Counter-Terrorism (CT) and Counter-Insurgency (COIN) -A NATO COE-DAT Research Project-

Stephen Harley (United Kingdom)
Editor

Centre of Excellence - Defence Against Terrorism
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The completion of this book project, **Counter-Terrorism (CT) and Counter-Insurgency (COIN) - A NATO COE-DAT Research Project,** is the culmination of extensive research, and the collaboration and dedication of a number of individuals who have contributed their time, expertise and support.

First and foremost, I wish to express my profound gratitude to Mr. Stephen Harley, the academic advisor for this project. His invaluable guidance, insightful feedback, and unwavering support were instrumental in shaping the direction and depth of this project. Mr. Harley's extensive knowledge in the fields of CT and COIN provided a strong foundation for the critical analysis and nuanced perspectives presented in this book.

This collaborative effort also stands as a testament to the commitment of COE-DATs wide network of experts, practitioners and academicians to, advancing knowledge and understanding in this critical area.

A special note of appreciation goes to the collaborative efforts of all the contributing authors who have generously shared their insights and experiences and have enriched this book with their diverse perspectives and expertise. These esteemed group of authors are Assoc. Prof. Emrah Özdemir, Colonel Daniel W. Stone (a former Deputy Director of COE-DAT), Dr. Dana Eyre, Prof. Harmonie Toros and Dr. Richard Warnes. Their dedication to the rigorous examination of the complex issues surrounding CT and COIN has been pivotal in providing a comprehensive understanding of these critical fields.

Their contributions have not only enhanced the quality of this work but have also underscored the importance of the differentiation between Counter-terrorism and Counter-insurgency. This distinction is crucial for developing effective strategies, policies, and doctrines as Counter-terrorism focuses on preventing and responding to acts of terror, while Counter-insurgency involves broader efforts to address and mitigate the root causes of insurgency through both military and non-military means. They also highlight the fact that Terrorism and Insurgency, Counter-terrorism and Counter-insurgency are all in a continuous process of change, and projects such as this one inform key decision makers as well as CT/COIN experts and practitioners of those developments.

We extend our deepest gratitude to SHAPE J5 and ACT for their invaluable support and collaboration. Their guidance and commitment have been instrumental in shaping this project, and we are confident that the insights provided herein will significantly enhance NATO's strategic capabilities.

I also want to thank my staff from the Transformation Department, Lieutenant Colonel Uwe Berger, Lieutenant Colonel Carmine Baruffo and Ms. Muge Memişoğlu Akar for their efforts in suggesting this project, supporting the authors and arranging the printing process. Ms. Selvi Kahraman and Sergeant Major Ekrem Kazıcılar were essential for the project with their capabilities to keep the team connected.

Finally, some words about COE-DAT itself. COE-DAT as NATO's Department Head (DH) in

Education and Training (E&T) for CT strives to be the hub of a wider network or Community of Interest (Col) regarding counter-terrorism for NATO. COE-DAT provides Key Decision Makers with a comprehensive understanding of terrorism and counter-terrorism challenges, in order to support NATO's and the Nations of Interest's transformation to meet future security challenges. The vision and mission of COE-DAT, and the comprehensive efforts towards supporting Alliance transformations nests with NATO's three declared core tasks of deterrence and defense, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security.

Halil Sıddık AYHAN
Colonel (TÜR A)
Director COE-DAT

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DISCLAIMER

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Professor Emrah Özdemir is based in Ankara, Türkiye, and has a distinguished career spanning over 16 years as a gendarmerie officer, including roles as a battalion commander, staff officer, and Liaison Officer (LNO) for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Regional Command – Capital (RC-C) to the Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS). He currently serves as an Associate Professor at the National Defense University (NDU) Turkish Military Academy. Özdemir is a graduate of the Turkish Military Academy and holds a Master of Arts in Politics, a Master of Science in International Security and Terrorism, and a PhD in Politics from Swansea University, UK. His doctoral thesis focused on "Post conflict State building as a Counterinsurgency Policy in Afghanistan." Additionally, he is an alumnus of the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, where he completed the Comprehensive Security Responses to Terrorism course in 2011, and he also completed the National Development Course at NDU of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in 2024. He was a visiting scholar at the NATO Defense College in 2014, and currently serves as an External Subject Matter Expert at the NATO Stability Policing Center of Excellence, Vicenza/Italy.

Colonel Daniel W. Stone (USAF) is currently the Joint Operations Center Director for Allied Joint Force Command Naples, Italy. He spent five years (two tours in Afghanistan) as an Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands learning and applying COIN principles. After his time as a Hand, Dan went on to become the Deputy Director at the Centre of Excellence Defense Against Terrorism (NATO's counter-terrorism think tank) where he led efforts to publish multiple book projects on terrorism and counter-terrorism (CT), oversaw the delivery of CT education and training for NATO and Partner Nations, developed education solutions for NATO's terrorism discipline, and focused research into "Why Gender Matters in CT"

Dana P. Eyre, PhD holds the post of Global Learning Officer, M&C Saatchi World Services. He is a sociologist specializing in strategic communications and social change; working with clients including the USG, HMG, and the UN, he has guided over $550m worth of multi-media production and strategic communications campaigning. He holds a PhD in sociology from Stanford and a BA in liberal studies from San José State. He has 15 years graduate-level teaching experience and over a decade on-the-ground in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan and beyond, working for the UN, USAID and as a consultant. He was a Fellow at the US Institute of Peace, a senior advisor for DARPA, and a peace building and counter-radicalization communications consultant in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Professor Harmonie Toros is professor in politics and international relations at the University of Reading. Her research focuses on conflict analysis, conflict resolution and political violence. In conflict analysis, she investigates nonviolent responses to terrorism and political violence and the potential for conflict transformation through negotiations. She has also researched informal governance practices of armed groups, gender roles in armed groups, and the lives of children associated with armed groups. A former international reporter, she returned to academia in 2003 to investigate the possibility of negotiations with non-state armed groups, primarily linked to al Qaeda. She has since advised the United Nations, NATO, and national governments on engagement with non-state armed groups in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Prior to joining the University of Reading, she held appointments at the University of Kent, the University of Queensland (Australia) and the University of Canterbury (New Zealand).

Dr. Richard Warnes is a self-employed research consultant with a focus on terrorism and irregular warfare, working part-time for Vedette Consulting Limited (VCL). He previously served in the Army during the warring faction period in Bosnia and then in the Metropolitan Police, including Special Branch and Counter Terrorism Command, where he was involved in several pro-active counter-terrorist investigations. Between 2008-2014 as a civilian contractor, he conducted in country field evaluations of a COIN capacity-building program with local forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, supporting the USMC. He is an Associate Fellow with the British Army's CHACR think tank and has a PhD on human factors in effective counter-terrorism, recently adapted and published as a book by Routledge.

Mr. Stephen Harley is a former British Army officer who has latterly worked in Iraq & the pan-Arab region for the US government, in Afghanistan for NATO and in Somalia for the UN and the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office in the fields of counter-terrorism, Preventing & Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) and Strategic Communication. He currently works for the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office as a consultant with a broad remit for countering the al-Qa'ida linked terror group, al- Shabaab. He has published extensively on Somalia, contributing two articles to the UN's seminal study, 'War and Peace in Somalia: National Grievances, Local Conflicts & al-Shabaab'. He also contributed two chapters to COE DAT's 'Good Practices in Counter-terrorism' on 'Hard, Soft & Smart Power' and 'Negotiated Settlement in Counter-terrorism'. He also covers East African issues for The Economist Group and is a PhD candidate at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, writing under the topic, 'Creative Writing as a Treatment for PTSD'.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Stephen Harley[1]

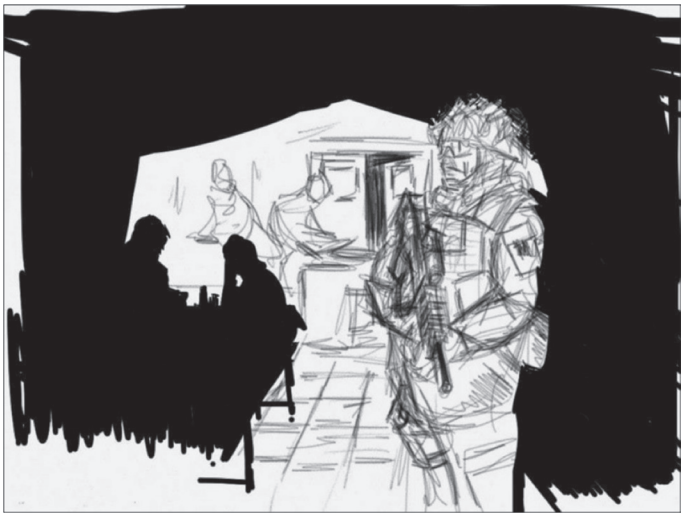

Illustration 1: A 'guardian angel', a fully armed and equipped ISAF soldier, stands guard while others eat in a cookhouse in Helmand Province. The 'insider threat' was one of a number of elements that increasingly limited the ability of ISAF and USFOR-A forces to operate.

The origins of this publication lie in a request in February 2024 from NATO Allied Command Operations (ACO) for COE-DAT to produce a rapid turnaround exploration of terrorism, insurgency, counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-insurgency (COIN). The publication is designed to assist the leadership of NATO in understanding each element both retrospectively (with a specific focus on the Afghanistan mission) and looking forward towards likely new threats and potential responses. The product would examine a number of areas: the key features of each element, noting both areas of confluence and divergence; likely

[1] Mr. Stephen Harley is a consultant specializing in counter-terrorism and strategic communication. He is also a Somalia area specialist and a PhD candidate at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. He can be contacted at stephenharley@me.com

operational requirements for the time when, not if (as the former Deputy Director of COE-DAT, Colonel Dan Stone, highlights in his chapter) NATO once again engages in CT and/or COIN operations; the likely threat networks that NATO might face and how those networks might be effectively attacked; the likely means and, at a lower level, Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), both conventional and unconventional, that terrorists and insurgents might use; and, in response, what military and non-military Instruments of Power (IoP) might be used in this effort and how they might be effectively coordinated.

As a result, COE-DAT engaged with a number of its long-term supporters from the academic and practitioner communities, as well as new authors. The emphasis in the selection of the six authors was that each had at least two elements of the following: academic background in the study of CT, COIN and other associated fields; experience of 'live' CT/COIN operations in Afghanistan between 2001-2021; or similar experience in other relevant conflicts such as such as Iraq in the 2000s, Iraq/Syria in the 2010s, Libya since the fall of the Qaddafi regime, Somalia, Nigeria and the Sahel and so on.

In the first chapter, Professor Emrah **Ö**zdemir provides a tremendously useful and very succinct definition of the core areas of focus – terrorism, insurgency, counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency. This is placed firmly in the context of NATO: how the Alliance defines each, its history of engagements in CT and COIN operations and the most recent developments in NATO's broader strategic thinking, including the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC), the NATO Strategic Foresight Analysis Framework and Multi-Domain Operations (MDO). This grounds the entire publication firmly in NATO's past and likely future involvement in CT/COIN Operations and is a highly usable piece for anyone seeking to understand 'the basics', even down to a series of tabular comparisons that every member of the NATO staff working in the CT/COIN space should print out, laminate and stick to their desk or wall.

Colonel Daniel W. Stone then provides a series of observations based on his time in various pivotal roles in Afghanistan as part of the ISAF/USFOR-A missions. But his chapter is not just a series of 'swing the lantern' anecdotes: his subsequent role as the Deputy Director of COE-DAT, a role to which he brought a dynamism, openness to new ideas and even an element of creative risk-taking, gives him a unique view of what happened in Afghanistan – good and bad – and what future CT/COIN Operations can learn from that experience.

This is followed by two chapters that explore specific disciplines or issues that came to the fore during the Afghanistan campaign, and which have subsequently become increasingly important in CT/COIN Operations.

Dr. Dana P. Eyre explores Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) and Conflict Transformation within the context of Peace-building, areas with significant commonality with CT/COIN but also many differences: in many ways, 'new ways to fight old wars'. A critical area of focus of the chapter is moving thinking beyond 'countering', with all its inevitable associations with an implied loss of the strategic initiative and 'knee-jerk' reactions, and then widening to prevention based on deeper understanding of the origins of

socio-political violence in society. NATO staff focused on CT/COIN should also print out, laminate and display Dr Eyre's diagrammatic, 'The Individual and Social Dynamics of War & Peace'.

Professor Harmonie Toros, on the other hand, explores Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) with a specific focus on attempts to engage with women in Afghanistan during the ISAF/USFOR-A missions. Within the developing discipline of Human Security, this is an area that was delivered badly in Afghanistan, albeit with the best of intentions. The focus of the chapter is on women, but the lessons are equally relevant to the minority or marginalized groups in society who so often become the critical 'human terrain' in CT/COIN and who are neglected only at great risk to the achievement of mission objectives.

Dr. Richard Warnes then looks to recent and likely future developments in the nature of terrorism, insurgency, CT & COIN. This chapter brings the discussion right up to date and explores how the technological and informational revolutions are relevant to CT/COIN now and in the future, and also looks in detail at a resurgent DAESH under the banner of DAESH in Khorasan Province (ISKP) as well as various right wing, anarchist and other ideologies that may also be the next threat that NATO may need to counter.

The final chapter is my own and is a series of conclusions based on the work of the other authors and also my own extensive experience in CT, COIN and P/CVE, along with recommendations to NATO ACO. But, once again, like Colonel Dan Stone's chapter, this is not merely a collection of 'pull up a sandbag' tales from Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and elsewhere: it is firmly focused on what NATO and others need to consider in their development of future CT and COIN strategies and, ultimately, their likely implementation in operations.

As editor I echo Colonel Halil Sıddık Ayhan's thanks to the staff of COE-DAT in doing the real hard work in support of this project: without the support of the Director himself, Lieutenant Colonel Uwe Berger, Lieutenant Colonel Carmine Baruffo and Ms Müge Memişoğlu -Akar, Ms. Selvi Kahraman and Sergeant Major Ekrem Kazıcılar, this product would still be a 'good idea', nothing more.

We have also included a series of illustrations produced during my own time in Afghanistan. For many of us Afghanistan is carved upon our hearts, and we hope this additional evidence of our engagement results in something beyond the purely academic, and something that is informative, insightful and of genuine practical relevance.

CHAPTER II

HOW NATO DEFINES TERRORISM, COUNTER-TERRORISM, AND INSURGENCY & COUNTER-INSURGENCY

Emrah Özdemir[2]

Illustration 2: Two Afghans eat in a café in Kabul. Only a tiny proportion of ISAF and USFOR-A forces ever had contact with Afghans in their everyday environment.

Abstract

This chapter examines the ways in which NATO defines and conceptualizes terrorism, counter-terrorism (CT), insurgency, and counter-insurgency (COIN) within its evolving security framework. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-insurgency (COIN) assumed a pivotal role within NATO's strategic priorities, influencing the organization's operational experience and shaping its strategic documents. In recent years, NATO's security perception has undergone further evolution in order to

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address new challenges, including those pertaining to environmental security and cybersecurity. However, the Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its attempted full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 have prompted NATO to refocus on conventional threats beside terrorism. The objective of this chapter is to elucidate both the distinctions and the overlaps between terrorism, counter-terrorism (CT), insurgency, and counter-insurgency (COIN) by analyzing key NATO doctrines and strategic concepts. This will provide a precise understanding of NATO's stance and strategies in addressing these threats. Ultimately, the chapter will demonstrate that NATO has an adaptive approach to countering diverse global security threats, and that CT and COIN remain significant elements of its strategic agenda, despite its realignment towards conventional threats attempting to reject or replace the rules-based international order.

How NATO Defines Terrorism, Counter-terrorism, and Insurgency & Counter-insurgency

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO or 'the Alliance') was established in 1949 with the purpose of collective defense against potential adversaries, especially the Soviet Union during the Cold War era. As global security dynamics evolved, the Alliance underwent strategic transformations to address emerging challenges. Originally designed to counter conventional military threats, the Alliance has adapted its focus in the post-Cold War era to include non-traditional security threats such as civil unrest, ethnic conflicts and failed states. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-insurgency (COIN) also became NATO priorities, with significant experience gained in Iraq and Afghanistan. After 2010, NATO broadened its security agenda to include new challenges like environmental security and cybersecurity, but the Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its attempt to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 led NATO to refocus on conventional threats. As well as this, the economic and rise technological of the People's Republic of China, while not presenting a threat, does present a challenge. In the midst of this strategic realignment, NATO has nonetheless continued to prioritize counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations, recognizing their enduring importance in shaping its strategic responses and threat assessments.

The objective of this chapter is to explain the manner in which the NATO defines and conceptualizes the terms of terrorism, counter-terrorism, insurgency, and counter-insurgency within the context of evolving security and threat perceptions. Despite the frequent use of these terms as if they were synonymous, there are notable differences between them in both practice and in the context of NATO concepts and doctrine. The analysis presented here will facilitate a more precise delineation of the Alliance's stance towards these threats and its strategies for their mitigation. Accordingly, the initial part of the study is dedicated to an examination of the definitions presented in both academic literature and the NATO concepts and doctrine documents.

The second part of the study will present an analytical comparison of the defined concepts, exploring the similarities and differences between them. The question of how these concepts should be defined is a topic of debate not only within the context of NATO but also in the wider academic community. Different approaches have been proposed in an attempt to elucidate the relationship between the two concepts. This comparison aims to contribute to the resolution of these debates.

The next part of the study part will analyze the inclusion of counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism in the current NATO agenda. This will be achieved through an assessment of the Strategic Concept 2022, the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC), NATO's Deterrence and Defense Concept for the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA),[3] and the Strategic Foresight Analysis 2023 (SFA 2023), which are the most important and relevant strategic documents for this purpose. It is especially important to explore how CT and COIN are used in the Multi-Domain Operations (MDO),[4] which dominates the Alliance's agenda since 2021.

Section 1: Definitions and Conceptual Framework

The lack of consensus on the definitions of key terms such as terrorism, counter-terrorism, insurgency and counter-insurgency present a significant challenge for both academic and political discourse around the development of coherent strategies and policies, as well as the formulation of collective policies. The roots of these definitional difficulties can be found in the complex and multifaceted nature of the concepts themselves, as well as in the fact that they have been discussed from many different political, cultural and ideological perspectives. For example, senior academic Alex P. Schmid notes that there are more than 250 different definitions of the concept of "terrorism" alone, underscoring the difficulty of reaching a consensus.[5] The circumstances have evolved considerably over the past 13 years. The current situation is even more intricate than it was at that time. While this study does not aim to provide general definitions for the terms, it seeks to elucidate how NATO defines these terms and the conceptual framework it employs.

Terrorism

'Terrorism' is not a new phenomenon;[6] however, it was not until the publication of the Strategic Concept in 1991 that it was officially introduced to the agenda of NATO. This concept defined the new threats faced by the Alliance in the post-Cold War era, with terrorism being identified as a significant concern. The 1999 Strategic Concept afforded terrorism a more expansive treatment, underscoring its growing threat to the Alliance.[7] Nevertheless, the

[3] As the DDA is a classified document, it was not subjected to direct evaluation; instead, it was examined through the utilization of data sourced from publicly accessible materials.

[4] Alliance Concept for Multi-Domain Operations (Draft), NATO Allied Command Transformation, 2023, NATO-Restricted. To obtain NATO's unclassified preliminary perspective on MDO, please refer to AJP-01, Allied Joint Doctrine, December 2022.

[5] Joseph J. Easson and A.P. Schmid, "250+ Academic, Governmental and Intergovernmental Definitions of Terrorism", in The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research (Alex P. Schmid ed, Routledge, 2011), pp. 99-157.

[6] For further information, please see Gérard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, eds. A Historical Overview of Terrorism: from Antiquity to ISIS, (University of California Press, 2016).

[7] NATO 1999 Strategic Concept, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_27433.htm (accessed 03 July 2024).

Alliance's prioritization of terrorism commenced subsequent to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In the wake of these attacks, Article 5 was invoked for the first time in the history of the Alliance, and the operations Eagle Assist and Active Endeavour were initiated with the objective of supporting the unilateral US efforts to combat terrorism.

One of the earliest strategic documents produced by NATO for the purpose of combating terrorism was the Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism, published on 22 November 2002.[8] The objective of this plan was to enhance collaboration between member and Partner Nations in the fight against terrorism, and it addressed a number of key areas, including the sharing of information, joint training and exercises. Moreover, in August 2003, NATO assumed command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, thereby enhancing its visibility and efficacy 'on the ground' in the fight against terrorism.

The Strategic Concept, adopted at the conclusion of the 2010 Lisbon Summit, also accorded extensive attention to the fight against terrorism and reaffirmed NATO's commitment to this issue.[9] The Alliance's strategic vision for counter-terrorism was then defined with the publication of the Policy Guidelines on Counter-Terrorism in 2012.[10] These guidelines set out NATO's strategic objectives, principles and priorities in the fight against terrorism and provided guidance to Alliance members in this field.

The aforementioned documents and operations clarified NATO's stance on terrorism and the methodologies employed to counter it, thereby enabling the Alliance to respond in an efficacious manner to terrorism at both the strategic and operational levels. NATO's experience in this field and its constantly updated strategic documents demonstrate the adaptability of the Alliance in response to global security threats.

While the aforementioned NATO documents identify terrorism as a significant threat to the Alliance, the most comprehensive definition is provided in the 'Military Concept for Counter Terrorism' (MC 0472/1), dated 6 January 2016. In accordance with this definition, terrorism is defined as:

> *"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."*[11]

On the other hand, Bruce Hoffman, a distinguished scholar in the field, defines terrorism as *"the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change."*[12] Boaz Gonar, in one of the more recent studies, provides a simpler and more inclusive definition of terrorism as *"the deliberate*

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8 Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_19549.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed 04 July 2024).

9 Lisbon Summit Declaration, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_68828.htm (accessed 03 July 2024).

10 NATO's Policy Guidelines on Counter-terrorism (2012), available at https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_topics/ct-policy-guidelines.pdf (accessed 03 July 2024).

11 Military Concept for Counter Terrorism, MC 0472 1, available at https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_01/20160817_160106-mc0472-1-final.pdf (accessed 04 July 2024)

12 Bruce Hoffman, Inside Terrorism (3rd ed., Columbia University Press, 2017), p. 44.

use or the threat to use violence against civilians in order to attain political, ideological and religious aims."[13] A more comprehensive and agreeable definition can be found in Alex P. Schmid. Schmid, who proposed one of the most frequently cited definitions in the field,[14] developed this definition as follows in his 2011 study, which was based on in-depth analysis and a comprehensive review:

> *"Terrorism refers on the one hand to a doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties."*[15]

In comparison to these definitions, it is evident that NATO, as a defense-oriented Alliance, has a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of terrorism. NATO's comprehensive definition of terrorism is significant in terms of informing the Alliance's strategic planning and response efforts. NATO's clear understanding of the nature of terrorism is essential for developing measures to mitigate both the immediate and long-term threats posed by terrorist activities and for ensuring cooperation against terrorism. NATO's definition of terrorism provides a framework for developing and adapting the Alliance's strategies to address this threat.

The approach adopted by NATO in response to the global threat of terrorism serves to enhance the operational capability of the Alliance and to strengthen international cooperation in order to mitigate the effects of terrorism in all of its forms. This allows the Alliance to adopt a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy that encompasses not only military, but also political, economic and social dimensions.

Counter-terrorism

The concept of counter-terrorism was developed in the light of lessons learned from NATO's policies and actions since 2001. This definition can be found in the aforementioned MC 0472/1. According to the definition, counter-terrorism is defined as:[16]

> *"All preventive, defensive and offensive measures taken to reduce the vulnerability of forces, individuals and property against terrorist threats and/or acts, to respond to terrorist acts. In the frame of the NATO Comprehensive Approach, this can be combined with or followed by measures enabling recovery after terrorist acts."*[17]

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13 Boaz Ganor. "Defining Terrorism: Is One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter?" Police Practice and Research 3(4) (2002), pp. 287–304.

14 Alex P. Schmid, Political Terrorism: Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases and Literature. With a Bibliography by the Author and a World Directory of "Terrorist" Organizations by A.J. Jongman (North-Holland Publishing Company, 1984), p. 111.

15 Alex P. Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," in The Routledge of Handbook of Terrorism Research (Alex P. Schmid, ed, Routledge, 2011), p. 86; for a more recent definition, see David C. Rapoport, Waves of Global Terrorism (Columbia University Press, 2022).

16 Military Concept for Counter Terrorism, MC 0472/1.

17 This concept represents an updated version of MC 472, the NATO Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism, which was formally adopted by the Military Committee on 26 September 2002, in the wake of the September 11 attacks. The definition provided here is also utilized in AAP-06 (2021), the NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions.

The NATO Military Concept for Counter-Terrorismpresents a comprehensive strategy for reducing the vulnerability of Alliance members to terrorism. The document outlines a range of preventive, defensive and offensive measures, which collectively guide the implementation of a more comprehensive approach to security. It places particular emphasis on the importance of maintaining situational awareness, facilitating intelligence sharing and developing a robust counter-terrorism capability as part of NATO's overarching security strategy. The inclusion of measures that enable recovery in the document underlines a comprehensive approach to building resilience, particularly in the context of counter-terrorism.

As the most recently updated document, the purpose of the NATO Counter-Terrorism Policy Guidelines, revised on 10 July 2024, offers valuable insights into the Alliance's approach to counter-terrorism.[18] This document is intended to provide strategic direction for ongoing counter-terrorism activities across the Alliance, reaffirm principles, and identify key areas for enhancing prevention, response, and resilience against terrorism. The guidelines address three principal areas: awareness, capabilities and preparedness, and cooperation and partnerships. With regard to awareness, the objective is to foster a common understanding of terrorist threats through the sharing of intelligence and the conduct of strategic analysis. In terms of capabilities and preparedness, the aim is to enhance national capabilities and develop new technologies to counter asymmetric threats. In the context of cooperation and partnerships, the goal is to work with partners and International Organizations (IO) to promote a shared understanding of the terrorist threat and to increase joint efforts in capacity building and political dialogue.

On the other hand, a review of the academic literature on the subject provides a useful comparison with NATO's approach. Andrew Silke defines counter-terrorism as *"the policies, strategies, and tactics that states use to combat terrorism and deal with its consequences"*[19] while Boaz Ganor characterizes counter-terrorism as *"various types of activities aimed at reducing or eliminating the terrorist organizations' ability to perpetrate attacks and activities aimed at reducing or eliminating the terrorists' motivation to carry out attacks."*[20] Robert Art and Louise Richardson posit that it is a comprehensive endeavor that includes activities ranging from negotiations and amnesty to economic measures, intelligence, and military operations within the political, legislative-judicial, and security domains.[21]

In comparison, the European Union's definition of counter-terrorism is set forth in the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy. This strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to counter-terrorism, comprising four fundamental elements: prevention, protection, monitoring, and

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18 NATO's Policy Guidelines on Counter-Terrorism: Aware, Capable and Engaged for a Safer Future, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_228154.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed 28 July 2024). On July 11, 2024, Tom Goffus, the Secretary General's Special Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism, presented these updated Policy Guidelines at a NATO Public Forum session titled "Addressing the Evolving Threat of Terrorism."

19 Andrew Silke, The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism (Routledge, 2019), p. 8.

20 Boaz Ganor, The Counterterrorism Puzzle: A Guide for Decision Makers (Transaction Publishers, 2005), p. 74.

21 Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson, editors. Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past (U.S. Institute of Peace, 2007), pp. 16-17.

response. Furthermore, the EU is taking significant measures in specific domains, such as the prevention of terrorist financing and the countering of radicalization.[22]

The United Nations has adopted a comprehensive approach to counter-terrorism too. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006, is comprised of four principal pillars: (1) addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, (2) preventing and combating terrorism, (3) building the capacity of member states, and (4) promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law.[23] The UN also seeks to address the root causes of terrorism by addressing its social, economic, political, and cultural factors.

In accordance with the aforementioned definitions, it is evident that the efficacy of counter-terrorism strategies hinges upon the implementation of a comprehensive approach that integrates socio-economic and political measures, in addition to active and protective measures against terrorist structures. NATO's comprehensive definition of counter-terrorism aligns with the Comprehensive Approach adopted at the 2008 Bucharest Summit and is consistent with the definitions put forth by prominent figures in the field.[24] In this regard, NATO's counter-terrorism approach encompasses not only the neutralization of terrorists but also the comprehensive planning necessary for the long-term resolution of the problem.

The counter-terrorism strategy agreed upon by NATO serves to enhance coordination among member states, facilitating collaboration in the context of shared threats. It encourages collaboration in several areas, including the sharing of information, joint training and exercises, the provision of intelligence support, and operational cooperation. Furthermore, NATO's approach to counter-terrorism, which is based on the integration of civilian and military capabilities, addresses the multidimensional nature of terrorism, and provides comprehensive solutions to ensure long-term security and stability.

In conclusion, NATO counter-terrorism policy places an emphasis on the development of prevention, resilience, and response capabilities to address terrorism as a direct threat to the security of NATO countries and its partners. In addition to these measures, the policy aims to prevent, protect against, and respond to terrorist attacks by improving awareness, capabilities, and relations with partners. While this comprehensive approach has the potential to foster a positive outcome, it may also introduce an ambiguity due to its resemblance to counter-insurgency strategies.

Insurgency

The terms 'insurgency' and 'counter-insurgency' are not novel in theory or practice. However, their analytical consideration can be traced back to the anti-colonial resistance movements of the late 19th century. The British experience with the Boers and Malaya, the

[22] European Union Counterterrorism Strategy (2005), available at https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST%2014469%202005%20REV%204/EN/pdf (accessed 05 July 2024)

[23] The United Nations Global Counterterrorism Strategy, available at https://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?OpenAgent&DS=A/RES/60/288&Lang=E (accessed 06 July 2024).

[24] Bucharest Summit Declaration, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm (accessed 04 July 2024).

American experience in the Philippines, and the French experience in Algeria represent notable examples.[25] During the Cold War period, the rise of independence movements influenced by the success of communism in Russia/the USSR and the Maoist movement in China contributed to a resurgence of interest in these concepts within the academic and political spheres.[26] Despite the shortcomings of French and American strategies in Vietnam, which led to a decline in interest in the concepts of insurgency and counter-insurgency, the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000s prompted a resurgence of interest in these concepts, both in theoretical and practical terms.

In US Military Doctrine, insurgency is defined as *"the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region."*[27] According to Bard E. O'Neill, one of the most cited academic scholars of insurgency,

> *"A struggle between a nonruling group and the ruling authorities in which the nonruling group consciously uses political resources (e.g., organizational expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations) and violence to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics."*[28]

In accordance with the definition set forth by NATO, insurgency is defined as:

> *"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."*[29]

Insurgencies frequently emerge in response to popular political, social, or economic grievances, with the objective of undermining the legitimacy of existing authority. Consistent with the definition provided by NATO, subversion can be understood as activities that are designed to weaken the economic, political, or military power of an existing government. This is achieved by eroding the morale, loyalty, and credibility of its members.

As posited by the renowned counter-insurgency theorist, David Galula, the primary objective of insurgencies is to erode the legitimacy of the incumbent administration by undermining its political efficacy and rendering it incapable of governing effectively.[30]

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25 Emrah Özdemir and Ahmet Özcan, Gayrinizami Harp Tarihi, (Kronik, 2022).

26 Michael J. Boyle. "The Military Approach to Counterterrorism," in Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism (Adrew Silke, ed, Routledge: 2019), 386. For more please see Robert Taber, The War of the Flea: Guerrilla Warfare in Theory and Practice, (Paladin, 1974); Walter Laqueur, Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study, (Little, Brown and Company, 1976); Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam, (F. A. Praeger, 1966); David Galula. Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice. (Praeger, 2005 [1964]); George K. Tanham, Communist revolutionary warfare: from the Vietminh to the Viet Cong, (Praeger, 2006 [1961]).

27 JP 3-24 Counterinsurgency, available at https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_24.pdf (accessed 05 July 2024).

28 Bard E. O'neill, Insurgency & Terrorism (Potomac: 2005), p. 23.

29 AJP-3.27 Allied Joint Doctrine for Counterinsurgency (COIN) April 2023, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64525cbdfaf4aa0012e13238/20230503-AJP-3_27_COIN_EA_V2-O.pdf (accessed 05 July 2024). In the 2011 edition of the same document, AJP-3.4.4, the Allied Joint Doctrine for Counterinsurgency (COIN) defines insurgency as" the actions of an organized, often ideologically motivated, group or movement that seeks to effect or prevent political change of a governing authority within a region, focused on persuading or coercing the population through the use of violence and subversion."

30 David Galula, Counterinsurgency Warfare, p. 90.

This is exemplified by Maoist insurgency strategies, which entail the establishment of an alternative governance structure in liberated areas, thereby challenging the legitimacy of the existing authority.[31] A comparable approach to insurgency is observed in NATO doctrine. The objective of an insurgency is to erode the legitimacy and popular support of the incumbent administration through a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic actions designed to gain popular support. An illustrative example is the ascendance of the Taliban in Afghanistan, which garnered popular support and legitimacy by establishing shadow or parallel government structures, such as local courts, to fulfill this function in areas where the existing administration was inadequate in the effective implementation of justice.[32]

Counter-insurgency

The concept of COIN first emerged in the late 19th century as a systematic response to anti-colonial resistances.[33] Notable early works include C. E. Callwell's Small Wars (1896), Charles Gwynn's Imperial Policing (1934), and the US Marine Corps' Small Wars Manual (1940).

In this sense, COIN involves a series of actions designed to suppress insurgencies and address their root causes. In the literature, COIN is broadly divided into two approaches: enemy-centric and people-centric.[34] The enemy-centric approach is kinetic in nature and directly targets insurgents, focusing on military operations. In contrast, the people-centric approach views the insurgency as a multifaceted political, economic, and social issue. This approach aims to address the underlying causes of grievance among the general population, thereby diverting their support and sympathy from the insurgents.[35] One notable example of this approach, termed 'hearts and minds' in the literature, was successfully employed in Malaya by British Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer and Sir Robert Thompson.[36] However, the approach, which was also attempted in Vietnam, failed to yield the expected results due to strategic mistakes and sustainability problems.[37]

Following the unsuccessful outcome of the Vietnam War, the United States military ceased to prioritize the implementation of a comprehensive COIN strategy. However, in the

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31 Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare, (translated by Samuel B. Griffit, US Marine Corps, 1989), pp. 107-110.

32 Mike Martin, An Intimate War: An Oral History of the Helmand Conflict, 1978/2012. (Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 100.

33 Douglas Porch, "Bugeaud, Gallieni, Lyautey: The Development of French Colonial Warfare," in Makers of Modem Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age, (P. Paret, G.A. Craig and F. Gilbert, eds, Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 376.

34 David Galula, Counterinsurgency Warfare, pp. 43-46; Patricia Owens, Economy of Force: Counterinsurgency and the Historical Rise of the Social (Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 245; Collen Bell, "The police power in counterinsurgency: discretion, patrolling and evidence." In: Jan Bachmann, Colleen Bell and Caroline Holmqvist (eds) War, Police and Assemblages of Intervention. London, UK; New York, USA: Routledge, 2015, pp. 17-35.

35 Galula posits that the population-centered approach is predicated on the notion that "the support of the population is necessary for the counterinsurgent as for the insurgent." David Galula, Counterinsurgency Warfare, p. 74.

36 Paul Dixon, 'Hearts and Minds'? British Counterinsurgency from Malaya to Iraq. Journal of Strategic Studies 32(3) (2009): pp. 353-381; Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist insurgency: the lessons of Malaya and Vietnam *(*F. A. Praeger, 1966), pp. 51-116.

37 Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr. The Army and Vietnam (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

context of the insurgencies that emerged in the wake of the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the experiences of the United States and France in Vietnam, the British in Malaya, and the French in Algeria were reexamined and reinterpreted in the context of military doctrine. The most tangible manifestation of this shift was the publication of the Field Manual FM 3-24 'Counterinsurgency' in December 2006, directed by General David Petraeus of the US Army and General James Mattis of the US Marine Corps. According to this Manual, the term "counterinsurgency" is defined as the *"military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency*."[38]

David Kilcullen, a leading scholar in the field and a major contributor to FM 3-24, also defines counterinsurgency as:

> *"An umbrella term that describes the complete range of measures that governments take to defeat insurgencies. These measures may be political, administrative, military, economic, psychological, or informational, and are almost always used in combination."*[39]

This perspective is reflected in the comprehensive approach espoused by FM 3-24.

The new COIN approach, spearheaded by the US Army, was subsequently conveyed to NATO through the insights gleaned from the Afghanistan conflict. This population-centric approach, initially adopted by the US military, was subsequently applied more comprehensively in the context of the Taliban insurgency. This was when General McCrystal, the commander of the US troops in Afghanistan, also assumed command of ISAF. In 2011, NATO published Allied Joint Doctrine for Counterinsurgency (COIN), AJP-3.4.4, which incorporates the experience gained in Afghanistan into a doctrine, while a standalone CT Operations doctrine is still missing. This doctrine defines counter-insurgency as *"the set of political, economic, social, military, law enforcement, civil and psychological activities with the aim to defeat insurgency and address any core grievances."*[40]

This strategy necessitates the concerted actions of security forces and state authorities to diminish and eradicate the impact of insurgents. COIN operations encompass a range of elements, including the assurance of security and stability, the fortification of local governments, the garnering of public support, and the formulation of long-term solutions to address the underlying causes of the insurgency. In this regard, the NATO approach is somewhat more expansive than FM 3-24, incorporating insights gleaned from recent experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In its 2023 publication of AJP-3-27 Allied Joint Doctrine for Counter-Insurgency (COIN), NATO developed this definition of counter-insurgency as "*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*

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38 FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency (Headquarters Department of the Army, 2006), available at http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/Repository/Materials/COIN-FM3-24.pdf (accessed 04 July 2024).

39 David Kilcullen, Counterinsurgency (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 1.

40 AJP-3.4.4 NATO Allied Joint Doctrine for Counterinsurgency (NATO Standardization Agency), https://info.publicintelligence.net/NATO-Counterinsurgency.pdf (accessed 05 July 2024).

law."[41] While this new definition is more generic in terms of application than the first one, it is more descriptive in terms of objectives.

A comparable approach to implementation can be observed in FM 3-24, which was revised in 2014 and bears the title 'Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies.' This document defines COIN as *"comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes."*[42] The new US manual is based on the theoretical framework of the old one, but it adapted the most recent experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan and changing political trends of the US government. This definition is inextricably linked with NATO's comprehensive approach to crisis situations, which entails the integration of political, civilian and military instruments. While military means are undoubtedly a crucial component, they are not a panacea for the multifaceted challenges to security. The effective implementation of a comprehensive approach to crisis situations necessitates a collective effort from countries, International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO).[43]

Section 2: Analytic Comparison of Definitions

A comparison of the meanings of 'insurgency/terrorism' and 'counter-insurgency/counter-terrorism' in NATO concepts and doctrine reveals significant differences at the operational and strategic levels. The term 'insurgency' is typically employed to describe popular movements that demand political or social change. In contrast, 'terrorism' is used to refer to the actions of limited groups that seek to achieve specific objectives through fear and violence. The equivalents of these concepts in NATO doctrine are of critical importance in determining the nature of threats and the most appropriate response strategies.

The 'counter-insurgency' strategy represents a strategic framework within which NATO generally adopts a long-term and comprehensive approach. It encompasses the neutralization of a multitude of security threats and military interventions, backed by social, economic, and political measures. In contrast, the 'Global War on Terror' (GWoT) represented a more circumscribed and operational-level concern, forming part of NATO's security strategies. This framework entails combating terrorism through the implementation of particular methods, including intelligence sharing, the rule of law, and targeted operations. The GWoT catalyzed NATO's evolution from a primarily Euro-Atlantic defense alliance to a more global security organization capable of addressing diverse and complex threats. In addition, NATO chose to develop a more complex counter-terrorism strategy that addresses root causes rather than simply eliminating terrorists, as in Afghanistan. A comprehensive comparison of these concepts enables NATO to effectively prepare for an array of security threats and assess the relevance of its operational strategies.

41 AJP-3.27 Allied Joint Doctrine for Counterinsurgency (COIN). This definition is also used in AAP-06(2021) - NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions and is synonymous with counter-insurrection.

42 FM 3-24. Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies (Headquarters Department of the Army, 2014), available at https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf (accessed 05 July 2024)

43 A ''comprehensive approach'' to crises, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_51633.htm (accessed 11 July 2024)

Insurgency and Terrorism

The concepts of terrorism and insurgency are often conflated in discussions of global security threats. Both phenomena involve the use of force or violence to achieve a long-term political objective, but they differ significantly in their methods, short-term goals, and organizational structure. It is therefore crucial to understand these distinctions in order to develop effective counter-strategies. This analysis will facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the distinctive and overlapping features that define these two forms of political violence used by state and non-state actors and exploited by criminal networks (Table 1: Analytic Comparison of Insurgency and Terrorism).

Table 1: Analytic Comparison of Insurgency and Terrorism

Aspect	Insurgency	Terrorism
Objective	Political change through subversion and irregular activities	Political, religious, or ideological change by instilling fear
Methods	Subversion, irregular military tactics, garnering local support	Unlawful use or threat of force or violence, high-profile attacks
Targets	Strategically political targets, often government-related	Civilian targets or symbolic locations
Organizational Structure	Structured, ideologically driven collective	Less centralized, loosely affiliated groups
Tactics	Protracted campaigns, combining military and political maneuvers	High-impact acts designed to gain media coverage and instill fear
Use of Violence	Combines violence with efforts to gain local support	Direct and indiscriminate violence to exert psychological influence
Overlap with Terrorism	May employ terrorism as a strategy (e.g., FLN in Algeria)	Purely focused on creating fear and coercion
Context within NATO	Defined broadly as actions of an organized, often ideologically motivated group	Defined as the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence
Psychological Elements	Coercive tactics to persuade or coerce populations	Psychological influence on a large group to achieve objectives

The two concepts exhibit significant areas of overlap. Of these overlapping features, the most significant are those pertaining to methods and objectives. Both terrorism and insurgency employ violence and coercive tactics to attain their objectives. Terrorists employ violence with the intention of instilling fear and terror among individuals and communities, thereby influencing government policy. In contrast, insurgents frequently employ a combination of subversion, irregular military tactics, and efforts to garner local support, often while engaged in protracted campaigns. Martha Crenshaw's research, particularly her work on terrorism in her book 'Explaining Terrorism,' examines these tactics, emphasizing the psychological and coercive elements that are crucial to both terrorism and insurgency.[44] NATO's counter-terrorism policy also emphasizes the importance of situational awareness, intelligence sharing, and maintaining strong capabilities to confront these overlapping threats.[45]

[44] Martha Crenshaw, Explaining Terrorism: Causes, Processes and Consequences (Routledge, 2011).

[45] NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, available at https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf (accessed 05 July 2024).

While the specific objectives may differ, the ultimate goal of both terrorism and insurgency is political change. Terrorists seek to achieve their political, religious, or ideological goals by instilling fear and terror among individuals and communities, thereby compelling governments to concede. Insurgents, while potentially violent, seek to persuade or coerce populations through subversion and irregular activities. Notwithstanding the discrepancies in operational methodologies, the overarching objective of altering the existing political configuration is a unifying factor for both.

Terrorist attacks are typically directed at civilian targets or symbols that have the potential to instill widespread fear. In contrast to the more indiscriminate nature of terrorist activities, the targets of insurgency tend to be more strategically political in nature. Such actions are frequently undertaken with the objective of undermining governmental authority or of gaining control over specific territories within a country or region. Terrorist methods can be defined as high-profile acts of violence designed to garner extensive media coverage and instill fear among a broad audience. In contrast, insurgents may engage in protracted campaigns employing subversion, irregular military tactics, and efforts to gain local support. Insurgency is typically conducted by a structured and ideologically driven collective seeking to effect political change through a combination of military and political maneuvers. In contrast, terrorist organizations are generally less centralized and more fluid in their operations, often composed of loosely affiliated groups focused on the perpetration of high-impact acts of violence.

In essence, the distinction between insurgency and terrorism is that the former is a case of political victimization leading to violence, while the latter represents the resort to violence by those who suffer from political victimization.[46] Consequently, terrorism can be employed as a strategy by those engaged in insurgency. A notable illustration of this perspective is the terrorist actions of the Front de Liberation National (FLN) against civilians during the uprising against the French occupation in Algeria.[47] The FLN insurgents directed their attacks against both French settlers (*pieds-noirs*) and Algerian collaborators. They carried out bombings in public locations, including cafés, markets, and transportation hubs, with the objective of pressuring France to abandon its occupation policy.[48]

As a reminder, in the context of NATO, terrorism is defined as *"the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence,"* whereas insurgency is defined more broadly as *"actions of an organized, often ideologically motivated, group or movement."* From this perspective, terrorism can be defined as a tool that can be used by insurgents. However, from a legal standpoint, insurgency groups that employ terrorism as a tactic cannot evade characterization of their comprehensive and long-term political struggle as a terrorist act by the international community.

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[46] Simon Pratt, "What is the difference between counterinsurgency and counterterrorism?", (E-IR, 21 December 2010), available at https://www.e-ir.info/2010/12/21/what-is-the-difference-between-counterinsurgency-and-counterterrorism/ (accessed 06 July 2024).

[47] George E. Wales, "Algerian Terrorism." Naval War College Review 22(2), (1969), pp. 26–42.

[48] Françoise Perret and François Bugnion. Between insurgents and government: the International Committee of the Red Cross's action in the Algerian War (1954–1962). International Review of the Red Cross. 2011; 93(883): 707-742.

Counter-insurgency & Counter-terrorism

As can be observed, both COIN and CT are fundamental elements of NATO's security strategies. However, they exhibit notable differences in their intended outcomes, scope, methodologies, and techniques. It is therefore essential to gain an understanding of these differences and of the points of common ground between them, in order to grasp how NATO addresses contemporary security challenges through its concepts and doctrines.

The principal objective of COIN is to counter insurgent movements that seek to overthrow or weaken a government or political system by gaining the support of the local population and stabilizing the political and social environment. In contrast, the primary objective of CT is to prevent, deter, and respond to acts of terrorism. This entails the identification and neutralization of terrorist groups and networks, as well as the mitigation of the effects of their activities.[49]

In terms of scope, COIN is broader and more comprehensive, encompassing military, political, economic, and social dimensions. It emphasizes long-term stability, governance, development, and ensuring the security of the population. CT, on the other hand, has a narrower and more tactical scope, focusing primarily on security and law enforcement operations. Its short-term objectives include disrupting terrorist plots, dismantling terrorist cells, and improving emergency security measures. In this sense, counter-terrorism makes instrumental sense within the broader COIN effort.

It is similarly possible to identify an opposing perspective in the existing literature. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the "Global War on Terror" was proclaimed as a far more expansive endeavor than the traditional fight against terrorism. In this sense, COIN against the Taliban in Afghanistan represents a tool in the fight against the al Qaeda terrorist organization, which was identified by British Prime Minister Gordon Brown as a global threat. In other words, COIN is a CT strategy in this specific discourse.[50] A solution to this approach, which causes further confusion of concepts, can be found in Kilcullen's work. In his analysis, Kilcullen characterizes the activities of the al Qaeda terrorist organization as a global insurgency instead of global terror.[51]

COIN employs a multifaceted approach, integrating a range of military operations, political reforms, economic development, and psychological operations. The key tactics include the construction of local government infrastructure, the enhancement of public services, and the facilitation of economic opportunity. The NATO AJP-3.27 doctrine underscores the necessity of a comprehensive approach that integrates civilian and military efforts. Consequently, CT is contingent upon the collection of intelligence, targeted strikes, special operations, law enforcement activities, and protective security measures. The recently (Washington Summit 2024) approved Fight Against Terrorism Action Plan and NATO's Policy on Counter-Terrorism provide guidance on CT efforts at NATO.[52] However, separate doctrines focusing on such sub-issues do not meet the need to develop an independent CT doctrine.

[49] Rob de Wijk, "Contributions from the Military Counterinsurgency Literature for the Prevention of Terrorism," in Handbook of Terrorism Prevention and Preparedness, (Alex P. Schmid, ed, ICCT, 2021).

[50] Michael J. Boyle, "Do Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency Go Together?" International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-) 86(2), (2010), pp. 333–53.

[51] David J. Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency." Journal of Strategic Studies, 28(4), (2005), pp. 597–617.

[52] AJP-3.14 Allied Joint Doctrine for Force Protection, available at https://www.coemed.org/files/stanags/01_AJP/AJP-3.14_EDA_V1_E_2528.pdf (accessed 05 July 2024); AJP-3.5 (Restricted) Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations

To comprehend the distinctions between COIN and CT, joint functions—including maneuver, fires, command and control, intelligence, information, sustainment, force protection, and civil-military cooperation—provide a suitable doctrinal framework (Table 2: COIN and CT from Joint Functions Perspective).[53]

Table 2: COIN and CT from Joint Functions Perspective

Joint Function	COIN (Counter-Insurgency)	CT (Counter-Terrorism)
Maneuver	Secure and stabilize key population centers with slower, deliberate movements focused on long-term security and governance.	Short-term, high-intensity operations designed to achieve immediate tactical objectives and rapidly disrupt terrorist activities.
Fires	Precision targeting to minimize collateral damage and avoid alienating the local population; aim to win hearts and minds.	Targeted attacks, including drone strikes and direct-action raids, to swiftly eliminate high-value targets.
Command and Control (C2)	Decentralized execution and integration with civilian agencies and host nation forces to build comprehensive governance structures and gain local support.	Centralized and hierarchical command structures for rapid, precise execution, heavily involving special operations forces and intelligence agencies for high-risk missions.
Intelligence	Relies on Human Intelligence (HUMINT) to understand the socio-political context and grievances driving the insurgency; requires sustained local engagement.	Prioritizes technical intelligence (SIGINT, IMINT) to identify and neutralize terrorist cells and leaders, aiming for timely, accurate intelligence to prevent attacks and disrupt activities.
Information	Information operations aim to positively influence the local population, counter insurgent propaganda, and build government support, focusing on strategic communication.	Information operations disrupt terrorist propaganda and communication networks.
Sustainment	Requires continuous logistical support for long-term operations and development projects, including building host country forces' and infrastructure's capacity for a stable, self-sustaining environment.	Logistics support rapid, high-tempo operations.
Force Protection	Emphasizes protecting civilians and infrastructure to gain local trust and legitimacy, balancing force protection with community engagement.	Prioritizes the protection of forces engaged in high-risk operations.
Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC)	Crucial for ensuring security, addressing local needs, and implementing long-term development projects, essential for gaining local trust and support.	More limited, typically involving information sharing and coordination with civilian authorities for planning and execution.

[53] AJP-3.27 Allied Joint Doctrine for Counterinsurgency (COIN).

Despite their differences, COIN and CT share some similarities, notably their reliance on a comprehensive approach, the critical role of intelligence, and legal and ethical considerations. Both strategies require a multifaceted approach involving various elements of national power, including military, intelligence, law enforcement, and diplomatic efforts. They also emphasize international cooperation and coordination among NATO members and partners. Intelligence plays a critical role in both COIN and CT, as accurate and timely information is essential to identify threats, understand the operational environment, and make informed decisions.[54] By facilitating the sharing of information among member nations, NATO increases the effectiveness of both COIN and CT operations.[55]

Legal and ethical considerations are central to both strategies. Operations are conducted within the framework of international law and respect for human rights, and NATO doctrines emphasize the importance of legality and ethical conduct.[56] Rules such as least harm to and protection of civilians are important to both in terms of maintaining the legitimacy of operations in the eyes of international public opinion and in terms of gaining public support. Failure to comply with the rules of law and ethics is an important propaganda tool for both terrorists and insurgents - of utmost importance that this is stated at the very beginning of the (AJP)-3.27 Allied Joint Doctrine for Counter-Insurgency.

Although the two concepts are distinct, they can sometimes be used as tools to complement each other or by different actors in the same geography for the same purpose. Therefore, there are similarities in their methodologies. In this sense, NATO's comprehensive approach and the combination of military and non-military means constitutes the commonality of these two different struggles. NATO's comprehensive approach integrates military and non-military means to address the root causes of conflict and instability, a fundamental principle in both COIN and CT operations. It emphasizes the need for significant civil-military cooperation and coordination between military forces and civilian institutions to achieve objectives.

While counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism differ in their objectives, scope, methods, and tactics, they share a common reliance on intelligence, legal frameworks, and comprehensive approaches, as shown in Table 3: Analytic Comparison of COIN and CT.

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54 Jason Rineheart, "Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency" Perspectives on Terrorism 4(5), (2010), pp. 31-47.

55 Stefano Santamato and Marie-Theres Beumler, The New NATO Policy Guidelines on Counterterrorism: Analysis, Assessments, and Action, (National Defense University Press, February 2013).

56 Sarah Sewall, "Ethics," in Understanding Counterinsurgency Doctrine, Operations, and Challenges, (Thomas Rid and Thomas Keaney, eds, Routledge, 2010), pp. 205-215; Jochen Bohn. "Magdalena Badde-Revue/Marie-des-Neiges Ruffo de Calabre (Hrsg.): Ethics in Counter-Terrorism. Leiden: Brill Nijhoff, 2018." SIRIUS – Zeitschrift für Strategische Analysen, 3(3), 2019, pp. 316-317.

Table 4: Analytic Comparison of COIN and CT

Aspect	COIN (Counter-Insurgency)	CT (Counter-Terrorism)
Objective	Counter insurgent movements by gaining local population support and stabilizing the political and social environment.	Prevent, deter, and respond to acts of terrorism by identifying and neutralizing terrorist groups and networks.
Scope	Broad and comprehensive, encompassing military, political, economic, and social dimensions. Focuses on long-term stability, governance, and development.	Narrow and tactical, primarily focusing on security and law enforcement operations. Aims for short-term objectives like disrupting terrorist plots and dismantling cells.
Methodologies and Techniques	Integrates military operations, political reforms, economic development, and psychological operations. Key tactics include building local government infrastructure, enhancing public services, and facilitating economic opportunities.	Relies on intelligence collection, targeted strikes, special operations, law enforcement activities, and protective security measures. Uses precision strikes to neutralize high-value targets.
Conceptual and Doctrinal Guidance	NATO AJP-3.27 emphasizes a comprehensive approach that integrates civilian and military efforts to stabilize regions.	NATO's Policy Guidelines on Counter-Terrorism, MC 0472/1, NATO AJP-3.14 and AJP-3.5 provide guidance on counter-terrorism operations and force protection measures.
Commonalities	Both strategies require a multifaceted approach involving military, intelligence, law enforcement, and diplomatic efforts. Emphasize international cooperation and coordination among NATO members and partners.	Both rely on accurate and timely intelligence to identify threats, understand the operational environment, and make informed decisions. Awareness, development of capabilities and preparedness, and cooperation and partnerships, legal and ethical considerations are central to both strategies.
Integration and Cooperation	Can be used to complement CT in the same geography. NATO's comprehensive approach integrates military and non-military means to address the root causes of conflict and instability	Complements COIN by focusing on immediate security measures. NATO's doctrines ensure that both COIN and CT operations are coordinated and aligned with international norms.
Legal and Ethical Frameworks	Emphasizes legality and ethical conduct to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of international public opinion and gain public support. Non-compliance can be used as propaganda by insurgents.	Similarly emphasizes legality and ethical conduct to maintain legitimacy and public support. Non-compliance can be used as propaganda by terrorists.

NATO's policies provide structured guidance to ensure that both COIN and CT operations are effective, coordinated, and in line with international norms. The integration of these approaches is vital to addressing the complex security challenges of the modern world, where NATO's objective is to maintain global stability and security through the balanced implementation of COIN, CT and other strategies.

Section 3: CT and COIN in the Contemporary Security Environment

The most recent iteration of the NATO Strategic Concept was published at the Madrid Summit in 2022.

[57] The document identifies the aggression of the Russian Federation and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine as the primary threat to global security. The text subsequently identifies terrorism, conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, pervasive instability, erosion of the arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture as threats, while China's ambitions and coercive policies present a significant challenge. The concept, which is primarily concerned with the analysis of peer and near-peer adversaries, does not explicitly address the issue of insurgency and counter-insurgency.[58] However, it does emphasize the importance of sustaining the lessons learned and capabilities gained from Afghanistan in the context of crisis management. This emphasis, coupled with the inclusion of the protection of civilians and human security in potential future crises, suggests that the Alliance views the experience and knowledge gained in previous counter-insurgency operations as a valuable asset that can be preserved and utilized in the future. This perspective is further reinforced by other operational documents prepared in alignment with and detailing this concept, such as AJP 3-27.

The NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC) represents a strategic approach designed to ensure the continued military superiority of NATO over potential adversaries. The document, published in 2023, addresses conventional threats posed by Russia and wider challenges such as China and Iran, while also acknowledging the potential dangers posed by terrorist organizations.[59] The concept places an emphasis on the integration of advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and underscores the necessity for a military force that is both agile and flexible in its approach to counter-terrorism and joint operations. Similarly, the NWCC does not explicitly address insurgency and counter-insurgency.

[57] NATO 2022 Strategic Concept.

[58] The continuation of this stance can be seen in the NATO Washington Summit Declaration. This declaration states that terrorism in all its forms is a significant threat to the Alliance, and that the Alliance will continue to counter, deter, defend against, and respond to the threats and challenges posed by terrorists and terrorist organizations with resolve and solidarity, based on a combination of prevention, protection, and denial. However, the terms insurgency and counterinsurgency are not directly mentioned in this declaration. Please see Washington Summit Declaration, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_227678.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed 28 July 2024).

[59] NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept, available at https://www.act.nato.int/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NWCC-Glossy-18-MAY.pdf (accessed 11 July 2024). The Warfare Development Agenda is also a key supporting document for the NWCC. It is the framework through which the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation directs the planning and implementation of the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept. As this document is classified, the contents of the Agenda cannot be quoted. Please see The Warfare Development Agenda, available at https://www.act.nato.int/warfare-development-agenda/ (accessed 29 July 2024).

However, ongoing instability and the struggle between various actors, which are identified as potential threats, can be interpreted as encompassing insurgencies. AJP-3.27, published concurrently with this concept, commences by asserting that fragile states and insurgencies continue to occupy a significant position on the Alliance agenda. Identifying insurgency explicitly as a threat factor, rather than in broad terms, may be more consistent with strategic foresight.

In parallel with the NWCC, which provides a visionary framework for the development of NATO's long-term warfighting capabilities, there is currently another important concept aimed at ensuring deterrence and defense. This document, NATO's Deterrence and Defense Concept for the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA), represents the foundation of the Alliance's strategy to safeguard its member states against contemporary threats, including those posed by Russia and various terrorist groups.[60]

In 2014, in response to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, NATO allies reached a consensus on a series of measures aimed at enhancing their collective defense capabilities. In recognition of the necessity for a more pertinent and resilient strategy, NATO adopted the Concept for Deterrence and Defense in the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA) as its novel classified military strategy in 2020, diverging from the outdated 2010 strategic concept.[61] This new strategy underscores NATO's dedication to ensuring the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area, regardless of the circumstances, whether in peacetime, during crises, or in wartime.[62]

The DDA concept, in conjunction with its associated sub-plans, constitutes the DDA family and represents a hitherto unparalleled level of alliance planning in the post-Cold War era.[63] In accordance with the DDA concept, the NATO Force Model, which previously concentrated on crisis management, has also been redesigned with a view to enhancing deterrence and defense capabilities against the aforementioned two principal threats: Russia and terrorist groups.[64] In a manner similar to the NWCC, this concept also identifies terrorism as a threat to the Alliance, although it does not mention insurgency in particular.

The NATO Strategic Foresight Analysis 2023 framework, on the other hand, is a tool designed to assist NATO in anticipating and preparing for potential future security

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60 Family of Plans, Civil-Military Cooperation Centre of Excellence, available at https://www.cimic-coe.org/cimic/Definitions/Family-of-plans/ (accessed 30 July 2024); About Deter and Defend, SHAPE, available at https://shape.nato.int/dda/about-dda (accessed 30 July 2024).

61 Sean Monaghan, Katherine Kjellström Elgin, and Sara Bjerg Moller, Understanding NATO's Concept for Deterrence and Defense of the Euro-Atlantic Area, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 20 May 2024, available at https://csbaonline.org/research/publications/understanding-natos-concept-for-deterrence-and-defense-of-the-euro-atlantic-area/publication/1 (accessed 29 July 2024).

62 C. Todd Lopez, SACEUR Provides Update on Deterrence, Defense of Euro-Atlantic Area, US Department of Defense, available at https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3391802/saceur-provides-update-on-deterrence-defense-of-euro-atlantic-area/ (accessed 28 July 2024).

63 Stephen R. Covington, "NATO's Concept for Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA)." Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, 2 August 2023; SACEUR Cavoli - CEPA Remarks, SACEUR, available at https://shape.nato.int/saceur/saceur-cavoli-cepa-remarks (accessed 28 July 2024).

64 John R. Deni, "The New NATO Force Model: Ready for Launch?" NATO Defense College, 2024.

threats. SFA 2023 specifically underscores the necessity of elucidating the socio-political underpinnings of terrorism.[65] It also highlights the pivotal role of economic and political factors in the processes of radicalization and the proliferation of terrorism. SFA 2023's threat assessments encompass a range of potential dangers, including the activities of ethnic rebel groups, social unrest and instability, as well as their relationship with peer and near-peer states, poverty, climate change, and the impact of disruptive technologies. This threat perception necessitates the implementation of comprehensive policies and the fostering of civil and military cooperation, which is consistent with the fundamental tenets of counter-insurgency doctrine.

The Multi-Domain Concept of Operations (MDO), meanwhile, represents a comprehensive approach to security, encompassing land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace.[66] This approach acknowledges the reality that contemporary security threats, such as terrorism, frequently transcend the boundaries of a single domain, instead manifesting across multiple domains. This framework encourages NATO to engage in collaborative efforts with international partners, civilian institutions, and the private sector with the aim of developing a coherent and effective response to the complex security challenges that the organization is currently facing. While the MDO is primarily concerned with the conventional capabilities of peer and near-peer actors such as Iran and Russia, it does not ignore the fact that these actors may have formed partnerships with terrorist organizations, criminal groups, and insurgents in the context of hybrid warfare. Furthermore, ongoing insurgencies and terrorist movements in the Middle East, Africa, and the Far East are also taken into account. Consequently, while prioritizing the advancement of conventional capabilities, the Alliance maintains the doctrinal and practical knowledge gained from counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations. NATO's strategic doctrines and concepts should be designed to enhance counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency capabilities through technological innovation and multi-domain integration. In turn, counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency doctrines developed or to be developed should follow the strategic concepts. For example, AJP-3.27 should address insurgency and the conduct of COIN operations in the MDO environment. Similarly, the counter-terrorism doctrine to be developed should explain how CT activities should be conducted in conventional warfare and the MDO environment.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how NATO defines the concepts of terrorism, counter-terrorism, insurgency, and counter-insurgency, and how these concepts are embedded in the Alliance's strategic and operational frameworks. In the post-Cold War era, NATO has undergone significant shifts in its approach to security threats. Initially, the Alliance's focus expanded from conventional dangers to encompass terrorism and internal insurgencies. In

[65] Strategic Foresight Analysis 2023, available at https://www.act.nato.int/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SFA2023_rev2.pdf (accessed 11 July 2024)

[66] AJP-01 Allied Joint Doctrine, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/659ea238e96df5000df843f3/AJP_01_EdF_with_UK_elements.pdf (accessed 12 July 2024).

the wake of the 9/11 attacks, counter-terrorism emerged as a pivotal agenda item, influencing the shaping of NATO's operational experience, strategic documents, and doctrines.

In its approach to terrorism, NATO has adopted a comprehensive definition, characterizing it as *"the unlawful use or threat of force or violence to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives."*[67] This definition has enabled NATO to develop comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies and enhance its operational capacity. The primary objective of NATO's policy guidelines and operational documents on counter-terrorism is to enhance coordination among member states and protect common security interests.

Insurgency and counter-insurgency are addressed from a distinct perspective in NATO's strategic documents and military doctrine. Insurgency is defined as organized actions against political changes or existing governments, and it constitutes an essential element in determining how NATO responds to such situations. The measures taken by NATO in the face of insurgency demonstrate how the alliance acts within a framework to ensure international security and stability.

In conclusion, an analysis of NATO's definitions and strategic approaches to terrorism, counter-terrorism, insurgency, and counter-insurgency reveals a clear evolution and adaptability in the Alliance's security policies. An understanding of these concepts elucidates the manner in which NATO has devised a strategy to counter global security threats and ensures cooperation among member states. For future engagements, a more profound examination of NATO's policies and strategies surrounding these concepts is nonetheless imperative, as this will facilitate continued and relevant comprehension of the Alliance's role in the current security environment and preparation for future challenges.

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[67] Military Concept for Counter-terrorism, MC 0472 1,

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CHAPTER III

CT/COIN ASPECTS RELEVANT TO MISSION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM AFGHANISTAN

Colonel Daniel W. Stone[68]

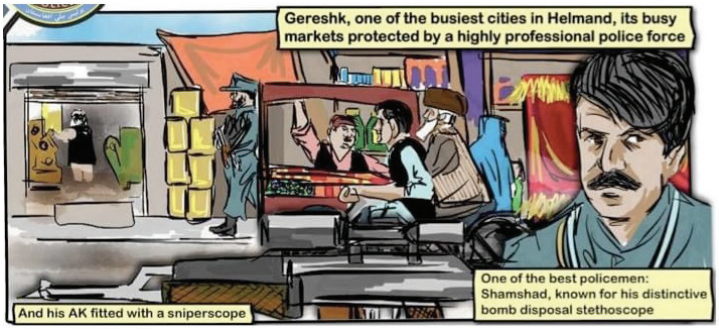

Illustration 3: A frame from an ISAF-produced cartoon strip, 'Heroes of the Afghan National Security Forces'. But, the ANSF were not always heroes in the eyes of the Afghan population.

Abstract

This chapter approaches the discussion on counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-insurgency (COIN) in Afghanistan from the lens of personal observation as opposed to the academic approach used in other chapters. The observations reflect experiences of the author during operations, interactions with commanders of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Operation Resolute Support and their staffs, senior members of the government of Afghanistan, as well as tactical level personnel.

[68] Col Daniel W. Stone is a 29-year veteran of the United States Air Force who has worked in a variety of specialties to include computer communications, pilot, and as an Afghanistan Hand

Introduction

The counter-terrorism (CT) goal for the Afghanistan mission was two-fold: firstly, find and defeat those responsible for the attacks on 11 September 2001 and secondly, to make sure that Afghanistan would not be used as a safe haven for terrorists to plan future attacks.[69] The first goal was accomplished quickly through Special Operations Forces (SOF) operating in partnership with local Afghan Northern Alliance forces to decimate al-Qa'ida and the Taliban.

However, achieving the second goal proved to be far more difficult as it necessitated a change in government and the rebuilding of local security forces; effectively nation building and counter-insurgency (COIN) as an implied task. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in 2021 stated that NATO *"prevented Afghanistan from being a safe haven for international terrorists, and prevented any attack against any NATO ally for over 20 years."*[70] While this statement is true, it does not address the failure to develop effective governance, an army, or a police force in Afghanistan, despite the mission lasting two decades. It is widely acknowledged that effective governance is key to successful nation building and this pivotal failure to provide effective governance ultimately led to the withdrawal of foreign forces in 2021.[71]

While the intervention in Afghanistan did not achieve all the goals intended, it still provides a number of lessons that can be applied in future counter-terrorism missions. The lessons learned are broken down into five broad categories. The first four can be viewed as cautionary tales that trend towards the negative as they require change in thought and action and consist of the lessons learned that:

- 'Never say never' as a counter-terrorism/counter-insurgency mission similar to Afghanistan most likely will occur again
- The problem must be clearly identified, and the solution must address and solve that problem
- Military power alone cannot win a counter-terrorism/counter-insurgency mission as CT and COIN are inherently non-military problems
- Building a security force is difficult

The fifth lesson learned provides a positive roadmap to build upon (this lesson learned was applied in Syria) for future CT and COIN missions:

- Partnerships with local forces work - if done right

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69 Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives 116 Congress, second session, "US Lessons Learned in Afghanistan", , 15 January 2020, last accessed 29 December 2022.

70 Doorstep statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers on 21 and 22 October at NATO Headquarters, NATO - Opinion: Doorstep statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers on 21 and 22 October at NATO Headquarters, 21-Oct.-2021, 21 October 2021, last accessed 29 Dec 2022.

71 Cordesman, Anthony H., "The Lessons of the Afghan War No One Will Want to Learn," 15 June 2022, 20220615_Lessons of the Afghan Warthat No One Will Want to Learn.pdf, p 4, last accessed 29 Dec 2022.

It should be noted that these lessons are not listed in terms of priority nor were they sequential in the learning: instead, they were concurrent and constantly subject to reconsideration, given the duration and the dynamics of the situation in Afghanistan.

Section 1: Never Say Never

The first and most obvious lesson learned is this will not be the last CT/COIN mission that encompasses nation building. It is easy to say the mission was 'just too hard' and never again will NATO nations make this type of commitment, with all the associated sacrifice, in what is characterised by many as a massive failure. However, history and the likelihood of another similar mission cannot be discounted; if anything, history indicates that there will be other terrorist groups and insurgencies that threaten the interests of the West and NATO might well have to directly face them down. The US provides a good example: after the Vietnam conflict, the US said it would never get involved in another counter-insurgency; and after nation-building in the Balkans the US said it would never try nation-building again as it was an inappropriate use of resources.[72] Even though the US said it would not engage in a similar mission again; missions to do these same things were pursued in Iraq. Then Afghanistan, and then Iraq/Syria. So, 'never say never.'

Section 2: The problem must be clearly identified, and the solution must address and solve that problem

In Afghanistan the US and later NATO/ISAF failed to identify the problem and a solution that addressed and solved only that problem. The failure to clearly identify the problem and the related solution led to the constant shifting of strategies and resources to accomplish the various strategies proposed. As part of that, conflicts emerged between the counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency/nation-building strategies.

Strategy Shifts and Resource Mismatch

Strategy and resources should be aligned; but this was not the case in Afghanistan. The US deployed there in 2001 to remove the Taliban from power and to damage al-Qa'ida to the extent that the terror group was prevented from being a future threat. This was largely accomplished in the first few months.

But at this point the strategy began to wander off course. As political administrations, national priorities, and military leaders changed, so too did the strategy and sub-ordinate priorities. The strategy in Afghanistan went from a CT mission (defeat al-Qa'ida), to COIN, then back to more of a CT focused mission, and finally to a Train, Advise & Assist (TAA) mission to help the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) stand up on their own; all of this over the course of 20 years.

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[72] Miller, Laurel, "Afghanistan 2001-2021: US Policy Lessons Learned," 17 November 2021, Afghanistan 2001-2021: US Policy Lessons Learned | Crisis Group, last accessed 30 December 2022.

It was an uneven strategy with mismatched resources. There was a period when there was good representation from the US Department of State and from other agencies of the US government on the ground in which they were working together and with the military. This was paralleled by the other troop contributing countries. The 2007-2008 period probably represented the high water mark of close cooperation where there were Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), supported by significant focus by actors such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfiD), Germany's Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), others on the ground, and a variety of other non-military instruments of government. After 2008, however, the mission was increasingly more heavily militarized, leading to a mismatch of resources to accomplish the strategy.[73]

Conflict between CT and COIN/Nation Building

Unity of command is required for *"coalition operations so that all coalition forces are working towards a common set of military and political objectives."*[74] But in Afghanistan there were two competing operations that inadvertently undermined each other. The US forces conducting counter-terrorism under Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) were not under the control of the ISAF Commander. OEF activities at times even undermined the wider ISAF strategic plan."[75]

Conflicting political objectives of the US and NATO also led to conflicting military activities:

> *"Although the Bonn process set out the wider strategic goals of the [NATO] campaign in Afghanistan, which highlighted the importance of political and economic development, it is important to remember the US' primary mission was to eliminate al-Qa'ida, and the Taliban, and prevent [al-Qa'ida] from returning to Afghanistan in the future."* [76]

The US focused on counter-terrorism under a policy of 'find and kill' al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters. To de-conflict ISAF's mission to stabilize and develop governance, ISAF was initially limited to the area around Kabul. When ISAF expanded to cover all of Afghanistan in 2003, this led to conflict between OEF and ISAF operations. One example of this conflict was in Regional Command Southwest (RC-SW), the British area of operations in Helmand province, where in 2007 British commanders requested the removal of all OEF forces in Helmand because of the impact of OEF attacks on RC-SW campaign objectives."[77] (They would subsequently return a few years later.)

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[73] Votel, Joseph, "Afghanistan: Lessons Learned," 29 Nov 2022, speech made for the Baltimore Council on Foreign Affairs and uploaded on YouTube, last accessed 4 January 2023.

[74] Chin, Warren, "NATO's Counterterrorism & Counterinsurgency Experience in Afghanistan" Lessons Learned Workshop Report, 18-20 November 2014, pp 38-39.

[75] Chin, Warren, "NATO's Counterterrorism & Counterinsurgency Experience in Afghanistan" Lessons Learned Workshop Report, 18-20 November 2014, pp 38-39.

[76] Chin, Warren,, "NATO's Counterterrorism & Counterinsurgency Experience in Afghanistan" Lessons Learned Workshop Report, 18-20 November 2014, pp 38-39.

[77] Chin, Warren,, "NATO's Counterterrorism & Counterinsurgency Experience in Afghanistan" Lessons Learned Workshop Report, 18-20 November 2014, pp 38-39.

As a result, by not having unity of command, as had been the case in Iraq under Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I), the two operations conflicted with each other throughout the Afghanistan mission.

Section 3: Military Power Alone Cannot Win

> *"Military power alone is not able to deter, defend against, nor defeat terrorism. Military and Hard Power should not be the primary instruments of power used in the fight against terrorism"*[78].
>
> *"Counter-terrorism requires a careful and more comprehensive approach. Eliminating senior terrorist leaders…and other terrorist operatives is critical, but over the long term we cannot defeat terrorist adversaries with the force of military might alone."*[79]

A combination of Hard Power (coercive military power, economic, legal, and policing methods) and Soft Power (persuasive and non-kinetic such as economic aid, diplomatic, culture, legal, and police methods) operating in concert to achieve strategic goals results in Smart Power.[80] Smart Power is the most effective method to address the root causes of terrorism using a Whole of Government and Whole of Society approach.[81]

It must be remembered that terrorism is inherently political in nature. Because of this, militaries should be in a supporting role during CT missions. Non-military objectives can be advanced with military capabilities, but military power alone is unlikely to achieve the desired goals. A Rand study looking at how [268] terrorist organizations end concluded that:

- Militaries win 7% of the time,
- Police and legal actions win 40% of the time,
- Terrorists win 10% of the time, and
- Terrorists join the political process 43% of the time.[82]

Military capabilities are best utilized when they fill gaps other instruments of power cannot address to achieve CT goals.

> *"Comprehensive counter-terrorism approaches require the effective integration of the full spectrum of counterterrorism capabilities most appropriate to the threat….We need to focus our efforts on using the right counterterrorism tools at the right time to solve the problem at hand."*[83]

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78 Stone, Daniel W., "Potential Future Role of NATO in Counter-Terrorism" presentation at Terrorism Experts Conference and Executive Level Defense Against Terrorism Seminar (TEC 2020), Terrorism Experts Conference Executive Level DAT Seminar (nato.int), p 142, last accessed 2 January 2023

79 Betts, Timothy Alan, "Counterterrorism Lessons Learned to Face Future Threats," Counterterrorism Lessons Learned to Face Future Threats - United States Department of State, 13 September 2022, last accessed 29 Dec 2022.

80 Nye, Joseph S., (2009), "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power", Foreign Affairs, July/August 2009, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2009-07-01/get-smart. (Accessed 15 December 2020), p 161.

81 Stone, Daniel W., "Potential Future Role of NATO in Counter-Terrorism" presentation at Terrorism Experts Conference and Executive Level Defense Against Terrorism Seminar (TEC 2020), Terrorism Experts Conference Executive Level DAT Seminar (nato.int), p 142, last accessed 2 January 2023.

82 RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, (1968 – 2009), https://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/ terrorism-incidents.html (Accessed 15 December 2020)

83 Betts, Timothy Alan, "Counterterrorism Lessons Learned to Face Future Threats," Counterterrorism Lessons Learned to Face Future Threats - United States Department of State, 13 September 2022, last accessed 29 Dec 2022.

> *"Militaries are very good at "Find, Fix, and Finish" using attack the network models. To support Smart Power initiatives, governments can utilize the organizational and discipline of military forces to Attack the Network to understand terrorist organizations in the "Find and Fix" phases. It is in the "Finish" phase that instead of a kinetic action, other instruments of Soft/Smart power could be used such as diplomatic, financial, public diplomacy, info operations, legal actions, and so on."*[84] [85]

As Dr David Kilcullen observes, terrorists instinctively understand the value of using hard and soft power together. Osama Bin Laden himself noted that terrorists balance their hard power operations – attacks – to soft power activities at a ratio of 10% operations to 90% soft power. But those fighting terrorists and insurgents the ratio is often reversed leading to an over reliance on hard power, potentially to the detriment of the CT or COIN campaign. The balance is the opposite with those fighting terrorists and insurgents."[8687] Large military budgets and the influence of proponents for the use of military action ensures the dominance of hard power in application. Sadly, smart power is an exception in CT campaigns: but, done right, *"in smart power, soft power leads."*[88]

Soft power counter-terrorism tools are an essential part of our counter-terrorism toolkit. They help prevent terrorists from capturing wide swathes of territory or attracting large numbers of adherents. They inspire confidence in local authorities to provide legitimate security through outreach and engagement, a reliance on the rule of law, and effective security sector delivery and governance. When delivered well, they deprive terrorists' sources of recruitment and support with credible efforts to prevent, investigate, prosecute, incarcerate, and rehabilitate the terrorist threat.

An emphasis on civilian-driven efforts to defeat terrorist adversaries by finding ways to remove them from the battlefield in the first place, then keep them off it, and, ideally, subsequently prevent them from rejoining the battle. Pre-emptive prevention of the terrorist ever entering the battlespace in the first place is an even more ambitious goal.

Military action alone risks one terrorist simply being replaced by another, and often that replacement takes a more extreme form, as shown by the transformation of al-Qa'ida in Iraq into DAESH. So civilian approaches, such as preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), strengthening border security, and providing rehabilitation and reintegration (RINT) pathways

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[84] Stone, Daniel W., "Potential Future Role of NATO in Counter-Terrorism" presentation at Terrorism Experts Conference and Executive Level Defense Against Terrorism Seminar (TEC 2020), Terrorism Experts Conference Executive Level DAT Seminar (nato.int), pp 158-159, last accessed 2 January 2023.

85 Harley, Stephen "Hard Power, Soft Power & Smart Power: Civilian-Military Challenges in CT", COE-DAT's Good Practices in Counter Terrorism edited by Haldun Yalcinkaya, 2021, Good Practices In Counter Terrorism - I (nato.int), p 28.

[86] Harley, Stephen, "Hard Power, Soft Power & Smart Power: Civilian-Military Challenges in CT", COE-DAT's Good Practices in Counter Terrorism edited by Haldun Yalcinkaya, 2021, Good Practices In Counter Terrorism - I (nato.int), pp 38-40.

[87] Harley, Stephen, "Hard Power, Soft Power & Smart Power: Civilian-Military Challenges in CT" presentation at Terrorism Experts Conference and Executive Level Defense Against Terrorism Seminar (TEC 2020), Terrorism Experts Conference Executive Level DAT Seminar (nato.int), pp 16-18, last accessed 2 January 2023

[88] Harley, Stephen, "Hard Power, Soft Power & Smart Power: Civilian-Military Challenges in CT", COE-DAT's Good Practices in Counter Terrorism edited by Haldun Yalcinkaya, 2021, Good Practices In Counter Terrorism - I (nato.int), p 39.

for those seeking to renounce violence, are also crucial. This is a challenge, but even a small margin of success increases confidence, provides added protection for civilians, and reduces the ultimate cost of a military engagement with terrorist adversaries.[89]

This lesson was observed during the author's two tours in Afghanistan. ISAF put significant resource into building up the ANSF and enabling the Afghans to conduct kinetic actions (CT). However, little was being done to address the underlying reasons the people of Afghanistan distrusted and disliked the imposed government (COIN). Corruption within the government and security institutions made the populace apathetic at best to the government in Kabul and sometimes even actively resistant. In hindsight it might have been a better use of resources to spend more effort addressing the grievances of the population and bringing the Taliban into the political process.

ISAF and US intelligence led operations were, nonetheless, highly successful in their aim of eliminating terrorist al-Qa'ida and insurgent Taliban leaders, a perfect example of the optimal use of hard power in CT. But, by not having coordinated actions to follow-up military success with soft power to address the actual needs and desires of the people, this approach sadly ensured tactical battlefield success never translated into operational security and strategic stability. Much of this stemmed from ISAF's inability or unwillingness to engage in "nation building".

By 2017, ISAF had decided the mission was to transfer responsibility to the Afghans, and away from ISAF ('Afghan face, up front'). One example from the author's experience concerned the handover of Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport to the Afghan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). ISAF Headquarters directed the transfer of the airfield to the Afghans without delay even though the Afghans could not maintain the airfield, provide fire crash services, or deliver effective air traffic control. When confronted with these realities, ISAF Headquarters agreed the Afghans required training and advising, but still directed the cessation of activities designed to train the Afghans to run and operate the airfield and instead hurried ahead with the transition of the airfield to the Afghan CAA.

In summary, a lesson learned is that our methods must emphasize an approach that is civilian-driven, partner-led, NATO-enabled, and rooted in multilateral cooperation because we know that to inflict a lasting defeat on an agile adversary, an adversary that only needs to survive: to win against such an enemy requires a considered and collaborative approach."[90]

Failure to Address the Conditions that Give Rise to Terrorism

Countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria have presented many of the underlying conditions that give rise to the discontent that leads to insurgencies and terrorist organizations coming into being. As a result, any effective CT/COIN campaign must address underlying root causes of terrorism.

[89] Betts, Timothy Alan, "Counterterrorism Lessons Learned to Face Future Threats," Counterterrorism Lessons Learned to Face Future Threats - United States Department of State, 13 September 2022, last accessed 29 Dec 2022.

[90] Betts, Timothy Alan, "Counterterrorism Lessons Learned to Face Future Threats," Counterterrorism Lessons Learned to Face Future Threats - United States Department of State, 13 September 2022, last accessed 29 Dec 2022.

NATO would be well advised going forward implement a policy which utilizes all elements of NATO's power to support Allies and Partner Nations to deter and defeat terrorism. In conjunction with Allies, Partner Nations, and the International Community, NATO should utilize Smart Power with the emphasis on Soft Power to address the root causes and grievances of terrorism and seek to bring terrorist groups into the political process peacefully. Using all of NATO's political and military power to train, coach, advise, and support nations fighting terrorism will more effectively interrupt terrorist operations: "*This helps to avoid deployment of NATO forces in major CT operations."* [91] [92]

A Culture of Corruption

Corruption is a root cause for terrorism and must be addressed in any CT/COIN campaign. ISAF and the US overestimated their ability to overcome the culture of corruption in Afghanistan. In the 1960s, Afghanistan was a relatively modern country and received a great deal of foreign investment, particularly for dried fruit exports. But problems appeared even prior to the Soviet invasion and in the aftermath of all the destruction and violence that came with that period corruption became ingrained in Afghanistan. ISAF and the US were unable to effectively address this despite a significant effort to reduce corruption.

In Afghanistan the International Community (IC) inadvertently – and occasionally even deliberately – fueled corruption. The initially attractive idea of using warlords to fight the Taliban in the hope they would offer stability, the subsequent funding of large-scale construction projects, and high salaries for Afghans working for NATO and the IC, coupled with limited efforts to ensure transparency and oversight of funds spent, produced a fertile situation for endemic corruption.

Corruption within the Afghan government and the ANSF specifically made the people of Afghanistan's lives more difficult. Perceived harassment and the bribery required to pass through checkpoints or to access government services negatively affected the local population's view of the government of Afghanistan. A common analogy many Afghans relayed to the author concerned the bribes required to obtain a driver's license: the bribe required to get a bureaucrat to issue a driver's license was seen as the norm by Afghan bureaucrats, a way to make additional money, while the Afghan population saw it as another yet another form of abusive behaviour by the government. Small examples such as this steadily combined to build a perception that the government and the Taliban were equally bad.

Another example of how corruption undermined the Afghan government's legitimacy from the author's own time in Afghanistan also illustrates how the Afghan National Army's (ANA) and the Afghan National Police Force (ANPF) illegitimate actions destroyed economic growth. In 2014, a plan to market and sell Afghan fruit abroad had the potential to reduce

[91] Stone, Daniel W., "Potential Future Role of NATO in Counter-Terrorism" presentation at Terrorism Experts Conference and Executive Level Defense Against Terrorism Seminar (TEC 2020), Terrorism Experts Conference Executive Level DAT Seminar (nato.int), pp 142, last accessed 2 January 2023.

[92] Votel, Joseph, "Afghanistan: Lessons Learned," 29 Nov 2022, speech made for the Baltimore Council on Foreign Affairs and uploaded on YouTube, last accessed 4 January 2023.

dependence on foreign donations. International buyers and prices were arranged. Logistical networks consisting of refrigeration facilities, trucks, and drivers to move the goods were put into place. But the plan became economically unfeasible due to the corruption of ANA and ANPF as "tolls" were levied on the trucks at checkpoints between the farms and export facilities. It was cheaper to let the fruit rot in the fields than try to transport the fruit to international markets.

The level of corruption in the Afghan government was endemic and served to undermine the confidence of even the ANSF in their own government. The people of Afghanistan did not trust their government either. Even though many did not like the Taliban, people saw the Taliban, perhaps rightly, as far less corrupt than the government. ISAF and the US underestimated the impact of corruption and the precipitous impact that corruption had on security in Afghanistan. [93]

Section 4: Building an effective security force is difficult

There is a need to understand the challenges and the difficulties in building an effective security force. The primary role of any government is to provide a secure and stable environment. This enables ordinary citizens to live their lives in a safe environment and also allows the government to provide vital services to the population without fear of retribution, further cementing government-populace relations. This population-centric approach is critical to the success of any CT/COIN mission. By focusing on the needs of the population, the government establishes its legitimacy with the populace while reducing the attraction of the terrorist organizations who offer a simple but ultimately corrupt form of security and service delivery to the population.

To accomplish the goals of a population centric campaign it was imperative to create a capable ANA and ANPF. The ANA had to suppress a rapidly expanding insurgency and ensure the territorial integrity of Afghanistan. The ANPF, meanwhile, needed to control increasing lawlessness and protect citizens from both criminals and corrupt government officials. But massive amounts of money and resources from ISAF and the IC failed to develop an effective army or police force. This is a vast and complex issue, but two valuable lessons that can be learned: don't try to build a pet army and that the police, even more so than the army, are critical to success.[94] [95]

Do not try to build a Pet Military

It is imperative to build on local systems and solutions with strategic patience rather than imposing imported systems that do not fit and are unsustainable. Reflecting on why the ANSF

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[93] Votel, Joseph, "Afghanistan: Lessons Learned," 29 Nov 2022, speech made for the Baltimore Council on Foreign Affairs and uploaded on YouTube, last accessed 4 January 2023.

[94] Meyer, Heidi, "NATO's Counterterrorism & Counterinsurgency Experience in Afghanistan" Lessons Learned Workshop Report, 18-20 November 2014, pp 81-83.

[95] Cordesman, Anthony H., "The Lessons of the Afghan War No One Will Want to Learn," 15 June 2022, 20220615_Lessons of the Afghan Warthat No One Will Want to Learn.pdf, p 17, last accessed 29 Dec 2022.

collapsed so quickly, the answer is clear to the author: they were built on an American and NATO military model that was culturally inappropriate for Afghan society and specifically the Afghan warrior culture. The Afghan warriors of generations past, who defeated both the British and the Soviets, were known for their physical and mental toughness, mastery of stealth, and bravery under fire. The Coalition took these much-vaunted mountain fighters, ignored their military culture and forced them into an international mold, ignoring the inherent strengths of the Afghan warrior tradition.

A more culturally appropriate Afghan force would have been primarily mobile, light infantry fighters living amongst the populace and relying on minimal logistics. But the Afghan National Army (ANA) was instead saddled with the trappings of a Western military. Instead of walking and using donkeys to carry their equipment, as they had for centuries, the ANA instead used trucks that tied them to the roads or flew in helicopters that were too expensive and complex to maintain. Afghan troops should have lived in the local communities they were defending – instead the United States and ISAF built entire bases, where the ANA lived in expensive barracks and ate in mess halls. When it was time to patrol or carry out other combat operations, these troops deployed from their bases into the countryside, just like the foreign US and ISAF forces. Unlike the Taliban (and the Afghan *mujahedeen* that preceded them), the Afghan infantry that the United States and ISAF trained and equipped were hesitant to engage in close combat—unless an allied aircraft were on call overhead for close support. This inevitably doomed the ANSF to the same fate as the British and the Soviets their Afghan forebears humiliated.

Over the course of the war, corrupt Afghan commanders also eroded the combat power of their troops by plundering their wages, food and ammunition. As US and ISAF forces withdrew, it became clear that ANSF trucks and helicopters could not operate without the support of tens of thousands of contractors. Poorly led and then abandoned by their leaders, local troops surrendered to the battle-hardened and motivated Taliban fighters—who had harnessed their Afghan military traditions and remained unconstrained by the burden of a foreign-imposed bureaucracy."[96]

Police are Critical to Success

Competent police forces are critical in population-centric CT or COIN missions. The 2012 Deputy Head of the UK Mission in Kabul and the Head of the Secretariat of the International Police Coordination Board, Catherine Royle, was a strong advocate for the critical role of police forces in a COIN campaign. She emphasized "*the need to support the immediate stand up of a competent police force in 2002 and to understand the critically important role of the police in a population- centric counterinsurgency."*[97]

[96] Manza, John, "I wrote NATO's lessons from Afghanistan. Now I wonder: What have we learned?", 11 August 2022, I wrote NATO's lessons from Afghanistan. Now I wonder: What have we learned? - Atlantic Council, last accessed 3 Jan 2023.

[97] Meyer, Heidi, "NATO's Counterterrorism & Counterinsurgency Experience in Afghanistan" Lessons Learned Workshop Report, 18-20 November 2014, pp 81-83.

Unfortunately, the Bonn Conference that put together the plan for NATO's involvement in the rebuilding of Afghanistan put very little emphasis on building the ANPF. No specific language concerning the development of police was included in the declaration. In spite of having no agreed mandate for a police force, Germany elected to lead the development of community style police force. This decision to develop community police, arguably the best type to provide service for the population, effectively limited the numbers of police that could be trained due to long training and development timelines. The ANA rapidly expanded while the ANPF was much slower in terms of 'standing up'. In practical terms, during the initial days of the campaign it would have been better to have a mix of community police and para-military police to fill the gaps the ANA left. Large amounts of funding, resources, and support were provided for the creation of the ANA: unfortunately, "*the criticality of the police as a central element of the campaign (was not) understood."*[98]

The failure to invest comparable resources, training, and development in the ANPF also allowed radical beliefs to remain mainstream, further undermining the police as a component of a counter-terrorism force. Reviews concerning radicalization and violent extremism within the police as late as 2015 indicated that while the ANPF "*appeared to generally accept democratic governance… a significant portion…continued to hold"* extremist views and rejected the legitimacy of the Kabul government.[99]

The period of 2001-2021 saw the creation of a number of different police forces ranging from para-military styled police, community style police, to local village police. The majority of resources and attention were focused on para-military police forces to the detriment of community and localized policing. This was partly due to the need to "hold" towns and villages after the ANA "cleared" an area, but then returned to their bases in anticipation of subsequent military operations. The police were left with the task of securing contested areas and required a para-military style force to do so. Another, associated flaw in the approach was ISAF's general reluctance to engage in the development of the police, as ISAF commanders and soldiers considered this, possibly with some degree of justification, to be outside of the military's role and capabilities.

Even when the effectiveness of community policing was demonstrated, no true attempt to go from a 'green' (paramilitary) to 'blue' (community policing) concept was instituted. During the author's time in Afghanistan, a series of community policing trials were accomplished by the Commander ISAF's Advisory & Assistance Team in 2013 and 2014. These community policing trials showed that police chiefs using trained officers to deliver community policing were able to reduce both crime and terrorist/insurgent influence in their districts. Unfortunately, the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MOI) refused to fund or expand this effort after the initial trial period, favoring instead the development of 'heavy' para-military police forces: the Deputy Minister of the Afghan MOI told the author, he was concerned

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[98] Meyer, Heidi, "NATO's Counterterrorism & Counterinsurgency Experience in Afghanistan" Lessons Learned Workshop Report, 18-20 November 2014, pp 81-83.

[99] Speckhard, Anne and Ellenberg, Molly, "Police and Violent Extremism", 2 Jan 2023, Police and Violent Extremism – ICSVE, last accessed 3 Jan 2023.

the ANA would not "hold" terrain after "clearing" it, and he concluded that an ill-equipped community police could defend cleared territory against heavily armed Taliban fighters.

As a result, the decision to focus on para-military forces over community-based police separated the police from the locals, reduced government legitimacy by failing to address citizens' security needs and ceded primacy to Taliban "shadow governments" the ability to provide policing of a sort and effectively control ever increasing numbers of towns, cities, and districts.[100]

Section 5: Partnerships Can Work if Done Right

SoF Enabled Partners Achieve Results Greater than the Sum of the Parts

Partner-led approaches work and local forces that NATO might partner with should be in the lead for the mission. As 'locals', these partners have the most at stake, know the terrain the best, know the local adversaries and potential allies, know the local culture, and will be there after long after the intervening forces leave. The adversary knew that ISAF and US troops could not and would not remain deployed forever. As a result, willing and committed partners are needed who NATO or any other international intervention force can train and work with, and who can stay in the fight when NATO and the US are no longer there to advise and assist.[101] This was clearly not the case in Afghanistan, as the events of 2021 demonstrate.

After the attacks on 9/11, it was inevitable the US would seek to destroy al-Qa'ida and defeat the Taliban. Al-Qa'ida orchestrated the attacks and:

> *"[The] Taliban refused to arrest and expel (al-Qa'ida's)…leaders and members…A small number of US special forces and intelligence personnel supported by an air campaign effectively shattered the Taliban and…al-Qa'ida ceased to be an active military force in Afghanistan after the battle of Operation Anaconda in Paktia in March 2002. In effect, the main US war against international terrorism in Afghanistan lasted for all of five months."*[102]

The mission in Afghanistan provides a number of good examples of how partnered local forces can be effective when properly enabled with advisors, intelligence, air support and so on. Latterly, the US applied this lesson to significant effect during Operation INHERENT RESOLVE in Iraq and Syria against DAESH. The US modified their approach to partnership by not trying to recreate the Iraqi Army in their own image and instead focused on rebuilding the Iraqi Army - but in this instance the US did not try to reorganize nor change the Iraqi institutions. The focus was to provide the necessary tools, training, and air power so the Iraqi Army could take the fight to DAESH.[103] The lesson here is to back up local forces with SoF or similarly and appropriately skilled advisors on the ground with access to essential

[100] Stone, Daniel W., personal experience.

[101] Betts, Timothy Alan, "Counterterrorism Lessons Learned to Face Future Threats," Counterterrorism Lessons Learned to Face Future Threats - United States Department of State, 13 September 2022, last accessed 29 Dec 2022.

[102] Cordesman, Anthony H., "Learning the Right Lessons from the Afghan War", 7 September 2021, 210907_Cordesman_Right_Lessons.pdf (csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com), last accessed 29 Dec 2022, p 53, last accessed 29 Dec 2022.

[103] Votel, Joseph, "Afghanistan: Lessons Learned," 29 Nov 2022, speech made for the Baltimore Council on Foreign Affairs and uploaded on YouTube, last accessed 4 January 2023.

capabilities that the local partner force lacks, such as intelligence capabilities and aviation strike assets, to achieve success on the ground.

Close Specialized Partnerships Work

Close long-term, consistent advising and mentoring of partner forces creates effective counter-terrorism forces. Three areas of partnership with Afghan forces stand out as resounding successes. All three of these partnerships were developed through long, close and enduring partnerships with coalition advisors. The three examples, the Afghan Special Forces, the Afghan Female Tactical Platoons, and the Afghan Air Force required sustained advisor deployments from six months to one year at a time in which personnel rotated repeatedly back to the same job and embedded with the same Afghan units. The bond that was formed was critical to the success of these units.

A key to success in the development of the Afghan Special Forces was coalition teams living with and working alongside their Afghan partners. This built close personal and operational ties which enabled Afghan commandos to perform bravely and often with genuine tactical brilliance. The Afghan SF were modeled upon US Special Forces but were also 'in sync' with the Afghan military tradition because they fought in small teams in hit-and-run actions, just as the Afghan *mujahedeen* had against the Soviets and the mountain tribesmen had against the British. However, their numbers were too few, and they were effectively 'hamstrung' by the wider military bureaucracy that plagued the ANA.

The Afghan Female Tactical Platoon also built close relationships with their US advisors through close integration and living together. Established in 2011 as the only female element of the Afghan Special Operations Forces, the Female Tactical Platoon was arguably even more selective than their male counterparts and received "higher quality and dedicated training".[104] Female Tactical Platoon members went on missions with Afghan and US Special Forces and interacted with women and children to gain information, which male special operators could not do due to the local customs and social mores. The Female Tactical Platoon and US female advisors lived and slept in the same buildings due to their small numbers. The resulting close bond between the Afghans and their advisors was critical to their successes in combat.[105] [106]

Similar to US Special Forces, US Air Force mentors worked and lived closely with the Afghan Air Force over a period of four years. This close relationship built trust between the advisors and the Afghan Air Force which was instrumental in developing highly capable Afghan forces.[107]

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[104] DeRiso, Stephanie, Captain US Army and former advisor to the Afghan Female Tactical Platoon, e-mail 25 June 2024.

[105] DeRiso, Stephanie Captain US Army and former advisor to the Afghan Female Tactical Platoon, interview with Daniel W. Stone on 14 and 17 Feb 2024.

[106] Richardson, Katie, "Afghan Female Tactical Platoon", 31 Mar 2023, presentation for the Arizona State University School of Politics and Global Studies and uploaded on YouTube, last accessed 4 Apr 2023.

[107] Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives 116 Congress, second session, "US Lessons Learned in Afghanistan", - US LESSONS LEARNED IN AFGHANISTAN (govinfo.gov), 15 January 2020, p, 10, last accessed 29 December 2022.

In hindsight, the Afghan military, and particularly the ANPF, was a hopeless case partly because US and ISAF units who rotated through capacity building roles were simply not trained appropriately to deliver. This was compounded by the fact that most of the units were deployed for between six and nine months, and sometimes even less, and were then replaced by a new unit with no context nor relationship with the units they were advising.[108] Continuity was nonexistent and, effectively, a 'lobotomy' occurred with each troop rotation.

Conclusions

The counter-terrorism goal for the Afghanistan mission was relatively straight-forward: (1) find and defeat those responsible for the attacks on 11 September 2001 and (2) to make sure that Afghanistan would not be used as a breeding ground for terrorists to plan future attacks.[109]

The first goal was accomplished quickly through SOF partnering with local Afghan forces to decimate al-Qa'ida. But the second goal proved to be far more difficult as it effectively includes nation building as an implied task. The task of nation building was a daunting task and the US and NATO were unable to develop neither effective governance, an army, nor a police force in Afghanistan.

However, in spite of the perceived failure of the intervention in Afghanistan, a number of lessons can be applied in future NATO counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency missions. The lessons learned break down into five broad categories.

The first four can be viewed as cautionary tales that trend towards the negative as they require change in thought and action and consist of the lessons learned that: firstly, 'never say never; as a counter-terrorism mission similar to Afghanistan most likely will occur again; a second lesson learned is the problem must be clearly identified and the solution must solve that problem; a third lesson learned is that military power alone cannot win a counter-terrorism mission as counter-terrorism is inherently a non-military problem; and a fourth lesson learned is it is difficult to build a security force. The final lesson learned provides a positive roadmap to build upon (LL applied in Syria) for future CT and COIN missions: partnerships work if done right.

When NATO next engages in CT/COIN operations in the future – and the author asserts that it is 'when' not 'if' – then the Alliance would do well to place these learnings at the center of its approach.

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[108] Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives 116 Congress, second session, "US Lessons Learned in Afghanistan", - US LESSONS LEARNED IN AFGHANISTAN (govinfo.gov), 15 January 2020, p, 10, last accessed 29 December 2022.

[109] Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives 116 Congress, second session, "US Lessons Learned in Afghanistan", - US LESSONS LEARNED IN AFGHANISTAN (govinfo.gov), 15 January 2020, last accessed 29 December 2022.

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CHAPTER IV

FROM COUNTERING TO PREVENTING TO BUILDING: UNDERSTANDING PREVENTING & COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (P/CVE), AND ADAPTING TO FUTURE CHALLENGES

Dr. Dana P. Eyre[110]

Illustration 4: An Af

ghan civil servant receives training from an international NGO. However, this massive, multifarious effort still struggled to produce effective governance.

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Abstract:

This chapter focuses on the concepts of, and efforts to, prevent violent extremism (PVE), and counter violent extremism (CVE) (together, P/CVE) in support of NATO (and other liberal democratic) states. It places these concepts in the wider arc of our evolving thinking about war, terrorism, insurgency, and how to address these problems. Though other chapters address counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency in detail, this chapter provides a short historical contextualization of these terms, as well as P/CVE. This simple contextualization of these highly-charged terms lets us see fundamental patterns in our evolving use of the terms. This pattern in the usage reflects a deeper, less visible, but vital evolution in our understanding of the terrorism and insurgency, and in our collective understanding of how to successfully address them. After this contextualization, and a discussion of the key research findings on P/CVE, the chapter introduces a concept not included in the formal charter for the volume or in NATO doctrine: conflict transformation (CTr). Conflict transformation (which has continuities with counter-insurgency (COIN) but is grounded in peace building rather than war fighting) helps us with the next step in the necessary evolution in our understanding of how to successfully resolve these problems. The evolution of terms, and of our understanding of these problems, is not of mere academic curiosity. Applying our learning to phenomena as politicized and complex as terrorism and insurgency requires an understanding of how we have learned, what the blockages to our learning and the application of that learning have been, as well as what we have learned. Our evolving understanding, grounded in research over the post 9/11 era, highlights critical operational aspects for counter-terrorism (CT), and counter-insurgency operations to which planners must attend.

Introduction

The chapter proceeds as follows. The next section will discuss the conceptual blinders created through a focus on 'countering' terrorism and insurgency, and will outline how our understanding must evolve, and how our evolving understanding, in turn, will be critical to the success of future counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations. The chapter will then review the evolution of the use of these and related terms in the post 9/11 period. This review highlights a pattern in the evolution in our thinking, from first focusing on the phenomena of concern (terrorism and insurgency) to 'countering' these phenomena (primarily with a symmetric response, the use of force in response to the use of force) to 'preventing' them (with wider thinking about the phenomena, and a recognition of the need for an asymmetric response to violence). The chapter will then discuss the evolution of research on countering and preventing violent extremism, and counter-insurgency and conflict transformation, drawing out of this multi-decadal effort key insights that must drive strategic thinking and

operational planning for counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the evolution of the problem, and implications for the evolution of operations.

From Problems, to 'Countering', to a Key Insight

Most efforts to address the challenges of terrorism and insurgency speak of "countering" the specific phenomena of concern, of 'counter-insurgency', 'counter-terrorism', 'counter-radicalization' or 'countering violent extremism.' This follows general military tradition, at least in the US vein, of using the 'counter' label on any problem. For example, 'counterintelligence', 'countermine', 'counter-drone', and, generally, 'countermeasures'. Such efforts are valuable, but, as their labels highlight, by their very nature, that they focus primarily on the phenomena of concern, and imply, if not express, an intent to extirpate, through force or other direct action, a specific problem. 'Countering' implies combating an 'other' and opposition to, not understanding of, the act, let alone empathy[111]. Countering doesn't focus on understanding the psycho-social processes producing the phenomena at hand, on the wider context of the violent activities, or on what evolutions of the current system might facilitate their ultimate elimination. When context is addressed in the space of 'countering' violence, it is most often thought of in terms of threat identification, only as a 'factor' influencing the individuals and groups undertaking the operations of concern, and not as an active system, or as a target of change efforts. Similarly, in COIN, the state is presumed as the foundation for the counter-insurgency effort, but not as the primary locus of work to address the problem of socio-political violence. COIN is undertaken to counter violence against a state on behalf of the state. Efforts to 'counter' are primarily conceived of as a form of war (CT and COIN) or as form of whole of government effort led by law enforcement (CVE). Only with the recent evolution of the relatively little used term 'preventing violent extremism' (and, as we shall see, within the peace building community) has a more comprehensive view of the challenge of ending socio-political violence been articulated. This more comprehensive view, it is argued, is central to decisively addressing the problem of socio-political violence.

This 'countering' focus partially blinds us, implicitly reducing the complexity of the organic and dynamic social context of socio-political violence to a narrow list of specific factors or influences. One overwhelming finding of the research in the post 9/11 era, we shall see, is that political violence – terrorism and insurgency – is a meaningful act. As appealing and as simplifying as the idea that violent actors are aberrant is, the reality is that political violence is a meaningful human act. It is, in some sense, normal. That idea may be resisted, for moral, emotional, or political reasons, but accepting it is foundational to our ability to decisively reduce the threat of socio-political violence. In that spirit, the goal of this chapter is to highlight, and contribute to, the ongoing shift in our attention, away from a narrow focus on the individual participants, the processes of radicalization, and the immediate dynamics of violence – answering the classic question 'why men fight?' – towards highlighting the

[111] For discussions of the need for strategic empathy, see H.R.McMaster's video https://www.policyed.org/lessons-hoover-policy-boot-camp/chapter-1-how-strategic-empathy-helps-us-understand-and-prevent-0 ; Allison Abbe,

foundational social processes of normal social orders and the question of 'how peace works?' Understanding radicalization and the dynamics of conflict is useful; a focused two decades of research has greatly informed us. But, this chapter argues, it is a central finding of that research that interventions only succeed to the degree they can successfully build or repair a social order[112] and incorporate non-violent challenges to that order into on-going political life, at the community, national, and global levels.

While focusing on 'social-political order' may seem to shift the focus beyond that of the military planner, this shift in understanding is critical in understanding the context of military actions, and, critically, in anticipating and managing their effects. Violence, whether by terrorists, insurgents, or states, has effects, not only the immediate kinetic and physical effects, but much broader psycho-social (narrative and identity) effects. Critically, these effects, intended or otherwise, impact the social order that terrorists and insurgents seek to change, and which security forces seek to preserve. Understanding the dynamics of socio-political order, and the impact of violence on an order, is therefore foundational for successful operations in defense of an existing order.

The chapter is predicated on two central points. First, that terrorism and insurgencies must be understood, and addressed, not merely with narrow, application-focused vocabularies (e.g., 'war', 'counter-terrorism'), but through a wider lens, as a psycho-social process. We have made progress in this effort over the past two decades, but we note that our attention has been primarily focused on the 'psycho-' aspect of the unified psychosocial processes. In both research and action in recent years, we have attended primarily to processes of radicalization and the motivations for conflict at the individual and small-group level, and given short shrift to dynamics at the community, national, and global level, and to how peaceful social orders are built and changed.

As UNESCO says:

> *"violent extremism is a threat to peace and tolerance. It is not enough to counter it, we must prevent it. Because no one is born a violent extremist, but they are made and fueled…. collective actions through education, science, culture and communication and information, allow prevention efforts to strengthen resilience factors at the individual, community and societal levels…"*

Clearly, security forces – soldiers, police and intelligence officers, border forces and so on – cannot defeat political violence alone. But they can play a decisive role, both in defending

War College Quarterly: Parameters 53, no. 2 (May 19, 2023), https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.3221.; Robert S Hinck and Sean Cullen, "Decoding the Adversary: Strategic Empathy in an Era of Great Power Competition," *AETHER: A Journal of Strategic Airpower & Spacepower* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2024): 81–94. ; Claire Yorke, "Is Empathy a Strategic Imperative? A Review Essay," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 46, no. 5 (July 29, 2023): 1082–1102, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2022.2152800.

[112] A "social order" is, simply, a habitualized form of social life. It is the way the world is, as we take that social world for granted. Berger and Luckman (Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality : A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, 1967.) note that "however massive it may appear to be to the individual [the social world] is a humanly produced, constructed objectivity." The entire social world we live in – governments, races, ethnicities, armies, FIFA, Olympics, churches, nations, global trade regulations, global corporations, stock markets – are humanly created and recreated continually through our actions and the meaning we make about them. It objectively exists, but it does not exist apart from human action. Indeed, all of this social life only exists through our continual action, and the meaning we make of and through that action.

against political violence, and in enabling (or hindering) the broader educational, scientific, cultural, political, and other process that can defeat such violence.

Section 1: A brief history of our concepts

This chapter uses socio-political violence (SPV) as a broader label for the deliberate use of violence by non-state actors, including terrorism and insurgency[113], directed against an existing socio-political order. The intent of this usage is to highlight broad continuities in the core dynamics of this complex set of phenomena. The post 9/11 period brought the issue of SPV brutally back to the consciousness of many NATO countries after a long period of very different set of "Post-Cold War" challenges – for example, peace operations in the Balkans – and of an apparently settled global peace.

Despite the enormous shock it caused, the 9/11 attack can be seen as a return to an older status quo. The belief in state-to-state violence as the 'normal' form of socio-political violence, and of other forms of political violence as "irregular" war, is a product of three related factors: the unique patterns last 200 years of Western European history, the development of the state as a normative form of social organization, and, as a product of the first two factors, the development of a dominant European war paradigm (as exemplified by Clausewitz and others).[114] Although non-state violence continued throughout this period in the era of state expansion and growth it was seen primarily as a residual problem, one that would be resolved with state consolidation. Throughout the 'long' 19th century[115], states (and the empires they often ruled) were the normative social form and therefore state-state violence was the normative form of violence. This "normalization" of inter-state war as the usual form of violence was not because violence by non-state actors stopped but because of how we thought about non-state actors – as marginal, transitory, secondary, in decline. Yet socio-political violence – violence by small, 'illegitimate' actors against larger established orders, has been with us since the beginning of human civilization. And NATO states have long and continuing experience with political violence, ranging from anti-tax rebellions in post-revolutionary America to the Paris Commune, the Springtime of Nations, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) after the American Civil War, the anarchist movement in Europe and the US at the end of the 19th century, and left-wing terrorism in the US and Europe in the 1960s and 70s. But, after the end of the 'short' 20th century[116] and with the shock of 9/11, we have become increasingly conscious of the multiple dimensions of globalization and attended to, and reconceptualized, older and temporarily ignored forms of socio-political violence.

[113] 'Socio-political violence' (SPV) is used in this chapter to emphasize a) the continuities in the underlying dynamics of a range of violent activities of concern to NATO and its member states, ranging from assassination to terrorism and insurgency, and b) the need to understand all SPV, including terrorism and insurgency, as understandable forms of human behavior undertaken by normal human beings, for whom the behavior is, bluntly, sensible. Socio-political violence is distinct from other forms of violence (e.g., domestic, criminal) by its at least nominal reference towards an existing socio-political order.

[114] Martin Van Creveld, *Transformation of War* (Simon and Schuster, 2009).

[115] The 125 year period between the French Revolution in 1789 and the outbreak of World War One in 1914. "Hobsbawm's Long Century," accessed August 15, 2024, https://jacobin.com/2017/06/eric-hobsbawm-historian-marxism-communist-party-third-reich-stalingrad.

[116] The 77 year period between 1914 and the fall of the USSR in 1991. E. J. (Eric J.) Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes : A History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York : Vintage Books, 1996), http://archive.org/details/ageofextremeshis0000hobs.

Despite the historical reality of multiple forms of violence by non-state actors, with this greater attention we have seen a rise in what actually are relatively new descriptive terms: terrorism and insurgency. Though these forms of socio-political violence have long existed, these terms are both essentially products of the Cold War, and, particularly in their popular use, the post-Cold War era. The complex realities of SPV, the recency of these terms, and the inescapably political nature of discussions of SPV has complicated learning[117]. More critically, these challenges obscure the implications of our evolved understanding for operators and operations. Our concepts shape our thinking and our concepts shape our understanding of specific problems. That understanding, in turn, shapes our approach to the problem, and, in turn, our success, or our failure.

Terrorism was first used to describe regime-directed violence during the Reign of Terror period of the French Revolution; its current meaning only became common in the mid- to late 19th century. Though dominated in US memory by the anarchists, the 'propaganda of the deed'[118] has been undertaken by opponents with a wide variety of justifications for attacking then current orders. The concept of insurgency likewise has old roots, though its rise in academic literature and public consciousness came later, appearing at scale in the post-World War II (WW II) period, with the Malayan Emergency and Algerian War of Independence. The latter generated David Galula's definitive "Counter-insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice."

What is critical for our purposes, however, is the relationship between labels for forms of socio-political violence (terrorism and insurgency), and the labels for efforts to end the violence. Figure 1, a Google Ngram, shows the relative presence of four concepts (terrorism, insurgency, CT, and COIN) in books published between 1860 and 2019. Both counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism came at a lag after the rise of the basic terms, which is not surprising. But the lag in the development of the ideas, and the relative lack of attention to how to address the problem (notice that the relative ratios of the core concept and the 'counter-' concept) is significant. Because visible violence succeeds in achieving dominant emotional effects (shock, fear, anger) our attention, individually and collectively, focuses on the violence, and on the perpetrators of violence. We learn in a highly politicized and emotional context and at a lag from events. This can distort our learning in operationally significant ways.

[117] Discussions of the topic of countering violent extremism have become so politicized that even the term P/CVE is seen by some political actors as the 'disarming of America's first lines of defense'. See Frank J. Gaffney, Clare M. Lopez, and Center for Security Policy (Washington,D.C.) *See No Sharia : "Countering Violent Extremism" and the Disarming of America's First Lines of Defense*, 1 online resource (273 pages). vols., Civilization Jihad Reader Series; Volume 9 (Washington, DC: The Center for Security Policy, 2016), https://archive.org/details/seenoshariacount0000gaff.

[118] The term 'propaganda of the deed' (French *propagande par le fait*) originated in the late 19th century within the anarchist movement. It refers to the use of direct actions, including violence, to inspire fervor or fear. Carlo Piscane, in the era of the Springtime of Nations, argued that violence was central to the rallying of the masses behind a revolutionary effort. Ideas, he argued, "result from deeds, not the latter from the former". This central connection between word and deed, between image and idea is one of the critical findings of the last two decades of research. Terrorism and insurgency is meaningful, and violence is central, not peripheral, to its meaning. Critically, however, the early anarchist beliefs that violence would catalyze participation by masses has not proved true. What remains constant, however, in discussions of terrorism is the use of fear as an intermediate mechanism to translate violence into socio-political effects. Paul J. Smith, *The Terrorism Ahead: Confronting Transnational Violence in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2015), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315698915.

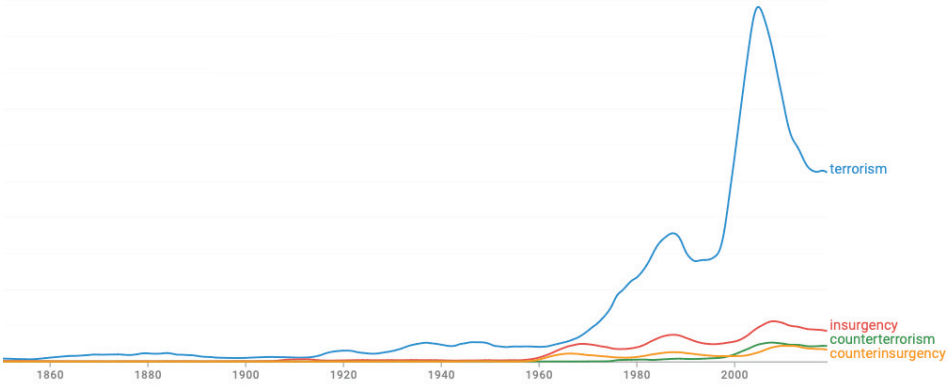

Figure 1: Evolution of Basic Terminology

What is even more relevant is the evolution of 'solution concepts', the idea frameworks used to think about dealing with SPV. These are illustrated in Figure 2, below.

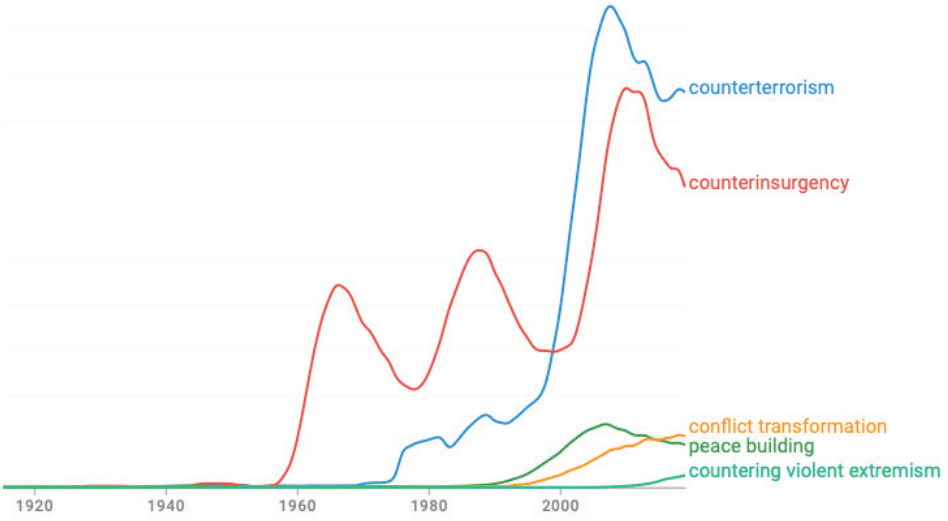

Figure 2: Evolution of Solution Frameworks[119]

In Figure 2, we see the rise of 'counter' logics, CT and COIN, ahead of the rise of transformative or social change logics such as CTr, PVE, and peace building (PB). This is significant because the core insights of the past two decades of research highlight why military and law enforcement strategies alone seeking to 'counter' have limited success in

[119] Note, CVE and PVE rise at approximately the same time. CVE is shown alone because, on the scale of relative mentions with the CT and COIN included, PVE is essentially a flat line, not really distinguishable from the Y axis. It does not have a significant presence in the wider discussion as represented by all the books in Google's collection through 2019.

vanquishing terrorism and insurgency and may have significant 'blowback.'[120] Toward the solution, it is to concepts emphasizing change and transformation that we must turn to seek truly transformative success against political violence.

Section 2: Evolving understanding, and evolving strategic frameworks

While studies of socio-political violence predate 9/11, our current public and political understanding of preventing and countering violent extremism has been deeply shaped – and, this chapter argues, distorted – by the shock of 9/11 and our subsequent involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. This section reviews the history of our thinking about SPV because it is necessary to understand the evolution, and distortions of, our learning to build a solid foundation for future plans. We need to weed out the politicized lessons, popular and shallow understandings, and accept the robust, albeit nuanced and challenging lessons from our post 9/11 learning if we are to generate robust insights for operational planners. In order to do this, two streams of research and practical strategies need to be brought together: thinking about terrorism, counter-terrorism, and P/CVE, and thinking about insurgency and counter-insurgency.

Early research on SPV, before WW2, was primarily the province of social science generalists, rather than specialists on terrorism or insurgency. These thinkers sought to understand SPV within the broad sweep of larger social dynamics. Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, as well as many others, integrated the understanding of socio-political violence within more general frameworks for thinking about social systems and their dynamics. In the pre-WW II era, SPV was seen as part and parcel of anarchist and nationalist movements, and those movements the result of both deliberate strategic activity by actors, and wider social contexts and processes. In this era, SPV, terrorist or insurgent, was not seen primarily as the product of aberrant individuals, but of political agendas in social contexts.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed, along with a continued variety insurgencies – Algeria, Vietnam, Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, the list is long) – the rise of new forms of terrorism, including nationalist-separatist movements such as the IRA in Northern Ireland and the FLN in Algeria, and left-wing revolutionary groups such as the Red Brigades in Italy, the Weather Underground in the US, as well as the rise of terrorism as an academic specialty. High-profile incidents, such as airline hijackings and the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre, brought terrorism to greater global attention. But a focus on "the philosophy of the bomb" or the strategy of terrorism, and "the sociology of terrorism", terrorism as a specific form of violence, dependent primarily on the socio-political context, remained central factors in understanding terrorism. (The quotes are from the titles of the 2nd and 3rd

[120] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups : The Role of the Justice System*, 1 online resource (149 pages) vols. (Vienna, Austria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017), https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Child-Victims/Handbook_on_Children_Recruited_and_Exploited_by_Terrorist_and_Violent_Extremist_Groups_the_Role_of_the_Justice_System.E.pdf.

chapters in Laqueuer's 1987 "The Age of Terrorism"[121].) Laqueur, in turn, also noted that "there has always been a great variety in character traits, mental make-up and psychology among terrorists."[122] For Laqueur, terrorism was primarily the product of strategic choice by actors in given context, not a product of individuals. Terrorism, he noted, could appear 'in isolation, as in combination with a political movement, or even in a general context of insurgency with guerilla warfare, political action, mass demonstrations and individual terror playing their part.'[123]

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks marked a turning point in terrorism studies, leading to an unprecedented level of public, academic, and governmental interest in the issue. Though the field had expanded in previous decades - research centers dedicated to the study of terrorism were established during this period including *International Center for the Study of Terrorism* at Penn State University and the *Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence* (CSTPV) at the University of St Andrews in Scotland, and academic journals such as *Terrorism and Political Violence* and *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* began publication – it was still a relatively small field, compared to what would develop after 9/11. The shock of 9/11 drove a flood of publications, some of quality, many not. More critically, it drove a conceptual focus (in public discourse, in political attention, and indirectly in academic work in response) captured in the phrase "they must be crazy to fly planes into a skyscraper." Radicalization, a relatively little used term previously, boomed in usage in the post 9/11 period, along with the term 'Islamist"'. Usage of of both terms goes up by a factor of 5 in the period after 9/11. Public understanding, and political verbiage, tended towards a belief that terrorism was the product of aberrant individuals in the context of specific belief systems. Terrorism and violent extremism was not a complex socio-political phenomena, it was something 'they' did.

Following 9/11, the most immediately dominant counter-terrorist, counter violent extremism paradigm was network analysis. The 9/11 Commission report, and research by Carley, Krebs, Knoke, Arquilla and Rondfeldt, and Marc Sageman supported special operations efforts to pursue "key nodes" (individual) and to "collapse networks." This approach in research and practice followed the broad Zeitgeist: if 'they' did it, we would go after 'them' and that would solve the problem. While this effort was robustly successful tactically, its failure strategically is captured in comments by a three-star US Army Special Operations Command leader, who noted in 2016 that *"when we started this effort after 9/11, we had a list of 23 names, we had them in three concentric circles... we thought when we got them all we'd be done. We've got them all. We're not done...."*[124]

This quote both expresses an evaluation of initial CT efforts and a critical recognition that a broader, interdisciplinary approach to understanding and dealing with socio-political violence was necessary. Along with this understanding was a growing concern that military and law enforcement operations could have negative, counterproductive consequences. Though such

[121] Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism* (Boston : Little, Brown, 1987), http://archive.org/details/ageofterrorism00walt.

[122] Ibid, pg 91

[123] Ibid pg 94

[124] Personal communication with author, 2017

operations may be necessary, that they can have unintended negative consequences is clear. Unfortunately, a dated but informative systematic review[125] found that out of 20,000 reports regarding terrorism, only 1.5% of that literature 'even remotely discussed the idea that an evaluation had been conducted of counter-terrorism strategies.'

This recognition spanned counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency, and reflected the motivation that lead to the development of new approaches to understanding and addressing SPV. Studies became increasingly interdisciplinary, drawing on psychology, sociology, law, criminology, and even technology studies to understand the complex nature of modern terrorism. They returned, in essence, to the prior understanding of SPV as a complex psycho-social phenomena, that needed to be understood in context, and which could not be easily dismissed as the product of disturbed individuals, particular religious beliefs, or specific political alignments.

The term 'Countering Violent Extremism' (CVE) as well as the lesser used term 'Preventing Violent Extremism' (PVE) gained prominence in the mid-2010s. CVE encompasses a range of non-coercive measures aimed at countering the ideologies and narratives that inspire terrorist activities, as well as the social and economic conditions that facilitate radicalization. Publications such as RAND's "Social Science for Counter-terrorism: Putting the Pieces Together"[126], highlighted the importance of understanding the social and psychological factors that contribute to radicalization, and analyzed terrorist actors as networks and organizations.

As the concept of CVE, and programs based on it evolved, there was an increasing recognition of the need for a still earlier, broader and more proactive approach.[127] Early CVE interventions, often explicitly linked to security concerns, sometimes suffered from two broad flaws. First was the securitization of law enforcement, social work, and education, which undercut the functioning of these basic services and rograms with explicit security focus could actually undercut existing efforts in these areas. CVE efforts sometimes specifically highlighted particular communities, leading to a sense of targeting, or labeling and stigmatization.[128] These consequences, ironically, could reinforce the processes that supported the very problem the programs sought to address.

This led to the development of 'Preventing Violent Extremism' (PVE) as an approach, building on the widening understanding of terrorism developed in academic research. These efforts focused on addressing the early stages of "radicalization"[129] and the structural

[125] Cynthia Lum, Leslie W. Kennedy, and Alison J. Sherley, "The Effectiveness of Counter-Terrorism Strategies," *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 2, no. 1 (2006): 1–50, https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2006.2.

[126] Paul K. Davis et al., "Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together" (RAND Corporation, May 13, 2009), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG849.html.

[127] William Stephens, Stijn Sieckelinck, and Hans Boutellier, "Preventing Violent Extremism: A Review of the Literature," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 44, no. 4 (April 3, 2021): 346–61, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1543144.

[128] *The Consequences of Counterterrorism* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2010), http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7758/9781610447287.

[129] While this chapter takes a critical view of the concept of "radicalization", it is not without worth. Some individuals do come to SPV through a process of increasing awareness of, and commitment to, a specific ideological justification for violence. But this process is as much about the readiness of the individual to accept these ideas – the individual's need for the feelings and sense of meaning that being radical generates – as about a logical and rational process. It has been said by some students of violent extremism that "minds don't find ideologies, ideologies find minds." Similarly, while radicalization does happen, recruiting (a more social process,

factors that contribute to the development of terrorism and extremism. The Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF), established in 2011, has played a crucial role in promoting best practices and sharing knowledge on both CVE and PVE. Its Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism (2013) is a germinal document in this field. PVE efforts drew on a broad set of disciplines and practices, including psychology and psychiatry, sociology, public health, education, social work, and criminology. Critically, these efforts moved the level of analysis upward again, shifting from terrorist groups (network analysis) and individuals (radicalization analysis) to communities and immediate context (counter-violent extremism analysis) to a focus on communities, national political and social systems, and the relationship of national populations to global dynamics.

In summary, recent research has returned to an understanding of SPV that pre-dated 9/11 – SPV is a human behavior, the product of unusual conjunctions of generally normal psychological and sociological processes. It is meaningful, and strategic; it is not the product of aberrant individuals or specific belief systems. But we have learned more, and in the next section we will review additional understandings that have been developed from both general psycho-social research, and specific research on SPV.

Section 4: What do we know about SPV and P/CVE today? Enduring insights from research

We have gone full circle, from understanding SPV as driven by context and political strategy, through a focus on individual psychology and specific belief systems in the immediate post 9/11 period, and back to a more contextual understanding of SPV as a strategically shaped and psycho-socially shaped behavior, but with a more richly developed model of how SPV comes about. Practically, what do we know today?

- It is not 'lone wolves' nor are these individuals irrational. While some attacks may fit the model of the lone wolf[130], even if the attacker acts alone they are often part of a broader social network that includes family, friends, or acquaintances who may share extremist views or have knowledge of the individual's radicalization process. Indeed, participants in SPV are often apparently well-integrated, 'normal' individuals.[131]
- Emotions are central to SPV, as they are for most forms of human behavior. Envy and

just as individuals are recruited for state forces by a combination of advantage and adventure) and "assignment" (a community-driven process; being born a male on a particular block in some cities can generate a de facto assignment to a particular gang. C.f., David C. Pyrooz and Gary Sweeten, "Gang Membership Between Ages 5 and 17 Years in the United States," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 56, no. 4 (April 1, 2015): 414–19, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.11.018.) Thus the processes of "staffing" SPV actors needs detailed analysis rather than a priori assumptions about a simple single process.

130 From a marketing standpoint, "lone wolf" is a too romantic a brand for the few attacks that match the model. A lone wolf is a noble, masculine image. Hence its frequent actual use in branding. 'Lost dogs' might be a less attractive label.

131 Angela Mcgilloway, Priyo Ghosh, and Kamaldeep S. Bhui, "A Systematic Review of Pathways to and Processes Associated with Radicalization and Extremism amongst Muslims in Western Societies," *International Review of Psychiatry* 27 (2015): 39–50, https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:46349658.

grievance[132], ambition and relative deprivation[133], a desire for meaning, significance, and an understanding of the world,[134] all can play a role in motivating individual participation in SPV. Groupthink[135] (the dominance of group solidarity feelings over individual rationality) can also play a powerful role once individuals are in SPV social formations.

- SPV is not rooted in personality disorders, but personality makes a difference. Personality clusters, particularly the so-call "dark triad"[136](Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) may be associated with violence, but these traits are also more present in 'productive' positions such as business leaders than in the normal population as well[137]. Psychopathology may be a risk factor for terrorist offending, but in ways similar to its role in non-socio-political criminal violence. Studies have identified specific personality traits, such as poor regulation of aggression, feelings of anger, and paranoid feelings, as prevalent among terrorist offenders: however, these traits may be linked to or even the product of grievance and anger about perceived injustice.[138]
- Participation in SPV is not the product of a narrow set of 'radicalization pathways'[139], though the idea of a series of psycho-social states or steps on pathways[140] is a useful means of organizing thinking about the complex psycho-social phenomena that is SPV, as long as one does not oversimplify. Participation in SPV is dependent on personal, localized (e.g., community level) and externalized (national and global) variables and a variety of organizing structures have been useful in thinking through

[132] Michael Moncrieff and Pierre Lienard, "From Envy to Radicalization," *Evolutionary Psychological Science* 10, no. 1 (2024): 70–86, https://doi.org/10.1007/s40806-023-00380-1.

[133] Elena Resta et al., "Ambition and Extreme Behavior: Relative Deprivation Leads Ambitious Individuals to Self-Sacrifice," *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (July 12, 2023): 1108006, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1108006. Jonas R. Kunst and Milan Obaidi, "Understanding Violent Extremism in the 21st Century: The (Re)Emerging Role of Relative Deprivation," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 35 (October 2020): 55–59, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.03.010.

[134] Ryan Shaffer, "Militant and Terrorist Ideology, Meaning, and Radicalization," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 5 (July 3, 2020): 1106–12, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2020.1776984.

[135] Eteri Tsintsadze-Maass and Richard W. Maass, "Groupthink and Terrorist Radicalization," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 5 (October 20, 2014): 735–58, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2013.805094.

[136] Alessandro Nai and Elizabeth L. Young, "They Choose Violence. Dark Personality Traits Drive Support for Politically Motivated Violence in Five Democracies," *Personality and Individual Differences* 230 (November 1, 2024): 112794, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2024.112794.

[137] Daniel Spurk, Anita C. Keller, and Andreas Hirschi, "Do Bad Guys Get Ahead or Fall Behind? Relationships of the Dark Triad of Personality With Objective and Subjective Career Success," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 7 (2016): 113–21, https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:146174365.

[138] Emily Corner and Paul Gill, "The Nascent Empirical Literature on Psychopathology and Terrorism," *World Psychiatry* 17, no. 2 (2018): 147–48, https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20547.Emily Corner et al., "Mental Disorders, Personality Traits, and Grievance-Fueled Targeted Violence: The Evidence Base and Implications for Research and Practice," *Journal of Personality Assessment* 100, no. 5 (October 9, 2018): 459–70, https://doi.org/10.1080/00223891.2018.1475392.

[139] Mcgilloway, Ghosh, and Bhui, "A Systematic Review of Pathways to and Processes Associated with Radicalization and Extremism amongst Muslims in Western Societies."

[140] Michael A. Jensen, Anita Atwell Seate, and Patrick A. James, "Radicalization to Violence: A Pathway Approach to Studying Extremism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 5 (July 3, 2020): 1067–90, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1442330.

these dynamics. The "three Ps" – push, pull, and personal – is one such framework[141]; another is "significance quest theory" and the "three Ns" – need, narrative, and network.[142] The key to the effective use of these frameworks is remembering that they are starting points for analysis of concrete, specific dynamics, not all-purpose answers. Significance Quest Theory and the three N framework, for example, have been confirmed in about 3/4s of studies done, but disconfirmed in ¼ of them. Participation in SPV is, to be clear, a "complex synthesis of psychopathology, personal circumstances, and environment."[143]

- Morality matters. While we may see terrorist actions as the epitome of immorality, terrorist narratives systematically employ moral vocabularies in ways that seem to vary[144] by cause. SPV, at least in the eyes of participants, is a moral act.
- Social conditions matter. While no simple and sustained relationship between measures of economic development and SPV can be consistently found, economic conditions may create situations in which other more determinative factors matter. Beyond economics, a wide variety of other environmental or contextual factors do matter consistently. Factors that shape social cleavages - political narratives, ethno-religious diversity, social divisions, social inequality, state repression[145], corruption, government ineffectiveness, the availability of cultural scripts[146], all are related to the presence of SPV, though none of these specific factors is both necessary and sufficient as causal conditions.
- Terrorism can also be enabled by affluence and the availability of dramatic models, such as on television.[147] Social Contagion Theory [148] suggests that a range of factors, ranging from our evolutionary capacity to participate in mass violence to grievances and cultural scripts can create widespread conditions for a social contagion dynamic of violence to take hold – violence that spreads like a virus. An act of terror, like a sneeze, spreads the 'disease' of SPV to the next susceptible host.
- Violence often hardens positions, failing to produce attitudinal change and instead hardens attitudes and in-group cohesion. Friedland and Merari note that:

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[141] Matteo Vergani et al., "The Three Ps of Radicalization: Push, Pull and Personal. A Systematic Scoping Review of the Scientific Evidence about Radicalization Into Violent Extremism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 43, no. 10 (October 2, 2020): 854–854, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1505686.

[142] Caroline Da Silva et al., "The Significance Quest Theory and the 3N Model: A Systematic Review.," *Canadian Psychology / Psychologie Canadienne* 65, no. 1 (2024): 58–70, https://doi.org/10.1037/cap0000364.

[143] Corner et al., "Mental Disorders, Personality Traits, and Grievance-Fueled Targeted Violence."

[144] Lindsay Hahn et al., "Applying Moral Foundations Theory to Identify Terrorist Group Motivations," *Political Psychology* 40, no. 3 (2019): 507–22, https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12525.

[145] James A. Piazza, "Rooted in Poverty?: Terrorism, Poor Economic Development, and Social Cleavages 1," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 159–77, https://doi.org/10.1080/095465590944578.

[146] Timothy Clancy et al., "Root Causes of Violent Radicalization: Terror Contagion Hypothesis," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY, November 6, 2021), https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3957919.

[147] Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics* 13 (1981): 379, https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:41388192.

[148] Timothy Clancy et al., "Contingencies of Violent Radicalization: The Terror Contagion Simulation," *Systems* 9, no. 4 (December 2021): 90, https://doi.org/10.3390/systems9040090.

> "*…terrorism is highly effective in inducing fear and worry, even when the actual damage it causes is moderate. However, terrorism appears to have failed to produce the attitudinal change desired by its perpetrators, the high levels of fear notwithstanding. On the contrary, terrorism caused a hardening of attitudes, strong opposition to any form of political reconciliation with terrorists, and widespread support for extreme counterterrorist measures."* [149]

- Violence that affects "host" populations – the populations within which the perpetrators of SPV operate – can have similar effects on their beliefs, causing a hardening of attitudes and identity fusion against those seeking to end SPV on behalf of democratic states.
- Narrative, meaning, metaphor, sensemaking, and legitimacy are absolutely central dynamics for all forms of SPV. As in all human life, people need *"narrative to make sense of the political world."* Indeed, human reasoning is *"fundamentally metaphorical"* and both narrative and metaphor are necessary in order for people to interpret incomplete information and make sense of the world.[150] Narratives can present a socially constructed version of reality that serve the interests of factions, depict violence as a solution and compensation for individual weakness, build collective identities, and de-humanize targets. Grievances (linking specific events or conditions to larger narratives) play a key role in building social formations capable of undertaking SPV.[151] The dynamics of legitimation and delegitimization are central to the dynamics of SPV.

Section 5: Where do we need to go? Shifting Focus, from People as Problems to Social Orders as Constructions

This section is built around a simple observation, and a simple argument drawn from that observation. The observation focuses on the decades of research on SPV post-9/11. While rich and useful, for the most part they have validated an insight that a longtime leader in the field of terrorism studies, Martha Crenshaw articulated in 2000, that: *"explanations of terrorism must take multiple levels of analysis into account, linking the individual to the group to society."*[152] The argument that follows is simple: if the causes are multi-dimensional, strategies to address SPV must be as well. Strategies need to address all three levels – individual, immediate social context - group, neighborhood or community, society – and a society and state's place in the world.

So, where does this leave us? What do we do with that understanding? This section will look briefly at lessons from our experience with COIN, and introduce a new term and set of ideas, Conflict Transformation.

[149] Nehemia Friedland and Ariel Merari, "The Psychological Impact of Terrorism: A Double-Edged Sword," *Political Psychology* 6 (1985): 591–604, https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:146885639.

[150] A Trevor Thrall, "Warring with Words: Narrative and Metaphor in Politics," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 28, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 166–67, https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2015.1004949.

[151] Cynthia Lum, Leslie W Kennedy, and Alison Sherley, "Is Counter-Terrorism Policy Evidence-Based? What Works, What Harms, and What Is Unknown," *WHAT WORKS*, n.d.

[152] Martha Crenshaw, "The Psychology of Terrorism: An Agenda for the 21st Century," *Political Psychology* 21 (2000): 405–20, https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:21352316.

There isn't space to review in detail the critiques of COIN as a strategy. There is a robust and easily available literature on COIN and critiques of COIN to which the interested reader can turn, not least in Professor Emrah Özdemir' s earlier chapter. But, by itself, this literature doesn't get us very far in terms of adapting to present and future challenges. What is more useful for this is the contrast between COIN and ideas drawn from Peace Studies – primarily the work of Johann Galtung and John Paul Lederach – which fall under the general label of Conflict Transformation Theory (CTr theory). CTr theory sees conflict, both violent and non-violent, as a central, normal, and continuing part of human existence. Conflict transformation is the effort to transform violent, and other non-violent forms of unproductive and resource wasting conflicts, into productive conflict. Simply put, a functional, peaceful social order is something that must be built.

Before turning to how ideas of CTr can help us in P/CVE efforts, it is necessary to briefly examine the relationship between COIN, the state, and the wider socio-political order[153]. As Professor Özdemir noted earlier and which Dr Richard Warnes will return to later in his chapter, since their initial conceptualizations, COIN operations have been intended to support a state (French rule in Algeria, the Republic of South Vietnam) against an insurgency, defeating insurgents and addressing grievances. NATO itself recognizes population-centric and enemy-centric COIN as operational approaches. COIN is a problem-centered approach; when insurgents are gone, when discrete population grievances are addressed, it is presumed that all will be well. This, from the point of view of conflict transformation thinking, represents a truncated view of the challenge, focused on eliminating problems rather than building a functional and inclusive peace for all that minimizes the generation of problems. Ironically, critics of COIN, who have frequently expressed their doubts as arguments against "nation building."[154] have, at least in their labels, more accurately recognized the challenge of COIN, and addressing SPV generally. Nations and socio-political orders must be built. They are not products of spontaneous generation, they are projects, built through deliberate human effort. Condolezza Rice, who early in her political and government service was a critic of peace operations and "nation building" on behalf of candidate George W. Bush[155], ended such service recognizing the centrality of "state building" as an "*urgent component of our national interest*."[156] What Rice and others have realized is what CTr advocates have long argued. Socio-political orders (such as the "nation-state") must be built.[157]

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[153] A nation-state is a form of socio-political order – a social formation that aligns interests and resource flows, identities, narratives, and networks with deep human desires and needs. But nation-states are not the only, or sole form of social order. Capitalism generated the corporation as a central form; tribes are a traditional form in the pre-industrial age. Much of the violence after colonialism was a process of "sorting out" how prior forms of socio-political order would integrate into the new independent nation-state form There is no single form of a functional, peaceful, and just social order. But the can be built.

[154] "The Hard Realities of Nation Building | Wilson Center," accessed August 19, 2024, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/the-hard-realities-nation-building.

[155] Condoleezza Rice, "Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1, 2000, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/campaign-2000-promoting-national-interest.

[156] Condoleezza Rice, "Rethinking the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs*, June 1, 2008, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/rethinking-national-interest.

[157] Daniel F. Runde and Conor M. Savoy, "Nation Building by Any Other Name," January 23, 2017, https://www.csis.org/analysis/nation-building-any-other-name.

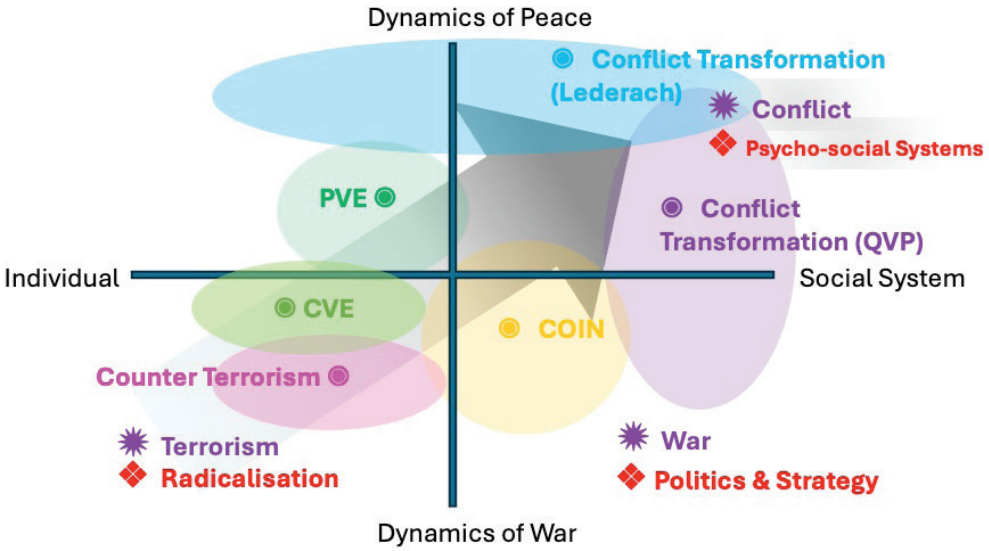

Figure 3: The Individual and Social Dynamics of War & Peace

Figure 3, above, illustrates the evolution of our understanding of, and our approach to solutions for, socio-political violence over the post 9/11 period. We began in the lower left-hand corner, thinking about individual radicalization, about terrorism as the form of SPV, and about CT, in specifically network analytic and military terms as the solution. At nearly the same time, COIN became an accompanying analytical framework and strategic concept. As the limitations of CT became apparent, ideas about countering and preventing violent extremism developed. This chapter argues that we need to draw upon the larger conflict transformation frameworks if we are to successfully continue to adapt to future challenges and successfully reduce SPV. As the chapter concludes, it will review implications for actions, and the challenges we may face in the coming years.

Conclusions

In conclusion, efforts to end SPV must be built on detailed, specific, psycho-science informed, historically and anthropologically grounded, and politically honest, analysis of the situation. The US Agency for International Development's Violence & Conflict Analysis Framework (VCAF) is one tool, but every state that has developmental efforts in the space has something similar. These tools are used to develop a 'theory of the case', a specific analysis of the particular causes of the particular conflict of concern. This is the foundation for strategies to address the SPV.

Empathy is a critical stance for a reliable TOC. Analysts must not engage in mirror-imaging, or alienate, where they create 'the other' as an alien, operating according to processes

[158] Jock Covey, Michael J. Dziedzic, and Leonard R. Hawley, eds., *The Quest for Viable Peace : International Intervention and Strategies for Conflict Transformation* (Washington, D.C., Arlington, Va.: United States Institute of Peace Press ; Association of the United States Army, 2005).

unrecognizable to the analyst. Conflict always features apparently radically incompatible views by the parties in conflict. And, when we address SPV directed against our societies, we are a party to the conflict, with our own blind spots and justifications. Empathy is critical to overcoming these blind spots. But this is rarely a skill taught to government and military staff.

Traditional distinctions – or gaps – between the processes of Intelligence Preparation of Battlespace (IPB)/ Engagement Space or of the broader operational environment, and assessment must be closed: they are a single effort. Traditional assumptions of kinetic primacy need review and challenge, as Dr. Dana P. Eyre emphasizes so strongly in his earlier chapter. Kinetic or 'hard' power' – military, law enforcement and so on – are necessary tools, but not necessarily primary except in some tactical circumstances when addressing SPV.

The Theory of Change (ToC) must be at the center of the design and military planning process The ToC build on the theories of the case: how a space 'works', be it geographical or societal or otherwise, must drive how to change it. Understanding and strategy both draw on abstract scientific knowledge, but they must be customized to the uniqueness of the problem at hand. No concept applies automatically or in all situations. Variation, contingency, individual and local contexts are determinative of forms and levels of political violence and must be determinative of specific solutions

Theories of change can be informed by the following general insights that highlight differences between state-state violence and SPV:

- Military and law enforcement activities are necessary but can be damaging and sometimes sustain problems rather than resolving them.
- Local communities are both challenging, problematic but also central to solutions. Crafting particular forms of participation and co-creation of solutions is foundational for success.
- Because violence has potential unintended and negative effects, efforts to build relationships with populations must be at the center of efforts. This is not a matter of 'hearts and minds' of populations liking intervenors, but it is a matter of generating a sense of understanding and acceptance: what the way ahead is, why the intervention, and why potential violence is necessary and legitimate.
- Work from the outside in, and before the problem rather than after. While assessments of military and law enforcement counter SPV efforts are still rare, there is an increasing body of evaluation work on P/CVE efforts[159] and this work can be used to inform future efforts.
- Simple models of radicalization and the dynamics of SPV are counterproductive. Simple, mono-causal solutions are as well. Strategies need to be civil-military, socio-political, integrated, sustained, and co-created.
- Context and coordination across multiple civilian and military lines of effort matter. More critically, and more challenging, is the requirement that the effects of the

[159] Max Erdemandi, Elena Savoia, and Michael J Williams, "Assessing the Effectiveness of Programs to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism," *NIJ Journal*, no. 285 (June 2024), https:// nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/assessing-effectiveness- programs-prevent-and-counter-violent-extremism.

individual lines of effort must be coordinated. Actions that might, in a community that trusts law enforcement or a military force, be effective and targeted, may in a distrusting and isolated community have severe negative consequences.

- Kinetic dynamics are not the key to victory, socio-political dynamics are. Planners and operators must continually attend to social dynamics – polarization, identities, narratives, sensemaking, belonging.
- Communications, the construction of a common narrative and a common identity, uniting intervenors and populations against the violent and brutal, is an absolute requirement for success. How events are interpreted and how interventions are understood are the linchpins in their effect. The meaning of kinetic operations is the critical strategic effect for those operations. And communications need to be as much about building a common sense of 'we', of belonging, as about 'fixing' specific problem individuals or communities. Targeting logics and focusing on a 'them' is alienating and marginalizing. Intervention forces need to build a common 'we'.
- Learning and evaluation need to be at the core of any counter SPV or specific P/CVE effort. A continued four-element "MEAL" effort is necessary:
  1. Monitoring programmatic activities – is the designed work being done?
  2. Evaluation of tactical activities – are the effects anticipated at the tactical or programmatic level actually happening?
  3. Adaptation – within the existing plan and theory of change, how do we need to adapt? These adaptations may be 'branches and sequels' such as anticipated evolutions of a campaign, or they may require replanning based on unanticipated outside events.
  4. Learning. Learning goes beyond the traditional planning logic and speaks to the correctness of the original diagnosis (the theory of the case) and the social science and historical knowledge used in its production. Individuals and organizations engaged in counter SPV or P/CVE activities must not be separate from the production of knowledge about these activities, they must be deeply integrated into our wider learning process.

But we cannot rest, we must continue to learn and to not repeat errors of the post 9/11 era, when we forgot continuing (though irregularly periodic) problems and fell victim to politicized and populist learning. As the world changes, the problems will change. But fundamental human realities will not. Crenshaw has identified the 'proliferation and diversity' of socio-political violence as a central challenge in the upcoming era. This chapter concludes, not with answers, but with a set of challenges and questions for reflection.

- Part of the reason that the term Socio-Political Violence was used is because some analysts see 'terrorism' as a symptom of a global insurgency[160]. As the world has globalized, every aspect of life has evolved from a local or national structure to a

[160] Aaron Karp, Regina Cowen Karp, and Terry Terriff, *Global Insurgency and the Future of Armed Conflict: Debating Fourth-Generation Warfare*, Routledge Global Security Studies; . 2 (London: Routledge, 2008).

global one. This has been articulated in various forms by a range of authors, labeled an 'Age of Anger'[161], a 'Global Rebellion' [162], or Fourth Wave[163] insurgency. French political scientist Olivier Roy[164] saw the 9/11 events as such an evolution, not unique to a religious belief or the Middle East, but a potential precursor to a larger phenomenon. As economies have globalized, so have class structures, narratives, and grievances. How can we best address a wide-spread, diverse, global insurgency?

- Some have suggested that social contagion dynamics are becoming more common. The combination of political entrepreneurs of polarization employing disgust as a central emotional and narrative feature, with global and highly networked forms of communications, may be generating a form of 'stochastic terrorism'[165]. This process may disconnect SPV from local conditions, creating an essentially random pattern of violence, as perpetrators – from a widespread and dispersed audience of the entrepreneurs of polarization – and victims – from some general class targeted by the narrators – only come together by sheer chance.
- The evolving combination of global context and local circumstances requires what can be called "glocal" thinking. Can we do that with existing doctrinal frameworks and analytical vocabularies?
- How are globalized, pervasive, 'always on' communications shaping the processes of sociopolitical violence? Matthew Ford and Andrew Hoskins have talked about "radical war"[166], with a breakdown between combatant and noncombatant as smart phones enable everyone to be a "prosumer" – a producer, distributor, and consumer of media. Nick Cull, looking at the same phenomena, has said that our central challenge now is not physical security, but "reputational security"[167]. This challenge is well illustrated by the dynamics of the Israeli-Hamas conflict today: the story of the local conflict, as told by partisans, shapes the strategic challenge posed by Iran and its allies. Narrative and reputation may well be generating a security challenge an order of magnitude larger than the local Gaza conflict itself.

These are but a few of the challenges we may face. For the author, the clear implications of these challenges, and past lessons, is that we must draw upon a wider set of frameworks for thought than is traditional in military circles and develop appropriate vocabularies for analysis and planning. The work in the tradition of Galtung and Lederach may help. Paul Rogers [168] talks about the complex dynamics of 'irregular war' on a global level, as viewed by Peace Studies thought leader. In turn, Chip Hauss[169] talks about "wicked global problems."

[161] Pankaj Mishra, *Age of Anger: A History of the Present* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017).
[162] Mark Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to al Qaeda*, 2009.
[163] Steven Metz, "Not Your Grandfather's Counterinsurgency: The United States Must Prepare for Radically New Forms of Nonstate Violence," Modern War Institute, July 28, 2021, https://mwi.westpoint.edu/not-your-grandfathers-counterinsurgency-the-united-states-must-prepare-for-radically-new-forms-of-nonstate-violence/.
[164] Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (Rupa, 2005).
[165] Bryn Nelson, "How Stochastic Terrorism Uses Disgust to Incite Violence," Scientific American, May 1, 2023, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-stochastic-terrorism-uses-disgust-to-incite-violence/.
[166] Matthew Ford and Andrew Hoskins, *Radical War: Data, Attention and Control in the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).
[167] {Citation}
[168] Paul Rogers, *Irregular War*, 1st ed. (I.B. Tauris, 2016).
[169] Charles Hauss, *Security 2.0: Dealing with Global Wicked Problems* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

There are many others besides the names mentioned. What we know is that Socio-Political Violence is a product, not just of individuals or local environments, but of social systems. It is a complex, strategic phenomena, not a series of isolated and local problems. It will morph as the larger social system does, as technology, the economy, the environment, culture, the political system and ecological dynamics evolve. We need, while mastering our own specialties, to ensure that our individual efforts are aligned with broader efforts. We must not seek simple answers, or simple solutions but, instead, continue to learn.

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CHAPTER V

CT VS COIN? ENGAGING WITH CIVILIANS IN AFGHANISTAN

Professor Harmonie Toros[170]

Illustration 5: An Afghan street scene, again from 'Heroes of the ANSF'. Women, minority groups, the marginalized and so on were often neglected or misunderstood by the ISAF/USFOR-A forces.

Abstract

One of the principal distinctions between counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-insurgency (COIN) approaches is how to engage with civilians. In the CT approach, civilians may surround and even support the opponent, but they

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are not deemed central actors in the conflict. The conflict instead remains between the terrorists and the CT forces and the aim of the latter is to destroy the terrorists' capability, while harming as few civilians as possible. In COIN, civilians are a central part of the conflict in which, alongside fighting, a political battle is waged to convince civilians to withdraw their support from the insurgents. The aim of this chapter is to examine how the attitudes and engagement with civilians in Afghanistan evolved over the two decades of fighting, focusing on the 'Hearts and Minds' logic and how it has been put into practice across political, economic, and social programs. The chapter focuses in particular on programs aimed at convincing Afghan women to support the ISAF counter-insurgency operation and assumptions made about gender in these programs. The fundamental question posed is, what have we learned from this case for future interventions?

Introduction

The fate of Afghan civilians has been a central question before, during and since the 2001-2021 intervention in Afghanistan. The question of how civilians were treated by the Taliban prior to the US-led intervention quickly became part of the rationale for military intervention. Equally, how many civilians were killed during the war, by all sides, was central to policy decisions of international actors. And what has happened to Afghan civilians since the return of the Taliban in 2021 is one of the factors taken into account in passing judgement on the decades-long US/NATO engagement there. Crucially, tens of thousands of civilians were killed in battle-related deaths in the two-decade war and it essential to learn from these casualties: how they came about, what was their effect on the main conflicting parties, and how can they be avoided – or at least considerably reduced – in the future.

As will be examined in this chapter, counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-insurgency (COIN) adopt very different understandings of, and engagement with civilians. This is true in how these two approaches are conceptualized as well as in how they are operationalized. This was particularly the case in Afghanistan and the aim of this chapter is to examine these two differing understandings of, and engagement with civilians, analyzing in detail the gender-based initiatives focusing on Afghan women. Based on the analysis of primary documents and academic literature, this chapter will argue that the US-led intervention moved from a CT approach that largely regarded civilians as irrelevant to how the campaign was to be fought – despite the plight of civilians being put forward as a secondary reason for intervention, beyond neutralizing the threat from al-Qa'ida – to a "population-centric" COIN approach that, as stated on the label, adopted civilians as the "prime center of gravity"[171] of its intervention.

The chapter will begin by examining how CT and COIN differed in their understandings of the relevance and role of civilians in interventions in their design before the start of the Afghan War in 2001. The chapter outlines the principal differences in these approaches but

[171] Hazelton, 'Bullets not Ballots'.

also key similarities. Indeed, although COIN is people-centered while CT focuses on terrorists and sees them as largely disconnected from the civilian landscape, both approaches arguably fail to understand civilians as agential political and socio-economic actors. This is particularly true of women, who are seen as reacting to events and driven to support "the winning side" regardless of their political or ideological views. The second section of the chapter examines how these differences and similarities played out in Afghanistan, first looking at approaches to civilians more broadly in CT and COIN and later focusing on initiatives aimed at Afghan women. The final section of the chapter attempts to draw broader conclusions on attitudes and engagement with civilians in both CT and COIN. Although the war in Afghanistan may not have been lost over engagement with civilians, the chapter will conclude that the latter nonetheless played an important role in Afghan civilians' attitudes toward and responses to NATO forces.

Section 1: CT vs COIN: From saving civilians through decisive action to convincing civilians through nation-building

Terrorism and insurgency have long been understood as potentially overlapping but distinct forms of violence requiring different responses. To state the obvious: terrorism is to be confronted by counter-terrorism (CT) while insurgency is to be addressed with counter-insurgency (COIN). The very nature of the oppositional violence is seen as different: Terrorists have largely been presented as disconnected from their surrounding environment, hiding amongst civilians and using them as shields to avoid reprisals.[172] An insurgency, on the other hand, is a term used to describe an oppositional violent movement that is grounded and supported by at least part of the population. Often there is also a notion of control of territory which terrorists rarely have.[173]

These distinctions have important implications in terms of responses. Against terrorists, states and their allies need to *"to hunt down, to find, to smoke out [the terrorists] of their holes."*[174] Against insurgencies, states and their allies need to also engage with why local populations tolerate or even support insurgents. Indeed, in COIN, the hunting, finding and smoking out needs to be done without further alienating or antagonizing the population surrounding the insurgents. We can see therefore that understandings of the role of civilians and attitudes toward them pose a central difference between CT and COIN responses.[175]

In CT, engagement with civilians also differs on who is leading the CT. Much literature has pointed out that CT is best led by law enforcement (particularly police forces) rather that military that are trained to use overwhelming force.[176] Indeed, the US Armed Forces were largely driven by "*the US Department of Defense's doctrinal preference for clear*

[172] Toros, 'Terrorism, Talking and Transformation.'' Jackson, Gunning & Breen Smyth, 'Critical Terrorism Studies.'

[173] Kilcullen, 'Countering Global Insurgency.'

[174] Bush, 'Remarks by the President Upon Arrival,' dated 16 September 2001

[175] In practice such a distinction is far more difficult. This is further complicated by the fact that policymakers and particularly media commentators regularly use these terms interchangeably.

[176] Jones & Libicki, 'How Terrorist Groups End.'

and decisive outcomes and the use of overwhelming force to rapidly destroy the enemy."[177] Importantly, this belief in the need to demonstrate a "*clear intention of winning*" and avoid a "*gradualist incremental approach*" followed *"problems experienced by US forces in Somalia in 1993."*[178] Thus, the need to project decisiveness was the result of a non-conventional military engagement, and thus applied particularly to non-conventional conflicts. This meant that subsequent military-led CT was likely to engage with decisiveness and that this could – and would, as witnessed in numerous theaters around the world – lead to high levels of civilian casualties. In CT, civilians are potential casualties to be avoided. Civilians are not seen as connected to the terrorists, except when the latter use and abuse civilians whether it is as human shields or through violent/repressive practices.

Population-centered COIN turns this thinking round nearly a full 180 degrees. As far back as 1963 in a RAND Symposium, the local population was understood as COIN's "prime center of gravity."[179] This is developed in a simple line of casual thinking: civilian casualties need to be avoided because *"needlessly harming innocents can turn the populace against the [COIN] efforts."*[180] This is important because the aim of COIN is "*to be build confidence and win the hearts and minds of the population, whose support is crucial to the continuation of the insurgency*."[181] COIN thus aims to defeat not only the actual armed actors – by capturing or killing them – but also to convince the local population to support the state and its allies against the armed actors. This change of approach leads to two important changes in the direct engagement. Firstly, COIN forces must do their utmost to reduce civilian casualties – possibly at times even at the cost of making tactical gains. Secondly, a COIN approach requires engaging in a myriad other actions to famously win the 'hearts and minds' of the population from improving local security, to (re)building infrastructure, schools, health provisions, to setting up a working political and economic system.

COIN sees the kinetic part of CT as only addressing the tip of the pyramid of a deep-rooted conflict.

> "*Due to the important role of the population in the insurgency pyramid, COIN is composed of a majority of nonmilitary, confidence-building efforts aimed at improving conditions for" the population*."[182]

Crucially, this requires knowing what the population needs and wants and how these can be addressed. COIN therefore requires a very different exercise in knowledge gathering, beyond the intelligence-gathering of CT that is almost entirely focused on where the terrorists are hiding and how they can be captured or killed. COIN requires a much broader knowledge of civilian life and a much deeper engagement with it. It requires that greater care be given to whether civilians are killed in fighting. Indeed, the local population must come to believe that

[177] Gilmore, 'A Kinder, Gentler Counter-terrorism,' P. 24.
[178] Gilmore, ibid, P. 24.
[179] Hosmer & Crane, 'Counter-insurgency,' P. iv.
[180] Gilmore, ibid, P. 25.
[181] McBride & Wibben, 'The Gendering of Counter-insurgency in Afghanistan,' P. 199.
[182] McBride & Wibben, ibid, 204.

COIN forces are taking particular care not to kill them, unlike in CT in which the population is meant to be in 'shock and awe' of military action.

Despite these differences, several critics have pointed out important similarities between CT and COIN's understanding of and engagement with civilians. Both approaches assume that the population has little to no agency in who they support. As noted above, for CT there is no substantial connection between the terrorists and the surrounding civilian population. Civilians do not have agency here and are required to stay away from kinetic action as much as possible. In COIN, although civilian support is central to the logic of engagement, civilians are assumed to only base these decisions on socio-economic factors such as basic services and security. COIN

> *"Presumes that basic security and public goods' provision can turn people away from the insurgency to the ranks of the government, while remaining agnostic to other non-instrumental bonds (such as ideological or ethnic) that the insurgents may have with the people."*[183]

In the words of Jacqueline Hazelton, COIN assumes that the population has no political preferences nor any regional, ethnic, class, religious, or national interests. It will simply "*support the stronger side*."[184] Crucially, for international interventions, the assumption is that the population will not be ideologically or politically opposed to foreign presence or foreign support for the incumbent state as long as the state provides for them. Civilians and their support come to be understood as "*a bag of capital*" which is "*finite and [has] to be spent slowly and frugally."*[185] There is no political agency considered.

This is particularly true of COIN's understanding of women. As argued by Laleh Khalili, in COIN *"women are cast as wholly socio-economic beings, divested of politics or ethics."*[186] As socio-economic beings, women take up a much more prominent role in COIN than in CT. Indeed, much of CT ignores women. COIN on the other hand has a "*particularly gendered character*,"[187] ascribing set roles to men and women based on gendered assumptions. Thus in COIN *"women are both the objects of increased scrutiny and its necessary operatives";* they "*are both 'custodians' of and 'conduits' for the sociocultural knowledge deemed an integral part of counter-insurgency operations*."[188] Women as seen as knowing the needs of ordinary civilians through their association with children and the enlarged family circle. A successful COIN strategy therefore requires engaging with women – an engagement that COIN often assumes needs to be carried out by other women, whether foreign or national.[189] Women are also often considered the 'bearers of culture' – and thus their willingness to support COIN is seen as an indicator

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183 Beath, Christia & Enikolopov, 'Winning Hearts and Minds?,' P. 7.
184 Hazelton, 'Bullet Not Ballots,' dated 2 June 2021.
185 Gilmore, ibid, P. 25
186 Khalili, 'Gendered Practices in Counter-insurgency,' P. 1477.
187 Khalili, ibid, P. 1473
188 Head, 'Women Helping Women,' P. 162.
189 Head, ibid.

of COIN success.[190] They are not, however, understood as political actors who can choose who to support based on a variety of factors beyond their immediate needs.

Section 2: CT and COIN in Afghanistan: Competing and Overlapping Approaches

These conceptual distinctions between CT and COIN – and the common understanding of civilians as solely socio-economic rather than political actors – emerge clearly in the US-led war in Afghanistan. This started off decisively as a CT mission to destroy the al-Qa'ida network, the culprits of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States (and numerous previous attacks on US interests abroad), and their sponsors, the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan. Analysts and historians, as well as Colonel Dan Stone in his earlier chapter in this volume, agree that the first phase of the war was remarkably swift in finding success. Kabul fell by November and the Taliban were no longer in control of the country by mid-December 2001. For what happened next, it is worth citing Todd Greentree's essay, "What Went Wrong in Afghanistan?" at length:

> *"One misconception led to another: al-Qa'ida was defeated, its remnants on the run; the Taliban had ceased fighting, its emirate overthrown; the situation demanded stabilization. But bringing order to Afghanistan conflicted with hunting terrorists. As foreign forces flowed in, they searched for combat. Most Pashtuns who sided with the Taliban had little sympathy for the Arabs of al-Qa'ida or interest in international terrorism and tolerated the coalition because of their promise to end the chaos in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, all former and suspected Taliban became residual targets for indiscriminate coalition manhunting supported by ample airpower and assisted with mixed enthusiasm and motives by Afghan Security Forces and Warlord Militias. Thousands of Taliban suspects filled prisons in Afghanistan, and they—not al-Qa'ida or other terrorists—became the largest category of prisoners at Guantanamo. While rooting out fighters in the corners of Pashtun tribal lands, incidents such as serial bombings of wedding parties and government delegations led to tens of thousands of civilian casualties over the years. Popular grievances grew, and the insurgency revived*."[191]

Greentree argues that it was in fact the CT operations carried out by the US and its international and Afghan partners that provoked "*an insurgency where none had existed*."[192]

Furthermore, despite the swift initial kinetic success, the question soon became how to keep Afghanistan 'terrorist-free': the answer was not immediately one of COIN but did involve questions of the political future of the country, with an international-led process set up to establish a western-friendly government in Kabul. This was, however, understood almost entirely as a top-down process. Although a '*Loya Jirga*' was set up following the Bonn Agreement on the future of Afghanistan, few believed that the process would allow for anything other than the US-preferred solution of a state headed by Hamid Karzai. Indeed, even in official policy documents, little attention was paid to the potential role of civilians in the political process. For

[190] McBride & Wibben, ibid, P. 202.

[191] Greentree, 'What Went Wrong in Afghanistan?,' PP. 12-13.

[192] Greentree, ibid, P. 13.

example, in 'The Global War on Terrorism: The First 100 Days' assessment published by the US Office of the Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, civilians are presented as either the 'human shields' of al-Qa'ida and their Taliban sponsors, or as in need of US humanitarian assistance due to years of neglect by the Taliban. Crucially, this assistance is not linked to trying to garner local support for the new Afghan administration but is rather a continuation of the narrative justifying the US intervention as also an act of humanitarianism. "*The U.S. commitment to the Afghan people is saving lives*," the document states.[193]

This was particularly true about Afghan women, who were put in the spotlight soon after the 2001 attacks as particularly victimized of the Taliban regime. Indeed, in one of her weekly radio addresses US First Lady Laura Bush said in November 2001 that:

> *"The fight against terrorism is also the fight for the rights of women," joining together the counter-terrorism goal of the Global War on Terror with a 'civilizational duty to protect vulnerable women."*[194]

Again, however, this focus on Afghan women was not to bring them onboard with the toppling of the Taliban regime but rather aimed at saving Afghan women from their plight. Afghan women themselves had no agency in this framing. This joint framing of the mission – as a CT one coupled with humanitarian concerns for civilians – lasted for several years.

The failure to "hold" Afghanistan became increasingly evident but as noted by Greentree it *"took America until 2006 to recognize the Taliban had regrouped, and then another three years, including a presidential election followed by nearly a year of study and deliberation, before the United States adapted."*[195] This adaptation can in the form of a turn toward COIN coupled with a troop surge in 2009 ordered by then US President Barack Obama. The relative success of COIN in Iraq, espoused by General David Petraeus, was seen as evidence that such a change in strategy would make the difference in Afghanistan as well. The COIN approach primarily meant "*restraint in the use of force, a focus on development projects and an increased awareness of local cultures*."[196] It was the people of Afghanistan that needed to be won over, not only the land. This meant the recognition of the need to understand the myriad complexities of Afghanistan's social fabric, through the rolling out of programs such as Human Terrain System (HTS). HTS introduced social scientists alongside military teams to *"understand not only their needs and wants, but also their kinship structures, the peculiarities of their gender relations, their way of living, their relationship with others around them, and beyond."*[197] By using the term 'human terrain,' it framed the population as "the primary battlefield,"[198] with the program "*premised on the idea that better sociocultural knowledge of local communities would save civilian and military lives by reducing the need to use lethal force*."[199]

[193] Office of the Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, 'The Global War on Terrorism,' P. 1.
[194] McBride & Wibben, ibid, P. 201.
[195] Greentree, ibid, P. 14.
[196] Gilmore, ibid, P. 25.
[197] Khalili, ibid, P.1478.
[198] Head, idid. P. 169.
[199] Head, ibid, P. 169.

While programs like the HTS brought in the knowledge deemed necessary for COIN to be carried out effectively, the US and its allies used this knowledge to launch a series of initiatives aimed at addressing the needs of Afghan civilians. The logic, as outlined above, was that once their needs were met or at least progress was made to meet their needs, civilians would turn their support away from the Taliban and toward the Afghan government. Between 2002 and 2017, the US spent 4.7 billion USD, most of it after the turn to COIN in 2009.[200] This included numerous programs: to train Afghan soldiers and police; to build credible electoral processes; to educate more Afghans, particularly women and girls; to improve health care; to reintegrate back into society thousands of former fighters; to develop the private sector; to reduce corruption; to reduce poppy cultivation and trade; and to deliver services at the local level."[201] In the words of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), as early as 2018, the US "*spent far too much money, far too quickly, in a country woefully unprepared to absorb it. Money spent was often the metric of success*."[202]

Most importantly for the argument here, it was based on the problematic assumption that Afghans were politically and ideologically agnostic on the question of who provided them with these services. If money spent became the metric of success, it was based on the assumption rather than evidence that it would lead to greater support for the government. It ignored the now glaring conclusion that Afghans "*saw U.S. forces as the latest in a long line of foreign occupiers propping up a puppet regime in Kabul*."[203]

This assumption of political neutrality or indifference was particularly clear in the framing of Afghan women and programs focusing on them. As outlined in the Commander's Guide to Female Engagement Teams (FET)[204], one of the key programs focusing on women, the rationale was that past approaches had overall ignored and tried to avoid engagement with more than 50 percent of the population of Afghanistan by failing to focus on women. "*Women are a critical yet often overlooked demographic in COIN strategy. This is a key demographic in gaining popular support*."[205] The US Marine-led FETs involved small groups of women joining male infantry units based on the notion that "*through increased interaction with the local population and specifically women, NATO forces will gain more support*." [206] By 2012 nearly 150 FETs drawn from 14 NATO countries were deployed in Afghanistan on the premise that women soldiers would be more likely to be allowed into homes and to engage with women and children across settings.

Naomi Head argues that FETs and other military-led, women-focused programs in Afghanistan made four gendered assumptions. It assumed that being a woman was a stronger identity marker than ethnic, class, or religious markers. That is, Afghan women were all similar as women, regardless of whether they were Tajik or Pashtun, rich or poor, educated

[200] SIGAR, 'Lessons Learned Report,' dated May 2018.
[201] SIGAR, 'What We Need To Learn.'
[202] SIGAR, 'Lessons Learned Report.'
[203] Mockaitis, 'Afghanistan and the COIN Conundrum,' P. 1088.
[204] Commander's Guide to FET, dated September 2011.
[205] Commander's Guide, ibid, P. 59.
[206] CIMIC-COE, 'Female Engagement Teams,' P. 1.

or not, with strong religious beliefs or not. Furthermore, the program was based on the premise that foreign women would engage with Afghan women *as women*. As one FET member, Sergeant Jeanette Corales, said in 2012: "*We, as women, can relate to them in a way that no man ever could – being mothers, sisters, or wives ourselves*."[207] The program also framed "*women as more peaceful, better for economic development and less corrupt*,"[208] an assumption that has been questioned by both peace studies and security studies scholars.[209] It made assumptions of women's lack of agency based on Orientalist constructions of gender relations. Indeed, the Commander's Guide to FET described the condition of Afghan women in rural areas as "*medieval*."[210]

Finally, it focused on stories of women's suffering which were seen as in line with the portrayal of violent Afghan men. Indeed, women were seen as the more credible victims of the Taliban. Head cites a CIA memo released in 2010 that spells this out clearly:

> "*Afghan women could serve as ideal messengers for humanizing the ISAF role in combatting the Taliban because of women's ability to speak personally and credibly about their experiences under the Taliban, their aspirations for the future, and their fears of a Taliban victory*."[211]

Crucially, it appears that this narrative of victimized women also impacted on the assumptions of the authors of the FET program: "*They assumed women would have a vested interest in siding with the counter-insurgency over the insurgency" because of the Taliban's draconian policies toward women*."[212]

One can see how the first CT phase and the subsequent COIN approach in Afghanistan differed in the centrality awarded to civilians but both made problematic assumptions about those same civilians. Afghan civilians in general, but particularly women, were understood as socio-economic actors who would choose whether to support the government or insurgents based primarily if not entirely on which group offered them the best socio-economic conditions. It was assumed that no political or ideological considerations – or considerations of ethnic or religious kinship – would impact on this decision. Thus, although COIN involved a very different understanding of how central civilians are to ending the war in Afghanistan compared to CT, it was nevertheless based on problematic assumptions about how civilians choose whom to support in a conflict.

This was particularly true of engagement with Afghan women. Initiatives such as FETs assumed that women were primarily defined by their femininity, and as such that foreign women would be able to engage more easily with Afghan women because of their communality as women. The programs also assumed that because the Taliban had been particularly brutal in their governing of women, Afghan women would more likely welcome forces fighting

[207] NATO, 'Engaging Women on the Frontline,' dated 26 July 2011. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_76542.htm

[208] Head, ibid, P. 162.

[209] Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall, and Toros, 'Contemporary Conflict Resolution.'

[210] Commander's Guide, ibid, P. 78.

[211] Head, ibid, P. 162.

[212] McBride & Wibben, ibid, P. 206.

against them. Finally, it primarily looked at women as driven by their immediate needs of security, food, and health as they were seen as wives and mothers rather than as individual political actors. Of course, one can understand how impressions of the Afghan social fabric, particularly in rural areas, can promote these understandings. It is nonetheless important to note that broad generalizations of a "medieval" Afghanistan in which people were purely driven by their basic needs proved unhelpful in the long-term.

Conclusion

The twenty-year conflict in Afghanistan witnessed a variety of responses to non-state violence. From an initial focus on CT, with some humanitarian concerns put forward as a rationale for intervention, to a full surge-backed turn to COIN, NATO allies adopted very different approaches to violent actors and the civilians surrounding them. As discussed in this chapter, civilians went from being peripheral to NATO military action, which aimed to engage with them as little as possible, to central to military action with the 2009 turn to COIN. This also included a recognition that Afghan women could not be ignored – they were part of the social fabric and could both help NATO allies understand the landscape and help them convince their families to back the Afghan government and its allies.

One of the failures, however, is that those designing and delivering COIN programs in Afghanistan did not recognize Afghan civilians as also having political preferences. Afghans, and Afghan women in particular, were primarily seen as socio-economic rather than political agents. The theory of change behind the COIN approach was that Afghans would turn away from the insurgency if they felt better served by the government – regardless of politics, ideology, or kinship ties.

> "*While the US counter-insurgency concept stresses the need for local legitimacy, the inhabitants of the societies subjected to counter-insurgency programs remain, in practice, disempowered and have few avenues through which to challenge the intervener's project or contest the War on Terror narrative within which it operates*."[213]

What does this conclusion teach us? Is it preferable to revert back to a CT approach that tries to avoid civilians as much as possible rather than a COIN approach that ignores the centrality of politics, ideology and kinship? Would Afghan civilians have ever supported a Western-backed government in Kabul regardless of how well they provided basic services? The choice, thankfully, is not restricted to these two flawed responses. Civilians should no doubt be understood as the "*center of gravity*" of any conflict. Insurgents were once civilians and are members of civilian families: there is rarely any social separation. Indeed, the CT view of terrorists as external to the social fabric from which they emerge has largely been discredited.[214] It is essential, however, to understand and engage with civilians as actors with agency. Civilians can choose whom to support and these choices are not simply based on satisfying their immediate basic needs. Political, ideological, and affective (kinship)

[213] Gilmore, ibid, P. 33.

[214] Jackson, Toros, Jarvis, Heath-Kelly, 'Critical Terrorism Studies at Ten.'

considerations also play a role in these decisions.

In the case of Afghanistan, the design of the COIN approach and its delivery assumed that Afghans had only two choices, either the US/ISAF-backed Kabul government or the Taliban. Political choice, however, does not need to be limited in this way and an approach that understands the breadth of human agency would recognize that civilians are capable of imagining different political, economic and social configurations for the future. Disempowering Afghans by giving them only a choice of two options and by assuming that they would make such a choice only based on socio-economic factors can thus be counted as failure of COIN in Afghanistan. For Jonathan Gilmore it was bound to fail as COIN "people-centered programmes aimed at facilitating reconstruction, the development of cultural understanding, and the ostensible empowerment of local populations are not conducted as ends in themselves but, rather, employed in the service of US security interests."[215] Indeed, COIN remains a military strategy that was deployed in Afghanistan to prevent the country from falling back into the hands of the Taliban for fear of it becoming a launching pad for armed actors intent on harming Western interests. The aim was to convince Afghans to support the Western-backed government, not to empower them into making a political choice.

Gilmore's is a rejection of COIN at its very foundation. If COIN is not to be dismissed entirely, however, it is nonetheless essential for any COIN planning and delivery to recognize that civilians – even those with low levels of education in rural areas – are full political actors who make choices not only based on who best provides their basic needs. They also make political, ideological, and affective decisions. It also requires an engagement with gender which does not reduce women to their roles of wives and mothers, understands that their femininity may not be their primary identity (they may see themselves more as Uzbek than as a woman; or more as university educated than a woman), and also recognizes them as political actors. The principal lesson learned may have to be that human agency in conflict is extremely rich and varied: attempting to oversimplify it and reduce civilians to "human terrain" to be conquered can lead COIN blindly into a dead end from which only a dramatic withdrawal is the solution.

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[215] Gilmore, ibid, P. 28.

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CHAPTER VI

CURRENT THINKING AROUND COUNTER-TERRORISM (CT) & COUNTER-INSURGENCY (COIN)

Dr. Richard Warnes[216]

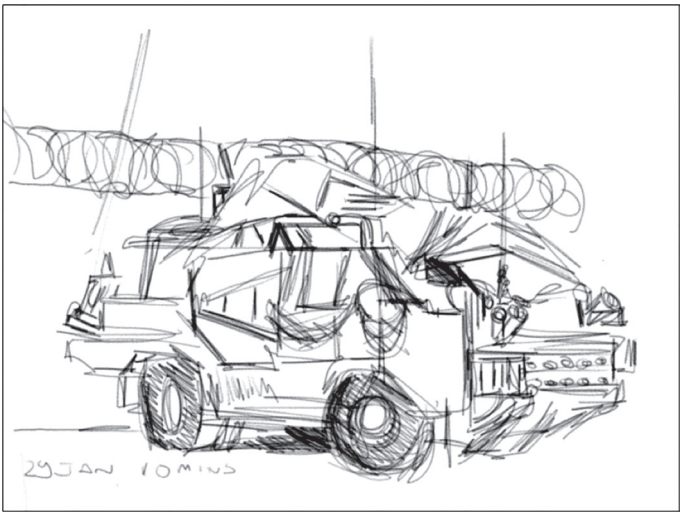

Illustration 6: A Jackal light armoured vehicle in Helmand Province. Incrementally ISAF and USFOR-A troops used more and more heavily armoured vehicles to protect the force, unintentionally distancing themselves from the population.

Abstract

During the decade since the ending of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan in 2014, it can be argued that the character of both terrorism and insurgency have changed, requiring adaptation in both counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-insurgency (COIN) responses. Religiously motivated terrorist attacks have

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tended to shift tactically from larger conspiracies towards smaller, less complex actions by small self-contained cells or lone attackers, often using 'cold weapons' or ramming attacks. Many of these are also remotely inspired and self-initiated. Although these are less likely to be identified by the authorities than the earlier more complex 'spectaculars', there are increasing concerns at the potential for a major attack from a resurgent DAESH Khorasan Province (ISKP), particularly following the Moscow Crocus Hall attack in March 2024 and a number of thwarted attacks in Europe and the United States. Additional concerns have been raised by the morphing virtual networks of Extreme Right extremists and anarchist/ far left/ single issue groups, particularly during and since the COVID 19 pandemic.

Over the same period, changes in insurgency have seen both an increased exploitation of new technology, including social media, communications and Artificial Intelligence (AI), along with adaptation to growing urbanisation and a return to Great Power Competition (GPC). As a result, there is an increasing development of 'virtual' insurgencies based around social media and networks of likeminded activists. These may have less focus on traditional 'kinetic' activity, and more emphasis on psychological and informational effects, as well as the use of cyber-attacks. Such 'virtual' insurgencies are not geographically constrained in the same manner as traditional insurgencies and can operate from urban areas as well as the more traditional 'uncontrolled areas.' They are also potentially more easily supported and exploited by hostile state actors than more traditional insurgencies, with less attribution and a higher level of deniability. To counter such threats, although the development of integrated fused intelligence and a thorough understanding of human terrain will remain critical, experiences of countering Organised Crime Groups (OCG) may prove to be a more applicable model than traditional warfighting.

Introduction

During the decade since the ending of the ISAF mission, the initial drawdown of NATO security forces in Afghanistan[217], and the first Russian invasion of Ukraine during 2014, it can be argued that the character of both terrorism and insurgency have changed and that these changes are likely to continue and increase going forward. This has impacted on current thinking around counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-insurgency (COIN), requiring adaptation of both CT and COIN responses and the related Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) adopted by various countries' police and security forces.[218] To fully understand such thinking and its effect on CT and COIN responses, it is firstly necessary to examine the mutating nature of the terrorist and insurgent threat. Consequently, the following chapter will

[217] Prior to withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021

[218] Warnes, R. Human Factors in Effective Counter-Terrorism: A comparative study (London: Routledge, 2024) / Kilcullen, D. Counterinsurgency (Oxford University Press, 2010)

examine the changing character of such threats, the current thinking around these changes and the resultant requirement for the adaptation of counter-terrorist and counter-insurgency responses, in order to better defeat emerging threat networks.

Within the field of terrorism, and certainly among NATO Member States and Europe, religiously motivated attacks have tended to shift tactically from larger conspiracies towards smaller, less complex actions by self-contained cells or lone attackers, often using 'cold weapons' or vehicle ramming attacks. Many of these attacks are remotely inspired and self-initiated. Although planning for such attacks is less likely to be identified by the authorities than the earlier more complex 'spectaculars', particularly if it originates solely in the mind of a lone attacker, there are increasing concerns at the potential for further major attacks from a resurgent DAESH Khorasan Province (ISKP), particularly following the Moscow Crocus Hall attack in March 2024 and a number of thwarted attacks in Europe and the United States. Additional concerns have also been raised at the morphing of virtual networks of Extreme Right actors and Anarchist/ Single Issue groups, particularly during and since the COVID 19 pandemic, some of whom could be exploited as proxy actors by hostile states for sub-threshold actions.

Over the same period, changes in insurgency have seen both an increased exploitation of new technology, including social media, communications and Artificial Intelligence (AI), along with adaptation to growing urbanisation and a return to Great Power Competition (GPC). As a result, there is an increasing development of 'virtual' insurgencies based around social media and networks of likeminded activists. Although traditional guerrilla warfare tactics and sabotage will continue, future insurgencies may have less focus on 'kinetic' activity (as the opportunity presents), with more emphasis instead on psychological and informational effects, as well as the use of cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure. Such 'virtual' insurgencies are not geographically constrained to the same level as traditional insurgencies and can operate from urban as well as remote, uncontrolled areas. They are more easily supported and exploited by hostile state actors than traditional insurgencies, providing an opportunity for less attribution and a higher level of deniability.

To better counter such threats, the development of integrated and fused intelligence, along with a thorough understanding of human terrain and the local population, will remain critical to both CT and COIN. However, although previous operational experience will continue to provide key lessons, the mutating character of terrorism and insurgency means that experiences from countering and fighting Organised Crime Groups (OCG) may provide a more applicable and transferable model than traditional warfighting.

Section 1: The Changing Character of Terrorism

As noted in Professor Emrah Ozdemir's earlier chapter, while no single definition of 'terrorism' has been internationally accepted, and discussion concerning such a definition remains contentious[219], we are reminded that terrorism has been defined by NATO as

[219] Schmid, A. and Jongman, A. Political Terrorism: A new guide to actors, authors, concepts, data bases, theories and literature (Transaction, 1988).

> *"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."*[220]

NATO's Strategic Concept from the Madrid Summit of 2022 states that:

> *"Terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, is the most direct asymmetric threat to the security of our citizens and to international peace and prosperity… NATO will continue to counter, deter, defend and respond to threats and challenges posed by terrorist groups"*[221]

This was reinforced at the Washington Summit in July 2024, when NATO declared that,

> *"Countering terrorism remains essential to our collective defence. NATO's role in the fight against terrorism contributes to all three core tasks of the Alliance*[222] *and is integral to the Alliance's 360-degree approach to deterrence and defence."*[223]

During the late 1990s and earlier 21st Century, NATO Member states, its allies and global partners faced a number of large scale 'spectacular' attacks by terrorists linked to the al-Qa'ida network and its affiliates.[224] These included the 1998 East Africa US Embassy attacks[225], the US 9/11 attacks in September 2001[226], which led to the first, and so far only, time that Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty has been invoked, the Bali Bombings of 2002[227], the Istanbul Bombings of 2003[228], the 3/11 Madrid Train Bombings of 2004[229], the 7/7 London Bombings of 2005[230] and the 2008 Mumbai Attack.[231]

The second decade of the 21st Century saw the rise of the DAESH network, splintering from al-Qa'ida and gaining prominence from 2014 through its brutal control of large areas of Iraq and Syria. Although by 2019 a combination of US-led Coalition forces, the Iraqi military and Local Armed Forces had re-taken these territories through intense conventional and urban fighting, the DAESH organization then returned to insurgent activity, with a network of affiliate 'Provinces' in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. This period also saw a

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220 NATO, Glossary of Terms and Definitions, (NATO Standardisation Office – NSO AAP-06, 2019).

221 NATO, Countering Terrorism, 05 December 2023. Available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_77646.htm

222 Deterrence and defence, Crisis Prevention and Management, and Cooperative Security

223 NATO, 'Washington Summit Declaration', Paragraph 22, NATO 10th July 2024. Available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_227678.htm#:~:text=Countering%20terrorism%20remains%20essential%20to,approach%20to%20deterrence%20and%20defence.

224 Hoffman, B. and Reinares, F. (eds.), The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat: From 9/11 to Osama Bin Laden's Death, (Columbia University Press, 2016).

225 Bergen, P. Holy War, Inc. Inside the secret world of Osama bin Laden (Free Press, 2001).

226 9/11 Commission, The 9/11 Commission Report: The final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (W. W. Norton, 2004).

227 Craig, D. Defeating Terror: Behind the hunt for the Bali Bombers (Hardie Grant Books, 2017).

228 BBC, 'Istanbul Rocked by Double Bombing', BBC News (20th November 2003). Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3222608.stm

229 Reinares, F. Al-Qa'ida's Revenge: The 2004 Madrid Train Bombings (Columbia University Press, 2017).

230 Intelligence and Security Committee, Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005 (HM Government, May 2006). Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-into-the-london-terrorist-attacks-on-7-july-2005

231 Levy, A. and Scott-Clark, C. The Siege: The attack on the Taj (Penguin Books India, 2013).

number of major terrorist attacks by DAESH and its affiliates, such as the Bardo Museum and Sousse beach attacks, Tunisia, in 2015[232], the November 2015 Paris Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attacks (MTFA)[233], the Zaventem Airport and Brussels Metro bombings of 2016[234], the attack on Atatürk Airport, Istanbul, in 2016[235], the Manchester Arena bombing of 2017[236] and the Sri Lanka Easter bombings of 2019.[237]

However, more recently there has been an increasing tactical shift towards smaller and less complex terrorist operations. As a result, many of the recent attacks linked to the al-Qa'ida or DAESH networks and their affiliate groups, have tended to rely on small independent self-contained cells or 'Lone Attackers'.[238] These attacks are often decentralised, low cost (sometimes even self-funded) and where firearms are less easily available or accessible, rely on 'cold weapons', such as attacking the public in crowded places with knives, or ramming them in Hostile Vehicle Attacks (HVA). Commonly, the attacks are self-initiated, remotely inspired through radicalisation, and sanctioned through terrorist exploitation of the web and social media. Groups such as DAESH have also used online sites and social media to identify and suggest potential targets, both in terms of individuals and venues.

One element behind this shift in tactics from major 'spectaculars' to smaller attacks or lone actors is the difference between the more exclusive nature of al-Qa'ida versus the inclusive approach of the DAESH network and the use of the internet as an attack catalyst. Al-Qa'ida traditionally saw itself as a vanguard movement, where potential recruits were identified through personal contacts, websites and chat rooms. Once identified as potential recruits, individuals were screened and checked as part of 'due diligence' to avoid infiltration. If deemed suitable, individuals were invited to join and often given initial smaller tasks to test their reliability, before more major actions, possibly involving a directed terrorist attack. DAESH on the other hand has adopted a more inclusive approach, where it exploits the web and social media to encourage and sanction attacks by any individuals radicalised or inspired by its narrative and its messages. It identifies tactics, sets priorities and suggests targets for individuals or small groups to attack. Consequently, anyone can launch attacks in the name of DAESH and the network will claim these attacks on its behalf by its 'soldiers'.

Arguably, another key factor behind this shift towards smaller self-initiated attacks is the level of improved CT intelligence collection, its fusion on the part of the authorities, and the

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[232] Agence France-Presse, 'Seven jailed for life over 2015 Tunis and Sousse terror attacks', The Guardian 9th February 2019. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/09/seven-jailed-2015-tunisia-terror-attacks

[233] Faucher, F. and Truc, G. (Eds.), Facing Terrorism in France: Lessons from the 2015 Paris Attacks (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

[234] BBC, 'Brussels attacks: Zaventem and Maelbeek bombs kill many', BBC News 22nd March 2016. Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-35869254

[235] BBC, 'Istanbul Ataturk airport attack: 41 dead and more than 230 hurt', BBC News (29th June 2016). Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-36658187

[236] UK Government, 'Manchester Arena Inquiry Reports', Home Office, 2nd March 2023. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/manchester-arena-inquiry-reports

[237] Sri Lanka Parliament, 'Report…on the Terrorist Attacks that took place on 21st April 2019', Parliamentary Select Committee, 23rd October 2019. Available at https://web.archive.org/web/20240704115544/https://srilankabrief.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/sc-april-attacks-report-en.pdf

[238] See the series of publications under Pantucci, R. 'Lone Actor Terrorist Project' (Royal United Services Institute – RUSI, 2016). Available at https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/projects/lone-actor-terrorism

vulnerability of the larger more complex terrorist conspiracies to identification through the generation and development of human and technical intelligence (HUMINT and TECHINT).[239] In particular, terrorist communications associated with the Command and Control (C2) necessary to plan and coordinate more complex attacks, and the use of precursors in the fabrication of Home Made Explosives (HME), such as Acetone, Peroxide or Ammonium Nitrate fertiliser, are vulnerable to such identification and interception.[240] Smaller attacks not only avoid this level of vulnerability through the minimisation of coordination and use of 'cold weapons', particularly in the case of 'lone attackers' where the planning is in the mind of one individual, but their costs and subsequent financial signature are significantly reduced. Countering the mutating character of this terrorist threat is consequently often reliant on the monitoring of social media and communications, the effective development of HUMINT from engagement with local communities to the identification of those vulnerable to radicalisation and the use of various Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) interventions.[241]

However, despite the shift of focus in countering the threat of small scale attacks, concerns have also been raised at a possible return to major attacks, with a resurgent DAESH Khorasan Province (ISKP or ISIS-K), particularly following the Moscow Crocus Hall attack and recent thwarted attacks in Europe and the United States.[242] Primarily active in parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia, ISKP was formed as a DAESH 'Province' (*Wilayah*) in 2015 and is currently estimated at 4000-6000 strong, led by 29-year-old Sanaullah Ghafari. Despite numerous earlier attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan, particularly against Shia targets such as the Hazaras in Afghanistan, the group came to greater attention with the Kabul Airport evacuation attack in August 2021, which killed thirteen US military personnel and 170 Afghans, and the January 2024 twin suicide bombings of the commemorative ceremony for Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) General Qasem Soleimani, in Kerman, Iran, which killed over 100 victims.

In January 2024, ISKP members attacked worshippers at a church in İstanbul, Türkiye, while in March 2024 the Crocus Hall attack saw four members of ISKP launch a marauding firearms attack on Russian concertgoers, killing at least 145 people. The same month, following the 2023 burning of Holy Qurans in Sweden, German authorities arrested two ISKP supporters for planning an attack on the Swedish Parliament, with parallel arrests in Belgium, the Netherlands and France. In April, Germany charged seven members of the group who were planning attacks in Western Europe, warning in June of potential large-scale attacks targeting major sporting or social events. Attacks on churches, a synagogue and police bases in the Southern Russian republic of Dagestan by armed gunmen in June, which killed twenty, are also believed linked to ISKP.[243] That same month, US authorities

[239] Pillar, P. 'Intelligence', in Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy (Audrey Kurth Cronin and James Ludes, eds, Georgetown University Press, 2004).

[240] Clutterbuck, L. and Warnes, R. Exploring Patterns of Behaviour in Violent Jihadist Terrorists: An analysis of six significant terrorist conspiracies in the UK (RAND Corporation, 2011).

[241] Warnes (2024) *Op. Cit.*

[242] Jadoon, A. et. al. 'From Tajikistan to Moscow and Iran: Mapping the local and transnational threat of Islamic State Khorasan'. CTC Sentinel, May 2024, Vol. 17, Issue 5. Combating Terrorism Center, West Point. Available at https://ctc.westpoint.edu/from-tajikistan-to-moscow-and-iran-mapping-the-local-and-transnational-threat-of-islamic-state-khorasan/

[243] Astier, H. and Gozzi, L. 'Twenty dead in attacks in attacks on churches and synagogue in Southern Russia', BBC News (23rd June 2024). Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crgggwg158do

arrested eight members linked to an ISKP conspiracy who had entered the country illegally from Mexico. Consequently, there are increasing fears that ISKP has used refugee flows from Ukraine and Mexico respectively to infiltrate its supporters into Europe and the US in order to launch larger 'spectacular' attacks against 'soft' public targets.[244] Certainly, along with their hostile focus on Afghanistan and the Taliban and since the Crocus Hall attack in March, ISKP social media and propaganda outlets, such as the *Voice of Khorasan*, have threatened European cities and called for attacks on major sporting events.[245]

Critical to the increasing activities of ISKP is the network's exploitation of uncontrolled areas in Afghanistan, notably in the Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces which border Pakistan. There is a subsequent risk of spill-over into neighbouring countries, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Southern Russia and beyond.[246] While there is a consequent need for increased CT cooperation with Pakistan and Central Asian partners to counter this developing threat, for obvious reasons many NATO alliance members are unwilling to engage on this matter in cooperation with either the Taliban regime in Kabul or Iran. Ironically, Russia is one of the main countries to cooperate with the Taliban on the threat currently posed by the ISKP.[247] The growing activities of the ISKP in Ukraine is also a matter of apprehension and at an international level there is a sense that the transnational threat posed by the ISKP has not received the level of awareness and 'traction' it deserves, both by national authorities and the general public.[248]

A separate and increasing concern amongst police and security agencies is the increase in the threat posed by Extreme Right-Wing (XRW) terrorism, or Racially and Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism (REMVE). This straddles the boundaries between individual hate crime and organised terrorism, espousing a range of interlinked ideologies containing hatred directed at minority communities, Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism.[249] The XRW threat has been enhanced by the exploitation of the online world for the spreading of hate and conspiracy theories, the growing frequency of 'Lone Actor' attacks by individuals linked to the extreme right, the use of weapons in mass casualty incidents and the increasingly global nature of the threat.[250] This globalisation has been enhanced by XRW exploitation of the internet for communication, radicalisation, recruitment, networking, planning and coordination, allowing access to a global community of likeminded extremists. For police and security forces, countering this type of XRW terrorism poses additional difficulties

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[244] Lister, T. *'How ISIS has Europe and the US in sights after deadly Moscow attack',* CNN 31/03/24.

[245] Den Braber, B. and Faizi, N. 'Islamic State Crocus City Hall Attack: Analysing the background and online responses', Center for Information Resilience, 1st July 2024. Available at https://www.info-res.org/post/islamic-state-crocus-city-hall-attack-analysing-the-background-and-online-responses#:~:text=Since%20the%20Crocus%20City%20Hall,Metropolitano%20Stadiums%20in%20Madrid%3B%20Parc

[246] Sayeh, J. 'ISKP's Transnational Re-emergence', FDD's Long War Journal, 10th June 2024. Available at https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2024/06/iskps-transnational-reemergence.php

[247] Felbab-Brown, V. 'Russia-Afghanistan relations in the aftermath of the Moscow attack', Brookings Institution 28th March 2024. Available at https://www.brookings.edu/articles/russia-afghanistan-relations-in-the-aftermath-of-the-moscow-attack/#:~:text=Russia%20has%20been%20developing%20its,ISKP%20and%20the%20United%20States.

[248] Author conversations at the European Experts Network on Terrorism (EENeT) Conference, Brussels, June 24.

[249] United Nations, 'Member States concerned by the growing and increasingly transnational threat of extreme right-wing terrorism', CTED Trends Alert, April 2020. Available at https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/files/documents/2021/Jan/cted_trends_alert_extreme_right-wing_terrorism.pdf

[250] Byman, D. Spreading Hate: The Global rise of white supremacist terrorism (Oxford University Press, 2022).

because of its nebulous nature, with a non-hierarchical, fluid membership and constantly morphing networks and groups, often based on virtual rather than fixed structures. As a result, counter-terrorist responses against XRW networks, particularly the generation of associated intelligence, have tended to focus on the (often recurring) individual extremist, rather than the organisations or networks they are associated with.[251]

Particularly during and since the COVID-19 pandemic[252], there has been a significant rise in the number of anarchist/far-left/ single issue protest groups with a mix of anti-society 'perpetual grievances', associated with a variety of eclectic extremist narratives and conspiracy theories.[253] These networks have been described as having a 'salad bar' or 'tool shed' of ideologies, where individuals pick and adopt an often-eclectic mixture of ideas and beliefs. This has often led to them being referred to as Mixed, Unstable, Unclear (MUU).[254] Such networks have exploited the increasing polarization of society in many countries, with a growing range of active protest groups spanning a range of issues from pensions and animal rights to climate change and oil exploration. It has been suggested that the increased support for such protest movements may be linked to the associated lock-down during the pandemic and a lack of access to 'third spaces'. These are environments, separate from home or workplace, where individuals can socially engage and 'belong' as part of a group, such as bars, social centers or sports clubs. As these were denied during COVID-19, some vulnerable individuals turned to virtual 'third spaces' on the internet for fellowship, such as fringe platforms, chat rooms and gaming sites, where they were vulnerable to various radicalization, recruitment and exploitation.

Some of these fringe extremist ideologies, along with their linked conspiracy theories, are nihilistic in outlook, with the belief that the political and social system cannot be changed and with no real end goal, apart from 'breaking the system'. Anarchist and far left networks linked to such an ideological outlook are believed to be associated with criminal damage and sabotage of key infrastructure, including against communications[255] and high-speed rail networks.[256] These sabotage attacks have notably increased in Europe following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, particularly in France, Germany and Poland.[257] While state sponsored terrorism is not new[258], and there is some evidence for historical Soviet and

[251] International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, IIJ Criminal Justice Practitioners Guide: Addressing Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism, (International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law/ University of Malta, 2021).

[252] Aydogdu, S. Warnes, R. and Harley, S. 'Developments in Terrorism and Counterterrorism during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Implications for the Future', (NATO COE-DAT, September 2021). Available at https://www.tmmm.tsk.tr/publication/researches/09-C19_ResearchReport.pdf

[253] Hess, J, Dolan, J. and Falkenstein, P. 'The Fifth Wave of Modern Terrorism: Perpetual Grievances', American Intelligence Journal 37 (2), 2020: 128-138. National Military Intelligence Foundation.

[254] Brace, L. et. al. 'Where do mixed, unclear and unstable ideologies come from? A data driven answer centred on the incelosphere', Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism, Volume 19, Issue 2, 2023. Available at https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/18335330.2023.2226667

[255] Le Monde, 'Fiber optic networks sabotaged in parts of France', Le Monde (29th July 2024). Available at https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2024/07/29/fiber-optic-networks-sabotaged-in-parts-of-france_6703674_7.html

[256] France 24, 'Sabotage on French rail network before Olympics: What we know', France 24 (26th July 2024). Available at https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20240726-sabotage-on-french-rail-network-before-olympics-what-we-know-1

[257] Ongoing research by Professorial colleague at Oxford University.

[258] Byman, D. Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Warsaw Pact support of Communist terrorist organizations in Europe during the Cold War[259], the clear concern is that the pendulum has swung back to state sponsorship of terrorism and that disgruntled individuals from such groups will be exploited as proxy actors by hostile states for malign sub-threshold actions.[260]

Section 2: The Changing Character of Insurgency

Once again, Professor Emrah Özdemir's earlier chapter defines insurgency in detail. However, as a reminder in order to lead into a discussion of more recent developments, insurgency is often referred to as the 'poor man's war' and can be seen as a strategic asymmetric tool of irregular warfare, fusing traditional guerrilla tactics with political and ideological objectives.[261] It is normally used by militarily weak movements to counter more powerful conventional enemy forces in order to achieve objectives they could not normally obtain through the use of conventional military force. Consequently, while the use of terrorist tactics and guerrilla warfare is usually part of a wider insurgency, this often includes an insurgent focus on the political, informational and psychological domains, to offset the conventional military advantage of the security forces.[262]

Although arguably insurgency and the use of guerrilla tactics is as old as warfare itself[263], since the end of WW2, major insurgencies (including examples of Resistance to Invasion) have included Palestine 1945-48, Indochina 1946-54, Malaya 1948-60, Burma (Myanmar) since 1948, Kenya 1952-56, Algeria 1954-62, Vietnam 1955-75, Rhodesia 1962-80, Oman 1962-76, South West Africa/ Namibia 1966-1990, Angola 1975-2002, Mozambique 1976-1995, Afghanistan 1979-89, Sierra Leone 1991-2002 and Chechnya 1994-96 & 1999-2009.[264] More recently, NATO and Coalition forces have been involved in extended counter-insurgency campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq respectively from 2001 and 2003.[265]

It has been argued that while insurgencies exploit existing grievances, conflicts and societal divisions, in relation to their enduring features, they must survive, must strengthen themselves and must weaken the power structure or state.[266] Insurgent movements have therefore exploited the decay of traditional authority and international rules-based structures, to spread their messages and recruit disaffected individuals. In all these activities, insurgents face the dilemma that if they effectively threaten the state militarily, they risk identification, infiltration and destruction, whereas by keeping their activities at a lower level they may

[259] Alexander, Y. and Pluchinsky, D. Europe's Red Terrorists: The fighting communist organizations (Frank Cass: 1992).

[260] Galeotti, M. The Weaponisation of Everything: A field guide to the new way of war (Yale University Press, 2022).

[261] Beckett, I. 'The Future of Insurgency', Australian Army Journal. Vol. V. No. 2. 2008.

[262] Beckett, I and Pimlott, J. Counter-Insurgency: Lessons from history (Pen & Sword, 2011).

[263] Boot, M. Invisible Armies: An epic history of guerrilla warfare from ancient times to the present (Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013).

[264] Marston, D. and Malkasian, C. (eds.), Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare (Osprey Publishing, 2008).

[265] Gompert, D. and Gordon, J. War by Other Means: Building complete and balanced capabilities for counterinsurgency (RAND Corporation, 2008).

[266] Metz, S. 'The Internet, New Media, and the Evolution of Insurgency', The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters. Vol. 42. No.3. Autumn 2012.

survive but are ineffective.[267] Consequently, more informational and less 'kinetic' approaches to insurgency may increase longevity and survivability.

Over the last decade the character of insurgencies has been affected by the exploitation of advances in technology, insurgents (and terrorists) often being quick to use new and developing technologies to their advantage. The internet and social networking, often encrypted, have not only been used to communicate and coordinate, but also to increase recruitment and support, disseminate propaganda and share suggested tactics and targets. Modern media has been exploited for psychological and informational impact, in effect by conducting insurgent Information Operations (IO) to undermine political and societal will. Developments in explosives and weaponry have been seized upon for their reduced intelligence signature, concealability, and ability to maximise casualties. The conflict in Ukraine has highlighted the growing utility of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) or 'drones', both for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) and for direct targeting.

The development of Bitcoin and the 'Dark Web' have been used as enablers to fund and facilitate insurgency.[268] Developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and secure Metaverse platforms have been used to emulate 'real world' locations and buildings: this allows remote 'virtual' rehearsal, where insurgents and terrorists can be put into a virtual encrypted world to train and rehearse their attacks. This reduces the need for hostile reconnaissance or Close Target Recce (CTR) of the target, thereby lessening the risk of identification.

These changes in the character of insurgency and the exploitation of technology have seen an increased reliance by insurgent movements on the internet and social media to achieve psychological and informational effects, as well as to recruit, radicalise, raise funds, plan and build networks. Over the last decade, the latter has led to escalating global connectivity amongst insurgencies and the formation of virtual tribes and societies. This virtual, networked and human centric focused form of insurgency differs significantly from the previous geographically and terrain-based insurgencies.[269] These virtual networks mean that insurgent movements are less geographically focused and fixed than they were previously, since they can now operate from what are, in effect, 'virtual' ungoverned spaces. Consequently, they can move location and relocate to a new physical area as operationally required, while consistently maintaining contact with their affiliate and associate groups in other locations.[270] Such a networked 'virtual' insurgency also means that with less of a focus on the previous operational security provided by difficult terrain, remote or 'uncontrolled areas', insurgents can take advantage of the world's growing urbanisation to operate out of cities, developing mega-cities, and the inevitable associated slum areas.[271]

[267] Ucko, D. The Insurgent's Dilemma: A struggle to prevail (Hurst & Company, 2022).

[268] Persi Paoli, G. et. al. Behind the Curtain: The illicit trade of firearms, explosives and ammunition on the dark web (RAND Corporation, 2017).

[269] Arquilla, J. and Ronfeldt, D. Networks and Netwars: The future of terror, Crime and Militancy (RAND Corporation, 2001).

[270] Metz, S. 'Not your Grandfather's Counterinsurgency: The United States must prepare for radically new forms of nonstate violence', Modern War Institute at West Point. 28th July 2021. Available at https://mwi.westpoint.edu/not-your-grandfathers-counterinsurgency-the-united-states-must-prepare-for-radically-new-forms-of-nonstate-violence/

[271] Kilcullen, D. Out of the Mountains: The coming age of the Urban Guerilla (Hurst & Company, 2013).

There has also been an element of insurgencies going 'Back to the Future'. During the Cold War period from the end of World War 2 to the start of the 1990s, there were numerous 'Proxy Wars' between East and West, where insurgent movements were funded, trained, equipped with weaponry and supplies, and sometimes even led and directed by state sponsors, notably the Soviet Union. Historically, this external support proved critical in sustaining, strengthening and expanding various insurgencies in Africa, Asia and South America.[272] Following the end of the Cold War, the emphasis shifted to countering insurgencies motivated by religious extremism such as the al-Qa'ida and DAESH networks, predominantly in the Middle East and North Africa.[273] However, recent military developments and a return of Great-Power Competition (GPC) have seen growing hostile state support to global proxy groups and insurgencies, notably by Russia, China, Iran and North Korea.[274] Whereas in the past the 'firewall' between those state-sponsors supporting, facilitating and enabling insurgencies in the Cold War was more limited, modern technology and in particular the exploitation of the internet and the virtual domain allow hostile states to effectively support proxy groups, including insurgents, more remotely and indirectly. This provides supporting and directing hostile state actors an even greater firewall, allowing them the opportunity for less attribution and a higher level of deniability in any sub-threshold activity conducted by proxy groups.

Pulling these aspects together, the concern is that we will increasingly see 'virtual' insurgencies based around social media and online networks of likeminded activists and extremists. These will exploit the internet for informational and psychological impact, spreading conspiracy theories and anti-state narratives, recruiting likeminded extremists and planning and coordinating attacks.[275] With less focus on traditional kinetic activity, they will use computer networks to launch deniable cyber-attacks from remote multiple locations, along with coordinated sabotage, against the vast range of Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) which modern societies are so dependent upon.[276] It is highly likely they will also use increased organised criminal activity to help fund and facilitate their actions. Given their dispersed and networked nature, these insurgencies will more easily operate out of urban centers, while rapidly adjusting and moving to new locations as required, based on operational requirements. This will make it increasingly difficult for security forces to identify and strike their Centre of Gravity (CoG). As such, we may see these insurgent networks increasingly operate on NATO Member state territory, while acting, either knowingly or by remote exploitation and cut-outs, as state proxies.[277] Such 'virtual' insurgencies will more easily be supported (and exploited) by hostile state actors to conduct malign sub-threshold attacks in order to degrade critical physical infrastructure, target key individuals and undermine national will, particularly in any shaping or preparatory phase to conflict.[278]

[272] Beckett, I. (Ed.), Communist Military Machine (Hamlyn Publishing, 1985).

[273] Cassidy, R. Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror (Stanford University Press, 2008).

[274] Kilcullen, D. The Dragons and the Snakes: How the rest learned to fight the west (Hurst & Company, 2020).

[275] Metz (2012) *Op. Cit.*

[276] Clarke, R. Cyber War: The next threat to national security and what to do about it (Harper Collins, 2010).

[277] Mekhennet, S. et. al. 'Russia recruits sympathizers online for sabotage in Europe, officials say'. The Washington Post, 10th July 2024. Available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/07/10/russia-sabotage-europe-ukraine/

[278] Madhani, A. and Moulson, G. 'Russian assassination plots against those supporting Ukraine uncovered in Europe, official says'. AP News 12th July 2024. Available at https://apnews.com/article/germany-russia-threats-report-rheinmetall-plot-2cee42e9f9f6940eb960b0b052e3e670

Section 3: The Changing Nature of Counter-terrorism

In countering terrorism there are a range of measures that can be taken in the fields of diplomacy/politics, criminal justice, security, policing, intelligence, the military/paramilitary, technology and economics, but these Instruments of Power (IoP) have to be used carefully to avoid undermining democratic society, exacerbating the situation and inadvertently increasing terrorist recruitment.[279] However, terrorist and insurgent developments and their exploitation of advances in technology, such as non-conventional weaponry, 'drones' and the use of AI, will require continuing flexibility and agile adaptation on the part of police and security forces involved in both CT and COIN.[280]

With the shift to smaller, self-contained and 'lone attacker' terrorism, the response has been to monitor social media and communications, develop human intelligence from local communities and seek to identify potentially vulnerable individuals and intervene with various Preventing & Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) measures. However, although the smaller self-contained attacks are more difficult for the authorities to identify in their planning stages than the more complex 'spectaculars' detailed, there are increasing concerns that while the police and security forces have shifted their focus and intelligence methodology into identifying and countering these types of smaller self-initiated attacks, there is the return to a renewed threat of further 'spectaculars'. While 'lone actors' are generally home grown, and the resultant intelligence focus is on the internal threat, most major terrorist attacks are transnational in nature and often generate an external threat to NATO countries. Thus, while much of the current intelligence focus is on the internal threat posed by unsophisticated domestic attacks from lone attackers, we need to be conscious of a mutating threat and the potential for further organised major terrorist attacks launched by external networks.

In particular, the resurgence of ISKP, and its increasing transnational attack capability, means that there is a need to re-focus counter-terrorism back to countering major attacks. This may also require a different intelligence focus from previous groups and communities. At the strategic CT level, the ISKP threat requires renewed and increased engagement and cooperation with Central and South Asian regional countries, possibly with what might be considered 'pariah' states, such as Afghanistan under Taliban rule and Iran. Given ISKP's targeting priorities in its social media and propaganda, there also needs to be increased security at major sporting and social events. However, perhaps the most important factor is for a greater awareness of the level of threat posed by ISKP and the concomitant development of the responses it requires.

With the increasingly networked and transnational Extreme Right Wing (XRW), there needs to be continuing monitoring of its online communications, narratives and propaganda, particularly in relation to potential targets. Given the constantly morphing and mutating nature of the often 'virtual' XRW networks, the intelligence focus needs to be on key individuals, who regularly appear in different roles and guises, rather than the XRW organisations or networks they are currently affiliated with. The various anti-establishment anarchist, far

[279] Warnes (2024) *Op. Cit.*

[280] Cronin, A. K. Power to the People: How open technological innovation is arming tomorrow's terrorists (Oxford University Press, 2020).

left and extremist protest groups, which have expanded particularly during and since the COVID-19 pandemic, will require an intelligence focus to ensure that they do not become exploited, either willingly or unknowingly, as proxies by hostile state actors. In particular, this will include intelligence on the communications, coordination and messaging of such networks. The potential actions, targeting and sabotage conducted by some elements of these networks will require an increase in cyber-security and the protection of transport networks, power supply and various other Critical National Infrastructure (CNI), along with more focus on the security of personnel and close protection for key political and military figures.

Section 4: The Changing Nature of Counter-insurgency

COIN involves a range of military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civic actions.[281] These are normally introduced and conducted around a number of principles of counter-insurgency, including primacy of political purpose, understanding the human terrain, securing the population, neutralising the insurgents, integrating intelligence and gaining and maintaining popular support.[282] However, given the changing character of insurgency detailed, more traditional COIN measures may need to focus less on kinetic action and more on informational and psychological measures and cyber security, as well as countering the exploitation of insurgencies by malign state actors and their proxy groups.

Clearly the development of integrated Human Intelligence (HUMINT) through engagement with affected local communities will remain critical, along with a thorough understanding of the human terrain. Likewise, traditional Military Assistance (MA) and capacity building of host nation/local indigenous forces, whether through operational partnering with NATO conventional or Special Operations Forces (SOF), will remain essential. However, given the future shift toward 'virtual' insurgencies, linked through online networks, there will need to be an increased emphasis on Technical Intelligence (TECHINT) and Signals Intelligence (SIGINT). This will assist in the monitoring of online messaging, coordination and communication and targeting priorities amongst a 'virtual' insurgency network. The monitoring of such insurgent networks' messaging will also assist in identifying and understanding the informational and psychological effects the insurgents are attempting to achieve and their actual impact and effectiveness. One consequent concern, potentially impacting on police and intelligence monitoring and resultant intelligence, is terrorist and insurgent use of encrypted technology, making it increasingly difficult to lawfully intercept communications.[283] This difficulty is being exacerbated by the shifting societal and legal balance towards the protection of individual privacy or the right to freedom of speech, over group security.

Given the potential for such 'virtual' insurgencies to be supported and exploited by hostile state actors, there will be a requirement to monitor and identify any foreign state support, facilitation or enablement of such activities. If identified, such support can be countered, or used for informational effect by exposing it in the public domain. With their ability to

[281] US Army and US Marine Corps, Counterinsurgency. FM 3-24/ MCWP 3-33.5, 2006.

[282] UK Army, Countering Insurgency. Army Field Manual Vol. 1:10 AC 71876, 2010.

[283] Lewis, J. et. al. 'The Effect of Encryption on Lawful Access to Communications and Data' (Center for Strategic & International Studies – CSIS, February 2017). Available at https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/8387f390-4fd7-4bca-9b56-c1a186b301c4_en?filename=csis_study_en.pdf

operate virtually in built up and urban areas, such future networked insurgencies will not be geographically constrained to remote, uncontrolled areas. If such virtual networks become increasingly active on NATO Member States' territory, as well as proactively targeting both insurgent individuals and networks, there will be an increased requirement for states to increase informational and operational security, the cyber-security of critical electronic command, control and communications, the physical security of various CNI and the personnel protection of key political, military, industrial and scientific personnel.[284]

As virtually networked insurgencies of the future are likely to be less focused on 'kinetic' activity, with more of an emphasis placed on psychological and informational effects, the approach to COIN may need to adjust. Experiences and lessons from countering and fighting Organised Crime Groups (OCG) may prove more applicable and transferable than traditional warfighting, or more 'military' approaches to counter-insurgency. This might include greater use of Financial Investigation Units (FIUs) to develop Financial Intelligence (FININT), follow insurgent fundraising streams or identify external funding from overseas actors, by 'following the money' in a similar manner to the EU's 'Administrative Approach' to organised crime.[285] Proactive intelligence and the use of appropriate analytic tools and concepts might be used, along with I2 Anacapa link charts, to conduct semi-automated network analysis that develops data matrices, and links insurgent activists, locations, vehicles, weapons and so on. Finally, increased cooperation and collaboration will be essential, not just between military, intelligence and policing agencies, but also with relevant civilian institutions such as schools and prisons.

Conclusions

Drawing together the various strands concerning terrorism, insurgency, counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency that have been outlined, what does all this mean going forward? While the fundamental nature of terrorism and insurgency (the 'what') is still there, and new ideological motivations (the 'why') continue to emerge, the 'how' is constantly expanding and changing, resulting in additional potential attack methodologies, adding to existing targeting approaches. These have resulted in changes in the character of both terrorism and insurgency, necessitating an adaptation of CT and COIN responses. Despite the differences between terrorism and insurgency, some of the key factors that have led to these changes in their character – and which will continue to change over the coming decades – are common to both:

- Terrorist/insurgent exploitation of advances in technology, including UAV 'drones', autonomous vehicles, 3D Printing and Artificial Intelligence (AI), for training, intelligence and targeting
- Terrorist/insurgent use of the internet and online world, not just for radicalisation, recruitment and organisation, but also for the delivery of informational and psychological effects, cyber-attacks and to establish 'virtual' networks
- The emergence of 'anti-everything perpetual grievances' associated with various Mixed, Unclear and Unstable (MUU) ideologies

[284] Johnson, R. Future Trends in Insurgency and Countering Strategies (NATO COE-DAT, 2015).

[285] ENAA, '3rd EU Handbook: On the administrative approach in the European Union, 2005. Available at https://administrativeapproach.eu/sites/default/files/publication/files/2005_Third%20Handbook%20EU_ENG_LR_1.pdf

- The breakdown of the international rules-based system, with the parallel rise of state sponsorship and the increasing use of terrorists and insurgents as deniable proxies for malign sub-threshold actions, possibly in a shaping or preparatory phase before outright conflict

Consequently, while NATO has had twenty years of experience in modern counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency through the ISAF operations in Afghanistan[286] and many member nations have had parallel concurrent experiences in Iraq and then Iraq/Syria, and although there are some enduring features of both terrorism and insurgency, the character or terrorism and insurgency has rapidly adapted and mutated, exploiting modern technological and societal trends. NATO practitioners must be equally agile and adaptable in their use of appropriate 'Instruments of Power' (IoP). Going forward, a comprehensive based approach, involving not only the military, police and security forces, but equally elements of industry, science, the media and civil society, may prove more effective in countering the type of state sponsored and 'virtual' threats detailed than previous, 'hard power' centric approaches.[287]

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[286] Kilcullen, D. The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting small wars in the midst of a big one (Hurst & Company, 2009)

[287] Connable, B. and Libicki, M. How Insurgencies End (RAND Corporation, 2010).

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CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Stephen Harley[288]

Illustration 7: An Afghan tribal elder in Kunar struggles to operate a wind-up radio that is pre-tuned to ISAF and western supported channels. 'Can I have money instead?" he eventually asked.

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This publication was designed to assist the leadership of NATO in understanding each element both retrospectively (with a specific focus on the Afghanistan mission) and looking forward towards likely new threats and potential responses. The product examines a number of areas: the key features of each element: terrorism, insurgency, counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency. It notes areas of confluence and divergence; likely operational requirements for the time when, not if NATO once again engages in CT and/or COIN operations; the likely threat networks that NATO might face and how those networks might be effectively attacked; the likely means and, at a lower level, Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), both conventional and unconventional, that terrorists and insurgents might use; and, in response, what military and non-military Instruments of Power (IoP) might be used in this effort and how they might be effectively coordinated.

Section 1: Conclusions

Professor Emrah Özdemir began by examining how NATO defines the concepts of terrorism, counter-terrorism, insurgency, and counter-insurgency, and how these concepts are embedded in the Alliance's strategic and operational frameworks. In the post-Cold War era, NATO has undergone significant shifts in its approach to security threats. Initially, the Alliance's focus expanded from conventional dangers to encompass terrorism and internal insurgencies. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, counter-terrorism emerged as a pivotal agenda item, influencing the shaping of NATO's operational experience, strategic documents, and doctrines.

In its approach to terrorism, NATO has adopted a comprehensive definition, characterizing it as *"the unlawful use or threat of force or violence to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives."*[289] This definition has enabled NATO to develop comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies and enhance its operational capacity. The primary objective of NATO's policy guidelines and operational documents on counter-terrorism is to enhance coordination among member states and protect common security interests.

Insurgency and counter-insurgency are addressed from a distinct perspective in NATO's strategic documents and military doctrine. Insurgency is defined as organized actions against political changes or existing governments, and it constitutes an essential element in determining how NATO responds to such situations. The measures taken by NATO in the face of insurgency demonstrate how the alliance acts within a framework to ensure international security and stability.

Professor Özdemir's analysis of NATO's definitions and strategic approaches to terrorism, counter-terrorism, insurgency, and counter-insurgency reveals a clear evolution and adaptability in the Alliance's security policies. An understanding of these concepts elucidates the manner in which NATO has devised a strategy to counter global security threats and ensures cooperation among member states. This is all firmly couched within recent NATO stra-

[289] Military Concept for Counter-terrorism, MC 0472 1,

tegic thinking, specifically the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC), the NATO Strategic Foresight Analysis framework and Multi-Domain Operations (MDO). For future engagements, a more profound examination of NATO's policies and strategies surrounding these concepts is nonetheless imperative, as this will facilitate continued and relevant comprehension of the Alliance's role in the current security environment and preparation for future challenges.

Colonel Dan Stone then gave us a practitioner's view, but one enhanced by his subsequent time as the Deputy Director of COE-DAT. He notes that goal for the Afghanistan counter-terrorism mission was relatively straight-forward:

(1) to find and defeat those responsible for the attacks on 11 September 2001

(2) to make sure that Afghanistan would not be used as a breeding ground for terrorists to plan future attacks.[290]

The first goal was accomplished quickly through Special Operations Forces (SOF) partnering with local Afghan forces to decimate al-Qa'ida and their Taliban allies. But the second goal proved to be far more difficult as it effectively included nation building as an implied task. The task of nation building proved to be a daunting task and the US and NATO were unable to develop neither effective governance, an army, nor a police force in Afghanistan. But, in spite of the perceived failure of the intervention in Afghanistan, a number of lessons can be applied in future NATO counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency missions, Colonel Stone asserts.

The lessons learned break down into five broad categories. The first four can be viewed as cautionary tales that trend towards the negative as they require changes in thought and action and consist of the Lessons Learned that:

- Firstly, 'never say never', as a counter-terrorism mission similar to Afghanistan most likely will occur again
- Secondly, the problem must be clearly identified and the solution must address and solve that problem
- Thirdly, that military power alone cannot win a counter-terrorism mission as counter-terrorism is inherently a non-military problem
- Fourthly, is it is difficult, incredibly difficult in fact, to build an effective security force.

The fifth and final lesson learned provides a positive roadmap to build upon (Lessons Learned applied in Syria) for future CT and COIN missions: partnerships work if done right. Since partnerships are likely to feature even more significantly in future CT/COIN operations, this is worthy of attention.

Dr. Dana Eyre's chapter takes us beyond CT & COIN, and introduces us to Socio-Politi-

[290] Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives 116 Congress, second session, "US Lessons Learned in Afghanistan", - US LESSONS LEARNED IN AFGHANISTAN (govinfo.gov), 15 January 2020, last accessed 29 December 2022.

cal Violent (SPV), Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) Conflict Transformation and much more. He makes a compelling case for the pursuit of increasing sophistication in the way which states and international organizations such as NATO understand conflict, an understanding that understands the terrorist and the insurgent as more than individuals or groups but instead as elements of a wider and increasingly global society.

A key point of Dr. Eyre's chapter is that learning is, and must be constant, and evaluation needs to be at the core of any effort. Four-elements, 'MEAL' effort necessary: Monitoring programmatic activities; Evaluation of tactical activities; Adaptation; and Learning. He echoes Colonel Stone's strong recommendation that understanding of CT/COIN must move beyond the kinetic, 'hard' power to which so many campaigns have defaulted and also notes the centrality of Strategic Communication in what is, ultimately, a battle of narrative.

This stimulating chapter ends with a series of questions:

- As economies have globalized, so have class structures, narratives, and grievances. How can we best address a wide-spread, diverse, global insurgency?
- How do we come to terms with 'stochastic terrorism', where the linkages between the terrorist/insurgent, the victim and the counter-actor seem seemingly random, unpredictable and disconnected in a way?
- Can states and institutions such as NATO go 'glocal', combining our understanding of global context and local conditions within existing doctrinal frameworks and analytical vocabularies? If not, what do they need to do to ensure that they can operate in this increasingly essential way?
- How are globalized, pervasive, 'always on' communications shaping the processes of socio-political violence?

NATO staff focused on CT/COIN should also print out, laminate and display Dr Eyre's diagrammatic, 'The Individual and Social Dynamics of War & Peace'.

Professor Harmonie Toros notes that the twenty-year conflict in Afghanistan witnessed a variety of responses to non-state violence. From an initial focus on CT, with some humanitarian concerns put forward as a rationale for intervention, to a full surge-backed turn to COIN, NATO allies adopted very different approaches to violent actors and the civilians surrounding them. As discussed in this chapter, civilians went from being peripheral to NATO military action, which aimed to engage with them as little as possible, to being central to military action with the 2009 turn to COIN. This also included a recognition that Afghan women could not be ignored – they were part of the social fabric and could both help NATO allies understand the landscape and help them convince their families to back the Afghan government and its allies.

One of the failures, however, was that those designing and delivering COIN programs in Afghanistan did not recognize Afghan civilians as also having political preferences. Afghans, and Afghan women in particular were primarily seen as socio-economic rather than political agents. The theory of change behind the COIN approach was that Afghans would turn away from the insurgency if they felt better served by the government – regardless of politics,

ideology, or kinship ties.

Professor Toros speculates whether it may be preferable to revert back to a CT approach that tries to avoid civilians as much as possible rather than a COIN approach that ignores the centrality of politics, ideology and kinship? Would Afghan civilians have ever supported a Western-backed government in Kabul regardless of how well they provided basic services? But the choice, thankfully, is not restricted to these two flawed responses. Civilians should no doubt be understood as the 'center of gravity' of any conflict. Insurgents were once civilians and are members of civilian families: there is rarely, in reality, any social separation. Indeed, the CT view of terrorists as external to the social fabric from which they emerge has largely been discredited.[291] It is essential to understand and engage with civilians as actors with agency. Civilians can choose whom to support and these choices are not simply based on satisfying their immediate basic needs. Political, ideological, and affective (kinship) considerations also play a role in these decisions.

In the case of Afghanistan, the design of the COIN approach and its delivery assumed that Afghans had only two choices, either the US/ISAF-backed Kabul government or the Taliban. Political choice, however, does not need to be limited in this way and an approach that understands the breadth of human agency would recognize that civilians are capable of imagining different political, economic and social configurations for the future. Disempowering Afghans by giving them only a choice of two options and by assuming that they would make such a choice only based on socio-economic factors can thus be counted as failure of COIN in Afghanistan. Indeed, COIN remains a military strategy that was deployed in Afghanistan to prevent the country from falling back into the hands of the Taliban for fear of it becoming a launching pad for armed actors intent on harming Western interests. The aim was to convince Afghans to support the Western-backed government, not to empower them into making a political choice.

If COIN is not to be dismissed entirely, however, it is nonetheless essential for any COIN planning and delivery to recognize that civilians – even those with low levels of education in rural areas – are full political actors who make choices not only based on who best provides their basic needs. They also make political, ideological, and affective decisions. It also requires an engagement with gender which does not reduce women to their roles of wives and mothers, understands that their femininity may not be their primary identity (they may see themselves more as Uzbek than as a woman; or more as university educated than a woman), and also recognizes them as political actors. The principal lesson learned may have to be that human agency in conflict is extremely rich and varied: attempting to oversimplify it and reduce civilians to "human terrain" to be conquered can lead COIN blindly into a dead end from which only a dramatic withdrawal of the kind that occurred in 2021 is the solution.

Dr. Richard Warnes notes that, while the fundamental nature of terrorism and insurgency (the 'what') is still there, and new ideological motivations (the 'why') continue to emerge, the 'how' is constantly expanding and changing, resulting in additional potential attack methodologies, adding to existing targeting approaches. These have resulted in changes in the character of both terrorism and insurgency, necessitating an adaptation of CT and COIN

[291] Jackson, Toros, Jarvis, Heath-Kelly, 'Critical Terrorism Studies at Ten.'

responses. Despite the differences between terrorism and insurgency, some of the key factors that have led to these changes in their character – and which will continue to change over the coming decades – are common to both:

- Terrorist/insurgent exploitation of advances in technology, including UAV 'drones', autonomous vehicles, 3D Printing and Artificial Intelligence (AI), for training, intelligence and targeting
- Terrorist/insurgent use of the internet and online world, not just for radicalization, recruitment and organization, but also for the delivery of informational and psychological effects, cyber-attacks and to establish 'virtual' networks
- The emergence of 'anti-everything perpetual grievances' associated with various Mixed, Unclear and Unstable (MUU) ideologies
- The breakdown of the international rules-based system, and the parallel rise of state sponsorship and the increasing use of terrorists and insurgents as deniable proxies for malign sub-threshold actions, possibly in a shaping or preparatory phase before outright conflict

Consequently, while NATO has had twenty years of experience in modern counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency through the ISAF operation in Afghanistan and many member nations have had parallel, concurrent experience in Iraq, then Iraq/Syria, and elsewhere, and although there are some enduring features of both terrorism and insurgency, the character or terrorism and insurgency has rapidly adapted and mutated, exploiting modern technological and societal trends. NATO practitioners must be equally agile and adaptable in their use of appropriate 'Instruments of Power' (IoP). Going forward, a comprehensive based approach, involving not only the military, police and security forces, but equally elements of industry, science, the information environment and civil society, may prove more effective in countering the type of state sponsored and 'virtual' threats detailed than previous, 'hard power' centric approaches.

Section 2: Recommendations

In anticipation of NATO engaging in future CT/COIN operations, which this publication views as being inevitable, we offer number of recommendations for consideration:

- Constantly review and update the strategies and doctrines for CT/COIN
- Focusing on the root problems within the relevant society that spawns the terrorist/insurgent group
- Placing CT/COIN within a wider context of P/CVE, Conflict Transformation & Peace-building
- Re-balancing between enemy-centric and population centric approaches
- Yet more focus on Emerging Threats

- Areas for further consideration

Constantly review and update the strategies and doctrines for CT/COIN

Firstly, while NATO has definitions and, in some areas, strategies, for CT/COIN, these require constant review and updating. Even then, every terrorist or insurgency group is unique in its own way: consider al-Qa'ida in Iraq and DAESH, for example. Every environment where a terrorist group operates is different as well: DAESH in Iraq/Syria is very different from DAESH in Afghanistan or Libya or the Sahel or Somalia. Broad, blanket definitions are fine but of limited use in terms of implementation, where the group and the environment must be understood and strategies and tactics adapted accordingly. As an aside, the editor himself, with nearly two decades of constant CT/COIN experience in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia, prefers a more practical definition: 'An illegitimate response to a legitimate grievance.'

Focusing on the root problems within the relevant society that spawns the terrorist/insurgent group

This leads to the second recommendation: placing emphasis on understanding the origins of the terrorist or insurgent group and, while dealing with the day-to-day tactical response to these groups, placing equal if not greater emphasis on addressing the grievances within those groups and the wider society. To achieve this, greater understanding of the politics, history, economics, infrastructure, geography, culture and so on, and associated 'soft power' capacity to respond will be required. NATO should consider how it might use its existing capabilities or restructures itself to meet this critical component of any CT/COIN campaign.

Placing CT/COIN within a wider context of P/CVE, Conflict Transformation & Peace-building

Thirdly, NATO may wish to consider framing definitions beyond CT/COIN within a broader structure that encompasses P/CVE, Conflict Transformation/Peace-building, Gender Equality & Social Inclusion within the realm of Human Security, and then define clearly how it views the way in which these different elements interact with each other to produce a comprehensive campaign strategy that can be implemented effectively.

Re-balancing between enemy-centric and population centric approaches

Fourthly, understanding society means understanding all of society, not just the political elite, the security forces and 'friendly' local advisors and employees: this includes women, but not just as women, along with minorities, the marginalized and, critically, the moderate middle, who are often assumed to be happy to remain quietly in place, neither pro-terrorist/insurgent nor pro-government institutions. NATO should consider how it can achieve this level of understanding, building on well-intentioned but poorly delivered concepts such as Human Terrain Teams, Female Engagement Teams and so on.

Yet more focus on Emerging Threats

Fifthly, NATO already has a highly effective Emerging Threats branch and this should be supported in its continuing efforts to track developments in areas such as CT/COIN but also

climate change, technology, space and so on.

Areas for further consideration

Finally, constraints of time and resource meant that other areas of relevance had to be neglected.

Strategic Communication and the rapidly developing Information Environment are touched upon in this publication but are worthy of fuller discussion in relation to the CT/COIN space, as is the ongoing technological revolution: terrorists and insurgents will instinctively seek to exploit developments, and not just in weaponry. Similarly, Negotiated Settlement should be a core effort of any CT/COIN campaign from Day 1. While COE-DAT has published extensively on this subject, this could not be incorporated into this publication for the same reasons.

Equally, the role of the broad range of reconstruction – or sometimes basic construction – activities should also be incorporated into CT/COIN campaigns, with specific consideration given to the interaction between the various component elements of humanitarian and disaster relief, stabilization, development and so on. In parallel, how NATO interacts with other implementers in this space – humanitarians, international organizations such as the United Nations, non-governmental organisation, civil society, private actors with ostensibly philanthropic motives – may be worthy of consideration. All of these are areas for further, specific research.

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