1. The enclosed Allied Joint Publication AJP-3.4.4, Edition A, Version 1, ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE FOR COUNTER-INSURGENCY (COIN), which has been approved by the nations in the Military Committee Joint Standardization Board, is promulgated herewith. The agreement of nations to use this publication is recorded in STANAG 2611.

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[Signature]

Edvardas MAŽEIKIS
Major General, LTUAF
Director, NATO Standardization Office
Allied Joint Publication-3.4.4

Allied Joint Doctrine for Counter-insurgency

Edition A Version 1

Allied Joint Publication-3.4.4 (AJP-3.4.4), dated July 2016, is promulgated as directed by the Chiefs of Staff

Director Concepts and Doctrine
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Note: The reservations listed on this page include only those that were recorded at time of promulgation and may not be complete. Refer to the NATO Standardization Document Database for the complete list of existing reservations.
**RECORD OF SPECIFIC RESERVATIONS**

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<td>As the term “military police including gendarmerie-type forces” is set in the NATO fundamental documents referring to military police, it should be used that way in AJP-3.4.4. Military police and gendarmerie forces are different entities, depending on the participating nations. Despite their disparity they conduct the same tasks in missions, especially when providing security force assistance. That is why the term “military police including gendarmerie-type forces” brings together both entities. Separating them from each other would limit the commander’s opportunities and would produce an unintended separation.</td>
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<td>DEU does not support the definition of “Information Operations”. On 22 Jan 15 the North Atlantic Council approved MC 0422/5 (Military Decision), NATO Military Policy for Information Operations. PO(2015)0028-AS1 refers. This document clears MC 0422/3 (Final). According to this document Information Operations is a staff function to analyze, plan, assess and integrate Information Activities to create desired effects on the will, understanding and capability of adversaries, potential adversaries and NAC approved audiences in support of Alliance mission objectives.</td>
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|          | DEU does not support the definition of “Intelligence”. The DEU understanding of the definition is based on the already NATO-Agreed definition published in September 2014 in AJP-2 (A) as follows: “The product resulting from the directed collection and processing of
information regarding the environment and the capabilities and intentions of actors, in order to identify threats and offer opportunities for exploitation by decision-makers.”

Reservation 6:

DEU does not support the use of the term “combatant” in relation to insurgency. The term is defined by IHL in Art. 43 AP I. Combatant is a person who is member of the armed forces of a Party to a conflict. Insurgents for the most part lack this necessary connection to a state. The insurgent organization is often border-crossing, international and predominantly ideology- than state connected. The categorization of its personnel in legal terms is therefore complex. The term “Armed Elements” covers the intended categorization and is more general in nature.

GBR

Breaches of the law, whether International Humanitarian Law (IHL), International Human Rights Law, domestic law or any applicable law may impact on international and domestic public opinion. IHL will not always apply in COIN operations as it only applies during armed conflicts (whether international or non-international). If IHL does apply during COIN Ops, most often it is the law of the non-international armed conflict that applies. Insurgents are bound by the applicable domestic and international law, even if they don't accept that they are so bound.

External support by a state, or collection of states, to an insurgency may become illegal and could mean the supporting state/s unwittingly become a party to the conflict. Distinction between combatants and non-combatants is a fundamental tenet of IHL (where it applies). COIN operations may pose a more difficult scenario than other conflicts. If an insurgency meets the threshold of a non-international armed conflict, being a member of an armed group may make an individual insurgent a lawful target.

Maritime crime may be relevant to COIN, however, piracy is unlikely to be relevant to a COIN as it may only occur in international waters. Except in very rare circumstances, "blockade" only applies to an international armed conflict so is unlikely to be relevant to COIN, however maritime operations to "isolate" insurgents may be relevant to COIN.

USA

STANAG 2611 Edition 2, RD1 Ratification.

(1) A number of terms introduced in this AJP do not conform to approved NATO terminology, or have been incorrectly introduced. The US recognizes only NATO approved terms. This reservation will be lifted when the correct NATO terms are cited and proper procedures followed for introducing new terms.
(2) The US does not agree with the legal framework as described in this AJP. In particular, the US questions the doctrinal implications regarding international law, insurgency and noninternational armed conflict” (NJAC). The US will adhere to the provisions of DODD 2311.01E, DoD Law of War Program and the Department Of Defense Law of War Manual as well as with US JP 3-24 whenever there is a perceived ambiguity between NATO and US Joint Doctrine.

(3) US doctrine does not recognize the mass base as a category of membership of the insurgency. The US will withdraw this reservation when the AJP is revised to clearly delineate between the mass base and insurgents.

| Note: The reservations listed on this page include only those that were recorded at time of promulgation and may not be complete. Refer to the NATO Standardization Document Database for the complete list of existing reservations. |
REFERENCES

A. AAP-06  GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND DEFINITIONS
B. AAP-15  GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS
C. AAP-47  ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT
D. AJP-01  ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE
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F. AJP-3  ALLIED DOCTRINE FOR THE CONDUCT OF JOINT OPERATIONS
G. AJP-3.2  ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE FOR LAND OPERATIONS
H. ATP-3.2.1  ALLIED LAND TACTICS
I. ATP-3.2.1.1  GUIDANCE FOR THE CONDUCT OF TACTICAL STABILITY ACTIVITIES AND TASKS
J. AJP-3.2.3.3  ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE FOR MILITARY POLICE
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L. AJP-3.4.1  ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE FOR THE MILITARY CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE SUPPORT
M. AJP-3.4.2  ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE FOR NON-COMBATANT EVACUATION OPERATIONS
N. ATP-3.4.4.1  GUIDANCE FOR THE APPLICATION OF TACTICAL MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN COIN
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T. AJP-3.15  ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE FOR COUNTERING IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICE (C-IED)
U. BI-SC DN 80-6  LESSONS LEARNED
V. C-M (2008) 0029-COR1  COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH PLAN
W.  NATO ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK
X. United Nations Security Resolution 1325  WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY
Y.  NATO LESSONS LEARNED HANDBOOK
PREFACE

0001 Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-3.4.4, Allied Joint Doctrine for Counter-insurgency (COIN) provides a common NATO doctrine to both guide commanders and staffs of operational formations and units engaged in the conduct of COIN, as well as inform civil actors and organizations about the full range of capabilities the military may contribute to a comprehensive response to resolve complex challenges, caused by an insurgency.

0002 AJP-3.4.4, COIN is an operational level doctrine publication. The tactical level guidance on COIN is now provided in ATP-3.4.4.1 (reference N).

0003 This edition reflects lessons learned from recent and current operations, as well as research by Alliance and national centres of excellence.
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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Section I – Purpose

0101 Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-3.4.4, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Counter-insurgency (COIN)*, provides NATO joint doctrine to guide commanders, staffs and forces engaged in planning and conducting COIN. It also informs civil actors involved in stabilization and security operations about the full range of capabilities the military may contribute to a unity of effort required to contain an insurgency and/or support resolving complex problems.

0102 Having identified many lessons through recent operations, this AJP is primarily intended to guide users at the operational level. First, it explains the concepts of insurgency and counter-insurgency. Secondly, it describes the complex operating environment, its actors and important influencing factors. Although fragile states seem more susceptible to insurgency, this phenomenon is by no means limited to these states. Finally, it articulates the principles of COIN and planning considerations for potential operations.

0103 Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has transformed significantly to enable the Alliance to meet the global challenges of instability. Alliance members are routinely engaged in conducting complex operations far beyond their own territory. To remain effective, NATO must maintain the ability to respond swiftly and decisively across a full range of scenarios. This requirement not only applies to preventing and mediating during conflict, but also extends to the normalization of environments emerging from, or still in, violent conflict to support recovery and provide a platform for political, economic and social stability.

0104 No statements and terminology pertaining to an insurgency and its organizational and operational patterns are intended to convey any legal connotation or combatant status. Instead, they should assist NATO commanders and staffs in understanding and describing their operating environment as well as planning and executing COIN operations.

Counter-insurgency (COIN) is defined as:
comprehensive civilian and military efforts made to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances.
(NTMS – NATO Approved)

Section II – Background

0105 In preceding centuries, the international organizational architecture was predominantly designed to deal with interstate conflict, in which the traditional norm of state sovereignty was paramount. Post-1945, however, the international community increasingly struggled to cope with, and adapt to, the complexity associated with intrastate violence and instability.
0106 In the current international strategic context, many of the relevant threats and risks emanate from potential fragile states. A characteristic of fragile states is the inability of their governments to provide the basic services the population expects them to deliver. Insecurity and instability are likely to result, stemming from government indifference to specific grievances and opportunists keen to exploit the vacuum of authority. This does not always end up in an insurgency but may lead to other forms of internal conflict (civil protests or power struggle between elite groups). If the government is not capable of maintaining internal security, opposing groups tend to use force and to court popular support while demeaning the authority and legitimacy of the government, thereby inhibiting its ability to prevent or resolve societal conflicts. The fragility of such states has the potential to destabilize entire regions and to affect global interests of others, especially when transnational terrorists get involved. The international community, through the United Nations (UN), has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means to help to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Should peaceful means, however, be inadequate and/or national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations from the cruelties, NATO may be invited to take necessary and appropriate action, through the UN Security Council, in accordance with the UN Charter and International Humanitarian Law, on a case-by-case basis. International organizations, like NATO, might be invited to support a wide range of intergovernmental activities, potentially including operations to assist a (fragile) host nation. As neutralizing an insurgency requires strong host nation institutions COIN might, however, work least well in fragile states. This presents the Alliance with a new set of challenges distinctly different from interstate conflicts.

Section III – Doctrinal Embedding

0107 COIN can be undertaken under both an Article 5 and a non-Article 5 mandate and is considered a (most demanding) manifestation of a security campaign. As almost all COIN operations are currently land focused, Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-3.2 Allied Joint Doctrine for Land Operations provides additional doctrinal foundation for COIN and its relationship to conducting operations across the range of military operations.

Section IV – Understanding Counter-insurgency

0108 **Insurgency and COIN as a common understanding.** Efforts taken to defeat an insurgency cannot ignore the destabilizing effects of irregular activity.

| Irregular activity is defined as: the use or threat of force by irregular forces, groups or individuals, frequently ideologically or criminally motivated, to affect or prevent change as a challenge to governance and authority. (NTMS – NATO Approved) |
0109 Insurgents seek to force political change on those in political power. Although the primacy of a political settlement prevails, counter-insurgents may ultimately be forced to seek prevention and, if required, defeat insurgent activity (including its associated irregular activity) while potentially supporting the contested authorities in addressing the population’s grievances, and to foster perceived legitimacy of the contested government. Therefore, COIN is a complex form of security operations to enable stability using all available instruments of power to create a secure environment, and to enable promotion of legitimate governance and rule of law.

Section V – The Primacy of Political Legitimacy

0110 Military operations support, and are coherent with, the political strategy. The link between military operations and achieving political objectives in a COIN environment is more complicated than in traditional warfare, because COIN is not just a clash of conventional military capabilities without regard for the population. During an insurgency, a small number of insurgents may cause a disproportionate amount of damage. Insurgency aims to break the will of the contested government. Consequently, COIN military operations must be carefully designed to support a unified political strategy, articulated within political, economic and security processes, at all levels within the Alliance and contested government. Despite the stated primacy of political considerations, Alliance policy and political guidance may be vague or incomplete. The confusion and chaos caused by the instability in fragile states may preclude timely and effective policymaking and guidance by either the contested authorities or Alliance governments.

0111 Civil authorities have the lead for internal security and stability according to their constitutional law. However, a non-permissive environment may require military forces to contribute more widely to security and developmental tasks. As a result, the military contribution may dominate the early phases of a COIN operation to deliver a security environment that protects the population and allows more civil agencies to conduct stability and reconstruction activities. The aim of such activities is to foster the contested authorities’ capacity and legitimacy, build human security and stimulate economic activity. Tasks that may fall to the military for security and stability aspects, may include: providing security for the population; restoring some essential services; training indigenous security forces, helping to establish interim governance and rule of law; supporting the development of an economy and infrastructure; and securing communications. A supporting military contribution, as part of a unified and comprehensive approach, sets those decisive conditions that allow security and stability to flourish and sits at the heart of the COIN operation. Civil and military actors must work together in a coordinated and integrated manner.

0112 Both insurgents and counter-insurgents employ alternating tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP), generally categorised as political and military in nature. Political considerations, which should prevail over military considerations in a struggle for legitimacy in the eyes of the population, may not be possible without
security provided through military activities. Therefore, every action in COIN should support a political resolution to the underlying causes of conflict. This is paramount when considering those organizations that contribute to humanitarian assistance and economic development efforts, some of whom operate in an impartial and neutral manner according to humanitarian principles. These activities are, however, unlikely to be perceived by insurgents as neutral because they are promoting the legitimacy of the contested government. This presents a dilemma to both the contested authorities and the Alliance and provides the insurgents with an opportunity to exploit such vulnerabilities. Unity of effort is therefore essential for the multiplicity of actors engaged within a COIN environment and a coordinated and comprehensive approach must be nurtured and safeguarded.

Increased globalization, changes in international systems, complex sovereignty issues and the increasing number of transnational actors who seek to influence international affairs and a global audience, all demand a multifaceted approach. While stability remains the desired end state, (the platform without which the state cannot prosper), providing security is the key element in delivering an enduring political settlement.

Section VI – The People

Among the people, for the people. NATO forces are, more than ever, operating where the enemy is generally among the indigenous population and conducting irregular activities, so military operations require the discriminate use of force for success. In operations that take place ‘among the people’, NATO forces face opponents for whom asymmetric attack is the norm. The population affected by asymmetric conflict normally includes opponents, allies, and neutral or ambivalent elements, many of which may change affiliations over time. Allegiances and motivations can shift rapidly and often unpredictably. They are influenced by a multitude of factors which are often difficult to discern, particularly when Alliance connections and relationships with local communities are limited. While insurgencies may be led by a core group of individuals, the secrecy and cellular nature of their organizations and covert aspect of their activities may make individual and group identification and targeting difficult. NATO forces must, therefore, be focused on the mission and sensitive to the population by understanding its socio-culture factors, politics and history, while attacking the insurgents’ network. Because the primary focus of COIN is on the population, ensuring the security and otherwise controlling geographic areas that are centres of population are operational necessities. Thus, the area of operations can be extremely complex and difficult to work in, because eliminating insurgency from the major centres of population will be a major endeavour. However, because insurgents will blend into the population, the forces conducting COIN must exercise restraint on the broad use of force and precisely use the appropriate level of force given the circumstances. Perceptions rather than reality can sway certain elements of the population,
while actual, or perceived, breaches of International Humanitarian Law\textsuperscript{1} including customary law – in particular the principles of humanity, proportionality, military necessity and distinction – may sway international public opinions. Also breaches of domestic or international law can alienate the population and undermine the objectives of the forces conducting COIN.

Section VII – The Insurgency

0115 **Understanding the insurgent.** Gaining a clear understanding of the insurgents and their motivations, structures, strengths and weaknesses is a critical output of the analysis process. Without a clear understanding of the insurgency on this level, COIN will not succeed.

0116 **Insurgents exploiting weaknesses.** Insurgents will always seek to attack where they perceive weaknesses exist. Exploiting weaknesses in a state can take many different covert and overt forms applied concurrently or sequentially. For example, some insurgents may concentrate on exposing political weaknesses, some may choose to stir up ethnic tensions, and others may choose crowd manipulation or violence intended to cause problems for the intervention force. Insurgents may conduct activities to cause the contested authorities to overreact to operational situations, and potentially alienate some of the indigenous population. Many successful insurgencies have developed a cellular structure which allows them to operate with great flexibility including a formal structure containing both political and military networks. The cellular insurgent networks are typically difficult to penetrate and dismantle by military operations alone, and require dedicated capabilities to attack the network.

0117 **Insurgent tactical activities.** These activities may include: assassinations; bombings; hostage taking and attacks against the government or associated organizations; or manipulation of riots and demonstrations. Each of these actions directly influences the operational and strategic levels. Insurgents desire to create strategic effects from tactical activity, evolving their TTP throughout a campaign in response to counter-insurgents’ reactions and thereby always attempting to be one step ahead of their opponents. In these situations, military capabilities, especially lethal ones, may be ill-suited to respond to such insurgent activities and risk being used counterproductively. Insurgents will capitalize on such reactions for propaganda purposes.

Section VIII – The Forces Conducting COIN Operations

0118 **Soldier-diplomat paradigm.** In a COIN environment, the relationship between commanders and their civilian counterpart(s) is pivotal in orchestrating the efforts of a wide variety of agencies into a comprehensive approach. This approach is achieved through consensus and compromise, as well as with

\textsuperscript{1} In this document International Humanitarian Law is used, encompassing the Law of War and Law of Armed Conflict.
AJP-3.4.4

traditional command practices. Commanders should promote the role and sovereignty of the host nation.

0119 **Balance in the use of force.** Although NATO forces operate with immense military power, versatility and an enduring ability to manage and project force, the overarching aim of COIN is to secure the population. Within this framework, when employing coercive actions, it is necessary to accurately determine limited objectives rather than large-scale objectives. Initially, it is necessary to estimate whether such actions will achieve a decrease in the number of insurgents or unintentionally increase popular support for the insurgency. The use of lethal and non-lethal force should be tailored to the situation, with particular attention paid to preventing collateral damage. The military response to atrocities must be measured, proportionate and appropriate, while also being swift and precisely targeted. This asymmetry in using force by own assets is principally offset by complying with International Humanitarian Law and it must be taken into account in both the planning and execution phases of any operation. This concept is particularly true as the force conducting COIN has to operate within the same environment with a wide range of non-military actors whose collaborative effort is required to stabilize the environment and to contribute to defeating an insurgency.

0120 **Dynamic, flexible military action.** Military participation in efforts against the insurgent must be dynamic. Counter-insurgents must exploit all possibilities and contingencies to limit or defeat the insurgent’s efforts. Insurgencies tend to change and evolve, sometimes quite rapidly. If the Alliance’s response is to be successful, the Alliance must understand its own multinational capabilities, constraints and limitations, as well as understanding similar aspects of the insurgency. Counter-insurgents must keep the insurgents off balance as they attempt to gain influence through physical and psychological activity. Use of the military within a COIN operation must remain flexible and adaptable over time as the insurgency changes shape and direction.

0121 **Learn and adapt continuously.** An effective counter-insurgent force needs to have a (often hard-earned) cultural understanding as well as a more general understanding of the societal, economic and political landscape of the affected country. This will help to develop a greater situational understanding, accepting that the objectives of the local actors (e.g., contested authorities, population and power brokers) may be far removed from those of the foreign force conducting COIN, of their country or of the international community. The struggle against an insurgency requires great agility from commanders and command systems in both planning and conducting operations which involve rapidly developing innovative tactics and capabilities to respond to the ever-changing threats they might face. The ability of counter-insurgents to continuously adapt is one of their keys to success, particularly considering the protracted nature of most insurgencies. Insurgents do not needlessly expose their leaders, cadre, auxiliaries, networks, armed elements, or other resources to targeting by counter-insurgents, while many government offices, leaders, and resources may be openly targeted by insurgents. A cycle of adaptation usually develops
between insurgents and counter-insurgents, with both sides striving to neutralize existing adversary advantages and develop new advantages of their own. Advantage is gained by adapting beyond the other side’s ability to adapt, achieve or sustain. Education and training can facilitate learning and adaptation. Successful counter-insurgents study, by a cultural understanding approach, the theory and history of insurgency and COIN, as well as their culture, languages and history. Lessons learned should therefore be disseminated rapidly throughout the security force. It should be noted, however, that discretion must be used as solutions that work in one area may not be as successful when applied in another area.

0122 **Duration of support.** The duration of NATO support to the host nation, which is linked to the political acceptability of the intervention, may be difficult to forecast, but history would suggest it is likely to be long – almost certainly it will be counted in years rather than months. Nevertheless, an estimate on the mission duration has to be made to help define military courses of action (COAs), as this will influence the actions of the non-military instruments. Depending on the situation, the risks and benefits of making the military ideas public has to be weighed. On the one hand, transparency and credibility could contribute to public support within the troop contributing nations and the host nation even over extended periods of time which could hinder and demotivate the insurgents. On the other hand, this knowledge could assist the insurgents in their planning. Additionally, making the military approach public could undermine the credibility of either the contested or the sending nation due to an inconsistency between word and action.

0123 **Support initiatives.** Initiative and creativity must be encouraged to help respond effectively to asymmetric threats. Ideas generated, built on gathered experiences, should provide the reactivity necessary to supply swift answers to deployed units, without creating organizational stovepipes.

**Section IX – The Cognitive Dimension**

0124 **Cognitive dimension.** The cognitive dimension encompasses the minds of those who transmit, receive, and respond to or act on information. It refers to individuals’ or groups’ information processing, perception, judgment, and decision making. As such, this dimension constitutes the most important component of the information environment.

0125 **Battle of perception.** When NATO forces take part in COIN, they are engaged in a general battle of perception for two major considerations. First, they will be the target of the insurgents’ offensive actions, which will aim to weaken the legitimacy and the credibility of NATO support of the contested government. Secondly, counter-insurgent military action is only valuable if it contributes more to the reduction of the legitimacy and credibility of the insurgency than the COIN presence is viewed adversely in the eyes of the population. The success of both civil and military COIN activities is determined in the cognitive dimension and is a function of target audiences’ perception, and the ability to match words
with achievements and results. Synchronizing and coordinating information activities through information operations (see AJP-3.10, reference R) with public affairs and public diplomacy, while adhering to and implementing fundamentals of strategic communications (STRATCOM), are critical to a COIN operation’s success. Both insurgents and counter-insurgents attempt to gain popular support, hence the population is critical to the outcome of complex operations. Popular support must therefore be a key factor throughout planning and executing COIN operations. As an insurgency tends to be nested within local, regional and even national peculiarities and complexity, characterized by instability and conflict, it is essential that both the political and military apparatus address the strategic context of the operating environment from the local to the national level to make sure that any political settlement is both enduring and self-sustaining.

0126 **Global reach.** The battle for perception generally extends beyond the local area, and insurgents, often with limited resources, use that to their strategic advantage. This stems from the capacity to relate local issues to the outside world, with little or no media limitations. The worldwide reach of the media allows insurgents to spread their message rapidly and widely to a large number of target audiences, many of whom will be outside the joint operations area. This worldwide reach can, however, also be an advantage to the counter-insurgents if the contested authorities and NATO forces can effectively communicate the legitimacy of their cause to and through international and local public opinion in both actions and words of a strategic COIN narrative.

0127 **Strategic COIN narrative.** Counter-insurgents must therefore develop a strategic COIN narrative both to contrast and counter the insurgents’ narrative. Just as it is difficult to dislodge perceived notions of the enemy narrative, it is far easier to exploit those same notions. An effective strategic narrative will therefore not try and substitute a preferred narrative but rather exploit the prejudices and assumptions of the other side. COIN planners must compose a unifying message that exploits the negative aspects of the insurgent efforts and reinforces the credibility and legitimacy of the contested authorities and the Alliance, countering the insurgents’ narrative and propaganda. It is vital for counter-insurgents to analyse, advertise, and exploit the differences between contested authorities cultural norms, sometimes a catalyst to the current conflict,² and the insurgents’ narrative and propaganda. The COIN narrative must strike a balance between simplicity for ease of understanding and explain an often complex situation. To be effective, the COIN narrative must be coordinated with all COIN participants and be adaptive to sometimes rapidly changing strategic situations based on emerging tactical events initiated by the insurgents, or the COIN narrative may fail (or be counterproductive).

0128 **Win battle of narratives by building legitimacy among the local population.** Insurgents typically establish a movement to resolve core grievances or

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² Cultural norms like bribery, corruption or lack of women’s or minority rights accepted in the contested nation, could be a (supporting) cause of the insurgency and strike with external (e.g. Alliance) norms.
perceived government weaknesses. By means of their own narrative, they attempt to demonstrate the inability of the government to provide for the population, and will offer themselves as a viable alternative. Narratives are therefore pivotal to representing ideologically collective/group identities, particularly the collective identity of religious sects, ethnic groupings and tribal elements. The counter-insurgents’ battle for the population seeks to undermine the local support of insurgents and to reinforce host-nation legitimacy and governance. To win popular support and isolate the insurgents both physically and conceptually, it is recommendable to take into account both the security expectations of the population and, simultaneously, to influence the insurgents, their reactions and destroy their credibility with friendly and neutral actors. Undermining support for insurgents within the population is a key method to isolate them. Building influence among the population requires knowledge of the socio-cultural factors, respect for their dignity and human rights, clearly explaining counter-insurgent intentions, and aiming to take advantage of insurgent mistakes in terms of legitimacy and rationality. Creating and establishing a ‘counter-cause’ to the insurgents’ requires a comprehensive approach, unity of effort and the ability to act decisively and effectively. The battle of the narratives becomes the battle of actions and for effective influence of the relevant populations.

0129 Combine legitimate use of force and information to defeat the insurgent’s ideology. Although not all insurgents are motivated by an underpinning ideology (religious or otherwise), they are generally unconstrained by International Humanitarian Law or the need for truthfulness. Thus, they are able to exert violence to manipulate opinion. Therefore, it is vital that counter-insurgents, through the legitimate use of force and information, strive first to contest and then to defeat the insurgent efforts in both the physical and cognitive dimensions.

Section X – A Comprehensive Approach

0130 The military instrument of power as a part of a comprehensive approach. COIN must be carried out in a comprehensive manner by civilian and military entities to defeat an insurgency and facilitate a return to legitimate political processes by establishing a stable and secure environment. It is therefore ultimately a political struggle that includes a wide range of activities in partnership with the contested authorities – of which security is just one, although it is a fundamental one. Unity of effort between the contested authorities and its multinational partners is required to gain success in a COIN operation. In some contexts the security environment will restrict the ability of civilian agencies to operate and proactive solutions must be found to enable them and their personnel to be deployed as far forward as possible to enable decentralized planning and execution of COIN at the tactical level. This may require the joint deployment of civilian personnel and agencies within a military secured compound; using military assets to enable civilian movement and sometimes tasking civilian managers to direct (but not command) support by military assets.
NATO forces are expected to perform a wide number of potentially simultaneous activities across a range of military operations (from humanitarian assistance to major combat operations) within short timeframes and in coordination and close proximity with nonaligned military, international organizations and non-governmental organizations as participants. Therefore, the Alliance military needs to fit in with a demanding comprehensive approach set by the international community (as described in AJP-1, reference D), including the coordinated planning and action from an appropriate grouping of civil and military actors, enabled by the coordination and synchronization of tasks and activities of NATO’s diplomatic and military instruments with other instruments of power.

Within this complex operating environment there is a need to proactively coordinate the activities of this wide range of actors, including non-aligned military, international organizations and non-governmental organizations. A comprehensive approach seeks to stimulate a cooperative culture within a collaborative environment, while facilitating a shared understanding of the situation. It should invigorate existing processes and strengthen relationships among the joint, inter-agency and multinational participants. This is particularly relevant for land forces at all levels where they should expect to operate alongside these actors. It should be clearly understood that NATO military forces do not own, nor should they expect to lead, this comprehensive approach, but they should aim to foster and create those conditions where civil-military cooperation and collaboration support the operations.

Section XI – Counter-insurgency and the Range of Military Activities

COIN as expression of the security campaign. Approaches to COIN can vary on a scale with two distinct principal ends: a COIN operation should be both population centric (focused on securing and controlling a given population or populations), which represents the majority and opponent centric (focused on defeating a particular opposing group). To be successful the counter-insurgent has to consider both in dynamic balance as the local situation dictates. The fact that COIN falls within the security campaign theme (of which it is considered a very demanding option) it does not necessarily mean that COIN is less violent at times than major combat or any other conflict. The joint force commander must continuously assess that dynamic balance when employing the opponent centric approach (heavily depending on applying military force and repression) to ensure that it is not counterproductive. It is indeed an extremely difficult challenge, often politically controversial, which involves managing a series of events that are extremely difficult to interpret. It also often requires more resources and time than initially anticipated. In particular, it can be very difficult to estimate and predict terms of commitment, such as time and costs (financial cost, political capital, military resources and human life). Additionally, there will be times when the international community’s military engagement in COIN may need to be circumspect, because of a lack of regional and international willingness to get embroiled in the conflict. Military deployments within this context, often with the UN, must uphold its impartiality.
In some countries the state itself has been a malign actor and Alliance forces operating in a security campaign must recognise when they are contributing to the prosecution of internal military and political rivalries, rather than the overall conflict against the insurgency they are meant to be fighting. Disciplined assessment by Alliance commanders, not just gathering statistics, may be essential to prevent such unintentional misuse of Alliance forces. Security forces should not be embroiled in internal political, military or economic rivalries. Capabilities required to conduct a COIN operation may be similar to those needed for peacekeeping operations and, generally speaking, stabilization operations. However, the fundamental goal of COIN is to contain and defeat the insurgency and secure the population, while the contested authorities can simultaneously focus on proper governance and legitimacy. This is accomplished by improving the contested government’s capabilities and building the popular support for the contested authorities while marginalizing the insurgents and reducing their capabilities.

0134 The political nature of COIN requires the military to directly address triggers for violence rather than the socio-economic causes of instability. However, the military is tasked as enabler to provide security and support to stabilization and reconstruction efforts that can mitigate some drivers of conflict. Military activities could also entail humanitarian assistance, peace support, and help to reconstruct fragile states through capacity building – these are all long term and structural tasks. If the level of threat and violence in theatre frequently prevents civilian (international and non-governmental) organizations from performing their critical development and capacity building tasks, the military must set conditions for these civilian actors to successfully deploy their capabilities. Alliance military commanders should anticipate the need for significant civil-military cooperation and liaison with all other military and civilian participants, in addition to the contested authorities.

0135 Commanders must visualise how a campaign or operation is likely to evolve over time and in light of changing circumstances and in cooperation with a diverse group of civilian and military actors throughout their area of operations (AOO). The military will not control civilian activities and may have limited influence upon them. However, commanders must establish a shared understanding of all aspects of the comprehensive approach with all other military and civilian participants, because of their potential impact upon the operating environment. Success at all levels is likely to depend on commanders establishing this understanding.

Section XII – Countering the Insider Threat

0136 Although not unique to COIN operations and occurring in other types of conflict, insider attacks are a strategic, operational, and tactical boon to insurgent forces and terrorist organizations, particularly when NATO is conducting operations. Insider attacks are part of the means an enemy will use to test the political will of the solidarity of member nations’ participation in the Alliance efforts. At a strategic level they erode the validity of the mission and may create increased
friction between senior Alliance political and military leaders and the host nation. At the operational level they increase burden on intelligence and force protection assets and pose an operational security risk. At the tactical level they stress the bonds nurtured between Alliance forces and local security forces at working level while forcing Alliance forces to increase their force protection posture, ensuring that the re-establishment of trust between the two forces will be nearly impossible. A successful insider attack can therefore have a detrimental impact on Alliance forces and international public opinion, highlighting the vulnerability of military operators when they are supposedly operating amongst local security forces who support the COIN operation.

0137 By the character of COIN, the strategic impact on the mission and home front opinion is higher when even a few casualties have been caused by an insider attack. This presents a dilemma: Alliance forces need to operate and support training in proximity of local security forces to be most effective but this makes them more vulnerable to insider threats. Careful recruiting of personnel for local security forces should reduce the insider threat and also minimize so-called-green–on-blue incidents. Training these local security forces with respect for their (cultural) background should strengthen mutual understanding, cooperation and trust which may help early detection of deviating behaviour by infiltrators. Training own specialists in detecting deviating behaviour of infiltrators in the local security forces should help in preventing and, if required, resolving these attacks. More information on countering insider threats is available in ATP-3.16.1, Allied Tactical Doctrine for Countering Insider Threats, nested under AJP-3.16, Security Force Assistance.

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3 According to AJP-3.16 Allied Joint Doctrine for Security Force Assistance (SFA) the term Host Nation Security Forces has been changed to Local Forces. Both terms are however not available in the NATO NTSM. For reasons of clarity the term local (security) forces will be used in this document.
CHAPTER 2  INSURGENCY AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY

Section I – General

0201 This chapter is divided into two parts. Part 1 looks at what makes up and drives an insurgency and some of the tactics and strategies open to the insurgent. Part 2 develops possible responses to an insurgency and establishes the principles and criteria required for conducting successful COIN.

0202 Some, but not all, insurgencies take place in the context of a fragile state, where the ability of the contested authorities to provide legitimate elements of a stable state is inadequate.

PART 1 – INSURGENCY

Section II – Overview

0203 Definition

| Insurgency is defined as: actions of an organized, often ideologically motivated, group or movement that seeks to effect or prevent political change or to overthrow a governing authority within a country or a region, focused on persuading or coercing the population through the use of violence and subversion. (NTSM – NATO Approved) |

0204 This publication also uses the term 'insurgent' to describe those actors that plan and execute insurgency actions.

0205 An insurgency is normally a protracted struggle based on political, economic, social or religious ideology, using violence and subversion. Insurgency is a fight for the legitimacy to rule in the eyes of the population and insurgents seek to undermine the government's legitimacy while reinforcing their own. Violence is used because insurgents feel they cannot attain their goals through the country's established political process. Key to this endeavour is gaining, and retaining, the popular support and insurgents will use all means available to achieve this, including political, economic, information and cultural measures, as well as violence. Insurgents typically seek concealment within the population and this would not be possible without the support of that population. Sometimes coercion can be used to gain short-term support but this is unlikely to be sustainable. Using violence and any related overreaction by the

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4 Information on stable state theory and the relationship between COIN and stabilization and reconstruction can be found in AJP-3.4, Allied Joint Doctrine for Non-Article 5 Crisis Response Operations (reference K) and AJP-3.4.5, Allied Joint Doctrine for Military Support to Stabilization and Reconstruction (reference O).
government security force (which may be deliberately provoked) will undermine the authority and credibility of the government and will invariably be destabilizing. An unstable state may attract terrorists and organized criminals who seek to benefit from the lack of government control. The resulting chaotic and unstable environment may bring together disparate elements because, although they may have different aims, they will have a common purpose in undermining effective government control.

0206 Insurgency movements are generally not fully constrained by geographical boundaries but have external connections and support. Insurgents may employ irregular activities (crime, terrorism, subversion and/or disorder) to obtain funds, promote instability and insecurity throughout the country, and reduce government control. Conversely, insurgencies might also use regular activities (for example, political, diplomatic, economic, social, religious or information) to gain legitimacy, generate funding, spread ideology, recruit supporters and obtain external support. Insurgencies will often have some external foreign support which could include moral, political, technical, financial and/or military resources. Insurgents also may be provided cross-border sanctuary in a neighbouring country or elsewhere outside of the challenged country. That support can come from a broad variety of sources including diasporas, sympathetic groups, organizations with affiliated ideology, ethnicity, cultural or religious kinship, or even recognised states. Insurgencies are not monolithic and, in some cases, contested authorities may be confronted by several different insurgent groups, each with different grievances and desired end states.

Will - time - space

0207 Insurgents seek to achieve their political aims by using their will, effectively biding their time and pushing the local security forces to overextend themselves through the country (space). They accept a protracted operational tempo and temporary setbacks to reach their long-term goals. Insurgents avoid open confrontation and do not transition to an attrition strategy until they have the resources and combat power, and support of the population, to seize territory and critical infrastructure. Slow, but steady gains in organization, personnel strength (e.g., growing auxiliary and guerilla forces) and popular support bolsters insurgents’ will. These three elements are therefore closely related, and if any one of them is missing, the others will be degraded.

a. **Will.** The ideological nature and root causes of insurgency often result in insurgents having a strong collective will, which, particularly within a fragile state, may well be relatively greater than that of the government. Therefore, the insurgent seeks to make the struggle a protracted ‘contest of wills’.

b. **Time.** Time is almost invariably on the side of the insurgent.
The insurgents’ sense of time will also affect their actions. If insurgents feel time is on their side, they are more likely to adopt a lower risk approach and avoid becoming decisively engaged. If they perceive time as being against them, that will push them towards higher risk activities. Determining an insurgency’s perception of time helps commanders and staffs to anticipate its behaviour. Insurgents have the ability to protract a conflict, which may be extremely costly for both state authorities and international forces. Over time this will wear down the perseverance and commitment of authorities. Due to their relatively strong will, insurgents can afford to be patient. When required, the insurgents will seek to erode their opponents’ will through subversion, terrorism and propaganda.

c. **Space.** Insurgents will try to choose where they fight to wear down their opponents through “hit-and-run” or “hit-and-fade away” tactics, becoming part of the indigenous population, without becoming decisively engaged or destroyed. Insurgents try to gain the initiative and force their opponents to react. Using sanctuaries also provide the insurgents with a place (space) to rest, plan, train and equip for future activity.

### Section III – Key Conditions for an Insurgency

#### Root causes

0208 For a population to support an insurgency there must be important issues at stake which cause a deeply felt sense of injustice, anger and/or fear. These grievances may be real or perceived, detailed in their insurgent narrative, and insurgents will eagerly exploit these to gain support. The importance, or even existence, of root causes (long-term issues), may change over time. There will also be drivers of conflict (short-term issues) that may be related to root causes. Insurgents can be adept at manipulating or creating causes to serve their purpose. A weak and unresponsive government without COIN capabilities can also be one of the root causes. Examples of root causes include the following.

- **Identity.** Identity can be based on shared ethnic, religious or other cultural groupings. In cases where groups feel persecuted and underrepresented, the insurgents can use a narrative that highlights these aspects as a root cause against the government. In some cases, groups are concentrated in certain regions where the government exercises biased controls over these elements; an insurgency may thus, look to nullify that government control or to seek self-determination. External actors with similar identities to the insurgents may also assist.
b. **Religious Extremism.** In addition to religion as an identity, religious extremism, as a root cause, is likely to attract support from external groups with similar extremist religious views. Additionally, a conflict based on religious identity is prone to evolve into one involving extremist views as violence becomes more pervasive and extremists arrive from external sources.

c. **Economy.** An inequality of resources, income and wealth among a population or lack of access to services can often fuel widespread public dissatisfaction, especially if perceived as a result of persecution or subjugation of an identity group. Young people without jobs or hope are vulnerable to recruitment by insurgents. A perceived disparity in people's means, for example, a significant gap between a poor majority and a wealthy minority, can be a core economic grievance.

d. **Corruption.** Corruption is a source of anger and frustration, particularly for the lower levels of society that often gain nothing but lose a lot. For the population, the police are often the most visible manifestation of the state, and their behaviour will therefore influence the perception of the people on their government and could undermine its legitimacy. A corrupt political system can prevent a political solution to the existing grievances of the population which can, in turn, lead to insurgency.

e. **Repression.** Repression can take many forms, such as discriminatory policies, rights violations, police brutality or unjust imprisonment. Repression can lead to widespread dissatisfaction with the government and may reduce the legitimacy of the contested authorities in the eyes of its population.

f. **Foreign exploitation, presence or occupation.** Foreign powers and/or external organizations exploiting or abusing local resources is likely to undermine the credibility of the contested authorities. A foreign military presence (or occupation) could offend national sentiment and may provide a focus for insurgent propaganda and attack. If the government appears to be pandering to external influences this may also generate displeasure. In some instances, the mere presence, or actions, of foreigners may offend local religious or cultural sensibilities.

g. **Essential services.** Essential services are necessary to sustain and desirable to improve the quality of life amongst the population. This may include access to: food, clean water and shelter to sustain life; law enforcement; emergency services; electricity; healthcare; schools; transportation; and sanitation to improve the quality of life. A population lacking these services is likely to try to rectify the situation and will support those offering a credible solution. An insurgency may generate support by offering to provide these types of services.
Interconnection of two or more root causes will increase the total potency of the effect of each: e.g. in the case of an economically subjugated religious minority whose appeals to the affected government are met with repression.

**Conditions**

For a root cause or core grievances to trigger an insurgency, and for that insurgency to endure, specific conditions may apply.

**Opportunity.** Opportunity alludes to the emergence of significant gaps in the ability of the local or national government, or its allies, to provide security for its territory and population. Specifically, the government must have the capability and capacity to detect the early stages of insurgency (organization and mobilization). This typically requires both awareness and cooperation of a significant portion of the population, or establishing a programme of domestic surveillance. It should be noted that this type of surveillance programme could be construed as overly intrusive and more in keeping with a 'police state'. Moreover, a government must be capable of suppressing the insurgency in a way that deters other potential rebels while not feeding the insurgent narrative (namely, not fostering perceived public grievances) and not provoking wider resistance to the government. Whether urban or rural, physically definable or a matter of popular perception, opportunity arises where there is a (even temporal, like night hours) gap in government control that provides an incipient insurgency with sufficient freedom to start organizing and manoeuvring politically and militarily. This gap may also grow as a result of local security forces either overreacting or appearing to engage in punitive violence not specifically linked to insurgent conduct. Understanding how the gap arose and how the nascent insurgency has exploited it to begin mobilizing an organized resistance, will provide insights to develop and establish an effective COIN strategy and a planned operational approach. Gaps in government control can stem from insufficient or inadequate capacity of local security forces, demographic changes, falling government revenues or the perceived erosion of a government’s legitimacy among segments of the population.

**Motive.** The existence of grievances does not necessarily cause an insurgency. Poverty, unemployment, economic inequality, inadequate essential services, political marginalization and repression are unfortunately commonplace, and exist in many locations where insurgency does not. There must be a compelling motive to organize an insurgency, because insurgents are generally treated as violent, traitorous criminals by the local security forces, government authorities and, potentially, some segments of the indigenous population. The motive may be a complex combination of the following.

a. **Compelling narrative.** It takes dynamic and intelligent leadership to build a compelling narrative that links grievances to a political agenda and mobilizes segments of the population to support an unlawful subversive and violent social movement. That narrative explains who is to blame for the grievances, how the grievances will be addressed, how the population
will benefit under the insurgents’ ideology, and how the population and insurgency should work together to accomplish that goal. The compelling aspect of the narrative is not only in its content, but how it is presented (promoted and publicised) to the target audience, which normally requires ideological leaders. It is consistently reinforced through communication and propaganda of the deed. Insurgents often frame grievances in terms of local identities, such as religious, ethno-sectarian or regional groupings. A compelling narrative is often spun around the marginalization of a particular community (e.g. tribal, ethnic or ideological), geographic area or socio-economic class of individuals by the government.

b. **Visionary Leaders.** Established and aspiring ‘revolutionary’ leaders are present in most societies where opportunity and motive (grievances) intersect. Such leaders emerge and attempt to mobilize segments of the population to follow them and their vision for change. The degree to which emerging insurgent leaders are successful at crafting and delivering a narrative that links grievances to a political vision is a key determinant of their subsequent ability to gain popular support, resources and eventual success. Additionally, managing tensions among different factions within the movement and their conflicting agendas is often one of the main challenges for visionary insurgent leaders, and is therefore a critical focal point for designing COIN strategy and operations.

c. **Adopting grievances.** Grievances alone are unlikely to cause an insurgency. They are however, most relevant in understanding its origins, evolution and dynamics. Moreover, COIN approaches and negotiated settlements that fail to adequately address the underlying grievances rarely create durable stability. The grievances driving the insurgency evolve and may change over time and be transformed by the dynamics of the conflict itself. Political alignments are reshaped as power shifts between different groups and as the insurgents and counter-insurgents interact with communities. This highlights a critical challenge for both insurgents and counter-insurgents which is to co-opt local grievances and political agendas into a broader movement. In many ways, insurgency is fundamentally an alliance-building process, in which leaders with political visions seek to knit together a broad patchwork of communities, interest groups and influential elites. Co-option can be complex and operates in both directions; just as insurgents seek to leverage local grievances, locals can also seek to co-opt insurgents and counter-insurgents as allies to win disputes and settle scores with rivals. Historically, most insurgencies occurred in rural societies, where disputes over land tenure and water rights were typically among the most important drivers of conflict. This can give rise to a checkerboard effect, in which the decision by one side in a local conflict to ally with insurgents can lead their rivals to side with the government. One key variable in that evolution is whether the relevant communities believe their existence would be threatened by the victory of either side.
d. **Failed security.** A failure by a contested government and their local security forces to protect its population and thereby provide security loses its legitimacy, being a common driver of instability. This frequently leads communities to look for other groups to fill the gap, offering them a better alternative. Such groups may be concerned solely with securing their own communities when they emerge, but evolve to challenge the state’s authority as their legitimacy and ambitions grow.

e. **Abusive behaviour.** Beyond failing to provide security, the government may itself become a source of insecurity for the population. Some insurgencies create or exacerbate grievances, by deliberately provoking (excessive) retaliation by local security forces. Abusive behaviour by government officials, local security forces or their local supporters can become a potent grievance and will often contribute to the emergence of insurgencies. Even where it is initially linked to other disputes, abusive behaviour can rise to become a grievance in its own right, particularly when it transgresses cultural norms.

f. **Elites’ agendas.** Elites’ attitudes tend to reflect both community-wide grievances and a discrete set of concerns about their own status. Elites may oppose government or commercial initiatives that could undermine their own positions of authority, even if the programme would benefit the wider community. In some cases, it is competition among elites that provides an opening for insurgents to co-opt communities by backing one competitor against another.

g. **Individual empowerment.** Reference to communal grievances as a reason for joining an insurgency sometimes masks (or may be mixed with) a simpler desire for adventure, opportunity or sense of control over one’s own destiny. Particularly where traditional social systems have collapsed or fail to provide avenues for social advancement for youths in the population, insurgent movements may offer an attractive escape from boredom and stagnation. Becoming an insurgent offers a boost in status and a sense of purpose. That sense of empowerment can be enough to motivate some to take up arms, even as they rhetorically reference other more conventional grievances.

h. **Community allegiance.** If a community believes it has the option to side with either the insurgency or the government then, in most cases, allegiance follows control and security. The populace is likely to side with whoever it perceives has established durable control in their area. This pattern of shifting allegiance to ensure survival tends to emerge over the course of the conflict and hold true regardless of what a community’s political preferences were when the violence began. In this case, ‘control’ means to establish predictable and tolerable conditions for the population; a clear set of rules that are consistently enforced under which they feel they can reasonably survive. The failure to publicise or consistently enforce those rules, or the use of arbitrary punishment, tends to generate
opposition among civilians who will then perceive that compliance will not guarantee their basic interests and survival. The effects of shifting allegiance may have an unpredictable and debilitating effect on the community.

0213 **Means.** It takes considerable resources to mount a subversive and sustained violent challenge to the incumbent government authorities, and the ways an insurgency goes about securing those resources determines a great deal about its behaviour. The leaders of emerging insurgencies must assemble and organize personnel, weapons, funds and systems of effective communications and logistics, all of which should be done clandestinely.

a. **Recruiting.** The first variable to consider is recruitment, as it has an impact on all others. Here the degree to which insurgent leaders can leverage pre-existing, strong social networks is critical. Social networks may be defined by village, clan, tribe, ethnicity, language, socio-economic status or membership of clubs, military units, associations or criminal groups. Where these networks exist and insurgent leaders successfully draw on identities and grievances to mobilize them, recruitment is easier and faster. Moreover, where recruits are bound together by pre-existing social ties, unit cohesion and reciprocal loyalty are often stronger. The ties between insurgents and their communities provide an integral support base from which insurgents can derive other support.

b. **Social networks.** Typically, only insurgent leaders who are members of the relevant community possess the required internal legitimacy to mobilize social networks. Where leaders lack that legitimacy, or where they seek to activate networks beyond their own community, the relationship between recruits and resources is reversed; leaders require access to resources in order to attract and equip recruits. In some cases, insurgents may exploit available natural resources. Other groups rely on more conventional criminal activities such as kidnapping, smuggling, drug/human trafficking, counterfeiting, trading endangered species and money laundering. Some groups receive support from transnational terrorist organizations through funding, recruitment, training, and propaganda. Reliance on social networks constrains insurgent freedom of action by potentially anchoring the insurgency in a well-established set of social norms. If they fail to conform to these norms, insurgent leaders risk undermining the very legitimacy that facilitated recruitment and organization, and they open themselves up to criticism or challenge from within the community.

c. **Social mobilization.** An insurgency relies on social mobilization over time which includes choosing a side (insurgency or government). The process typically draws on existing ethnic, religious, racial, socio-economic, geographic and/or political identities, and the symbols associated with them, which is why the narrative is a key element for social mobilization. However, individuals and communities are typically members of multiple
overlapping groups with whom they may be identified. The degree to which behaviour is shaped by group membership depends on multiple factors and will ultimately define the primary loyalty of both individuals and communities. These factors include which side is perceived as best to advance their interests, the ease of switching sides and which side they expect to win. Switching does not necessarily imply abandoning fundamental social ties to family, friends or community, but often it involves a shift in the political and/or military alliances through which a group seeks to advance its interests, and a corresponding redefinition of loyalties and politics.

d. **Forced recruitment.** Some insurgent groups also use forced recruitment to bolster their ranks, which often includes illegally recruiting children. This approach is typically associated with insurgent groups, focused on resource exploitation and enrichment rather than on altering or replacing the governing authorities. In extreme cases, forcible recruitment becomes intertwined more fundamentally with the strategy, ideology and survival of the insurgent group. Forced recruitment can occur alongside voluntary participation. Insurgents may seek to forcibly co-opt a social network by coercing its members to join their ranks. In doing so, insurgents may secure the neutrality or even the support of the rest of the kin-group or community. Often participation is characterized as a duty based on the identity or narrative promoted by the insurgents. Here, social pressure may be used to try to cajole recruitment, but is often reinforced by brutal retaliation against those who resist.

e. **Diasporas.** Ethno-sectarian conflicts are frequently supported by diaspora communities. These communities can assist with funding and recruitment and they are sometimes well positioned to favourably influence the public opinion and policies of their own country and the attitudes of global media towards the insurgents.

f. **External sponsors.** State sponsorship offers advantages well beyond those available through transnational sources or the exploitation of illicit economies. Supporting nations\(^5\) can provide insurgents with a larger-scale and broader variety of resources and training, and perhaps provide external sanctuary from which to organize or prepare for future activities. However, there are also disadvantages. Recruits attracted by the prospect of individual material rewards are likely to be less dedicated to the cause, and therefore less disciplined and loyal, particularly in the face of setbacks. Insurgencies that rely on resources rather than social networks to recruit tend to be more violent towards civilians. This further undermines their already low legitimacy and can inhibit their efforts to widen their political support. Insurgent groups can mitigate this issue if they are patient and use externally provided resources to build a political base before launching

\(^5\) External support to an insurgency by a State has legal consequences. The supporting State could be responsible for an unlawful use of force against the State which is the victim of the insurgency; they may even become a party to the conflict themselves.
military operations. External sponsors can also include transnational sympathizers. Contemporary insurgents are able to use the Internet to build transnational networks which have common sympathies, but may not have an ethnic or sectarian affiliation. These networks can provide funds, legitimacy, connections, information and potentially recruits. Transnational sympathizers can also include criminal and black market organizations which provide potential outlets for natural resources exploited by insurgents and a source of weapons and other assets.

g. **Resourcing risks.** While necessary, recruitment also carries risk for insurgent groups. Recruitment activities can alert authorities to the presence and extent of an insurgent group before it is ready to act. Recruitment also carries security risks that may arise through the indiscipline of new recruits, and/or infiltration by government agents. Many of the most successful and resilient insurgent groups have invested heavily in their own internal security and counter-intelligence procedures, including extensive vetting and information compartmentalization to mitigate the risks associated with recruiting. The resource base can overtake insurgent politics in terms of defining insurgent organization, strategy and objectives. Deepening involvement in illicit economies can transform insurgent organizations into criminal enterprises as accruing resources becomes an end in itself. Diaspora politics and priorities can diverge significantly from those in the theatre of operations, creating tension between the local population, insurgents, and their geographically removed backers. State sponsors have their own agendas and a degree of influence, or even outright control, over insurgent operations, but this is often the price of access to key resources.

0214 **The relationship between insurgency and irregular activity.** Many forms of irregular activity enjoy a symbiotic relationship with insurgency. Irregular activities that threaten a state and cannot be dealt with by the contested authorities’ means may trigger international (possibly including NATO) forces to interfere.

0215 The aim of an insurgency is not always to outfight the local security forces, but to replicate and/or replace the government through subversive activities, gaining control over, and support from the population. Subversion is about gradually establishing a parallel governing and administrative structure in order to meet the needs of the population. It also undermines the military, economic, psychological or political strength or morale of a governing authority. Subversion is most effective when conducted over a long period. Insurgents may establish a ‘shadow’ (or parallel) government, which may provide, for example, a judicial system in insurgent preferred areas where the contested authorities fail to do so.
Section IV – Dynamics of Insurgency

Each insurgency has different dynamics depending on the country, actors and their cause. Insurgencies often build around a perceived sense of relative deprivation. Although each insurgency is unique, there are common dynamics or characteristics that can be used to assess an insurgency and determine its strategy. These include:

a. ideology;
b. the insurgent narrative;
c. internal support (level, type);
d. objectives;
e. leadership;
f. environment and geography;
g. external support;
h. the phasing and timing of an insurgency; and
i. organizational and operational patterns.

Ideology. Ideology is a fundamental element of an insurgency and understanding this is essential for determining the rationale of insurgent actions. It provides a message of change that is normally coherent and logical, supporting the psychological and political cohesion among insurgents. The narrative, based on the insurgency’s underlying assumptions, is the central mechanism by which ideologies are disseminated. An ideology can affect a country's domestic and foreign politics and public opinion, and may be used to justify violence. If the ideology within an insurgency is contested or incoherent, counter-insurgents can exploit this conflict to divide and neutralize the insurgents.

The insurgent narrative. Insurgent leaders need attractive and persuasive causes to mobilize popular support and these may stem from unresolved contradictions that exist within any society or culture. Although contradictions are based on real problems, insurgents may inflate or create artificial contradictions using propaganda and misinformation. By selecting an assortment of causes and tailoring them for various groups within society at a local level (political, religious, professional or social) they disseminate convincing ideas to attract attention of the population. Local insurgents normally exploit local grievances when recruiting, and link their messages with tangible solutions and actions. Without a legitimate cause, an insurgent movement may not be able to sustain itself, but a carefully chosen cause is a formidable asset. It can provide a fledgling movement with a long-term, concrete base of support.
Any country ruled without broad popular support provides a political cause for insurgents. Exploited or repressed social groups (be they entire classes, ethnic or religious groups, or small elites) may support larger causes in reaction to their own narrower grievances.

0219 **Internal support.** In an insurgency, the contest is for the control and support of the population. The insurgents’ aim is to break the ties between the incumbent regime and the population, while establishing and strengthening their own ties with the people. Insurgents obtain supplies, recruits, intelligence and shelter from the population, without which they cannot operate. It is the neutral element of the population that is usually the centre of gravity (COG) that both sides target for support. There are two types of internal support: active and passive, both of which may be volunteered or coerced.

a. Active supporters provide open sympathy to the insurgency, participate in insurgent operations, and find new recruits. Active supporters are usually central to the insurgency’s propaganda effort. They may provide material, intelligence, or assistance as requested or demanded by insurgents.

b. Passive support is critical for successful insurgent operations. It provides freedom of movement for members of the insurgency to reside, train, plan, and conduct operations in an area without resistance from the local community. Passive supporters do not report insurgents to local security forces out of sympathy for the cause, anti-government sentiment, reluctance to get involved due to peer pressure, threats of violence, or the benefits that the insurgency provides.

0220 **Level of popular support.** The reality of countering insurgencies is that neither side will ever enjoy the support of the entire population. Popular support will fluctuate due to many factors and measuring the population's support is difficult, but important. Asking the population directly or using surveys can provide an insight into popular support and attitudes. Figure 2.1 shows a simplified model of the ranges of popular support, depicting the population as a monolithic entity, which it is not. It will be spread across the spectrum of support, with individuals often falling in clusters based upon their social groups (families, villages, etc.) The demarcations between active, passive and indifferent are not as definitive as depicted, since the population may provide various degrees of support, crossing the demarcations.

![Figure 2.1 – Range of popular support](image-url)
**Types of popular support.** Popular support can be either active or passive, and may come from a small or large segment of the population. Insurgents cannot operate without at least some degree of sympathy from a portion of the population as they cannot function for long in a fully hostile environment. To achieve long-term success, an insurgency will need support from a significant proportion of the population and this may be overt or clandestine.

Crime and insurgency are normally mutually supporting and often symbiotic in nature. Criminal organizations and criminals benefit from instability and a lack of government presence and control; the insurgency may gain financially and, potentially, in other ways from criminality. Insurgents will often be involved in some criminality themselves, such as kidnapping, bank robbery, extortion and human/drug trafficking to both finance their activity and to demonstrate a lack of government control. However, in many instances, contested government officials and local security forces are also implicated in criminal activity.

**Objectives.** To understand an insurgency, its objectives must be identified, and this analysis should be from the insurgents’ perspective. Insurgencies can have strategic, operational, and tactical objectives. Tactical objectives most directly translate to actions. However, these actions are normally performed to achieve an operational objective. In the example of an attack on a convoy, the operational objective might be to prevent logistic support of local security forces. When insurgents achieve various operational goals, they can attain the end state of their insurgency. Objectives are often difficult to identify and may not be obviously related to the root causes. They may be vague or ill-defined, or there may be multiple insurgent groups, each with differing objectives. The insurgents’ overarching objective is to force a political change and often to install an alternative power structure. Objectives are normally driven by the insurgents’ strategic approach. There are generally five types of insurgent objectives.

a. **Reform.** Some insurgencies do not aim to change the existing political order, but instead seek to compel the government to alter its policies or undertake political, economic or social reforms. The scope of those may range from relatively modest changes in policy to more significant adjustments in the structure and characteristics of the government. However, insurgents typically envision deeper changes to the socio-political structure of society as occurring through more moderate or gradual political processes rather than direct coercion.

b. **Revolution.** Revolutionary insurgents seek to overthrow and radically reshape the political system, socio-economic structure, and sometimes even the culture of the nation. Revolutionaries often want to change the fundamental sources of political legitimacy around which government and political authority are organized.

c. **Secession.** Secessionist insurgencies seek complete political autonomy for a geographically-defined area which may lie within a country’s existing national boundaries.
d. **Nullification.** Some insurgents seek to roll back governmental authority – particularly coercive local authority – in a geographically-defined area. In some cases, warlords or powerful criminal groups may seek greater freedom of action to pursue illicit activities. In others, insurgents may aim to nullify government control of a region to create a sanctuary in support of insurgency or terrorism elsewhere. Often, the contested authorities mistakenly dismiss the early stages of other types of insurgencies as simply criminal activities. Conversely, objectives of other categories can shift over time towards nullification.

e. **Resistance.** Some insurgencies seek to compel an occupying power to withdraw from a given territory and the drivers and dynamics of resistance movements are complex. The concept of ‘foreign forces’ is entirely situational dependent; remote, semi-autonomous, or socio-politically distinct areas within a country may even regard government local security forces from other areas within that country as ‘outsiders’. In some cases, these foreign forces from more distant countries may even be preferable in the eyes of locals if they are regarded as more impartial and trustworthy than neighbours or countrymen with whom there is a history of conflict or tension. Although autonomy and self-determination are powerful themes for insurgent narratives, actual participation in a resistance insurgency by individuals and communities is often driven by more tangible grievances against the occupying force, or by pragmatic calculations about the distribution of political power in a post-conflict regime. Grievances often arise from: a failure to establish predictable and tolerable conditions for the civilian population; manipulation of the occupying force by its local allies to target rival communities; a failure to accommodate elites and communities from the losing side in the new political order; or a combination of all three. In other words, the emergence of resistance movements is typically tied to the conduct of the occupying power. Where foreign forces avoid these pitfalls as they are regarded as playing a constructive or necessary stabilizing role, they are more likely to be tolerated; albeit on an interim basis.

**0224 Leadership.** Leadership, and not just a visionary attribute, is essential to any insurgent group or movement, especially in instilling and indoctrinating the ideology in its members. It is easier to disseminate a cause when it is embodied by a driven, charismatic, visionary or revolutionary leader who can inspire followers, convert the uncommitted, and instil fear into those who support the government. They have to possess the sharpness of intellect to define political and strategic aims, and the flexibility of wit and wisdom to adjust the immediate requirements and implement tactics to meet them. They require the strength of character to impose decisions taken, especially when the insurgency is in its early stages. They will exploit their education, familial and social ties, and prestige to recruit and motivate personnel. Conversely, over-reliance on a charismatic leader as a prime motivator of the insurgency can cause a degree of fragility within the group.
a. The leadership of an insurgency is composed of leaders from the political cadre, guerrillas, and auxiliaries, not necessarily the same individuals. Moreover, they may work closely together or operate in a decentralized manner, depending on their need for security or other operational concerns. Insurgent leaders usually exercise leadership through force of personality, the power of revolutionary ideas, and personal charisma. In some insurgencies, they may hold their position through religious, clan, or tribal authority. The leadership may include supporting members, much like command and staff in a regular military. These supporting members may include advisors, logistics and administration personnel, spokespersons, and those leading operations. Insurgent leaders may attain positions within the government and work to undermine the government.

b. Poor leadership can undermine an insurgency and thereby hamper its success. An analysis of insurgent leadership provides information on how effective its leaders are in mobilizing the population and effectively using resources to undermine the contested authorities.

0225 **Environment and geography.** Insurgents need sanctuaries (see paragraph 0226f). A detailed understanding of the terrain and indigenous people will give the insurgent an advantage over any external force conducting COIN. This applies principally to local insurgents as ‘foreign fighters’ may be disadvantaged. To achieve their political objectives, insurgents must ultimately control, and have influence over, the territory in which the target population resides.

0226 **Forms of external support.** Most insurgencies receive some external support from a variety of sources including other nation states, emigrants, refugees, or other non-state and civilian actors. Forms of external support could include the following.

a. **Moral support.** Acknowledgment that insurgents, or their cause, are just and admirable can provide credibility and be vital for success. Moral support often leads to political, resource and sanctuary support. Support may also come from the press, diaspora, celebrities and politicians in foreign countries.

b. **Political support.** International political support for insurgents can apply pressure on counter-insurgents through diplomatic action (such as discussions in the UN and gathering support from NATO nations) by those states that support the insurgency.

c. **Logistic support.** Insurgencies rely on support from external elements to move equipment and supplies, as well as providing food and medical assistance.
d. **Military support.** Military support can include providing arms and ammunition, materiel and intelligence, as well as technical expertise and training. In certain circumstances it could also include direct intervention.

e. **Personnel support.** Although the majority of personnel involved with the insurgency are likely to come from within the supportive element of the population, insurgents may also include other external personnel, particularly ‘foreign fighters’ and those with technical expertise.

f. **Sanctuaries.** Sanctuaries, both geographic and demographic, can provide insurgents with a place to rebuild and reorganize without fear of interference. Geographic sanctuaries may be local or regional 'safe' areas or an area across a border in a neighbouring (sympathetic) country, while demographic sanctuaries provide insurgents the ability to blend in with the population.

g. **Financial support.** Financial support may be provided overtly or covertly.

**Sources of external support.** External support may come from other nation states, emigrants, refugees and other non-state actors including the following.

a. **Support from other states.** State support for insurgencies is generally the most significant source of external support. It can be military, financial, logistic and/or political and is likely to be motivated by the desire to:

   (1) gain regional influence;
   (2) wage war using a proxy force;
   (3) overthrow another government;
   (4) retaliate;
   (5) gain influence over the insurgency (likely to ensure that the insurgent goals are in the interest of the supporting state);
   (6) support similar ethnic or related groups;
   (7) reclaim territory; and
   (8) gain access to markets or resources.

b. **Emigrant and diaspora communities.** These are important sources of funding, political influence, intelligence, weapons, recruitment and equipment.

c. **Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP).** As well as potential recruits, refugee camps may provide insurgents with sanctuary and therefore, the opportunity to rest, plan, train and recruit, as well as to gain
control of that refugee/internally displaced persons’ community. External assistance intended to help refugees may also be diverted towards the insurgency. There are a number of reasons why refugees may support an insurgency including:

(1) a desire to return to their previous status and life in their own homeland;

(2) the need for protection from oppressive government forces, rival ethnic groups, or local bandits (frequently operating in or near refugee camps);

(3) a conviction that military action and violence is the only way to get their grievance noticed and addressed (generally enhanced by a sense of frustration and anger that they have been forced away from their homes and would like to return); and/or because

(4) refugees and internally displaced persons are vulnerable population groups, and are therefore easily targeted by insurgents through coercion.

d. Other insurgent groups. Other insurgent groups can be a valuable source of support, advice and tactics to an insurgent movement.

e. Influential individuals. Wealthy and influential individuals whose objectives align with the insurgency can be a source of funding and support.

f. Criminal organizations. Transnational or national criminal organizations may provide mutual support to insurgent groups/individuals, or use the instability caused by the insurgency to increase their own profits. This may involve mutually beneficial relationships between organized crime gangs and insurgents, including providing arms and funding/collaboration on the trafficking of drugs or people.

g. Aid agencies, non-governmental organizations and human rights organizations. On rare occasions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and charities may support the insurgency, be it intentionally or unintentionally.

h. Religious organizations. These may be an influential source of financial and intellectual support. Their spiritual support, disseminated through the modern global media, can be an important contribution in inspiring recruits and activists.

i. Transnational terrorist organizations. These terrorist organizations (e.g., al-Qaida and its associates) are strong in number, well-funded, and globally oriented. They will infiltrate areas with insurgencies and terrorist operations around the globe, whether welcomed or not, and will thrive and
even surreptitiously instigate conflict between insurgents and forces conducting COIN alike. Their intermediate goal is instability and chaos, supporting an established insurgency until they can control and dominate the situation. Forces conducting COIN should be diligent in identifying possible presence and support of insurgent by transnational terrorists.

Section V – Structure and Elements of an Insurgency

0228 The structure of the insurgency will adapt as the insurgency itself changes. In the initial stage a simple informal structure could suffice. In later stages it may be necessary for a movement to organize itself into different groups, cells or networks to provide security to the members and resources. Once an insurgency has gained enough popular support, a well-functioning and flexible organization will be essential for coordinating and executing insurgent activities, as well as establishing a credible alternative to replace the established power.

0229 An insurgency normally consists of six broad membership categories described below. The proportion of each category will depend on the objectives, development, capability and progress of the particular insurgency. Individuals may drift between categories of membership, particularly mass base, auxiliary and armed elements. The membership categories are generally based on the skills, roles, and responsibilities. Across the entire membership, the organization is typically cellular to prevent infiltration and large scale identification of the insurgents by the government.

a. Leaders. They provide the vision and direction as the command element of an insurgency and articulate the ideology that underpins it. Their leadership is usually exercised through force of personality, power of ideology and personal charisma. In some insurgencies, a leading position may result from religious, clan or tribal authority. Leaders are typically politically astute, and if not militarily and organizationally astute, they will establish those expertise in trustworthy cadre and armed elements who wage the guerrilla warfare for the insurgency.

b. Armed elements. These conduct operations, execute orders and actions, and maintain local control, including protection of training camps and networks that facilitate funding, training and recruiting activities and consist of both local and ‘foreign’ fighters. Combatants are often mistaken for the movement itself but they exist to support the insurgency’s wider political agenda. They may also be involved in protecting or coercing segments of the population, directed by the cadre and leaders. This element would principally conduct the necessary guerrilla warfare against government or occupying forces as required.

c. Cadres (or ‘militants’ or ‘the Party’). This is the political core of an insurgency, highly trusted by the leaders, engaged in the overarching struggle to accomplish insurgent goals. Certain cadre will liaise with the armed elements, auxiliaries, and underground to ensure oversight,
security, and effective support activities. They may form into a political
division and will implement guidance and procedures in accordance with
direction from the leadership. Insurgencies based on religious extremism
will typically include religious and spiritual advisors within their cadre. The
cadre assesses and attempts to resolve grievances in local areas and will
attribute successful solutions to the insurgency. In time, the cadre may
seek to replace government bureaucracy and assume its functions as part
of a 'shadow government'.

d. **Auxiliaries.** These are active members and sympathizers who provide
support services to an insurgency. However, some neutral or even non-
sympathetic people/groups can be used as auxiliaries by insurgents as
they do not have means to resist or just comply out of fear. They only
occasionally participate in direct actions. Their activities could include:

(1) operating and maintaining safe houses;
(2) storing weapons and supplies;
(3) acting as couriers;
(4) providing passive intelligence collection;
(5) giving early warning of counter-insurgent movements;
(6) providing funding from lawful and unlawful sources;
(7) providing forged or stolen documents;
(8) providing technical expertise and materiel fabrication, such as
improvised explosive devices;
(9) providing armed and unarmed training and indoctrination; and
(10) giving access to, or introducing potential supporters.

e. **Underground.** The underground is a cellular organization of active
supporters of the insurgency which may include individuals working in the
contested government, as contractors or in international and/or non-
governmental organizations. They are as engaged as the auxiliaries and,
at times, may act as an armed element. They operate in all areas,
especially in those not accessible to the standing armed elements and will
conduct clandestine, covert, and overt operations. Members of the
underground often continue in their normal positions in society but lead
additional clandestine lives as part of an insurgent movement.

f. **Mass base.** The mass base consists of followers of the movement or
those politically-aligned with its aims and goals; in other words, the
supporting populace. Members are often recruited and indoctrinated by
the cadre. In some cases, they may however be unaware of their role in supporting the insurgency. Mass base members continue in their normal positions as legal members of society, and do not take part in direct actions or provide substantial enabling support. Popular support is not only important from a political point of view, but assists with providing logistic support, developing an intelligence and recruiting network and creating a protective security screen around the insurgency’s clandestine organization. Additionally, the mass base may be mobilized to conduct non-military actions, such as demonstrations or riots.

Section VI – Insurgency in Operation

0230 **Organizational structure and networks.** Insurgencies will use a combination of tribal, familial, religious and ideological networks. This ensures resilience through multi-layered networks where members may have many different roles in various networks and compartmented cells. Layered networks are particularly difficult for the counter-insurgent to understand and therefore hard to neutralize. They tend to heal, adapt and recover rapidly. The compromise of one cell will not greatly affect the operational security of the organization as a whole, and they are also adaptable to changing circumstances and developments in the political or security environments. Such organizations are often represented within the local, regional, national and even international spheres.

0231 **Learning and adapting.** All successful insurgencies are adaptive and agile. An insurgency will apply a wide range of tactics as its strength increases or declines.

0232 **Recruiting.** The main recruiting sources are disaffected segments of the population, although diasporas and sympathetic foreign populations can also be fertile recruiting grounds. New personnel are incorporated into the insurgency as it expands its efforts and it possibly loses members due to casualties or arrests. Recruiting is assisted by the proliferation of news, information and commentary, coupled with increasingly responsive audiences. Recruiting efforts will be focused in areas that are considered fertile and responsive.

0233 **Training.** Insurgents need training on subjects such as weapons, explosives, logistics, communications and small-unit tactics. Although often provided by the insurgent organization itself, suitable trainers are not always available. Secure places to conduct training are difficult to find, particularly in urban areas. Sometimes insurgents need to rely on external support or the Internet for training and education. In the early days of a conflict, an insurgent group may lack a cadre of skilled, experienced fighters who can pass on their knowledge to new recruits.

0234 **Resources.** To maintain momentum and sustain operations, insurgents need constant and reliable access to supplies, weapons, ammunition and funding. Internal logistic support is vital, especially in the early stages of the insurgency.
when external support may be limited, and secrecy is essential. As an insurgency develops and expands, reliance on logistic support increases, with more support being sought from external sources. If an insurgency is successful enough to develop a force capacity for traditional warfare against local security forces, the external support may well increase in scope and importance and become more brazen, because the insurgents appear to be winning. Some of the main resources required by insurgents are listed below.

a. **Weapons and ammunition.** Insurgents will readily improve weapons and explosives to increase their lethal effects. Primitive and sophisticated improvised explosive devices have proven to be very effective weapons for insurgents and terrorists. Weapons, ammunition and explosives can be purchased on the black market, captured from government forces or supplied and smuggled across porous borders. If weapons of mass destruction are available to insurgents, they could use them but the potential international condemnation and ramifications could hurt the insurgency more than help it. Proliferation of modern technology like unmanned systems, particular attractive to insurgents if easily accessible and cheap, might endanger/hamper COIN efforts.

b. **Funding.** Income can be obtained through many sources and is essential for purchasing arms, paying recruits and bribing corrupt officials. While funds are often provided directly to insurgents they may also be moved and held by local financial institutions. Local supporters or international fronted organizations can provide donations; legitimate businesses may be established to furnish funding. In insurgent-controlled areas, confiscation or illegal taxation might be used, whilst criminal activity is also a common source of funding. Although funding is crucial for an insurgency to survive it may also make it more vulnerable.

c. **Supply lines.** Insurgents require a system of internal and external supply lines underpinned by suitable transportation and storage facilities most of which are hidden and operated in secrecy.

d. **Bases.** Insurgents adapt easily and can operate from a variety of safe houses and bases (see paragraph 0238 below). Safe houses are used to temporarily hide insurgents and are often part of a network to secretly move members and materiel. The larger and more active an insurgent force becomes, the more it needs established facilities including both permanent and temporary bases. Bases must be safe and secure in areas where insurgents can rest, plan and train. In rural areas, bases tend to be in remote areas characterized by rough, inaccessible terrain, whilst in urban areas, bases tend to be located in areas where the insurgent has popular support.
Section VII – Insurgent Vulnerabilities

0235 **The need for secrecy.** An insurgent group operating from a position of weakness that intends to use violence to pursue its political aims will initially adopt a clandestine approach for the planning and execution of its activities, even while seeking overt effects: it will operate in small groups to avoid detection by government/forces conducting COIN. However, excessive secrecy can limit insurgent freedom of action, reduce or distort information about insurgent goals and ideals, and restrict communication within the insurgency. Recruiting new insurgents is still a challenge, so insurgent personnel losses are not easily replaced: insurgent methods to recruit replacements can be identified, tracked and exploited by the forces conducting COIN. As an insurgency grows, the number of potential informants increases. This creates an inherent tension between the need to grow popular support and the need to maintain organizational security. Some insurgencies split into political and military wings, allowing part of the movement to address the public (political) requirements of the insurgency while separately conducting covert (military) actions. Adopting a cellular structure for reasons of security can further restrict communications and inhibit command and control.

0236 **Inconsistencies in the insurgent narrative.** The core logic of the narrative must remain consistent. If an insurgency continually changes its political objectives, the population will be less likely to be convinced.

0237 **Insurgent propaganda.** The frequent use of incorrect, fake and distorted propaganda by insurgents, or constantly changing political objectives, can be exploited to undermine the insurgents’ credibility, especially when countered with accurate information. However, to effectively counter insurgent propaganda and exploit overreach, correct information must be presented in a form and manner that is compelling to the targeted audience. In the early stages, an insurgency may be tempted to go to extremes to attract followers. Insurgents will use a combination of propaganda and intimidation, and they may overreach in both.

0238 **Need to establish a base of operations.** Establishing a viable but secure operating base can be difficult for insurgents. A base too far from the major centres of activity may be secure but risks being isolated from the populace. A base too near centres of government activity risks exposure through observation and infiltration. Bases close to borders can be attractive when they are beyond the reach of counter-insurgents, yet safe enough to avoid suspicion on the part of neighbouring authorities or populations. Moving people and supplies around a base may expose its location and allow the lines of communication to be monitored or disrupted. This presents opportunities for counter-insurgents to deepen their understanding of the insurgency and its networks, as well as conduct strike operations.

0239 **Reliance on support.** Lines of communication are vulnerable and may be exploited by the counter-insurgents. An inability to gain external support may
impact on the insurgents' ability to sustain the campaign. The sealing of borders by counter-insurgents may starve an insurgency of external (international) support.

0240 **Economic and financial weakness.** All insurgencies require funding. However, the search for this may attract attention from local security forces. Controls and regulations that limit the movement and exchange of material and funds may compound insurgent financial vulnerabilities, especially related to funding from other countries. Financial transactions are vulnerable to electronic interdiction and tracking. Funding by external donors and criminal organizations may come with an associated political price that could affect the overall aim of an insurgency and thereby weaken its popular appeal.

0241 **Internal divisions.** Counter-insurgents are always alert for signs of divisions within an insurgent movement. Successes by counter-insurgents or errors by the insurgents themselves may cause members to question their cause or to challenge leadership. Relations within an insurgency are not always harmonious; particularly when sub-factions form to vie for power. If rifts between insurgent leaders are identified, they can be exploited. Offering selective amnesty, or compromises, can also cause divisions within an insurgency and provide an opportunity to split, or at least weaken, it. Internal divisions may deteriorate into violence among different groups as they compete for power. The desertion of members or supporters, or information leaks to government authorities can also demoralise and damage an insurgent organization.

**Section VIII – Strategies of Insurgency – Models**

0242 Contemporary insurgents may vary their approaches and apply tactics to take advantage of particular circumstances. They may adopt a composite solution that includes experiences drawn from various other approaches. Historically, insurgents have used a variety of strategic models or approaches.

0243 **Conspiratorial approach.** This involves a few leaders and a militant cadre or activist party seizing control of government structures or exploiting a revolutionary situation. Insurgents remain secretive for as long as possible and emerge only when they believe success can be achieved quickly. This approach usually involves creating a small, secretive, vanguard party or force.

0244 **Military-focused approach.** Those applying the military-focused approach aim to create revolutionary possibilities through the application of military force. They can use conventional forces to secure their independence or secession, or employ armed elements in a rural environment to create a focus and gain revolutionary support that will enable them to seize power. They spread control through creating and deploying combat forces rather than through political subversion.
Urban approach. Protracted urban terrorism waged by small, independent cells requires little popular support, and is difficult to counter. To negate the effect of local security forces, these groups adopt a cellular structure recruited along lines of close association (family, religious, political or social group).

Protracted popular warfare. This approach, where decisive combat is avoided, has been frequently employed by insurgencies and regular armies. The most illustrative examples are those of the 20th century in Asia (Chinese communist forces in the Civil War and the National Liberation Front for South Vietnam (also known as the Viet Cong or Vietnamese communists). Mao Zedong's Theory of Protracted War describes a three-phase, politico-military approach. Effectively applying Maoist strategy does not require the sequential or complete application of all three phases. Moreover, a single insurgency may be in different phases in various parts of a country or region simultaneously. Insurgencies may revert to an earlier phase when pressured and resume activities when conditions are more favourable. This flexibility is the key strength of a phased approach in that it provides fall-back positions, and movement between phases does not end the operational and tactical activities typical of earlier phases – it incorporates them. The phases in the protracted popular war model may not provide a complete template for understanding contemporary insurgencies, but they do explain the shifting mosaic of activities usually present in some form. The constant feature in all phases of an insurgency is to stick to its strategic centre of gravity which is gaining and maintaining popular support and consent.

a. Phase 1 – Strategic defensive (latent and incipient). The first phase of an insurgency normally begins with the government having stronger forces than the insurgents, meaning that the insurgency is on the strategic defensive and insurgents must concentrate on survival and building support. Although they share many of the same activities, there are two distinct common stages within the first phase: latent and incipient. Members of a latent or incipient insurgency conduct several linked, often interdependent, activities. While not all insurgencies will conduct all of these activities or place the same emphasis on them, all insurgencies will use them to some degree.

b. Phase 1: Stage 1 – Latent. A latent insurgency is not yet ready to start significant subversive or violent activities. It usually begins with a group of like-minded individuals discussing their grievances and this exchange may occur through many mediums, including the Internet or other forms of media. During this period, an insurgency establishes an identity, a cause, a narrative and a firm ideological or political base. This can be a period of frequent fractures into different ideological groups due to disputes providing a potential vulnerability; insurgents therefore often try to keep their activities clandestine from the government and the majority of the population. The two key tasks that insurgents perform during the latent stage are recruiting and infiltrating.
Recruiting. Beginning in the latent stage, the insurgency will recruit members, form cadres and establish underground agents. The insurgents use planned recruitment to attract members, supporters and sympathizers at all levels. Rival organizations are a key concern for the insurgents, as they can compete for the limited new recruits or support that might be available.

Infiltrating. Insurgents seek to identify and infiltrate power centres at different levels within a country, including where decisions are made to include different levels of the government (local to national), significant socio-political institutions, and various news and entertainment media. This will normally be achieved by forming a network of cells and agents.

c. Phase 1: Stage 2 – Incipient. In the incipient stage an insurgency is becoming more active, however, many of the activities from the latent stage will remain ongoing (for example, building and maintaining an ideological or political base). Although the insurgents will continue with latent activities, they now have a sufficient foundation to begin violent and additional subversive activities. There are two other key tasks that insurgents perform – preparation and manifestation.

Preparation. Building organizational structures and capabilities to perform subversion and violent activities is a key task. Information activities, especially propaganda, are vital for the growth and long-term prospects of an insurgency. As well as having members and supporters, insurgents must acquire the materiel means to fight, such as weapons, funds and other supplies. Insurgents also continue to build an intelligence collection network, which may involve coercion and blackmail. Some insurgencies will organize support from the local population through established networks. An insurgency based on an existing organization, such as a religious faction or tribe, can have a significantly reduced preparation time. Regardless of the exact tasks or emphasis of the insurgency in the preparation phase, it must balance the risk between secrecy and open operations. While an insurgency needs to promote the cause or narrative to gain popular support, overt operations makes it vulnerable to penetration by counter-insurgents. Many insurgencies also turn to criminal organizations to generate funding.

Manifestation. Manifestation or ‘unmasking’ by insurgents is meant to create a negative psychological effect on the will of the government and their local security forces, and a positive, uplifting effect on the will of insurgents and their supporters. It may take several forms and is largely dependent on the insurgents' strategy. The exhibition of certain specific insurgent tactics, techniques, and procedures, or their accomplishments should show strength and legitimacy of the insurgent narrative for the purpose of increasing favourable local,
regional, and international public opinion, recruiting, and garnering materiel support. Manifestation can also appear in the form of ghost governing in locales strongly supportive to the insurgency and with little or no control by the government. Insurgents are careful not to allow manifestation to give government local security forces a better insight for conducting COIN activities, because manifestation is conducted at the onset of rapid expansion of activities to help transition the insurgency forward into phase 2 strategic equilibrium with momentum that can help further transition to phase 3, strategic offensive.

d. **Phase 2 – Strategic equilibrium.** The second phase of an insurgency normally starts when force correlations approach equilibrium and using an armed element becomes the most important, pervasive activity. The phase can start with actions of armed elements striking at a time and place of their choosing and then disappearing back into the population. The size and intensity of such attacks will depend on the situation and the goal of the insurgency. If the intention is to impose a military defeat, the attacks may concentrate on causing military attrition, weakening the military power, and causing desertions, with a view to eventual conventional battles. If the aim is to cause a level of harassment that is unendurable for the government, a wider range of attacks may be attempted. If the intention is to force a repressive military response from the government, thus alienating it from the population, applying terrorism in a ruthless and systematic manner is likely. Insurgent efforts in this phase may include:

(1) armed action, often aimed to force counter-insurgents onto the defensive;

(2) sabotage and terrorism;

(3) intensifying propaganda;

(4) gaining control of isolated areas and developing bases;

(5) driving governmental officials out of areas with strong insurgent support;

(6) establishing local shadow governance; and

(7) increasing efforts to gain international recognition and support.

e. **Phase 3 – Strategic offensive.** The third phase of an insurgency begins when insurgents feel they have superior strength and a portion of their military forces could attempt to fight in a traditional manner. Insurgent efforts may include:

(1) some armed elements combining and training to fight as conventional forces;
(2) more powerful and sophisticated weapons acquired through capture or foreign assistance;

(3) insurgents obtaining support from external combat forces, such as special operations forces or conventional forces from a friendly bordering nation; and

(4) areas of insurgent control expanding and political activity increasing.

Protracted popular war approaches are conducted along multiple politico-military courses of action and are locally configured. Insurgents may employ differing tactics in different regions. The result is more than just a ‘three-block war’: it is a shifting ‘mosaic war’ that is difficult to envision as a coherent whole.

Identity-focused approach. This approach mobilizes support based on the common identity of religious affinity, clan, tribe or ethnic group. These movements may be based on an appeal to a distinct identity, either separate from, or as a part of, other identities. This approach is common among contemporary insurgencies and is sometimes combined with the military-focused approach.

Composite strategy. Contemporary insurgents may use different approaches at different times and places, applying tactics that best take advantage of the prevailing circumstances. They may also apply a composite solution that includes experiences drawn from other approaches. Different insurgent forces using diverse approaches may also form coalitions. Within a single area of operations, there may be multiple competing groups, each seeking to maximize its survivability and influence. This reality complicates the mosaic and it will be difficult for counter-insurgents to understand the type of actions necessary for success.

Contemporary insurgencies and current threats. Some contemporary insurgencies have developed in extremely complex scenarios. There are many interrelated actors, and it is often difficult to clearly discern between two parties – insurgent and counter-insurgent. These actors may include: militias, warlords, organized criminals, drug dealers, private security companies, non-governmental organizations, media, foreign supporters and multinational companies with strategic interests in the area. By nature of their organizations transnational terrorist and criminal organizations are frequently able to support each other and even cooperate. There may be a flow of volunteers who, after one conflict ends, will join other conflicts and share experiences, training and resources. However, “nationalistic” insurgents typically do not relinquish their movements and objectives to transnational terrorists or criminals for support.

There are resistance movements and insurgencies that continue to exist, and which do not overwhelm the affected governments to require outside assistance. The threat posed by new insurgencies is related to their ability to act in different areas. This is also linked to their capacity to influence a country's
domestic/foreign politics, and its public opinion, through the use of violence and propaganda.

Section IX – Insurgent Activities for Achieving their Goals

0252 Non-violent activities. Non-violent activities are intended to gain sympathy or support and may include large-scale marches and protest demonstrations to obstruct the use of infrastructure, disrupt work, distribute propaganda and have a political impact on the population. These non-violent means may generate international attention, that could put even more pressure on the government and counter-insurgents. Insurgents may also use publicised boycotts, like avoiding using specific goods and services or not purchasing products from that particular country and refusing to carry out basic civic functions (e.g., not paying taxes or striking). As insurgencies become more adept, they may combine non-violent and violent methods, like using a legitimate demonstration to cover an attack on local security forces.

0253 Occupation activities. These activities are carried out to temporarily occupy a chosen establishment, such as a government office or communications facility. This is usually done to gain propaganda or psychological advantage.

0254 Violent activities. Violent activities may take the following forms.

a. Guerrilla Warfare. Armed elements, often organized into a military structure, with a commander, harass and interfere with the host nation’s ability to conduct operations. These armed elements are usually small in number and will normally avoid direct combat or becoming an identifiable target. They primarily use surprise, mobility, and focused attacks, followed by immediate dispersal. They may choose to operate in an urban environment, due to accessibility of weapons, modern communication systems facilitating command and control, a concentration of population and the ease of concealment.

b. Terrorism. Terrorism aims to subdue the population and to weaken, undermine and interfere with legal authorities. Global media maximizes propaganda value and the psychological impact. The aim is to create a climate of fear among the population without directly facing them, promoting groundless discouragement, undermining their morale, and making them feel helpless. For further information see AJP-3.4 (reference K).

c. Kidnappings. Kidnapping targets may include foreign personnel, like attachés, ranking government officials, aid workers and members of the commercial or media community.

d. Sabotage. Insurgents may sabotage economic, military or political installations such as factories, public or government office buildings, communications facilities and essential service providers.
e. **Street tactics.** Insurgents may use street tactics to involve the populace in their efforts against local security forces. They may seek to turn peaceful demonstrations into violent ones and also construct barricades to heighten or prolong existing tensions or violence. Missile-throwing, sniping and other means may be used to incite local security forces to attack a peaceful demonstration. Through such activities, they aim to cause material damage and a general breakdown in morale of the populace, and embarrass and undermine the government. Professional agitators from the insurgent organization may penetrate demonstrations to incite violence by using propaganda. The insurgents obscure their intentions by blending into the crowd and merging their activities with those of the masses. A riot is a mode of violence intended to interfere with public order causing direct engagement with local security forces. For further information see AJP-3.4 (reference K).

f. **Ambushes.** These are generally used to kill government officials and security force members. They are carefully planned and may employ blocking elements to prevent rapid reinforcement of the ambushed force. Mines and improvised explosive devices as well as snipers may be used as part of the ambush. The insurgent will normally try to take advantage of the irregularities of the streets and buildings. An ambush often has a powerful effect on local security forces.

g. **Raids.** Raids are armed assaults made to obtain funds, equipment or materiel, to free detainees, or to destroy or overrun government or military installations. Typical targets include foreign forces allied with the contested government, monetary and commercial centres, government buildings and police stations, penal institutions, military installations and arsenals, foreign embassies and communications and transportation facilities.

0255 **National and international information activities.** Globalization provides insurgents with multiple means (old and new media) that have a multiplying effect on their information activities. As an example, religious fundamentalists use the Internet to disseminate information to groups in foreign countries. The Internet significantly facilitates the purchase of goods and radical books together with the broadcast of sermons delivered in clandestine environments.

0256 **Social assistance.** Through social assistance, insurgents try to win local support and legitimacy while emphasizing the failure of the government to effectively provide for the population. This is particularly effective in countries where the government is weak, corrupt or failed. Social assistance can include:

a. education, medical treatment facilities and activities;

b. aiding workers by supporting labour unions and providing employment;

c. providing basic needs, such as the care of orphans and widows; or
d. providing a shadow government including a judicial system.

0257 **Political activism.** An insurgency may form an overt or covert political wing to support these efforts. The success of insurgent political activism may depend on the insurgents’ ability to create coalitions with other actors. Overt political organizations allow insurgents to organize demonstrations, protests, general strikes and boycotts with reduced need for secrecy. They may also use computer networks to support political activism.

0258 **International relationships.** Local insurgencies can establish relationships with other insurgent groups that are acting in other countries. This may be a mutually beneficial agreement to receive training, exchange experiences, raise funds, acquire arms and pose a united front. Insurgents may also seek support from other states, or individuals and non-governmental organizations or other organizations with worldwide influence (for example, a group which influences public opinion or a popular public figure who publicises a legitimate insurgent cause). See paragraphs 0226 and 0227 for details on external support.

**Section X – Motivation Methods**

0259 Although the term ‘popular support’ connotes popular likes and dislikes of the civilian populace, the support of the population is not simply a function of the preferences or the sympathy of the population. People’s sympathy may not guarantee compliance with the demands of either the authorities or the insurgency. Insurgent organizations can use persuasive and coercive techniques to gain the support of the population.

0260 **Persuasion.** In times of restlessness and turmoil, political, social, security and economic benefits may attract popular support for one or another party. Persuasion can be used to win internal/external support through:

a. charismatic leadership;

b. appealing to a specific ideology or religion;

c. promising to address grievances;

d. demonstrations of potency such as large-scale attacks or effective social programmes for the needy (this can be the most effective technique because it can create the perception that the insurgency has momentum and will succeed) and;

e. providing security.

In the latter, insurgents will base their actions on the belief that, for the population, a government unable to secure the population loses its legitimacy. Most civilians will tend to support those who ensure their security, even if this may be at the detriment of their freedom.
Coercion. Coercion is considered to be the action or practice of persuading someone or a group to do (or not do) something by using force or threat of force. Insurgents use coercion to intimidate the population. The kidnapping and murder of local leaders, or their relatives, is a common practice among insurgents. Coercion and other criminal activities are used to deter the population from supporting the government. The effect of coercion may be quicker and more direct than persuasion but is likely to be short-term. To bring a swift end to an insurgency, both sides can employ coercion as an instrument of population control. Although coercion is an effective tool in manipulating an individual’s short-term decisions, it may cause serious problems in the long-term.

Provoking disproportionate reaction. By provoking a disproportionate response from the local security forces, the insurgent aims to alienate the government from the populace. Though firmness on the part of local security forces is often necessary to establish a secure environment, a government that exceeds accepted local norms and abuses its power or behaves in a tyrannical way, will generate resistance to its rule. People who have been maltreated or have had friends or relatives killed or detained by the government and its local security forces, are more liable to join an insurgency.
PART 2 – COUNTER-INSURGENCY

Section XI – Overview

0263 Definition.

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<th>Counter-insurgency</th>
<th>is defined as: comprehensive civilian and military efforts made to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances.</th>
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This publication also uses the term ‘counter-insurgent’ to include the set of actors executing COIN actions, whether they are part of the contested government, the Alliance or members of other supporting countries or agencies.

0264 The population is the prize. Conducting successful COIN requires practitioners to have an adaptive and flexible mind-set. First and foremost, the population is the critical dimension of a successful COIN. NATO's military achievements alone will not translate into political success. Insurgency is a contest for the support of the population and the legitimacy to rule. While military power is important in COIN, defeating an insurgency also requires addressing its root causes through a political solution. A key part of understanding the population is to have an intimate knowledge of what caused and perpetuates the insurgency. Cultural awareness, which is supported by civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) staff, therefore plays a key role.

0265 The role of the host nation. The ultimate responsibility for countering an insurgency rests with the contested authorities. NATO forces committed to a COIN effort are primarily there to assist an existing contested government (or support the process of establishing one). The long-term goal must be to ensure the contested authorities’ government and its local security forces reach an appropriate and sustainable level of effectiveness to endure once NATO forces have withdrawn. Viable local leaders and institutions must therefore be developed. NATO forces and agencies can help with that, but to achieve sustainable success, contested government elements must ultimately accept responsibility for security, governance, development and rule of law. While NATO military units may sometimes be necessary to conduct independent operations, the long-term security solution remains with the local security forces. Every effort must be made to build the capacity, legitimacy and credibility of these institutions as early as possible.

0266 The effect of a foreign military force. Eventually, all foreign local forces can be seen as interlopers or occupiers and the sooner the lead for security can effectively transition to government institutions, the better. This military effort can only be successful when the Alliance works by, with, and through the contested government political and security force apparatus (helping to create one if it does not already exist). To be truly successful, NATO’s military effort
must therefore ‘put the host nation’s face on the operations’ and transfer lead security responsibility to the contested authorities.

0267 **The role of the military.** The strategic goal of the counter-insurgent is to promote legitimate governance by controlling violence and enforcing the rule of law when so directed. This requires the coordinated use of military power with all other instruments of national power, including diplomacy, informational and economic in a comprehensive approach. The comprehensive approach to COIN integrates the application of the security, information, and economic functions through a political strategy that results in the contested government’s control of its environment, to include the relevant population, and support for the government against the insurgents. A poor security situation may initially require the joint force to execute other than conventional tasks, normally the preserve of other civilian agencies and organizations. Priority should always be given to addressing the political considerations of an insurgency with the military in a supporting role.

0268 **COIN with global considerations.** A NATO comprehensive approach to COIN efforts is more likely to counter external support for an insurgency, and has the benefit of an allied multinational force that can provide informational power on a wider basis to counter insurgent propaganda, support the NATO- and contested authorities’ efforts, and influence international public opinion. NATO COIN efforts can thereby have strategic global implications, just as an insurgency can, in what NATO considers a sovereign State.

0269 Throughout the effort, emphasis must be placed on the ‘develop’, as well as ‘secure’ elements of the COIN ‘shape-secure-develop’-framework (see Chapter 4). An appropriate balance between ‘secure’ and ‘develop’ will demonstrate tangible signs of progress, provide security, legitimize the contested government and provide improved prospects for the community. This should, in turn, help to secure the support of the population at the expense of the insurgents.

0270 **Unity of effort.** Countering an insurgency requires the combined efforts of both civilian and military actors working to a common political strategy, developed between the Alliance and the contested authorities, and with other significant participants. NATO forces will operate under a single military commander and will probably face a number of challenges including national caveats. Attaining coherence with other non-NATO military and civilian actors may be difficult, however, commanders must strive to achieve unity of effort.

0271 Recognizing political primacy in COIN, the joint force commander and staff should identify areas of commonality, or unity, among all relevant actors as part of a comprehensive approach. This should allow them to focus their civil-military interaction on key actors, including the contested government, and to share a common understanding of the purpose of the mission, and whenever possible to synchronize effort using a comprehensive approach (see Chapter 1). This should be coordinated by the contested authorities which will combine political,
economic and security solutions into a COIN-plan. The contested authorities and participating NATO-member governments may invariably have competing international agendas, different domestic imperatives, and different relationships with other regional protagonists. Additionally they may be operating under different legal and political constraints. Commanders should, however, remember that elements of the contested authorities may also be part of the root cause of the insurgency. Effective liaison will be critical to achieve unity of effort.

Section XII – Counter-insurgency Principles

0272 As well as the principles of joint and multinational operations which apply to all operations, NATO has developed the following COIN principles.\(^6\)

a. Political primacy.
b. Develop and promote the legitimacy of the contested government.
c. Hand over responsibility to the local forces as soon as practicable.
d. Secure the population.
e. Understand the human environment.
f. Defeat the insurgent.
g. Operate within international, national law and respect domestic law.
h. Prepare for a protracted campaign.
i. Learn and adapt.

0273 **Political primacy.** Any solution that addresses the root causes and political drivers of an insurgency will be predominantly political in nature and is likely to include some form of recognition or negotiated accommodations to the insurgents’ political demands. Therefore, the political strategy coordinated with the contested authorities, combining civilian and military resources, principles and attitudes, will provide the direction and guidance for all COIN planning for all principal participants. NATO strategy will focus predominantly on the military instrument of power, but must also be guided by the broader political considerations. Commanders and their staff must ensure operational planning reflects this relationship. Plans must be flexible enough to support, rather than undermine, the overarching political strategy. This approach will support the overall political imperative as part of the comprehensive approach (see Chapter 1).

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\(^6\) With the exception of political primacy these are not listed in an order of priority.
Develop and promote the legitimacy of the contested authorities. Insurgency is a struggle between the insurgents and the contested authorities for the legitimacy to govern – in the eyes of the population. The insurgents will expend considerable effort and may even accept tactical defeats to increase their apparent legitimacy relative to the contested authorities. This may include encouraging forces conducting COIN to overreact and cause civilian casualties. Identifying what the population considers to be legitimate, and what they expect from their government, are important planning factors.

Military commanders should plan activities that promote legitimacy and help develop the relationship between the contested government and its people. As the legitimacy of the government grows, support for the insurgency should diminish. NATO forces must continually assess what legitimacy means to the population within specific areas, cognisant that this perception may vary over time and in different communities. Pre-conceived opinions based on perceptions of the intervening force should be avoided.

Hand over responsibility to the local forces as soon as practicable. Commanders should hand over responsibility to the contested authorities and its security forces as soon as practicable and put the government at the forefront of the COIN effort. This demonstration of sovereignty will then boost their credibility and legitimacy amongst the population. Achieving this will require legitimate, capable and sustainable local security forces at all levels. Some nations may not possess the capability, or capacity, to perform this function from the outset of the insurgency and may require international support to include building their capacity for security. A transition process that transfers authorities and responsibilities to host nation security authorities incrementally such as geographic areas that have been secured and stabilized to a reasonable degree, would bolster their credibility. Successful transfers help serve as objective examples for local security forces in training.

While it may be necessary for NATO forces to initially lead operations, the enduring aim must be to strengthen the local security forces and institutions to a point where they can assume responsibility for security. As part of a controlled transition, NATO effort may shift from directly fighting the insurgents to providing support to the local security forces. This support could include providing intelligence support, helicopters, engineers, medical support, and the training of local security forces. If the responsibility for security is not handed over as soon as it is viable, the insurgency may present its cause as a struggle against an occupation force.

Secure the population. If the population feels the contested authorities or foreign forces conducting COIN are providing acceptable security and its interests are better served by the contested authorities than the insurgents, then progress can be made on the other key lines of operation (governance and economic). This will help to provide a long-term solution to the insurgency by addressing the root causes. As the legitimacy and credibility of the government increases, this may lead to more information being offered by the population.
This will be particularly applicable when local, rather than NATO forces are the dominant and visible presence.

0279 Securing the local population should therefore be the main focus of the military activity whilst neutralising insurgents should be seen as actively enabling the protection of the population and coalition forces. However, during the early stages of a COIN operation a difficult balance will have to be struck between operations that directly neutralize insurgents and those that establish the framework to secure the population. Achieving this balance should be intelligence-led and will evolve over time.

0280 Effective and enduring security will help create the conditions to develop local governance. This requires deploying units (including local security forces where possible) in strength to centres of population. Particularly in the early stages of an operation, priority may be given to the more developed areas because these will provide a better opportunity to provide tangible progress. Operations to secure key centres of population can allow the contested authorities to overtly demonstrate its capability. This also starts to instil confidence among the people in the competence and long-term intentions of their government.

0281 A population which has been under control of insurgents, and among whom insurgents may still live, is not going to be transformed overnight. Therefore, units allocated an area of operations will need to live and operate among the population and require sufficient numbers and resources to conduct effective operations to re-establish and maintain security and control. Once the population is secure, governmental and development processes can start or resume, and progress towards reconciliation, reintegration and negotiation will become possible.

0282 **Understand the human environment.** The human environment can be characterized as the social, ethnic, cultural, political, gender and economic environment as well as belief systems and forms of interaction that exists within the area of operations. Religion, literature, language, music, legend and myth are constituent parts of the human environment as are culture and shared concepts that guide what people believe, how they behave and how this behaviour is interpreted. The human environment includes the values, norms and beliefs that are reflected in different structures and systems. It is shaped by individual attitudes, assumptions and expectations and, at its core, it consists of networks, perceptions, motivations and needs. The human environment encapsulates an understanding of individuals (particularly key leaders), groups and societies.

0283 In COIN, the population’s perception is critical. Understanding the human environment will allow military operations to be designed to achieve the desired influence and help prevent negative unintended consequences as a result of well-intentioned, but misguided, activity. This also allows effective engagement with the whole population (including women, and those out of work) through information activities and will help address human security. Employment of
more female personnel as military advisors, civilian police and humanitarian personnel, could provide additional, more specific perspective to information. Effective intelligence will help commanders better understand the human environment. The full range of intelligence sources should be used but with particular emphasis on human intelligence (HUMINT).

Defeat the insurgent. Military operations should focus on removing the insurgents’ freedom of action, and ability to influence the population and support itself. From the start, effort must be made to identify, although difficult in itself, and separate those insurgents who can be reconciled from those who cannot as this will assist with the long-term political solution. Dealing with those who are amenable to reconciliation will require some degree of political accommodation. Where political reconciliation cannot be achieved, a law enforcement or military solution consistent with applicable law will be required to defeat the insurgency.

A vital step in defeating or neutralizing insurgent influence is to establish a strong persistent presence among the population, thereby denying insurgent control and freedom of movement. This allows security measures to be implemented in order to secure the population, by area if required. Action can then be focused to deter, disrupt and dislocate insurgent activity within each area that has sufficient local security forces. The overall security aim should be to defeat the insurgents using all available means, whilst simultaneously using no more force than is absolutely necessary. A heavy-handed and overly destructive approach that causes civilian casualties and other collateral damage may boost the radicalization of the insurgents' narrative and only serve to enlarge their popular support and recruit new fighters. A short-term tactical success may have unfavourable effects in the longer-term. Where possible, measures that risk destabilising the overall situation should be avoided. The basic principle is to seize the initiative from the insurgency in all aspects feasible and then retain it by continuous, flexible and appropriate action. Once insurgents are defeated, neutralized or at least have lost influence, it is essential to exploit every opportunity to introduce permanent measures designed to prevent re-incursions or resurgences, and to demonstrate governmental capability and resolve.

At the national level, careful consideration should be given to the need to control or even close, borders. This will create physical barriers intended to prevent insurgents from using neighbouring states as sanctuaries or sources of support. To achieve an effective border control will require both diplomatic skill and considerable resources.

Operate within international, national and domestic law. Legitimacy and credibility of a contested government are critical to the chances of successful COIN. Forces conducting COIN must therefore operate within the law as this is what distinguishes them from the insurgents. Undermining the law will invariably be counterproductive and operations that contravene national and international law will be exploited by the insurgents to undermine the contested
government legitimacy and credibility. Supporting international forces conducting COIN are subject to the same constraints with any exceptions to domestic law being laid out in an agreement (like Status of Forces agreement) with the contested nation and must also be seen to act within international and national law. Whenever possible and ethically feasible (no abusive conduct or grossly inadequate facilities), searches and detentions should be conducted by local security forces with subsequent prosecutions conducted in local courts, even if this results in a low conviction rate. Generally it will be preferable to use local detention facilities.

0288 Insurgents will do everything within their power to undermine the authority and legitimacy of the government and any supporting local security forces. This may include attempting to provoke an overreaction and fostering frustration with existing legal constraints. Illegal activity or human rights abuses by forces conducting COIN are likely to seriously hinder overall progress and likelihood of success of the operation. The speed and reach of modern communications and media methods make this point more important than ever.

0289 Prepare for a protracted campaign. Insurgencies are usually protracted, and effective COIN will require considerable time and resources. Commanders must guard against the temptation to make overly optimistic assumptions based on short-term security successes. Enduring success will depend on long-term plans to enhance economic, developmental and social aspects of civil life in order to eliminate, reduce, or at least suppress, a significant number of the root causes of the insurgency.

0290 Military commanders must understand that the effects of their actions will take time to materialize and will often stretch beyond their own deployment period. Therefore each military deployment should be seen as but one part of an enduring operation. Military activities that are integrated with other civilian and security actors and are supported by an overarching political strategy are more likely to have an enduring effect leading to a political end-state. Populations are unlikely to support their government until they are convinced that the government has the means and resolve to provide security and further their interests over the long-term.

0291 Learn and adapt. An effective force conducting COIN must have the ability to assess its own effectiveness. The military will learn and adapt as it develops a better understanding of the insurgency, the population and the root causes. The battle between insurgent and counter-insurgent represents an iterative action-reaction process; it is competitive learning. The side which is quickest to adapt its techniques and understanding will seize the initiative and be better placed to win control of the operating environment. Forces conducting COIN must be able to identify and implement appropriate changes rapidly. Tactics, operation plans and overarching strategy must be flexible enough to respond to shifts in government policy, public sentiment and insurgent methods. Once decisions are made, adequate and sufficient resources must be available for rapid implementation. Measures of effectiveness (MOE) and measures of
performance (MOP) need to be developed to assist with the continuous assessment of the force conducting COIN, thereby enabling them to determine if the force is “doing the right things” (measures of effectiveness) to achieve its objectives, not just “doing things right” (measures of performance).

0292 An efficient training programme, together with an effective way of capturing and managing lessons, will be imperative. Units should be able to analyse, outline and implement lessons learned as well as assess the subsequent effects as part of an iterative process. Experiences and lessons identified and learned from recent NATO missions should be disseminated to those preparing for future operations. Commanders should periodically return to the original premises in order to examine and test their plans and procedures.
CHAPTER 3 – UNDERSTANDING THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Section I – The COIN Operating Environment

0301 The counter-insurgent operates in a very complex operating environment\(^7\), characterized by the presence of many different local, regional, national and international actors and no easily recognizable enemies. Insurgents usually hide among the population.

0302 The local society may be deeply fractured and part of the population may be willing, or through coercion forced, to support the insurgency. The thoughtful analysis of social, economic and cultural factors is then critical to understand the root causes of insurgency, which is often the first step to defeat it.

0303 Local security forces may be collapsing or unable to preserve freedom from violence, persecution, want and fear, as well as to protect private property, public assets and cultural values. They may need substantial external support and building of COIN capacity to increase their competences or to function and conduct operations effectively. Besides, they may not just be dissolving and unable to prevent crimes but even be active in predation, arbitrary violence and engaged in a range of illegal activities.

0304 In order to conduct operations in any operating environment, commanders and staff must analyse and describe it in terms of interrelated operational variables, for example, political, military, economic, social, information and infrastructure (PMESII)\(^8\). This is shown in Figure 3.1.

![Figure 3.1 – PMESII](image)

\(^7\) It does not refer to the operational level of war and it extends beyond the mere physical boundaries of a defined area. See AJP-1 (reference D), AJP-02 (reference E), AJP-3 (reference F) and AJP-3.2 (reference G) for a more detailed description of the operating environment and operational environment.

\(^8\) See AJP-2 (reference E) for further information on the PMESII model and the joint intelligence preparation of the operational environment (JIPOE) process. See also Allied Tactical Publication (ATP)-3.4.4.1, (reference O), paragraph 0201 for further details.
Commanders and their staffs should work hard to understand operationally relevant aspects of each of the mentioned variables, the relationships between them, the impact of these interrelated factors on the decision-making and on the behaviour of all actors involved in the crisis.

0305 **Political variable.** Within the analysis of this variable in COIN operations, it is particularly important to determine the contested government power sharing structure among formal and informal parties and the regional actor’s influences which may support, fuel the insurgency or use insurgents as a proxy to promote their international interests. In many operating environments, political affiliation is highly volatile and must be continuously monitored.

0306 **Military variable.** In a COIN environment, there may be many different friendly, neutral or hostile actors which could have the capability to use force. NATO-led forces may cooperate with local security forces, other international organizations, like the UN, and private military and security companies. They may have to tolerate the existence of local neutral self-defence militias and face a combination of regular and irregular adversaries. However, as with the political variable, military affiliations and activity also may be highly variable, with some forces dropping in and out of conflict or rapidly changing sides.

0307 **Economic variable.** Fragile states usually are affected by severe economic crisis; widespread poverty, high unemployment rates and a broad economic divide between rich and impoverished people. These can fuel insurgency and be part of the root causes of civil disorders, corruption and criminality. Moreover, it can also provide a significant mass of recruits for the insurgents among the young jobless population.

0308 **Social variable.** Cultural, religious and ethnic differences, as well as divergent perceptions of beliefs, values, customs, and behaviours within the society of the contested government may well be the predominant causes of the clash among families, clans, factions or parties. This may be exploited by insurgents to cause hate, fear and civil strife.

0309 **Information variable.** Both insurgents and counter-insurgents often use information to gain credibility and legitimacy with the population, while simultaneously undermining their opponents. The continuous evolution of communications may offer some unique opportunities for insurgencies. The spread of information within a country, a region or across any border is much easier than it used to be. Besides, many communication means may help insurgents communicate both internally (within their organization) and externally (for example, with other supporting organizations abroad) in a less restricted way. Counter-insurgents should be able to exploit information to shape operations and gain local, as well as international, support to COIN efforts.

0310 **Infrastructure variable.** The availability of a robust local infrastructure may significantly support the efforts of forces conducting COIN. It can provide means and ways to support the population, enhance freedom of movement, as well as
help to develop the economy of the host nation. The infrastructure network usually represents a major target for insurgents, especially the mobility corridors and the facilities needed to have access to the territory of the contested nation (ports, airfields, railway stations).

Section II – Learn and Adapt

0311 To be effective, forces conducting COIN should be able to continuously learn from the operating environment, quickly adapt to it and swiftly implement necessary changes in their operations to gain or maintain initiative in the struggle with the insurgents. The battle between these insurgents and counter-insurgents is, in addition to the physical dimension, mainly carried out in the cognitive dimension of the information environment. The side which learns and adapts faster, wins this battle, seizes the initiative and is more likely to reach its objectives. Therefore, from a counter-insurgent perspective an efficient lessons learned-cycle, as well as an adaptive doctrine and training system is key in preparing forces for COIN operations, overcoming the insurgents and effectively operate in the COIN operating environment. It is crucial to focus on adaptation during pre-deployment (preparing the force), deployment (employing the force) and post-deployment (mission exploitation). Forces conducting COIN should be learning organizations, committed to deeply understand their operating environment, in order to identify the root causes of insurgency and the basis of its power. See annex B and NATO Assessment Handbook (reference W).

Section III – Understanding the COIN Operating Environment

0312 Understanding the operating environment is the first step of the 'learn and adapt-cycle'. In particular, it is fundamental to identify the root causes of the insurgency. It is also vital to conduct operations gaining progressive consensus of the local population and avoiding the alienation of the external support to the COIN effort. The operating environment shapes the options for military commanders at all levels, affects capabilities and limits all actions of friendly, neutral or hostile actors within the area of operations.

0313 Understanding politics. A full appreciation of the political aims of all relevant actors (including, the contested government and its constituent parts, civil society, actual or potential oppositional groups, neighbouring countries, possible political parties and ethnic and tribal groups which compose the local society), is critical to understand those who could hypothetically influence an internal conflict positively or negatively. The knowledge of how these different groups interact, for example, may help to discern the means to influence them. Forces conducting COIN must also be cognizant of the effect their actions may have on the political environment. Inappropriate or misguided military action can affect the balance within the political environment and may cause friendly or neutral actors to slide toward supporting the insurgency.

0314 Understanding security. Having a reasonable awareness of the structures, capability and capacity of all security actors operating in, or influencing, the
operating environment can provide insight into why the contested authorities are unable to defeat or contain the insurgency by itself, and identify where gaps in security exist. It can also help commanders appreciate the actions necessary to develop a long-term capacity of the local security forces so that eventually the contested authorities can provide security to the population without the assistance of significant international support.

0315 **Understanding economy.** Developing an understanding of the contested nation’s formal and informal economic structures may enable commanders identifying any nexus between insurgents and the economy. Insurgents can exploit even legitimate formal economies as a source of funding, but the black market will most likely be a direct enabler of an insurgency in terms of both funding and logistics.

0316 Counter-insurgents should, therefore, also assess the current economic variables and opportunities available to different segments of the population, and the effect insurgent and counter-insurgent operations will have on the population’s ability to meet their basic economic needs. Economic survival, especially in an area where an insurgency is occurring, is almost as important and as immediate a challenge for households as physical security. Therefore, leaders at all levels of the counter-insurgency operation need to assess the impacts of military operations on the generic elements of the economic welfare of households and communities, including:

a. income (including future capacity to earn an income);

b. assets and property (used to earn income); and

c. work (including possible traditional patterns of unpaid work).

0317 Forces conducting COIN must also consider the economic impact that the Alliance’s presence may have on local economies. Introducing foreign wealth or financial support from the contested authorities can have unintended negative consequences. For this reason, careful thought and planning is needed for any project intended to have local economic impact. Some factors to consider are:

a. prospects of long-term sustainability;

b. possibility of local price inflation; and

c. risks of disrupting local economic structures (for example, farmers leaving fields to work on better paid trash pickup projects).

0318 There is a direct link between effective security operations and the promotion of economic stability, reduced crime, migration to better living areas and an increased sense of general assurance. Successful counter-insurgency may well depend more on improving local and national economies rather than on the force used to ensure a state’s security.
Understanding culture. Counter-insurgents must understand and identify cultural opportunities for the insurgency and develop effective military strategies that undermine the insurgency and support the population in the contested nation. Military action that underestimates the influence of the insurgency risks undermining the COIN operation and presenting the insurgents with an opportunity to undermine the legitimacy of the contested government. Underlying the cultural context of the operating environment is the insurgent’s exploitation of the cultural space that will seek to undermine the presence and role of the counter-insurgent. It is particularly important to understand the complex linkage by which authority and power can be exercised. To complicate this, religion, politics, tribal relations and ethnic groupings all influence the society, which may, in turn, be exploited by insurgents, warlords and criminals. Religion is a strong unifying factor and many insurgencies have therefore used it as a rallying idea to support their legitimacy. Therefore, counter-insurgents, by necessity of gaining and maintaining popular support, must be culturally sensitive and look across the operating environment to identify all possible cultural drivers of the conflict.

Understanding information. Understanding how people communicate and who influences them on a daily basis is essential for counter-insurgents. New media, and social media in particular, may be preferred channels to share information and influence the masses. Connecting to diaspora or sympathetic groups in the world could be vital to any insurgency. With the ability to communicate comes the ability to move resources and obtain funding. Moreover, media may be easily accessible by insurgents for open source intelligence. They may also be exploited for propaganda, the rapid spreading of rumours and mass deception.

Understanding geography. Insurgents and other adversaries have often demonstrated an understanding that open, unpopulated terrain favours a sophisticated military force by allowing it to employ its advantages in manoeuvre, reconnaissance and long-range, precision-guided weapons. Insurgents attempt to reduce these advantages by exploiting complex terrain and hiding among the population, allowing them to take advantage of constraints on the use of powerful weapons systems with high risks of collateral damage. Urban areas offer the most complex terrain and provide the adversary with the capability to offset conventional military capability and to operate with a better prospect of success both locally and by making use of international media facilities, normally located in urban areas. A commander needs to be cognizant of the possibility that COIN operations in urban areas may lead to increased collateral damage, including civilian casualties, and the potential loss of goodwill and consent.

Understanding weather and climate. Sophisticated insurgents usually monitor and exploit the climatic variations in the area of operations. They may plan for offensives or pauses to take full advantage of the best season to fight and the one to rest and regroup. They may also exploit weather variations to
choose the best moments for attacks reducing the impact of air power and sophisticated equipment (such as night vision devices) on operations.

0323 **Understanding infrastructure.** Existing infrastructure in the contested nation that enables a normal routine for the population will materially assist contested authorities and Alliance efforts to gain the support of the local population, as well as facilitate the freedom of movement of friendly actors in the area of operations. Counter-insurgents should recognize infrastructure vulnerabilities that may be subject to attack and key facilities that need protection, such as communication hubs, power grids, ports or airfields. They should also assess how insurgents exploit infrastructure for their aims, in order to identify possible weaknesses.

0324 **Understanding coalitions and time.** NATO may lead or be part of a multinational coalition which may see their counter-insurgency efforts being limited by national objectives or by public pressure. COIN is often a long-term struggle while international support may be relatively short-term. Some members of the coalition may leave the operation unexpectedly, complicating the military mission. On the other hand, for the host nation, the insurgent and the population, the struggle is less constrained by time. NATO forces should always assess the impact of national expectations and time on operations. Moreover, national caveats should be considered when developing operation plans, as they may significantly affect the full availability of deployed units.

0325 An insurgency may use the time variable to its advantage as this factor usually works against counter-insurgency forces. Generally, it may be expected that the support to COIN operations decreases over time, while the support to insurgency increases.

0326 **Understanding insurgents.** Gaining an understanding of all aspects of an insurgency and how they interrelate is vital to help analysts and planners progress by helping them understand the operating environment, the centre of gravity (COG) analysis and the subsequent network analysis to support courses of action-development. Additionally, insurgency is hardly a monolithic bloc. Differences and possible fractures among factions and groups should be identified for future exploitation. Nodes and links within the insurgent network should also be identified to facilitate the isolation and disruption or elimination of insurgent leaders and active cells.

0327 **Understanding the population.** It should be clear that civilians tend to cooperate with whichever side is able to establish effective control and meet their basic needs. For civilians, this encompasses both immediate physical security and access to other essentials for survival (like food and shelter), as well as their prospects for security over the longer-term. It also encompasses the control of the full range of other potential threats, including terrorists, criminals or paramilitary groups. In situations where neither insurgents nor counter-insurgents can establish effective control, civilians will often try to remain neutral in order to survive. In order to better understand the population,
counter-insurgents need to recognise local population’s specific requirements, the range of factors that shape their perceptions and behaviour, as well as the relationship between those factors. Employment of gender identical personnel might help address specific requirements of that specific populace segment.⁹

0328 **Understanding host nation.** Contested governments have a vital role in any COIN effort. NATO forces should assess their capabilities and policies. Some may not be capable or willing to undertake the necessary reforms to improve the chances of neutralizing the insurgency. Contested governments are not monolithic: even where some parts of them are cooperative, other parts may resist for various reasons. It is then fundamental to understand which parts of the local institutions are more supportive to the COIN efforts and capitalise on their actions. Some contested government leaders and factions may also seek to co-opt Alliance assistance and combat power to promote their own political and personal interests. This manipulation has the potential not only to undermine COIN efforts in the immediate conflict, but also to damage Alliance credibility more broadly with domestic and international populations.

0329 Counter-insurgents should therefore focus their attention on distributing power among the different contested government components and the relationship among executive, legislative and judiciary systems. They should also assess how the nation acquires and manages resources; how government policy is made and implemented; as well as the relationship between the contested government and private interests, ethno-sectarian leaders, criminal groups, insurgents and other relevant actors. It then enables planners to determine how to successfully engage individuals, networks, and institutions within the contested government and in its vicinity in order to promote the reforms necessary for effective COIN.

0330 **Understanding other actors.** The impact of other actors who may be involved in COIN operations:

a. transnational and international non-state actors;

b. neighbouring nations;

c. international organizations (IOs);

d. non-governmental organizations (NGOs);

e. local civil society groups;

f. NATO and coalition partners; and

g. other third party counter-insurgents.

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⁹ United Nations Security Resolution 1325 (reference X) refers
Analysts need to map the interests in the region and the area of operations of the major actors, previously mentioned. They should also focus on understanding the relationship with the contested government and population, current and historical (possible) involvement with the insurgency (or opposition to it), and the likely reaction to NATO and coalition partners presence and military actions.

0331 **Transnational and international non-state actors.** Uninvited these may openly or covertly support or otherwise interfere in the insurgency. They could provide logistic support, financial support, trainers and technical experts or even fighters for a common cause. A detailed understanding of the nature and scope of the relationship between transnational non-state groups and the local insurgents is therefore critical to develop an effective operational approach. Additionally, transnational terrorists can attack elements of both the insurgency and the forces conducting COIN to keep a high-level of violence and distrust between them both, and maintain chaos and instability for their own purposes.

0332 **Neighbouring countries.** They may provide open or covert support to insurgents; for example, they could offer critical access to sanctuary areas and resupply, as well as to resources typically unavailable to insurgents without formal state support. As partners for counter-insurgents, they may be invaluable for: coordinating the control of borders, cutting insurgent logistic networks, interdicting illicit activities and countering the exploitation of border areas as sanctuaries. In some cases, NATO forces and other third-party counter-insurgents may require the support of neighbouring states to establish secure ports, airports, ground lines of communication and permissions for over-flight in order to project power and logistic support from platforms and bases located outside the joint operations area (JOA).

0333 **International organizations.** These can act as important facilitators for cooperation among states, pressure the contested government to make difficult but necessary political reforms, impose sanctions on insurgents and their supporters, and, in some cases, muster and deploy multilateral civilian and military capacities to support stabilization efforts. International organizations can also play an important role in humanitarian assistance and development. Understanding their capabilities and plans within the joint operations area is particularly important for effort synchronization.

0334 **Non-governmental organizations.** They are typically divided into three categories: humanitarian relief, development and reconstruction. For humanitarian relief non-governmental organizations, coordination groups such as InterAction or the UN Office for the Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) can serve as useful liaison elements. Most humanitarian non-governmental organizations fiercely guard their independence from governmental and military organizations, and military planners should respect those desires. However, maintaining active lines of communication is vital to de-conflict activities, mitigate the risk of accidental targeting, and help to compile a diagnosis of the causes of conflict.
0335 **Local civil society groups.** Other local actors, such as religious institutions, cultural groups and aid societies that would be considered small local non-governmental organizations or part of the private sector may operate within the operating environment. Each of these could willingly or forcibly support insurgents. Otherwise they may face retaliation if seen to be assisting forces conducting COIN. Understanding their role in the local society and their attitude toward NATO is fundamental to gaining their help in stabilizing the contested nation.

0336 **NATO and coalition partners.** NATO may be part of a coalition that includes other multinational forces and organizations. Planners must understand the strategic context for NATO partners and other multinational force involvement, and incorporate those considerations into the operational-level planning process. Many participating nations may have caveats and limitations to the employment of their units, constraining the commander's options in conducting any military activity.

0337 **Other 3rd party counter-insurgents.** Forces conducting COIN may hire contractors to support their operations. They will be aligned with NATO, multinational or contested government interests and may be targeted by insurgents because of this, or extorted by malign actors for profit. Understanding their capabilities and plans within the joint operations area is important, particularly for synchronization of efforts and to reduce the potential risk of their targeting. Oversight and review of contractor activities is imperative to ensure that their actions align with the strategy of the joint forces commander and in order to limit corruption that would undermine the COIN effort.

0338 **Asking the right questions.** A joint forces commander and staff may anticipate events within the joint operations area to determine the potential reactions of relevant actors to any action. Anticipation may be improved by answering the following questions based on the enhanced understanding gained during analysis of the operating environment.

a. What are each actor’s desired end state and intermediate objectives?

b. What tasks will actors try to complete in order to attain their desired end state and intermediate objectives?

c. How will each actor attempt to complete these tasks?

d. What is the likely outcome of each actor’s likely actions (to include potential 2nd and 3rd order effects) ?

e. How will each actor’s desired end state and intermediate objectives change (if at all) based on these likely outcomes?

f. What are likely follow-on courses of action?
As previously discussed, insurgents can swiftly adapt their strategies as the situation changes, combining various strategies as deemed necessary or moving to entirely new approaches. A dynamic analysis of possible courses of action is essential in staying within the adversary’s decision cycle.

Section IV – Intelligence and the COIN Operating Environment

0339 In order to gain the best possible understanding of the operating environment, counter-insurgents must take into account the most up to date intelligence obtained from all the available sources, as well as the relevant available lessons learned from all parties involved in the operation. The joint forces commander will require a holistic understanding of the operating environment as presented through the joint intelligence preparation of the battle space process. See AJP-2 (reference E).

0340 Especially in COIN operations, all military activity must be based on timely, accurate and predictive analysis, in order to increase the chances of neutralizing targets hiding among neutral or friendly subjects, as well as reducing the possible collateral damage which could alienate the local population support to the forces conducting COIN. Understanding the insurgents and the environment surrounding them requires emphasis on intelligence, which is then an essential precondition for success in COIN.

0341 NATO forces in COIN should focus less on material indicators intelligence and more on subjective but systematic analysis. Material elements, often hard to identify and blended into the environment, no longer provide easy indicators to determine the adversary’s intent. It is the mind-set of the population and the insurgents, as well as the methods of the insurgents, that have to be understood. Accurate analysis is difficult, especially due to the need to properly select useful information in a complex environment with a multi-layered communication flow. Additionally, uncommon languages spoken by the local population may be a serious difficulty for intelligence gathering in COIN operations.

0342 While technology is always vital to intelligence collection, it only allows NATO forces to ‘know’ rather than ‘understand’. As such, understanding the COIN operating environment requires the deployment of counter-intelligence/human intelligence (CI/HUMINT)-specialists who have not only extensive military training but also a detailed knowledge of the operating environment and its complexities in the area of operations.

0343 Insurgents may also conduct non-military activities to gain popular support, such as providing financial support or essential services to local communities, which must be understood in the appropriate context for both current and future operations. Other insurgent activities may include infiltration of the local security forces resulting in an insider threat, and it may be necessary to assist the contested authorities in internal intelligence collection. Therefore, intelligence gathering should also rely on and fuse information from open sources and all other actors involved in the crisis to gain a complete picture of the operating
environment. It may also involve enabling or accessing the intelligence structures of the contested nation.

0344 Intelligence helps to develop and update a common operational picture (COP), which provides a shared understanding of the operating environment from which to diagnose the nature of the problem(s) that counter-insurgents are trying to resolve and plan solutions in a synchronized manner over time and space. In COIN, it is particularly important that the common operational picture is interagency compiled and – to the extent possible – incorporating multinational partners, as well as key elements of the host nation, international organizations and non-governmental organizations. It should also include a system for evolving as the campaign progresses. This requires agreed upon processes for incorporating new information, updating the information that has already been accounted for, and eliminating information that is old and/or no longer accurate.

0345 Counter-insurgents should make sure that the common operational picture accurately depicts all relevant military and non-military information in order to avoid neglecting important elements of the operating environment, which may lead to wrong decisions and inappropriate courses of action. In COIN operations, non-military events and activities may often be as important or more important than the military ones.
CHAPTER 4 – PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE MILITARY CONTRIBUTION TO COUNTER-INSURGENCY

Section I – Introduction

0401 General. This chapter focuses on planning for, and assessment of, the NATO military contribution to COIN at the operational level. The general rules for the operational-level planning process in NATO also apply to COIN planning. The principles are described in:

- AJP-5, Allied Joint Doctrine for Operational-level Planning, and
- AJP-3.4.5, Military Support to Stabilization and Reconstruction.

0402 Operational planning. In COIN, the operational level contributes to the end-state by focusing on securing the population, neutralizing the insurgents’ strategy and organization and addressing the core grievances of the insurgency. To prepare for, and conduct, military operations, it is necessary to develop operational plans. An element of NATO’s operations planning process is the requirement for political control, guidance and approval, particularly in respect of planning and force activation, in response to an actual or developing crisis. To this end, planning should be flexible enough to allow both frequent exchanges of political guidance and military advice, as well as adapting to political requirements. These requirements set the outline for this chapter in which the COIN objectives will be addressed, with the restraints and constraints and the operational approach for COIN. Effective planning for a COIN operation also includes the operations assessment of the inputs, outputs and outcomes, shaping the joint functions and creating clear guidance for tactical level commands.

0403 Political primacy and unity of effort. Political considerations in COIN require special attention to achieve unity of effort. This unity can be achieved via a comprehensive approach, characterized by cooperative planning, execution and assessment by a range of actors, both national and international; including militaries, other governmental departments, international organizations (IOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the contested government. A comprehensive approach to planning and execution is essential for successful long-term COIN. NATO’s military contribution supports the host nation’s military efforts to neutralize the insurgent’s military efforts, but the military contribution is only one part of a larger comprehensive approach to countering an insurgency.
Section II – Military Objectives and Lines of Effort

0404 General. The aim of the military contribution to COIN is to secure the population and to neutralize the insurgency. In support of these aims the commander should pursue the following military objectives:

a. secure the population;
b. isolate the insurgents from their support;
c. neutralize the insurgents’ subversive strategy and armed organization; and
d. support other organizations in planning to create unity of effort.

Achieving these objectives will contribute to successful attainment of the political end-state of defeating the insurgency.

0405 Secure the population. The commander should identify what the military may be required to contribute to human security tasks, recognizing that providing military assistance is a last resort and the main responsibility should lie with other international organizations and the contested government. Providing protection for the population stimulates economic activity and supports longer-term development and governance reform. Importantly, it generates local people’s confidence in their security situation (their collective human security) and provides an economic interest in ongoing stability. It thereby denies adversarial groups one of their principal strategies for expanding their support base. Failure to meet the population’s needs may undermine the foundations of stability as people struggle for daily survival. Political progress is unlikely to take place in the midst of chronic human insecurity. However, focusing on the population does not mean ignoring the adversary; on the contrary, the contest for security will be fought among the population and for their support. International forces should seek to earn respect, to prevent the adversary from gaining more influence and security control, and to re-connect the population with its government – this requires the government to be perceived as reliable. Where the state lacks the capability or will to meet human security needs, individuals tend to transfer loyalty to any group promising to meet those needs including adversarial groups.

0406 Isolate the insurgents from their support. Defeating an insurgency requires NATO forces to psychologically, materially, and physically isolate the insurgents from the population, their ideological support base, and external support. Physically separating insurgents from their areas of popular support will disrupt the support of the population and from their ideological support base by isolating them from their resources and funding and disrupt all forms of support from external sources. This helps to limit insurgent freedom of action while

10 Also see Chapter 2, Section III
providing the counter-insurgents with better opportunity for freedom of action for subsequent military action. Isolating the insurgents disrupts their ability to maintain needed levels of recruits, weapons, materiel, funding, intelligence and sanctuary. The compelling COIN narrative reinforced through robust information operations should support the psychological isolation of the insurgents.

0407 **Contain the insurgent physically.** When targeting insurgents, it is crucial to create a clear picture of all actors in the operating environment to distinguish the insurgents from the other actors. It is important to list in detail, the opposing actors. Denying insurgents access to safe havens and sanctuaries that may be present in the surrounding region is an important element of any COIN; this will need a high level of political, as well as military, involvement. In complementing these actions, forces conducting COIN may need to carry out operations to deny insurgent movement, possibly in partnership with neighbouring countries or in the global community. This peripheral posture, which could contribute to regional stability, may be enhanced by regional actors’ situational awareness of insurgency issues and, in turn, support the legitimacy of the military presence in the region. These actions will need to be synchronized between military and non-military actors, especially at the political level.

0408 **Neutralize the insurgent’s subversive strategy.** Because insurgencies employ grievances in local areas and seek credit for successful solutions to those grievances, counterinsurgents must identify and address these efforts. This may involve interdicting insurgent organization, strategic communications, and CIMIC activities. The commander must support government efforts to identify and dismantle insurgent ‘shadow state’ organizations seeking to replace government bureaucracy and assuming its functions, and to replace it with legitimate government functions.

0409 **Defeat the insurgent’s armed organization.** Efforts in defeating the insurgent’s armed organization should focus on the insurgent’s resources and reducing the positive perception of the insurgent’s use of violence within the local population. It is a long-term effort, often more psychological than physical, and is typically achieved by involving the population. Depending on the situation, several approaches can be chosen or combined, but all should consider influencing or shaping key actors. One way is to create conditions in which insurgents must concentrate and attack friendly forces in a conventional manner which will make them more vulnerable to the strengths of NATO military forces. Another approach could be to defeat the insurgency in detail, after isolation has been achieved. It is difficult for NATO forces to avoid being drawn by the insurgent into prepared operations conducted in complex terrain, which may include densely inhabited areas. At the same time, it is necessary to generate a feeling of insecurity among the insurgents to reduce their freedom of action, which is essential to their survival, while not hampering the freedom of movement of the civilian population. Counter-insurgents could attempt to undermine the internal linkages, which unify the various insurgency
constituents, to weaken them by increasing their internal dysfunctions, and even to decapitate their political-administrative organization. Building capability and capacity of indigenous forces is vital to effectively fighting an insurgency and should be seen as the optimal solution. Local security forces will, when sufficiently trained, need to be the lead security agency with NATO forces supporting them.

0410 **Build capacity into the plan for a comprehensive campaign.** The COIN effort is comprehensive in nature. Causes for the conflict are complicated, entangled and long lingering. Hence, dealing with the problem will most likely demand comprehensive solutions and a lengthy commitment from the international community. The military contribution to the COIN effort includes a physical component for security and safety but the military contribution could also entail a conceptual component: planning capacity.

**Section III – Restraints and Constraints**

0411 Asymmetry and applying force discriminately represent the main restraints. Asymmetry, which often characterizes the operational methods of insurgents, confers on them a certain strategic impunity and other tactical advantages. It affords them the possibility of using both uncertainty and brutality in terms of space, time and information, while policy and political agreement may restrict NATO forces from using and applying the full spectrum of political and operational mechanisms against insurgents. An insurgent will always want their opponent to fight the battle the insurgent is most suited to – applying force. In doing so it will use the civilian population as both a cover and a shield in order to generate circumstances whereupon the opponent is responsible for collateral damage.

0412 **Learn and adapt.** Success in COIN relies on the capability by a force conducting COIN to learn and adapt to the operating environment (OE), and the ever changing dynamics of the insurgent. Insurgent’s use of asymmetric means and familiarity with the operating environment allows it the advantage in adaptability. Forces conducting counter-insurgency must be flexible enough to mitigate this advantage and respond to changes in insurgent technology, tactics, and strategy.

0413 **Synchronize and integrate lethal and non-lethal lines of effort.** In COIN, lethal and non-lethal activities cannot be designed and implemented in isolation. They need to be carefully synchronized at the operational and tactical levels to reinforce each other and support the COIN narrative. From planning through to execution, the efforts of joint, interagency, multinational entities and contested authorities are integrated toward a common purpose. Insurgent opportunities, motives and means typically cut across the spectrum of lethal and non-lethal lines of effort, so that failure to integrate will, at best, render the COIN effort less effective and, at worst, lead to counterproductive impacts across different lines of effort. Counter-insurgents will therefore have to prioritize efforts while also
remaining aware of the linkages and cross-cutting effects these efforts will have in other areas.

0414 **Rule of law.** Insurgent activities shape the population’s behaviour and perceptions in three key ways. It:

a. undermines the government’s credibility and legitimacy as provider of security in return for cooperation;

b. isolates the population from the government by punishing those seen to be collaborating; and

c. establishes a rival system of control/governance over the civilian population.

If insurgents are able to establish a more credible and consistently enforced set of rules than the government, civilians are likely to cooperate irrespective of whether they agree with the insurgent’s goals. Governance is also a critical aspect of COIN. Access to effective mechanisms to resolve disputes without resorting to violence and in accordance with a consistent set of rules is fundamental to ensuring that the population feels safe, which is critical to contested government legitimacy. In the short term, the most vital aspect is to provide speedy and fair mechanisms for dispute resolution, in which “fair” means impartial and comporting with local values. Other rule of law considerations should be incorporated into the dispute resolution mechanisms as soon as feasible. The rule of law should also govern the conduct of the forces conducting COIN; transparently and consistently following its own rules – even if they include emergency measures that curtail certain rights and expand the authority of local security forces. This will normally demonstrate the political credibility of the contested government and its allies to the population and the insurgents.

**Section IV – Operational Approaches for COIN**

0415 **Centre of gravity analysis.** The need for a specific COIN-oriented operational approach stems from the centre of gravity (COG) analysis. The insurgent likely understands intrinsically the strategic COG. A strategic COG analysis will therefore highlight how the insurgent’s ideology, motivations and cause relate to the COG. Insurgent leaders, or their followers, might comprise the COG; however in most instances, it is the people’s perception of the legitimate government. Insurgent ideology should be analysed in relation to the COG. At the operational level, insurgents rarely mass large forces to constitute a tangible operational COG. In determining COGs, it is important to appreciate that our opponents will act according to their own interests, values and perspectives, which are likely to be significantly different from NATO’s perspective. It is useful to determine if the COG relates to the different factions, as well as international organizations and non-governmental organizations that must be protected. This
The direct and indirect approaches. The possible generic responses to an operation, including a COIN operation, range from direct to indirect as depicted in Figure 4.1. The proportion of effort that counter-insurgents use is the key denominator: a direct approach will provide a greater proportion of security (military and law enforcement) efforts rather than development and diplomacy efforts. Conversely, an indirect approach will have more diplomatic and development efforts than security efforts. Careful consideration and coordination should determine which initial approach is appropriate given the starting conditions. There is no fixed sequence for the operational approach. The preferable approach for a comprehensive COIN operation is the indirect approach. Commanders should adjust their approach as circumstances change, especially the security situation.

Figure 4.1 – Counter-insurgency range of responses

a. Direct. A direct approach may be required when contested authorities are losing ground in its struggle with an insurgency or there is no viable contested government. A direct approach attacks the enemy’s COG or principal strength by applying combat power directly against it. The first task in this situation is to establish security and control in as wide an area
and with as great an extent as possible. Once security and control are established, the counter-insurgent approach should strive to adopt a more balanced approach.

b. **Balanced.** This approach is a more even blend of political, development and military efforts. The balanced approach is led by the local commander and supported by the joint forces command, but all efforts should support the host nation’s strategy. While the overall level of effort is balanced, military efforts are to be subordinate to political and development activities when using this approach. Removing the fuel keeping an insurgency going – the core grievances and narrative – is ultimately more effective than attacking or destroying the military wing of the insurgency.

c. **Indirect.** An indirect approach uses more development and diplomatic efforts than military efforts to address an insurgency. The ability to use this indirect approach is heavily dependent on the current security situation. If the insurgency is in a military stalemate, counter-insurgents can avoid direct military confrontation and instead focus on addressing the core grievances and combating the insurgency’s narrative. An indirect approach attacks the enemy’s COG by applying combat power against a series of decisive points that lead to the defeat of the COG while avoiding the enemy strength. It also requires a viable host nation. If so, NATO can support the contested nation’s COIN efforts. Advisory efforts are normally an essential part of this indirect approach. Finally, the indirect approach is best suited to early intervention and must be a holistic effort.

0417 **Operational approach to COIN operations.** Following paragraphs discuss the NATO preferred operational approach to COIN.\(^{11}\) It describes the essence of the ‘shape, secure and develop’ (SSD) framework; the relationship with the stabilization cycle; and the engagements needed in the separate areas.

0418 **‘SSD’ framework.** The ‘SSD’ framework is an operational-level framework, which provides a template for coherent over-watch of the operations area. The framework is displayed in figure 4.2, and is not a list of sequential tactical core functions. It entails a civil-military cooperation in COIN, combining NATO, contested authorities and civil actors. From the military instrument of power it encompasses offensive, defensive, stability and enabling activities. The SSD framework draws upon the main themes of the stabilization model; see AJP-3.4.5 (reference O) for more information on the stabilization model.

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\(^{11}\) For details see the ‘stable state model’ in AJP-3.4.5 (reference O).
Figure 4.2 – The ‘shape, secure, develop (SSD)’ framework

a. **Shape.** Shaping is the ability to influence and inform the perceptions, allegiances, attitudes, actions and behaviours of all principal participants in the operations area, as well as (inter)national domestic areas. Engagements that can be identified in the areas include: key leader engagement; psychological measures; engaging the local population and media; and maintaining or promoting the legitimacy of a state.

b. **Secure.** Security operations aim to provide the population with the opportunity to go about their daily lives without the fear of violence. Securing engagements separate insurgents from the population in a comprehensive manner; creating a safe and secure environment for tasks, like support to government or stabilization projects. ‘Clear-hold-build’ operations seize an area from insurgent control, secure the population and allow the restoration of the host government’s control, maintaining or promoting the legitimacy of government authorities.

c. **Develop.** Development operations, in the sense of coordinated government action and activities, generally involve long-term activities and build on the opportunity that security offers. The contested government should be firmly in the lead, supported by the allied/partner efforts, and effective communications with the population. Development is an area that is primarily a civilian responsibility and, where possible, such activities should have a civilian lead. The key is coordinated government action because, certainly for local security forces, commanders need to be clear about what they can achieve in development terms and the effect they will have. Such actions with civil-military cooperation include: developing cooperation (economy, infrastructure, social welfare); promoting stability in areas of operation; training, mentoring, monitoring and embedding local security forces; helping develop better governance; and maintaining or promoting the legitimacy of government authorities.

Variation in the framework. The conceptual SSD framework describes the essential themes of a general COIN approach. It is a way to describe and group the main activities in which armed forces may be involved. It is explicitly not a sequence. The three groups are interrelated and interdependent. Action taken in support of any one theme is likely to have an impact on the other two. Based
on the situation at hand but also on the availability of resources, variations in the SSD framework can occur within the area of operation (see Figure 4.3). These variations are acceptable as long as they sit within the overall guiding principles of political factors having primacy over military; coordinated government action; population security, and gaining and securing popular support.

Figure 4.3 – Variation in conceptual framework within area of operation

Section V – Operations Assessment

0420 General. In NATO, assessment means to be able to measure progress and results of operations in a military context, and then develop conclusions and recommendations that support decision-making. The following purposes apply to all levels, the politico-strategic, operational and the tactical level.

a. Determining the progress of plan executions (actions and tasks).

b. Determining the effectiveness of those executed actions by measuring the achievement of objectives and attainment of end states.

c. Drawing conclusions about past situations and, in some cases, making projections about future trends, as well as recommending adjustments to the plan based on the conclusion.

0421 Assessing operations. Assessments throughout the operational process play a pivotal role in determining progress towards specific goals, accomplishing

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12 For detail see NATO ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK (reference W).
tasks and creating effects in COIN. Commanders should continually assess operational effectiveness in accomplishing assigned missions and inferred tasks. This can be done in a variety of ways and, depending on the level of command, may even include an ad hoc or permanent working group to assist in the assessment process. Whether at the battalion or combined, joint task force level, it is the commander’s responsibility to determine how effective the unit’s actions are and adjust guidance as required to exploit enemy weaknesses, or otherwise increase unit’s effectiveness in its assigned tasks. The commander’s tools for this purpose are numerous and not doctrinally constrained. Traditionally, they use the operations order, personal observations, staff recommendations, the common operating picture, running estimates and the assessment plan in making the assessments.

0422 Process. Commanders should monitor their operations using multiple methods and evaluate the resulting data to potentially recommend, or direct changes to tactics, techniques and procedures. Evaluating COIN requires understanding the correlation between actions taken and the effects created. This not only pertains to efforts that do not result as intended, but also successful actions, as best practices should be shared with other units. It is sometimes necessary to direct adjustments to subordinates, in an effort to reach the desired end-state.

a. Monitoring. Commanders and staffs continuously observe relevant conditions during the operations process, which allows a consistent collection of data that can be compared to the commander’s intent. The data collected helps commanders and staffs determine the current situation, which may, or may not, be what was anticipated during the planning. Commander’s critical information requirements and decision points help focus collection of data by the staff which, in turn, will assist the commander in making decisions.

b. Evaluating. Using prescribed criteria to judge progress towards desired conditions and establishing why such conditions have resulted are keys to evaluation. At higher echelons of command, assessment plans may exist listing measures of effectiveness and measures of performance. The former measures whether the best actions are being taken, while the latter measures whether the action was taken. Indicators in the shape of reports (intelligence, subordinate, higher and media) and surveys allow commanders and staffs to gauge the status of measures of effectiveness and measures of performance. Commanders and staffs may use running estimates to keep track of measures of effectiveness and measures of performance and make key decisions based on indicators.

c. Recommending/directing action. Commanders should issue guidance that adjusts actions to be taken, or practices to be altered. Staffs use processes to collect data, used to formulate recommendations to commanders for continuing operations as planned, or making unanticipated adjustments. Commanders should integrate these recommendations into
their decisions.

0423 **Effective assessment.** Commanders should integrate their personal assessments, along with those of the staff, subordinate commanders and friendly forces, to make well-informed decisions. Effective assessments include a prioritized effort, considering the logic on the plan while considering causes and effects. Also both qualitative and quantitative indicators should be used to build assessments. Commanders should be careful not to overburden staffs with too detailed tasks in assessment and avoid trying to quantify all operation aspects. Assessments should be conducted at the echelon where they are assigned. Effective assessment in COIN can be challenging, due to complexity of the human environment. Often, in COIN qualitative assessment is best, while measurable aspects should be included where possible.

0424 **Staff and working groups.** Larger, higher echelon staffs may include section assessments, equipped with expertise in mathematical and statistical reasoning and trend analysis. These sections can provide additional capabilities to a commander, over and above managing assessment processes, and could be charged with trend analysis, hypothesis testing, operational comparisons and certain forecasting. Such staff sections can also test and explore commanders’ hypothesis, using said models and methods to substantiate, or show the unlikelihood of their relevance. Assessment staffers in COIN should be forward thinking with knowledge of the latest models in data analysis, especially as it relates to the human environment.

**Section VI – Transfer of Governance and Security Transition**

0425 **General.** NATO forces should transfer the responsibility for security to the local security forces headquarters or to any follow-on military forces as soon as practical. This process is enabled by the effective conduct of security sector reform (SSR)\(^{13}\) and must be implemented when the host nation security structures are sufficiently well developed. The process includes the transfer of both authority and responsibility for providing security to the local security forces and will be part of an ongoing NATO or international operational transition process. The need for this to occur will have been stated in the campaign plan, and the conditions required to achieve it will need to be developed as the campaign progresses. Implementation is likely to be incremental. The requisite conditions will not be solely concerned with the issue of security but will cover the whole range of security sector issues, including governance capacity, the rule of law, gender aspects and economic reform. Reform in these areas is usually the responsibility of other government departments and non-governmental organizations, and there will be a requirement to conduct coherent planning with these in order to coordinate military activities effectively.

\(^{13}\) For details see ATP-3.4.4.1 (reference N).
0426 **Setting conditions and decision-making.** Generic conditions for the transfer should be set and agreed by the contested government with advice from NATO or the UN as part of a comprehensive planning process. This should be based on the clearly expressed premise that the contested authorities and its local security forces will have the ability and competence to operate and that, when they do, they will operate within the rule of law. These conditions will be linked to the lines of operations. It is critical that the contested government is fully involved with designing the conditions and considers that it has ownership of them. Above all, the population must see that it is their government that takes the final decision, reflecting their own sovereignty, reinforcing the contested government’s legitimacy and its ability to secure the population. Conditions for re-intervention by NATO will also need to be agreed.

0427 **Support to other institutions.** The ability to conduct successful transition and transfer at the operational level depends as much upon the ability and capacity of contested government institutions to operate without support from NATO and other international government departments as it does on capable and credible local security forces. Self-reliance in these areas is central to the drawdown and eventual withdrawal of NATO forces and to maintaining longer-term security. There may be a requirement to focus on supporting and facilitating fledgling elected bodies and governance while developing cross-ministry cooperation. This should be conducted as part of a comprehensive approach in conjunction with civil agencies, such as national ministries and the UN and, in turn, should be supported to improve their effectiveness in order to replace military assistance. If the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan is taken as an example, at the provincial level, the capacity for governance should complement national initiatives and take place concurrently. It is normally appropriate to use provincial reconstruction teams in this coordinating role. Where specific military teams operate in support of contested government departments at the local/provincial level, plans should be made to hand over remaining functions to, ideally, the host nation’s governing bodies or other donors at an appropriate stage in accordance with the lines of operation. Civil-military cooperation and upholding to the principles of strategic communications, such as information activities and public information activity, will be required to support these activities.

0428 **Execution.** As operational transition progresses, the NATO force posture will evolve through a number of phases. Changes in this context should be driven by improvements in local security forces and its capabilities, and designed to promote and support responsibility for security at the local and national levels. The phases are:

a. tactical over-watch;

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14 NATO Military Concept for Strategic Communications, July 2010.
15 For progress to the next stage to be made, a pre-determined set of functional and environmental circumstances needs to apply. Subjective judgement will be required to lead this process.
b. operational over-watch; and
c. strategic over-watch.

0429 **Tactical over-watch.** The major determinant for this phase is the ability of local forces to take the lead for providing security at the provincial level with close support from NATO forces. The likely conditions are as follows:

a. Representative government at the regional level is capable and able to exercise political control over local security forces’ activity and further capacity building, with advice from the NATO forces.

b. Local security forces are effective, operating with advice and assistance from NATO forces.

c. Essential services are acceptable or improving, and provide reasonably sustained levels of service sufficient to preclude widespread civil unrest.

d. Operational mentoring and liaison teams and other military embedded trainers are widespread throughout the local security force structure.

0430 **Operational over-watch and transfer of security responsibility.** The following conditions should apply before a formal transfer to the provincial civil authorities is conducted.

a. The contested authorities are capable (linked to the appropriate national institutional structures) and able to exercise political control over local security forces’ operations and further capacity building with very limited advice from international actors or NATO forces.

b. The local security forces are able to operate at this level without support and re-intervention plans are agreed.

c. The majority of opposition groupings are willing to support the government and their leaders advocate engagement with it.

d. Assessed popular opinion indicates a reasonable degree of confidence in the sustained delivery of essential services, and there is a widespread belief that economic opportunities are sufficient or continuing to grow.

e. Reconstruction, economic development and inward investment are led by the host nation.

f. NATO planning and coordination support to indigenous security forces is continued. The scale of military embedment is reduced, although some support continues to be guaranteed.

g. NATO provides appropriate forces at readiness to provide support within
agreed timescales. Arrangements for this support are regularly practised.

0431 **Strategic over-watch.** The conditions for strategic over-watch will be met when: indigenous security forces have assumed security and stabilization tasks from NATO forces; contested government institutions have sufficient capacity to provide control of their local security forces at a national level; and they can provide adequate municipal services to their population. In effect, normal bilateral military relations exist, although some specialist military support may continue to be provided by NATO (like fixed-wing or rotary-wing support, or naval support). The following conditions will need to be met:

a. Regional and national governments are able to exercise political control over military operations and capacity building with very limited advice from NATO at the national level.

b. Local security forces can operate fully at the strategic level in compliance with contested government wishes.

c. An accountable system of national government has been established, with opposition groups being represented by political parties in the first instance.

d. Assessed popular opinion indicates satisfaction with the degree of delivery of essential services and there is widespread belief that economic opportunities and growth exist.

e. There is a national lead for economic development and inward investment.

f. National government conducts bilateral relationships.

g. NATO retains the ability and infrastructure to intervene to support the contested authorities on call.

**Section VII – Joint Functions Considerations**

0432 **Joint functions.** The commander must determine the capabilities required for a joint force. The joint functions are command and control, intelligence, manoeuvre and fires, force protection, information operations, sustainability and civil-military cooperation.

0433 **Command and control.** The commander must develop and train a proactive and agile staff. Commanders have to create opportunities and seize them immediately. To do this, command and control must be decentralized to allow for tactical initiative. As joint land operations tend to become decentralized, mission command becomes the preferred method of command and control. Successful mission command demands that subordinate leaders at all echelons

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16 For detail see AJP-3(B), *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations.*
exercise disciplined initiative, acting proactively and independently to accomplish the mission, which includes: decentralized execution; initiative; distributed operations; and distributed resources across echelons.

Intelligence. Intelligence gathering by a NATO force in COIN also has to rely on, and fuse, information from other actors, other networks and other services from a variety of other nations. It will also involve enabling or accessing the intelligence structures of the host nation. This impacts on the larger struggle, since the information gathered feeds the demands of more than just those of a deployed force.

Manoeuvres and fires.

a. Manoeuvres. It is critical that the force conducting COIN has a manoeuvre plan to provide adequate levels of security for the population to retain its support and cooperation. Those efforts should align with the overall politico-military strategy, but to be effective they must address the full range of security concerns of the population, which may extend well beyond the insurgents and not be captured in standard military threat assessments. Forces conducting COIN can be a source of insecurity for the population as well. Abusive, corrupt, or predatory behaviour by elements of the local security forces can undermine the whole COIN effort; undermine the legitimacy of the contested government and of the forces conducting COIN, pushing the population to support the insurgency. Even carefully targeted military activities against insurgents can create risks for the population. This creates a dilemma for counter-insurgents, because securing the population requires offensive activities against insurgents to seize the initiative and neutralize the threat.

b. Fires. Fires in COIN include a wide variety of capabilities applied in support of the force conducting COIN. In COIN, coordinated, synchronized and discriminate use of all fire sources is key to protecting the operating force. Fires must be precise and delivered against enemy’s critical vulnerabilities and critical requirements (such as command nodes), fighting capabilities, and its logistic sustainment to neutralize it. Fire support enhances freedom of manoeuvre for a force conducting COIN and can be delivered by land, air or sea platforms. To be truly effective, fire support requires proper planning and executing procedures (targeting processes) to reduce the risk of collateral damage to a minimum. This heterogeneity (NATO, coalition, multinational partners) of fires resources means that there is an even stricter requirement for common operating procedures to receive benefit of such support while avoiding collateral damage.

Force protection. Insurgents know that any human or materiel loss, of either real or symbolic value, can weaken political will to pursue a successful COIN operation. To this end, NATO forces can expect to be the target of a variety of
attacks carried out by the insurgent. These could take the form of suicide bombings, improvised explosive devices (IED) or stand-off weapons, such as rockets or rocket propelled grenades, employed against forces conducting COIN while operating outside the wire. Insurgents using modern technology, sometimes easily accessible and cheap, could simply jeopardize COIN efforts, particularly Force Protection. There is also the ‘insider threat’ commonly referred to as ‘green on blue’. This can be particularly effective in partnering environments because it allows insurgent exploitation by claiming an insider attack regardless of whether the subsequent evidence supports this assertion. At all levels, the insider threat, both as an insurgent strategy or as a result of a cultural incompatibility (perceived or real), can disrupt not only the Alliance’s objectives but also undermine the overall efforts of the international community. In particular, insider threat-related incidents are often vulnerable to insurgency media exploitation in the battle for narrative against forces conducting COIN, regardless of its real nature. The loss of trust, communication and cooperation between host nation and NATO forces caused by insider attacks can also heavily affect the military capability. Eliminating and/or mitigating the insider threat and related effects is critical to mission success and can be achieved through properly preparing and training forces along with adopting suitable force protection measures and planning considerations based on a continuous risk and threat evaluation. However, implemented force protection measures should avoid excessive security which could be perceived as cloistering NATO forces from the local population or wasting too much effort to the detriment of the main mission. If feasible, the Provost Marshall should be consulted on the (planning of) force protection measures.

0437 Information activities. The struggle for dominance in the cognitive dimension is a constant necessity for the NATO forces in COIN, particularly where insurgents rely on using information to manipulate public opinion. Reality and truth are subjective and relative. In this way, hype and distortions can influence what the population believes to be true and, therefore, the Alliance must successfully employ information activities that provide the population more favourable information, as well as a competing narrative or interpretation of events. Insurgents will use (what NATO forces may perceive as) propaganda and attempt to manipulate the media and public perceptions to their own advantage, and this is one of the principal asymmetric elements of their activity. Therefore, NATO forces need to be attuned to insurgents’ using the media and must be proactive and first with the truth, based on the campaign’s ‘dominant narrative’ and current theme. The key for the counter-insurgent is to be the first to present a superior version of the truth to the public. Remaining silent, not reacting, not providing a version of events, or waiting for the truth to emerge will all be exploited by an agile opponent who is not necessarily bound by the truth. This naturally gives the insurgent the advantage, which must be countered by an agile, responsive and forward-leaning organization. Information activities must be actively employed and synchronized with intelligence to accomplish the following.
a. Create favourable perceptions of the contested government legitimacy and its capabilities; obtain local, regional and international support for COIN operations.

b. Publicize insurgent violence and warning the population that they will be subject to insurgent propaganda.

c. Discredit insurgent propaganda and provide a more compelling alternative to the insurgent ideology and narrative.

d. Provide a favourable narrative that supports the legitimate role of the NATO-led forces.

0438 Information activities planning is synchronized and nested within the information strategy developed for each operation. It should also reflect a dominant narrative agreed upon among allies for both the civilian and military elements of the COIN operation. Planners must coordinate information activities, conducted through capabilities, key tools and techniques to accomplish COIN objectives. In this context, the information activities function will provide advice on, and help to coordinate information activities throughout, the planning process. Successfully executing information activities also requires early detailed information activities planning, coordination and de-confliction with all appropriate participants in unified action. Uncoordinated information activities can compromise, complicate, negate or harm other activities within operations. Planners must also recognize that other agencies and nations will have various concepts concerning information activities and some have thorough and sophisticated doctrine, procedures and capabilities for planning and conducting information activities. Planners should develop common, multi-echelon themes based on, and consistent with, contested government policies and the operation’s objectives.

0439 Sustainability. Sustainability is more than executing classic logistics activity in support of a military force. Sustainability is the ‘going concern’ of the military operation and activities include, delivering essential goods such as water, food, medicine, shelter/tents, fuel for example, but also providing emergency transportation and maintaining critical infrastructure to support individuals in refugee camps or small, isolated communities. Maintaining critical infrastructure requires implementing physical protection measures. Environmental protection and energy management could also enhance sustainability and resiliency. While supporting the force protection of both the host nation and NATO forces, it additionally encourages the contested authorities in protecting their environment, while stimulating their local economy through enterprises involving reusable or recyclable materials.

0440 Some challenges that sustainability in COIN needs to overcome are listed below:
a. Areas of operations and sectors are neither contiguous nor linear. The forces conducting COIN to be sustained are usually dispersed.

b. Areas of operations may be very wide and compartmented. Thus, applying medical evacuation protocols may require a large number of air assets, crews and air medical teams.

c. The COIN effort is usually protracted in time.

d. Some sustainability activities can be contracted to civil contractors (national or international), in which accountability and effectiveness of the contractor requires proper vetting and continuous evaluation.

e. The uncertainty of predicting the threat and the subsequent employment of the force conducting COIN may impact the planning of combat forces’ logistic requirements.

f. Lines of communication and main supply routes could be insufficient and extended.

g. The contested authorities may not be able to provide any of the required sustainment capacity in terms of infrastructure, supply of services and materials and medical services.

0441 Civil-military cooperation. Long-term development and therefore successful COIN depends on the joint force providing an environment in which civilian agencies can effectively operate, especially with respect to economic efforts. To succeed, counter-insurgents must address the basic economic needs and essential services (such as sewage, water, electricity, sanitation, and healthcare), sustaining key social and cultural institutions, and other aspects that contribute to a society’s essential quality of life. Integrating political, security and economic activities in COIN, therefore, frequently requires military forces to carry out a wider range of civil-dimension skills and capabilities than they typically train for or inherently possess. As a result, coordination and collaboration become more important as the joint forces commander seeks to gain unity of effort. COIN planning at all levels should include representatives from the contested government and other participants. Military participants should support civilian efforts, including those of international governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, inter-agency partners, indigenous populations and institutions, and other friendly actors. Deployment of Gender Advisory Teams could support local women to participate in the peace process, protect them from sexual violence, promoting women’s inclusion in electoral systems and engaging their voices in legal and judicial procedures.17

17 United Nations Security Resolution 1325 (reference X) refers
Section VIII – Cross-Functional Considerations

0442 Security Force Assistance (SFA): Interoperability between NATO and indigenous forces. The military contribution to COIN cannot be considered an Alliance’s solo effort, as success can only be achieved through involving the local security forces who need to deploy on the front line to defeat insurgent forces. To enable local security forces to participate in, and eventually lead, operations there is a strong requirement in evaluating and planning all aspects related to security force assistance. These encompass NATO joint force and other organizations’ activities conducted to develop a sustainable capability and capacity of local security forces and their associated institutions through organizing, training, enabling, advising and mentoring. Many actors can participate in security force assistance including joint, intergovernmental, inter-agency, multinational, non-governmental and others. These efforts focus on the host nation’s efforts to increase its local security forces’ capability and capacity. Activities vary from ministry level to tactical level. Local security forces can comprise of civilians, special operations forces (SOF) and conventional military forces. They are often also responsible for law enforcement, border security and stability operations. Female personnel acting as role models in the local environment, should inspire women in often male-dominated societies to push for their own rights and for participation in the nation building process. In sum, Alliance mentors, advisors and trainers charged with conducting security force assistance activities in a COIN environment must look beyond the immediate tactical conditions on the ground. They must also collaborate with multiple agencies to develop the supporting infrastructure required for the host nation security force to sustain and re-generate itself over the long-term.

0443 Partnering. Alliance and indigenous forces operate together to achieve mission success while building capability and capacity. Partnering should be the collective result of a union of the organizations involved. It cannot be carried out occasionally, when convenient, or as time permits; nor should it be limited to periodic or occasional combat operations. Effective partnering is an enduring, collective, and collaborative effort which involves carrying out varying tasks toward a common goal. It requires mutual respect despite differences in culture, size, skill, training and capabilities of the units involved. Effective partnering will exploit all available strengths and overcome respective weaknesses. It requires leadership flexibility and innovation to forge strong relationships between partnering units which are key to successful COIN efforts. Successful COIN partnerships will enable indigenous forces to gain the capability and capacity to maintain stability.

0444 Improvised explosive device threat. Another common insurgent strategy of attacking forces conducting COIN is through the wide and deliberate use of
improved explosive devices (IEDs) which can represent one of the main threats. Insurgents have traditionally relied on improvised explosive devices to counter conventional forces. Improvised explosive devices have the capability, if not countered and neutralized, of slowing and affecting the joint force’s operational momentum. Consequently, it is necessary to have a common understanding of the threat, which is posed not only by the device itself, for which the forces conducting COIN and the local forces must be equipped with suitable capabilities, but more effectively and widely by the network that places the devices, thus enabling the attack. It is, therefore, essential to understand how improvised explosive devices networks operate, to know their strengths and vulnerabilities and to define what actions the joint forces commander could take to discard these networks. This involves focusing intelligence on examining, in detail, the pertinent threat network(s) and using that analysis to degrade the insurgent’s combat power. See also AJP-3.15 (reference T).

0445 Attacking the network. It is fundamental for a joint forces commander and staff to understand how a threat network operates so that they can limit the adversary’s ability to conduct attacks successfully. Attacking the network operations involve lethal and non-lethal actions. Operations against networks are conducted continuously and simultaneously at multiple-levels (tactical, operational and strategic) that capitalize on, or create, key vulnerabilities and disrupt activities to eliminate the enemy’s ability to function. This enables the operation or campaign’s success. In COIN, attacking the network seeks to destroy the insurgent force’s physical infrastructure, including capabilities that can be used to support the insurgent’s cause. Attacking the network proactively targets the physical and societal mechanisms that support and fuel the insurgency. It involves aggressive offensive techniques which must be in accordance with the principle of proportionality. This means that the death/injury caused to civilians, or damage/destruction caused to civilian property, must be proportional and not excessive in relation to the tangible and direct military advantage anticipated by an attack on a military objective.

0446 Psychological operations.\(^\text{19}\) Psychological operations (PSYOPS) are planned psychological activities using methods of communication and other means directed at approved audiences to influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviour, affecting the achievement of political and military objectives. The psychological dimension of an insurgency is as important as the physical. Conflict is a struggle of wills that takes place in people’s minds, as well as on the battlefield. The attitudes and behaviour of people (friend, foe and the undecided or uncommitted) may be central to determining the outcome of conflict and the nature of the post-conflict environment. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the motivation of various target audiences – leaders, opposing forces, populations – to shape their perceptions, affect their will and to persuade them to accept the outcome desired by NATO. Psychological

\(^{19}\) US does not utilize the term Psychological Operations but refers to these as Military Information Support Operations (MISO).
operations as a capability, constitutes a key information activity of military engagement in the information environment with regard to local and regional audiences.

0447 **Contribution of psychological operations.** Forces conducting psychological operations in COIN have a vital role in maximising the operational effects of conventional and special operation forces in the local population’s perspective. It will always require action, balanced with information activities to gain the support of the local population and counter the adversaries’ psychological and propagandistic outreach. Forces conducting psychological operations are enhanced by their capability to analyse and assess audiences belonging to a foreign culture, advise joint planning and targeting and convey culturally attuned messages to approved target audiences. They are the single provider for military mass media capabilities (radio, print, TV/video, new media, direct communication and other activities, for example, traditional communication, events and so on) in direct support and disposal of the theatre commander. The three basic goals of psychological operations are to:

a. create behavioural change of the insurgent, forcing him to leave the insurgency;

b. reinforce the commitment of friendly target audiences; and

c. deprive the insurgency of the support and cooperation of uncommitted or undecided audiences.

0448 **Security sector reform.** Security sector reform (SSR) is often vital to rebuilding the legitimacy of the contested government. However, only the contested authorities can reform their security sector. Allied forces should seek to provide assistance and guidance to the reform process, but contested authorities buy-in and ownership of the security sector reform-process is crucial. Security sector reform depends on thorough planning and assessment. Through unified action, the various actors consider the unique capabilities and contributions of each participant. The ensuing plan aims for a practical pace of reform and accounts for the political and cultural context of the situation. The plan accounts for available resources and capabilities while balancing the human capacity to deliver change against a realistic timeline. The security sector reform plan reflects contested nation culture, sensitivities and historical conceptions of security. It does not seek to implement a Western paradigm for the security sector, understanding that a Western model may not be appropriate. As with the broader campaign plan, the security sector reform plan seeks to resolve the underlying root causes of conflict while preventing new or escalating future security crises. The level of contested nation’s development – especially as it pertains to poverty and economic opportunity – is an important consideration in security sector reform planning. Planning for security sector reform includes (re)building culturally appropriate local forces, judicial systems, law enforcement
and corrections. Security force assistance and stability policing builds or improves indigenous forces\textsuperscript{20}.

Section IX – Component Contribution

Land component contribution

0449 **General.** As the population lives and works primarily on land, much of securing and protecting the population is accomplished by deploying manpower within the population with an enduring presence. This includes both NATO and the indigenous security forces. The current COIN operational approach – direct, balanced or indirect – will determine the size, footprint and roles of, and the relationship between, the host nation and NATO land forces. Land forces are the main medium to implement the comprehensive approach as most of the agencies involved will be active on the ground.

0450 **The local security forces.** The local security forces will be unique to their particular culture and location. This includes their quantity, quality and effectiveness. Regardless of their situation or status at the outset of COIN, local security forces will be indispensable in terms of executing COIN and, more importantly, creating enduring solutions. Professional local security forces will be invaluable for intelligence and understanding the operating environment, particularly when the joint force is new to the operating environment.

a. **The local security force and legitimacy.** If NATO elements are working with, or training, the indigenous security force, care must be taken to ensure that the population perceives their local security forces are capable, competent and professional. Adherence to gender specifics will enlarge acceptance and cooperation by those most vulnerable. Failure to do so will generally undermine the contested government's legitimacy and the population might not accept the local security force.

b. **Security sector reform.** Training and developing the local security force is a key part of security sector reform requiring unity of effort among all actors to develop not only military forces, but other aspects of security and governance, such as police/gendarmerie, prison services and judiciary.

0451 **Contested government law enforcement.** Apart from upholding the rule of law to support the legitimacy of the contested government, its law enforcement forces play a valuable role in conducting COIN operations if these forces are competent and trustworthy. If they are legitimate in the eyes of the population, they are likely to have better access to detailed intelligence on insurgent leaders, networks and links to criminal elements. The presence of indigenous law enforcement elements, particularly if they are perceived to be leading

\textsuperscript{20} For more on Stability Policing connected to Security Force assistance see AJP-3.4.5 Allied Joint Doctrine for Military Contribution to Stabilization and Reconstruction (Edition A), para B036
operations, will have a stabilizing and normalizing impact on the population and will find greater acceptance among the population.

a. **Coordination between indigenous law enforcement and contributing military.** Military forces must be closely coordinated with indigenous law enforcement forces. Military forces may support them providing security and protection when the security situation requires it, thereby allowing the law enforcement forces to perform their routine duties, even during heightened security situations. Law enforcement forces may support the military as well. For example, police may arrest insurgents captured and detained by military forces and cooperate in site exploitation to gather evidence to prosecute the insurgents. Law enforcement forces and military forces may be collocated to conduct joint operations and to afford the police additional protection, based on the security situation. This coordination will often provide valuable intelligence sources, and law enforcement and military intelligence should be shared within prudent classification restrictions. As security improves, law enforcement forces should assume a greater role and profile amongst the population, thereby allowing military forces to focus on subsequent operations. The preference to use law enforcement as the lead agency will also increase the public perception of success and legitimacy.

b. **Proficiency.** The efficient enforcement of law is often dependent on the proficiency of the police force and contested authorities judiciary and the population's perception of them. For example, if they are regarded as corrupt, the population will have little trust that the police have the best interests of the population in mind or can provide real security. If military forces must be used for law enforcement tasks, military police and gendarmerie-type forces are recommended to be used because of their specific training and education.

c. **Training police forces**\(^21\). Military forces may have to be used in some instances to train contested authorities law enforcement, especially civilian police, using a comprehensive training program to ensure all requirements of relevant stakeholders are met. Ideally, this responsibility will be assumed by supporting police forces so that they receive proper mentoring and training in all aspects of police duties, including gender aspects\(^22\). However, the military will continue to work closely with police forces and mentor them when necessary.

d. **Corruption.** Some law enforcement forces are not organized or controlled in a way which fosters responsible governance. Law enforcement forces may be corrupt or poorly organized, trained and equipped. In fact, corrupt

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\(^{21}\) See AJP-3.4.5 (reference O) and AJP-3.22 Allied Joint Doctrine on Stability Policing (under development)

\(^{22}\) United Nations Security Resolution 1325 (reference X) refers
law enforcement or other local forces may be a core grievance of the insurgency or may be a driver of continuing conflict. It is important to understand the potential ramifications of using former insurgents as members of the police force. Efforts must be made to rectify any issues concerning corruption, especially as it is unlikely that a nation will be stable without a competent, professional law enforcement apparatus.

0452 **Local auxiliary forces.** When the security situation is such that the contested authorities or NATO forces cannot provide 24 hour security, counter-insurgents might consider organizing and mobilizing the local population to self-protect by forming auxiliary forces. This is a key policy decision the contested government must make. These forces may augment military and/or law enforcement efforts. The following should be considered:

a. **Training and roles.** When well-organized, equipped, trained and led, auxiliary forces can play a vital role in COIN. They can augment and assist professional military and law enforcement forces, especially providing a permanent presence within the population. A permanent presence within the population is vital to security but is manpower-intensive. Auxiliary forces are best used to augment or execute defensive or stability operations. The quality, quantity and presence of these forces can, in many cases, determine the outcome of the overall COIN effort.

b. **Advantages.** Auxiliary forces are often local in nature, having inherent advantages by their intimate and thorough knowledge of the local population. They can thus be invaluable assets; their understanding of the local operating environment is far superior to that of any outsider. Auxiliary forces may also have specialised skills, developed as part of their culture that may complement those of other more professional forces. These skills can include tracking, patrolling, understanding the terrain and wildlife, and local communications methods. Auxiliary forces that are well accepted by the population may be conducive for the acceptance of NATO forces and support the legitimacy of the contested government.

c. **Issues.** Auxiliary forces can, however, present disadvantages, but these can generally be overcome with oversight. Auxiliary forces may be more prone to insurgent infiltration, and they may provide an informational, operational and security challenge. Alliance members should realize that some auxiliaries may be working for both sides in a conflict, most commonly the side they perceive to be winning at that moment in time. Members of auxiliaries, or their friends and family, may be subject to insurgent coercion and violence. The overall context will determine how vulnerable and, therefore, how useful the auxiliary forces may be. Additionally, consideration must be given to the legal effect of employing the local population in a military capacity.
Maritime contribution

0453 **General.** Demographic projections indicate that littoral populations and cities will continue to grow rapidly, putting ever greater pressure on limited local resources and increasing the scope for internal discontent among the population that is ripe for (potential) insurgents to exploit. The presence of ports, harbours, major rivers and lakes in a COIN environment will further increase the need for a maritime contribution. The ability of that maritime component to provide sea control could be vital in isolating an insurgency, both physically and psychologically. Additionally, facilitating public access and safety while limiting insurgent activity supports increasing economic activity which may undermine the insurgency.

0454 **Maritime capabilities.** Maritime forces may include large and small surface and sub-surface craft, as well as maritime air and aviation assets which can provide the following capabilities within COIN:

a. Maritime security.

b. Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

c. Mobility and manoeuvre.

d. Sustainment.

e. Strike.

f. Influence.

g. Capacity building.

0455 **Maritime security.** Maritime forces, working in conjunction with host nation naval, coastguard, gendarmerie and police forces, can provide security at sea, in internal waters and on inland waterways, ensuring access and freedom of navigation to help maintain the flow of commerce which brings wealth and stability to the host nation. In the littoral (green water) and in land waterways (brown water), they can, pending their capabilities, guard against air, surface and/or sub-surface threats, enabling them to help protect critical host nation maritime assets and infrastructure. This includes ports, harbours, oil and gas platforms; the latter two representing particularly high value targets for insurgents. Maritime forces can assist with countering maritime crime and other criminal activity (for example, drug, weapon and human trafficking) which undermine a country’s economic security and contribute to instability. A combination of maritime offshore and riverine patrols can provide deterrence, presence and interdiction, demonstrating NATO’s support for the host nation, while sending a strong message to insurgents and their supporters that illegal activities will be targeted. If necessary, maritime forces can deny access to regions under the control of insurgents, helping to isolate them from external
economic and military support. The sensors, communications and weapons systems, particularly of larger ships, tend to be optimized for operating in the open oceans. Therefore, while maritime forces can support COIN operations to good effect, the challenges they, particularly larger draft ships, face when operating in the relatively cluttered and congested littoral should not be underestimated.

0456 **Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.** Successful COIN is based on the ability to anticipate, learn and adapt, but to do so, forces conducting COIN require accurate, timely and well integrated intelligence. Maritime forces can make a significant contribution in this area because their surface, sub-surface, air and aviation assets can provide a range of, often persistent and covert, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets over both land and sea. These can help build or contribute to the common operating picture (COP), recognised air picture (RAP) and recognised maritime picture (RMP).

0457 **Mobility and manoeuvre.** Shipping can efficiently transport significant quantities of personnel, equipment and stores to, and within, an operational area. A maritime force can achieve surprise by manoeuvring rapidly to exploit the maritime flank or inland waterways or challenging ‘brown water’ areas if equipped with air cushion vessels. It can insert small units, both conventional forces and special operations forces (SOF), and may be configured to facilitate air operations from the sea to gain an advantage on land. If required, maritime forces can also conduct/support non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs) from regions either threatened by insurgents or under their control. Amphibious forces can also be projected ashore, possibly from over the horizon, either overtly or covertly to act independently before being recovered back to sea or remaining ashore as part of the land component. Amphibious forces are well suited to conduct raids against insurgents’ command and control and logistics capabilities, particularly situated in the littoral.

0458 **Sustainment.** Maritime forces can provide forces on land with key sustainment capabilities. This includes providing the majority of bulk supplies via military surface connectors in austere environments.

0459 **Naval air power and fires.** Depending upon its composition, a maritime force can deliver a range of effects through providing sea based offensive air (OA), air interdiction (AI), close air support (CAS), naval gunfire support (NGS) and precision guided munitions, all of which reduce the military footprint ashore. However, all fires and strike operations must be based on accurate intelligence to avoid or minimize collateral damage among the civilian population.

0460 **Influence.** Maritime forces, even the presence of a single ship offshore, can help reassure the contested government whilst indicating foreign political intent to an insurgency (Gunboat-diplomacy). A maritime force, particularly an amphibious one, can exert considerable influence by loitering offshore, possibly over the horizon, to provide a strong presence without commitment.
Capacity building. The campaign plan for maritime forces should include the need to build sustainable host nation maritime capacity and capability. Alliance maritime forces will withdraw when COIN operations are completed and, to compensate for this loss of capability, it is important that the host nation’s naval, marine and coastguard forces are sufficiently trained and equipped to ensure stability, enforce the law, control borders, respect and comply to gender specific requirements, manage customs and immigration and prevent a renewed insurgency. This might require longer-term mentoring and an enduring programme of subsequent maritime engagement activities. The maritime component may also contribute to the contested authorities rebuilding effort with a dedicated maritime civil affairs component designed to influence rebuilding efforts in maritime and naval affairs. These include:

a. maritime law;
b. port administration and port operations;
c. marine fisheries and resource management;
d. maritime interagency coordination;
e. customs and logistics;
f. port/inter-coastal surveys; and
g. control of maritime immigration.

Air and space contribution

General. Air and space forces, with their key characteristics\(^{23}\) and capabilities\(^{24}\) can play an integral role in the military contribution to comprehensive COIN. Air and space forces will provide the Alliance with a considerable advantage over any insurgency. The airpower contribution to COIN can be considered in four fundamental activity areas: control of the air, attack, situational awareness (SA)/situational understanding (SU) and air mobility/logistics.

The role of technology. Unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) provide capabilities in surveillance and target acquisition. The persistence of some unmanned aircraft systems can place large areas under constant observation providing critical “pattern of life” information whilst armed platforms can be employed against dynamic/time-sensitive targets. This capability of constant observation combined with the capability of engaging dynamic/time-sensitive targets may

\(^{23}\) Height (enhance observation and perspective of the battle space), speed (to project power more rapidly) and reach (fly over long distances unconstrained by physical barriers of topography).

\(^{24}\) Responsiveness, flexibility, ubiquity, precision, mobility, concentration, penetrating power, visibility, diversity and adequacy and survivability.
however cause a climate of constant insecurity and fear among the population. Tactical air control parties provide ground commanders with beyond line-of-sight situational awareness through full-motion video from aircraft targeting pods, and perform critical air-to-ground interface activities. Air and space-based signal intelligence platforms provide another vital information collection capability. Air collected information needs to be processed, exploited and disseminated by an all-source intelligence element to provide the required insights. Suitable structures need to be established. Systems manufactured for the civilian market can also be used successfully to patrol borders and lines of communication in order to report on suspicious activity and deter insurgent attacks. Stationary (tethered) aerostats equipped with video cameras and other sensors are simple, relatively inexpensive and provide a persistent means to monitor activity.

0464 **Control of the air.** In the past, non-state actors have demonstrated the ability to field both manned and unmanned aircraft and could also use ballistic or cruise missiles.\(^{25}\) Even in a COIN operation there may be a requirement to gain and maintain control of the air to permit freedom of action, to protect friendly forces and activities as well as to protect and support the civilian population, whilst concurrently denying the use of air and space to adversaries.

0465 **Offensive airpower.** Precision air attacks can be enormously valuable in COIN. However, commanders at all levels must exercise caution prior to employing airpower to create effects. Both tactical and strategic effects can be created by successful air attacks, but any benefit will rapidly be outweighed by the negative effect of an unintended event or undesired action. Even the most precise weapons may cause civilian casualties when the insurgents merge with the civilian population to make their detection, positive identification and targeting difficult. Commanders must assess the benefit against the risk of every air strike. An air strike that causes collateral damage and turns people against the contested authorities may provide the insurgency with a major propaganda victory, even though those attacks may be legally permitted under International Humanitarian Law.

0466 **Situational awareness and situational understanding.** Air and space power provides a broad range of collection capabilities that are capable of strategic and tactical support tasks. The complexity of providing an intelligence product in the right format to the right person in an appropriate timescale in order to meet the requirements and to support effective decision making needs to be considered by the responsible staff. Reconnaissance and surveillance from the air may be useful when the insurgency is operating in rural or remote areas as well as urban enclaves, especially when closely integrated with signals intelligence. Imagery created by multiple technologies can find well-hidden insurgent facilities while signal intelligence can intercept insurgent’s communications and locate their point of origin. Persistent air surveillance will often identify people and their activities, vehicles and buildings, even when the

\(^{25}\) Consider also in conjunction with any capability or intent to use weapons of mass destruction (WMD).
insurgency tries to hide them. In this capacity, air surveillance can provide a substantial contribution to developing an understanding of the pattern of life in any area.

0467 **Air mobility/logistics.** Air mobility provides a commander with the ability to rapidly deploy, redeploy, sustain and reposition forces. It also provides support to government and non-governmental organizations. The capability to transport local governance personnel and to move aid and equipment to deliver direct support to the population when the contested government does not have the capability to do so may enable the COIN operations. A critical role of air mobility is to support the medical services in transporting critically ill and injured personnel (both combatant and local populace when appropriate) to medical treatment facilities. The ability to transport casualties at short-notice from an area of combat or remote locations to medical treatment facilities within theatre and ultimately back to the home base is a unique air capability. Air mobility supports the information strategy when forces conducting COIN provide humanitarian assistance and it clearly has a wide-ranging ability to support combat operations. Developing host nation air mobility allows a governance structure for the contested authorities, to be seen by the population as having the ability to reach and support.

0468 **Force protection of air assets and securing access to space.** All air assets present a high-value target for any insurgency. One of the strengths of an insurgency is its potential to persistently apply a direct threat to local infrastructure, such as an airfield, which may constrain use of air assets. Aircraft and facilities must therefore be protected from both air and ground attacks. Force protection measures need to mitigate these risks and will include the aspect ‘securing access to the space’. Land forces may support or take the responsibility for force protection activities.

0469 **Command and control.** COIN planning is complex and timelines can be short. A key challenge for planners and operators within COIN operations will be efficiently using scarce air assets and space enablers. The supporting air commander needs to understand, in detail, the land scheme of manoeuvre and their part in the plan in order to best support the complex campaign. The land commander and staff must consider the requirement for air and space support at the outset of planning to fully exploit air and space capabilities and to ensure they are fully integrated into any activity.

0470 **Building host nation capability.** Airpower can make a significant contribution to host nation capacity building. Airpower capacity building, support to security and civil sector aviation development are main areas to be developed. Building any nation’s airpower capability requires time, careful planning, investing in training and mentoring, as well as financial investment. In any COIN operation, an early review should be conducted to identify the host nation’s ability to command, control and employ airpower independently or integrated as part of the coalition effort. An air mobility capability, if it cannot be developed quickly,
might expeditiously be ‘bought-in’ from the civil sector to provide a capability enhancement whilst creating time for indigenous capability development. Developing a capable air force will probably take longer to develop than the equivalent land, police or other local security forces. As a result, development activity should commence at the earliest opportunity.

**Special Operations Forces component contribution**

0471 **General.** Special operations are military activities conducted by specially designated, organized, trained, and equipped forces, manned with selected personnel using unconventional tactics, techniques and modes of employment. These activities may be conducted across the full range of military operations, independently or with conventional forces. NATO special operations forces (SOF) are joint organized, strategic assets to be employed to help achieve strategic and operational-level objectives with aviation, maritime, and land units, constituting a mission-specific special operations component command (SOCC) with a joint staff to plan and direct special operations. Special operations forces can effectively complement the overarching application of the Alliance’s diplomatic, economic, military, and information instruments of power, applied in a COIN role. When preparing for COIN operations, special operations forces can provide area assessments and an early command, control & communications capability. During COIN, special operations forces could conduct military assistance, special reconnaissance, direct action or a suitable combination of these principal tasks to support Allied joint operations. To gain a better understanding of the operational environment, situational awareness and to collect information, special operations forces can liaise with many factions in a joint operations area. More importantly, special operations forces should be used when there is a need for special capabilities, or a requirement to conduct covert or clandestine operations. The success of these operations can be enhanced by conducting technical exploitation operations.

0472 **Command.** The special operations component command is a multinational or national joint component command formed around a framework nation. These commands are non-standing headquarters in the NATO force structure that are tailored for each operation according to the number of special operations task groups assigned and the degree of command and control required. The complexity of COIN requires special operations forces to be integrated in the earliest stages of strategic and operational planning as well as special operations missions to be coordinated with other current activities. This will ensure special operations forces are fully integrated throughout operations and nested special operations forces effects are created in support of the strategic and operational level commanders. In that respect, the two-way liaison is vital for coordination, critical information sharing and understanding of capabilities of both the command and the forces.

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26 For details, see AJP-3.5 (reference Q).
Joint logistic support contribution

0473 **General.** In comparison to other operations COIN operations offer a different challenge for those providing logistics.

a. In addition to the logistic support required by the forces, the civilian organizations and the population might have to be supported as well. At times it may be required to support the local security forces.

b. In COIN operations, logistic installations can often be high priority targets. This is because they present a lower risk combined with a higher pay-off because of the vulnerability of the lines of communication and the slow and vulnerable transportation means.

0474 **Operations.** Logistics contribute to military operations against insurgents. It may also provide extensive capabilities to support humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and economic development, all of which are activities that help undermine the insurgency through targeted assistance of the population. Especially in reconstruction and development, logistic activities and capabilities can have a significant impact on the whole of COIN in addressing or preventing grievances among the population. Logistics plays a supporting function in:

a. conducting combat and civil security operations;

b. training and employing local security forces;

c. establishing or restoring essential services;

d. supporting development of better governance; and supporting economic development, and

e. supporting displaced persons and refugees.

0475 Supporting military operations means to support static and mobile forces. Preferably, these forces are light forces as they have a smaller overall logistical requirement, meaning these forces can more easily be self-sufficient and ensure a higher sustainability.

0476 Lines of communication are vulnerable and are the insurgents' preferred targets. The biggest threat to logistics comes from improvised explosive devices and small arms fire and, therefore, suitable protective measures should be employed. Whenever possible supply should be delivered by air, to avoid attacks by insurgents on the ground.

0477 Establishing lines of communication and infrastructure, such as roads, landing zones, power grids and outposts can help to extend government influence and sustain and support light forces that are widely distributed. This additional infrastructure can have the added advantage of addressing society’s needs.
Planning considerations. Logistics plays an important part in the planning process. Commanders have to closely analyse the factors of the environment in which they are operating before committing logistic assets and engaging logisticians to provide support to the operation. The following areas should be considered:

a. contested nation infrastructure and economic and supply situation;
b. condition and supply situation of the local security forces;
c. needs of the population, notably those most vulnerable like women, children and elderly;
d. contested nation health system; and
e. availability, capability and capacity of contractors.

As in many military operations, contractors can play an important role in COIN. Using contractors provides the means to conduct support and development projects and, at the same time, balances limited military resources against the huge number of reconstruction and support tasks. However, it is vital to thoroughly consider the contracting policies to avoid negative impact, for example, competition between contractors and local economy or with the contested government for influence.

Deployment/protection. When choosing a location for future logistics bases it is important to find sites which will be available for a considerable length of time – ideally for the length of the campaign. To avoid, or minimize, any disruption to the population, the site chosen should be easy to defend and, knowing that it will be a potential threat to insurgent attack, logistic units should, ideally, be co-located with combat units (which may also save resources). If possible the site should be close to an airfield (which can accommodate rotary and fixed wing assets) to help with moving people and assets, including evacuations, or to a harbour, particularly for transferring bulk supply.

Cyberspace considerations

General. Insurgents tend to be very resourceful, intelligent and capable of developing and adopting capabilities to achieve their goals. One of these capabilities is using cyberspace. Within cyberspace, access plays a critical role in navigating the operating environment and may prove vital to isolate an insurgency physically and psychologically. The virtual nature and unique capabilities of cyberspace forces provide an advantage in areas where physical access is denied or limited. With the reduction in costs of IT infrastructure and end-user equipment, expansion of the physical and social network on a global scale and the tremendous possibilities of cyberspace, almost everybody in the
world can be connected. Insurgents use cyberspace to conduct a full spectrum of conflict, mobilization, command and control and psychological operations.

0482 **Cyberspace operations and electronic warfare.** Operational commanders should consider creating a proactive mind-set towards reducing the effects of insurgents’ cyberspace capabilities on local security forces, governance, population and home front. Integrating capabilities such as cyberspace operations and electronic warfare on strategic, operational and tactical level, addressing also legal aspects of their employment, can monitor, detect, disrupt or even deny insurgents using cyberspace. Provided cyberspace operations comply with the UN Charter, 1977 Additional Protocol I and other applicable international law and do not constitute an extra-legal intervention, cyberspace operations and electronic warfare could provide security within the operating environment and help to isolate insurgents within the affected area, or separate them from external support secured through cyberspace. Thereby, communication and information exchange between local security forces, governance, population and home front will be at least maintained, if not improved, to win the ‘battle of perception’ and to keep the ‘force protected’. AJP-3.10 (reference R) refers.

0483 **Building contested nation cyberspace capability.** Security force assistance may also include assisting the contested authorities with building or improving its cyberspace capability and capacity. The cyberspace component of security includes contested nation telecommunications, inter-agency organizations and military command, control and communications that may be loosely affiliated with governance organizations in the contested government. A further consideration to enhance the contested nation cyberspace security capability is to introduce or expand existing cyberspace awareness efforts, all by developing a long-term plan to assist the local authorities in these areas.
Annex A PARADOXES

A.1. General. These paradoxes are offered to stimulate thinking during planning for, and conducting, operations within a COIN setting, not to limit it. The applicability of the thoughts behind the paradoxes depends on the context faced by the commander and staff in any given insurgency. They are not intended to be applicable in all cases, and the list itself is not exhaustive.

A.2. The more you protect a security force, the less secure you may be, also known as the COIN trilemma. Ultimate success in COIN is gained by protecting the populace and not exclusively the force conducting COIN itself. If military forces remain in their compounds they lose touch with the population and concede the freedom of action to the insurgents. Even if the level of insecurity threatens the security of the force, commanders should find a balance between implementing restrictive force protection measures and the need to maintain close contact with the locals. Overly restrictive force protection measures tend to isolate and, over time, alienate, the security force from the local population, denying them the vital ‘finger-tip feel’ for what is happening on the ground, required to distinguish and neutralize the insurgents. They need this ‘feel’ in order to protect the population, understand their needs and collect vital intelligence. Operations conducted at the tactical level among the population, while attracting high levels of risk, will reflect a will to share that risk with the populace and consequently help to gain their support to defeat the insurgency.

A.3. The more force is used, the less effective it may be. Any use of force produces many effects, not all of which can be foreseen. The greater the force applied, the greater the chance of collateral damage and mistakes. Using substantial force also increases the opportunity for insurgent propaganda to portray
lethal military activities as brutal. In contrast, using force precisely and with restraint strengthens the rule of law that needs to be established. The key point for counter-insurgents is to know when more force is needed – and when it might be counterproductive. This judgement involves constant assessment of the security situation and the necessity of having information available on potential actions by the insurgent: generally obvious for commanders, it is sometimes forgotten at lower levels when self-defence is at stake. It should be kept in mind that killing numerous insurgents will be seriously counterproductive if collateral damage kills peaceful civilians too. That will create legitimacy for the insurgency and lead to increased support from the population. For this reason, commanders have to establish procedures to achieve a balanced use of force and to avoid any excessive use of force that leads to collateral damage.

A.4. The more successful a COIN operation is, the less force is required and the more risk must be accepted. This paradox is really a corollary to the previous one. As the level of insurgency violence drops, the requirements of international law and the expectations of the populace lead to a reduction of the direct military actions by counter-insurgents. More reliance is placed on police work, rules of engagement may be tightened and troops may have to exercise increased restraint. Soldiers may also have to accept more risk in order to maintain contact with the population.

A.5. If a tactic works today, it might not be the case on the following days; if it works in a given area, it might not work in another one. Efficient insurgents are adaptive and are often part of a network that communicates constantly. Insurgents quickly adjust to COIN practices and rapidly disseminate information throughout the insurgency. Indeed, the more effective a COIN tactic is, the faster it may become out of date because insurgents have a greater need to counter it. Effective leaders at all levels avoid complacency and are at least as adaptive as their enemies. Constantly developing new tactics, techniques and procedures is essential. However, it is essential to have a common doctrine and set of tactics to provide a common understanding on the planning and execution of military activities which creates a starting point for adaptation. Consequently, commanders should always be on their guard when implementing proven methods. There are no template solutions that can be universally applied – each situation demands a bespoke approach.

A.6. Tactical success alone guarantees nothing. As important as they are, military actions by themselves cannot exclusively achieve success in COIN. Sometimes a doctor or a teacher may locally be more efficient than one infantry company in undermining an insurgency. Insurgents who never totally defeat counter-insurgents in combat may still achieve their strategic objectives, because they can win by not losing. Tactical actions, thus, must be linked not only to strategic and operational military objectives but also to the host nation’s essential political goals. Without those connections, lives and resources may be wasted for no real gain.
A.7. **Doing nothing may be the best reaction.** Often insurgents carry out actions with the primary purpose of enticing counter-insurgents to overreact or at least to react in a way that insurgents can exploit – for example, using more force than appears appropriate in the circumstances or executing a clearance operation that creates more enemies than it eliminates. If an assessment of the effectiveness of a potential course of action determines that negative effects outweigh the positive effects, then no action may be the preferred course of action.

A.8. **Some of the counter-insurgent’s most appropriate weapons do not shoot.** Counter-insurgents often achieve the most meaningful success in garnering public support and legitimacy for the contested authorities with activities that do not systematically involve killing insurgents. Arguably, the decisive battle is for the people’s minds; hence coordinating and synchronizing information activities with efforts along the other lines of operation is critical. While security is essential to set the stage for overall progress, lasting victory comes from a vibrant economy, political participation and restored hope. Depending on the state of the insurgency, therefore, Alliance forces should be prepared to execute the full range of military activities in support of COIN efforts, and make a valuable contribution to stabilization and reconstruction.

A.9. **The contested authorities doing something tolerably is often better than the force doing it well.** It is just as important to consider who performs an operation as to assess how well it is done. The contested authorities must take ownership of the solution, and this is best done by empowering it to act purposefully, and increasingly to give it the lead as its capability improves. This approach will ensure that the solutions arrived at, have local buy-in and are culturally attuned to the contested authorities population. It is accepted that, while some of these solutions may be suboptimal from a NATO perspective, they do have contested authorities ownership, and are therefore more likely to be enduring. Where NATO is supporting a host nation, long-term success requires the establishment of viable contested authorities leaders and institutions that can carry on without significant Alliance support. The longer that process takes, the more the troop-contributing nations domestic support is likely to wane and the more the local populace may doubt the ability of their own indigenous security forces and their government to bring about substantive change.
Annex B LEARNING AND ADAPTATION IN COIN

B.1. **General.** In COIN operations, it is vital to implement a continuous learning and adapting cycle\(^{27}\) (See Figure B-1), both in planning and executing all COIN activities, in order to increase coalition force protection and improve the protection of the population, while expanding the capability to defeat insurgents.

Figure B.1 – Learn and adapt cycle

B.2. All units conducting COIN operations must continually assess the situation, question every assumption, evaluate chosen courses of action and adjust to match the need for changes. Commanders at any level should find means and ways to improve the capability of their units to learn and adapt quickly. The first step is to understand the operating environment and identify the potential need of changes, the second is to orient – to critically analyze and synthesize the identified needs. The third is to adapt; to develop required changes in doctrine, organization, training, leadership, materiel, personnel, facilities and interoperability. The fourth is to act and apply the changes, testing their validity within the engagement space through the unfolding interaction with the operating environment. The first two steps are where the knowledge is

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\(^{27}\) The proposed model is fundamentally based on the Boyd's Cycle, commonly referred as the 'observe-orient-decide-act (OODA) loop'.

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developed while the last two are where the knowledge is managed. Each step is built on the previous one but it continuously provides feedback to better understand the operating environment.

B.3. Speed in combat, as well as in learning and adapting, is a powerful weapon, to be achieved by either improving the coalition adaptation process or by slowing down the adversary’s. Fast adaptation requires friendly forces to improve their capability to get into the opponent’s learning and adapting cycle, anticipating their next move. This disrupts their decision-making process, generates confusion among the adversary forces and provides friendly forces the opportunity to gain or maintain the initiative.

B.4. In essence, adaptability means significantly shortening the time necessary to adjust to each new situation. There are two basic ways to adapt: anticipation and improvisation.

a. Anticipation is the capability to introduce new methods, schemes, techniques, materiel, weapon systems and training programmes for future use. It is based on the forecasts of future, filtered through practical experiences, lessons learned, organizational culture and corporate memory.

b. Improvisation is the ability to adjust to unexpected situations on the spur of the moment, without any specific preparation. It requires creative, intelligent and experienced leaders which have an intuitive appreciation for what is the best course of action to solve a problem, even without having sufficient time allocated for planning.

B.5. Adaptation can lead to innovation, which may be seen as a long-term development of new ways and means to conduct operations. While adaptation consists substantially in adjusting existing military means and methods, innovation involves developing new technologies, strategies, tactics or structures with a long-term impact on NATO forces and the military campaign (See Table B.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adaptation</th>
<th>Innovation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting strategy</td>
<td>Switching strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revising ROE</td>
<td>Adjusting mandate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementing forces</td>
<td>Surging forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retro-fitting equipment</td>
<td>Acquiring new equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting training</td>
<td>Developing new doctrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting tactics</td>
<td>New approach to operations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B.1 – Effects of adaptation and innovation
LEXICON

Part I – Abbreviations and Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJP</td>
<td>Allied joint publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATP</td>
<td>allied tactical publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COG</td>
<td>centre of gravity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COIN</td>
<td>counter-insurgency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>common operational picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMINT</td>
<td>human intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IED</td>
<td>improvised explosive device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IO</td>
<td>international organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OODA</td>
<td>observe, orient, decide, and act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMESII</td>
<td>political, military, economic, social, information, and infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSD</td>
<td>shape, secure &amp; develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSR</td>
<td>security sector reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOF</td>
<td>special operations forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTP</td>
<td>tactics, techniques, and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part II – Terms and Definitions

campaign
A set of military operations planned and conducted to achieve a strategic objective. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

centre of gravity
Characteristics, capabilities or localities from which a nation, an alliance, a military force or other grouping derives its freedom of action, physical strength or will to fight. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

civil-military cooperation
The coordination and cooperation, in support of the mission, between the NATO commander and civil actors, including the national population and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organizations and agencies. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

counter-insurgency
Comprehensive civilian and military efforts made to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

course of action
In the estimate process, an option that will accomplish or contribute to the accomplishment of a mission or task, and from which a detailed plan is developed. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

cyberspace
The global domain created by communication, information and other electronic systems, their interaction and the information that is stored, processed or transmitted in these systems. (NTMS-TAA 1 APR 2007 and TTF 25-02-2015 by proposal ACT)

end state
The political and/or military situation to be attained at the end of an operation, which indicates that the objective has been achieved. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

host nation
A nation which, by agreement:
a. receives forces and materiel of NATO or other nations operating on/from or transiting through its territory;
b. allows materiel and/or NATO organizations to be located on its territory; and/or

c. provides support for these purposes. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)
human intelligence
Intelligence derived from information collected by human operators and primarily provided by human sources. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

information activities
Actions designed to affect information or information systems. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

information operations
Operations coordinated to influence decision-making of adversaries in support of the Alliance overall objectives by affecting their information, information-based processes and systems while exploiting and protecting one’s own. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

insurgency
Actions of an organized, often ideologically motivated, group or movement that seeks to effect or prevent political change or to overthrow a governing authority within a country or a region, focused on persuading or coercing the population through the use of violence and subversion. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

intelligence
The product resulting from the directed collection and processing of information regarding the environment and the capabilities and intentions of actors, in order to identify threats and offer opportunities for exploitation by decision-makers (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

international organization
An intergovernmental, regional or global organization governed by international law and established by a group of states, with international juridical personality given by international agreement, however characterized, creating enforceable rights and obligations for the purpose of fulfilling a given function and pursuing common aims.

Note: Exceptionally, the International Committee of the Red Cross, although a non-governmental organization formed under the Swiss Civil Code, is mandated by the international community of states and is founded on international law, specifically the Geneva Conventions, has an international legal personality or status on its own, and enjoys some immunities and privileges for the fulfilment of its humanitarian mandate. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

irregular activity
The use or threat of force by irregular forces, groups or individuals, frequently ideologically or criminally motivated, to effect or prevent change as a challenge to governance and authority. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)
line of operation
In a campaign or operation, a line linking decisive points in time and space on the path to the centre of gravity. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

lines of communications
All the land, water, and air routes that connect an operating military force with one or more bases of operations, and along which supplies and reinforcements move. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

non-governmental organization
A private, not for profit, voluntary organization with no governmental or intergovernmental affiliation, established for the purpose of fulfilling a range of activities, in particular development-related projects or the promotion of a specific cause, and organized at local, national, regional or international level.

Notes:
1. A non-governmental organization does not necessarily have an official status or mandate for its existence or activities.
2. NATO may or may not support or cooperate with a given non-governmental organization. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

operation
A sequence of coordinated actions with a defined purpose.

Notes:
1. NATO operations are military.
2. NATO operations contribute to a wider approach including non-military actions. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

operating environment
A composite of the conditions, circumstances and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

rules of engagement
Directives issued by competent military authority which specify the circumstances and limitations under which forces will initiate and/or continue combat engagement with other forces encountered. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)

terrorism
The unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence against individuals or property in an attempt to coerce or intimidate governments or societies to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives. (NATOterm-NATO agreed)
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