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14. ABSTRACT

Though difficult, it is possible to wage successful counterinsurgency operations across the range of the elements of national power—any campaign must be waged in this full spectrum manner to be victorious. Through the course of waging this effort, the operational commander must have a means of measuring his progress and the effectiveness between strategy and tactics. This cannot be accomplished through the study and recitations of endless statistics on dead insurgents, security forces trained, or schools built. Rather, to measure progress and gauge success in counterinsurgency, the operational commander must begin by collecting this type of data along with many other sets of quantitative and qualitative metrics and measure them against planned intermediate objectives and goals established within Logical Lines of Operation (LLO) for the counterinsurgency operation. During this paper, I will examine recently released US military doctrine for the execution of counterinsurgency, discuss the measurement tools outline in Joint and Service doctrine, and evaluate how well operational and national-strategic leaders are applying statistics, measures, and metrics to measure progress and assess success in counterinsurgency operations in Iraq.

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OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT IN A COUNTERINSURGENCY

by

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Major, United States Army

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: _____

10 May 2006

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Abstract

      Though difficult, it is possible to wage successful counterinsurgency operations across the range of the elements of national power; any campaign must be waged in this full spectrum manner to be victorious. Through the course of waging this effort, the operational commander must have a means of measuring his progress and the effectiveness between strategy and tactics. This cannot be accomplished through the study and recitations of endless statistics on dead insurgents, security forces trained, or schools built. Rather, to measure progress and gauge success in counterinsurgency, the operational commander must begin by collecting this type of data along with many other sets of quantitative and qualitative metrics and measure them against planned intermediate objectives and goals established within Logical Lines of Operation (LLO) for the counterinsurgency operation. During this paper, I will examine recently released U.S. military doctrine for the execution of counterinsurgency, discuss the measurement tools outlined in Joint and Service doctrine, and evaluate how well operational and national-strategic leaders are applying statistics, measures, and metrics to measure progress and assess success in counterinsurgency operations in Iraq.

Introduction

  In April of 2007, one month after the four year anniversary of the commencement of the United States-led-coalition invasion of Iraq, much doubt remains among the population and leadership of both the United States and Iraq with respect to the eventual outcome. In light of President Bush's January 2007 troop surge and reaffirmation of a clear and hold counterinsurgency strategy in Baghdad, Iraq, the need to be able to articulate progress and measures of success in the fight against the insurgents in Iraq is as critical as ever.

  Assessing progress in a counterinsurgency fight has never been an easy task— especially for modern and technologically dependent societies used to operating in conventional conflicts, desiring a simple, quick, and definitive answer. President Johnson and Defense Secretary McNamara tried for several years, but proved unable to do so. Secretary McNamara famously and unsuccessfully had his staff and academics throughout the country attempt to generate limitless statistical categories and numerical measures to gauge the United States' progress against the insurgency in Vietnam.[1]

  Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations are not waged on a traditional linear battlefield. There is no Forward Edge of the Battle Area or Forward Line of Own Troops. The conventional mindset of defeating enemy forces and gaining ground does not directly translate to success in these operations. The insurgent only needs to trade his life and space for time and maintain the control of the minds of the populace, while reinforcing doubt in the ability of the Host Nation (HN) to effectively govern, protect, and serve its people.[2]

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[1] United States Military Academy Department of Military Instruction, "Measuring Success in Counterinsurgency," available from <http://www.usma.edu/dmi/IWmsgs/MeasuringSuccess.pdf>; internet, accessed 13 April 2007.

[2] In Field Manual 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, the sovereign state or elected government opposing the insurgency is referred to as the Host Nation.

As difficult as it appears, it is possible to wage successful COIN operations across the range of the elements of national power; any campaign must be waged in this full spectrum manner to be victorious.[3] Through the course of waging this effort, the operational commander must have a means of measuring his progress and the effectiveness between strategy and tactics. This cannot be accomplished through the study and recitation of endless statistics on dead insurgents, security forces trained, or schools built. Rather, to measure progress and gauge success in COIN, the operational commander must begin by collecting this tactical data along with many other sets of quantitative and qualitative metrics and measure them against planned intermediate objectives and goals established within Logical Lines of Operation (LLO) for the COIN operation. **During this paper, I will examine recently-released US military doctrine for the execution of COIN, discuss the measurement tools outline in Joint and Service doctrine, and evaluate how well operational and national-strategic leaders are applying statistics, measures, and metrics to measure progress and assess success in COIN operations in Iraq.**

<u>Counterinsurgency at the Operational Level</u>

Successful COIN practices and principles differ from activities associated with the traditional American way of war—maneuver, firepower, technology, and a quick decisive victory with minimal casualties. An insurgency cannot be defeated in this manner, and thus COIN is a different and extremely difficult fight. A US Army Special Forces officer serving in Iraq in 2005 is quoted as saying, "*counterinsurgency is not just thinking man's warfare—it is the graduate level of war.*"[4] Commanders and staffs have found that the traditional phased

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[3] The term 'elements of national power' refers to the use of Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic systems and instruments to achieve national objectives.

[4] U.S. Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual (FM) 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-33.5 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), 1-1.

approach to warfare of U.S. doctrine, prior to the December 2006 release of the Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency manual, is not effective in COIN. The operational commander cannot focus on one particular objective or on a single phase to the detriment of any other. In order to solve this issue, operational commanders have proposed and are using a "balanced, full spectrum operations" approach rooted in event-driven and interrelated LLOs.[5] This full spectrum approach has been set in doctrine with the release of the 15 December, 2006, U.S. Army/U.S. Marine Corps Counterinsurgency manual, Field Manual (FM) 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-33.5.

COIN doctrine defines an LLO as "a logical line that connects actions on nodes and/or decisive points related in time and purpose with an objective."[6] FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 further defines LLOs as "an operational framework/planning construct used to define the concept of multiple, and often disparate, actions arranged in a framework unified by purpose."[7] LLOs offer a transitional approach which is more appropriate for COIN operations. A plan built around LLOs "unifies the efforts of joint, interagency, multinational, and HN forces toward a common purpose."[8] Each LLO represents an area along which COIN forces intend to focus their efforts to defeat the insurgent strategy and establish or restore HN legitimacy. The LLOs are interdependent. Success or progress in one, feeds success and progress in another.[9]

Due to the diversity and unpredictability of insurgencies, there are no prescribed LLOs for all COIN operations. FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 lists six LLOs that serve as a good

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[5] Major General Peter W. Chiarelli and Major Patrick Michaelis, "The Requirement for Full-Spectrum Operations," *Military Review* (July-August 2005): 7.
[6] FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, 1-7.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., 5-3.
[9] Ibid.

baseline for COIN and which I will briefly describe below. As always, the operational

commander has the option of developing his own or building on those listed in FM 3-

24/MCWP 3-33.5. Research of redeployed units has shown most commanders' LLOs to be

strikingly similar to those presented in FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5.

The first LLO for COIN operations is perhaps the most critical and, more than the

other LLOs, permeates each and every action or operation in a successful COIN—conduct

Information Operations (IO).[10] IO is identified in FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 as the single most

important and decisive LLO, though it also states that IO must be integrated into all LLOs.

IO will set conditions for success along all remaining LLOs. The Army/USMC COIN

manual articulates in detail the components and considerations for developing and executing

an IO LLO.[11] COIN forces must understand that every action at the tactical level has

operational and strategic IO implications. Every tactical action provides an opportunity for

positive or negative IO effects not only at the tactical, but operational and strategic levels.

Insurgent forces have a flexible, adaptive, and agile IO campaign at work in Iraq. COIN

forces must ensure their message and story is being heard, or all the other hard work and

development in COIN is wasted.

The second LLO is the conduct of "combat operations/civil security operations."[12]

This LLO is by far the most familiar to U.S. forces and the one with which most armed

forces feel most comfortable. It is critical that COIN forces do not focus too much effort on

this LLO to the detriment of other LLOs. Combat operations run the risk of having second

and third order effects counterproductive to COIN, which will be discussed later. With few

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 5-7. For further detail with respect to the importance of Information Operations in COIN, consult FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5.

[12] Ibid., 5-3.

exceptions, security forces should not patrol through and clear areas or terrain they do not

intend to hold; any area not occupied by security forces will be reoccupied by the insurgents.

[13] Adherence to Rules of Engagement is especially important in this area. Military forces

must treat the populace with respect and remember that the intent behind this combat

operation is to ensure the security of the indigenous population.

The HN must be able to stand alone and secure its own people. Hence the third LLO

is to "train and employ HN security forces."[14] No lasting progress is possible until this is

accomplished. These capabilities will not be established overnight and will be an iterative

process. Highly trained and culturally sensitive U.S. forces serving in an advisory role can

be invaluable during this Foreign Internal Defense effort. Joint patrols and operations

between HN and U.S. forces are a positive incremental step toward HN legitimacy, but every

effort must be made to put HN forces in the lead as soon as possible. Operations with HN

forces in lead roles will always be more effective than U.S. forces, even considering the

disparity in skill sets and aptitude.[15]

The fourth LLO is to "establish or restore essential services."[16] It is crucial to make

constant progress in this regard and to manage expectations. The management of

expectations is a function of IO, but is strikingly important in this arena. Less developed

nations and populace may have expectations shaped by 'man on the moon' syndrome; 'if the

Americans can put a man on the moon, why can't they give me' . . . electrical power, or

running water, or sewage services—'they must not want to do it.'[17] The two, yet-to-be

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[13] Ibid., 5-11-5-12.
[14] Ibid., 5-3.
[15] Ibid., 5-13 – 5-14.
[16] Ibid., 5-3.
[17] Elliot Cohen, Conrad Crane, Jan Horvath, and John Nagl, "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (March-April 2006): 51.

mentioned LLOs of governance and economic progress cannot be made without progress in this LLO. Again, the need to involve HN institutions and help them to accomplish the required tasks is paramount in importance; it sets them up for long term stability and provides legitimacy. The restoration of services must be incrementally attained in concert with improving the security situation or all will be for naught. IO relating to this LLO need to be tailored and conducted to ensure the HN gets the credit rather than insurgents.[18]

The fifth LLO listed is to "support development of better governance."[19] Success in this LLO will enable the HN to provide direction and control for society—as opposed to the insurgents or the U.S. forces. Again, the interrelationship between governance and the establishment of security and reestablishment of essential services cannot be understated. When performed effectively and efficiently, this concept can eliminate the root causes of the insurgency. However, national-strategic leaders must not simply replace one repressive regime with another—the insurgency will simply shift from one group to the other. This LLO encapsulates all others and when executed well will be the biggest factor affecting stability in the nation.[20] In the case of an insurgency, where legitimacy for the government is so critical to winning the hearts and minds of the populace, corrupt or incompetent governance will absolutely prevent HN victory in any counterinsurgency.[21]

The sixth and final LLO offered by FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 is to "support economic development."[22] Doctrine breaks economic development into short and long term objectives. Short term progress is defined as curbing unemployment and ensuring that day to day commerce and economic systems are functioning. Long term strategic progress includes

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[18] FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, 5-14.
[19] Ibid., 5-3.
[20] Ibid., 5-15 – 5-16.
[21] Cohen, Crane, Horvath, and Nagl, "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency," 49.
[22] FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, 5-3.

setting the conditions for a national economy capable of sustaining the people and encouraging growth and prosperity. A prospering economy built on a solid economic foundation could serve as a model and source of motivation to the region. Without a fair and functioning economy, it is likely that the populace will seek a potentially better deal promised by the insurgents.[23] IO remains of the utmost importance in this LLO because the insurgents will seek to discredit the HN government either by taking credit for the development themselves or by putting a foreign face on it and further undermining the HN.

Assessment of Operations

Continuous assessment and evaluation of strategy, tactics, and their progress is necessary for any organization, let alone large government or military organizations. Joint doctrine stipulates that continuous assessment allows the operational commander to "**determine progress toward accomplishing a task, creating an effect, or achieving an objective**."[24] In unconventional and non-linear operations such as COIN, the need to continually reassess strategy and tactics, and how operational art bridges the gap between the two, throughout the conduct of an operation is even more pronounced. This continuous assessment throughout the execution of operations allows the operational commander to determine how well the plan is working and whether he will achieve his operational objectives.

Operational assessment helps to identify opportunities to adjust tactics or strategy to ensure the operational commander remains on course. Having established the importance of assessment of COIN operations, the next step is to identify exactly how to remain on course. The operational commander must first establish evaluation criteria or governing factors

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[23] Ibid., 5-16 – 5-17.
[24] Joint Warfighting Center, *Commander's Handbook for an Effects-Based Approach to Joint Operations*, (24 February 2006), IV-6.

during the Joint Operational Planning Process against which to evaluate the operation to determine the effectiveness of his strategy and progress toward his stated operational objectives.

Before discussing progress indicators, we must look at assessment tools. Measures of Effectiveness (MOE) and Measures of Performance (MOP) are the two prescribed types of assessment measures set forth in both Joint and US Army/Marine Corps doctrine.[25] FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 defines an MOE as "a criterion used to assess changes in system behavior, capability, or operational environment that is tied to measuring the attainment of an end state, achievement of an objective, or creation of an effect."[26] MOEs enable the commander to determine if his actions are giving him the desired results or effects that build toward the achievement of the Desired End State (DES); achievement of this DES may take weeks, months, or years. MOEs also facilitate the operational commander in determining when his actions are not leading to the results he wants and helps him determine when to develop new actions or a shift in tactics to achieve the desired results.

MOP is defined as "a criterion to assess friendly actions that is tied to measuring task accomplishment."[27] MOPs simply tell the commander if the task was performed as he intended. MOPs will illuminate whether the tasks assigned by the commander were completed, while MOEs will determine if the assigned and completed tasks are contributing to the achievement of the commander's objectives and overall desired end state. While both are important tools for commanders at all levels, the MOP is more of a tactical tool, while the MOE are better used by the operational commander to assess the overall effectiveness of his

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[25] For more information on MOE and MOP see the *Commander's Handbook for an Effects-Based Approach to Joint Operations*.
[26] FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, 5-27.
[27] Ibid., 5-27.

operations and progress toward the achievement of his objectives. That being said, due to the volatile and complex nature of insurgencies, it would behoove leaders at all levels of war always to consider the use of measures of effectiveness during COIN.

All operational assessments will begin with tactical actions and tactical assessments. These tactical assessments are more than results of combat actions. They are the results and outcome of all tactical level actions—from a combat patrol to a humanitarian aid or assistance mission in the Joint Operations Area (JOA) and even extending to neighboring areas. Tactical assessments usually consist of familiar MOE and metrics used so often in news releases and interviews—patrols executed, defense forces trained, insurgents killed or captured, numbers of neighborhoods with electrical power, and so forth. The tactical level units assess tactical actions and pass their assessment, under the category of Battle Damage Assessment, to the operational level commander. This raw data is then used by the operational commander and his staff to judge if the desired effects were achieved and whether they contribute to overall achievement of operational objectives and progress along respective LLOs.[28]

The operational level assessment cannot be a simple regurgitation of facts and figures, but must be a careful collection and analysis of tactical actions to determine operational effects and progress. The operational commander's assessment focuses on "measuring progress toward creating desired effects."[29] This allows the commander and his staff to determine if tactical successes and accomplishments will translate into achieving effects at the operational level and hence operational and strategic success. It allows use of non-lethal elements and metrics to be interpolated in order to determine if these MOE are

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[28] *Commander's Handbook for an Effects-Based Approach to Joint Operations*, IV-8-9. A complete description of Tactical Assessment and its components can be found in Chapter IV.
[29] Ibid., IV-8.

contributing to mission accomplishment. In COIN, more so than in other, more conventional operations, the influence of the diplomatic, informational, and economic efforts hasten more effects and progress than military operations alone. Hence, the operational commander must draw data from non military agencies and multinational partners as well to measure effects and progress.

The complex and social-political nature of COIN makes it extremely difficult to measure progress and determine success. Military staffs and commanders have traditionally used stand alone and discrete quantitative and qualitative measurements to evaluate their progress, and in turn, success or failure of their strategy and tactics. This approach has been used in the past with COIN operations and proven woefully ineffective. The body counts and patrols and raids executed during Vietnam never served as an effective measure.

Aside from being a foolish and counterproductive COIN tactic that made several insurgents for each one it killed due to its indiscriminate use of force and violence, "counting bodies" was simply a poor measure—a drop in the bucket of the complex stew that is COIN.[30] U.S. forces fell prey to a similar mistake during early stages of the Operation IRAQI FREEDOM by hanging success on similar numbers, like insurgents killed or numbers of Iraqi policeman trained.

There is no magic statistic, category, or metric that will render an absolute answer on progress in counterinsurgency operations. The most accurate and useful measurement that the commander can use during his assessment is a subjective analysis across the spectrum of his established and defined LLOs. Nevertheless, the quantitative data of trained HN security forces, insurgents killed, insurgent attacks, households with electricity, which are of little

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[30] Jeffrey Record, "The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency," *Policy Analysis*, No. 577 (1 September 2006), 10-11, http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=6640 (accessed 13 April 2007).

value alone, can be useful in determining progress and eventual success, when used properly and in the context of LLOs.

In addition to careful analysis of each LLO, the nature of insurgencies necessitates that the operational commander carefully analyze progress, achievements, and statistics along each LLO as it relates to the other established LLOs. The nature of COIN is such that actions, successes, and failures will reverberate across the spectrum of all LLOs. Just as in the case of the COIN LLOs, there is no doctrinal set of objectives and progress points to correspond to respective LLOs. FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 provides a starting point, but the development of progress indicators and intermediate objectives belongs to the operational commander and his staff.

Sample of Metrics in Use Today

As previously mentioned, the traditional mindset of operational commanders to focus their assessment efforts on a small group of quantitative indicators as effective measures of operational progress and success is a mistake. Quick tactical metrics and statistics are matters of convenience and are easy to understand for mass consumption. The data can be easily collected, requires little analysis or interpolation, and can then be presented quickly and simply to illustrate a point—fewer attacks, fewer casualties, more troops trained, and so forth. None of these by themselves means anything; they must be analyzed and interpolated against the prescribed LLOs and intermediate objectives. I will now take a look at a handful of the most popular measures of effectiveness and progress indicators being used today by tactical, operational, theater-strategic, and national strategic leaders.

The perennial favorite of both the military operational and theater strategic leadership as well as the national strategic leadership is the number of Iraqi or HN security forces trained. One cannot read a news article or press release on the status of Iraq or 'progress report on the surge' without receiving an update on the status of Iraqi security forces. This metric has largely replaced the 'body count' numbers of the Vietnam War.[31] But the simple numbers alone do not serve as a useful measure.

A more accurate measure would be the number of Iraqi security forces trained, equipped, and present and available for duty. In haste to boost the numbers and give the Iraqi People and the international community a marked sign of progress, forces trained did not always mean forces equipped and capable. Many Iraqi troops were rushed through abbreviated training in a well meaning attempt to attain the desired numbers. These raw numbers also said nothing about the status of leadership and the ability of the units to plan and execute operations on an autonomous or even semi-autonomous basis.[32] The "numbers trained" also fail to account for how many stayed on to serve for a sustained period upon the completion of their training. In particular, during the early stages of establishing the security forces, desertion was a major issue.[33] This is obviously an extremely important statistic to monitor and analyze; the ability of the HN to provide for its own security is of paramount importance and is intertwined throughout the COIN LLOs. However, there must be careful qualitative analysis done for this statistic to have any meaning and serve as a useful MOE.

A counterargument can be made that the actual existence of a uniformed and sanctioned security force serves as progress enough and that the simple existence of those

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[31] Frederick W. Kagan, "Measuring Success," *Armed Forces Journal*, 143, No. 6 (January 2006), 2.
[32] Ibid., 1.
[33] Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, interview by Steve Inskeep, *Morning Edition*, 29 March 2005, <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2005/tr20050329-secdef2401.html>, accessed 9 March 2007.

force numbers have significant meaning. Yet, the past couple of years in Iraq have shown that one trained and equipped Iraqi police company is far more effective than several hastily trained and absent battalions.

Another frequently used and common metric is the number of counterinsurgent or U.S. and Coalition casualties in Iraq. This is by far the number one metric for mainstream media outlets and is again a poor indicator of progress or success in COIN.[34] Nothing can be determined in the prosecution of COIN operations from blanket casualty reports. Even comparing casualty rates and percentages to those of past counterinsurgencies is a poor metric. In Iraq the casualty rate remains well below half that of the Soviets in Afghanistan (with percentages adjusted for the overall troop strength in the three conflicts) or the United States in Vietnam, but that is not an indicator of progress or regression.[35] In the era of highly effective individual and vehicular armor coupled with responsive and effective medical care during an armed conflict that pits a technologically advanced foe against a more primitive one, pure casualty numbers do not measure the strength or intensity of an insurgency.

A better use of this statistic would be to measure the numbers of engagements involving COIN and insurgent forces as a reflection of the boldness or strength of the insurgency. However, this statistic too is flawed. As the COIN forces harden their positions or alter their behavior, insurgent forces are likely to shift their focus to attacks on the populace to remind everyone that 'cooperating with the HN or COIN forces will cost you and your family your lives'. Furthermore, the insurgents choose the place and time for most engagements against civilians and security forces. A brief respite during which the numbers of casualties and attacks decrease cannot be misinterpreted as a sure indicator of the

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[34] Kagan, "Measuring Success," 2.
[35] Ibid., 1.

effectiveness of the COIN effort. Measuring the number of engagements initiated by COIN

forces does serve as a useful metric. Not only does it reveal the insurgents may be losing the

initiative, more importantly, it demonstrates the quality of intelligence and tips provided by

the populace. This in turn expresses that the populace are attempting to take back control of

their neighborhoods and their lives from the insurgents.

One might argue that if the coalition is sustaining fewer casualties in the JOA, it must

mean that insurgency is losing. The insurgent does not have to hold ground or kill security

forces to be successful. So long as he continues to dominate the five inches between the ears

of the populace he is winning.

Another popular, yet equally poor measure of effectiveness and progress popularly

used is the number of insurgents killed. This is a holdover statistic from conventional and

high intensity wars and conflicts, and it utility simply does not translate to any level of COIN

warfare. Because insurgent organizations exist in a loosely related, flat, and cellular

structure, COIN forces never know exactly how many insurgent forces they are up against

and therefore, without an accurate baseline, any numbers of destroyed insurgent forces lose

meaning. Insurgents do not wear uniforms, nor do they carry Geneva Convention

identification cards or tags identifying them as members of an insurgency or movement.

Verifying who they are and why they were found on the opposite end of the security forces is

not always easy.

At the heart of this measure is the incorrect mindset that an insurgency can be

defeated with bullets.[36] Every lethal operation executed is an opportunity for the HN and

COIN forces to make mistakes and provides an opportunity for the insurgents to place blame.

The IO effects of the raids and engagements that target insurgents can have enormous

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[36] Cohen, Crane, Horvath, and Nagl, "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency," 52.

ramifications. Executing a militarily efficient raid that kills five or ten insurgents is futile and counterproductive if the collateral damage to life and property results in the recruitment of an entire neighborhood of insurgents or sympathizers.[37]

A counterargument can be made that if the HN and other security forces can just kill enough of the insurgents, the insurgents will surely lose their motivation and the movement will come to an end. One can look no further than the United States in Vietnam or the Soviet Union in Afghanistan to mute that counterargument. In both cases, overwhelming firepower, maneuver, and brute force were able to kill thousands of insurgents; and the world knows how it ended for those two superpowers. The disparity in the 'value of the object' is such that casualties are nearly meaningless to the insurgents. They are fighting for their very existence and no threat of force will deter them.

Though their use is fewer and more far between, one will see the occasional non-military-focused metrics mentioned with respect to COIN progress. Some examples are numbers of schools built or neighborhoods with essential services restored. In a COIN, even more important than the restoration of services or building of schools is the IO effort that must accompany the counterinsurgency—before, during, and after. Building ten new schools is a meaningless statistic unless the HN and not the insurgents is credited for doing so, and the schools are subsequently resourced to operate on a daily basis for an extended period of time. The management of expectations and sustainability of these services is just as important. The quantitative measures of numbers of blocks with running water and electricity simply do not capture the ancillary data that must accompany these efforts and which must be available to the operational commander for comparison against the spectrum of LLOs

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[37] Ibid., 51.

It can be argued that the raw numbers denoting the reestablishment of essential services or numbers reflecting percentages of operational critical infrastructure are meaningful MOE and appropriate indicators of progress against the insurgency. Again, the qualitative aspects of those developments are not always as easily measured and are arguably more important. Power and services must be restored for predictable intervals where the HN gets the credit for doing so and is able to explain when it is not available. Schools and hospitals must be resourced to stand up and continue to run and the HN must again get the credit and take ownership for doing so. Otherwise, each of these numbers and metrics could easily turn into a HN/Coalition liability and, in turn, an insurgent victory.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is no single dominant metric or MOE that will indicate progress or success in COIN. Placing too much focus on achieving dominance in a single tactical area or along a specific LLO will doom the COIN operation. Likewise, looking at numbers in a vacuum will never provide a valid indicator of success, progress, or failure. These aforementioned statistics are not irrelevant, but must be collected and analyzed together with other quantitative and qualitative data with respect to the established LLOs and the objectives contained therein. Doing so will provide proper assessment tools to allow the commander to give accurate reports on progress and adjust his strategy and tactics as necessary.

An alarming trend is that most metrics and MOEs presented in press releases and interviews of political and military leaders seem to focus on the lethal or military statistics. Leaders understand these are a small part of the overall COIN fight, but the military statistics are the easiest to collect and present because the bulk of the forces involved in the COIN effort come from the military establishment.

These statistics are simply tracked and are easily presented and explained to mass audiences. They offer a snapshot of activity in an area few people outside of the government know anything about. For these reasons, among many others, such statistics will continue to propagate the mass media. Commanders will and should continue to offer discrete quantitative metrics for public consumption; the public and media outlets will demand this information. Nonetheless, they should not forget or ignore that the real assessment comes from the collection and application of all tactical metrics against the logical lines of operation established to measure true progress in a counterinsurgency fight and determine the effectiveness of their strategy and path to victory.

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