# From Research to Education: Bringing Analysis into the Irregular Warfare Classroom

*Christina S. Phillips*

*The Army has long recognized that detailed research and analysis generates both analytic and technological advantages, improves planning, and saves time, money, and lives. An early product of this recognition is the first volume of the* Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare. *First published by the Special Operations Research Office (SORO) in 1962, this collection of case studies provides irregular warfare (IW) planners with the backbone of historic insurgency analysis that informs future planning. SORO's efforts ended in 1966 with the publication of* Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies. *In 2011, to address the resulting 45-year gap in analysis of insurgencies, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) G3 Sensitive Activities Division partnered with the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (APL). The resulting project, Assessing Revolutionary and Insurgent Strategies (ARIS), aims to provide IW planners, practitioners, and students a value-neutral, academically rigorous, standardized analytic framework and an impartial account of insurgencies and revolutions. In 2013, the ARIS team recognized the need for materials that would help instructors integrate ARIS research into the IW classroom. The challenge was to design products that fit the needs of beginner, intermediate, and advanced students in meeting a range of IW objectives. The ARIS team developed a host of educational products, including published works, guided discussion lessons, exercise scenarios, analytic tools, and video and resource libraries, all housed on a single portal maintained by APL. Instructors and students at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School and at Georgetown University actively use these resources.*

## INTRODUCTION

Highly adaptable asymmetric adversaries are a mark of the modern military's operational environment. Defeating these adversaries requires modern warfighters to understand their adversaries' motivations and behaviors as well as the relationships between relevant populations. To support education of the increasing population of U.S. warfighters, the Johns Hopkins University

Applied Physics Laboratory (APL) partnered with the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) G3 (Operations Department) Sensitive Activities Division on a project called Assessing Revolutionary and Insurgent Strategies (ARIS). In recognition of the human domain's potential impact on war, the ARIS project aims to provide planners, practitioners, and

irregular warfare (IW) students a peer-reviewed, value-neutral, academically rigorous, and impartial account of insurgencies and revolutions.

IW is defined as "a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s)."[2] Doctrinally, IW is composed of five elements:

1. Counterinsurgency: "Comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes"[2]

2. Stability operations: "An overarching term encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief"[2]

3. Foreign internal defense: "Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security"[2]

4. Counterterrorism: "Activities and operations taken to neutralize terrorists and their organizations and networks in order to render them incapable of using violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals"[2]

5. Unconventional warfare: "Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area"[2]

Because of its complexity, IW is sometimes referred to as "the graduate level of warfare." Although there is much debate as to whether IW is more complicated than conventional operations, one can readily accept the highly sophisticated nature of each of its components. Adding to the challenge of execution, many IW operations are conducted by both conventional and special operations forces, despite their varying levels of experience and training. Recent insurgencies (state-sponsored and otherwise) in Ukraine, Iraq, Somalia, and Syria demonstrate the growing requirement for U.S. special operations and conventional forces to support IW missions. The ARIS project seeks to contribute to the critical education the modern warfighter needs to effectively support IW missions.

The project's foundational product is the second volume of the *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary*

*Warfare*, which picks up where the first volume left off. The 23 case studies share a standardized analytic framework developed by a team of political and social scientists.[1] This framework includes analysis of the relevant region's physical, cultural, social, economic, and political factors, along with the revolution's objectives, leadership, organization, operations, communication, and interactions with the relevant populations. Additionally, each study identifies governmental responses and the revolution's impact on its environment. This structure helps IW students to understand the various environments and to identify each revolution's important characteristics and short- and long-term effects, thereby allowing them to compare and assess the movements and the factors influencing them.

## INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

After producing the second volume of the *Casebook on Insurgencies and Revolutionary Warfare* and updating the other foundational texts, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies* and *Undergrounds in Insurgent, Revolutionary, and Resistance Warfare*, the ARIS team recognized the need for an instructor's guide to facilitate the use of ARIS products in the IW classroom. While developing the instructor's guide, the team uncovered the depth of IW subject matter expertise residing in APL. Therefore, the team redesigned and expanded the instructors' guide, creating a web portal featuring a wide array of IW instructor resources (see Fig. 1). While the extensive library of videos, publications, scenarios for classroom exercises, commercial games, and links to external websites provides the instructors with a useful repository of IW information, the portal's key components are the growing number of guided discussion lessons and analytic tools developed by the APL team.

### Guided Discussion Lessons

The guided discussion lessons cover a set of specific IW objectives and give the IW student a greater understanding of the history and theories associated with revolutions. To determine which subjects to address and to identify the associated objectives for the first generation of guided discussion lessons, the ARIS team assembled a working group of highly experienced DoD IW instructors and practitioners. The working group also served as a peer review board for all lessons. The group identified three critical topic areas: IW, insurgency analysis, and weapons and communications. For the IW topic area, the team developed guided lessons on the following subtopics: IW origin and thought leaders, IW doctrine, and IW in practice. The insurgency analysis guided discussion lessons focus on the identification, indoctrination, and mobilization ($I^3M$) model of insurgent involvement;

**Figure 1.** Home page of the ARIS instructor's guide portal.

insurgency elements; transitions; historical context; government countermeasures; narratives; impact of physical geography; socioeconomics; ideology; adaptability; threat finance; insider threats; and legal implications of the status of persons in resistance movements. The final topic area, weapons and communications, includes lessons on nonstandard methods of communication and the impact of social media.

Each lesson includes beginner, intermediate, and advanced objectives as defined in the updated Bloom's taxonomy, commonly displayed as a pyramid (see Fig. 2). The updated taxonomy identifies the beginner skills as remember (recognize and recall) and understand (interpret, exemplify, classify, summarize, infer, compare, and explain). The intermediate skills are apply (execute, implement) and analyze (differentiate, organize, and attribute). The advanced skills are evaluate (check and critique) and create (generate, plan, and produce).[7] For example, after completing the guided discussion lesson on thought leaders in irregular warfare, beginner students are expected to discuss the origin of IW and significant IW thought leaders and to summarize IW modern history. Intermediate students are expected to examine both IW origin and history as they relate to case studies and compare and contrast IW thought leaders. Advanced students should be able to contrast IW thought leaders' theories and IW history with current analysis, critique IW thought leaders within differing operational environments, and evaluate IW thought

leaders in light of a changing international system. By using a "crawl, walk, run" model, each guided discussion lesson provides the level of detail required to support all three levels of objectives in a presentation that instructors can easily adapt to fit their requirements.

Once the working group identified topics and objectives, APL subject-matter experts developed the lessons, relying on significant prior research in the specific subject areas as well as on the foundational ARIS publications. In some cases, the APL expert partnered with a DoD expert to leverage operational experience (as exemplified by the lesson on insider threats during foreign operations, which was based on the DoD partner's development and implementation of multiple lessons for both the Army and NATO).

Each lesson underwent a rigorous internal review process to ensure that the author followed educational best practices and provided high-quality academic content and analysis. To ensure the relevance to the warfighter, the working group reviewed and approved each lesson before publication. After lessons are published, IW instructors can download them and modify them to fit their needs. Although site statistics cannot be reported here, we can note that instructors and students from both the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School and Georgetown University have ready access to the portal, and portal content is known to be integrated into several programs of instruction and referenced in student products.
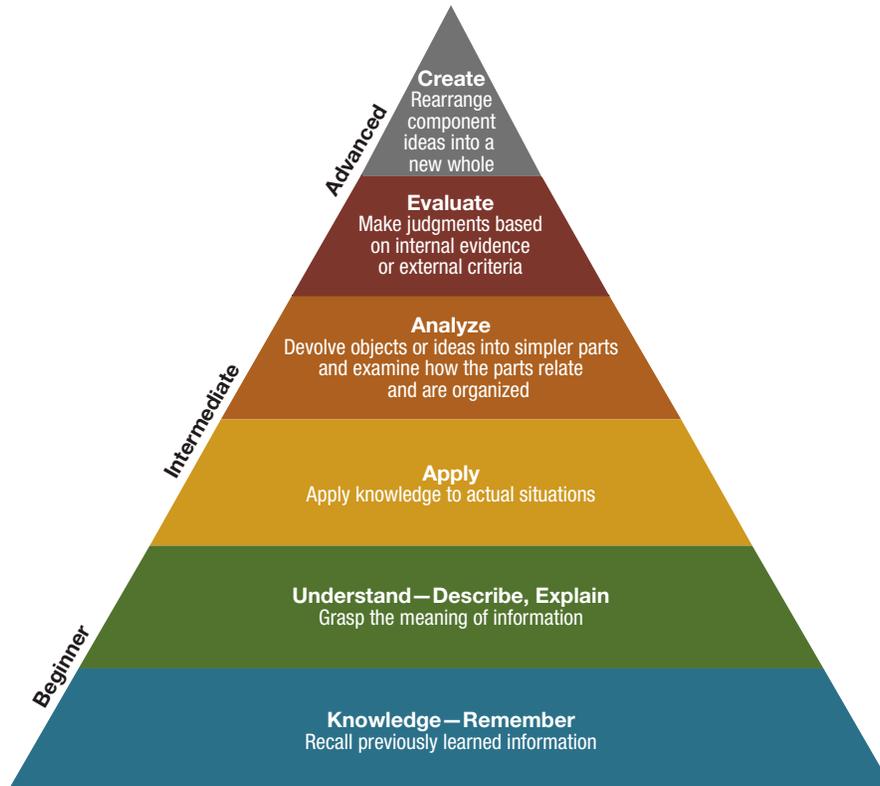
**Figure 2.** Bloom's taxonomy is a common heuristic used to categorize learning objectives from low- to high-order thinking skills.

## Additional Resources for Instructors: Model for Mobilization

In addition to guided lesson plans, the ARIS portal provides the IW instructor with existing and newly developed analytic tools. In response to USASOC's interest in refining understanding of what drives a population to pick up arms against a government, the ARIS team researched and developed the $I^3M$ model of insurgent involvement. Bruce Defeyter (USASOC) and Christina Phillips (APL) first developed this model, and Dr. Jesse Kirkpatrick (APL) and Mary Kate Schneider (APL) later refined it. This concept, featured in the October 2013 issue of *Special Warfare*, is also available on the ARIS portal as a guided discussion lesson. This model builds on existing radicalization models but also departs from the current body of work in significant and dynamic ways in order to generate a more holistic understanding of mobilization.

Much of the available literature focuses on radicalization (a process of adopting a belief in an extremist ideology, either political or religious in nature) even though radicalization alone is not an accurate predictor of participation in violence or violent radicalization (involving belief in an extremist ideology, accepting a commitment to a violent extremist movement, and becoming involved with a terrorist group and terrorist activities). The existing body of literature identifies a set
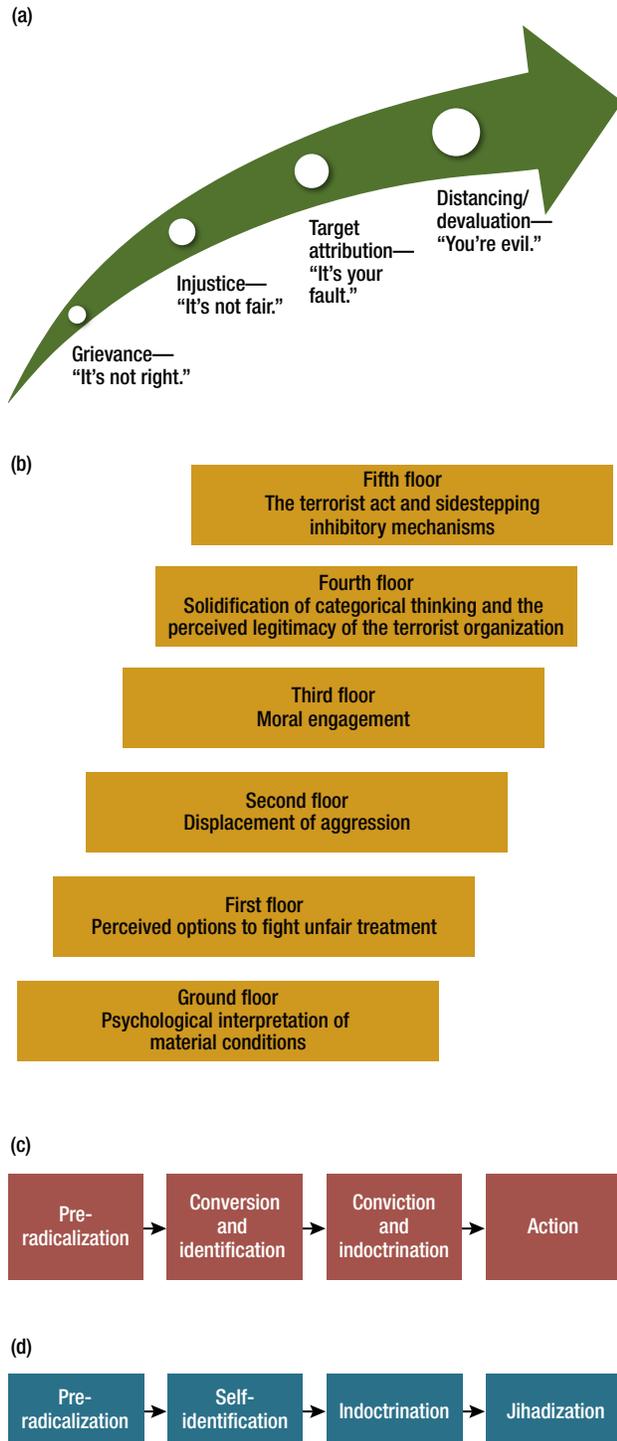
of commonalities among recent Islamist terrorists who participated in attacks. These traits include being married, 15- to 35-year-old, middle-class, well-educated males who display markedly changed behavior during the radicalization process.[3] Researchers estimate that 80% of new, fully radicalized and mobilized jihadists are second- and third-generation descendants of Muslim immigrants who are not integrated into the local and national cultures.[4] Although case studies may provide some understanding of the large vulnerable population, they are highly focused on jihadists and do not provide enough data to assist analysts in identifying high-risk individuals who might mobilize in support of either a religiously or a nonreligiously motivated organization.

Efforts to identify the potential shared paths toward radicalization to violence led social scientists to examine the process of Islamist violent radicalization more deeply. The resulting models share several commonalties (see Fig. 3):

- Borum's four-stage model of the terrorist mindset focuses on grievance, injustice, target attribution, and distancing and devaluation.[5]

- Moghaddam's staircase to terrorism emphasizes interpretation of material conditions, perception of unfair treatment, displacement of aggression, moral engagement, perceived legitimacy of terrorist organization, and sidestepping inhibitory mechanisms.[5]

- Precht's model of "typical" radicalization patterns includes pre-radicalization, conversion and identification with radical Islam, indoctrination, and participation in terrorist acts.[5]

- The New York Police Department's model for jihadization leading to terrorist acts includes pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination, jihadization, and participation in attacks.[3]

Although these models share some significant similarities, such as the assumption that the insurgent must be radicalized to participate in terrorist acts, it is clear that there is no standardized process of radicalization. Rather, it is as varied as the groups the radicals sup-

port. In addition, these models focus on the seemingly small population of insurgents who are fully radicalized and participate in violence. The ARIS team recognized that radicalization is not a requirement for one to sup-

**(a)**



Grievance—
"It's not right."

Injustice—
"It's not fair."

Target attribution—
"It's your fault."

Distancing/devaluation—
"You're evil."

**(b)**

**Fifth floor**
The terrorist act and sidestepping inhibitory mechanisms

**Fourth floor**
Solidification of categorical thinking and the perceived legitimacy of the terrorist organization

**Third floor**
Moral engagement

**Second floor**
Displacement of aggression

**First floor**
Perceived options to fight unfair treatment

**Ground floor**
Psychological interpretation of material conditions

**(c)**

Pre-radicalization → Conversion and identification → Conviction and indoctrination → Action

**(d)**

Pre-radicalization → Self-identification → Indoctrination → Jihadization

**Figure 3.** Models of radicalization. (a) Borum's four-stage model of the terrorist mindset. (b) Moghaddam's staircase to terrorism. (c) Precht's model of "typical" radicalization patterns. (d) New York Police Department model of jihadization. (Reproduced with permission from Ref. 5.)

port an insurgency, passively or actively, or to participate in violent acts. Expanding the focus to everyone who might mobilize to support an insurgency, the two-part I$^3$M model seeks to explain the motivations and processes leading to and including insurgent mobilization regardless of the insurgent's degree of radicalization. The creators of this model recognized that insurgents may be driven by factors that are not addressed by extreme political or religious ideologies and that the motivations and incentives to mobilize may be physical, emotional, or ideological in nature (see Fig. 4). The influence of these motivations and incentives may be impacted by personal and group grievances, slippery slope (exposure to insurgent violence may incrementally increase one's tolerance, acceptance, or endorsement to such activity), love, risk, status, unfreezing (valuing the camaraderie and social capital resulting from participation), group polarization, competition, and isolation.[6]

While the I$^3$M heuristic is helpful to analysis, the motivations and incentives are not discrete and often cross over multiple categories. Dr. Jesse Kirkpatrick explored this in a thought piece called *Interest, Identification, Indoctrination, Mobilization: I$^3$M*. Scheduled to be published in 2015 as part of a collection on various topics related to insurgency, the paper describes the example of a neo-Nazi Caucasian male who witnessed law enforcement officers use force to subdue his father. As a result, he (the son) develops a personal grievance against the police in general. The motivations arising from this grievance could be categorized as physical (desire to safeguard physical safety), emotional (the love felt for his father and corresponding desire for redress), and ideological (the belief that the activity for which his father was arrested should be legal). Thus, the categories outlined in the I$^3$M model are not entirely separable.

After incentivization, the four key behavioral processes of insurgency involvement include interest,



Physical motivations and incentives

Emotional motivations and incentives

Ideological motivations and incentives

I$^3$M
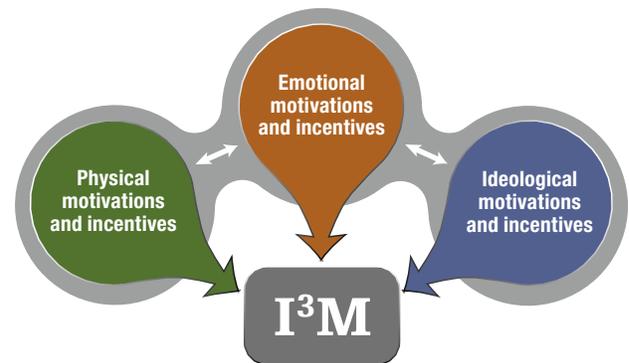
**Figure 4.** The motivations and incentives to become interested in, identify with, become indoctrinated into, and mobilized may be classified into three broad categories; however, they are not restrictive in nature and individuals may be motivated or incentivized across multiple categories. (Reproduced from Ref. 8.)
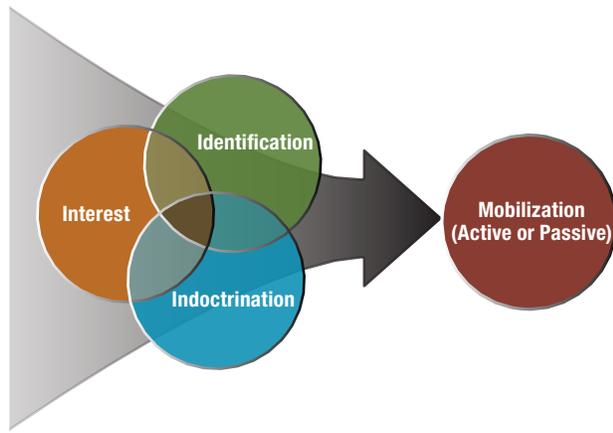
**Figure 5.** Interest, identification, and indoctrination are interconnected and not determinatively linear. (Adapted from Ref. 8.)

identification, indoctrination, and active or passive mobilization. Interest may be defined as what generates curiosity; identification is what leads recruits to associate with the movement; indoctrination further influences recruits to join the movement; and mobilization is the point at which individuals take action in support of the movement. Interest, identification, and indoctrination are the three factors that lead to mobilization, and although these components are interconnected they are not determinatively linear (see Fig. 5). The I³M model allows the analyst to examine the methods insurgent groups use to influence mobilization, the ways they are able to effectively mobilize a population in support of their cause, and potential vulnerabilities in the mobilization process that the counterinsurgent can leverage to counter mobilization.

No model will perfectly predict what motivates people to mobilize in support a movement. The goal of the I³M model is to harness existing findings in scholarship into an efficient and robust tool without restricting further refinements. As such, the I³M model is scheduled for continued research in FY2015. The future research will include in-depth empirical examinations of historic case studies in addition to analysis of current insurgencies. While the model continues to be developed and evaluated, the comprehensive lesson that incorporates the existing body of research through the I³M model is published on the ARIS portal.

## CONCLUSION

The ARIS partnership between USASOC and APL, which began in 2008 and continued with the release of the first publications in 2012, has expanded into a holistic project that enables the student, the instructor, the analyst, and the warfighter to gain deeper understanding of both insurgents and insurgencies. By specifically targeting support to the IW instructor, the ARIS portal serves as a resource library that increases the depth of existing DoD IW course content and enriches the learning experience. The range of ARIS products provides a baseline of understanding of both historic and current revolutionary movements that may inform planning, doctrine, and training. As current events in disparate operating environments such as Iraq, Ukraine, and Syria demonstrate, insurgencies are here to stay. Ensuring that current and future operators and planners have a deep understanding of the factors that relate to revolutions and insurgencies should improve our ability to shape the environment before conflicts escalate and to mitigate the impact of those that do escalate, giving the United States both a technical and analytic advantage, saving money, time, and lives.

## REFERENCES

[1]Defeyter, B., and Phillips, C., "ARIS: Assessing Revolutionary and Insurgent Strategies," *Special Warfare* **26**(4), 18–21 (2013).
[2]Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, DC (as amended through June 15, 2015).
[3]Silber, M., and Bhatt, A., *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*, New York City Police Department, New York, 5–90 (2007).
[4]Post, J., and Sheffer, G., "The Risk of Radicalization and Terrorism in U.S. Muslim Communities," *Brown J. World Affairs* **XIII**(2), 101–112 (2007).
[5]Borum, R., "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research," *J. Strategic Secur.* **4**(4), 37–62 (2011).
[6]Mccauley, C., Moskalenko, S., and Van Son, B., "Characteristics of Lone-Wolf Violent Offenders: a Comparison of Assassins and School Attackers," *Perspectives on Terrorism* **7**(3), 4–24 (2013).
[7]Krathwohl, D. R., "A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy: An Overview," *Theory Into Pract.* **41**(4), 212–218 (2002).
[8]Kirkpatrick, J., and Schneider, M., "I³M: Interest, Identification, Indoctrination, Mobilization," *Special Warfare* **26**(4): 22–27 (2013).

**Christina S. Phillips** is a project manager at APL. She supports projects for the U.S. Army Special Operations Command and the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School. Her work focuses on countering non-state challenges such as piracy, narcotics, and other forms of illicit trade as well as the spectrum of state-supported proxy actions including terrorism and threat finance. Her experience with instruction and facilitation in joint and combined environments leads to unique approaches, educational modules, and products for unconventional warfighters. Her e-mail address is christina.phillips@jhuapl.edu.