfare**

Because human factors are hard to analyze and to understand, and infinitely varied, counterinsurgency is very complex and requires social sciences more than physical sciences. Because more art than science is needed in counterinsurgency, we need a way to visualize this human terrain, to conceptualize the battle, and create a strategic framework for counterinsurgency campaigns. We need a way to depict this kind of war, to assist in determining what to observe and measure, and how to interpret events and actions. To add structure to this whole endeavor, I developed a conceptual framework and analytical tool, I call the Gavrilis Analytic Model, based on my studies and tours in Iraq. This conceptual model helps to determine the level of insurgency, the level of government support, and interrelated operations needed to achieve overall political and military objectives.

I begin by creating a basic graph of popular support. The bottom horizontal axis is a scale with zero or neutral popular support in the center, popular support for the government on the left and popular support for the insurgency on the right. Next, I place vertical axes, a scale of intensity of support, one on each side of the horizontal axis. (See Figure 1).

The next step is to identify the different segments of the population in the area to be analyzed. This graph is more accurate and useful at local levels than at the national level, and the counterinsurgents must do their own research to determine the right categories for the area and the nature of the conflict, and the local sentiments, political positions, and other information needed for an analysis. Detailed and precise analysis here is imperative because government activities and programs should be based on accurate characteristics of the population. A more detailed categorization of the segments of the population will yield a more accurate picture of the human terrain and will result in a more accurate model and more effective counterinsurgency activities and programs. The degree of effectiveness depends on the degree of accuracy. For example, using Sunnis as a segment category is less accurate and may provide a misleading picture than using urban Sunnis, or urban Sunnis of a particular tribe, or urban Sunnis of a particular tribe that are unemployed. Next the analyst places the identified population segments on the graph according to their support for the government or for the insurgency (left or right of center) and their intensity of support (top or bottom of the graph). (See the circles representing segments of population in Figure 1). Some segments will support the government, some will support the insurgency. Usually small portions of the population will be active supporters and large portions passive supporters of either the government or the insurgency. Some portions will be neutral. Some segments will be neutral, and some may be unlikely to change their neutrality. Most areas will vary, though, and diversity in geography, ethnicity, religion, and economy will be reflected in each location's graph.



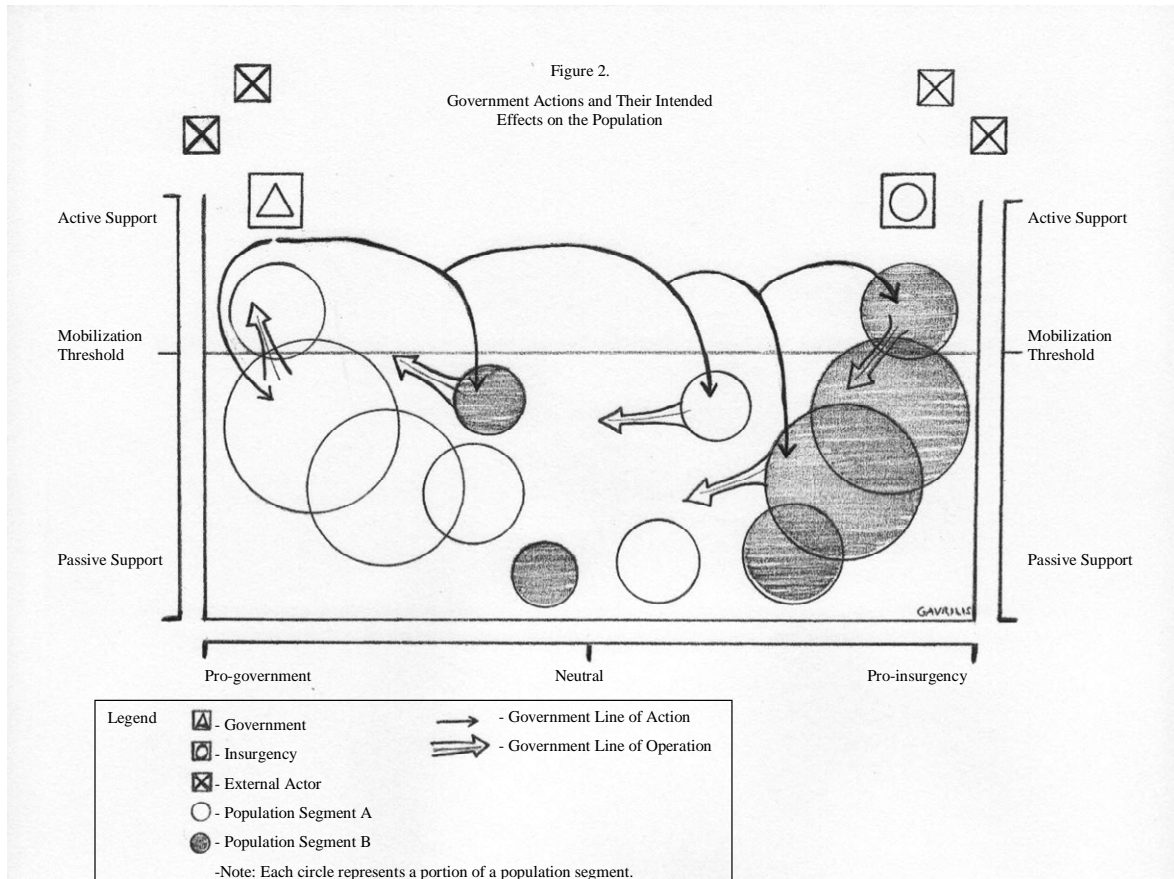
**Figure 1: Graph of Popular Support**

The graph now shows current levels of support across the population of any given area, and gives the analyst a view of the human terrain in a political-military framework. Though individuals may move independently from one side to the other, the focus is on groups and the change and subsequent movement of groups on the graph.

The next step is to depict the insurgency's leaders and infrastructure on the right hand side of the graph and the government on left side of the graph. Both the insurgency and the government are rooted or embedded in the population, but for conceptual purposes I show them as poles to which the population gravitates. Both opponents are trying to increase their popular support to greater levels of intensity.

The government's goals should be to reduce the level of intensity of support for the insurgency (pulling numbers down from active support or demobilizing them), and the government's goal is to reduce the level of passive support for the insurgency (pulling numbers from the right to the center neutral or to the left passively supporting the government). In addition, the government is trying to move neutral segments to its side. Finally, the government's goal is to increase the level of intensity of support from its passive support base, mobilizing larger numbers to act, and increasing numbers up the scale on the left side, expanding its active supporters. (See the thick arrows in Figure 2). And when possible, the government's goal is to flip active supporters of the insurgency to immediately be active supporters of the government, as happened in the Tribal

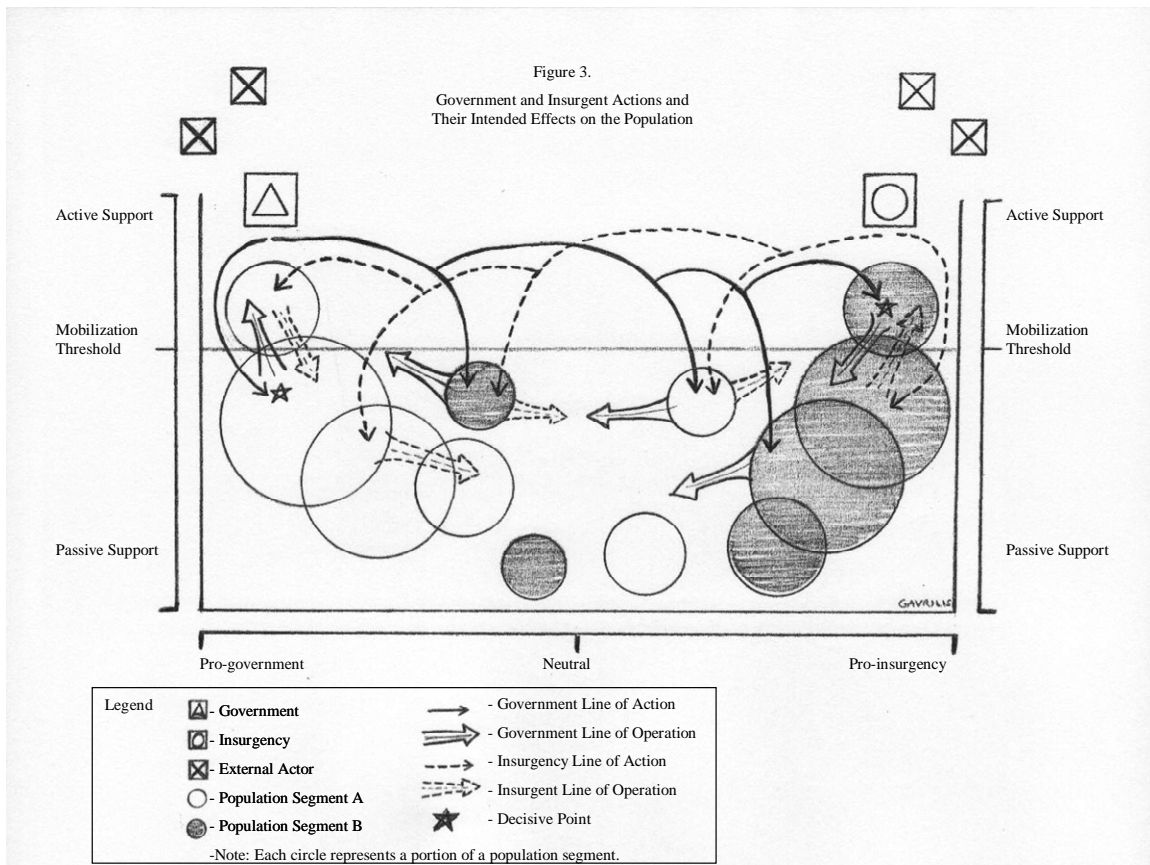
Awakening in Anbar Province, Iraq. The government reaches these goals of increasing popular support for itself and reducing popular support for the insurgency by conducting various activities and programs specifically designed for each targeted segment of the population. (See the thin arrows in Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Government Actions and Their Intended Effects on the Population**

Likewise, the insurgents are trying to do the same things in the opposite direction, reducing active support for the government, pulling passive support from the government, and increasing the active support for itself. (See the dashed arrows in Figure 3). The graph now displays the battle, the contest or competition for popular support, which is the *main effort* in counterinsurgency. These vectors, the desired changes of popular support in segments of the population, are the *goals* or *lines of operation* for counterinsurgency campaigns; economic, political, informational, and military programs and operations are the *means* or *lines of action* to pursue these *lines of operation*.

The meaning of “countering” insurgency must include outperforming insurgent lines of action and driving popular support toward the government by constructive efforts and alternative solutions. It must include all things to win popular support, reduce vulnerabilities of the population, and grow government legitimacy and control, in addition to and not solely attacking guerrilla forces.



**Figure 3: Government and Insurgent Actions and Their Intended Effects on the Population**

Halfway up the vertical axes I place a horizontal line marking the point where popular support transitions from passive to active support, which I call the mobilization threshold. (See the horizontal line in Figure 3). One of the lessons I learned is that passive popular support is not enough; the side that *mobilizes* a larger number of people will win. The government can have an overwhelming majority of passive popular support but unless it mobilizes that support, the insurgency can win. This is a critical factor and threshold. The *decisive points* for counterinsurgency are mobilizing greater and greater numbers of government supporters and demobilizing supporters of the insurgency. (See the stars in Figure 3). Demobilizing active supporters of the insurgency reduces insurgent attacks and propaganda activities, allowing law and order, government control, and the perception that the insurgency is impotent. As an example of successful mobilization, the Concerned Local Citizens, or Sons of Iraq, were instrumental in driving Al Qaeda in Iraq insurgents from Anbar province and other places in Iraq.

This is a very complex conflict because each opponent conducts a number of activities aimed at the different segments of the population who have different support sentiments. At the same time each opponent tries to block or derail the other's activities. Furthermore, the activities are much more than just military; they are political, economic, informational, psychological, and range from persuasive to coercive, from purchasing support to killing supporters of their



opponents. This is *political warfare*. Insurgency and counterinsurgency are forms of war and must be treated as such. All lines of action must focus on conversion of the population.

To this end, the next step is to identify the drivers or motivations of the population. Do the people in a particular segment support the insurgency out of fear or belief? What are their vulnerabilities that are being exploited by the insurgency and how can the government reduce them? What are their grievances? How can the government maintain its passive support base? In other words the counterinsurgent must understand the population in order to implement the most effective activities that will move popular support in the direction the government desires. Furthermore, the conditions must change in order to actually move the population across the scale or graph.

Changing the popular support of segments of the population can be done in a number of ways depending on the specific circumstances by addressing grievances of the population, providing services, providing protection, reducing vulnerabilities, and a large number of things to change the conditions within which the population finds itself. Counterinsurgency must be locally implemented, to include changing individuals who in turn change their social groups. But the counterinsurgent must also operate at the strategic level to change the environment, the broad social and political conditions of the area, in order to move popular support. The individual may not be able to change his loyalties unless the overall situation changes first. Among other things, providing a secure environment may allow individuals to change their political loyalties. Zarqawi was working at this strategic level. By creating and instigating sectarian conflict, he was creating the conditions where Sunni people were dependent on his insurgent organization, Al Qaeda in Iraq, for protection from Shia death squads. That dependency allowed his organization to grow.

Presence matters, in this kind of war. As local and decentralized as insurgency and counterinsurgency are, whoever sleeps in the village at night with guns dictates the political order and allocation of resources. Unfortunately, the average citizen gets pressure from all sides. In some places in Iraq the citizens are pressured from Sadr's militia, Al Qaeda in Iraq, foreign terrorists, tribal sheiks, political parties, the Iraqi security forces, local and national government officials, Coalition forces and even Iranian agents. And unfortunately a reality of this kind of war is that civilians have no choice but to support the group that exerts the most pressure on them. So in order to be effective, the counterinsurgent must exert more authority and control and protect the civilians over a long period of time. Temporary security is self-defeating because of erosion of trust and exposure of the population to retribution. Furthermore, to be successful the counterinsurgent must form a closeness to the population at the local levels to compete with and edge out the guerrilla and insurgent who by nature are closer and more connected to the population than the central government; centralized counterinsurgency is less effective, local effective governance and security are more effective.

A good example of an effective program is the Joint Security Station program implemented in Iraq in 2007 and 2008. U.S. or Coalition forces were embedded with Iraqi Army and local police forces in small outposts throughout neighborhoods. Not only did this reduce the vulnerabilities of the population, it also exerted government control and improved government efforts at isolating insurgent leaders. This embedding provided a full spectrum of security capabilities,

civilian and military, to deal with different insurgent threats. The military bolstered the police and allowed them to do their job and improved intelligence and investigative activities required in counterinsurgency. Moreover, the combination of sects in the Iraqi security forces along with Coalition presence prevented the pursuit of sectarian agendas and biased activities and corruption. Lastly, by increasing the number of Joint Security Stations progressively through more neighborhoods, the government was able to inch the insurgency out, and it freed more people from the local area to join the police force and actively support the government. The operations in Ramadi, Iraq, are a good illustration of this process.

Looking at past U.S. experience, an example of an insurgent strategy that held the population as the center of gravity is the Dau Tranh, the two pronged strategy (armed Dau Tranh and political Dau Tranh) used by the Viet Cong. The political Dau Tranh included action among the people, action among the enemy, and action among the military. In other words, the Viet Cong protected and expanded their base of popular support, eroded the South Vietnamese government's base of popular support, and subverted, sabotaged, and undermined the government itself as well as the U.S. military. The Viet Cong implemented extensive political action programs and population centered activities to win the popular support battle, in addition to its direct military engagements with government and U.S. forces.

Alternatively, in El Salvador, the U.S. concluded that defeating the insurgency could not be accomplished by eliminating all of the insurgents, but by providing the changes the insurgents were promising thus making the insurgency irrelevant. The U.S. supported security force reforms, which reduced abuses, land reforms, and democratization. The counterinsurgency there attacked the underlying grievances or vulnerabilities of the population; the essence of counterinsurgency is addressing the underlying drivers of discontent. The counterinsurgent must see past the kinetic actions between the government and the insurgents and address the conditions of the population that enable insurgents to operate and expand.

After depicting the different segments of the population, their political support, and their vulnerabilities, the government must identify the *critical* segments of the population and their decisive points to evaluate their importance. Critical segments are ones that are more easily mobilized or demobilized, or are more easily moved across the graph, or are an essential base of support for the insurgency or the government. Identifying critical segments provides the counterinsurgent with priority for action and an understanding of where to weight efforts. For example a particular tribe may be responsible for the majority of attacks. The government should compel this tribe to reduce its level of intensity of support for the insurgency. Likewise, another tribe may be offering more active support for the government than others. The government should encourage this tribe to increase its mobilization and actions in support of the government. Moreover, there may be connections among segments even though they fall on different sides of the graph that should be recognized and leveraged. If a portion of a tribe or segment supports the government, then this should be accentuated because it can have an impact on the entire tribe or segment or entire political community.

A good example of identifying a critical segment of the population and taking action to reduce the popular support base of the insurgency is the British relocation program of the Chinese squatters during the Malaya emergency. The squatters were vulnerable, living close to the jungle

as a disenfranchised segment of the population, and had little connection to Malayan society. Consequently, they became targets of both rhetoric and coercion by the Chinese communist insurgents. The British relocated them to remove a base of population the Chinese communist insurgents could exploit. Although some argue that the relocation camps created animosity among the squatters toward the British, the overall effect was the removal and isolation of a critical segment of the population of the insurgency.

In my experience, coercion by either the insurgent or the counterinsurgent increases the likelihood and momentum of change. A popular support backlash increases the speed of change reflected in the vectors on this graph. When people are coerced, they have a tendency to move further and faster in the opposite direction when the opportunity arises, or the conditions change, or the coercion becomes unbearable. The Tribal Awakening in Anbar Province, Iraq, is an example of this backlash. The tribes in Anbar rejected the oppressive and abusive rule of Al Qaeda in Iraq to such an extent that they ceased to be active supporters of the insurgency and became active supporters of the Coalition and later the government. The representation of this occurrence would appear as a segment that would have moved quickly and directly from the top right to the top left side of the graph.

Identifying critical segments of the population that are in these kinds of positions is a basic task of analysis in this model, and the conditions that will drive such a backlash should be created by the counterinsurgent. Governments, such as Saddam Hussein's, can be coercive too, and their coercion usually pushes people toward insurgency and rebellion further and faster than simple neglect. The counterinsurgent should be aware of this. A coerced population is ripe for flipping. The counterinsurgent should try to create the conditions that cause the people to reject insurgents or foster conflict between insurgent groups. As occurred in Anbar in 2007, Ba'athist insurgent groups shifted away from collaboration with extremists to collaboration with Coalition forces against extremist insurgent groups.

In general, there are three conditions that enable an insurgency to grow: a vulnerable population, insurgent leadership, and a lack of government control. The counterinsurgent must address all three of these conditions and change these conditions to his favor. For instance, only addressing the insurgency's leaders will rarely eliminate insurgency. New leaders, and even foreign governments, can assume control of insurgent infrastructure and popular movements, and a vulnerable population can always be exploited by another group of insurgent leaders. And if the government has little control, there is no contest. The insurgents would then rule. In effect, there is no counterinsurgency in that area or for that segment of the population. Without addressing population vulnerabilities or government control, lawlessness, subversion, and insurgency will surely persist.

This population-centered warfare model should help to clarify the three conditions favorable to insurgency as well as show the interrelationships between them, and ultimately assist the counterinsurgent in effectively changing these conditions.

Because many of the insurgents are members of the population and have connections to the people the counterinsurgent is trying to win over, eliminating all of the insurgents is not possible. Many are partisans, part-time insurgents; others provide passive support out of tribal, religious,

political, or economic association. Not all passive and active supporters should be considered insurgents. People should have the opportunity to change. Insurgent defections should be encouraged by the counterinsurgent. Defections are good indicators for some of the counterinsurgent's lines of operation. Although eliminating and isolating insurgent leaders, the hard core cadre, is necessary, providing amnesty or reform for the people that once supported the insurgency is also necessary. Merely isolating insurgent leaders rarely defeats insurgency; however it is a necessary part of counterinsurgency. Part of this analysis includes determining the "irreconcilable" from the "reconcilable." The counterinsurgent must make fence sitters choose, and choose to come to the government's side. The government cannot give immunity to irreconcilable insurgent leaders even if they hold legitimate political office or are political or religious figures.

Finding fair and non-factional local and national indigenous leaders is critical. And because they will then be targets of the insurgency, they need to be protected. Sectarian political control excludes large segments of the population from being a part of and accepting the government. This is a recipe for continued insurgency. Any discrimination against segments of the population will drive them to support the insurgency.

The counterinsurgent must ensure the government's lines of action are based on the specific characteristics of the segments of the population they are directed toward and are indeed reducing the vulnerabilities of the population, exerting government control, and isolating insurgent leaders from the population. The lines of action on the graph now include the nature of the activities or programs of each opponent to each of the segments of the population, with emphasis on the activities to the critical segments. (See Figure 3). This analysis should give the counterinsurgent a visual image of the government's and the insurgent's strategy, tactics, and goals.

The next step is to determine where and when to block the insurgent and where and when the government is vulnerable to blocking. For example, if a segment is told and convinced that the government will permanently discriminate against them, whether true or fabricated by the insurgency, then some government activity must be taken to demonstrate and convince this segment of the population that this is not the case. Likewise, if a segment is intimidated or terrorized not to vote, then government protection must be provided to allow this segment to act in favor of the government.

This tug-of-war for the population occurs at both general or national levels as well as specific or local levels. The government should apply programs that affect entire segments of population and all citizens or address an issue that is relevant to multiple segments, and at the same time apply very specific programs aimed at a particular segment of the population or location. As the tug-of-war carries on, a variety of changes occurs in the population and consequently is reflected on the graph. Some segments of the population may move across the graph, some may split, some portions of the segments may merge, and some may cross the mobilization threshold, either mobilizing or demobilizing.

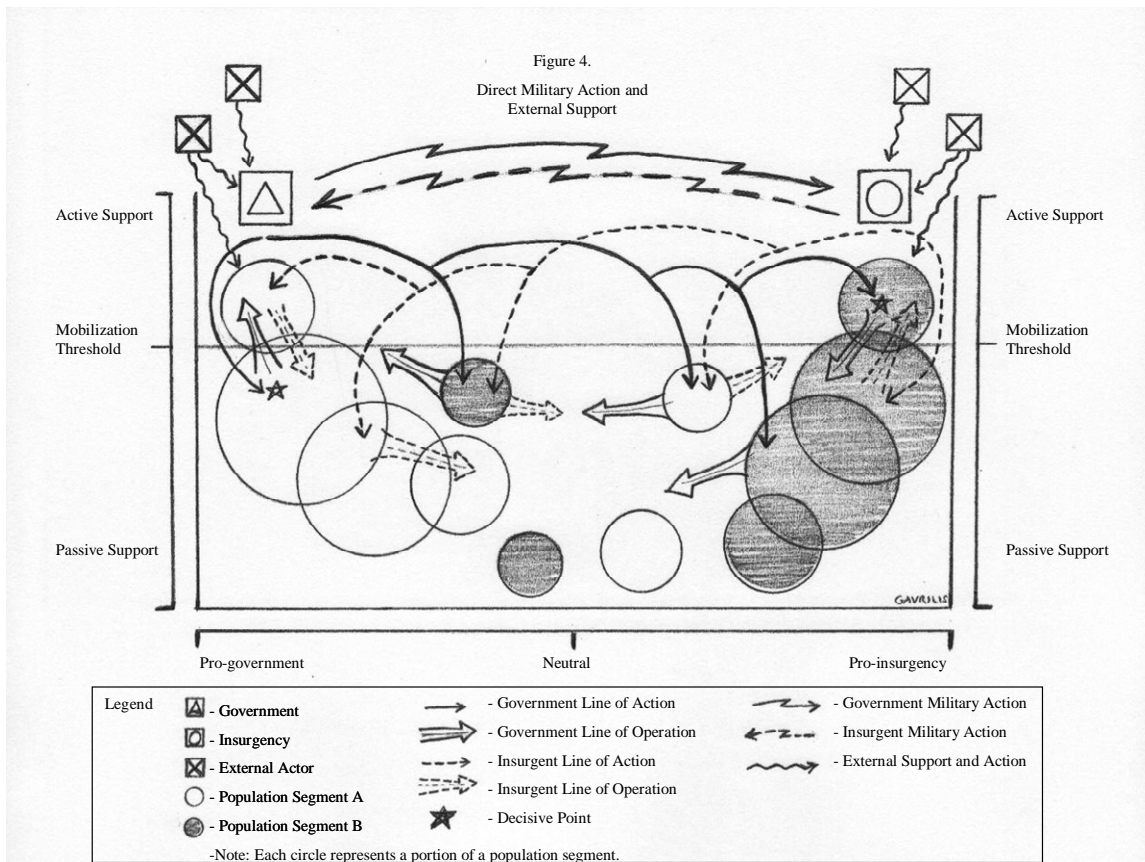
Very importantly, if the government is not present and active and does not address a location or segment of the population the insurgent wins by default. The analyst must understand the

government's and insurgent's intentions. The Iraqi central government may not have really cared to control, reduce the vulnerabilities, or isolate insurgent leaders from the population in Anbar. It may have only been the intention of the U.S. forces there to do so. The Iraqi government may not have had as a goal to kick out Al Qaeda in Iraq from Anbar. Only when Al Qaeda in Iraq began killing Shia did it become a priority for the Shia dominated Iraqi government.

Furthermore, winning the popular support battle is not just about having a better narrative; it is about having more organizational capacity than your opponent. A nationwide insurgency must be well organized to be effective at influencing large segments of the population over extended periods of time. The government must out perform the insurgency in every facet, and must be superiorly organized to counteract the weight of the insurgency as well as pull popular support toward its side.

It is easy for the counterinsurgent to get fixated on the organization of the insurgency, especially when it is formidable and successful. Currently, intelligence operations and information gathering are enemy focused and concentrate on the organization and resources of the insurgency. They should be centered on the population and primarily examine the nature of the relationship, influence patterns, and the impact of the insurgency on the population; intelligence must shift to a population center of gravity as well.

Since military action, or kinetic engagement, such as mortar attacks or raids, is not directed against the population, a separate set of lines are drawn above the graph. (See the jagged lines at the top of Figure 4). These horizontal lines across the top represent the two opponents' military actions against each other and the analysis of where these actions are vulnerable. Although this part of the conflict is mainly military in nature and is not directed against the population, it does have an important impact on the population. For example, successful rocket and mortar attacks against military bases demonstrate insurgent power. On the other hand, the successful targeting and killing of Zarqawi demonstrates Coalition power. But repeated raids by the Coalition and government can disrupt and alienate segments of the population, and spoil other government activities and programs aimed at winning the support of these segments of the population.



**Figure 4: Direct Military Action and External Support**

This aspect of counterinsurgency has created the most hang-ups for the U.S. military which tends to view this part of the conflict as the entirety of counterinsurgency or the entirety of the military's role in counterinsurgency. While kinetic operations against the insurgents are a necessary part of counterinsurgency, they are secondary to winning popular support and blocking the insurgency's ability to win popular support. *The main effort* is the battle for the population and all that this entails. Consequently, the military must do more than just kinetic operations. Military actions must be conducted to achieve political and psychological goals designed to win popular support. Some kinetic operations will need to be cancelled because they will be counterproductive to winning popular support. Some missions will be executed even though they have no *military* value or objective but will win popular support. Before conducting any military mission, its impact on the main effort must be determined and considered.

Direct combat between forces can be a diversion from the main effort. The counterinsurgent must see through the fighting to the underlying drivers of the conflict, the grievances or vulnerabilities of the population that are exploited, and again change these conditions. For example, Sunni concerns of Shia dominance are real and legitimate and must be addressed. Otherwise, resistance will continue, and this vulnerability will always be exploited, regardless of how many Sunni resistance fighters are killed or captured.

Moreover, insurgents many times instigate fighting because it diverts government and Coalition resources away from the main effort of winning popular support. Insurgent attacks may cause an overreaction by the government to punish a segment of the population where the insurgency resides. Or without overreaction, the fighting simply makes people upset with the government. In addition, the political and social breakdown that results from heavy fighting creates power vacuums and vulnerable segments of the population that the insurgency can further exploit. These all support insurgent lines of operation and heavy fighting should be avoided by the counterinsurgent.

However, there are times and locations when an area must be cleared militarily before the government can take control. This may occur frequently as the government expands its control. Each case is different. High levels of insurgency may require high levels of fighting. Conventional fighting can get the counterinsurgent to the point where the government can control an area, remove large insurgent forces and infrastructure, reduce population vulnerabilities, and where the main effort of counterinsurgency can then be implemented.

When military force is used, discrimination is needed to avoid hurting innocent civilians, damaging private property, or disrupting public services which can drive popular support toward the insurgency. Also, specific individual targeting is required in order to not kill or capture reconcilable local people that could be won over to the government's side when going after the irreconcilable insurgent leaders, cadre, or foreign fighters.

Counterinsurgency may appear confusing, and many think that there must be peace and stability in order to achieve political goals. This is not true, and insurgents understand this. Both Sunni and Shia extremist groups increased levels of violence and successfully used force in their competition to gain control of more people and resources. Insurgents create conflict and instability because it helps to achieve their political goals. Similarly, the government can use force and violence to achieve its political goals. However, the counterinsurgent must be aware of the consequences of fighting and fight in such a way as to support counterinsurgent lines of operation. In other words, fight when, where, and how it puts the government at an advantage to win popular support.

External support must be determined and depicted to grasp the full complexity of counterinsurgency. Boxes outside the two poles represent external actors and the nature of their support to the opponents. (See the x-boxes and curvy arrows in Figure 4). For example, the U.S. and Coalition support the Iraqi government, and Al Qaeda and the Iranian government support insurgents in Iraq. Each external actor can provide financial, material, and human resources, as well as psychological, moral and political support. Another box outside the poles represents external populations who can provide similar support for either opponent. Again, the analysis includes how, when, and where to block the external support of the opponent, and how, when, where to prevent blockage of government external support.

External support can also have an impact on the population and the conflict that does not flow directly through the government or insurgent organizations. Prior to the build up of sufficient Iraqi military capacity, the U.S. military conducted combat operations against insurgents for years with very little, if any, involvement of the Iraqi government. The intent was to support the

Iraqi government by countering the insurgency. However, external action such as this can drive popular support away from the government as well as the external actor when the actions ignore or alienate the population and are enemy focused, as was seen in the early years in Iraq. In another case, Iran bypassed insurgent leadership and organization and provided funds, arms, advanced munitions, training, and operational guidance directly to small splinter groups of Shia insurgents to continue to destabilize Iraq and continue high levels of attacks against U.S., Coalition, and Iraqi Security Forces. The flow of individual foreign fighters into Iraq is an example of support to the insurgents from external populations and transnational terrorist organizations, and had a disproportionate effect on the conflict than their numbers would seem to indicate, mainly because of their willingness to use violence and terrorism and even commit suicide bombings, escalating fighting and severely psychologically damaging the population.

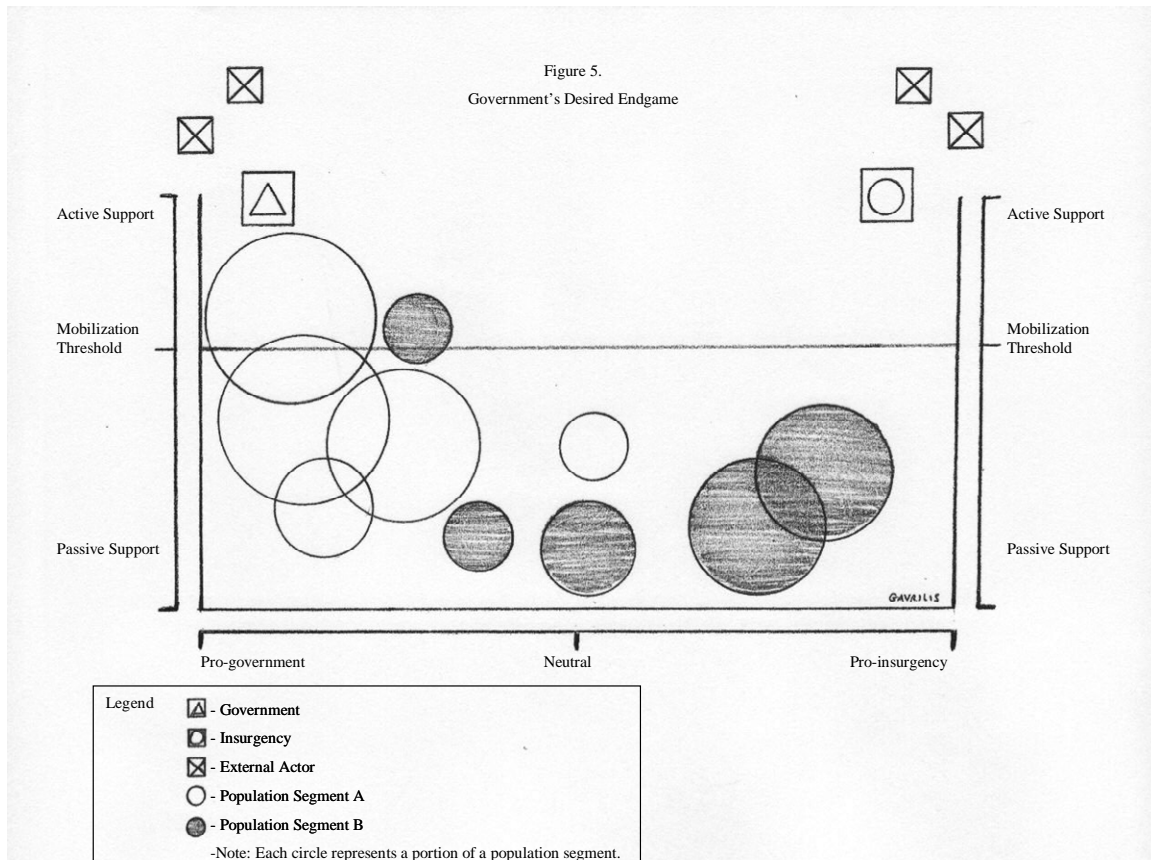
To illustrate the point that this is political and psychological, one should consider the impact of a suicide car bomb detonated at a market place or bus stop. The physical and military impact is relatively low. If no soldiers, police, or government officials are killed, no military materials destroyed, then it is viewed conventionally as a meaningless act with zero impact on military and government operations. While this is true from a conventional perspective, the effect of this terrorist attack on the political and psychological environment is enormous. It disturbs almost every segment of the population. The influence on the strategic outcome of the conflict is decisive. The car bomb demonstrates to segments of the population that support the government that the government cannot protect them. Further, it intimidates them to take no action in favor of the government. For segments that support the insurgency, it demonstrates insurgent competence and power. In the larger picture, the attack shows external supporters of the insurgency that their assistance to the insurgency is paying off, encouraging more assistance. It shows to the soldiers and diplomats of external supporters of the government that the conflict is too deep to overcome. To the populations of regional states and the U.S., the incessant attacks on the population suggest that the war will never end and is probably not worth continuing. Characteristically, insurgencies intend to intimidate the population and fatigue the support of the government, both internal and external.

Similarly, the image of an Iraqi emerging from a voting station with an ink-stained finger had an enormous impact on the conflict as well. It gave a tremendous boost to the Iraqi government and the U.S. and other supporters of the new Iraqi government. This image demonstrated that Iraq could and had changed politically, that democracy could succeed and was desired by Iraqi citizens. It demonstrated the intention of the Coalition to help rather than rule. However, supporters of the insurgency, both indigenous and foreign, saw the gesture as a challenge and concluded that more needed to be done to counter the success of the government and its external supporters. Otherwise a democratic Iraq that was a U.S. ally would be permanently established. As a counter to car bombs, more events and images of this kind should be made known to win popular support and encourage the population to actively resist the insurgency, transnational terrorist organizations, or foreign government influence.

Although the graph of the popular support battlefield will provide a snap-shot of the situation, it will have to be updated to reflect the dynamic nature of the conflict. That is, changes in the levels of popular support, in activities, in external support, and in insurgent leaders and organization must be reflected in changes on the graph. The basis for evaluating progress should



be the observation of movement of the desired segments of the population in the desired direction along the lines of operation, to include the desired mobilization and demobilization of the population. The government's endgame is to have the overwhelming majority of active popular support on the government's side, leaving the least amount of support on the insurgency's side with the lowest level of intensity of support. (See Figure 5).



**Figure 5: Government's Desired Endgame**

Furthermore, there can be more than one insurgency, which can cause greater complexity. I recommend creating separate graphs for each insurgency in the specific area. By keeping government actions consistent, and reducing vulnerabilities and increasing government control, the counterinsurgent can pull popular support from multiple insurgencies. Many of the government's activities will not change when countering multiple insurgent groups, although some will and it is worth identifying what is different. Multiple graphs, one per city, district, province, and state, will maintain consistency and fairness, as well as make use of national assets and national campaigns to defeat large nationwide insurgencies and criminal organizations. But the process of countering the insurgency must be local through a progression of local political warfare campaigns until larger areas of the country can be consolidated, mutually supported, and under legitimate government control.

The U.S., if it is to conduct major counterinsurgency campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, must have popular support, usually consisting of those segments that support the government. Yet the U.S. military has not valued winning popular support or seen the population as the center of gravity in either conflict thus far. For many, protecting the population and reconciliation in Iraq were just a means to stabilize the country enough for a U.S. military withdrawal.

To use mistakes from the Iraq conflict as examples, the U.S. military did not have as a primary mission to protect the population, or to quell sectarian violence, or to deal with kidnapping prior to January 2007. These were viewed as Iraqi issues, civilian and not military issues, and considered low level violence and not part of a counterinsurgency campaign. However, similar to the car bomb, although these have little impact on the military itself, they have tremendous impacts on the population, and consequently the strategic outcome of the conflict. Without protection, the population remains vulnerable to intimidation, coercion, illegal taxation, and rhetoric. Sectarian violence mobilizes people to fight for one side or the other, destroys the fabric of society, creates lawlessness, mistrust, and communal conflict that fuels insurgency. People are forced to choose sides for survival. And without an organized government in a local area, the people have no choice but to join other organizations that can and will protect them, such as insurgent groups or political or religious militias. Kidnapping generates high volumes of money for insurgency, intimidates and terrorizes the population, displaces civilians, breeds mistrust, and disrupts society immeasurably. That Coalition forces did not address these earlier shows that the understanding of insurgency and counterinsurgency was relatively superficial and incoherent. Thus the counterinsurgent should address these social conditions immediately. Because policing and security are basic government functions, the counterinsurgent should organize local militias, like the concerned local citizens in Iraq, when security cannot be accomplished by formal government forces. Following the prescribed analysis, the model will help identify particular weaknesses of the government and vulnerabilities of the population in a given area, and how these weaknesses relate to the strength of the insurgency. When counterinsurgency activities focus on these weaknesses such as developing local militias, the graph will reflect changes in the population moving to the government's side. If the U.S. had followed this model earlier we may have been able to avoid much of the destruction of 2005 and 2006 in Iraq, and may not have to surge forces today in Afghanistan.

In contrast, the commander's emergency relief program funds (CERP) were the most effective counterinsurgency and reconstruction fund because of their flexibility and their local injection. The money immediately and directly affected local citizens and influenced popular support for the Coalition and the government. Large amounts of money funneled to the top, or national level, rarely trickle down to reach local communities, and if they do, they reach them too late to influence popular support, many times harming popular support because the government fails to meet expectations or promises--certainly too late to be part of a coherent comprehensive counterinsurgency program for a given area. In recognition of this principle and the success of CERP, the Department of State now has created a quick reaction fund (QRF) for provincial reconstruction teams that functions similarly to the Defense Department's CERP fund.

Lastly, in counterinsurgency unity of effort is key. Partnership across the spectrum of security forces and between civilian and military agencies as well as their programs and activities is critical for successful counterinsurgency. I encourage both the Department of Defense and the

Department of State to use this model in their doctrine and to build and work from the same graphs in the same operations centers in the field. It is counterproductive not to. I offer this model to the U.S. military to use for counterinsurgency and unconventional conflicts. The problem with using conventional military maps and overlays is that they are graphic representations of the earth's surface and do not depict the political, psychological, or human landscape of insurgency and counterinsurgency. Once the counterinsurgent has identified a critical segment of the population, its vulnerabilities, and the level and nature of insurgent influence, he can then translate the result of the graph's analysis onto a map and into specific operations, programs, and activities. But without a conceptual framework to analyze the population, to understand insurgency and counterinsurgency, and to guide the strategy and lines of operation, a map is almost useless. I strongly encourage the use of this model. After all, our low-tech enemies are already using population-centered activities and are very successful against the world's sole superpower.

*Jim Gavrilis is a former Special Forces officer who has served two tours in Iraq and has taught insurgency and counterinsurgency at Georgetown University, George Washington University, and the State Department's Foreign Service Institute. For more information or assistance in applying the model to specific cases, contact Jim Gavrilis at The Gavrilis Group, LLC, [www.TheGavrilisGroup.com](http://www.TheGavrilisGroup.com).*

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