



Ministry
of Defence



Allied Joint Publication-3.27

Allied Joint Doctrine for Counter-Insurgency



NATO STANDARD

AJP-3.27

ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE FOR COUNTER-INSURGENCY (COIN)

Edition A, Version 2

APRIL 2023



NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

ALLIED JOINT PUBLICATION

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17 April 2023

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Allied Joint Publication-3.27

Allied Joint Doctrine for Counter-Insurgency (COIN)

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dated April 2023,
is promulgated as directed by the Chiefs of Staff

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Director Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre

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RECORD OF SPECIFIC RESERVATIONS

[nation]	[detail of reservation]
GRC	GRC Armed Forces cannot execute tasks normally incumbent on civilian agencies and organizations, due to caveat deriving from national legislation.
USA	<p>(1) The United States does not support glossary/lexicon terms and definitions and shortened word forms (abbreviations, acronyms, initialisms) that are neither NATO Agreed, quoted verbatim from NATO Term, correctly cited IAW AAP-47 Allied Joint Doctrine Development, correctly introduced/revised IAW AAP-77 NATO Terminology Manual, nor have terminology tracking forms submitted. Department of Defense (DoD) terminology views regarding terms and definitions applicable to the United States can be found in the DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms available at https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/dictionary.pdf?ver=J3xmdacJe_LDMvIUhE7qA%3d%3d.</p> <p>(2) The United States uses the term “law of war” to describe that part of international law that regulates the resort to armed force; the conduct of hostilities and the protection of war victims in international and non-international armed conflict; belligerent occupation; and the relationships between belligerent, neutral, and non-belligerent States. Sometimes also called the law of armed conflict or international humanitarian law, the law of war is specifically intended to address the circumstances of armed conflict. The legal views of the Department of Defense (DoD) regarding the law of war applicable to the United States can be found in the DoD Law of War Manual available at https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/DoD%20Law%20of%20War%20Manual%20-%20June202015%20Updated%20Dec%202016.pdf?ver=2016-12-13-172036-190.</p> <p>(3) The United States supports doctrinal content that is harmonized with NATO’s capstone and operations keystone doctrine publications as well as within and between other NATO Allied Joint Doctrine publications. United States personnel are directed to use national joint doctrine to overcome variances between U.S. joint doctrine and Allied Joint Doctrine publications [ex. command relationships, joint operations principles, physical domain and other domain categorization, subject matter expertise language usage and other related terminology]. Department of Defense (DoD) joint doctrinal content can be found in joint doctrine publications available at https://www.jcs.mil/Doctrine/Joint-Doctrine-Pubs/.</p>
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.

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Summary of changes

AJP-3.27, Edition A, Version 2, is the product of a revision of AJP-3.27, Edition A, Version 1, to align the document with AJP-01 Edition F, Version 1, that was promulgated in December 2022 (after AJP-3.27 Edition A, Version 1). AJP-3.27, Edition A, Version 1, was a product of the full revision of AJP-3.4.4.

The following is an outline of changes made from AJP-3.27 Edition A Version 1 to Version 2:

- Update concepts of ‘comprehensive approach’, ‘audience’, ‘engagement space / battlespace’, ‘operational domain’, ‘effects dimensions’ and ‘unity of effort’.
- Update counter-insurgency related terms that became NATO Agreed: ‘insurgency’, ‘counter-insurgency’ and ‘underground’.
- Correct some editorial mistakes.

The following is an outline of changes made from AJP-3.4.4 to AJP-3.27 Edition A Version 1:

- The preface is restructured in accordance with AAP-47.
- The publication is restructured to improve the reading flow, reduce repetition and enhance readability and comprehension.
- It is harmonized with extant joint doctrine and in-revision related publications.
- Notions relative to the protection of civilians—the so called ‘cross-cutting topics’; the strategic communications and derived doctrine; the comprehensive planning; the civil-military interaction/civil-military cooperation; the stabilization operations; the security force assistance and the stability policing support; the weapons of mass destruction threat; the impact of an urban environment; and the use of cyberspace have been incorporated or have modulated pre-existing concepts.
- Counter-insurgency related terminology is refined, resulting in insurgency/counter-insurgency amended definitions; in the use of ‘resistance’ as tantamount term to ‘insurgency’; and the characterization of an insurgency’s membership categories.

- A ‘joint’ understanding and perspective is applied, including the transfer from LO WG’s¹ ownership of the publication to AJOD WG’s² portfolio, as delegated tasking authority.
- ICRC’s³ comments to extant publication were given consideration.
- ‘Adaptive force design’ is incorporated to counter-insurgency’s principles.
- Annex C ‘Counter-insurgency in an era of global competition’ offers some thoughts on recent insurgencies.

¹ LO WG: Land Operations Working Group.

² AJOD WG: Allied Joint Operations Working Group.

³ ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross.

Related documents

A	<i>PO(2015)0292 - NATO Policy on the Protection of Children in Armed Conflicts</i>
B	<i>PO(2016)0310 - NATO Policy on Building Integrity</i>
C	<i>PO(2016)0407 - NATO Policy for the Protection of Civilians</i>
D	<i>PO(2011)0293-AS - NATO Lessons Learned Policy</i>
E	<i>PO(2018)0227- MC Concept for the Protection of Civilians</i>
F	<i>United Nations Security Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security</i>
G	<i>MCM-0007-2015 - Stock-Taking Report on Building Integrity Activities</i>
H	<i>MC 0133 - NATO Operations Planning</i>
I	<i>MC 0327 - NATO Military Policy for Non-Article 5 Crisis Response Operations</i>
J	<i>MC 0334 - NATO Principles and Policies for Host Nation Support</i>
K	<i>MCM-0034-2014 NATO - Security Force Assistance Concept</i>
L	<i>MC 0411 - NATO Military Policy on Civil-Military Cooperation and Civil-Military Interaction</i>
M	<i>MC 0422 - NATO Military Policy for Information Operations</i>
N	<i>MC 0586 - Allied Forces and Their Use for Operations</i>
O	<i>MC 0628 - NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications</i>
P	<i>ACO Directive 95-2 - ACO Strategic Communications Directive</i>
Q	<i>ACO Protection of Civilians Handbook</i>
R	<i>Bi-SC Directive 080-006 Lessons Learned</i>
S	<i>Bi-Strategic Command Directive 40-1 Integrating UNSCR 1325 and Gender Perspective into the NATO Command Structure</i>
T	<i>BiSCD-086-005 Implementing Cultural Property in NATO Operations and Missions</i>
U	<i>NATO/EAPC - Action Plan on the Implementation of Women, Peace and Security</i>
V	<i>NATO Military Guidelines on the Prevention of and response to Conflict-Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence</i>
W	<i>CM(2008)0029 - Comprehensive Approach Plan</i>

X	<i>AJP-01 - Allied Joint Doctrine</i>
Y	<i>AJP-3 - Allied Doctrine for the Conduct of Joint Operations</i>
Z	<i>AJP-3.2 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Land Operations</i>
AA	<i>AJP-3.4.1 - Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Peace Support</i>
AB	<i>AJP-3.4.2 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations</i>
AC	<i>AJP-3.4.3 - Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Humanitarian Assistance</i>
AD	<i>AJP-3.4.5 - Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Stabilization and Reconstruction</i>
AE	<i>AJP-3.5 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations</i>
AF	<i>AJP-3.9 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Joint Targeting</i>
AG	<i>AJP-3.10 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations</i>
AH	<i>AJP-3.10.1 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Psychological Operations</i>
AI	<i>AJP-3.10.2 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Operations Security and Deception</i>
AJ	<i>AJP-3.14 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Force Protection</i>
AK	<i>AJP-3.15 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Countering Improvised Explosive Devices</i>
AL	<i>AJP-3.16 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Security Force Assistance</i>
AM	<i>AJP-3.18 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Explosive Ordnance Disposal Support to Operations</i>
AN	<i>AJP-3.19 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Cooperation</i>
AO	<i>AJP-3.20 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Cyberspace Operations</i>
AP	<i>AJP-3.21 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Military Police</i>
AQ	<i>AJP-3.22 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Stability Policing</i>
AR	<i>AJP-5 - Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations</i>
AS	<i>AJP-6 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Communications and Information Systems</i>
AT	<i>AJP-10 - Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications</i>

AU	<i>ATP-3.2.1 - Allied Land Tactics</i>
AV	<i>ATP-3.2.1.1 - Guidance for the Conduct of Tactical Stability Activities and Tasks</i>
AW	<i>ATP-3.4.4.1 - Counter-Insurgency Tactics</i>
AX	<i>ATP-3.16.1 - Allied Tactical Doctrine for Countering Insider Threats</i>
AY	<i>COPD - ACO Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COPD)</i>
AZ	<i>AIIntP-17 Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operating Environment (JIPOE)</i>

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Preface

Context

1. Intra-state violence and instability pose a unique and complex challenge for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Fragile states are a major contributing factor to this instability; their inability to provide basic services, public goods and meet specific grievances are the root cause of much civil conflict. Fragile states and internal conflict can cause regional instability and have been causally linked to transnational threats such as global terrorism and organized crime.
2. The international community, through the United Nations (UN), recognizes the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means to help protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.
3. If peaceful means would be inadequate and/or national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations, NATO might be invited by a host nation (HN) or through a UN Security Council Resolution, in accordance with the UN Charter and the Law of Armed Conflict/International Humanitarian Law⁴ (LOAC/IHL) to support a wide range of intergovernmental activities, potentially including operations to assist a fragile HN. Through these entities, NATO assumes that the HN government is recognized as the legitimate and viable government and that use of NATO forces is required to stabilize the environment within the country.

Scope

4. Allied joint publication AJP-3.27 encompasses the NATO doctrine for the planning, preparation, execution and assessment of counter-insurgency (COIN) operations in the context of Allied operations. This publication spells out a comprehensive civilian and military effort made to isolate and defeat an insurgency, and to address any core grievances of the population.
5. NATO COIN operations always require North Atlantic Council approval and can originate from a request of a NATO member state under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, a UN Security Council Resolution and/or at the request of the HN.

Purpose

6. To remain effective, NATO must maintain the ability to respond swiftly and decisively across a full range of scenarios. The spectrum of activity includes preventing further rise

⁴ The term Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) is fully recognized by NATO Allies. The UN uses the term International Humanitarian Law (IHL) alternatively, although there is not full consensus among the Allies to accept it. Just in this book, LOAC and IHL will be considered interchangeable, to avoid confusion amongst readers.

in tension and mediating during conflict through to normalization of environments emerging from, or still in, violent conflict.

7. Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-3.27 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Counter-insurgency (COIN)*, provides common NATO doctrine to joint operational commanders and their staff engaged in the conduct of COIN. Non-military organizations will also find it a useful source of information about the full range of military capabilities that NATO may contribute as part of a comprehensive response to insurgency.

Application

8. AJP-3.27 COIN is primarily intended as a guidance for NATO commanders and staff. This doctrine may also be instructive when conducting COIN operations in the framework of a coalition of NATO Allies and/or non-NATO partners and nations.
9. In addition, it provides a reference for NATO Education and Training Facilities, NATO Centres of Excellence and NATO and non-NATO civilian actors (International Organizations, Governmental Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations).

Structure

10. This publication consists of four chapters and supporting annexes:
- Chapter 1 – Introduction
 - Chapter 2 – The operating environment
 - Chapter 3 – The insurgency
 - Chapter 4 – The counter-insurgency
 - Annex A –Paradoxes
 - Annex B –Learn and adapt in counter-insurgency
 - Annex C –Counter-insurgency in an era of global competition

Linkages

11. AJP-3.27 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Counter-insurgency (COIN)* is an operational level doctrine publication.
12. AJP-3 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Joint Operations* is an operational level doctrine publication building on *AJP-01 Allied Joint Doctrine* and providing guidance for COIN operations.

13. AJP-3.27 is strongly linked to the former AJP-3.4.X series (transitioning to AJP-3.24 through AJP-3.28), particularly to AJP-3.4.1 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Peace Support*; AJP-3.26 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Humanitarian Assistance*; and AJP-3.28 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Stabilization*. It is also recommended to be read in concert with AJP-3.16 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Security Force Assistance*; AJP-3.19 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Cooperation*; AJP-3.21 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Military Police* and AJP-3.22 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Stability Policing*.
14. Furthermore, AJP-10 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications*; AJP-3.10.1 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Psychological Operations*; AJP-3.10.2 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Operations Security and Deception* and the prospective military public affairs doctrine are also relevant to COIN operations.
15. AJP-3.27 establishes principles for COIN tactical doctrine in NATO, which is currently covered in Allied Tactical Publication (ATP)-3.4.4.1 *Counter-insurgency (COIN) Tactics*.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Section 1 - Overview

1.1 In accordance with AJP-3 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*, NATO crisis response operations contribute to conflict prevention and resolution, humanitarian purposes, or crisis management, in the pursuit of declared Alliance strategic-political objectives. Military contribution to crisis response operations is further classified as:

- counter-irregular activities;
- peace support;
- humanitarian assistance;
- stabilization;
- non-combatant evacuation;
- extraction;
- sanctions; and
- freedom of navigation and overflight.

1.2 Irregular activities are a broad category of non-conventional methods of violence employed to counter traditional capabilities of an opponent, that can include acts of military, political, social, informational or economic nature, be they physical or psychological.⁵

1.3 Counter-irregular activities fall into three categories:

- counter-insurgency (COIN);
- counter-terrorism; and
- counter-criminality.

1.4 The following terms/descriptions are used in this publication:

a. 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. (NATO Agreed)

⁵ AJP-3 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*.

b. insurgency

Actions of an organized, often ideologically motivated, group or movement that seeks to effect or prevent political change within a country or a region through subversion, and that are focused on persuading or coercing the population through irregular activity.⁶ (NATO Agreed)

c. counter-insurgency (COIN)

A comprehensive civilian and military effort to isolate and defeat an insurgency, create a safe and secure environment, address core grievances, and to enable the promotion of legitimate governance and rule of law. (NATO Agreed)

d. subversion

Action or a coordinated set of actions of any nature intended to weaken the military, economic or political strength of an established authority by undermining the morale, loyalty or reliability of its members. (NATO Agreed)

1.5 Relationship amongst insurgency, subversion and irregular activity. Many forms of irregular activity enjoy a symbiotic relationship with insurgency, so that insurgent networks and their tactics, techniques and procedures usually converge or overlap with terrorist and transnational criminal ones. All these groups seek to take advantage of a weak governing authority, either in an entire country or in a specific region.

1.6 The aim of an insurgency is not always to outfight the host nation security forces⁷, but to replicate and/or replace the government through subversive activities, gaining control over, and support or acquiescence—whether willing or coerced through intimidation—from the population.

1.7 Subversion is about gradually establishing a parallel governing and administrative structure to manipulate the population and gain its support while pursuing subversion's own agenda. It undermines the military, economic, psychological or political strength or morale of a governing authority. Subversion is most effective when conducted over a long period. In this context, insurgents may establish a 'shadow'—or parallel—government, which may provide, for example, a justice system in insurgent-controlled areas where the host nation (HN) authorities fail to do so.

1.8 Ideally, COIN security forces operate to counter the security threat created by the insurgency to enable other agencies to redress the population's grievances and ensure their support to COIN's endeavour. This requires close coordination between HN government, military forces, law enforcement and other agencies. Military forces seek to create the requisite safe and secure environment by counteracting or displacing insurgent threats.

⁶ By extension, in this publication 'insurgency' is also used to designate the group or movement undertaking insurgency actions.

⁷ Host nation security forces include the armed forces and law enforcement agencies of the HN, regardless of their status (military or civilian).

1.9 Figure 1-1 shows how the use of subversion, violence, crime and terrorism against the population and the functions of government weakens the underpinning pillars of power, leading to state instability.

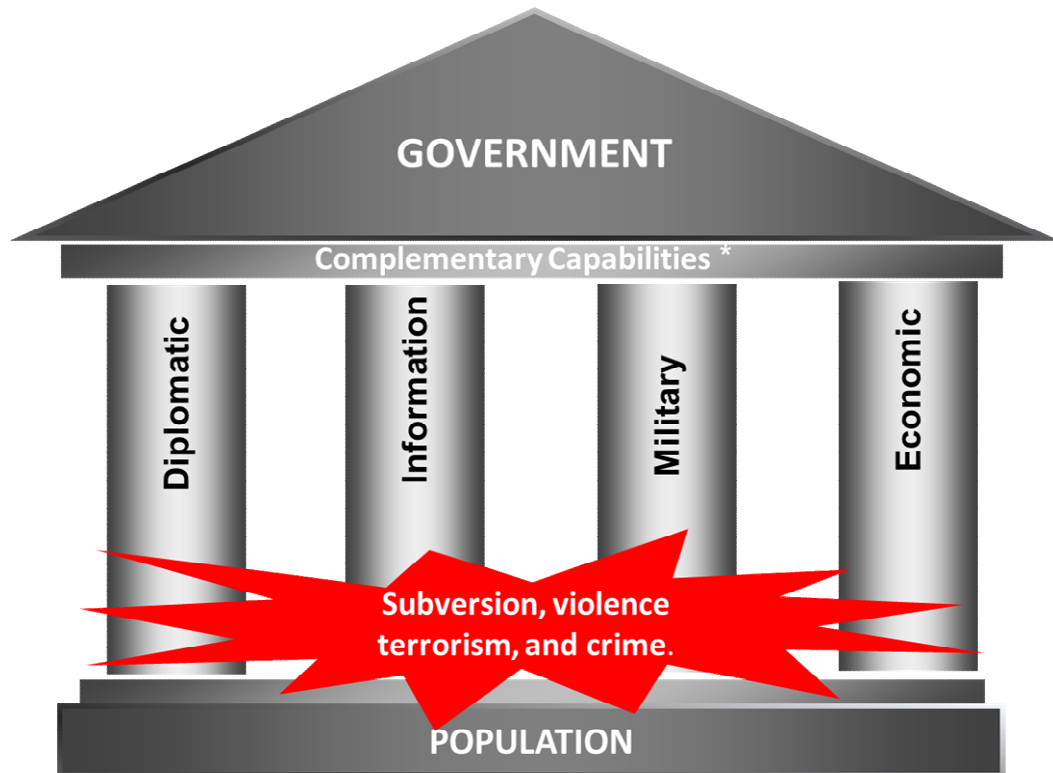


Figure 1.1 Relationship between subversion, violence, terrorism and crime against the population and the government

*These capabilities include areas such as the judiciary, constabulary, civilian administration, contractors and commercial partners, infrastructure that enables medical care, food distribution, power generation, and water and sanitation services (Ref. AJP-01). For the purpose of this publication the judiciary plays a fundamental role in COIN effort.

1.10 An insurgency seeks to implement political change through coercion and violence. Successful COIN will not replace the requirement for a political settlement, but will change the balance of power between the negotiating parties. COIN operations will seek to prevent, deter and defeat insurgents⁸ in support of HN efforts to address the population's grievances and enhance the government's legitimacy. Counterinsurgents must understand the

⁸ This publication uses the term 'insurgent' to describe those actors that plan and execute insurgency actions. No statements or terminology pertaining to an insurgency and its organizational and operational patterns used herein are intended to convey any legal connotation or to pronounce a combatant status thereof. Instead, they are meant to assist NATO commanders and staff in understanding and describing their operating environments as well as planning and executing COIN operations.

importance of establishing an enduring presence within the population to create confidence and facilitate continuous security and development efforts. This should help isolate the insurgent from the population, thus depriving them of recruits, resources, intelligence, and credibility.

1.11 Operations may be assigned or described in terms of their contextual theme:⁹ warfighting, security, peace support, and peacetime military engagement. Each operations theme is indicative of the balance of tactical operations and activities. Often it changes over the course of a conflict, which should be anticipated and identified. Operations themes provide specific strategic-military narrative and guidance for a commander's planning and employment of forces. The same type of operation may be related to different operations themes.

Section 2 - The primacy of political legitimacy

1.12 NATO is a multinational political and military organization that can act for its collective defence, or for crisis management, based on a United Nations Security Council mandate or by invitation of the legitimate government of the HN.

1.13 NATO's armed forces are deployed and employed within an overarching political framework, as part of a collective strategy to achieve the strategic objectives of the Alliance.

1.14 At its heart, an insurgency is a competition over the most legitimate form of government as viewed by the affected population. This does not necessarily mean the most effective form of government, but the one that is effective enough to meet basic needs and is acceptable to the cultural and social expectations of the population. Political legitimacy provides long-term stability, assuring that transition activities have popular support and that the political process is likely to endure.

1.15 Military operations support, and are coherent with, the political strategy. Conducting COIN operations requires an adaptive and flexible mindset and an understanding that the population is the critical factor. COIN environment is particularly complicated because of the relevance of the population. Consequently, COIN military operations must be carefully designed to support a unified political strategy, articulated within diplomatic, information, military and economic processes at all levels within the Alliance, relevant international actors and the HN government, addressing the underlying causes of conflict.

1.16 HN civil authorities have primacy for internal security and stability. However, a non-permissive or uncertain 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 secure environment that protects the population and enables civil actors to conduct stabilization. The aim of such activities is to foster HN

⁹ For further details, see AJP-01 *Allied Joint Doctrine*.

authorities' capacity and legitimacy, build population security and stimulate economic activity, as well as education and cultural tolerance.

1.17 Tasks that may fall in the military for security and stabilization aspects include defeating insurgent forces and structure; 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 economy and infrastructure; and securing communications.

1.18 Political considerations have the utmost importance in COIN. Confusion and chaos caused by the instability may preclude timely and effective policymaking and guidance by HN authorities. It is fundamental for the joint force commander to receive and implement the Alliance's mission and support a coherent HN policy and political guidance.

1.19 In such circumstances NATO may support HN efforts to improve its security sector through a security sector reform,¹⁰ seeking to address two broad areas: the quality of institutions dealing with security and the capacity and professionalism of personnel in those sectors. Beyond the security force assistance effort—concentrating on developing military forces, and stability policing (SP)—reinforcing local police forces, also disarmament, demobilization and reintegration contribute to security sector reform.

Section 3 - The people

1.20 **Amongst the people, for the people.** Insurgents will continue to operate amongst the local population. Consequently, NATO operations must judiciously and carefully discriminate between combatants, non-combatants and civilians, and must always observe the standards of the Law of Armed Conflict/International Humanitarian Law (LOAC/IHL) such as using a proportionate and necessary degree of force.

1.21 In operations that take place 'amongst the people', NATO forces will face asymmetric threats. The population affected by an insurgency normally includes opponents, Allies and neutral or ambivalent elements, many of which may change their affiliations over time. Allegiances and motivations can shift rapidly and 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.

1.22 While insurgencies may be led by a core group of individuals, the secrecy and cellular nature of their organizations will render individual and group identification and targeting difficult. In addition to understanding culture, allegiances, vulnerabilities, socio-economic and other factors of the human environment, the joint force commander must understand the underlying grievances and causes of insurgency, as well as the core strengths and

¹⁰ For more information refer to AJP-3.4.5 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Stabilization and Reconstruction*.

resiliencies within the society through a thorough analysis of its constituent elements and dynamics.

1.23 Because the primary focus of COIN is set on the entire population, ensuring their security and controlling centres of population are operational necessities. Eliminating the insurgency from the major centres of population will be a major endeavour, for insurgents will seek to blend into the population. Therefore, forces conducting COIN must exercise restraint and apply precision, using the minimum level of force necessary. It is paramount to identify existing and potential threats to civilians and integrate effective counters into the planning and conduct of COIN operations.

1.24 Perceptions rather than reality can sway support from certain elements of the population, while actual or perceived breaches of the LOAC/IHL—in particular the principles of humanity, proportionality, military necessity and distinction—may sway international public opinion. Breaches of domestic or international law can alienate the population and undermine the objectives of the forces conducting COIN. Understanding the nature of the threat against civilians is critical when identifying the proper use of force. SP, by its law enforcement capabilities, may become instrumental to protect the population. Negotiation, mediation assets as well as the use of non-lethal means enable a reduction in the use of military force, diminishing the likelihood of collateral damage, nurturing local support.

1.25 COIN is a complex type of operation, often conducted within the security and peace support operations themes, using all available instruments of power to create a safe and secure environment (SASE) and to enable the promotion of the rule of law. In times of global competition, a COIN operation can take place below and above the conflict threshold.

Section 4 - The cognitive dimension

1.26 **Effects dimensions.** The battlespace / engagement space can be described as a system containing physical, virtual and cognitive elements susceptible to be grouped into effects dimensions that operationalize the manoeuvrist approach.¹¹

1.27 The physical dimension comprises the audiences, the sub-surface, surface, airspace and space areas where all physical activities take place, and where audiences live, including all physical objects and infrastructure that support them.

1.28 The virtual dimension comprises intangible activity in the form of storage and transmission of analogue and digital data and information, and all supporting communication and information systems and processes.

1.29 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,

¹¹ Refer to AJP-01 *Allied Joint Doctrine*.

perception, judgment, and decision-making. As such, this dimension constitutes the most important component of the information environment.

1.30 **The battle of perception.** When NATO forces take part in COIN operations, they are engaged in a general battle of perception driven by major considerations:

- a. NATO forces will be the target of the insurgents' offensive actions, which will aim to weaken the legitimacy and the credibility of NATO support to the HN government.
- b. COIN military action is only valuable if it contributes to the reduction of the legitimacy and credibility of the insurgency and does not undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the HN government. Insurgents will attempt to tarnish domestic and international perceptions of the HN government and its allies, and will maximize the use of the cyberspace to reach audiences and convey their narrative, including efforts to influence NATO/Coalition participating nations.

1.31 In the information environment, success of military COIN activities is determined by target audiences' perception and the ability to match words with actions and outcomes. Synchronizing and coordinating information activities through information operations¹² with military public affairs and public diplomacy, while adhering to and implementing the fundamentals of strategic communications, is critical to COIN operations' success. In the cognitive dimension, success of military COIN activities can be supported by deception, that is a psychological process seeking a behavioural response, be it action or inaction, and aimed at misleading the adversary.¹³

1.32 **Global reach.** The cognitive dimension may be influenced via communications. Insurgents may seek to exploit the global reach of information, such as social media and the established press, to influence their selected target audiences. The insurgent is unlikely to have the same normative and legal constraints as NATO forces and consequently will be able to create dis- and misinformation and to disseminate it quickly. This worldwide reach can, however, also be an advantage to the HN authorities and NATO if they can effectively communicate the legitimacy of their cause. A credible strategic narrative will need to align words with deeds.

1.33 In current information environment both insurgent and counter-insurgent activities will often be live-cast to a global audience or transmitted in near-real time. Information will often be manipulated by insurgents, including the use of fabricated deepfakes. This has two important implications. First, the need for force discipline by COIN forces is amplified since any error or transgression will become disseminated. Second, narrative-shaping must be dynamic. It will seldom be enough to create a unified narrative and persist with it. Narratives must be adjusted as new information becomes available and perceptions change. This

¹² Refer to AJP-3.10 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations, to be renumbered as AJP-10.1.*

¹³ Refer to AJP-3.10.2 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Operations Security and Deception.*

applies not only in the operational area but also outside it, since insurgents will try to erode public support for involvement in the COIN operation.

1.34 COIN narrative at all levels. COIN planners should develop a COIN narrative encompassing all levels of operations, from strategic through tactical, conveying a message that exploits the negative aspects of insurgent activities and reinforcing the credibility and legitimacy of HN authorities and Alliance's support, as well as countering the insurgent's narrative and propaganda. COIN planners also should plan for counter-deception, a staff function that seeks to identify and counter adversarial deception aimed at undermining the will, understanding and employment of friendly forces. Active counter-deception comprises the activities required by the commander once intelligence confirms that adversarial deception is underway against friendly forces.

1.35 It is vital for the COIN forces to analyze, advertise, and exploit the differences between the legitimate actions of their forces and violent insurgent acts. COIN narrative must be brief and understandable—message and means of delivery—whilst not being a simplistic explanation of a complex problem. To be effective, the narrative must be coordinated with all COIN participants, tested with select elements of the target population, and be adaptable to changing strategic/operational situations or the COIN narrative may fail—or become counterproductive.

1.36 Win the battle of narratives by building legitimacy among the entire population. Insurgents typically establish a movement to resolve or exploit core grievances and/or perceived government weaknesses, resulting in insecurity and injustice. COIN forces are to cooperate with the HN to put in place public security essential elements:

- a. **Legal framework.** It is to be consistent with International Human Rights Law, such as the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), proclaimed by the United Nations and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). The Human Rights Law and not the LOAC is always applicable below the threshold of an armed conflict. However, the rules of LOAC are more specific in an armed conflict (*lex specialis* principle) and complement the human right standards.
- b. **Law enforcement and corrections.**¹⁴ Laws can be enforced equitably when the lives, property, freedoms, and rights of individuals are protected.
- c. **Judiciary system.** It has to ensure equal and effective application of the law, procedural fairness, and transparency.

¹⁴ Corrections: structures and processes to execute sentences for criminal violations are required and need to abide by the international Human Rights Law.

- d. **Rule of law¹⁵ and accountability.** Population and public officials are to be held legally accountable for their actions and responsible under the law.

Section 5 - A comprehensive approach

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

1.38 Pursuance of unity of effort¹⁶ is essential for the multiplicity of actors engaged within a COIN operation and a coordinated and comprehensive approach must be nurtured and safeguarded. It will depend on mandates and modalities of work of neutral and impartial organizations who may not want to be seen fully aligned with NATO operations.

1.39 **The military instrument of power as a part of a comprehensive approach.**¹⁷ 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. It is a political struggle that includes a wide range of activities in partnership with the HN authorities of which security is but one, yet a fundamental one.

1.40 Achieving unity of effort between HN authorities and its multinational partners is required to succeed in a COIN operation. In some contexts, the security environment will restrict the ability of civilian agencies to operate; thus proactive solutions must be developed to enable their personnel to be deployed as freely as possible. This may require the concurrent deployment of civilian personnel and agencies within a military compound, and using military assets to enable civilian movement, and occasionally performing tasks in civilian agencies' support. However, NATO has to respect the principle of neutrality of the majority of non-governmental organizations.

1.41 There is a need for synchronizing and de-conflicting the activities of a wide range of military, law enforcement, international, and non governmental organizations. NATO commanders do not own, nor should they expect to lead the comprehensive approach.

¹⁵ 'The 'rule of law' refers to 'a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards.' UN Security Council, S/2004/616, paragraph 6.

¹⁶ As per AJP-01 Allied Joint Doctrine, 'As part of a comprehensive approach, unity of effort binds all the parts of the coalition together whilst retaining the benefit of diverse perspectives and approaches. It enables the integration and convergence of effects horizontally, across the Alliance and partners, and vertically, through the strategic, operational and tactical levels of operations.'

¹⁷ Refer to AJP-01 *Allied Joint Doctrine*.

It is via civil-military (CMI)¹⁸ interaction and civil-military cooperation that they will support the achievement of operational objectives.

Section 6 - Cross-cutting topics

1.42 NATO has identified the following cross-cutting topics¹⁹ that are of the utmost importance in operations and underpin every effort made to regain and enhance HN legitimacy perception among its own population and in the international sphere:²⁰

- protection of civilians;
- children and armed conflict;
- cultural property protection;²¹
- women, peace and security;
- conflict-related sexual violence;
- trafficking in human beings;
- sexual exploitation and abuse;
- building integrity;

1.43 The aforementioned contribute to human security,²² entailing the protection against physical violence and other critical factors: dispute resolution, protection of human rights, access to critical community resources and essential services.

1.44 COIN forces may become a source of insecurity for the population. There is always a balance to be struck: being as close as feasible to the population to bring security, and ensure such proximity doesn't have the unintended effect of endangering the population by placing a military target in their midst.

1.45 Some insurgent groups use forced recruitment to bolster their ranks, which often includes the use of women in combat and support roles, in addition to the illegal recruitment

¹⁸ Civil-Military Interaction (CMI): *Civil military Interaction are activities between military bodies and Non-Military Actors in order to foster a mutual understanding to enhance the effectiveness and the efficiency in comprehensive crisis and conflict prevention and resolution.* (NATOTerm)

¹⁹ For more information refer to AJP-01 *Allied Joint Doctrine*, and AJP-3.4.5 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Stabilization and Reconstruction*, Annex A and AJP-3.19 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-military Cooperation*.

²⁰ For more information refer to AJP-3.19 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-military Cooperation*.

²¹ For more information refer to *BiSCD 086-005 Implementing Cultural Property Protection in NATO Operations and Missions*.

²² AJP-3.4.5 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Stabilization and Reconstruction* cites human security, economic and infrastructure development, and governance and rule of law as constituent elements of a stable state.

of children, though in most cases, forcible recruitment occurs alongside voluntary participation.

1.46 Frequently, participation in an insurgency is based on economics rather than politics. Participation may pay better than other forms of employment, or other forms of employment may not be available. Counter-insurgents should be aware of this since often the best way to degrade support for an insurgency is to foster the conditions for decent and sustainable employment.

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Chapter 2 - The operating environment

Section 1 - Comprehensive preparation of the operating environment in counter-insurgency operations

2.1 The operating environment (OE) is a composite of the conditions, circumstances and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander.²³ To understand the OE, NATO forces should consider intelligence and information obtained from all available sources, as well as the relevant lessons from all parties involved in the operation. The joint force commander will require a comprehensive understanding of the OE which is usually best achieved through the comprehensive preparation of the operating environment process, which one of the main contributors, though not the only one, is the joint intelligence preparation of the operating environment (JIPOE).²⁴ The comprehensive preparation of the operating environment also receives contributions by other non-intelligence-specific areas to address the needs of the host nation, international organizations (IOs)/governmental organizations (GOs)/non-governmental organizations (NGOs) towards a truly holistic understanding of the OE.

2.2 The JIPOE process is an analytical method conducted by the intelligence staff that produces intelligence assessments, estimates and other intelligence products to support operations planning. JIPOE develops a comprehensive understanding of the OE covering elements of the political, military, economic, social, infrastructural and informational (PMESII) spectrum, usually adding the physical and time variables to make it political, military, economic, social, infrastructural, informational, physical and time (PMESII-PT) to better describe complex OE such as counter-insurgency (COIN).²⁵

2.3 NATO forces should focus less on physical indicators' intelligence and more on subjective but systematic analysis. Physical elements, often hard to identify and blended into the environment, no longer provide easy indicators to determine the adversary's intent. It is the mindset of the population and the insurgents', as well as the methods of the latter, that must be understood. Accurate analysis may be difficult, especially due to the need to properly select useful disaggregated²⁶ data in a complex operating environment.

2.4 While technology is always vital to intelligence collection, it only allows NATO forces 'to know' rather than 'to understand'. As such, understanding the OE in a COIN operation

²³ NATOTerm.

²⁴ See AJP-2 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Intelligence, Counter-Intelligence and Security* and AIntP-17 *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operating Environment (JIPOE)*, and *Allied Command Operations Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COPD)* for further information.

²⁵ To ensure the analysis of the OE takes gender perspective into consideration, gender factors should be analyzed in all eight variables, as stated in the *COPD*.

²⁶ Any data on individuals broken down by ethnicity, religion, sex, age, or other unique identifiers.

requires the deployment of counter-intelligence/and human intelligence specialists, who have extensive military training and a detailed knowledge of the OE and its complexities.

2.5 Insurgents may conduct non-military activities to gain popular support such as providing financial support or essential services to local communities. Other insurgent activities may include infiltration of host nation security forces (HNSF), resulting in an insider threat, and it may be necessary to assist the HN authorities' counter-intelligence. Contributions from functional specialists and advisors on culture and all areas of the civilian environment and cross-cutting topics will improve that understanding. Therefore, intelligence should rely on and fuse information from open sources and all others involved in the crisis to gain a complete picture of the OE. It may also involve enabling or accessing the intelligence structures of the HN.

2.6 The collection of sex-disaggregated data and application of a gender perspective will reveal the potential ways operations could affect and be affected by both civilians and the insurgent, and will contribute to situational awareness by identifying the motivations, structures, strengths and weaknesses of the entire population.

2.7 Intelligence helps develop and update a common operational picture (COP), which provides a shared understanding of the OE from which to diagnose the nature of the problems 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 COP is interagency-compiled and, to the maximum extent possible, incorporates multinational partners as well as key elements of the HN, IOs and NGOs. It should also include an update mechanism to reflect the situation as the campaign progresses. This requires agreed-upon processes for incorporating new information, refreshing the information that has already been accounted for, and eliminating information that is outdated and/or no longer accurate.

2.8 Counter-insurgents should make sure that the COP accurately depicts all relevant military and non-military information in order to avoid neglecting important elements of the OE, which may lead to wrong decisions and inappropriate courses of action (COAs). Non-military events and activities may often be as important or more important than the military ones.

Section 2 - Analysis of the operating environment in counter-insurgency operations

2.9 The counter-insurgent operates in a complex OE characterized by the presence of many different local, regional, national and international actors, all of which obfuscate the insurgent. Local society may be fractured, and part of the population—sympathizers—may be willing, or through coercion, forced to support the insurgency.

2.10 To understand the OE in which the insurgency occurs and its root causes, COIN forces, in conjunction with the HN and other agencies, undertake a holistic study that

includes the PMESII variables, and in COIN, it is worthwhile adding the physical and time variables (PMESII-PT).²⁷

2.11 PMESII-PT analytical tool offers commanders a full understanding of the various facets of the environment and where problems and grievances lie. Commanders and their staff must understand operationally relevant aspects of each of the mentioned variables, including the systematic gathering and analysis of disaggregated data, the relationships amongst them, and the impact of these interrelated factors on behaviour and on the decision-making process.

The political variable

2.12 It is particularly important to determine the HN government power-sharing structure among formal and informal stakeholders, and the regional actors' relationships and influences, which may support/fuel the insurgency or use insurgents as a proxy to advance their international interests. In many OEs, political affiliation is highly volatile and must be continuously monitored.

2.13 A full appreciation of the political aims of all relevant actors²⁸ is critical to understand those who could hypothetically influence the conflict, either positively or negatively. The knowledge of how these different groups interact may help discern the means to influence them. Forces conducting COIN must 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 cause friendly or neutral actors to slide towards supporting the insurgency.

2.14 Analysts need to map out the interests in the region and the area of operations of the major actors. They should focus on understanding the relationships with the government and population, current and historical involvement with the insurgency—or opposition to it—and the likely reaction to NATO and coalition partners' presence and actions.

2.15 **Understanding the HN.** NATO commanders should assess the HN in relation to their mandates, policies and capabilities, in particular their capacity to protect the population and operate respecting national and international law, offering support and concurrently, temporarily replacing/reinforcing HN capacities where needed, only for the time strictly necessary.

2.16 HN governments are not monolithic; even where some parts of them are cooperative, others may resist for various reasons. It is fundamental to understand which institutions are more supportive of COIN efforts and capitalize on their actions. Some HN government leaders and factions may also seek to co-opt Alliance assistance and combat power to

²⁷ See AJP-01 *Allied Joint Doctrine – The operating environment*.

²⁸ For the purpose of AJP-3.19 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Cooperation*, non-military actors include international organizations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, governments and governmental organizations, local actors and population, and private sector actors.

promote their own political and personal interests. This manipulation has the potential to undermine COIN efforts in the immediate conflict and to damage Alliance credibility with domestic and international populations.

2.17 Counter-insurgents should analyze the distribution of power, particularly amongst the different HN government components and the relationship amongst the executive, legislative and judiciary systems. They should assess how the HN acquires and manages resources; how government policy is made and implemented; who has access to power and authority and the difference in access amongst different groups, including all genders, as well as the relationship between the HN government and private interests, ethno-sectarian leaders, criminal groups, insurgents and other relevant actors. This analysis enables planners to determine how to successfully engage individuals, human networks, and institutions within the HN government and in its vicinity, in order to promote the reforms necessary for effective COIN.

2.18 **Local civil society groups.** Others, such as local organizations, religious institutions, cultural groups and aid societies that would be considered small local NGOs, or part of the private sector, may willingly or forcibly support an insurgency. Otherwise, they might face retaliation if seen to be assisting forces conducting COIN. Understanding their role in the local society and their attitude towards NATO is fundamental to gaining their help in the stabilization effort.

2.19 **Understanding the role of third parties to the conflict.** Transnational and international non-state actors may openly or covertly support the insurgency, or otherwise, interfere in operations. The third parties should be engaged in an early stage in order to prevent the insurgency from being sympathized or politically or ultimately militarily supported. They could provide logistic and financial support, trainers and technical experts, or even fighters for a common cause. Additionally, transnational terrorists can attack elements of both the insurgency and the forces conducting COIN to maintain chaos and instability for their own purposes.

- a. **Neighbouring countries/other states** may provide open or covert support to insurgents. They could offer critical access to sanctuary and resupply areas as well as the resources typically unavailable to insurgents without formal state support, such as manpower and/or training. Conversely, as COIN partners, they may be invaluable for controlling borders, cutting off insurgent logistic lines of communication and human networks, interdicting illicit activities, and countering the exploitation of border areas as sanctuaries. In some cases, NATO forces and others may require the support of neighbouring states to establish secure seaports, airports, lines of communication, and permissions for over-flight to project power and logistic support from platforms and bases located outside the joint operations area (JOA). The military approach, which is usually operationally limited to the HN, must always be accompanied by an early international diplomatic approach that addresses the entire region and in particular the neighbouring countries, to ensure their political support or the provision of resources.

b. **IOs** can act as important facilitators for cooperation amongst states; pressure the HN 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—policing capabilities, as well as 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 JOA is particularly important for the synchronization of efforts.

c. **NGOs** are typically divided into three categories: humanitarian relief, development, and reconstruction. For humanitarian relief, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs can serve as useful liaison element. Most humanitarian NGOs fiercely guard their independence from governmental and military organizations, and military planners should respect those desires. Development and reconstruction NGOs can come from private investors, international fraternal organizations and government institutions outside the HN, to name a few. However, maintaining active lines of communication is vital to de-conflict activities, mitigate the risk of undesired effects and/or collateral damage, and help compile a diagnosis of the causes of conflict.

d. Commanders and staff are to take into account that:

(1) Multinational corporations operating in the JOA may necessitate protection of assets and personnel, and in some cases, they may deploy private security elements in the conflict zone.

(2) Transnational support or advocacy networks can generate resources and recruits for an insurgency, and affect political will inside the nations providing COIN support.

(3) Media present in the conflict area develop or modulate narratives and may influence political will inside the nations providing COIN support.

The military variable

2.20 In a COIN environment, there may be many different friendly, neutral, or hostile actors which have the capability to use force. NATO-led forces may cooperate with HNSF, other IOs, like the United Nations, 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 volatile, with some forces dropping in and out of conflict or rapidly changing sides.

2.21 Building up a reasonable awareness of the structures, capability and capacity of all security forces operating in/or influencing the OE can provide an insight into why the HN authorities are unable to defeat or contain the insurgency and identify gaps in the security construct. It can also help commanders appreciate the actions necessary to develop a long-

term capacity of the HNSF, so that eventually they can provide security to the population without the assistance of significant international support.

2.22 Working with HNSF may pose challenges for NATO forces. In all cases, wherever possible, HNSF should maintain the lead in planning and conducting operations. A line of operations or effort within the campaign may be achieved through security force assistance and stability policing support to build HNSF capabilities. This should see culturally appropriate local capabilities developed that can self-sustain after NATO's hand-over to a follow-on force or the HN proper. NATO forces must work to ensure the HNSF abide by the applicable legal framework—HN internal law and applicable international law and customs. Failure to do so would undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the campaign and the forces involved.

2.23 **Caveats and limitations.** NATO member states' and partners' forces, if applicable, may have caveats and limitations to the employment of their units, constraining the commander's options as to conducting military activities. Timely understanding and managing caveats and limitations is paramount to plan and conduct COIN operations.

The economic variable

2.24 Fragile states are usually affected by severe economic crisis, widespread poverty, high unemployment rates and a broad economic divide between rich and impoverished people. Inequality of access to resources, income and wealth among the population, or lack of services, can often fuel public dissatisfaction, especially if perceived as a result of persecution or subjugation of an identity group. Youths without jobs or hope are vulnerable to recruitment by insurgents. A perceived or real disparity in social and gender equality may become a core economic grievance that can be exploited by the insurgency.

2.25 Understanding the HN's formal and informal economic structures may enable commanders to identify the key linkages between insurgents and the economy. Insurgents can exploit the legitimate formal economy as a source of funding, but the black market as well as revenues from other illicit activities will most likely be a direct enabler of an insurgency, in terms of funding and logistics. Counter-insurgents should assess the economic variables and opportunities available to different segments of the population, and the effect that insurgent and counter-insurgent operations will have on the population's ability to meet their basic economic needs.

2.26 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 impact of military operations on the generic elements of the economic welfare of households and communities, such as:

- income—including future capacity to earn it;
- assets and property—used to make a living;

- work—including possible traditional patterns of unpaid work;
- future economic factors;
- informal labour;
- illicit exploitation of labour;
- work for development/food for work;
- labour conditions—including women and children's education²⁹; and
- conditions of the educational system.

2.27 Introducing foreign wealth or financial support to the HN authorities can have unintended negative consequences. Careful thought and planning are needed for any project intended to have local economic impact. Some factors to consider are:

- prospects of long-term sustainability;
- possibility of local prices inflation; and
- risks of disrupting local economic structures—for example, farmers leaving fields to work on better paid trash pickup projects.

2.28 There is a direct link between effective security operations and the promotion of economic stability, reduced crime and migration to better living-conditions areas and an increased sense of general assurance. If mandated, SP can counter illicit activities aggravating the economy and/or improve the responses by HN law enforcement agencies, including dedicated ones such as labour protection, cultural property protection or anti-trafficking units. Successful COIN may well depend more on improving local and national economies rather than on the force used to ensure a state's security.

The social variable

2.29 Cultural, religious, ethnic and gender differences, as well as divergent perceptions of beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, norms and roles within the society of the HN government may well be the predominant causes of the clash amongst families, clans, factions or parties. This may be exploited by insurgents to provoke hate, fear and civil strife, and to promote subversion against the legitimate government. The social variable is primarily underpinned by culture, ethnicity, religion and gender, and it can be biased by political affiliations. Understanding social variables is critical for COIN forces in order to anticipate

²⁹ To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the economic impact on gender aspects, the assessment should include an analysis of the different roles and responsibilities between men and women, including who has access to what resources, who is doing what work and how are the labor conditions different.

insurgent sources of support and to preclude them from gaining opportunities in the social environment.

2.30 Understanding the population. Civilians tend to cooperate with whomever is able to establish effective control and meet their basic needs. This encompasses both immediate physical security and access to other essentials for survival—like food, water, health and shelter—as well as their prospects for security over the longer-term, and dignity. It entails 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.

2.31 Counter-insurgents must recognize local population's specific needs, experiences, requirements, and vulnerabilities. Gender awareness and the integration of gender perspectives into planning, execution and evaluation are essential in terms of increased operational effectiveness.³⁰

2.32 Understanding the insurgent. Gaining an understanding of all aspects of an insurgency and how they interrelate is vital to help analysts and planners understand the OE, and conduct center of gravity and the subsequent human network analysis, in support of courses of action development.

2.33 An insurgency is rarely a monolithic bloc. Differences and fractures amongst factions should be identified for future exploitation, as well as the different reasons for affiliation to the insurgency—ideology, revenge, income, privilege, reputation, commodities, coercion, obligation, fear. Nodes and links within the insurgent human networks should also be identified to facilitate the isolation and disruption or elimination of insurgent leaders and active cells. Enhanced understanding of insurgents and their modes of action will help ensure proper distinction between civilians and insurgents.

2.34 Organized crime groups. Within a fragile state, there may exist organized crime groups pursuing internal and/or global interests, and elements of transnational criminal networks, either transiting the area or undertaking their own activities. They can be substantial in scale, armed, violent, networked and well informed. As an enterprise for profit, they will seek to take advantage of any situation—such as the deployment of multinational forces—and will resist efforts to change the environment that might threaten their business. Often having strong links to the state's institutions—sometimes presenting themselves as legitimize suppliers—and fostering corruption, they may have transactional links to insurgents—i.e. weapons, information, logistics—in exchange for money, security, freedom of action, or even manage the war economy of the insurgents. Organized crime groups usually require freedom of action to conduct their activities, and they will not usually confront

³⁰ NATO *Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Policy and Action Plan*. Assessing gender-based differences between men and women as reflected in social norms, roles and relations, and in the distribution of resources and access to power, paints a more comprehensive picture of the operational environment. Drawing on the different perspectives of men, women, boys and girls enables the military to be more effective and improve security and stability wherever they operate.

military forces by default. Notwithstanding, upon the deployment of COIN forces, they will either move to areas with no military presence to continue with their criminal activities, if possible, or they will oppose or will finance an opposition to the presence of military forces, in case they would not have a viable alternative to relocate. Historical evidence shows that single actors may perform one or more different roles at the same time—e.g. a HN politician or police officer might be a power broker, a member of an organized criminal network, an insurgent and/or terrorist, or a provider of administrative services.

The information variable

2.35 Insurgents often manipulate information to gain credibility and legitimacy with the population while simultaneously undermining the legitimate government and COIN forces. Conversely, counter-insurgents will use factual information to promote the credibility and the legitimacy of the government and COIN forces, and will fight against the narrative of the insurgents.

2.36 The continuous evolution of communications may offer some unique opportunities for insurgencies. With the development of technology—e.g. social media and the internet—the spread of information within a country, a region, or across borders is much easier and faster. Besides, many communication means may help insurgents exchange information internally and externally—with supporting organizations abroad—in a less restricted way. Counter-insurgents should be able to understand and efficiently employ means of communication able to reach the intended audiences, particularly the local ones, exploit information to shape operations and gain local, as well as international, support to COIN efforts.

2.37 Understanding how the insurgents communicate, access to information and who influences them on a daily basis, is of the essence. News—and social media in particular—may be the preferred channels to share information and influence the population. Connecting with diaspora or sympathetic groups in the world could be vital to an insurgency. Alongside the capability to communicate comes the ability to move resources and obtain funds. Moreover, media may be easily accessible by insurgents for open-source intelligence, and may also be exploited for propaganda, the rapid spread of rumours and deception.

The infrastructure variable

2.38 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 and help develop the economy. It usually represents a major target for insurgents, especially mobility corridors and facilities needed to have access to the territory of the HN nation—ports, airfields, railway stations. Existing infrastructure in the HN enables the population to carry on their daily lives and keeping it available will materially assist HN and Alliance's efforts to gain the support of the local population as well as facilitate the freedom of movement in the JOA.

2.39 Counter-insurgents should identify infrastructure³¹ vulnerabilities that may be subject to attack and key facilities that need protection, including from own actions, such as communication hubs, power plants and grids, dams, ports or airfields, as well as those providing essential services: hospitals, water treatment plants, waste-water management, and other sites of relevance for the populace, including cultural and religious sites, monuments and places of worship.

2.40 As COIN operations usually take place in fragile states, local infrastructure will be often limited and counter-insurgents/insurgents will strive for its control. COIN forces—usually through civil-military interaction—must be aware that their use of the infrastructure should not hamper local population's activities and economy. The control and protection of key infrastructure and creating the conditions to use it is not just a military priority, it may be critical to gain the support of the local population.

The physical variable

2.41 The physical environment, which includes amongst others, geography, weather and climate, is of utmost importance to military operations. COIN forces must be appropriately trained and equipped in order to successfully meet the specific requirements arising from the physical environment.³² Furthermore, environmental negative impact may bring about resource scarcity and therefore exacerbate grievances and fuel insurgency.

2.42 **Understanding geography.** Insurgents will try and choose where to fight to wear down their opponents through 'hit-and-run' or 'hit-and-fade-away' tactics, becoming part of the local population, without being decisively engaged or destroyed. They will also try to gain the initiative and force their opponents to react. Using sanctuaries will provide the insurgents with a space to rest, plan, train and equip for future activities.

2.43 Open, unpopulated terrain, such as deserts, jungles, mountain ranges and long coastlines can provide insurgents and criminals with opportunities to infiltrate supplies, weapons, personnel and contraband. Likewise, it favours a sophisticated military force by allowing it to employ its assets in manoeuvre, reconnaissance and long-range precision-guided weapons. Therefore, insurgents will try to reduce any technological gap by exploiting complex terrain and obfuscating within the population.

2.44 COIN operations in urban environments may lead to increased collateral damage and consequently the potential loss of goodwill and consent of locals, and hence pose a significantly stringent requirement on NATO/HN forces to use precise and accurate means that limit collateral and escalatory effects.

2.45 Congested, cluttered and connected urban areas may afford a degree of anonymity and hamper the identification of insurgents, who can use the city as a sanctuary, as a base,

³¹ See also AD 084-002 *Infrastructure Assessment*, dated 17 Oct 2019.

³² Refer to AIntP-13 *Human Network Analysis and Support to Targeting (HNAT)*.

as a source for recruitment and as an advantageous environment to execute attacks, particularly against 'soft-targets'.³³

2.46 Understanding weather and climate. Sophisticated insurgents may monitor and exploit the climatic variations in the JOA. They may plan for offensives or pauses to take full advantage of the best season to fight and the one to rest, regroup and reconstitute. They may also exploit weather variations to choose the best moments for attacks reducing the advantage of air superiority and sophisticated equipment on operations—such as night vision devices.

The time variable

2.47 Time highly influences military activities—operations duration, decision cycle, battle rhythm, operational tempo. NATO may lead or be part of a multinational coalition which may be limited by national objectives or by public pressure. COIN is often a long term struggle decades or even centuries old. NATO/Coalition nations' support for presence in the JOA may alternatively be short-termed. It is important that NATO commanders assess correctly the impact of time on their own/coalition national expectations operations-wise. On their part, the insurgent will use the time variable to their advantage. By and large support to COIN operations decreases over time while support to an insurgency increases.

Section 3 - Learn and adapt

2.48 To be effective, counter-insurgents must continuously learn from the OE, quickly adapting and implementing changes in their operations to gain or maintain the initiative. The battle between insurgents and counter-insurgents is, in addition to the physical dimension, carried out in the virtual and cognitive dimensions. The side which learns and adapts faster, seizes the initiative and wins the physical and informational battle, and is more likely to reach its objectives. An efficient lessons learned cycle, as well as an adaptive doctrine and training system, is key for COIN operations success. Thus, it is crucial to focus on adaptation during pre-deployment—preparing the force, deployment—employing the force, and post-deployment—mission exploitation.

2.49 Understanding the OE is the first step of the learn-and-adapt cycle. It is fundamental to identify the root and proximate causes of the insurgency. The OE informs the options for military commanders at all levels, affects capabilities, and is the backdrop for actions of friendly, neutral or hostile actors within the JOA.

³³ MCM-0053-2019 (INV) *NATO Joint Military Operations in an Urban Environment*.

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Chapter 3 - The insurgency

Section 1 - Overview

3.1 Gaining a clear understanding of the insurgent 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, counter-insurgency (COIN) will not succeed.

3.2 **Contest of wills.** The ideological nature and root causes of an insurgency often result in insurgents having a strong collective will which, particularly within a fragile state, may well be larger than that of the government. Therefore, the insurgent may seek to turn the struggle into a protracted 'contest of wills'.

3.3 **Exploiting weaknesses.** Insurgents will attack where they perceive weaknesses exist. This 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 exacerbate ethnic tensions; and others may focus on crowd manipulation and/or violence, including sexual and gender-based.³⁴

3.4 Insurgents may conduct activities designed to prompt host nation authorities to overreact and potentially alienate some segments of the local population. Many successful insurgencies have developed a cellular structure that allows them to operate with great flexibility, including a formal structure containing both political and military human networks. Cellular insurgent human networks are typically difficult to penetrate and dismantle by military operations alone, and require dedicated capabilities, including police expertise.

3.5 **Tactical activities.** These actions may influence the operational and strategic levels, and may include: assassinations, bombings, hostage taking, attacks against the government or associated organizations, or manipulation of riots and demonstrations. Insurgents often desire to create strategic effects from tactical activity, adapting their tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) throughout a campaign in response to NATO/Coalition and HN forces' reactions. In these situations, military capabilities—especially those employing lethal means—may be ill-suited to respond to insurgent activities and could prove counterproductive. Insurgents will capitalize on such reactions for propaganda purposes.

3.6 Insurgencies are generally not fully constrained by geographical boundaries, enjoying external connections and support. Insurgents may leverage irregular activities—from transnational organized crime and terrorist movements—including the so called violent extremist organizations³⁵—to garner funds, promote instability and insecurity, and harm

³⁴ Refer to *NATO Military Guidance on the Prevention and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence*.

³⁵ Violent extremist organizations are groups of people bound by a common interest, who use forms of hatred and intolerance, foster and practice violence with ideological and/or deliberate intents, including political and religious.

governance. Illicit activities to raise financial assets may include counterfeiting of currency and trafficking in drugs, weapons, human beings and legally or illegally acquired cultural property.

Section 2 - Insurgency's root causes

3.7 For a population to support an insurgency there must be important issues at stake which cause a deeply-felt sentiment of injustice, anger and/or fear. These grievances may be real or perceived, but always will be reflected in insurgent's narrative. Insurgents will eagerly exploit them 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, and will be termed 'proximate causes' in this publication. All in all, insurgents can be adept at manipulating or creating causes to serve their purpose.

3.8 In the minds of insurgents and supporters, root causes warrant their strife and the use of violence. Root causes focus on issues of governance—how power is shared and exercised within a state, region or populace. These governance-related root causes may stem from a variety of issues, such as land control; political influence or autonomy of a particular group; systemic discrimination of groups; or lack of religious freedom, to name just a few. To a certain extent, there will be real and perceived legitimacy—i.e. 'truth'—in these grievances. For a COIN campaign to be successful, these grievances must be addressed, beginning with the strategic authorities, but followed by all levels of responsibility. In addressing them, solutions presented or offered must be in keeping with the cultural and social expectations of the affected audiences; otherwise they will be rejected, even when offering benefits to the population. Root causes may include the following:

- a. **Identity.** Identity can be based on shared ethnic, religious, gender or other cultural groupings. In cases where groups feel persecuted and underrepresented, the insurgents can use a narrative that highlights those aspects against the government. In some cases, groups are concentrated in certain regions where the government exercises biased governance. An insurgency may thus look to nullify government control or to seek self-determination. External actors with similar identities to the insurgents may also assist.
- b. **Corruption.** Corruption is a source of anger and frustration, particularly for the lower socio-economic layers of society, that often gain nothing but lose a great deal. For the population, the police are often the most visible manifestation of the state, and their behaviour will influence their perception of it. A corrupt political system can prevent a political solution to the existing grievances of the population, leading to insurgency.
- c. **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, reducing the legitimacy of the HN authorities in the eyes of its population.

d. **Foreign exploitation, presence or occupation.** A foreign military presence—or occupation—could offend national sentiment and may provide the grounds for insurgent propaganda and turmoil. 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.

e. **Essential services.** Essential services are necessary to sustain and improve the quality of life of the population. They may include access to healthy and affordable food, water and sanitation, electricity, healthcare, education, transportation, law enforcement and emergency services. A population lacking these services and being able to compare with others enjoying them is likely to try and rectify the situation, and may support those offering a credible solution. An insurgency may generate support by offering to provide these types of services.

3.9 Interconnection of two or more root causes will increase the total potency of the effect of each—like in the case of an economically subjugated religious minority whose appeals to the affected government are met with repression.

Section 3 - Insurgency's proximate causes

3.10 Root causes or core grievances usually need some elements that help galvanize part of the population into the insurgency movement and help it endure. These elements come up as true catalysts, and are termed 'proximate causes' in this publication. Here below are some:

a. **Amalgamating grievances.** Individual grievances are unlikely to trigger an insurgency but when combined with other proximate causes, violence may be perceived as the only viable option. They are relevant in understanding the origin, evolution and dynamics of the insurgency. Grievances may change over time and be transformed throughout the conflict. Political alignments are reshaped as power shifts amongst different groups, and as insurgents and counter-insurgents interact with local communities. This highlights a critical challenge for both, which is to co-opt locals—and their political agendas—into a broader movement. In many ways, an 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 or counter-insurgents as allies to win disputes and settle scores with rivals. This can provoke 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.

b. **Failed security.** A failure by an HN government to equally—including gender and age—protect the population, loses its legitimacy and is a common driver of instability. This frequently leads communities to look for other groups to fill the security

gap. Such groups might be concerned solely with securing their own communities but can evolve over time to challenge the state's authority, as their legitimacy and ambitions grow.

c. **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 prompting (excessive) retaliation by host nation security forces (HNSF). Abusive behaviour by government officials, HNSF or their local supporters can become a potent grievance. In such circumstances, NATO alignment with such forces will pose a significant credibility challenge for the joint force.

d. **Elites' agendas.** Elites' attitudes tend to reflect both community-wide grievances and a discrete set of concerns about their own status. They may oppose government initiatives that could undermine their own privileged positions of power, even if those programmes could benefit the wider community. In some cases, it is the competition amongst elites that provides opportunities for insurgents to co-opt communities by backing one competitor against others.

e. **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—including for the so-called 'freedom fighters'—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 can be enough to motivate sympathizers to take up arms, even if rhetorically arguing to uphold more conventional grievances.

f. **Community compliance.** If a community believes it has the option to side with either the insurgency or the government then, in most cases, it will comply with the one who harms or threatens the community the least. This means that the population will often tell COIN and insurgent forces what they want to hear at the time. But so long as the insurgent force threatens the population for noncompliance, the community will most likely have to provide some measure of support to the insurgents. This pattern of shifting allegiance to ensure survival tends to emerge over the course of the conflict and proves 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 live. The failure to publicize or consistently enforce those rules, or the use of arbitrary punishment, tends to generate opposition amongst 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.

Section 4 - Insurgency's leaders, ideology, narrative, and motive

3.11 Root and proximate causes of societal grievance create an unstable security situation that can spark the emergence of an insurgent movement, when combined with a particular leadership, ideology, narrative and motive.

3.12 **Insurgency's leaders.** Established and aspiring 'revolutionary' leaders are present in most societies where opportunity and motive intersect. Such leaders surface 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 achieve eventual success. Additionally, managing tensions among different factions within the movement and their conflicting agendas is often one of the main challenges for insurgent leaders, and is therefore a critical focal point for designing COIN strategy and operations.

3.13 **Insurgency's ideology.** Ideology is a fundamental element of an insurgency and understanding it 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 amongst insurgents. An ideology can affect a country's domestic public opinion and foreign politics, 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 insurgent.

3.14 **Insurgency's narrative.** Narrative is the central mechanism through which ideologies are expressed, observed and disseminated. 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 grievances; how the grievances ought to be addressed; how the population would benefit under the insurgent's ideology; and how the population and insurgency should work together to accomplish that goal.

3.15 The compelling aspect of the narrative is not only in its content, but on how it is presented—promoted and publicized—to the target audience, which normally requires ideological leaders. It is consistently reinforced through communication and propaganda of the deed, but also through ways and means. Insurgents often frame grievances in terms of local identities, such as religious, ethno-sectarian or regional groupings. A persuasive narrative is often spun around the marginalization of a particular community—tribal, ethnic or ideological, geographic area or socio-economic class of individuals, by the government.

3.16 **Insurgency's motive.** Poverty, unemployment, economic inequality, inadequate essential services, political marginalization and repression are commonplace grievances. When grievances intersect with insurgent leadership, ideology and narrative, a population can be mobilized. Even when insurgents are generally treated as violent, traitorous criminals by the HNSF, government authorities and, potentially, by some segments of the population,

the insurgent leadership can succeed in motivating other segments of the population with compelling arguments to support the insurgency as the only and fastest way to solve their grievances and to address their needs.

Section 5 - Insurgency's objectives

3.17 To understand an insurgency, its objectives must be identified, and this analysis should be carried out from the insurgents' perspective. An insurgency's goal is to effect or prevent a political change or to overthrow a governing authority. Insurgencies have overall political objectives that may inspire and determine their ways, and means of action.

3.18 Objectives may change over time and generally become more extreme as previous efforts to effect change are met with resistance or failure. Objectives are normally driven by the insurgent's strategic approach. There are generally five types of insurgent objectives:

- a. **Reform.** Some insurgencies do not aim to change the existing political order, but rather seek to compel the government to alter its policies or to 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 than those occurring through more moderate or gradual political processes.
- 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 independence 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 if coercive—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 HN 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.**³⁶ Some insurgencies seek to compel an occupying foreign power to withdraw from a given territory. The concept of ‘foreign power/forces’ is entirely situational dependent. Remote, semi-autonomous, or socio-politically distinct areas within a country may even regard government HNSF 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 nationals with whom there is a history of conflict or tension. Although autonomy and self-determination are powerful themes for insurgent narratives, the 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.

Section 6 - Forms and sources of support to an insurgency

3.19 To address its objectives, an insurgency requires different types of support—moral, logistic, military and others—from a variety of sources, including other nation states, emigrants, refugees, diasporas or other non-state organizations and civilians.

3.20 **Forms of support.** Support forms to an insurgency may include the following:

- a. **Moral.** 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.
- b. **Political.** International political support for insurgents can apply pressure on counter-insurgents through diplomatic action by those states that support the insurgency.
- c. **Logistic.** Frequently, insurgencies rely on support from external sources to move equipment and supplies, as well as providing food and medical assistance.
- d. **Military.** Military support can include the provision of arms and ammunition, materiel and intelligence, as well as technical expertise and training. In certain circumstances it could also include direct intervention.
- e. **Personnel.** 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 in cases of proxy insurgencies, ‘advisers’ with military and technical expertise.

³⁶ A ‘resistance movement’ is a term considered synonymous with ‘insurgency’ in this publication. Political reasons, to grant a positive flavour to an insurgency movement may lead to characterize it as a resistance. This term has been associated in the past with the legitimate fight of indigenous population in their own country against foreign occupying forces.

f. **Sanctuaries.** Sanctuaries, both geographic and demographic, can provide insurgents with a place to rebuild and reorganize without fear of interference. Geographic sanctuaries³⁷ may be local or regional 'safe' areas, including those set up in urban environment. Such safe areas may be 'no-go' zones or districts in which governmental or HNSF presence is minimal or absent. Support is pivotal for insurgent's resilience and thriving. It is paramount to identify all factors—internal and external—that contribute to their support.

g. **Financial support.** Financial support may be provided overtly or covertly, licitly or illicitly, with formal or informal mechanisms. Identifying channels, accounts, means and ways of raising funds is key to this effort, and NATO/coalition police forces, in conjunction with HNSF, may prove an extraordinary asset. As a critical enabler for an insurgency, cutting funding links should be a main objective for the counter-insurgency.

3.21 **Sources of support.** Besides the supporting population, support may come from other nation states, emigrants and diasporas, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP), and other non-state actors, including the following:

a. **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:

- gain regional influence;
- wage war using a proxy force;
- overthrow another government;
- retaliate;
- gain influence over the insurgency—likely to ensure that the insurgent's goals are in the interest of the supporting state;
- support similar ethnic or akin groups;
- reclaim territory;
- gain access to markets or resources; and
- impose a cost—financial, diplomatic or political—on another state or international organization, such as NATO.

b. **Emigrants and diasporas.** Ethno-sectarian conflicts are frequently supported by diaspora communities that provide funding, political influence—public opinion and

³⁷ MCM-0053-2019 (INV) *NATO Joint Military Operations in an Urban Environment*.

policies of their own country, and the attitudes of global media towards the insurgents—intelligence, weapons, recruitment and equipment, possibly linked to illegal trafficking/funding networks.

c. **Refugees, evacuees and internally displaced persons.** As well as potential recruits, camps for these persons may provide insurgents with sanctuary and the opportunity to rest, plan, train and recruit, as well as to gain control of that community of refugees, evacuees and IDP. External assistance intended to help refugees may also be diverted towards the insurgency. IDP and refugee camps abound in women and children which make them particularly vulnerable to threats and use of violence from insurgent groups. It is important to coordinate activities with local/international governmental/non-governmental organizations to improve refugees, evacuees and IDP's living conditions, as well as to prevent them from being subject to insurgency's propaganda, radicalisation and recruitment activities. There are several reasons for refugees, evacuees and IDP to support an insurgency, including:

- a desire to return to their previous status and life in their own homeland;
- the need for protection from oppressive forces, rival ethnic groups, or local thugs, frequently operating in or near refugee camps;
- a conviction that military action and violence is the only way to get their grievances 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 refugees, evacuees and IDP are vulnerable population groups, easily targeted by insurgents through coercion.

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

e. **Influential individuals.** Wealthy and influential individuals whose objectives align with the insurgency can be a sizeable 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, weapons and explosives, cultural property or human beings.

g. **Local organizations.** They may provide political, financial, intellectual or material support to the insurgency. Their support, disseminated through the media, can be an important contribution in inspiring recruits and activists.

h. **Transnational terrorist organizations.** Terrorists and particularly violent extremist organizations—such as al-Qaida and its associates, or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria—are strong in number, well-funded, and globally oriented. They may infiltrate areas with insurgencies and terrorist operations around the globe, whether welcomed or not, 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. COIN forces should be diligent in identifying the possible presence and support of the insurgent by transnational terrorists.

i. **NGOs, private companies and entities** may be coerced into providing support to the insurgency, often as a condition for their safety or the permission to conduct their activity—i.e. delivering humanitarian aid.

Section 7 - The population as centre of gravity

3.22 In an insurgency situation, there is a continuous competition for the control and support or acquiescence of the population. The insurgent's aim is to break the ties between the incumbent regime and the population whilst establishing and strengthening their own ties with the people. Insurgents will obtain supplies, recruits, information, 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 that both sides target for support.

3.23 **Level of popular support.** In an insurgency situation neither side will ever enjoy the support of the entire population. Popular support will fluctuate, and measuring the population's support will be difficult task, yet most important. There are multiple ways to gauge popular support, varying from surveys—using mixed engagement teams³⁸—to using technical methods and tools such as those employed in analysing trends in social media.

3.24 Figure 3.1 depicts a simplified model of where the population may lie within the range of support—for or against an insurgency/the government. This measurement is difficult to fathom and validate for a lengthy time period, because of the way insurgencies develop over time. However, measures to quantify passive and active support for insurgencies can be taken through careful study of population behavior.

³⁸ Teams with male and female personnel.

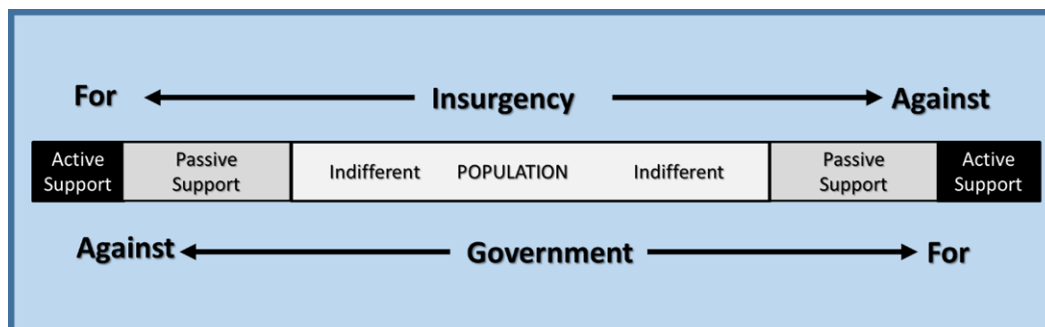


Figure 3.1 – Range of popular support

3.25 Focusing on the population's segment that supports the insurgency, two types of supporters can be distinguished:

- a. Active supporters, that participate in insurgent operations and find new recruits. They are usually central to the insurgency's propaganda effort, and may provide materiel, intelligence, or assistance as requested or demanded by insurgents.
- b. Passive supporters, or sympathizers, allow freedom of movement for members of the insurgency to reside, train, plan, and conduct operations. They do not report insurgents to HNSF 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.

3.26 **Techniques to gain the support of the population.** The population's support is not simply a function of their preferences or sympathy. People's sympathy may not guarantee compliance with the demands of either the authorities or the insurgency. Insurgent organizations will use persuasive and coercive techniques to gain the support of the population, such as:

- a. **Persuasion.** In times of restlessness and turmoil, political, social, security and economic benefits may attract popular support to one or another party. Insurgents will base their actions on the belief that 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 to the detriment of their freedom. Persuasion can be used to win over internal/external support through:
 - charismatic leadership;
 - appealing to a specific ideology or religion;
 - promising to address grievances;

- demonstrations of potency, such as large-scale attacks or social programmes for the needy—this can be the most effective technique because it can create the perception that the insurgency has resources and will succeed; and
- providing goods and services to the population, spanning from food and shelter through security or justice.

b. **Coercion.** Coercion is considered to be the action or practice of persuading someone or a group to do/not do something by using force or threat of force. Insurgents use coercion to intimidate the population. Kidnapping, murder and threat or use of violence—including sexual—against local leaders or their relatives, are common practice. Coercion and other criminal activities are used to deter the population from supporting the government. The effect of coercion may be swifter and more direct than persuasion, but is likely to be short-lived. To bring a rapid end to an insurgency, both sides can employ coercion as an instrument of population control. Although coercion may be an effective tool in manipulating individuals' short-term decisions, it can cause significant longer-term issues.

Section 8 - Human networks

3.27 Human networks are comprised of people and entities where key nodes, materiel and activities can be linked through associations, all of which are potentially identifiable, exploitable and targetable. To build and sustain a violent and subversive challenge to a sitting government, insurgencies will use a combination of tribal, familial, religious, ideological and criminal human networks. This ensures resilience through multi-layered networks where members may have many different roles in various networks and compartmented cells. Comparable to living entities, human networks must continuously respond to operating environment changes to stay alive. Survival and success are directly connected to adaptability and ability to compete for resources.

3.28 **Social networks.** Typically, only insurgent leaders who are members of the relevant community possess the required internal legitimacy to mobilize social networks. Social networks may also be used to recruit foreign fighters. 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.

3.29 Some groups receive support from transnational terrorist organizations through funding, recruitment, training, and propaganda. Reliance on social networks constrains insurgent's 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.

3.30 Other groups rely on more conventional criminal activities such as kidnapping, smuggling, trafficking in drugs and human beings, counterfeiting, trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora,³⁹ and money laundering, as well as activities to acquire, smuggle or traffic cultural property, including for profit.⁴⁰

3.31 **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, gender, socio-economic, geographic and/or political identities, norms and mores, roles and symbols associated with them, that makes the chosen narrative 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 succeed. 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.

Section 9 - Insurgency's membership categories

3.32 The structure of the insurgency will evolve as the insurgency changes. In the initial stage a simple informal structure could suffice. In later stages it may be necessary for the movement to organize into different groups, cells or human 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.

3.33 Across the entire membership the organization is typically cellular, to prevent infiltration and large-scale identification of the insurgents by the government. Membership categories are generally based on skills, roles and responsibilities. Here below are the most common:

- a. **Leaders.**⁴¹ 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 experts,

³⁹ *The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.

⁴⁰ See Bi-SC 086-005 *Implementing Cultural Property Protection in NATO Operations and Missions*.

⁴¹ Leader: In an insurgency, a visionary thinker, or charismatic person that sets purposes, aims and objectives, and guides the movement in coherence with a fundamental ideology. (in this publication)

they will rely on trustworthy cadre and armed elements who will wage the violent actions for the insurgency.

b. **Cadre.**⁴² This is the core of executive personnel in an insurgency, highly trusted by the leaders, engaged in the overarching struggle to accomplish insurgent goals. Cadre members will liaise with the armed elements, auxiliaries, and underground to ensure oversight, security, and effective support activities. If a political party is formed, they may implement guidance and procedures in accordance with directions 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'.

c. **Armed elements.**⁴³ They conduct operations, execute orders and actions, and maintain internal control and discipline, including protection of training camps and human networks that facilitate funding, training and recruiting activities, and consist of both local and 'foreign' fighters. Fighters 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 cadre and leaders. This element would principally conduct the necessary warfare against HNSF or COIN forces, as required.

d. **Auxiliaries.**⁴⁴ These are active members 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 and just comply, out of fear. They only occasionally participate in direct actions. Their activities may include:

- operating and maintaining safe houses;
- storing weapons and supplies;
- acting as couriers;
- providing passive intelligence collection;
- giving early warning of counter-insurgent movements;
- providing funding from lawful and unlawful sources;

⁴² Cadre: In an insurgency, a group of individuals who carry out instructions and operations for the leaders, including planning, information and propaganda activities, intelligence gathering and logistic support. (in this publication)

⁴³ Armed element: In an insurgency, a paramilitary group that carry out violent irregular activities. (in this publication)

⁴⁴ Auxiliary: An active member of an insurgency who provides support and ancillary services. (in this publication)

- providing forged or stolen documents;
- providing technical expertise and materiel fabrication, such as improvised explosive devices or weapons of mass destruction—chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear;
- providing armed and unarmed training and indoctrination;
- giving access to, or introducing potential supporters; and
- spreading propaganda.

e. **Underground.**⁴⁵ The underground is an element of the insurgency—frequently integrates leaders and cadre—that may include individuals working with the HN government or GOs/NGOs. Members of the underground often continue in their normal positions in society but lead additional clandestine lives as part of an insurgent movement. They operate in all areas, especially in those not accessible to the standing armed elements, and may conduct clandestine, covert and overt activities and operations.

f. **Supporting Population.** They participate actively in the insurgency, and are either followers or those politically-aligned with its aims and goals. Popular support is not only important politically, but also to enable logistic and intelligence support, recruiting and the creation of a protective security screen around the insurgency's clandestine organization. Additionally, they may be mobilized to conduct non-military actions, such as demonstrations or riots. It will be difficult to delineate active (supporting population) from passive supporters (sympathizers)⁴⁶ amidst the population. Insurgents are often recruited and indoctrinated by the cadre amongst sympathizers.

3.34 Figure 3.2 shows, in the form of a 'target', the insurgent's membership categories and the population, split this latter by a white ring, meaning that the inner-most part of the population actively supports the insurgency, whereas the outer—light and dark green rings—don't. However, sympathizers—passive supporters of the insurgency—are those who find insurgency's words and deeds supportable, although they haven't engaged yet in active support. They are under the focus of the insurgent, that will try to win them over to support their struggle, but also under the focus of COIN forces, that will strive to keep them to stay true to legality and to the peaceful ways of solving grievances.

⁴⁵ Underground: A group or movement organized secretly to work against an existing regime.(COED)

⁴⁶ Sympathizer: A member of the population who is in tacit or active agreement with an insurgency but who does not provide active support to the group. Sympathizers are considered both future insurgent candidates and the intended audience or target of Allied forces information campaigns and activities. (in this publication)

3.35 Figure 3.2 is to be read from a twofold perspective: the population-centric, mentioned above, and the insurgent-centric, where leaders are at the bullseye. Traffic light colours portray the hazard posed by notional membership categories. It is important to bear in mind that this is a theoretical construct that real life transforms in a dynamic and fluid way, letting leaders become part of the armed branch, sympathizers turn into any or various other categories and any other possible combination of multiple roles.

3.36 Underground elements are located in the same ring as the supporting populace for ease of graphic representation, but their commitment to the insurgency is higher, and it is normal for their members to join inner rings when their clandestine cover is blown or circumstances recommend/dictate so.

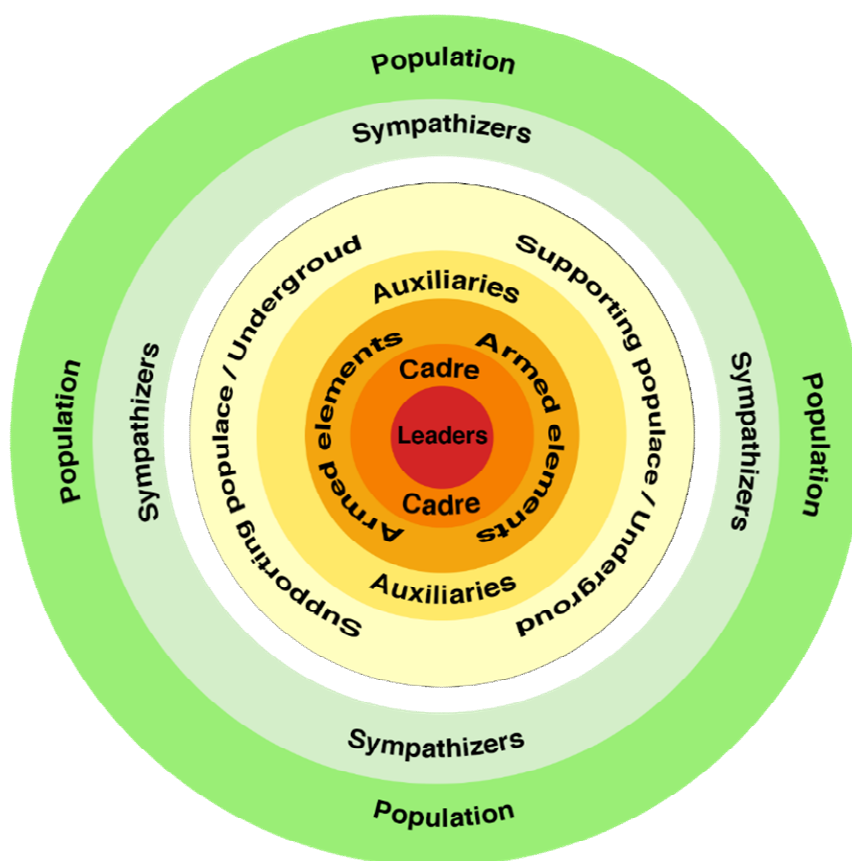


Figure 3.2 – Insurgency and population

Section 10 - Organizational and operational patterns of an insurgency

3.37 It takes considerable effort to mount a subversive and sustained violent challenge to the government authorities, and the ways an insurgency secures those resources greatly determines its behaviour. The leaders of emerging insurgencies must assemble and organize personnel, weapons, funds, systems of effective communications and logistics, all of which must be done clandestinely.

3.38 **Human networks within the insurgency.** Layered human 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, because 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.

3.39 **Political activism.** An insurgency may form an overt or covert political wing to support their cause. The success of insurgents' political activism may depend on their ability to create coalitions. Overt political organizations enable insurgents to launch demonstrations, protests, general strikes and boycotts with reduced need for secrecy. They may also use social media networks to support political activism.

3.40 **International relationships.** Local insurgencies can establish relationships with other insurgent groups acting in other countries. This may be a mutually beneficial agreement to receive training, exchange experiences, raise funds, acquire arms and make up a united front. Insurgents may also seek support from other states, individuals, NGOs or other organizations with worldwide influence.

3.41 **Violent activities.** Violent activities may take the following forms:

- a. **Guerrilla Warfare.**⁴⁷ Armed elements, often organized into a paramilitary structure, with a commander, harass and interfere with the HN's ability to lead a normal life or conduct operations. They 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 ease of concealment.

⁴⁷ Guerrilla: A member of a small independent group taking part in irregular fighting, typically against larger regular forces. (COED)

- b. **Terrorism.**⁴⁸ Terrorism aims to subdue the population and to weaken, undermine and interfere with legal authorities. Global media maximizes the propaganda value of its strikes and the psychological impact. The aim is to create a climate of fear amongst the population without directly facing them, promoting groundless discouragement, undermining their morale, and making them feel helpless. Those who plan and execute such actions hope to compel the government to react in an inappropriate manner, usually causing civilian casualties, which in turn can further undermine the population's morale, leading them to question the ability of the government to manage the situation.
- c. **Kidnapping.** Kidnapping's targets may include foreign personnel, high-ranking government officials, aid workers and members of the commercial or media community, and may serve to enable coercion, exact a ransom, use the kidnapped as 'bargaining chip' for detained individuals, force recruitment and create fear— such as the 'desaparecidos'—for the elimination of rivals/opponents.
- d. **Sabotage.**⁴⁹ Insurgents may sabotage economic, military or political installations such as factories, critical infrastructure, public or government office buildings, communications facilities and essential service providers, pursuing a host of different aims, including to prevent the use of sabotaged material/infrastructures, to foster instability, and to boost the narrative that the government is losing or has lost control.
- e. **Civil unrest.** Insurgents may use tactics to involve the populace in their efforts against HNSF. They may seek to turn peaceful demonstrations into riots⁵⁰ and violent actions to heighten or prolong existing tensions or violence. Missile-throwing, sniping and other means and tactics may be used by insurgents to attack a peaceful demonstration. Through such activities, they aim to cause material damage and a general breakdown in morale of the populace, embarrass and undermine the government, and erode the presence of NATO/Coalition forces. Professional agitators from the insurgent's 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.
- f. **Ambushes.**⁵¹ They 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 (IEDs), as well as snipers, may be used as part of the ambush orchestration.

⁴⁸ Terrorism: The unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence, instilling fear and terror, against individuals or property in an attempt to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, or to gain control over a population, to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives. (NATO Agreed)

⁴⁹ Sabotage: Deliberately destroy or obstruct, especially for political or military advantage. (COED)

⁵⁰ Riot: A riot is a violent disturbance of the peace by a crowd. (COED)

⁵¹ Ambush: To conduct as a surprise attack from concealed positions on a moving or temporarily halted enemy. (NATO Agreed)

In an urban environment the insurgent will try to take advantage of the irregularities of the streets and buildings. A successfully executed ambush can have a significant adverse effect on the morale of HNSF and NATO/Coalition forces.

g. **Raids.**⁵² 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 HN government, monetary and commercial centres, government buildings and police stations, penal institutions, military installations and arsenals, foreign embassies, and communications and transportation facilities.

3.42 **Resources management.** 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 conventional-type warfare against HNSF, 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 expeditiously improve weapons and explosives to increase their lethal effects. Handmade and sophisticated IEDs have proved 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. When 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 remotely controlled, semi-autonomous or even autonomous systems, particularly attractive to insurgents if easily accessible and cheap, might heavily endanger/hamper COIN efforts.

b. **Funding.** Income can be obtained through many sources and it 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 organizations can provide donations, and legitimate businesses may be established to furnish funding. In insurgent-controlled areas, confiscation or illegal taxation may be found, as well as the fruit of criminal activity. Although funding is crucial for an insurgency to survive, it may also turn it more vulnerable.

⁵² Raid: An operation, usually small scale, involving a swift penetration of hostile territory to secure information, confuse the enemy, or destroy his installations. It ends with a planned withdrawal upon completion of the assigned mission. (NATO Agreed)

c. **Supply lines.** Insurgents require a system of internal and external supply lines and suitable transportation and storage facilities, most of which are hidden and operated in secrecy. Often insurgents use licit logistical companies for smuggling and storage supplies. This is frequently done without the knowledge or consent of the licit logistical company.

d. **Bases.** Insurgents can operate from a variety of safe houses and bases. Safe houses are used to temporarily hide insurgents and are often part of a human network that secretly moves 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 tend to be located where the insurgent enjoy popular support.

3.43 **Recruiting.** This activity has an important impact on all others. 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, gender, language, socio-economic status or membership in 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.

3.44 Some insurgent groups also use forced recruitment to bolster their ranks, which often includes illegally recruiting children. This approach is typically associated with 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 would-be recruits, but it is often reinforced by brutal retaliation against those who resist.

3.45 The connectivity of the modern world greatly enhances the ability of insurgents to attract foreign recruits. Because foreign fighters are not part of the tight family and social networks of the insurgent core, insurgent leaders often see them as more disposable and often use them for operations like suicide terrorism which requires minimal training.

3.46 **Training.** Insurgents need training on subjects such as weapons, explosives, logistics, communications and small-unit TTP. 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. Linking-up with criminals, terrorists and local entities already accustomed to violently confront the government and HNSF, might add to this training offer.

3.47 Social governance. Through social assistance, insurgents try to earn 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 governance can include:

- establishing education and medical treatment/health care facilities;
- aiding workers by supporting labour unions and providing employment;
- providing basic needs, such as the care of orphans and widows; and
- providing a shadow government, including a justice system—police, judiciary and correctional institutions.

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

Section 11 - Approaches and strategies of an insurgency

3.49 Approaches of an insurgency. Contemporary insurgents may vary their approach to create, foster and bring to success an insurgency, and apply different strategies to provide resilience and take advantage of circumstances. Historically, insurgents have used some of the following approaches:

- a. **Conspiratorial.** 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. A ‘coup d’état’ is a good example of this approach.
- b. **Military-centered.** Those applying the military-centered approach aim to create revolutionary possibilities through the application of military force. They can use conventional-type forces to secure their independence, secession, or employ armed elements in a rural environment to gain revolutionary support that will enable them to seize power. They spread control through creating and deploying fighting forces rather than through political subversion.
- c. **Urban.** Protracted urban terrorism waged by small, independent cells requires little popular support, and is difficult to counter. To negate the response of HNSF, these

groups adopt a cellular structure recruited along lines of close association—family, religious, political or social group.

d. **Identity-centered.** This approach mobilizes support based on the common identity of religious affinity, clan, tribe or ethnic group. These movements may 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-centered approach. For instance, a movement can have a religious and ethnic identity, as well as its own militia and an affiliated political party.

3.50 **Strategies of an insurgency.** The following are instances that illustrate how insurgency movements draw on their given situations, culture and environment, and adjust to achieve their goals in the most effective way.

a. **Protracted popular warfare.** This strategy, where decisive combat is avoided, has been frequently employed by insurgencies and regular armies. The most salient examples are those of the 20th century in Asia: Chinese People's Liberation Army during the civil war, and the National Liberation Front for South Vietnam, also known as the Viet Cong. Mao Zedong's *Theory of Protracted War* describes a three-phased, politico-military strategy. 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 regions 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 strategy 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.

(1) **Phase 1 – Strategic defence.** In this phase normally the government has stronger capabilities than the insurgency, which adopts a defensive posture, concentrating on survival and building up strength and support. Insurgents focus their efforts on recruiting members and infiltrating the Establishment and power entities to perform subversion activities. Guerrilla warfare is most emphasized by insurgents.

(2) **Phase 2 – Strategic equilibrium.** This phase starts when force correlation reach a balance, and using an armed element becomes the most important, pervasive activity. Armed elements typically strike at a time and place of their choosing and then melt back into the population. The size and intensity of such attacks will depend on the situation and the strategy 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 provoking desertions, with a view to eventually wage conventional battles. If the goal is to create a level of harassment that is unendurable for the government, a wider range of attacks may be attempted. If the purpose is to force a repressive military response from the government, thus alienating it from the population, insurgents are likely to resort to terrorism in a ruthless and systematic manner.

(3) **Phase 3 – Strategic offensive.** This phase begins when insurgents feel they have overmatch strength and a portion of their military forces could attempt to fight in a conventional-type manner.

b. **Composite strategy.** Insurgents may use different strategies at different times and places, applying TTP that best capitalize on circumstances. Different insurgent forces or coalitions, including with terrorists and other irregular actors using diverse strategies may also crystallize. 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 landscape and it may be difficult for counter-insurgents to understand the type of actions necessary for success.

c. **Time management strategy.** Time is almost invariably on the side of the insurgent. *‘Insurgents win a war when they don’t lose, while the counter-insurgents lose when they don’t win’.*⁵³ The insurgent’s sense of time will also affect their actions. If time is perceived on their side, they are more likely to adopt a lower risk approach/strategy and avoid becoming decisively engaged. They will prolong a conflict and will seek to erode their opponent’s will through subversion, terrorism and propaganda. On the contrary, if they perceive time as playing against them, that will push them towards bolder activities. Determining an insurgency’s perception of time helps commanders and staff to anticipate their behaviour.

d. **Contemporary insurgencies and current threats.**⁵⁴ Some contemporary insurgencies have developed in extremely complex scenarios. Many interrelated actors, including militias, warlords, organized criminals, drug dealers, private security companies, mercenaries, NGOs, media, foreign supporters—including NATO’s near-peer states—and multinational private companies with strategic interests in the area are stakeholders to be factored in the insurgency equation. Transnational terrorist and criminal organizations are frequently able and willing to support each other and cooperate. There may be a flow of volunteers who, after one conflict termination, 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 insurgencies that continue to exist, and which do not overwhelm the beleaguered governments to require outside assistance. The threat posed by new insurgencies is related to their ability to act in

⁵³ Henry Kissinger: *The Vietnam Negotiations, Foreign Affairs, Vol. 48, No. 2, 1969.*

⁵⁴ See Annex C to this publication.

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 12 - Vulnerabilities of an insurgency

3.51 **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, and will operate in small groups/cells to avoid detection by HNSF conducting COIN. However, excessive secrecy can limit insurgent's freedom of action, reduce or distort information about insurgent goals and ideals, and restrict communication within the insurgency.

3.52 As an insurgency grows, the number of potential informants increases. This creates an inherent tension between the need to garner popular support and the need to maintain organizational security.

3.53 Some insurgencies split into political and paramilitary wings, enabling part of the movement to address the public—political wing—while separately conducting covert—paramilitary wing—actions. Adopting a cellular structure for reasons of security can further restrict communications and hinder command and control.

3.54 **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 convinced to continue their support.

3.55 **Insurgent's 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.

3.56 **Need to establish a base of operations.** Establishing a viable but secure operating base can be difficult for insurgents. A base too far from major centres of activity may be secure but risks being isolated from the population. A base too near to 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.

3.57 Moving people and supplies around a base may expose its location and allow the lines of communication to be monitored or disrupted. This offers opportunities for counter-

insurgents to deepen their understanding of the insurgency and its human networks, as well as conduct strike operations.

3.58 Reliance on support. Lines of communication are vulnerable and may be exploited by the counter-insurgents. Inability to gain external support may impact on the insurgents' ability to sustain the campaign. The sealing of borders and coastlines/territorial waters by counter-insurgents may starve an insurgency of external support.

3.59 Economic and financial weakness. All insurgencies require funding. However, the search for it may attract attention from HNSF. 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. While some financial transactions are vulnerable to electronic interdiction and tracking, other systems such as informal money transfer system (e.g. hawala), are quite difficult to track and intercept. 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.

3.60 Internal divisions. Counter-insurgents must be always alert for signs of division within an insurgency, and will use carefully constructed information to create or magnify these fractures. Success by counter-insurgents or errors by the insurgents may provoke insurgency's members to question their cause or to challenge the leadership. Relations within an insurgency are not always harmonious, particularly when sub-factions vie for power. If rifts between insurgent leaders are identified, they can be exploited. Offering selective amnesty or compromises can also trigger divisions within an insurgency and provide an opportunity to split, or at least weaken it. Internal divisions may deteriorate into violence amongst different groups as they compete for power. The desertion of members or supporters, or information leaks to government authorities can also demoralize and damage the insurgency. The insurgency needs to strictly enforce discipline amongst its ranks. Excessive violent internal repression may give the counter-insurgent the opportunity to amplify this through StratCom to encourage defection and even cooperation with COIN authorities.

3.61 Legitimacy. Usually, insurgent movements seek to increase their perception of legitimacy from their initial position of low legitimacy. Most likely, the insurgency can only draw on a few resilient 'legitimacy' nodes for support which is an inherently vulnerable position. In most cases insurgents are unable to effectively offer security to the population. In the absence of or low legitimacy, the insurgents may exercise coercive power. In this vein, the ruling authority has available opportunities to promote the perception among the populace that it has the willingness and the legitimacy to undertake broad reforms, solve problems, and shape respective social conditions through the rule of law and the provision of a stable safe and secure environment. By that, the HN can delegitimize the insurgent movement in the eyes of the local populace and international sympathizers.

3.62 Resourcing risks. While necessary, recruitment carries risks for insurgent groups since these activities can alert authorities to their presence and extent before they are ready to act, and subsequently get tracked down. Security risks also may arise from 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.

3.63 The resource base can overtake insurgent politics in terms of defining the insurgent organization, strategy and objectives. Deepening involvement in illicit economy can transform insurgent organizations into criminal enterprises, as accruing resources becomes an end in itself.

3.64 Diaspora politics and priorities can diverge significantly from those in the theatre of operations, creating tension between the local population, insurgents, and their external backers. State sponsors have their own agendas and a degree of influence, or even outright control over insurgent's operations, but this is often the price of access to key resources.

Chapter 4 - The counter-insurgency

Section 1 - Overview

4.1 **General.** Counter-insurgency (COIN) is a comprehensive civilian and military effort to isolate and defeat an insurgency, create a safe and secure environment, address core grievances, and to enable the promotion of legitimate governance and rule of law. (NATO Agreed)

4.2 This publication also uses the term 'counter-insurgent' to include the set of actors executing COIN actions, whether they are part of the host nation government, the Alliance or members of other supporting countries or agencies.

4.3 Within the military sphere, COIN operations are aimed at reducing violence, addressing core grievances and enabling HN authorities to govern effectively. The population is the key centre of gravity for COIN operations, and therefore its protection is of paramount importance. It abides by the Allied protection of civilians principles and guidelines. A balanced approach between reinforcing the HN government and reducing insurgent influence should be sought.

4.4 This chapter focuses on planning for, and the 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. These principles are described in *AJP-5 Allied Joint Doctrine for Operational-level Planning* and *AJP-3.4.5 Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Stabilization and Reconstruction*.⁵⁵

4.5 **The soldier-diplomat paradigm.** In a COIN environment, the relationship between commanders and their civilian counterparts is pivotal in orchestrating the efforts of a wide variety of agencies into a comprehensive approach to fulfil unity of effort. This approach is achieved through consensus and compromise, as well as with traditional command practices. Commanders should promote the primacy and sovereignty of the HN.

4.6 Forces conducting COIN might be a source of insecurity for the population as well. Abusive, corrupt, or predatory behaviour by elements of the host nation security forces (HNSF) or NATO/Coalition forces, including acts of sexual exploitation and abuse⁵⁶ can undermine the whole COIN effort, pushing the population to support the insurgency. Even carefully targeted military activities against insurgents can create risks for the population. This presents a dilemma for the COIN force, because securing the population requires offensive activities against insurgents to seize the initiative and neutralize the threat.

⁵⁵ Refer also to *ACO Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COPD)* and *ACO Gender Functional Planning Guide*.

⁵⁶ See *NATO Policy on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)*.

4.7 **Balance in the use of force.** Although NATO forces may operate with significant 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 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 means should be tailored to the situation, paying particular attention to preventing collateral damage.

4.8 Stability Policing (SP) forces utilize legal targeting,⁵⁷ including arrest, seizure of assets and funds, to produce non-lethal effects on the insurgents and their networks. It affords further flexibility in responding to COIN threats while protecting the population and avoiding situations where the HN may lose legitimacy or create/aggravate grievances.

4.9 The military response to atrocities committed by insurgents must be measured, proportionate and appropriate, while also being swiftly and precisely targeted. This use of force by own assets is, as in all operations, conducted in accordance with Law of Armed Conflict/International Humanitarian Law (LOAC/IHL) and the approved rules of engagement, and it must be considered in both the planning and execution phases of any operation.

4.10 **Dynamic, flexible military action.** Military efforts against the insurgent must be dynamic. COIN forces should exploit all possibilities and contingencies to limit or defeat the insurgent's efforts. To that end, own's and adversary's constraints and restraints are to be thoroughly understood and incorporated to planning and execution. COIN authorities should keep the insurgents off-balance as they attempt to gain influence through physical and psychological activity. The military should remain flexible and adaptable over time as the insurgency may change shape and direction.

4.11 **Duration of support.** The duration of NATO support to the HN, 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 over the mission duration must be made to help define military course of action and an exit strategy, as this will influence the actions of the non-military instruments.

4.12 Risks and benefits of making COIN forces plans known to the public must be carefully weighed. On the one hand, transparency and credibility could contribute to public support within the troop-contributing nations and the HN, even over extended periods of time, which could dishearten and demotivate the insurgent. On the other hand, this knowledge could assist the insurgent in their planning. Additionally, making the military approach public could undermine the credibility of either the HN or NATO/Coalition forces'; inconsistencies between word and action should be avoided and, if they occur, mitigating messaging would be needed.

⁵⁷ Legal targeting: Enforcing international and applicable HN law to achieve effects on adversaries and enemies. (for the purposes of this publication)

4.13 **Support initiative.** Initiative and creativity should be encouraged to help respond effectively to asymmetric threats. Ideas generated, stemming from lessons, should provide swift answers to deployed units, without creating organizational stovepipes.

4.14 **The population is the key for success.** Conducting successful COIN requires practitioners to have an adaptive and flexible mind-set. First and foremost, the population is the critical factor in a successful COIN equation, therefore it is essential to study and understand its constituent parts—including women, men, boys, and girls—and their specific security experiences, expectations and needs.

4.15 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, isolating and 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. Understanding of the civil environment through CMI, is supported by civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), and plays a key role.

4.16 **The role of the HN.** The ultimate responsibility for countering an insurgency rests with the HN authorities. NATO forces committed to a COIN effort are primarily there to assist an existing HN government or support the process of establishing one that can assume the responsibilities for the COIN effort, or until a follow-on force—e.g. from the UN—can take over. The long-term goal must be to ensure that the HN government and its HNSF reach an appropriate and sustainable level of effectiveness to endure once NATO forces are withdrawn. Viable local leaders and institutions acceptable to the populace must therefore be developed and strengthened. NATO forces and agencies can help with that, but to achieve sustainable success, the HN must ultimately accept responsibility for security, governance, development and rule of law.

4.17 While NATO military units may sometimes be required to conduct independent operations, the long-term security solution remains with the HNSF. Every effort must be made to build the capacity, legitimacy and credibility of these institutions as early as possible.

4.18 **The effect of a foreign military force.** Eventually, all foreign forces can be seen as intruders 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 HN government political and security force apparatus—helping create one if it does not already exist. To be truly successful NATO's military effort must 'put the HN's face on the operations' and transfer lead of security responsibility to the HN authorities, while promoting their legitimacy and accountability.

4.19 **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 and policing capabilities with all other instruments of national power. A comprehensive approach in COIN integrates the application

of the security, information and economic functions through a political strategy that results in the HN government's control of its environment. A poor security situation may initially require the joint force to execute tasks normally incumbent on civilian agencies and organizations. Priority should always be given to addressing the political considerations of an insurgency with the military in a supporting role.

4.20 Operations planning. In COIN, the operational level contributes to the strategic end-state by focusing on securing the population, neutralizing the insurgents' strategy and organization, addressing the identified core grievances of the insurgency and, concurrently, helping build local capabilities and capacity, including through security force assistance (SFA) and SP reinforcement activities.

4.21 To prepare for, and conduct, military operations, it is necessary to develop operations plans. A key element of NATO's operations planning process is the requirement for political control, guidance and approval, particularly with regards to force activation in response to an actual or developing crisis. 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 COIN objectives are addressed, together with the constraints, restraints and the particular operational approach to COIN. Effective planning of a COIN operation also includes operations assessment, orchestrating joint functions and developing clear guidance for tactical level commanders.

Section 2 - Counter-insurgency principles

4.22 In keeping with NATO's principles of operations,⁵⁸ the following principles should be applied to COIN operations:

- a. **Political primacy.** Any solution that addresses the root and proximate causes of an insurgency will be predominantly political in nature, and is likely to include some form of recognition or negotiated accommodation to insurgents' political demands. Therefore, the political strategy coordinated with the HN authorities, combining civilian and military resources, principles and attitudes, will provide the direction and guidance for all COIN planners. NATO's strategy will focus predominantly on the use of the military instrument of power, but must also be guided by broader political considerations. Commanders and staff must ensure operations planning reflects this relationship. Plans must be flexible enough to support, rather than undermine, the overarching political strategy.
- b. **Develop and promote the legitimacy of HN authorities.** An insurgency is a struggle between the insurgents and the HN authorities for the legitimacy to govern—in the eyes of the population. The insurgent will expend considerable effort and may even accept tactical defeats to increase their apparent legitimacy relative to the HN

⁵⁸ Laid out in AJP-01 *Allied Joint Doctrine* and AJP-3 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*.

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 vital planning factors. Military commanders should plan activities that promote legitimacy and help develop the relationship between the HN 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, cognizant that this perception may vary over time and be different to separate communities. Pre-conceived opinions based on perceptions of the intervening force should be avoided.

c. **Hand over responsibility to the local forces as soon as practicable.** The HN is the first responder and responsible for COIN. If they cannot perform adequately, others, including NATO, can come in support until they do, and only if authorized, temporarily replace the HN. Commanders should hand over responsibility to the HN 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 boost their credibility and legitimacy amongst the population, and will require legitimate, capable and sustainable HNSF 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 build up their security capabilities. A transition process that transfers authority and responsibility to HN 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 HNSF in training. While it may be necessary for NATO forces to initially lead COIN operations, the enduring aim must be to strengthen the HNSF and institutions to a point where they can assume responsibility for security and protect their population in respect of national and international law. As part of a controlled transition, NATO effort may shift from directly fighting the insurgents to providing support to the HNSF, as well as securing maritime approaches beyond its territorial waters, their sovereign airspace and cyberspace infrastructure. This support could include providing enablers such as intelligence assets, helicopters, engineers or medical support, and training. 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, in an effort to be seen as a resistance movement.

d. **Secure the population.** If the population feels the HN authorities or foreign forces conducting COIN are providing acceptable security and their interests are better served by the HN authorities than by the insurgents, then progress can be made on the other key lines of operations: governance and economy. Securing the local population should be the main focus of the military activity alongside neutralizing insurgents, avoiding, or in any case, minimizing harm to civilians. 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. Effective and enduring security will help create the conditions to develop local governance. This requires deploying units—including HNSF 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 HN authorities to overtly demonstrate its capability. This also starts to instil confidence amongst the people about the competence and long-term intentions of their government. A population which has been under the control of insurgents, and amongst whom insurgents may still live, is not going to be transformed overnight. Therefore, units allocated to an area of operations needing to live and operate in the midst of the population will 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.

e. **Understand the human environment.**⁵⁹ The human environment can be characterized as the social, ethnic, cultural, political, gender and economic environment as well as belief systems, norms and forms of interaction that exist within the joint operations area. Religion, literature, language, music, legends and myths 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. It is shaped by individual attitudes, assumptions and expectations and, at its core, it consists of human networks, perceptions, motivations and needs. The human environment encapsulates an understanding of individuals—particularly key leaders and elites—groups and societies. Understanding these relationships and the power dynamics behind them is a prerequisite to understand the root causes of conflict and the ability to respond to, and address, those factors. 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. Awareness of local culture will also help assess hostility of local individuals when facing unfamiliar behaviours, and in turn, will help distinguish between insurgents and civilians, particularly would-be sympathizers. This will enable effective engagement with the entire population through information activities. Employment of cross-section teams of individuals such as military advisors, police officers, humanitarian personnel, or members of mixed engagement teams, could provide an 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, with particular emphasis on human intelligence and social media.

f. **Isolate and defeat the insurgent.** Military operations contribute to hampering/denying the insurgents' freedom of action and their ability to influence the

⁵⁹ Refer to *MC Concept for the Protection of Civilians* and the *ACO Protection of Civilians Handbook*.

population and get/keep their support. From the start, efforts must be made to identify 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. Law enforcement or military solution consistent with applicable law will be required to isolate and defeat the insurgency that refuses political reconciliation. A vital step in defeating or neutralizing insurgent influence is to establish a strong persistent presence amongst the population. Action can then be applied to deter, disrupt and dislocate insurgent activity within each area that has sufficient HNSF-NATO/Coalition forces. The overall security goal should be to defeat the insurgents using all available means, whilst simultaneously using no more force than is absolutely necessary. At national level, careful consideration should be given to the need to control or even close, borders and coastlines/territorial waters. 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 efforts and considerable resources. The impact on the entire population of closing borders and restraining physical movement should also be given careful consideration before decided on.

g. **Operate within the international and applicable domestic law.** Forces conducting COIN must operate within the law as this is what distinguishes them from the insurgents. Whenever possible, legally and ethically feasible—no abusive conduct or grossly inadequate facilities—searches and detentions should be conducted by adequately-trained HNSF, with subsequent prosecutions conducted in local courts, even if this results in a low conviction rate. Corrections facilities and procedures conforming to Human Rights Law hamper radicalization and foster reconciliation. As in all military operations, the provision of security for facilities and personnel is a military commander's decision. In an armed conflict, all operations with detainees and captured persons⁶⁰ are subject to the LOAC/IHL and other applicable laws and agreements. Below the threshold of an armed conflict—mere internal disturbances and tensions, such as riots, isolated and sporadic acts of violence—the legal requirements concerning detainees and captured persons are based on the individual case—usually according to the mandate and the national law. Insurgents will do everything within their power to undermine the authority and legitimacy of the HN government and HNSF. This may include attempting to provoke an overreaction, fostering frustration with the existing legal constraints. Illegal activity or human rights abuses by forces conducting COIN are likely to seriously undercut the overall progress and likelihood of success of the operation. The speed and reach of modern communications and media make this matter more critical than ever.

⁶⁰ The facilities for detainees and captured persons are covered by AJP-2.5 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Captured Persons, Materiel and Documents*, ATP-3.7.2 *NATO Military Police Guidance and Procedures*; and ATP-3.2.1.1 *NATO Guidance for the Conduct of Tactical Stability Activities and Tasks*.

h. **Prepare for a protracted campaign.** Often insurgencies prolong over the years, rendering effective COIN costly in every aspect. 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, to eliminate, reduce, or at least suppress, a significant number of the root causes of the insurgency. Military commanders must understand that the effects of their actions will take time to materialize and will often stretch beyond their own deployment period.

i. **Learn and adapt.** Success in COIN depends on the capability of a force to learn from, and adapt to, the operating environment and the ever changing dynamics of the insurgency. Forces conducting COIN must be flexible enough to mitigate insurgent's advantage, as they normally seize the initiative to act or operate, and respond to changes in insurgent capabilities, tactics, techniques and procedures, and strategy.

j. **Unity of effort.**⁶¹ Countering an insurgency requires the combined efforts of both civilian and military actors working towards a common political strategy, developed between the Alliance and the HN 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. Recognising the political primacy in COIN, the joint force commander and staff should identify areas of interoperability,⁶² or unity, among all relevant actors as part of a comprehensive approach. This should allow them to focus their CMI on key actors, including the HN government, to share a common understanding of the purpose of the mission, and whenever possible to synchronize efforts towards a shared common outcome.

k. **Adaptive force design.** COIN efforts need to overmatch the insurgency as it evolves. Providing the joint force with the requisite strength and capabilities to concurrently engage the insurgents, protect the population and enable governance and HN capacity-building is paramount. Troop contributing nations should avoid where possible symbolic contributions; successful COIN requires understanding and trust—attributes that require time and commitment to achieve. In the event that short term deployments are unavoidable, NATO/Coalition measures should be considered to mitigate the impact of short-time contingents deployments.

⁶¹ Refer to AJP- 01 *Allied Joint Doctrine—Comprehensive Approach Concept*.

⁶² The ability to act together coherently, effectively and efficiently to achieve Allied tactical, operational and strategic objectives. (NATO Term)

Section 3 - Counter-insurgency approaches and strategies

4.23 As contemporary insurgents may change their approaches and apply different strategies to take advantage of particular circumstances, COIN response should evolve dynamically, as required over the campaign.

4.24 **COIN approaches.** Conducting a center of gravity (CoG) analysis will determine the approach of HN/NATO's response to an insurgency. The tendency is to focus on the military weaknesses of the insurgent, overlooking CoG elements of the populace. Insurgent's ideology may be a more important factor in the fight than military might itself. An approach based on the importance of ideological ideas versus military strength may cause a shift in operational or tactical focus when applied to the plan. It is important to appreciate that insurgent movements will act according to their own interests, values and perspectives, which are likely to be significantly different from NATO's. In this vein it is useful to determine if the CoG relates to the different factions, as well as international organizations (IOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), that must be protected.

4.25 Commanders and staff are to conduct human network analysis⁶³ to determine the insurgent's capabilities and organization to conduct operations. The following chart (Figure 4.1) exemplifies one notional network that would help identify critical vulnerabilities and recommendations to get desired effects.

⁶³ Analysis techniques and methods are further detailed in AIntP-13 *Human Network Analysis and Support to Targeting (HNAT)*.

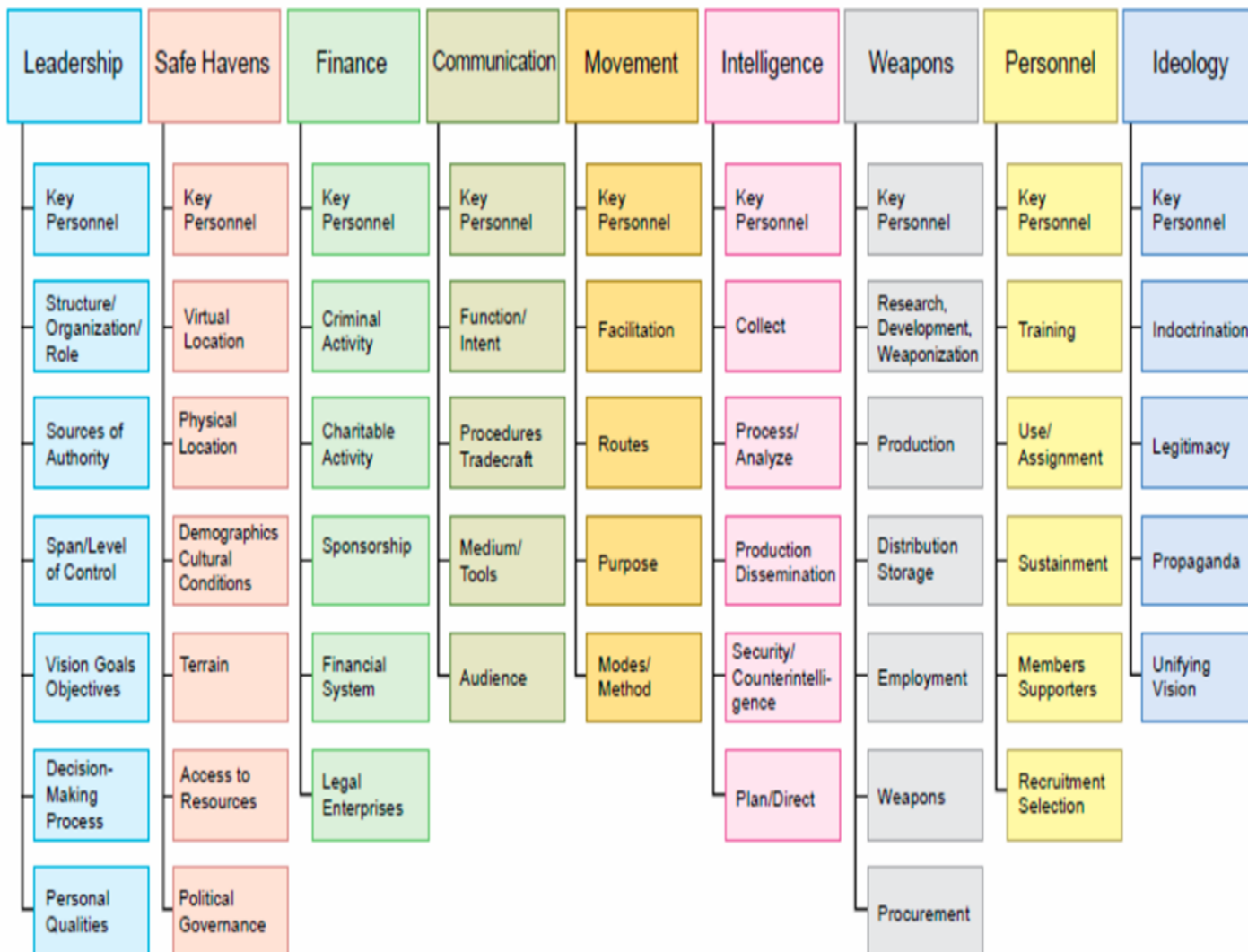


Figure 4.1 – HNA analysis

4.26 The indirect, balanced and direct approaches. The possible generic approaches to execute a COIN operation range from direct to indirect, as depicted in Figure 4.2. The proportion of military power that counterinsurgents apply is the key factor to determine the most pertinent to the situation: a direct approach will provide a greater proportion of security—military and law enforcement—efforts rather than developmental and diplomatic’s. Conversely, an indirect approach will have more diplomatic and developmental efforts than security’s. Careful consideration and coordination should determine which initial approach is appropriate, given the starting conditions. There is no fixed sequence for implementing an operational approach. The preferable approach for a comprehensive COIN operation is the

indirect approach. The chosen approach is adjusted as circumstances change, especially the security situation, and is not a discreet value amongst the three, but rather it is set along dynamically, as the situation dictates.

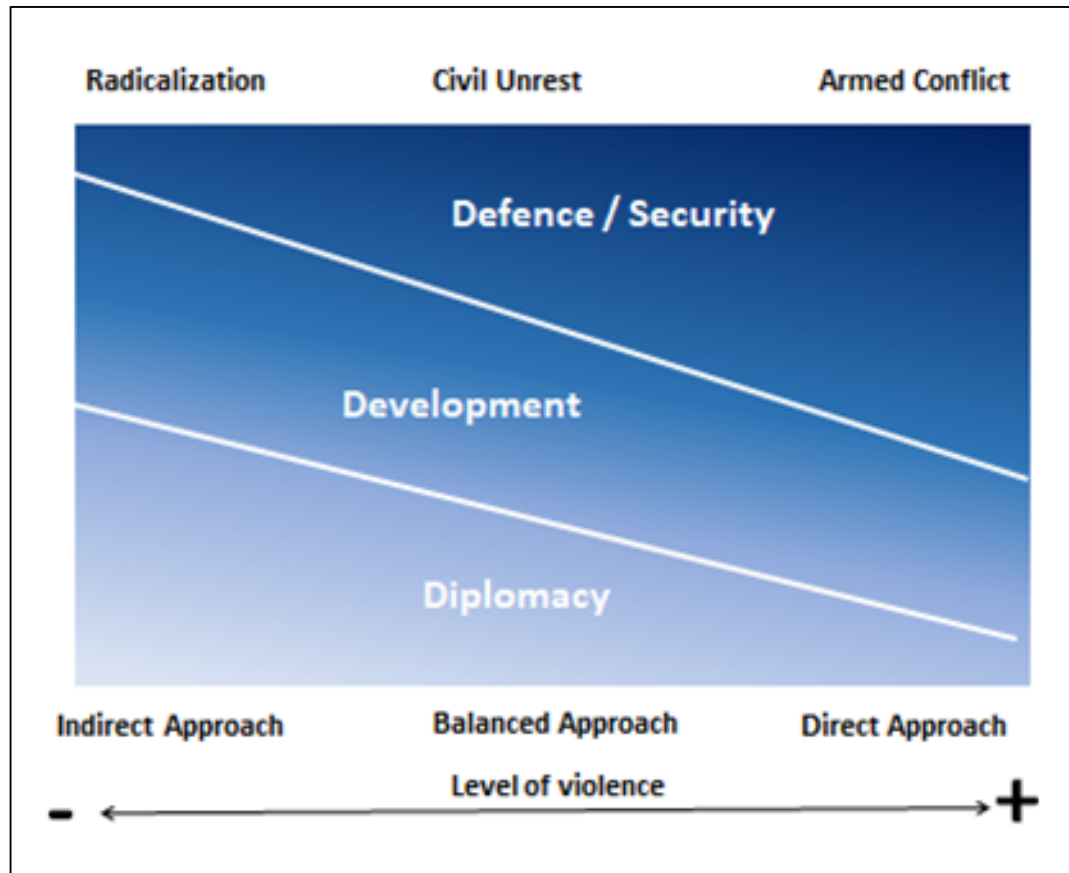


Figure 4.2 – Counter-insurgency approaches

- a. **Indirect.** An indirect approach translates into more developmental and diplomatic efforts than military and law enforcement efforts. The ability to use this indirect approach is heavily dependent on the 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. Advisory efforts are normally an essential part of this indirect approach. The indirect approach is best suited to an early intervention and must be a holistic effort.
- b. **Balanced.** This approach is even more a blend of political, developmental, military and law enforcement efforts. Military efforts remain subordinated to political activities. Removing the core grievances and narrative behind an insurgency is more effective than attacking or destroying the military wing of the insurgency.

c. **Direct.** A direct approach may be required when HN authorities are losing ground in their struggle with an insurgency. The main objective is to establish as wide a secure and safe area as possible. The primary effort is military, to guarantee the protection of the population first, then to attack insurgency's CoG or its principal strength by applying combat power.

4.27 **COIN strategies.** Once HN authorities decide on the approach to confront the insurgency situation, commanders and staff translate it into operational strategies. A COIN operation should be both population-centric—focused on securing and controlling the population—including the HN as a whole and its government—and opponent-centric—focused on isolating and defeating a particular insurgent movement. To be successful, the counter-insurgent must consider both in dynamic balance, as the local situation dictates.

4.28 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 a challenge, often politically controversial, which involves managing a series of events that are extremely difficult to interpret. It often requires more resources and time than initially anticipated. In particular, it can be very difficult to estimate and predict in terms of commitment, such as time and cost—financial, political capital, military resources and human lives. 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.

4.29 It may happen that the state afflicted by an insurgency has proven a biased actor. Alliance's forces should not contribute to taking sides in internal military and political feuds. Their support should be conditioned to the HN commitment towards reforms, countering corruption and fostering the rule of law, under the mandate given by the United Nations or terms expressed by the invitation made by the HN government, in accordance with the international law. Thorough and thoughtful assessment by Alliance commanders is of the essence to prevent such unintentional misuse of Alliance's forces.

4.30 The capabilities required to conduct a COIN operation will be drawn from across the full range available to NATO, be they warfighting, security or peace support. The force mix will depend upon the approach taken in response to the operational environment.

4.31 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 may be tasked as an enabler to provide security and contribute to stabilization that can mitigate some drivers of conflict. Military activities could also entail contribution to humanitarian assistance, as a last resort—in accordance with Interagency Standing Committee guidelines; peace support; and reconstruction of fragile states through capacity building. If the level of threat and violence in the joint operations area would prevent civilian organizations from performing their critical development and capacity building tasks, the military could set conditions for them to successfully deploy their capabilities, while understanding their mandates and

working modalities. Alliance military commanders should anticipate the need for significant civil-military cooperation and liaison with all other military and non-military actors, in addition to the HN authorities.

4.32 Commanders must visualize how a campaign or operation is likely to evolve over time, in light of changing circumstances and in cooperation with a diverse group of civilian and military actors throughout their assigned areas of operations. However, commanders must establish a shared understanding of all aspects of the comprehensive approach with all other military and civilian participants, due to their potential impact upon the operational environment. Success at all levels is likely to depend on commanders establishing this understanding.

Section 4 - Military lines of effort

4.33 **General.** The aim of the military contribution—including SP—to COIN is achieved through the fulfilment of the following objectives, amongst others.

- a. Protect the population.
- b. Isolate the insurgent and counter the insurgent's narrative.
- c. Counteract the insurgent's subversive strategy.
- d. Defeat the insurgent's armed organization.
- e. Support HN capacity building—including SFA and SP.
- f. Assist other organizations—in keeping with the principle of unity of effort.

4.34 Achieving these objectives will contribute to successful attainment of the end state and hopefully enable an acceptable political resolution of the conflict. They are further explained below.

- a. **Protect the population.** The joint force commander should identify those types of operations where military forces may participate, understanding that military contribution to some—e.g. humanitarian assistance—may be a last resort, because the HN government has primary responsibility. Providing protection for the population may stimulate economic activity and support longer-term development and governance reform. It may generate local population's confidence in their security situation and create 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 amongst the population and for their support. COIN forces should seek to earn respect, to prevent the insurgent from gaining more influence and security control, and to

re-connect the population with their government—provided the government is perceived as dependable.

b. **Isolate the insurgent and counter the insurgent's narrative.** Defeating an insurgency requires NATO/Coalition forces to isolate the insurgent from the general population, from their supporting section of the population, and from their external support. This will help limit insurgent's freedom of action and cut off their lifelines, while providing the counter-insurgent with freedom of action for subsequent military action. Isolating the insurgent disrupts their ability to maintain the needed level of recruitment, weapons, materiel, funding, intelligence and space—sanctuaries, safe havens or places. With regards to the physical isolation, when targeting insurgents, it is crucial to develop a clear picture of all actors in the operating environment, to distinguish them from the others, as required by the LOAC/IHL principle of distinction. Denying insurgent's access to safe havens, sanctuaries, and to their supply routes, is key to any COIN operation. This will require a high level of political and military cooperation and coordination. Forces conducting COIN may need to carry out operations to deny insurgent movement, possibly in partnership with neighbouring countries or the global community. This peripheral posture, which could contribute to regional stability, may be enhanced by regional actors' situational awareness of insurgency affairs and, in turn, support the legitimacy of NATO/Coalition's presence in the region. Psychological isolation will be achieved through psychological operations. Their basic goals in the COIN context are to:

- create a behavioural change in the insurgent by instilling doubt of a successful outcome, creating confusion inside the insurgency, and encouraging the belief that working with the HN provides a better chance of achieving goals, ultimately compelling them to leave the insurgency;
- reinforce the commitment of friendly target audiences and counter the insurgent narrative; and
- deprive the insurgency of the support and cooperation of uncommitted or undecided audiences.

c. **Counteract the insurgent's subversive strategy.** Because insurgencies draw on grievances in local areas and seek credit for successful solutions, counter-insurgents must identify and address these shortcomings and efforts. This may involve interdicting insurgent's organization activities and strategic communications, and make use of CIMIC activities to gain thorough and actionable understanding of the civil environment.

d. **Defeat the insurgent's armed organization.** COIN efforts should focus on cutting off 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 could be to defeat the insurgency in full, 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. Defeating armed organizations may include destabilizing the organization through undermining internal linkages, increasing internal dysfunctions, and targeting the political and administrative leadership structures and personnel.

e. **Support HN capacity building—including SFA and SP.** HN's capacity-building is vital to effectively fighting an insurgency and should be seen as the optimal solution. HNSF will, when sufficiently trained, need to be the lead security agency, with NATO forces supporting them and allowing thus the drawdown of external forces providing assistance. However, while the provision of security is a necessary activity in COIN, it will not defeat an insurgency on its own.

f. **Assist other organizations.** COIN effort is comprehensive in nature. Dealing with the insurgency will most likely demand comprehensive solutions and a lengthy commitment from the international community. NATO military and SP contribution to COIN efforts includes a physical component for security, safety and law and order activities, but it also entails a conceptual component, that will be offered to support HN government endeavours.

Section 5 - Counter-insurgency conceptual operations frameworks

4.35 Operations frameworks allow commanders, staff and other actors to share a common understanding of the situation and the operational objectives to be achieved that contribute to the strategic objectives. They also place the military effort into the context of supporting a whole-of-government effort. These analytical tools help achieve the requisite unity of effort, adapting dynamically operations design to the operating environment, and are used as a reference by tactical commanders to translate them into effects, and thus develop their own operations design.

4.36 The preferred NATO operations framework is composed of the following joint activities: shape – engage – exploit – protect – sustain, although in COIN operations, shape – secure – develop (SSD) is deemed very useful. SSD portrays the ability of non-military personnel to carry out their activities in support of governance and law and order, the provision of essential services, and the overall development of local society. The establishment of a safe and secure environment is paramount, and a prerequisite for other activities to flourish. SSD framework help visualize COIN efforts from the security standpoint, allowing users to

understand the relative importance of shape, secure and develop lines of operations within the joint operations area (JOA).

4.37 **The SSD framework.** The SSD framework provides a template for coherent oversight of the joint operations area. The framework is displayed in Figure 4.3—showing a balanced instance—and it is not a list of sequential tactical core functions; rather, it emphasizes visually the relative importance of the three constituent elements in a given situation, combining NATO, HN authorities and non-military actors' activities. For the military instrument of power it encompasses offensive, defensive, stability and enabling activities.

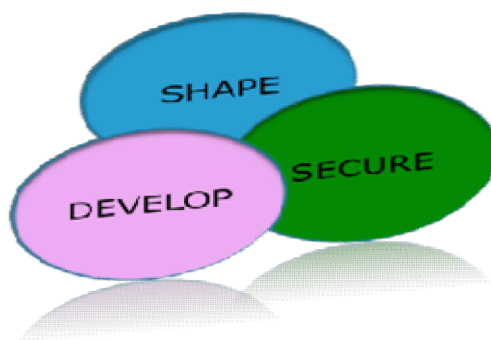


Figure 4.3 – The SSD framework

- a. **Shape.** Shaping is the ability to influence and inform the perceptions, allegiances, attitudes, actions and behaviours of all actors and audiences in the JOA and abroad. Engagements that can be identified in the areas include: key leader engagement; psychological operations; engagement of local population and media; and maintenance or promotion of the legitimacy of the HN, including through strategic communications.
- b. **Secure.** Security engagements aim to provide the entire population with the opportunity to go about their daily lives without fear of violence. Securing engagements in a comprehensive manner contribute to separate insurgents from the population, creating a SASE for tasks like support to government or stabilization projects.
- c. **Develop.** Development operations, as a coordinated governmental action, generally involve long-term activities and build on the opportunity that security offers. HN government should be firmly in lead, supported by the Allied/Coalition's efforts and effective communication with the population. Development is primarily a civilian responsibility and, where possible, such activities should have a civilian leadership. Commanders need to be clear about what they can achieve in development terms and the effect it will have. Such actions may include: developing cooperation—economy,

infrastructure, social welfare; promoting stability in areas of operations; advising, training, and mentoring the HNSF; helping develop better governance; and maintaining or promoting the legitimacy of government authorities. An appropriate balance between 'secure' and 'develop' will demonstrate tangible signs of progress, provide security, legitimize the HN government and provide improved prospects for the community.

4.38 **Variations in the framework.** The conceptual SSD framework describes the essential lines of operations of a general COIN approach, and the main activities in which NATO/Coalition forces may be involved—operations themes. It is explicitly not a sequence. The three lines of operations are interrelated and interdependent. Action taken in support of any one is likely to have an impact on the other two.

4.39 Based on the situation but also on the availability of resources, the SSD framework may vary within the joint operations area—see Figure 4.4. These variations are acceptable as long as they sit within the overall guiding principles: political factors have primacy over military's; military operations support coordinated government actions; operations put population's security first and gain and secure popular support.

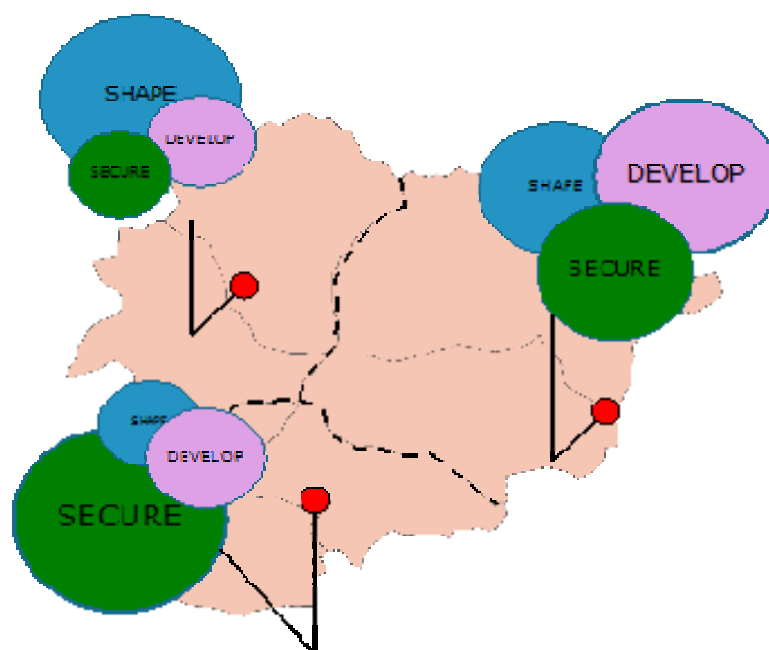


Figure 4.4 - Variations in SSD framework within the joint operations area

Section 6 - Additional conceptual frameworks used in counter-insurgency

4.40 SSD will normally be used in conjunction with other analytical frameworks, like the functional framework (find – fix – strike – exploit) and the geographic framework (deep – close – rear), which describes where and when activities take place in relation to the force.

4.41 **Clear – hold – build (CHB) framework**,⁶⁴ at tactical level, assists commanders and staff to exert oversight of operations meant to seize an area from insurgent control, secure the population and allow the restoration of the HN government's control, maintaining or promoting its legitimacy. In this framework, visualizing tactical activities' inter-relation in purpose streamlines their synchronization on the ground in a dynamic way, allowing for a swift change of activity if needed, according to the situation.

4.42 The CHB tactical framework is linear and embedded within the 'secure' phase of the operational level (SSD). It helps visualize the clearance of insurgents from the area in question; when control of this area is achieved, and how host nation's control and public support are developed, setting the conditions for the next operational level phase—develop (SSD).

Section 7 - Joint functions and other considerations

4.43 **Joint functions**.⁶⁵ The joint force commander must determine the capabilities required for the joint force. Joint functions are: manoeuvre, fires, command and control, intelligence, information, sustainment, force protection and civil-military cooperation.

4.44 **Manoeuvre**. It is critical that the force conducting COIN has a manoeuvre plan to gain positional advantage in respect to the insurgent's, from which force can be threatened or applied to provide adequate levels of security for the population. Those efforts should align with the overall politico-military strategy, but to be effective they should 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.

4.45 Within a COIN environment, much of the manoeuvre capability will consist of forces conducting presence patrols amongst the civilian population in order to dislocate and disrupt insurgent's activities and hamper/nullify their influence. Such tactics also help monitor the population, control movement, disrupt criminal activity, protect civilian police forces and other agencies, and collect intelligence.

4.46 **Fires**. Fires include a wide variety of lethal and non-lethal capabilities applied in support of the force conducting COIN. Coordinated, synchronized and discriminate use of all fire sources is key to protecting the operating force. Fires must be precise and delivered against insurgent's critical vulnerabilities and assets—such as command and control nodes, fighting and logistic sustainment capabilities—to neutralize them while considering and applying LOAC/IHL and appropriate rules of engagement. Fire support enhances freedom of manoeuvre of a force conducting COIN, and can be delivered by joint fire support assets provided by land, air and sea. Fires will also include offensive electronic warfare and cyber attack operations to disrupt insurgents communications, plans and actions. To be truly

⁶⁴ For details see ATP-3.4.1.1 *Guidance for the Application of Tactical Military Activities in Counter-insurgency*.

⁶⁵ See for detail AJP-3 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*.

effective, fire support requires proper planning and executing procedures—targeting processes—to reduce the risk of collateral damage to a minimum. Non-lethal weapons can greatly enhance the range of available options and help reduce fatalities. Diversity of fires resources—HNSF/NATO/Coalition—implies that there is an even stricter requirement for common operating procedures.

4.47 **Command and control.** Command and control encompasses the exercise of authority and direction by a commander over assigned and attached forces to accomplish the mission. The commander must develop and train a proactive and agile staff to create opportunities and seize them immediately. To do so, command and control must allow for tactical initiative, as enabled by the concept ‘mission command’.

4.48 A successful COIN campaign will depend on the lowest-level tactical commanders’ understanding of the situation, their mission and the granted initiative and confidence to undertake actions to disrupt insurgents and secure the population. Thus, mission command philosophy must be encouraged down to the lowest levels of command.

4.49 **Intelligence.** Intelligence gathering by a NATO/Coalition force also must rely on, and fuse, information from human networks and intelligence services from a variety of 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 requirements of more than just those of a deployed force.

4.50 Despite the advances in technology-based collection networks, much information and intelligence can be gained by presence patrols and their daily contact with the population. Intelligence requirements should be understood by commanders at the lowest levels so that they may collect against them, gaining both general and specific information.

4.51 **Information.** The struggle for dominance in the cognitive effect’s dimension is a constant necessity for NATO/Coalition forces in COIN, particularly when insurgents rely on using information to manipulate public opinion. Perceived ‘reality’ and ‘truth’, in this context, are subjective and relative. In this way, hype and distortions can influence what the population believes to be true, and the Alliance must provide the population with unbiased information as well as a competing narrative and interpretation of events.

4.52 Insurgents use propaganda to manipulate the media and public perception to their own advantage. Therefore, NATO forces need to counter insurgent’s using the media and being proactive and quick 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 objective truth. This naturally could give the insurgent the advantage, which must be countered by a more agile, responsive and forward-leaning organization.

4.53 Information must be actively employed and synchronized with intelligence, psychological operations, CIMIC and military public affairs activities to accomplish the following:

- inform the population over how the HN is addressing the grievances and root causes of the insurgency;
- create favourable perceptions of the HN government's legitimacy and its capabilities, obtaining local, regional and international support for COIN operations;
- publicize insurgent violence and criminal activities, and warn the population that they will be subject to insurgent's propaganda;
- discredit insurgent's propaganda and provide a more attractive and reassuring alternative to the insurgent's ideology and narrative;
- provide a favourable narrative that supports the legitimate role of the NATO-led forces; and
- persuade the HN population that the solution presented through the COIN narrative is the better long-term alternative.

4.54 Information planning is synchronized and nested within the overall plan developed for each operation. It should also reflect a dominant narrative agreed upon amongst NATO/Coalition joint force commander and the HN authorities for both the civilian and military elements of the COIN operation. Successfully executing information activities also requires early detailed information activities planning, coordination and de-confliction with all appropriate participants, seeking a unified outcome. Uncoordinated information activities can compromise, complicate, negate or harm other activities. 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, HN government's policies and the operation's objectives.

4.55 Psychological operations (PSYOPS) are planned activities using methods of communication and other means directed at approved audiences to influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviour. It is necessary to understand the motivation of various target audiences to shape their perceptions, affect their will and persuade them to accept the desired outcome. PSYOPS, as a capability, constitutes a key communication activity of military engagement in the information environment with regard to local and regional audiences.

4.56 The three basic objectives of PSYOPS in COIN are to:

- create a behavioural change of the insurgent, in order to leave the insurgency;

- reinforce the commitment of friendly audiences; and
- deprive the insurgency of the support and cooperation of uncommitted or undecided audiences—general population, and in particular, sympathizers.

4.57 Forces conducting PSYOPS play a vital role in capitalizing on the operations effects of the joint force before the local population. 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. They also possess a unique capability to analyze 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, press, television/video, news and social media, the world wide web, direct communication and other activities—in direct support to and disposal of, the operational commander.

4.58 COIN often requires the use of existing or new technologies to solve tactical problems. Examples are the use of biometrics to identify insurgents, persistent wide-area surveillance to limit freedom of movement and action, SIGINT/EW⁶⁶—for operations including the monitoring of mobile phone networks—and tactical site exploitation for intelligence purposes.

4.59 **Sustainment.** Sustainment is more than executing classic logistics activity in support of a military force. It is likely to require a greater ability to leverage contracts and services which contribute to capacity building and narrative. The capacity of HNSF to sustain themselves must also feature in thinking. Sustainment activities include, for example, delivering essential goods, such as water, food, medicines, shelter/tents or fuel, but also providing emergency transportation and maintaining critical infrastructure to support individuals in refugee camps or small, isolated communities.

4.60 Environmental protection and energy management can ensure protection of resources and reduce their depletion for the local population and own force requirements. Developing and stimulating the local enterprises that use reusable and recyclable materials assists in fostering the economy and protection of the natural environment.

4.61 Some challenges that sustainment in COIN needs to overcome are:

- a. Within the JOA, areas of operations (AOOs) and sectors are neither contiguous nor linear; forces conducting COIN are usually dispersed.
- b. AOOs may be very wide and compartmented. Applying medical evacuation protocols may require a significant air capability, including crews and air medical teams.

⁶⁶ SIGINT: Signal Intelligence. EW: Electronic Warfare.

- c. COIN efforts are usually protracted in time and sustainment needs to be planned for a continued provision.
- d. Some sustainment activities can be outsourced to civilian 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 planning of combat forces' logistic requirements.
- f. Lines of communications could be insufficient, extended, and threatened. Security of lines of communications must be included in the force protection plan.
- g. HN authorities may not be able to provide all or any of the required sustainment capacity in terms of infrastructure, supply of services and materiel, and medical services and resources.

4.62 **Force protection (FP).** The benevolence—active acceptance—within the local population of COIN operations and NATO/Coalition forces is a key factor to FP. An accountable HN administration and the upholding of the rule of law,⁶⁷ is conducive to better acceptance by the population, which in turn might become willing to contribute to FP, including by exchanging information. Implemented FP 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.

4.63 Insurgents know that any human or materiel loss of either real or symbolic value can weaken the political will to pursue a successful COIN operation. To this end NATO/Coalition forces can expect to be the target of a variety of attacks carried out by the insurgent in the form of suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices (IEDs); stand-off weapons, such as rockets or weaponized drones; the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), including chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN); and the 'insider threat', posed by insurgents impersonating HNSF personnel.

4.64 Operational experience shows that law enforcement stations are usually smaller and lack the manpower and FP measures of military sites; this can make them particularly attractive targets for insurgent attack.

4.65 These are important elements to factor into the FP equation:

- a. **The improvised explosive device threat.** A common insurgent's strategy of attacking forces conducting COIN is through the wide and deliberate use of IEDs, which can represent one of the main threats. Insurgents have traditionally relied on IED to counter conventional forces. IEDs have the capability, if not countered and

⁶⁷ Based on an independent and fair judiciary and law enforcement agencies and corrections, and strengthened by building integrity and internal affairs mechanisms.

neutralized, of slowing 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 must be equipped with suitable capabilities, but more effectively and widely by the network that places the devices, enabling the attack. It is essential to understand how IED networks operate, what are their strengths and vulnerabilities, and what actions the joint force commander could take to disrupt these networks. This involves focusing intelligence on examining in detail the pertinent threat networks and using that analysis to degrade the insurgent's combat power.⁶⁸

b. **WMD/CBRN threat.** NATO forces will have the ability to conduct operations where there are hazards posed by WMD/CBRN. Because of the potentially devastating consequences of their use, robust passive defence and mitigation measures must be in place to enable NATO/Coalition forces and appropriate civilian agencies to continue effective operations in a CBRN environment. The use of chemical and biological production facilities by insurgents, such as clandestine laboratories, can operate within a limited space—like one-car garage—using common dual-use or improvised equipment. Thus, swift accurate intelligence to prevent insurgents' access and acquisition to basic and related components, as well as to eliminate their capability to research, develop, test, produce, stockpile and traffic in WMD is of the utmost importance.

c. **The insider threat.** Although not unique to COIN operations, insider attacks provide a strategic, operational and tactical advantage to insurgent forces and terrorist organizations. This can be particularly effective in partnering environments, allowing insurgent's exploitation by claiming an insider attack regardless of whether the subsequent evidence supports this assertion. At all levels, the insider threat can disrupt not only the Alliance's objectives but also undermine the overall efforts of the international community. Insider attacks are part of the means an insurgent will use to test the political will and solidarity of nations' participating in the Alliance's efforts. At strategic level, they erode the validity of the mission and may create increased friction between senior Alliance's political and military leaders and the HN. At operational level, they increase burden on intelligence and FP assets, and pose an operational security risk. At tactical level they stress the bonds nurtured between Alliance/Coalition forces and HNSF. A successful insider attack can therefore have a detrimental impact on NATO/Coalition forces and international public opinion, highlighting the vulnerability of military personnel operating in the midst of HNSF. This presents a dilemma: Alliance's forces need to operate and support training in proximity of HNSF to be most effective but this makes them more vulnerable to insider threats. Careful recruiting of personnel for HNSF should reduce the insider threat and also minimize incidents. Training HNSF with respect for their cultural background should strengthen mutual

⁶⁸ See also AJP-3.15 *Countering Improvised Explosive Devices*, *AlntP-10 Technical Exploitation*, *AintP-13 Human Network Analysis and support to Targeting (HNAT)*, *AlntP-15 Countering Threat Anonymity: Biometrics in Support of NATO Operations and Intelligence*.

understanding, cooperation and trust, which may help early detection of deviating behaviour by infiltrators. The implementation of the vetting process of partner HNSF personnel is recommended. Training own specialists in detecting infiltrators in the HNSF should help preventing and, if required, resolving these attacks.⁶⁹

d. **Air assets protection.** 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 the use of air assets. Aircraft and facilities must therefore be protected from both air and ground attacks. FP measures need to mitigate these risks and will include the aspect 'securing access to the space'.⁷⁰

4.66 **Civil-military interaction and civil-military cooperation.** Successful COIN depends on the joint force contributing to an environment in which non-military actors can effectively operate, especially with respect to economic efforts and development. This consists also in providing a security framework, a SASE that enables other activities to take place. COIN planning must integrate factors such as basic economic needs and essential services for the whole population—sewage, water, electricity, sanitation or healthcare—sustaining key social and cultural institutions, and other aspects that contribute to the society's essential quality of life.

4.67 Integrating political, security and economic activities in COIN frequently requires military forces to use a wider range of civilian skills and capabilities than they typically train for or inherently possess. As a result, coordination, cooperation and collaboration become more important as the joint force commander seeks to gain unity of effort. COIN planning at all levels should include representatives from the HN government and relevant actors. Military participants should support civilian efforts, including those of IOs, NGOs, interagency partners, local organizations, including women's organizations, and other friendly actors.

4.68 Deployment of gender advisor teams could support local women to participate in the development of COIN strategies, implementing the peace process, protect them from conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, promoting women's inclusion in electoral systems and decision-making, and promoting and protecting their rights in legal and judicial procedures.⁷¹

4.69 **Measurement of effects.** Success in COIN is difficult to define, but attempts must be made at the outset of the campaign to identify the required end-state and articulate suitable indicators to monitor the way to that outcome. Working with the HN may mean that NATO is required to feed data into other agencies' results frameworks, or may have to report measures

⁶⁹ More information on countering insider threats is available in ATP-3.16.1 *Countering Insider Threats*, nested in AJP-3.16 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Security Force Assistance*.

⁷⁰ For details see ATP-3.3.6 *NATO Force Protection Doctrine for Air Operations*, and ATP-1.1.2 *Definition and Aim of Force Protection for Air Operations*.

⁷¹ Refer to United Nations Security Resolution 1325 *Women, Peace and Security*, and *NATO/EAPC Action Plan on the Implementation of Women, Peace and Security*.

of effectiveness through the military chain of command. Good indicators are measurable, reliable, feasible, useful and disaggregated. For each indicator, an initial baseline measurement needs to be established, a target identified and milestones of progress to target set. It will be ensured that the military measures of effect are integrated into the wider strategic results framework, in a way that avoids duplication of effort and presents a single and reliable version of the situation. Therefore, indicators should be set at the strategic level and passed down to the operational and tactical levels. There is frequently a tension between tactical, operational and strategic success, in that it is possible to 'win the battles but lose the war'. Poorly defined or over ambitious strategic outcomes can mean that tactical execution is successful, but the desired outcome is not achieved. If this is identified it needs to be escalated up the chain of command.

Section 8 - Constraints and restraints

4.70 **Constraints.** 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 execution, the efforts of joint, interagency, multinational entities and HN authorities are integrated towards a common purpose.

4.71 Insurgent opportunities, motives and means typically cut across the spectrum of lethal and non-lethal tactics of force employment, so failure to integrate them will, at best, render the COIN effort less effective and, at worst, lead to counterproductive impact 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. If insurgents can 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.

4.72 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 HN government's legitimacy. The rule of law governs the conduct of the forces executing COIN operations, transparently and consistently following its own rules even if they include emergency measures that curtail certain rights and expand the authority of HNSF. For HNSF, rule of law means that they are accountable to applicable national and international law. This will normally demonstrate the political credibility of the HN government and its allies to the population and the insurgents.

4.73 **Restraints.** Asymmetry and applying force discriminately represent the main restraints for NATO/coalition forces. Asymmetry, which often characterizes the operational methods of insurgents, confers on them a certain strategic impunity and many tactical advantages. It affords them the possibility of using both uncertainty and brutality, while policy and political agreement may restrict NATO/Coalition forces from using and applying the full spectrum of political and operational mechanisms against the insurgent.

Insurgents will always wish HNSF and COIN forces to fight the battle the insurgent is most suited to, enticing from them an all-out application of force. In doing so they will use the population as both a cover and a shield to generate circumstances whereupon the opponent is responsible for collateral damage, which imposes on HNSF and COIN forces a requirement for thorough, tight and fine-grain planning and execution process.

Section 9 - Host nation security forces capacity building

4.74 **Security sector reform.**⁷² Security sector reform (SSR) is often vital to rebuilding the legitimacy of the HN government; yet, only HN authorities can reform their security sector. Allied forces should seek to provide assistance and guidance to the reform process, but HN authorities' buy-in and their ownership of the SSR process are of the essence. NATO's contribution to SSR is underpinned by SFA, SP and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) activities.

4.75 SSR depends on thorough planning and assessment. Through unified action participants consider the unique capabilities, contributions and perspectives of other participants, including those of women. Unified action is the coordination, synchronization, and/or integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to achieve unity of outcome. The ensuing plan aims for a practical pace of reform and accounts for the political and cultural context of the situation, available resources and capabilities, while balancing the human capacity to deliver change against a realistic timeline. The SSR plan must reflect HN culture, sensitivities and historical conceptions of security. It will not seek to implement a 'NATO-like' paradigm for the security sector, understanding that this model may not be appropriate. As with the broader campaign plan, the SSR plan should pursue to address the underlying root causes of conflict while preventing new or escalating future security crises.

4.76 HN's degree of security development is the bottom line consideration in SSR planning, that includes (re)building appropriate HNSF, judicial system, law enforcement and correctional organizations. SFA and SP may contribute to build up or improve local forces' capabilities.

4.77 **Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration.** DDR seeks to encourage insurgents to defect and quit an ongoing insurgency, and remove post-conflict sources of instability by ensuring that fighters and their weapons are taken out of the conflict and provided with a transition package so that they can return to their civilian life and forego returning to arms. The reintegration could envision channeling former insurgents into HNSF roles, including the local police, after a proper vetting, and SP reinforcement activities and tasks.

4.78 **Interoperability between NATO's forces and HNSF.** NATO's contribution to COIN cannot be considered an Alliance's solo effort, as success can only be achieved through

⁷² Refer to AJP-3.4.5 *Allied Joint Publication for the Military Contribution to Stabilization*.

involving the HNSF, who need to deploy on the front line to defeat insurgent forces. To enable HNSF to participate in, and eventually lead, operations there is a strong requirement for evaluating all factors and planning all aspects. HNSF include military forces, which are the focus of SFA, and police forces, which are SP's focus.

4.79 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 their nation building process. Cooperating with local women's organizations to empower women could also be critical to increase their participation and representation.

4.80 **Security Force Assistance.**⁷³ SFA encompasses all NATO activities to develop and improve, or directly support, local military forces and their associated institutions, and it is undertaken upon HN's request. SFA activities can be provided during any phase of an operation, across the full range of operations and the entire spectrum of crisis response scenarios—e.g. insurgency, stabilization, humanitarian assistance, and peace support. They require a political, financial and long-term commitment to develop and improve HN's capacity and capabilities through generate, organize, train, enable, advise and mentor activities.

4.81 NATO may not be the only organization providing assistance to develop local security forces or contributing to COIN. Commanders must ensure that coordination measures are in place to synchronize activities, mitigate gaps and reduce redundancies, ensuring that each SFA activity is tailored to the situation, local conditions and requirements.

4.82 In sum, NATO's trainers, mentors and advisors charged with conducting SFA 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 HNSF to sustain and re-generate themselves over the long-term. SFA units do not replace local forces. SFA activities are tailored to render the local forces capable to regain the control, establish and sustain autonomously a SASE within their national territory, against external and internal threats.

4.83 **Stability Policing.**⁷⁴ Legitimate, accountable, capable, and effective local police forces are as essential for the success of a COIN campaign as the military force. Similarly to SFA supporting the local military forces, SP activities are aimed at developing the local police. These activities need to be nested within an overarching effort of development of the local security forces and, where required, the whole security sector, including judicial and correctional institutions. The locals should contribute to, conduct and ultimately take over internal security responsibilities when the insurgency is neutralized, defeated or a peaceful solution has been identified and implemented. The local police should be fully prepared for it and, most importantly, accepted by the population they are to serve.

4.84 Besides reinforcing the local police, filling a policing gap may require NATO to temporarily replace the local police, when they do not exist or they are unreliable, incapable

⁷³ See AJP-3.16, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Security Forces Assistance*, for additional details.

⁷⁴ See AJP-3.22 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Stability Policing* for additional details.

or unwilling to operate. This entails performing policing activities and tasks in support of the local population until hand-over of responsibility is feasible to either the local police or a follow-on police task force.

4.85 SP forces possess the necessary police expertise and a policing and civilian-oriented mind-set. SP forces can replace and/or reinforce the local police to prevent insurgents to take over law enforcement. In both capacities, NATO SP forces, preferably made up of police professionals such as gendarmerie-type forces and military police, can widely contribute to the overall COIN effort, including:

- providing criminal and law enforcement information and intelligence to support identification of insurgent's human and financial networks, as well as support stemming from sympathizers;
- providing for the police-related security needs of the populace and enforcing the law;
- contributing with non-lethal means—e.g. arrest, seizure of assets and funding—to disrupt insurgents' networks;
- investigating money flows, especially revenue from illicit activities;
- addressing corruption through building integrity;
- supporting cultural property protection; and
- enhancing legitimacy and acceptance of the local police by improving their skills, capabilities, performance and most importantly, their attitude, behaviour and accountability, especially with regards to corruption and human rights abuse.

4.86 **Partnering.** NATO/Coalition forces and HNSF operate together to achieve mission success while building capability, capacity and compliance with the law. Partnering should be the collective result of the 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 collaborative effort which involves carrying out varied tasks towards a common outcome. 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 will overcome extant weaknesses. It requires leadership flexibility and innovation to forge strong relationships between partnering units. Experience shows that partnering between NATO forces and HNSF have been conducive to improved professionalism and overall better performance, as well as a catalyst to building integrity.

4.87 **Military Assistance (MA).** MA consists of a broad category of measures and activities conducted mainly by NATO's special operations forces (SOF) that support, enable, and influence critical friendly forces through training, advising, mentoring, partnering, or

conducting combined and other operations. These operations will be executed by SOF units optimized for this task, to increase the proficiency of HNSF. MA includes, but is not limited to, development and improvement, or directly supporting HNSF; military engagement and interaction with local, regional and national leadership, ministries or organizations; and actions to support and influence the local population or agencies. SOF may also conduct MA in support of SSR—including SFA/SP activities—and/or stabilization missions.

Section 10 - The transition of security responsibilities

4.88 **General.** NATO should transfer back the responsibility of governance and security, in case of having taken over any responsibility on this domain from HN government as soon as practical. This process is enabled by the effective conduct of SSR⁷⁵ measures and must be implemented when the HN security structures are sufficiently well developed. The need for this to occur will be laid out in the campaign plan, and the conditions required to achieve it will be adapted as the campaign progresses. Implementation is likely to be incremental. The requisite conditions 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 coherent planning amongst them is imperative. Figure 4.5 depicts the overall transfer of authority and responsibility process.

⁷⁵ For details see AJP-3.4.5 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Stabilization and Reconstruction, Annex B*.

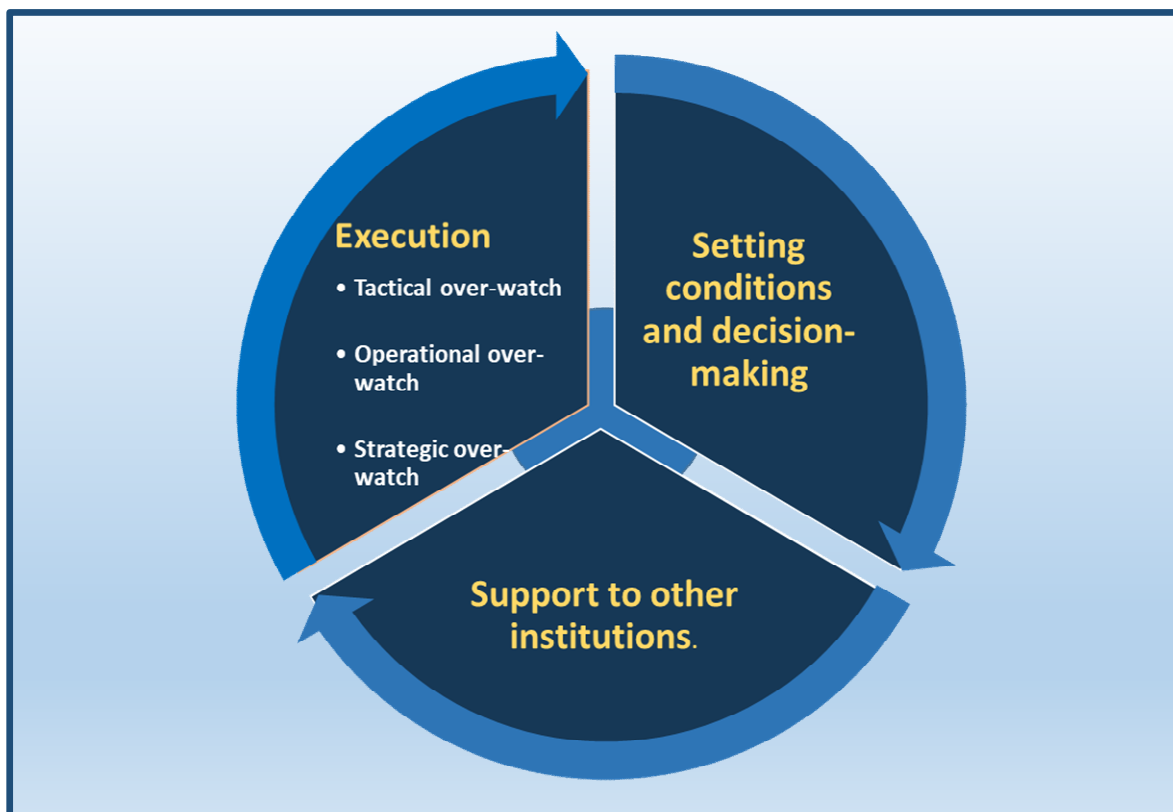


Figure 4.5 - Transfer of governance and security transition process

4.89 **Setting conditions and decision-making.** Generic conditions for the transfer process should be set and agreed upon by the HN government with advice from UN/NATO as part of a comprehensive planning process. This should be based on the clearly expressed premise that the HN authorities and its HNSF will have the ability and competence to operate and that, when they do, it will be within the rule of law principle. These conditions will be linked to the lines of operations, being critical that the HN government be fully involved and has ownership of their design. Above all, the population must see that it is their government that takes the final decision, reflecting their own sovereignty, reinforcing thus the government's legitimacy and its ability to secure and provide for the population. Conditions for re-intervention by NATO will also need to be agreed.

4.90 **Support to other institutions.** The ability to conduct successful transition and transfer of responsibility at the operational level depends upon the ability and capacity of HN government's institutions to operate without support from NATO and other international agencies, as it does on capable and credible HNSF. Self-reliance in these areas is central to the drawdown and eventual withdrawal of NATO/Coalition forces and to maintaining longer-term security and stability.

4.91 There may be a requirement to focus on supporting and facilitating fledgling elected bodies and governance while developing cross-departmental 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. As an example, NATO forces can establish provincial reconstruction teams in this coordinating role. Where specific military teams operated in support of HN government departments at the local/provincial level, plans are to be made to hand over remaining functions to, ideally, the HN's governing bodies at an appropriate stage, in accordance with the lines of operations. CIMIC, CMI and strategic communications⁷⁶—including information operations and public information activities—are key to success.

4.92 **Execution.** As transition progresses, the NATO force's posture will evolve through a number of phases. Changes in this context should be driven by improvements in HNSF capabilities, and designed to promote and support responsibility for security at the local and national levels. These phases⁷⁷ are: tactical, operational and strategic over-watch.

a. **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:

- (1) Representative government at regional level is capable and able to exercise political control over HNSF's activity and further capacity building, with advice from NATO.
- (2) HNSF are effective, operating with advice and assistance from NATO forces.
- (3) Essential services are acceptable or improving, and provide reasonably sustained levels of service, sufficient to preclude widespread civil unrest.
- (4) Operational mentoring and liaison teams and other military embedded trainers are widespread throughout the local security force structure.

b. **Operational over-watch.** The following conditions should apply before a formal transfer to the provincial civil authorities is conducted.

- (1) HN authorities are capable—linked to the appropriate national institutional structures—and able to exercise political control over its security forces' operations and further capacity building with very limited advice from NATO and/or other international parties.

⁷⁶ See *NATO Military Concept for Strategic Communications*.

⁷⁷ A pre-determined set of functional and environmental circumstances need to apply before progress to the next stage is made.

(2) HNSF are able to operate at this level without support, and re-intervention plans are agreed.

(3) The majority of opposition groups are willing to support the government and their leaders advocate engagement with it.

(4) 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 up.

(5) Reconstruction, economic development and inward investment are led by the HN.

(6) NATO planning and coordination support to HNSF is continued. The scale of military embedment is reduced, although some support continues to be guaranteed.

(7) NATO provides appropriate forces at stand-by able support within agreed timescales. Arrangements for this support are regularly practised.

c. **Strategic over-watch.** The following conditions should apply:

(1) Regional and national government are able to exercise political control over military operations and capacity building with very limited advice from NATO at national level.

(2) HNSF can operate fully at strategic level in compliance with HN government guidance.

(3) An accountable system of national governance has been established with opposition groups being represented by political parties.

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

(5) There is a national lead for economic development and inward investment.

(6) National government enjoys bilateral relationships.

(7) NATO retains the ability and infrastructure to intervene to support the HN authorities on call.

Annex A - Paradoxes

A.1 **General.** The following paradoxes are offered to stimulate thinking during planning for, and conducting, operations within a counter-insurgency (COIN) setting, not to limit it. The applicability of 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—see Figure A-1 below. 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 imposing force protection measures on COIN forces 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.

A.3 Operations conducted at the tactical level amongst the population, while attracting high levels of risk, will reflect a will to share that risk with the populace and consequently will help gain their support to defeat the insurgency.

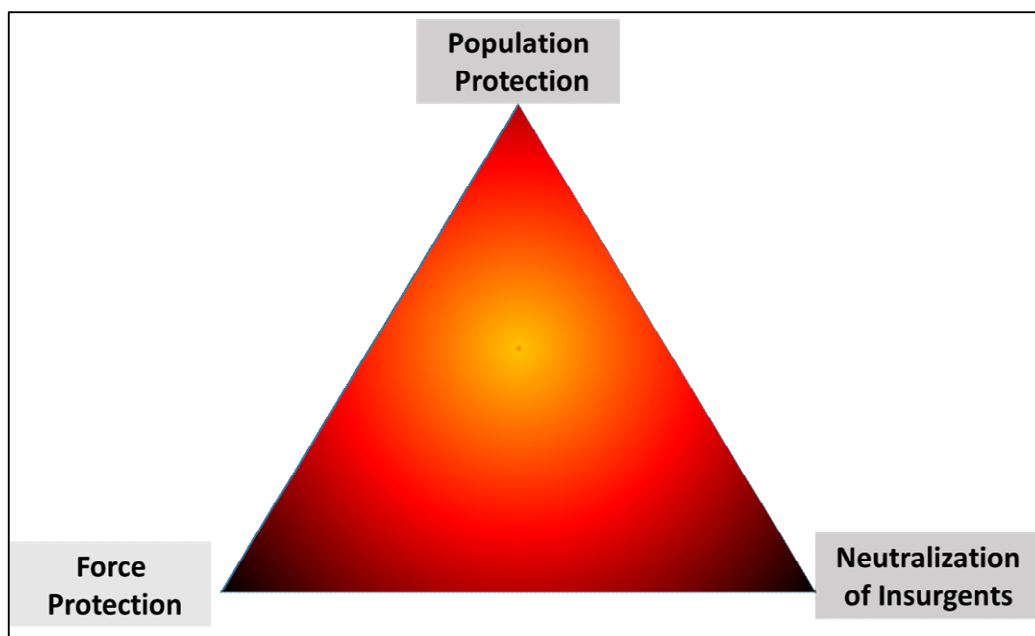


Figure A-1 – The trilemma

A.4 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. 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 ensures compliance with Law of Armed Conflict/International Humanitarian Law and that only intended targets are attained to. The key point for counter-insurgents is to realize 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—is sometimes forgotten at lower levels when in contact. Commanders must establish procedures to achieve a balanced use of force throughout the chain of command to avoid any excessive use of it.

A.5 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 expectations of the population lead to a reduction of the direct military actions by counter-insurgents. Police work becomes prevalent, 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.6 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 human network that communicates constantly. Insurgents quickly adjust to COIN practices and rapidly disseminate information throughout the insurgency. 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 adversaries. The constant development of new tactics, techniques and procedures is paramount. However, it is essential to have a common doctrine and set of tactics, techniques and procedures to provide a shared 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 recipes that can be universally applied—each situation demands a bespoke approach.

A.7 Military tactical success often guarantees nothing. Military success often does not 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 the government in combat may still achieve their strategic objectives because they can win by not losing. Tactical actions, thus, must be linked not only to operational and strategic objectives but also to the HN's essential political goals. Without those connections, lives and resources may be wasted for no real gain.

A.8 Doing nothing may be the best reaction. Insurgents often carry out actions with the primary purpose of enticing the COIN forces to overreact, or at least to react in a way that insurgents can exploit—for example, using more force than 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. This includes the tactical level where withdrawal may contribute more to strategic success than an overreaction.

A.9 Some of the COIN's most appropriate weapons do not shoot. The Alliance often achieves the most meaningful success in garnering public support and legitimacy for the HN authorities with activities that do not systematically involve killing insurgents. Arguably, an important part of the battle is for the people to turn away from the insurgent cause; hence coordinating and synchronizing information activities with efforts along the other lines of operations is critical. While security is essential to set the stage for overall progress, lasting victory comes from a vibrant economy, social justice, political participation and restored hope.

A.10 HN authorities doing something tolerable is often better than the Alliance joint force doing it well. It is just as important to consider who performs an operation as to assess how well it is done. HN authorities must take up ownership of the solution, and this is best done by empowering them to act purposefully, as their capabilities improve. This approach will ensure that the solutions agreed upon have local buy-in and are culturally attuned to the population. While some of these solutions may be suboptimal from a NATO perspective, if they enjoy HN authorities' ownership, they are more likely to endure. The longer that process takes, the more the troop-contributing nations' domestic support is likely to wane, and the more the local population may doubt the ability of their own government and HN security forces to bring about substantive change.

A.11 Cooperation with the insurgents. One of the COIN goals is to find and neutralize subversive elements within the population and to remove their leadership. This could be done by attracting amenable parts of the insurgency movement and using them as means of dividing the insurgency and undermining the more radical or militant components. In some cases, offering amnesty through a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme to former insurgents who display their willingness to cooperate with the state and COIN forces may be an extra motivation to enable reintegration back into society.

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Annex B - Learn and adapt in counter-insurgency

B.1 **General.** In counter-insurgency (COIN) operations, it is vital to implement a continuous learn and adapt cycle—see Figure B-1 below—in the planning and execution of activities, to increase NATO/Coalition force protection and improve the protection of the population, while expanding the capability to isolate and defeat the insurgent.

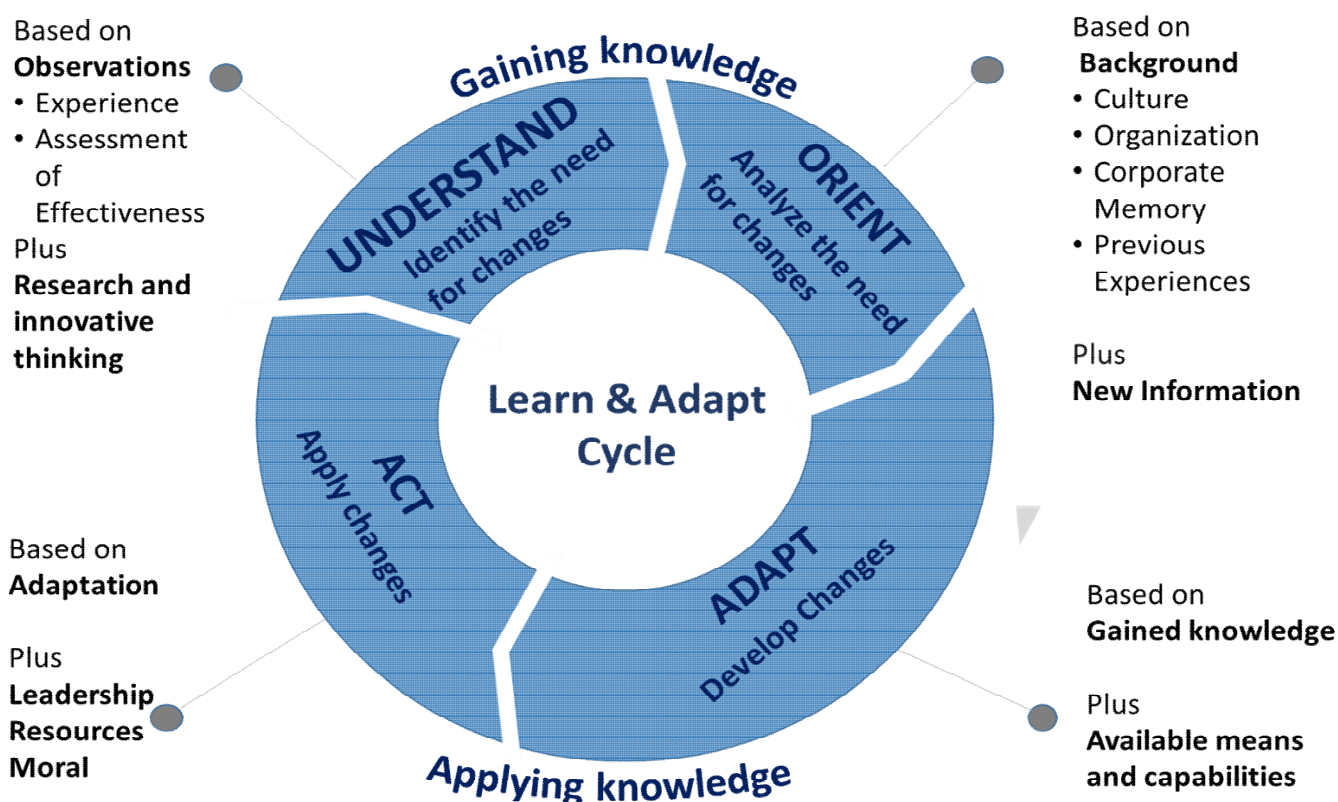


Figure B-1 – Learn and adapt cycle

B.2 Forces conducting COIN operations must continually assess the situation, question every assumption, evaluate chosen courses of action (COAs) 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, leaning heavily on operations assessment and lessons learned efforts. Here are some steps that may help in this process:

- a. Understand the operating environment (OE) and identify the potential need for changes.

- b. Orient—to critically analyze and synthesize the identified needs.
- c. Adapt—to develop required changes in doctrine, organization, training, leadership, materiel, personnel, facilities and interoperability.
- d. Act—to apply the changes, testing their validity within the engagement space.

B.3 Knowledge is gained in the first two steps whereas the last two is where it is applied. Each step builds on the previous one and continuously provides feedback to better understand the OE.

B.4 Momentum in operations, as well as in learning and adapting, is a most powerful tool, to be achieved by either improving NATO/Coalition adaptation process or by slowing down the insurgent's. Swift adaptation requires COIN forces to improve their capability to get into the insurgent's learning and adapting cycle, anticipating their next move. This disrupts their decision-making process, generates confusion and provides COIN forces with the opportunity to gain or maintain the initiative. In essence, adaptability means significantly shortening the time necessary to adjust to each new situation.

B.5 **The importance of anticipation.** Joint force commanders and staff anticipate events to determine the potential reactions to their own actions. The following questions, based on the enhanced understanding gained during analysis of the OE are but an example thereof:

- What are actors' desired end-state and intermediate objectives?
- What tasks will actors try to complete in order to attain their desired end-state and intermediate objectives?
- How will actors attempt to fulfil these tasks?
- What is the likely outcome of actors' prospective actions—to include potential 2nd and 3rd order effects?
- How will actors' desired end-state and intermediate objectives change—if at all—based on these likely outcomes?
- What are likely follow-on COAs?

B.6 As previously discussed, insurgents can swiftly adapt their strategies as the situation changes, combining various strategies as deemed necessary or moving to entirely new ones. A dynamic analysis of possible COAs is essential to stay within the insurgent's decision cycle and retain initiative.

B.7 There are three basic ways to adapt:

a. **Anticipation**, that is the analysis of trends/evolutions of the OE to introduce new methods, schemes, tactics, techniques and procedures, materiel, weapon systems and training programmes for future use. It is based on the forecast of potential futures, informed by experience, lessons, organizational culture and corporate memory.

b. **The best practices/lessons identified/lessons learned cycle**,⁷⁸ consisting in the analysis of current and past facts/experiences to introduce changes in the short term and present.

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

B.8 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-2 below.

Adaptation	Innovation
Adjusting operations plans	Switching operations plans
Revising rules of engagement	Adjusting mandate
Supplementing forces	Surging forces
Retro-fitting equipment	Acquiring new equipment
Adjusting training	Developing new doctrine
Adjusting tactics	New approach to operations

Table B-2 – Effects of adaptation and innovation

⁷⁸ See AJP-3 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*.

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Annex C - Counter-insurgency in an era of global competition

C.1 In times of strategic competition one or more major powers may actively arm and support a belligerent—often, an insurgency. This development becomes not only a tilting factor in the military balance, but also a valuable testbed for new weapons systems and the development of tactics, techniques and procedures, as well as training opportunities to keep military capabilities honed.

C.2 In the current strategic environment conventional armed conflict is perceived as costly and comes with reputational and political risk. Consequently, major powers may seek to apply their instruments of national power below the threshold of armed conflict—as commonly understood by the rules-based international order—to achieve more limited or nuanced objectives. Such objectives might not aim for victory in an armed conflict in a traditional sense, but rather may target regime and social change, in order to expand power and influence or seek an economic advantage.

C.3 Not all regime changes are brought about through a military option, but when a military lever is used, it is carried out by, with, and through segments of the local population, which legitimizes the military action on the world stage. In most instances the brunt of the fighting will be borne by locally organized units, mirroring the supporting major power, and equipped with materiel and weapons systems furnished by supporting security force assistance teams, that also provide military advice and help synchronize operations.

C.4 Major powers' support to an insurgency may materialize in the form of the:

- deployment of special forces, private military security companies and mercenaries;
- fielding of electronic warfare assets, in association with modern artillery;
- use of remotely piloted aircraft to enhance command and control; joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; and joint fires;
- undertaking of offensive cyberspace operations, in cooperation with cybercriminal groups;
- strategic communications campaigns, using social media to spread fake news, misinformation and disinformation;
- use of criminals, terrorists and other irregular actors as proxies, and exploit other groups such as emigrants and internationally displaced persons.

C.5 Above mentioned ways of support underline the importance of mission command. It is imperative that NATO/Coalition forces and the supported host nation security forces fully understand the operating environment (OE) and commanders clearly translate their vision, objectives—outcome—and mission into flexible orders, so as to enable subordinate

commanders to continue operating with little to no guidance from superiors. Key to mission command for subordinates is a clear main task and purpose, together with the commander's intent.

C.6 The following notions may help in understanding the OE where an insurgency backed by a major power could flourish, enabling a better development of the campaign plan, a more accurate design of the necessary joint force, and an adequate orchestration of COIN operations:

- a. Political subversion might be furthered through the insertion/remote interference of agents to launch disinformation operations using mass media, building on ethnic, linguistic and class differences, and drawing on corruption and compromise of local officials. Disruption of on line official and private sector services could make the population lose their confidence in their system's resilience, contributing to confusion and lack of a unified response to the challenge.
- b. Creation of sanctuaries by the insurgency is to be prevented in earnest, particularly if close to a porous and not friendly international border, or international waters. It would be of great value to the insurgency to afford such a lifeline.
- c. In line with NATO's Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area concept, NATO should come in support of a partner or host nation requesting formal aid with necessary resources before it is too late. This encompasses the timely use of instruments of power—diplomatic, information, military and economic—as a whole-of-Alliance effort.

Lexicon

Part 1 – Acronyms and abbreviations

AJP	Allied joint publication
AOO	area of operations
ATP	Allied tactical publication
CBH	clear, build, hold
CBRN	chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear
CMI	civil-military cooperation
CIMIC	civil-military interaction
COA	course of action
CoG	centre of gravity
COIN	counter-insurgency
COP	common operational picture
DDR	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
FP	force protection
GO	governmental organization
HN	host nation
HNSF	host nation security forces
IED	improvised explosive device
IDP	internally displaced persons
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IO	international organization
JIPOE	joint intelligence preparation of the operating environment
JOA	joint operations area
LOAC	Law of Armed Conflict
MA	military assistance
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
OE	operating environment
PMESII-PT	political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical and time
PSYOPS	psychological operations
SASE	safe and secure environment
SFA	security force assistance
SOF	special operations forces
SP	stability policing
SSD	shape, secure and develop
SSR	security sector reform
TTP	tactics, techniques and procedures
UN	United Nations
WMD	weapon of mass destruction

Part 2 – Terms and definitions

battle space / engagement space

The part of the operating environment where actions and activities are planned and conducted. (NATO Agreed)

campaign

A set of military operations planned and conducted to achieve a strategic objective. (NATO Agreed)

centre of gravity – CoG

The primary source of power that provides a commander its strength, freedom of action and/or will to fight. (NATO Agreed)

comprehensive approach

Combining all available political, military and civilian capabilities, in a concerted effort to attain the desired end state. (NATO Agreed)

countering improvised explosive devices – C-IED

The collective efforts to defeat an improvised explosive device system by attacking networks, defeating devices and preparing a force. (NATO Agreed)

counter-insurgency – COIN

A comprehensive civilian and military effort to isolate and defeat an insurgency, create a safe and secure environment, address core grievances, and to enable the promotion of legitimate governance and rule of law. (NATO Agreed)

course of action – COA

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. (NATO Agreed)

cyberspace

The global domain consisting of all interconnected communication, information technology and other electronic systems, networks and their data, including those which are separated or independent, which process, store or transmit data. (NATO Agreed)

effect dimensions

dimensions (admitted)

An analytical construct that translates actions in the engagement space into the physical, virtual and cognitive consequences that these actions may have. (NATO Agreed)

end state

The political-strategic statement of conditions that defines an acceptable concluding situation to be attained at the end of a strategic engagement. (NATO Agreed)

force protection – FP

All measures and means to minimize the vulnerability of personnel, facilities, equipment and operations to any threat and in all situations, to preserve freedom of action and the operational effectiveness of the force. (NATO Agreed)

gender perspective

The consideration of gender-based differences between women and men as reflected in their social roles and interactions, in the distribution of power and the access to resources. (NATO Agreed)

host nation – HN

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.

(NATO Agreed)

human intelligence – HUMINT

Intelligence derived from information collected by human operators and primarily provided by human sources. (NATO Agreed)

information activities

Actions designed to affect information and/or information systems.

Note: Information activities can be performed by anyone and include protection measures. (NATO Agreed)

insurgency

Actions of an organized, often ideologically motivated, group or movement that seeks to effect or prevent political change within a country or a region through subversion, and focused on persuading or coercing the population through irregular activity. (NATO Agreed)

international organization⁷⁹ – IO

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

⁷⁹ For a much wider understanding of international organizations, see AJP-3.4.3 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Military Support to Humanitarian Assistance* (annexes A to C).

Conventions, has an international legal personality or status on its own, and enjoys some immunities and privileges for the fulfilment of its humanitarian mandate. (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. (NATO Agreed)

lines of communications – LOC

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. (NATO Agreed)

non-governmental organization⁸⁰ – NGO

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. (NATO Agreed)

operation – Op

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. (NATO Agreed)

operating environment – OE

A composite of the conditions, circumstances and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander. (NATO Agreed)

operational level

The level at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theatres or areas of operations. (NATO Agreed)

rules of engagement – ROE

Directives to military forces, including individuals, that define the circumstances, conditions, degree, and manner in which force, or actions which might be construed as provocative, may be applied. (NATO Agreed)

⁸⁰ For a much wider understanding of international organizations, see AJP-3.4.3 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Military Support to Humanitarian Assistance* (annexes A to C).

strategic level

The level at which a nation or group of nations determines national or multinational security objectives and deploys national, including military, resources to achieve them. (NATO Agreed)

subversion

Action or a coordinated set of actions of any nature intended to weaken the military, economic or political strength of an established authority by undermining the morale, loyalty or reliability of its members. (NATO Agreed)

tactical level

The level at which activities, battles and engagements are planned and executed to accomplish military objectives assigned to tactical formations and units. (NATO Agreed)

underground

A group or movement organized secretly to work against an existing regime. (NATO Agreed)

AJP-3.27(A)(2)

