



SMALL WARS JOURNAL

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The Jones Insurgency Model

A Tool for the Prevention and Resolution of Insurgency

by Robert C. Jones

Offered here is the simple proposition that *insurgency happens* when governance fails. Similarly, *foreign terrorism happens* when one supports these same failed systems.

- Not the kind of failed governance that draws so much attention to countries like Somalia; which is probably more accurately described as a rejection of forced western, Westphalian constructs of governance for forms more acceptable to their culture and society.
- Not the kind of failed governance that draws so much attention to countries like Bangladesh; where the lack of effective government services and widespread poverty are largely seen as “normal” by the affected populace.
- Not the kind of failed governance that draws so much attention to countries like Liberia; where auspices of statehood are perverted to criminal purposes.

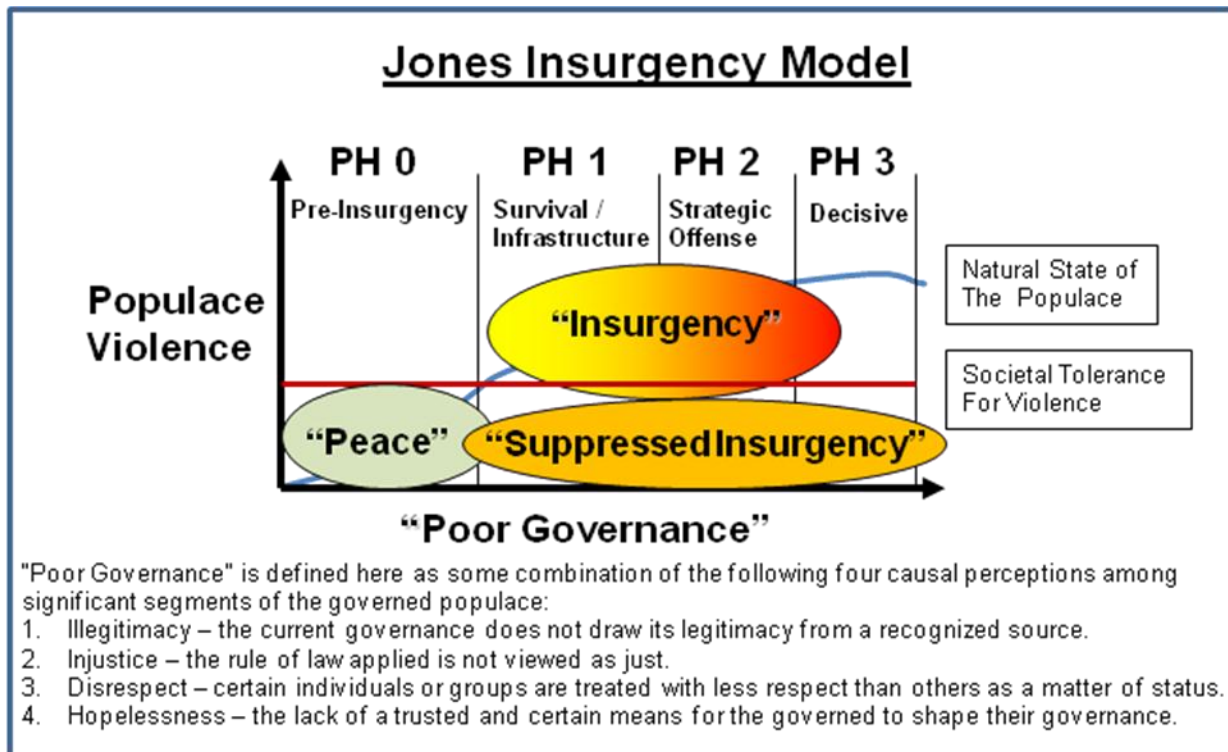
No, the failures that lead to insurgency are far more fundamental, and often so insidious that they are not even recognized or acknowledged by their equally failing leaders; even when pointed out to them, often quite violently, by their own populaces. What makes countering such insurgent causation even more complicated is that these failures do not even have to be *real*; all that is required is that some key segment of the populace reasonably believes them to be true. The irony is not that this happens in countries like those described above, but that it also afflicts the most developed, upright, and law abiding countries as well. This is the paradox. This is why counterinsurgency is so difficult: it can happen anywhere, its causation is rooted in perceptions of governmental failure; and its resolution is rooted in governmental recognition and resolution of those same perceptions.

Many believe that establishing a strong central government is the key to resolving insurgency. Others believe that the development of security force capability and capacity and enforcing the rule of law is the key to resolving insurgency. Still others believe the development of government services and caring for the populace is the key to resolving insurgency. Perhaps most believe it is some combination of all of the above. These are reasonable beliefs, and there is certainly truth in each of these positions, yet all of these positive conditions can exist and one can still find their self

waist deep in insurgency. This situation has vexed policy makers, military leaders, and heads of state since mankind first gathered together in organized social structures under a common leadership.

Why is it that strong government, rule of law, and robust delivery of development and services are sometimes not enough to prevent or resolve insurgency? Quite simply it is because:

- Security and Rule of Law without Justice is *Tyranny*;
- Development without equity is *Apartheid*;
- Governance without Legitimacy is *Despotism*; and
- A populace experiencing any of the above without a voice is *Hopeless*.



The above model is a compilation of years of engagement and professional study, primarily at the Operational and Strategic levels, on insurgency and the many manifestations and surrounding effects falling under an ever increasing number of headings and definitions. Subversion, Insurgency, Counterinsurgency, Terrorism, Counterterrorism, Irregular Warfare, Foreign Internal Defense, Unconventional Warfare, Revolution, Dissidence, Internal Defense and Development, Security Force Assistance, and many others, are all related to some extent and touch in varying degrees this paradox of *insurgency*.

So what does the Jones Model tell us?

As conditions of Poor Governance increase, so does the natural tendency of the populace to act out violently against that governance. The curve running from the lower left corner up and to the right roughly plots this track. While each populace/governance dynamic creates its own unique snapshot of this model, one could also in more general terms plot the status of every populace/governance dynamic around the globe on a single model. Most would plot in the lower left quadrant of “peace.” Those with active insurgencies, such as Afghanistan, would plot up in the “insurgency” zone. Others, where conditions of Poor Governance exist, but where the natural state of the populace’s reaction to that Poor Governance is suppressed, such as perhaps Iran or North Korea, would plot in the “suppressed insurgency” zone (“perhaps” because media and political assessments from outside sources are a poor measure of a populace’s perceptions of its own governance).

Poor Governance is defined here as four causal perceptions measured from the perspective of the populace. How anyone else assesses the “Goodness” of governance, to include the governance in question, is largely moot. Insurgency is all about how the populace feels. There is a powerful implied task here. The perceptions are not just the indicator of the problem, they *are* the problem. Governance must address these perceptions in order to achieve conditions of Good Governance. Monitoring, understanding, valuing, and addressing the populace’s perceptions is fundamental to establishing and sustaining Good Governance.

Every populace also has its own cultural tolerance for violence. Beginning with Mao’s three phases of insurgency as a widely accepted standard baseline for understanding what stage an insurgency is in, it is the nexus of where “Populace Violence” exceeds “Societal Tolerance for Violence” that conditions leave the realm of subversion/pre-insurgency and enter into what is classically understood as “insurgency.” It is important to understand that the insurgent may prevail in any of the four phases, but success for governance is only achieved by keeping the populace in phase zero.

Few populaces are truly a single body, so within a given system of governance there may well be pockets of the populace that plot in wildly diverse locations on the Jones Model depending upon a variety of factors. First, perceptions of Poor Governance will typically vary, and this can be along lines of geography, religion, politics, race, economics, season, or virtually any other set of factors that serve to create distinct segments within a given society. The best metric for determining where these segments lie on the model is through polling of the populace, asking general questions that provide indicators of feelings toward the four causal perceptions. Second, the leadership of these distinct segments of society can also affect the north-south axis of the plot according to how that leader seeks to act out to express dissatisfaction with Poor Governance. As an example, both Gandhi and King chose and enforced non-violent ways to address the conditions of Poor Governance facing the populaces they led. Finally, suppression of these distinct segments of society by governmental policy and security forces may also keep violent expression artificially low; though when those

suppressive effects are removed the populace will likely move upward to its natural state in short order. As an example, Tito suppressed popular will in the Balkans throughout his reign, but it exploded in violence once those suppressive effects fell off.

How does understanding the Jones Model help prevent or resolve insurgency?

The Jones Model implies clear roles and responsibilities. It is the duty of civil governance to maintain the peace internal to a society. Understanding what leads to violence is critical to ensuring efforts are focused on the right areas for maximum effect. Similarly, programs that may seem logical on their face but that are not likely to positively influence the causal perceptions can be identified and either assigned a lower priority or avoided altogether. The Jones Model also places the full onus for an insurgent populace on the governance of that populace. Governmental responsibility is critical for effective COIN. The Jones Model clarifies the role of security forces as well. To merely attack the violence without concurrently addressing the conditions of poor governance may well suppress an insurgency, but is not likely to resolve it. The role of the military should be to supplement civilian security forces, and be employed only when the situation has exceeded civilian capacity. This extra capacity is to create space for civil leadership to identify and address the factors leading to the perceptions of poor governance, moving the populace down, and to the left into "Peace."

The Jones Model provides for simple, effective metrics. Complex objective metrics may be very precise, but at the same time sadly inaccurate in terms of providing understanding of the state of insurgency within a given populace. Perceptions toward the four causal factors however, are easily gathered through polling and can then be plotted by color coding areas on a map according to phases 0 through 3 as Green, Amber, Red and Black. This is perhaps the best way for the Coalition Forces in Afghanistan to clearly explain to a global audience the current state of the insurgency there now, and also to demonstrate how conditions progress over the course of the next several months as the surge of forces implements General McChrystal's Population-Centric strategy. Each "focus district"¹ could be assessed a color, and reassessed quarterly. This elegantly simple tool works for briefing generals, presidents, or your average concerned citizen, and is arguably far more material and accurate than any of the complex models currently in use.

Lastly, the Model enables an understanding that insurgency is more accurately a *civil emergency* than it is a war. Waging war against one's own populace is sometimes necessary, but never good. All violence, however, is not war. By seeing insurgency as a naturally occurring civil emergency resulting from perceptions of Poor Governance, one is far more likely to apply the military in a properly constrained, subordinate role. One is also far more likely to hold civil leadership accountable for their failures, and focus on resolving the conditions and perceptions giving rise to the insurgency rather than simply focusing on the physical and moral defeat of those who dare to stand up to Poor Governance.

¹ General McChrystal identified a number of "focus districts," where COIN effects are most critical in the coming months for success in Afghanistan.

How does understanding the Jones Model help prevent or resolve foreign terrorism?

Legitimacy is also the causal perception that appears to be the critical link to acts of foreign terrorism. Many well established competing theories dominate thinking on this topic, rooted in ideology, religion, hate, fear and jealousy; all surely contribute, but none of those really stand up to analysis rooted in an understanding of *Insurgency*. Sixty years of Cold War engagement and a pair of recent regime change operations have all served to cast a cloud of U.S.-based legitimacy over many governments across the Middle East. Populaces who perceive their governance to draw its legitimacy more from the U.S. than it does from the traditional sources recognized by them are apt to commit local acts of insurgency, coupled with distributed attacks to break the ties to that corrupting outside source of legitimacy.

Bin Laden and Al Qaeda have focused on this dynamic from the outset, labeling these failed governments as “apostate” and urging the populaces of these states to rise up against those failed governments as well as against the U.S. and other western powers.² The religious overtones are obvious, but the undertones are rooted in terms of the Illegitimacy of the rulers of states like Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Yemen and Egypt; and in terms of Western disrespect for the populaces of the region. The injustices of the legal systems in these countries are well documented, as is the hopelessness of populaces unable to influence governance through peaceful means. Looked at through a lens of religion and hate, one can easily draw conclusions of causation in those factors. Looking at the same facts through a lens of insurgency as captured in the Jones Model and the critical causal perceptions of Legitimacy, Injustice, Disrespect and Hopelessness stand out as well. After eight years it may be time for a fresh approach.

Joining forces with these allied governments to attack the insurgent elements of their populaces under the guise of counterterrorism is to attack the symptoms of the true problem, and actually contributes to making the perceptions of Poor Governance worse. Arguably the quicker path to success lies in changing the nature of the U.S. engagement with these governments so as to mitigate perceptions of U.S. legitimacy overriding the will of the governed. President Obama’s instincts are sound; the U.S. must urge and enable these same governments to address the perceptions of injustice, disrespect and hopelessness among their people.³ As Samuel P. Huntington observed in *The Third Wave*:

Oil revenues accrue to the state: they therefore increase the power of the state bureaucracy and, because they reduce or eliminate the need for taxation, they also reduce the need for the government to solicit the acquiescence of its subjects to taxation. The lower the level of taxation,

² [FBIS Report, Compilation of Usama Bin Laden Statements 1994-January 2004 ;](http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/ubl-fbis.pdf)
<http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/ubl-fbis.pdf>

³ Larry Diamond, “Why Are There No Arab Democracies?”, *Journal of Democracy*, January 2010, Volume 21, Number 1.

the less reason for publics to demand representation. "No taxation without representation" as a political demand; "no representation without taxation" is a political reality.⁴

Some day this last quip may be as notoriously famous as Marie Antoinette's retort of "Let them eat cake!"

So, applying the Jones Model to the greatest security challenges facing the U.S. today suggests a deceptively simple, yet potentially powerful change of approach to foreign policy. First is to assess every nation with which the U.S. engages for how the major groupings within their populace perceive their own governance in terms of Legitimacy, Justice, Respect and Hope. Second is to ensure that the form of U.S. engagement is designed so as to be least likely to create perceptions of preemption of Legitimacy by the U.S. (remembering that this is as viewed through the eyes of those populaces; need only be perception and not fact; and that the perception of U.S. policy makers as to the intent and nature of said engagement is completely immaterial). Lastly is to encourage Hope; to tell the people of the world not to despair, while at the same time applying carrots and sticks as required to the governments of the same to engage their populaces and to make reasonable accommodations on terms acceptable within their unique cultures, to give the people a legal means to voice their concerns. Just as the word "Democracy" does not exist in the U.S. Declaration of Independence or Constitution, it should be absent from this engagement as well. Self-Determination is the path to Good Governance.

Conclusion.

At the end of this month, President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan is scheduled to conduct a grand "Consultative Peace Jirga." His quest is an existential one; it is a quest for Legitimacy.

In the weeks leading up to this Jirga, Mr. Karzai has famously made cutting remarks aimed at the Coalition in general and the U.S. in particular. He has also reached out to leaders of opposition organizations and to the heads of states in greatest opposition to the policies of the U.S. and the West. He knows he must create a sense of separation from those who placed him in office. President Karzai understands that the strategic key to stability in Afghanistan lies not in the surge of Coalition Forces, nor in the major military operations in Helmand and Kandahar provinces. These are essential supporting operations; but Mr. Karzai understands that his presidency presides under a cloud of Illegitimacy and that foreign armies fighting to preserve his office can do no more than suppress the violence for some short time. He must show his people respect and provide hope to those segments of Afghan society currently excluded from participation in governance and opportunity.

⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 65.

No model is perfect, and the Jones Model is no exception to that rule. This model has existed in various forms in the author's head and on paper for several years, and will likely look slightly different in the future than it does as captured here today. There are many voices and opinions, both modern and historic, competing for space in today's marketplace of ideas on this topic. Many have contributed to the understanding captured here.

De Oppresso Liber.

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