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Matt Calvin
University of Denver

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**People, Partnerships and Collaboration: Understanding and Improving
Intelligence in Counterinsurgency**

People, Partnerships and Collaboration

UNDERSTANDING AND IMPROVING INTELLIGENCE IN COUNTERINSURGENCY

MATT CALVIN

University of Denver

M.A. Candidate, International Security

The goal of intelligence is to inform decision makers. While this general goal holds true for counterinsurgencies, the nature of the target requires an understanding of intelligence that is unique from the traditional Cold War focus on nation-state adversaries. This paper seeks to build upon the substantial current literature on population-centric counterinsurgency, theoretical studies of intelligence as a discipline, and the recent literature on military intelligence in counterinsurgency to construct an innovative model of intelligence as it relates to full-spectrum counterinsurgency. This model of intelligence is then utilized to provide recommendations on how intelligence efforts in counterinsurgency can be improved, advocating a new intelligence model, based on flexibility and adaptation and enabled by expanded human intelligence capabilities, networked integration and collaboration, and an emphasis on local partnerships.

The goal of intelligence is not specific to any one type of target or conflict. Intelligence is collected and produced to support and inform decision makers. This holds true whether the intelligence target is a nation-state government or a non-state actor, and it holds true in both conventional and unconventional conflicts. The intelligence process itself though is heavily dependent upon the target, and it must be designed specifically to address the realities of the situation in which it is being employed. During the Cold War, the American Intelligence Community grew and evolved to collect against and analyze the Soviet Union and the threat posed by a powerful nation-state adversary in a global ideological conflict. The current conflicts of the early 21st century, countering complex insurgencies with interdependent local and global elements in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, are fundamentally different in nature. Intelligence efforts to support decision makers in counterinsurgency (COIN), whether policy makers or military forces, must adapt to the unique nature of the conflict to be effective. Intelligence in counterinsurgency should be concentrated primarily on the population and must take a full spectrum approach, addressing the political, economic, social, humanitarian, development, and informational components as well as the military. This requires a new intelligence paradigm, based on flexibility and adaptation and enabled by expanded human intelligence capabilities, networked integration and collaboration, and an emphasis on local partnerships. This paper puts forth a model of insurgency that can be used in understanding the intelligence requirements of COIN, discusses the unique nature

of intelligence in COIN, and then provides recommendations for an improved intelligence capacity in COIN.

Combating insurgencies is not new to the Western world. Modern literature on insurgency and counterinsurgency stretches back to the writings of T.E. Lawrence and his experiences fighting alongside Arab tribes against Turkish occupation during World War I. While Lawrence actually fought on the side of the insurgency, his experiences and insights have been invaluable in the study of asymmetric warfare. The work of David Galula, a French soldier who drew upon his experiences in Indochina and Algeria, is another cornerstone of modern counterinsurgency theory. John Nagl's *Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife* compares the mid-20th century experiences of the British in Malaya and United States in Vietnam, drawing valuable conclusions on the importance of organizational learning and flexibility in COIN (Nagl 2005). The past eight years though have witnessed an explosion in academic literature on counterinsurgency, fueled by the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As these works have emerged, they have sought to recognize and grapple with a new, hybrid form of warfare, similar in many ways to traditional guerrilla warfare but fundamentally altered by the globalization of communications and information technology and extremist ideologies.

Drawing largely upon the hard-earned lessons of the early 21st century insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, recent literature on counterinsurgency seeks to comprehend the complex local-global nature of these conflicts. Many of the contributions come from soldiers and civilians who have had direct experience in these wars. David Kilcullen, an Australian Army officer and former advisor to U.S. General David Petraeus in Iraq, has become a prominent voice in favor of reduced use of force and greater focus on the needs of the civilian population. Kilcullen has based his theories on years of field research in conflict zones worldwide, studying the factors that lead the undecided within a population group to form or join an insurgency (Kilcullen 2009b). Numerous articles have emerged in military publications, such as *Military Review*, as well, built upon on the real successes and failures of ongoing counterinsurgency efforts. The RAND Corporation and other think tanks have also weighed in heavily on the subject, constructing comprehensive studies of insurgencies past and present, searching for trends and lessons that can be extracted and leveraged to combat the asymmetric conflicts of today and tomorrow (Gompert and Gordon IV 2008).

Much of the existing literature on counterinsurgency mentions intelligence as a critical component in assessing and combating insurgencies, but it does not focus specifically on the unique nature of intelligence in this mode of conflict. The difference between intelligence targeting nation-states and intelligence targeting non-state insurgent groups is substantial, yet few studies have focused primarily upon this issue. Those authors that have focused primarily on intelligence have approached the subject from a heavily military intelligence focused perspective. Kyle Teamey and U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Sweet have created a comprehensive model for organizing intelligence in counterinsurgency, upon which this paper relies heavily, but the focus is on military intelligence efforts, making only passing reference to non-military components of intelligence (Teamey and Sweet 2006). U.S. Army Major Dan Zeytoonian and a team of officers from the Command and General Staff Officer Course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas have built a comprehensive comparison between military intelligence in conventional military operations and those in COIN - a comparison which

has provided valuable insight to this paper as well - but the comparison is more tactical than broadly theoretical (Zeytoonian, et al. 2006). The new Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual itself contains an entire chapter on intelligence, but, again, the focus is military and doctrinal in nature.

This paper seeks to build upon the substantial current literature on population-centric counterinsurgency, theoretical studies of intelligence as a discipline, and the recent literature on military intelligence in counterinsurgency to construct an innovative model of intelligence as it relates to full-spectrum COIN. The purpose is not to construct entirely new theories on insurgency or counterinsurgency, since numerous authors and practitioners have developed these in recent years based on substantial field research and experience, but rather to bring these theories together with existing literature on the study of intelligence to create a new way of understanding intelligence as it relates to counterinsurgency. This paper will begin by providing a generalized model of insurgency from which to start discussion. From this model, it will then provide four key tenets of successful counterinsurgency, based upon the recent literature on the subject. While the concept of “successful counterinsurgency” is still highly contested, the model proposed here is based upon the views of the leading contemporary experts on the issue. From there the paper discusses why intelligence is unique in counterinsurgency, beginning with a theoretical look at the nature of intelligence as a discipline and outlining a set of six unique differences between conventional and COIN intelligence, based largely upon existing work on military intelligence in COIN, the previously highlighted components of successful COIN, and a theoretical focus on intelligence itself. This model of intelligence within counterinsurgency is then utilized to provide three unique sets of recommendations on how intelligence efforts in counterinsurgency missions can be improved.

Model for Understanding Insurgency

While this paper is not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of insurgency, a general understanding is necessary to study the unique intelligence requirements of a counterinsurgency mission. Bard O’Neill broadly defines an insurgency as “a struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities in which the non-ruling group consciously uses *political resources* (e.g. organizational expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations) and *violence* to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics” (O’Neill 2005, 15). The critical components are the asymmetric relationship between the ruling and non-ruling groups and the centrality of legitimacy as the ultimate focus of the conflict. These factors distinguish insurgency from interstate conflict or civil war and identify the non-aligned population as a key player in determining legitimacy of either of the belligerent groups.

While there are certain fundamental factors that are common to all insurgencies, it is helpful to distinguish between different types of insurgency based on common characteristics. This paper will focus primarily on the complex global-local variety seen today in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, in which elements of global extremist networks have joined local insurgents in opposition to weak or emerging host-nation governments. A 2006 RAND Corporation report on COIN defines these global-local insurgencies as *Type III* insurgencies, defined as local insurgencies receiving outside support, making

them part of a wider regional or global struggle (Gompert and Gordon IV 2008, xxx). This report also notes that Type III insurgencies pose the “greatest challenges of 21st century insurgency” due to the effects of globalization (Gompert and Gordon IV 2008, 48).

The most prominent cases of Type III insurgency today are in Iraq and Afghanistan, where members of Al Qaeda (AQ) are fighting against local governments and intervening Western forces in an attempt to further their *takfiri* ideology and agenda through opposition to Western forces and host-nation governments that they view as illegitimate. While the insurgency model in this paper has been designed to cover more than just global-local insurgencies, the paper will focus primarily on the intelligence efforts of the United States and its Western allies involved in counterinsurgencies against AQ-allied insurgents, primarily in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Insurgency Space

Analyzing and understanding an insurgency requires an accurate picture of both the spatial and temporal domains of the conflict. Figure 1 below contains a generalized model of the insurgency space. This model is a simplified and incomplete representation of an extremely complex social and political phenomenon, but it serves to highlight some of the key components necessary to understanding insurgency.

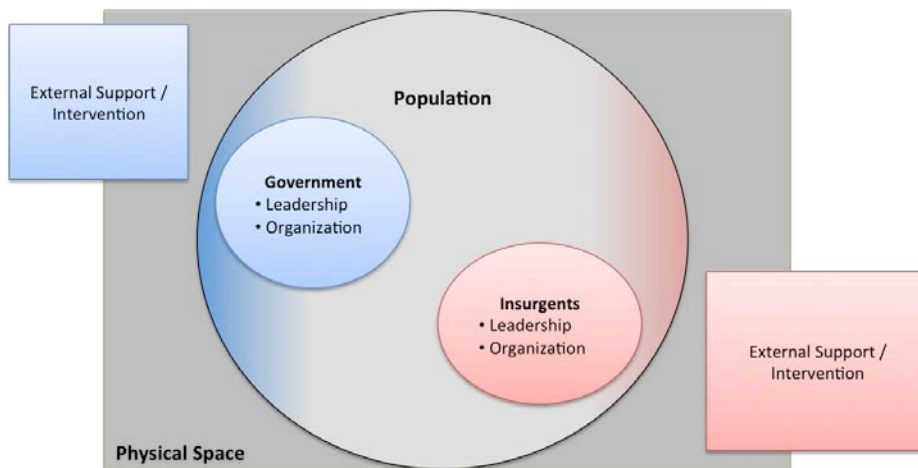


Figure 1: Insurgency Space

The insurgency space exists on the backdrop of a physical space, since all forces and actions exist within the physical world. This space is scalable and need not be contiguous or coincide with any specific political borders or boundaries. Physical space also includes the physical components of cyberspace, such as servers and internet access points, representing the physical access points of an otherwise amorphous medium (Demarest 2009). All actors within an insurgency must occupy a physical location, and geospatial considerations have direct influence on the other factors in an insurgency.

Within the physical space is the population, which is the central factor in any insurgency. In global-local insurgencies, like those in Iraq and Afghanistan, the broadest population group is the citizenry of those countries, living within the recognized existing

nation-state political boundaries. An important part of understanding the insurgency space is recognizing the scalability of the various components. The same theoretical divisions used to look at a nation-wide insurgency can be used to analyze a much more localized segment of insurgency. As recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown, the population itself contains many divisions, whether sectarian, tribal, ethnic, or others, and recognizing and understanding those divisions within the population is critical.

Within the population also exist the opposing forces of insurgent and government. Many insurgency models focus heavily on the insurgent forces, at the expense of the opposing government, or counterinsurgent, forces. This model includes both with equal weight, as the nature and actions of each have equally strong influence on the progression and outcome of an insurgency. It is important to note that these groups exist within - and not separate from - the larger population, since the actual membership of each group draws upon the population.

External support can play a critical role in an insurgency as well, as the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate today. As the figure above reflects, this support can be outside the physical space of the insurgency, in the form of financial support, ideology, or training, or within the physical space, in the form of direct intervention of external actors. Both types of support are visible in Iraq and Afghanistan today. Since local-global insurgencies are defined by the connection between the local conflict and a larger global struggle, external support must be understood as a defining component of the conflict

The Insurgency Cycle

Understanding the temporal, cyclic component of an insurgency, including its origins and the actions and reactions that fuel or impede its progress, is the second component of this model. Figure 2 below shows a generalized model of the insurgency cycle. This has been adapted from an earlier model created by Paul Viotti, which focused on causal understandings of insurgencies and potential counterstrategies (Viotti 2008, 14).

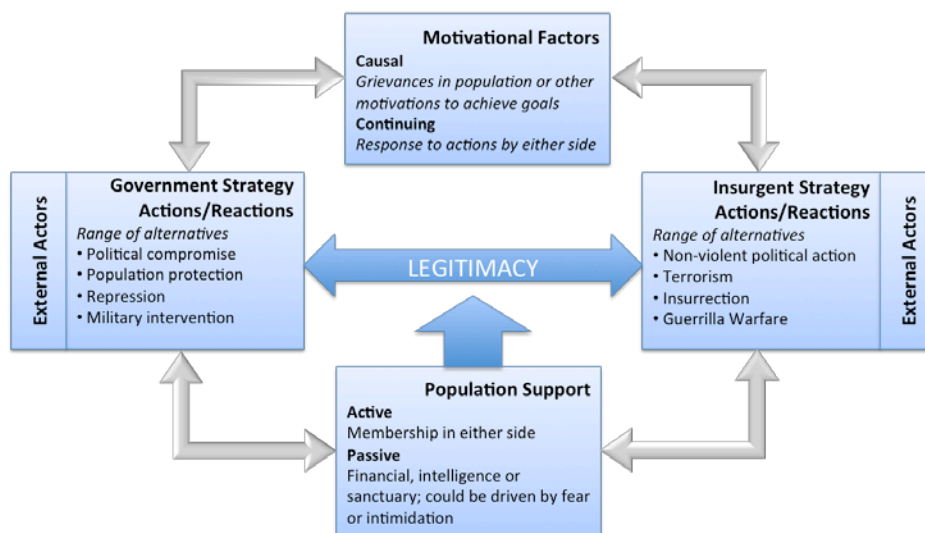


Figure 2: Insurgency Cycle

The representation of insurgency as a multidirectional cycle serves to highlight its evolutionary, adaptive nature. There is no cleanly defined beginning or end within this cycle, and the four components - motivational factors, insurgent strategy and action/reaction, government strategy and action/reaction, and population support - influence and react to the others in the cycle as an insurgency progresses.

Motivational Factors

Motivational factors are the grievances or motivations driving both groups within the conflict. This includes the grievances driving insurgents to contest the legitimacy and authority of the government, as well as the motivations of the government itself. It is important to recognize that neither group is necessarily homogenous in its motivations and goals. Different groups within the larger insurgency or government may have competing motivations, and a deeper understanding of the insurgency requires recognizing and understanding these fractured and localized motivations. Motivational factors may evolve throughout the course of a conflict as well, but the original set of factors that led to the emergence of the insurgency are especially important in understanding the origins and initial nature of the insurgency.

Strategy and Actions/Reactions

The strategies and actions of both the government and insurgent forces must be considered together, as they drive one another in a continually adapting and evolving fashion. Both are shaped as well by motivational factors, whether causal or continuing. The asymmetric nature of the conflict provides a different range of political and military actions to each side in the conflict. As insurgents seek to address grievances and further their goals, possible options range from non-violent political activity to guerrilla warfare to terrorism and assassination. As governments seek to destroy or isolate the insurgent group within the population, they may choose non-violent alternatives, like political compromise or redress of grievances, or violent alternatives, from broad repression to targeted assassination.

Population Support

The fourth component of the cycle is population support. This refers to the alignment and actions of the population group that does not have active membership with either side in the conflict. The support of the population, which determines the legitimacy of the government or insurgency, is the primary target of both sides in the conflict. Neither side can achieve its objectives without the support of the population over which it seeks control or governance, which is why legitimacy is the ultimate objective of both sides. It is directly shaped by the actions of both groups and influenced by the same motivational factors that drive government and insurgent actions. As the cycle continues, the neutral population may choose active membership on either side, bolstering government or insurgent forces. More common is the passive support of either side, which can take the form of financial assistance, intelligence on belligerent actions, or sanctuary for insurgent

forces. Passive support is often coerced through fear or intimidation as part of government or insurgent strategies. Population support is the lynchpin of the insurgency cycle, as it drives the strategies and actions on both sides and shapes the legitimacy of each group.

As mentioned above, this model is a highly generalized and imperfect representation of an extremely complex mode of conflict. In looking at the role of intelligence within a counterinsurgency though, the two components of the model can serve to highlight the dominant factors that must be addressed in both the spatial and temporal domains. This understanding can inform the role that intelligence must play in confronting an insurgency.

Counterinsurgency: Four Key Tenets

The purpose of this paper is not to define a new counterinsurgency strategy. Scholars and practitioners like David Kilcullen and John Nagl and organizations like the RAND corporation have written extensively on counterinsurgency in recent years, based on case studies, empirical data and comprehensive field research. Many of these lessons have been learned at great cost over the past eight years in Iraq and Afghanistan. The intent here instead is to build upon the strategies advocated by these experts to determine the role that intelligence can play in enabling and improving the chances of success. Intelligence is a critical component in counterinsurgency, and as new counterinsurgency strategies are advocated and adopted, intelligence must adapt accordingly for those strategies to succeed. This section outlines four key tenets of effective counterinsurgency, based on the recent literature, from which to begin further discussion of intelligence efforts within counterinsurgency.

Population-Centric Strategy

As expressed in the insurgency model above, the population is the critical objective for both parties in an insurgency. Recent literature on counterinsurgency supports this assumption by advocating strategies that are *population-centric* in nature (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State 2009, 14). The first component of population-centric counterinsurgency is the security and protection of the population. If legitimacy in the eyes of the population is the final objective in counterinsurgency, then the provision of security becomes the first step in attaining that legitimacy. As opinion polls in Afghanistan have shown over the past five years, security and stability generally trumps all other factors in determining the perceptions of the people towards the government (Rennie, Sharma and Sen 2008, 15-18).

A key tenet underlying population-centric security is the reality that it is impossible to kill or capture enough insurgents to end the conflict, since this approach ultimately results in unintended civilian casualties, fuels grievances against the government, and increases support for the insurgency. As this process continues, the insurgent group grows with the membership of locals who may have had no prior motivation to support the insurgency. Counterinsurgent actions actually initiate the insurgency cycle for a group of aggrieved locals, providing motivation and creating new enemies.

Based on substantial field research in Southeast Asia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, David Kilcullen has described this process as the *accidental guerrilla syndrome*:

This is the phase in which local people begin to become accidental guerrillas, fighting along extremist forces not because they support the takfiri ideology but because they oppose outside interference in their affairs, because they are rallied to support local tribal or community interests, or because they are alienated by heavy-handed actions of the intervening force (Kilcullen 2009b, 38).

While this quote mentions specifically the *takfiri* ideology of Al Qaeda and its allies as the ideological motivating factor of the hard core of the insurgency, Kilcullen argues that the situation applies to insurgencies with other causal motivations as well. The terms *reconcilable* and *irreconcilable* have also been used to distinguish between those insurgents who have no ideological stake in the conflict and could potentially be turned away from the insurgency and those who cannot and must ultimately be killed or captured. According to Kilcullen, the reconcilable generally largely outnumber the irreconcilable, and a population-centric approach focused on driving a wedge between the two groups rather than inadvertently fueling their cohesion has much greater chances of success with far less cost in blood and treasure (Kilcullen 2009b, 49). While the ways in which to accomplish this are largely dependent on the individual conflict and actors, doing more to meet the needs of reconcilable insurgents – whether in the form of security or development assistance – than the irreconcilable forces are able is a fundamental way to encourage a schism within an insurgency.

Politics and Governance

A second and equally important component of population-centric counterinsurgency is the recognition that the only real chance of success lies in a political solution and the establishment of a legitimate, effective government. The Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual lists political power as “the central issue in insurgencies and counterinsurgencies” (U.S. Army and Marine Corps 2007, 2). In a comprehensive study of historical insurgencies, Gompert and Gordon of the RAND Corporation found “authoritarian, unresponsive, inept and corrupt government” and “populations excluded from politics and estranged from the state” to be two of the four strongest predictors of failed counterinsurgency (Gompert and Gordon IV 2008, 13-14). Within the insurgency cycle, population support is unlikely if the government cannot meet the needs of the population. In short, as this same RAND study states, “there is no substitute for legitimate, effective local government” (Gompert and Gordon IV 2008, 14-15).

In coordination with efforts to reduce violence and protect the population, counterinsurgency is also a struggle to build a local government that is legitimate, efficient, transparent, and can begin to meet the needs of its citizens. Building government capacity does not mean embedding international aide organizations as a parallel government to provide services or structuring local government from a Western model. To improve the legitimacy of the government, all actions must be guided and championed by host-nation leaders and must assume a form that is compatible with the indigenous culture (deVillafranca 2008-2009, 85). The establishment of effective

government is critical in counterinsurgency, but real legitimacy can only be achieved through genuine representation of the indigenous population. Puppet regimes supported by foreign governments may be able to maintain control in the near term, but are unsustainable in the long term.

Flexibility and Adaptation

In addition to population-centric security and the establishment of effective governance, flexibility and adaptation are vital in counterinsurgency. Karl von Clausewitz long ago coined the term “fog of war,” writing that “war is the province of uncertainty; three-fourths of the things on which action in war is based lie hidden in the fog of a greater or less uncertainty” (Clausewitz 2000, 299). Asymmetric warfare is no exception to this principle, and, as Thomas Mockaitis has argued, the fog may indeed be “thickest at the low end of the conflict spectrum, where arguably it never dissipates” (Mockaitis 1999, 40). An insurgency survives by blending in with and floating among the population, concealing the identities and operations of its members against counterinsurgent forces with the assistance – whether willing or coerced – of civilians. When the adversary is formless and the objective is as lofty and nebulous as building the legitimacy of a government and gaining the loyalty and trust of an entire population, uncertainty is constant.

Counterinsurgents must address the uncertainty inherent in asymmetric warfare by embracing institutional learning across all organizations involved. In comparing the institutional learning capabilities of the British military in Malaya and the American military in Vietnam, John Nagl noted that “the key to organizational learning is getting the decision-making authority to allow such innovation, monitor its effectiveness, and then transmit new doctrine with strict requirements that it be followed throughout the organization” (Nagl 2005, 195). Insurgent forces are highly agile and adaptive, and the motivational factors fueling an insurgency may evolve rapidly as well. Additionally, insurgents are generally not bound by the same institutional rules and processes as government or Western forces are, allowing rapid adaptation and innovation of new tactics without the need for approval or review. Combating a highly adaptive enemy requires that learning and flexibility be institutionalized within counterinsurgent forces to better enable the inevitable changes and innovations required to confront an insurgency as the cycle progresses.

Full Spectrum Counterinsurgency

The final principal of effective population-centric counterinsurgency is that it must be a *full spectrum* effort, integrating all relevant actors - civilian, military and intelligence - within an integrated strategy that addresses the conflict as more than just a military concern (Kilcullen 2009b, 265). As local government legitimacy is so important, it is imperative that full spectrum also include the host-nation government as well. Within a population-centric approach, those issues which affect the population – political, economic, social, humanitarian, development, informational, and security – need to be considered in a comprehensive manner. Limited resources, in terms of personnel and

budget, are a reality in counterinsurgency, but failing to consider a comprehensive approach is detrimental to counterinsurgency efforts.

The four components of an effective population-centric counterinsurgency strategy outlined above are certainly not comprehensive or prescriptive, but they serve as a basis for looking at the specific function of intelligence in counterinsurgency. In summary, the following four points highlight the key counterinsurgency principles that effective intelligence must support:

- Population-centric security, with an emphasis on minimizing the application of force and isolating irreconcilable insurgents from neutral civilians and reconcilable insurgents
- Increasing the legitimacy of the local government through increased effectiveness and institutional capacity, while ensuring that it provides genuine representation of the indigenous population
- Institutionalized learning and flexibility across all organizations involved in counterinsurgency
- Full spectrum counterinsurgency, which integrates the efforts of all involved parties and takes a comprehensive view, within realistic limitations, of all factors that impact the population and the establishment of a legitimate government.

Intelligence and COIN: Why is Intelligence Different in Counterinsurgency?

Before looking the unique requirements of intelligence in counterinsurgency, it is worth looking at the general purpose of intelligence as a function performed by political organizations. Mark Lowenthal distinguishes intelligence from information, describing intelligence as “information that meets the stated or understood needs of policy makers and has been collected, processed, and narrowed to meet those needs” (Lowenthal 2009, 1). Within counterinsurgency, policy makers can be expanded to include decision makers at all levels, whether military commanders or civilian leadership.

American foreign and military intelligence capabilities were primarily developed during the Cold War to target nation-state adversaries. Insurgency and transnational terrorism are certainly not new to the United States, but intelligence efforts against these targets during the Cold War were undertaken in the shadow of the dominant Soviet threat. While 9/11 and the subsequent interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have raised counterinsurgency and counterterrorism to the top of the intelligence priority list, the intelligence community has been slow to reorient and restructure itself. While this may be an oversimplification of pre-9/11 intelligence community mission and capabilities, it does reflect a level of truth based on the nature of the Cold War and the needs of policy makers and war fighters during that timeframe. The primary concerns of intelligence customers were nation-state adversaries, and intelligence was structured to address those concerns.

There are inherent characteristics of an intelligence capability built to target nation-state governments or conventional militaries, including a reliance on complex technical collections systems and a dominant focus on obtaining and protecting secret information (Lowenthal 2009, 233-235). When targeting a nation-state for collection, the geospatial target area is inherently bounded by political borders. The space within those borders is

generally denied-territory, which creates the need for technical collection capabilities to access that space. Conventional warfare against industrial, technologically advanced militaries relies heavily upon technical collections capabilities as well. Understanding the force posture and capabilities of opposing militaries was primarily a technical intelligence problem, with human espionage playing a supporting role.

When targeting nation-states, the dominant focus on secret information exists because governments generally guard their most important secrets very closely. Government political plans, advanced weapons program details, or ulterior foreign policy intentions are rarely openly available. The primary focus of intelligence under this constraint is to obtain that secret information, defeating any denial and deception measures being employed, without revealing how the information was obtained, so that it can be accessed again (Bruce and Bennett 2008, 125). The secretive and stove-piped nature of the modern intelligence community largely evolved because of the critical need to protect the intelligence sources and methods upon which the intelligence community and the policy makers it served relied (Lowenthal 2009, 77-78).

Six Principals for Intelligence in COIN

Why are the requirements of intelligence in counterinsurgency different from those needed to conduct a conventional war or collect on and analyze a powerful, industrial nation-state adversary? The differences come from the reality that targets themselves are drastically different, the sources of critical information are less guarded yet still difficult to access, and the mission that intelligence is supporting is of a much different nature. While this set of six principles overlaps in part with the six principles outlined by Teamey and Sweet in their 2006 article on intelligence in counterinsurgency, this set of principles is intended to apply beyond the specific area of military intelligence, focusing on numerous aspects of insurgency and counterinsurgency (Teamey and Sweet 2006).

Focus on the Civilian Population

First, the primary focus in counterinsurgency is on the civilian population, as opposed to the military capabilities and political intentions of a hostile government or conventional military. Population-centric intelligence is critical to a successful population-centric counterinsurgency strategy. As Teamey and Sweet noted, “counterinsurgency is an intelligence war” and “intelligence in counterinsurgency is about people” (Teamey and Sweet 2006, 28). The importance of the local population cannot be overstated, as the eventual outcome of the conflict depends upon its perceptions, motivations, hopes and fears. The primary goal of intelligence must be to understand the population. All other objectives serve to support this primary goal.

Understanding the population enables military commanders and decision makers to distinguish between skeptical civilians, accidental guerrillas and ideologically motivated extremists (Kilcullen 2009b, 284). Operational planning can then seek to isolate civilians and reconcilable insurgents from irreconcilable insurgents through combined military, political, economic, informational, and developmental efforts, rather than focusing on eliminating an ill-defined, and ultimately larger, insurgent set within the insurgency space through military targeting alone.

Greater Emphasis on Open Source Information

Second, in counterinsurgency there is less emphasis on secret information. As David Kilcullen has suggested, “secret intelligence may matter less than situational awareness based on unclassified but difficult-to-access information” (Kilcullen 2009a, 497). The RAND COIN study by Gompert and Gordon has estimated that 90 percent of needed information in counterinsurgency is likelier to come from the population and other COIN users than from secret sources and methods (Gompert and Gordon IV 2008, xliii). This shift from the paradigm of secrecy is directly related to the population-centric nature of an insurgency. The information most vital to counterinsurgents is hidden primarily within the opinions and perceptions of the population. Accessing it can still be difficult, but it is not purposefully guarded by its owners nor inherently secret once it has been obtained.

Insurgents may engage in denial and deception efforts to conceal their own locations and intentions, but while this intelligence is still of critical importance in combating an insurgency, it is secondary to the population. Effective population-centric counterinsurgency will generate its own intelligence on the identities and locations of insurgents, and when truly successful, the alienation of insurgents from the population will force them into engagement with counterinsurgent forces (Kilcullen 2009b, 146).

Intelligence is Localized

Third, intelligence is much more localized in counterinsurgency. Understanding the leadership structure, identities, needs, motivations and fears of individual villages and neighborhoods requires much more local focus than studying the political leanings of Soviet politburo members who hold control over an entire nation-state territory. According to Teamey and Sweet, insurgencies themselves are “local, vary greatly in time and space, and are mosaic-like” (Teamey and Sweet 2006, 28). Counterinsurgency intelligence must be scaled to the diverse and numerous localized realities within the larger theatre of operations.

Local Intelligence Has a Global Component

Fourth, while intelligence in counterinsurgency is more localized, it must also acknowledge and consider the global component of a global-local insurgency. While it may seem paradoxical that intelligence in COIN can be simultaneously local and global, it is a reality of the modern global-local insurgency. While local factors are critical to the understanding of an insurgency within an area of operations, global factors, such as propaganda, information, training, financing, and weapons, can be supplied to local insurgents from around the world. Conversely, local occurrences in theatre, such as collateral damage resulting in civilian deaths, can be shared around the world by insurgents via the internet and global news media with no cost and little effort.

Intelligence Must Consider Unintended Consequences of COIN

Fifth, intelligence in counterinsurgency must seek to anticipate and predict the unintended consequences of counterinsurgent actions. While this is an important and responsible consideration in any decision making process, the very nature of insurgency makes this an imperative. Insurgent strategies themselves are dependent upon the 2nd and 3rd order unintended consequences of counterinsurgent actions (Kilcullen 2009b, 29). An overreaction to an insurgent offensive that results in civilian casualties can have widespread and lasting negative consequences. As noted earlier, a flexible counterinsurgency capable of learning from its successes and failures and adapting accordingly is critical, but all adaptation must take into consideration potential unintended consequences. Intelligence must recognize this and seek to anticipate how counterinsurgent actions will affect the environment, both locally and globally.

Intelligence Must be Full Spectrum

Sixth, just as counterinsurgency itself must be full spectrum, intelligence supporting counterinsurgency must be a full spectrum enterprise, requiring efficient coordination and collaboration between all involved parties. The synchronization of civilian, military, host-nation, and multinational efforts to simultaneously strengthen a local government, protect a population and combat insurgents requires a more flexible and networked intelligence effort than exists today.

As mentioned above, Cold War intelligence capabilities were developed in stove-pipes because of the need to protect capabilities, and the nature of the threat made the limitations acceptable. Different agencies collected different types of intelligence, and all-source agencies, like the CIA, DIA, and State Department INR, channeled the finished intelligence to the President and other national and military leaders who needed it to make decisions. Tactical and theatre military intelligence capabilities were largely separate from the national foreign intelligence efforts. National-tactical integration was never a primary priority of the intelligence community (McConnell 2007, 49-50).

In counterinsurgency, national-tactical integration is vital, as both levels can benefit directly from the intelligence efforts of the other. Within the military intelligence structure, Teamey and Sweet argue that “in a joint-combined environment, all echelons must work at intelligence” (Teamey and Sweet 2006, 28). Modern insurgencies generally do not operate with rigid command and control hierarchies, so intelligence efforts cannot be organized that way either. Intelligence must be horizontally and vertically networked with as much flexibility as the insurgency it is targeting.

Recommendations for Improved Intelligence in Counterinsurgency

Expanded Human Intelligence: A New Look at The Oldest Form of Intelligence

Human intelligence, or HUMINT, primarily involves the collection of intelligence from human sources. It is the world of espionage and spying that is most commonly associated with the intelligence community. Spying is the most ancient form of

intelligence, having been described as the world's second oldest profession (Lowenthal 2009, 97). When targeting nation-states, HUMINT is largely based upon intelligence officers operating out of embassies overseas and recruiting and handling foreign sources. Potential sources are developed very carefully, being targeted, assessed, pitched and handled through a specific acquisition process (Lowenthal 2009, 97). The most valuable sources are well placed within foreign governments or militaries, and concealing the identities and activities of source and handler are necessary to protect both parties and to ensure the continuity of access.

To be effective in population-centric counterinsurgency, the traditional definitions of both HUMINT targets and collectors should to be expanded. Targeting a nation-state government or military requires assets that can report on a relatively small circle of elite decision makers; the views and opinions of the non-elite population are of minimal importance. In counterinsurgency, power and authority are often fractured among many different competing individuals and organizations, and the battle for legitimacy between the government and the insurgent is ultimately decided by the population.

Expanding the HUMINT target set means moving beyond a traditionally small set of assets among government elites, power brokers and military leadership to include sources among the general population. As Dan Zeytoonian has noted, "In COIN, useful intelligence is most often obtained through personal contact with the population. This puts a disproportionate level of importance on HUMINT and requires a different understanding of it" (Zeytoonian, et al. 2006, 33). The danger in cultivating only a small set of assets among and around those who wield authority is that it draws information only from a fraction of the population involved in the insurgency. The experiences, fears and opinions of the general population are critically important in counterinsurgency. If insurgents are intimidating a particular segment of the population, this is a component of insurgent strategy and must be identified. If civilians are unhappy with services being provided by the government in their area, this is important data as well. If the government fails to provide the necessary services, the insurgents will, and loss of government legitimacy will be the penalty.

The organizations explicitly responsible for HUMINT within the Intelligence Community are the CIA and DIA. Unfortunately, neither currently has the manpower or mandate to assume responsibility for recruiting and handling a greater number of assets within populations facing insurgent conflict. Providing expanded human intelligence in counterinsurgency requires more collectors being trained and tasked to engage in this form of intelligence collection. Counterinsurgency is a full spectrum enterprise involving personnel from various military and civilian entities, many of whom have regular, direct contact with the population. With targeted training and direction, these existing relationships can be leveraged to provide a much broader source of population-centric HUMINT to counterinsurgent forces.

The intent in this expansion is not to replace traditional clandestine HUMINT operations but rather to augment them with an overt, population-centric human intelligence capability. The sources are still human, so this intelligence still falls within the purview of HUMINT, but the nature of the collection process and resulting intelligence is changed. Rather than collecting discrete secrets from well placed sources, this capability is intended to construct a more accurate picture of the "human terrain"

within which counterinsurgents are operating. This enables better understanding of all actors inside the insurgency space and the realities driving the insurgency cycle.

Collaborative Intelligence: Leveraging the Benefits of Full Spectrum COIN

An expanded population-centric HUMINT collection capability in counterinsurgency will generate valuable intelligence about the motivations and perceptions of the population, but absorbing and making use of that intelligence requires increased capabilities for collaboration among all components of a counterinsurgency mission.

The value of full spectrum counterinsurgency is only enabled when the complete array of military, civilian and intelligence components are able to communicate with and learn from one another. The complex, hybrid nature of modern insurgent conflict means that the success of a reconstruction project can have direct influence on the perceptions of the population, which can then build legitimacy for the government, bolster the support of the population, and drive insurgents from a particular area (Kilcullen 2009b, 71). Success in this hybrid environment requires intelligence that is shared openly and quickly across organizational and national boundaries.

Part of this effort requires the technological infrastructure to share information across organizational and national boundaries. The technical details of such a network are beyond the scope of this paper, but the infrastructure should be designed with an emphasis on expanded user access, direct communication between users at all levels, and easy sharing of data. Libicki, Gompert, Frelinger and Smith of the RAND corporation have written in detail about the information technology requirements of effective counterinsurgency, including a proposed Integrated Counterinsurgency Operating Network (ICON) which would emphasize “user primacy, inclusiveness and integration” (Libicki, et al. 2007, xxiii). Such a comprehensive network infrastructure could serve as the backbone for an expanded collaborative intelligence capability.

A key component of improved collaboration should also be the adoption of the tools, processes, methodologies and philosophies that are commonly known as “Web 2.0”. In an assessment of social media and its implications for national security, Mark Drapeau and Linton Wells describe Web 2.0 as “dynamic and participatory, where software interacts among many users and across many devices, and persons effortlessly shift between author and audience states” (Drapeau and Wells II 2009, 1). While the application of tools like wikis, blogs, and social networking – components of Web 2.0 – may seem out of place in a discussion of insurgent conflict, the principals behind Web 2.0 – user empowerment, reduced redundancy of effort, and collective intelligence, have direct application to the intelligence requirements of population-centric counterinsurgency.

The greater difficulty in enabling stronger collaboration will be cultural, rather than technological (Gompert and Gordon IV 2008, xliiii). As technologist Andrew McAfee pointed out in a discussion of Web 2.0 adoption by large commercial enterprises, empowering users to share and collaborate with fewer constraints decreases the ability for centralized control of information, which can be an uncomfortable adjustment, to say the least, for managers of that system (McAfee 2006, 28). It can be assumed that this would be especially true in the field of intelligence, where national security is at stake. In counterinsurgency, the implications for system misuse are grave, so the design of the

system would need to include checks and balances, such as mandatory user attribution and effective monitoring capabilities. Components of the intelligence community have already begun adoption of similar collaborative systems, like Intellipedia, so there are already sources for lessons learned and expertise that can be drawn upon as these capabilities are built to enable collaboration in counterinsurgency (Medina 2008, 245). Ideally, existing systems would be integrated with any counterinsurgency intelligence network as it comes online.

Collaborative intelligence should also place greater emphasis on open source intelligence (OSINT) than currently exists. As noted earlier, the intelligence required for counterinsurgency is primarily unclassified and open source in nature, focused largely on the population itself. This can include direct HUMINT reporting from members of the population as well as local or global media reporting on the conflict. As Dan Zeytoonian has noted, “Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) also gains a measure of importance that it does not have against a conventional threat. The intelligence analyst has much to gain from what people say on the radio and write in newspapers. Just gauging the number of pro- and anti-government newspapers printed in a certain area is telling” (Zeytoonian, et al. 2006, 33).

Additionally, open source information is cheaper, has fewer, if any, access and sharing restrictions, and greatly expands the pool of potential sources. Intelligence officers that are trained, encouraged and empowered to utilize open source information as well as secret information will be able to more effectively obtain the information that they need, regardless of the source (Steele 2008, 141). Additionally, OSINT enables more effective use of a collaborative network like that suggested above, since classification and compartmentalization are no longer impediments to access. Not only are the sources of intelligence expanded, but the viewers and analysts of intelligence are expanded as well. As Steele has pointed out in arguments for greater use of OSINT throughout the intelligence community, “open source intelligence harnesses what *everyone* sees and knows” (Steele 2008, 148).

A potential, unconventional component of networked intelligence and greater focus on OSINT is the concept of “crowd-sourcing,” or distributing tasks among an unstructured, collective workforce on a voluntary basis. This may seem counterproductive to further integration among counterinsurgents, but for some analytical tasks, such as translating foreign language media or analyzing strategic trends within and beyond the theatre of insurgency, the internet expands the pool of available talent and capability substantially. Indeed, websites like jihadica.com and smallwarsjournal.com leverage the combined knowledge and opinions of academics, former and current soldiers and intelligence officers, and the interested public to produce commentary and analysis of topics directly related to ongoing counterinsurgency efforts. The “about” section of jihadica.com highlights the value of this approach:

Jihadica is a clearinghouse for materials related to militant, transnational Sunni Islamism, commonly known as Jihadism. At the moment, much of this material is diffuse, known only to a few specialists, and inaccessible to the public and policymakers unless they pay a fee. Jihadica provides this material for free and keeps a daily record of its dissemination that can be easily searched and studied. These records are accompanied by the expert commentary of people who have the

requisite language training to understand the primary source material and advanced degrees in relevant fields (McCants 2009).

It is of course the responsibility of the intelligence analyst or counterinsurgency practitioner accessing and utilizing this open information to vet the credibility and reliability of the source, but this is true for any intelligence, whether open or secret.

Finally, enhanced intelligence collaboration within counterinsurgency enables greater continuity of experience, expertise and skill as new personnel are brought in and current personnel are rotated among different positions. New personnel could have access to a database of accumulated knowledge, and the capability for reaching back to the individuals themselves who have the relevant knowledge and experience could be integrated directly into the technical and cultural operational processes. A recognition of the value of this type of capability already exists within the military, and new programs are being implemented to develop individuals who can provide “continuity, expertise and relationships” in a specific theatre of operations (Bumiller and Shanker 2009). Counterinsurgency intelligence, and operations in general, could be greatly improved by an expansion of this concept to all aspects of the mission.

More Effective Partners: A Greater Focus on Competencies for Learning, Training and Communicating

The approaches above for expanded HUMINT capabilities and greater collaboration are important in improved population-centric intelligence, but the additional component that can make these concepts successful is a greater specific focus on partnership with local government, military and civilian partners. The importance of improving host-nation capacity, the need for deep cultural knowledge, a widespread weariness of foreign involvement, and the high costs of a protracted insurgency all support the conclusion that the most ideal intelligence collectors and analysts are locals.

The first component of improved partnership is the ability of counterinsurgent personnel to advise and train locals. John Nagl has advocated strongly for a greater advisory capacity within the military, arguing that “the most important military component of the Long War will not be the fighting we do ourselves, but how well we enable and empower our allies to fight with us” (Nagl 2007, 3). Improving the legitimacy of the host-nation government is in part a matter of improving institutional capability and efficiency. Professional Western forces have a great deal to teach indigenous forces as they seek to establish professional military, intelligence and police forces amidst the chaos of an ongoing insurgency.

The value of an advisory role extends to the civilian components of counterinsurgency as well. Hank Crumpton has noted a Department of Justice program which sends U.S. attorneys overseas to serve as legal advisers to local governments as a successful example of this concept (Bartholet 2008). The program not only provides valuable advisory skills to the local government, but it provides valuable experience and cultural education to the advisors themselves. According to Crumpton, these programs move beyond our current “archaic way of thinking about war” of “armies fighting armies and diplomats doing diplomacy,” integrating civilian and military efforts in a whole-of-government approach. Programs of this nature are few and far between though, and an

expansion of this concept would be invaluable to intelligence efforts in counterinsurgency (Bartholet 2008).

The second component of improved partnership is a shift towards employing intelligence personnel with competencies directly related to building relationships and cross-cultural communications. Intelligence officers, no matter how well trained and educated, will never understand the local population as well as a native of that population. This becomes even more apparent when considering the localized nature of insurgency. The goal of a greater cultural competency is then not to gain a native-like understanding of a population, but rather to understand it well enough to be able to work effectively and collaboratively with government officials, military and police forces, intelligence officers, and civilians from the local population.

Successful counterinsurgency is population-centric, full spectrum, based on flexibility and adaptation, and is focused on improving the legitimacy of the host-nation government. None of these components can succeed without effective partnership with not only the local government, but with local civilians as well. Foreign counterinsurgent forces, no matter how well equipped and informed, cannot defeat an insurgency without the support of the population. In the end, the host-nation government and population are the only groups capable of achieving victory against an insurgency. Foreign forces can only seek to improve the odds. The decline in violence in Iraq since 2007 has been attributed to the difficult decision by former Sunni insurgents to turn against Al-Qaeda en-masse and side with Iraqi government and American forces (Kilcullen 2009b, 185). This was a decision made by and for the Iraqis. Without strong partnerships with coalition forces though, their decisions arguably could not have been supported and sustained.

Conclusion: Commitment, Caution, and Beneficial Consequences

The population-centric, hybrid nature of modern insurgency clearly places demands upon intelligence that are different from those of conventional warfare or nation-state politics. Effective counterinsurgency is population-centric, and intelligence must provide the comprehensive understanding of the population that decision makers need to conduct an effective counterinsurgency. In a complex human maze of localized conflict, transnational extremists, accidental guerrillas, and innocent civilians hoping for security and stability, intelligence provides the only means of distinguishing civilian from insurgent, reconcilable from irreconcilable, corrupt from legitimate, and trustworthy from untrustworthy. This understanding can guide counterinsurgents as they seek to learn from and adapt to the dynamic situation on the ground, continually trying to avoid a downward spiral of missteps and unintended consequences.

An expanded HUMINT capability that seeks to understand the human terrain of an insurgent environment is one component of an improved intelligence capacity. Expanded collaboration among all actors involved in integrated, full spectrum counterinsurgency is another. The most critical need to improve intelligence within counterinsurgency is a greater capacity across the board to develop stronger local partnerships. While this responsibility extends beyond the ranks of intelligence officers, the institutional cultural and situational knowledge, experience and insight gained from these partnerships will

yield intelligence that is just as valuable to decision makers as that from technical collection systems.

The lessons of the past years in Iraq and Afghanistan have provided real examples of what works and what does not in counterinsurgency. As intelligence efforts are improved, it is critical that the scope and commitment of this type of conflict is considered. Counterinsurgency is a long-term endeavor and the odds of success are not good. There are no successful examples of counterinsurgency taking less than ten years; many take much longer than that (Kilcullen 2007). Despite this unavoidable reality of extended commitments, there is a potential ancillary benefit. A prospective fortuitous consequence of a greater population-centric intelligence capability within both the civilian and military components of a counterinsurgency force is an institutionalization of skills and capabilities whose usefulness extends beyond combating insurgencies. The qualities and skills needed to understand the human terrain of a local village or urban neighborhood in counterinsurgency are largely the same as those required for stability operations or humanitarian assistance. By developing more capable full spectrum counterinsurgents, the U.S. government is ultimately developing a more culturally aware and capable global workforce. While some may view this as a form of neo-colonialism, the realities of this increasingly networked and globalized 21st century require the United States to become more, not less, engaged with the rest of the world.

Even though the intelligence capabilities outlined here have the potential to make the United States more effective at conducting counterinsurgency, that does not mean that it should become a favored or even commonly accepted tool of foreign policy. As David Kilcullen has argued, it should be avoided whenever possible, but if it has to be done, it should be done right (Kilcullen 2009b, 264). To do it right though, an improved intelligence capability is a must.

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