

Measures of Merit in Complex Security Situations:

Insurgency, Terrorism, and Nation Building

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Cornwallis, April 16, 2013

Agenda

- What Are we Talking About?
- Examples of Complex Security Situations
- Historical Efforts at Measures of Merit
- Fundamental Principles: How to Get it Right
- Illustrative Past Successes
- Conclusions
- Contact Information

Insurgency

- An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. (DoD)
- Efforts at autonomy should be included if they use subversion or armed conflict.
- Must seek to replace a government, not just to publicize a cause, change a policy, or harm an ethnic or religious group,
- Insurgencies seek to replace a government by creating a new sovereign entity.

Sovereignty

- Attributes of a sovereign entity
 - Control of territory and borders
 - Monopoly of coercive force within borders
 - Legitimacy in the eyes of the populace
 - Delivery of essential services to the population
 - International legitimacy – recognition
- Insurgents often focus first on destroying or discrediting the existing government.

Terrorism

- The calculated use of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological. (DoD)
- This definition is imperfect in that it fails to recognize the role of state terrorism, which is very real, but not relevant here.
- “The purpose of Terrorism is to Terrorize” (attributed to Lenin among others)

Insurgency and Terrorism

- Not all Terrorists are Insurgents
 - Most historical anarchists and nihilists sought to destroy, not replace, existing governments and institutions.
 - The original assassins killed individual leaders
- Many insurgencies employ terrorism as a tool to destroy or discredit sovereign governments.
 - Break government's monopoly of coercive force.
 - Demonstrate inability of the government to protect the population and deliver services
 - Destroy popular sense of government legitimacy
 - Intimidate leaders and general population
- Not all insurgencies employ terrorism, but many do.

Nation Building

- Poorly (and inconsistently) defined because the topic is politically charged.
- Refers either to the efforts to sustain a new, weak or failing state or to rebuild one that has failed.
- Essentially means establishing or reestablishing sovereignty –control of territory, monopoly of coercive power, legitimacy internally and internationally, and delivering services (rule of law, education, etc.)
- Temporal issues are important – long term success implies building successful institutions, but short term (temporary) success is sometimes seen as desirable.

Nation Building is Complicated

- Failed or failing states often experience several challenges
 - Corruption (often kleptocracy)
 - Illicit trafficking in drugs, people, natural resources, animals and animal products, etc.
 - Warlords, gangs, or other violent activities
- Failed or failing states cannot or will not deliver important services
 - Rule of law
 - Banking and market access or regulation
 - Education
 - Infrastructure
- Nation Building requires long term success in all these areas

Insurgency, Terrorism and Nation Building are often inexorably mixed

- Successful nation building requires defeating or marginalizing an insurgency and halting or limiting terrorism.
- Recent history dominated by images of “undesirable” insurgencies – Nicaragua, El Salvador, Iraq, Post -2011 Afghanistan, Mali, Yemen...
- Western World sometimes sees insurgency as a positive force – Anti-Soviet Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Sudan...
- In many cases complex security situations involve more than two sides, more than one cleavage.
- The Measures of Merit issues are identical in all cases.

The Natural Hierarchy

- Nation Building, the most challenging arena, must be seen as the most important in the long run.
- Countering insurgency (COIN) and terrorism are typically understood to be essential short term goals necessary to enable Nation Building.
- However, some COIN and counter-terrorism approaches and programs undermine efforts at Nation Building.

Complex Problems

- Complexity is a mathematical concept.
 - Reliable and valid data to demonstrate mathematical complexity in security situations almost never exists.
- Ordinary usage is more useful here.
 - Composed of many dynamic, interconnected parts.
 - So complicated or intricate as to be hard to understand or deal with logically or simply.
- The nexus of an insurgency, terrorism, and nation building must be treated as a complex problem, or more usefully, as a wicked problem.

Wicked Problems

- Wicked problems were identified by Rittel and Webber (Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning in *Policy Sciences*, 1973)
- Wicked problems cannot be resolved with traditional analytical approaches.
- A “tame problem,” (the opposite of a wicked one) can be addressed by a finite number of possible solutions, has a set of relevant criteria for selecting among alternatives which can be ordered or weighted for importance, and allows recognition of improvement or a solution.
- Also known as “simple” and “complex” problems in some military literatures.

Wicked Problem Characteristics

- Every wicked problem is unique
- They have no definitive problem formulation or causal explanation
- Solutions are better or worse, not true or false
- Lack an immediate test for progress or solution
- Are dynamic and have no stopping rule
- Implemented efforts at solutions change the problem and typically generate unintended consequences
- Require a coherent set of actions – there is no single silver bullet

Examples of Relevant Situations

- Current situations include: Mali, Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Central African Republic, Congo, Yemen
- Relevant Historical Situations include Vietnam, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Lebanon, Kosovo, Bosnia, Sudan...
- Many more potential where weak or failing states lack the capacity to govern effectively – Pakistan, Egypt, Libya...

Measures of Merit: Categories for Complex Security Situations

- Three important classes for complex security situations
 - Measures of Effectiveness (MoE) deal with impact on the operating environment
 - Measures of Performance (MoP) deal with successful activities
 - Measures of Efficiency (MoEf) deal with the incremental cost of performing or being effective.
- Appropriate Measures of Merit form a coherent system (MoE, MoP, and MoEf) that is dynamic as the complex security situation changes.

Measures of Merit: Illustrative Examples

- MoE: Change from Peace Enforcement to Peacekeeping, Mission or Campaign Accomplishment, normalizing market prices.
- MoP: Reducing Successful IED Frequency, Opening Schools and Health Clinics, Reducing Human Rights Complaints Against Forces.
- MoEf: Friendly Forces need to maintain “safe” provinces, shift from military to police.
- Note that input values (money, troops) factor only into Measures of Efficiency.
- By definition, if there is no effectiveness or performance, then efficiency cannot be measured.

Historical Efforts That Failed

- McNamara's Whiz Kids in Vietnam – body counts, territorial control, bombs dropped and artillery fired.
- French in Algeria – military MOE and MOP rather than counterinsurgency focus.
- Russians in Afghanistan – territorial control as well as troop and firepower ratios (correlation of forces).
- Western efforts to aid rebels in Libya – regime change rather than institution building.
- All these efforts valued COIN and counter-terrorism over Nation Building.
- The jury is still out on US and coalition efforts in Iraq where more thought was given to nation building, but long term institutional success remains in doubt.

Fundamental Principles: How to Get it Right (1)

- Complex or Wicked Problems require Agility
 - Recognize and prioritize the problem elements
 - Seek Flexibility – more than one way to succeed
 - Create Resilient forces and plans – anticipate setbacks and respond to them
 - Do not go “All In” – maintain reserve resources
 - Be Responsive – timely action to exploit opportunities and avoid vulnerabilities
 - Be Innovative and Adaptive – learn from experience in each context
- Balancing activities over time and across arenas (COIN, Counter-terror, nation building) is essential, including constant “re-balancing” as the situation changes

Fundamental Principles (2)

How to Get it Right

- Insurgency, Terrorism, and Nation Building are different, but linked problems.
 - All three must be dealt with simultaneously
 - Trade-offs must be recognized and accepted
 - Nation building, the slowest, is the key and must be the primary focus of MoE.
 - Insurgency and terrorism will often be the focus of MoP and MoEf, but may also be MoE foci during some periods.

Historical Efforts that Succeeded (these are rare)

- British in Malaysia – MoE focused on government legitimacy, MoPs of isolating insurgents and delivering services, MoEf of transferring responsibilities to locals
- US and Nicaraguans vs. Sandinistas – MoE of transforming conflict from military to political, MoP of area pacification (but institutionalization did not last)
- US and NATO in Bosnia – MoE of political rather than military conflict, MoP of separating and disarming warring factions.

More Depth in Successful Example: Bosnia

- MoEs – Convert military struggle into political contest; move from Peace Enforcement to Peacekeeping
- MoPs changing over time
 - Time to detect and dismantle roadblocks
 - Weapons removed from Cantonments
 - Market openings, market basket of prices, soccer games played.

Conclusions (1)

- Complex Security Situations involving insurgency, terrorism and nation building have become all too familiar.
- These situations must be understood to be complex or “wicked” problems
- Failure to recognize and prioritize the elements of complex security situations makes them all but impossible to manage.
- Past efforts to craft Measures of Merit for complex security situations have seldom succeeded, which is also true of most efforts to manage them.

Conclusions (2)

- Success requires building a coherent, linked and dynamic system of measures, including:
 - MoE focused on changing the operating environment
 - MoEf focused on the incremental costs of performance
 - MoP focused on performance of key activities
- There is a natural hierarchy dominated by MoE, then MoP, then MoEf, which must be constantly re-balanced as the situation changes.
- Failure to recognize the long term importance of nation building will undermine the effort.

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