



Report on Wilton Park Conference WP829

TACKLING COUNTER-INSURGENCY AND POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION: RECENT EXPERIENCES AND BEST PRACTICES

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Summary of Conclusions

- In Afghanistan tackling the insurgency is a major goal of coalition forces and the Afghan Government. Any counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy, however, must be closely linked to the wider and longer-term reconstruction of Afghanistan. Thus COIN and civilian reconstruction require an integrated approach.
- A comprehensive (or integrated) approach weaving together military and civilian/governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) capacities is critical to success in both COIN and post-conflict reconstruction.
- The difficulties in achieving a comprehensive approach are significant both at the national and international levels. Setting realistic expectations and goals in attempting to build a comprehensive approach is necessary as is accepting that there may be gaps in the multi-agency and multi-actor effort undertaken.
- Given the difficulties faced by humanitarian and development agencies operating in dangerous environments, such organisations may have to train their military counterparts to meet humanitarian and development needs in insecure operational environments.
- The complex matrix of actors involved in COIN and post-conflict reconstruction, including international, national and local participants, makes 'unity of effort', rather than a more centrally controlled 'unity of command', a more realistic and sustainable model of achieving the maximum degree of cohesion in the common endeavour.
- At a national level, integrating the many agencies that contribute to post-conflict reconstruction projects suffers from an uneven distribution of resources, bureaucratic and cultural obstacles, in particular, between civilian and military organisations.

- Establishing an effective link between the immediate COIN operations and the longer term effort to build a security sector is critical to defeating an insurgency. In particular, more attention needs to be given to building effective police forces, and a holistic approach towards security and the administration of justice.
- The lack of means of measuring or assessing progress in attainment of reconstruction goals requires the development of effectiveness indices to measure progress and allocate resources.
- Success in COIN and post-conflict reconstruction by international actors cannot succeed without the engagement, support and assumption of responsibility by local actors in running their own affairs.

Introduction

1. The ongoing insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq have given the military coalitions engaged in these challenging armed conflicts considerable impetus to revisit and develop national counter insurgency (COIN) strategy and doctrine. The very nature of COIN postulates the integration of political and humanitarian action with military operations. Moreover, both Afghanistan and Iraq require not only that insurgencies be defeated but that comprehensive efforts be made in post-conflict reconstruction particularly building vital state capacities. Thus alongside the immediate needs of ongoing COIN operations are longer term requirements of post-conflict reconstruction to put in place security, social, economic and political capacities that offer lasting solutions.

2. As a consequence of the challenges in Afghanistan and Iraq regarding successful prosecution of COIN and post-conflict reconstruction, from a policy-making perspective arises a plethora of questions to be addressed:

- What is the best strategy in COIN operations, including in Afghanistan and Iraq?
- What lessons can be learned from ongoing and recent operations?
- What needs to be done to obtain the critical nexus between political and military dimensions, with coordinated government machinery for military, diplomatic, economic and social measures?
- What strategies work for protecting people and separating insurgents from their base support?
- What approaches work in engaging with armed groups to end violence?
- How can institutions involved in COIN - military, police, intelligence and government departments - better coordinate?

- What are the dilemmas in combining security and humanitarian needs?
- What role should private security companies play?
- How can long-term security in COIN situations be built, ensuring a comprehensive approach to governance, the rule of law and economic reconstruction?
- How should security sector and judicial reform be approached in COIN situations?

COIN: Contemporary and Historical Lessons

3. Afghanistan provides an important illustration of the challenges in applying a COIN strategy in the context of dangerous and difficult insurgency while attempting to build capacity for sustainable and long-term post-conflict reconstruction of the Afghan state. In the wake of the US-led *Operation Enduring Freedom* (OEF) in Autumn 2001, important efforts were made to engage the international community in political, economic and military terms and to encourage the development of Afghanistan's ability to govern itself took place. However, the inadequate resources, comprehensiveness and pace of post conflict reconstruction created conditions that saw the resurgence of a Taliban led insurgency in southern regions of the country. In addition to the insurgency, there is the problem of a narco-criminal culture centred on the cultivation of the poppy. Eradication of poppy cultivation is an issue affecting both COIN and efforts at state reconstruction. The consequence of the Taliban insurgency, poppy cultivation and problems in moving forward the large needs for post conflict reconstruction require better integration of political, military and developmental responses to address the situation.

4. Developments in Afghanistan point to efforts to achieve greater integration between COIN and state reconstruction. In terms of the military effort, the shift from the US-led coalition (OEF) to a NATO-led operation throughout Afghanistan harnesses, not without some difficulties, greater military resources and a larger number of states into the COIN effort. Resolving national contingent differences of rules of engagement (ROE) and lifting limitations on operational employment will only make the NATO effort more effective. Alongside the international military effort is that of the Afghan armed forces. Indeed it is critical that the Afghan Government assume ever greater responsibility for its governance, security and economic development. The military efforts in Afghanistan as noted above cannot be divorced from non-military contributions to state reconstruction. Within COIN efforts in

Afghanistan, there is a clear need to shift the centre of gravity toward non-military reconstruction activity.

5. The twin problems of insurgency and state reconstruction in Afghanistan have a regional as well as international dimension. The issues confronted by Afghanistan require the involvement and coordination of efforts with neighbouring states. In this regard, cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan is an important factor in resolving Afghanistan's internal problems. The cross border synergies between Afghanistan's Taliban insurgents and Pakistan's Pashtun tribal areas along the border require a common approach.

6. Overall, the specific areas to be addressed in the context of the insurgency in Afghanistan and state reconstruction centre on security, governance/justice and economic/strategic reconstruction. The security requirements include not only tackling the Taliban insurgency but developing the quality and sustainability of the Afghan National Army and other elements of the security sector. The development of Afghan governance and justice entails not only improving the efficacy of representative government but also extending the influence and capacity of national institutions into every part of the country. Given the lack of infrastructure, as well as the social and economic conditions, development needs remain significantly high. It is clear that tackling the insurgency is a major goal of coalition forces and the Afghan government. Any COIN strategy, however, must be closely linked to the wider and longer-term reconstruction of Afghanistan. Thus COIN and civilian reconstruction require an integrated approach.

7. The lessons learned in contemporary Afghanistan have historical resonance. The example of British experience in dealing with Northern Ireland between 1969 and 1972, like in Afghanistan today, illustrates the cost of not adopting an effective COIN strategy from the onset of the insurgency. In the case of Northern Ireland, the need for adequate numbers of troops on the ground, effective intelligence, and the support of civilian agencies were critical lessons from the British experience. Moreover, Northern Ireland highlighted the fact that armed forces cannot treat COIN as a poor relation in the spectrum of military operations with underdeveloped doctrine and a paucity of resources.

8. From the many historical examples of insurgencies can be identified a number of core principles to guide COIN operations. Insurgencies are, by their very nature, a very political form of warfare where there is a competition for support between the insurgents and those conducting COIN operations. Therefore isolating insurgents from their support and protecting civilians opposed to the insurgents is necessary to defeat an insurgency. Similarly the limited or measured use of force by security forces acting within the rule of law is important to win and sustain civilian support. Excessive use of force only builds support for insurgents among civilian populations. Intelligence and a broader understanding of the operational environment are also essential elements of COIN strategy.

9. Although COIN principles can be readily identified from historical case studies, the need for flexibility and adaptability in their application is among the most important of principles in COIN. To utilise templates for separating insurgents from their supporters, protecting civilian opponents to the insurgents or employing security forces risks failure. Any use of COIN principles must be guided by the fact that it is more of a political rather than a military problem. Troops employed in COIN need to learn new skills: linguistic and cultural, as well as to exercise patience and initiative. New training programmes need to be developed to meet these requirements.

10. Thus in COIN, political rather than a military primacy is vital. Political responses that build legitimacy undermine insurgent efforts. The need to focus on isolating insurgents from their support and protecting civilians opposed to the insurgents means that civilian humanitarian and development action can have a major impact on COIN operations. Finding a way to an integrated or comprehensive approach that brings together military and civilian actors is a critical nexus in COIN and associated state reconstruction.

New Conceptual Frameworks for Civil-Military Interaction?

11. Bringing together military and civilian actors into a comprehensive or integrated approach to support COIN and post conflict reconstruction can be a highly

daunting exercise at both the national and international levels. There are many barriers that include incompatibility of goals, cultural practice, autonomous bureaucratic fiefdoms and uneven distribution of resources. Taking the example of goals, often military and civilian aims can be fundamentally opposed where there is both an insurgency and great humanitarian need. In such a situation, armed forces see the humanitarian aid as part of their COIN strategy to defeat the insurgency. For a civilian non-governmental organisation delivering humanitarian aid, the central aim is to deliver impartially to those in need whether they support insurgents or not. Put in a different way, armed forces tend to be 'enemy' focused while civilian agencies delivering aid are 'people' focused. Given such gulfs in perceptions, in roles and objectives, achieving effective civil-military interaction can be difficult. Similarly, cultural practice in the field can be another source of divergence rather than integration. The hierarchical, highly disciplined and task orientated culture of the military can rest uneasily with the more flexible, collegiate and horizontal management structures of civilian agencies.

12. Another dimension to the provision of security in the context of COIN and state reconstruction is the Private Security Company (PSCs). These private firms fill a variety of security and support functions that range from supplying body guards to catering services. In the COIN and state reconstruction environment PSCs are a controversial new actor. Proponents of PSCs argue that they provide necessary and cost effective services that governments are no longer willing to provide. Critics, however, see both national and international issues over the adequacy of regulation of PSCs, their cost effectiveness and the lack of operational control over their activities.

13. It would seem that the best prospects for achieving a comprehensive approach between the military and civilian agencies are at the national level. Integrating military and civilian capacities within the sphere of national government at least suggests the possibility of central direction to insure a common effort. At a national level, however, integrating the many agencies that contribute to post-conflict reconstruction projects suffers from the same problems as military collaboration with international actors and the NGO community. The uneven distribution of resources, bureaucratic and cultural obstacles occur as much on the national level as in other

contexts. Within government, duty of care, contractual employment factors and the understandable lack of willingness of civilian staff to run the same risks as military personnel make deployment of civilians from government agencies on COIN and post-conflict reconstruction difficult. There is a lack of qualified people. In a parallel fashion international organisations (IOs) and NGOs have difficulty deploying staff into violent and highly dangerous environments. Uneven resource distribution among government institutions is another limiting factor when combining military and civilian responses. Many government agencies delivering humanitarian or development action lack the necessary resources even if they were minded to collaborate with the armed forces in COIN and post-conflict reconstruction. Some governments have provided a training manual to improve the preparation of civilians, from a range of professional backgrounds such as health, education, agriculture, deployed for reconstruction tasks in insecure or dangerous environments.

14. Where COIN and post-conflict reconstruction are taking place together, it is clear that civilian humanitarian and development action in this environment can be made extremely difficult by security conditions. Moreover, the military lacks the civilian expertise in delivering humanitarian and development aid. The challenges faced by both civilian and military actors raise uncomfortable questions: For the military, to what degree should humanitarian and development action be militarised? For civilian governmental and non-governmental organisations to what degree should civilian deliverers of humanitarian and development aid collaborate and be partners to military efforts? Although there are major points of principle that may be at stake for both civilian and military actors facing the dilemma of pursuing both security and humanitarian objectives, the only solution may be a pragmatic one. Given the difficulties faced by humanitarian and development agencies operating in dangerous environments, such organisations may have to train their military counterparts to meet humanitarian and development needs in insecure operational environments.

15. Coordination of agencies and efforts at the national level can be highly problematic. Solutions to achieving a more comprehensive integration of military and civilian efforts may require stronger political direction or even legislation to create the necessary frameworks, or new structures, to make it happen. Taking the problem of

civil-military integration to a level that embraces a wider spectrum of actors poses even more significant challenges that may require lowered expectations of what can be achieved. The complex matrix of actors involved necessary for COIN and post-conflict reconstruction including international, national and local participants makes 'unity of effort' rather than a more centrally controlled 'unity of command' model a more realistic and sustainable way of achieving the maximum degree of cohesion in the common endeavour.

Building Long-Term Security in COIN Situations

16. State reconstruction is a challenging undertaking that takes into account the full spectrum of public goods delivered by a state. Among the key areas to be tackled in any state-building project include governance, the rule of law, human rights, the justice system, socio-economic development and security sector reform. The scale and comprehensiveness of state reconstruction is difficult enough in the wake of armed conflict but the problems are considerably magnified when concurrent with a COIN situation.

17. Given the complexity of the task of state reconstruction, adopting an integrated or comprehensive approach to the task is important but as noted above in other contexts difficult to attain. As the case of Afghanistan illustrates, the variety of IOs, NGOs and other state actors involved can dissipate efforts and indeed be acting in a contradictory or counter-productive manner toward a common end of state reconstruction, Restoring key functions of the state requires, coherence, resources and a common approach and goals.

18. Apart from requiring a comprehensive approach, state reconstruction is a long term project that can be measured not simply in years but decades. Maintaining the interest and engagement of the international community, national governments and NGOs for such a long term project is problematic when taking into account short term political cycles and attention spans, problems in sustaining donor commitment and the tendency to focus on the latest international crises.

19. Some of the problems of sustaining commitment to state reconstruction rest on the lack of means of measuring or assessing progress in attainment of goals. In

the broadest sense, there is the case for the actors in state reconstruction to adopt a state effectiveness index to measure progress and allocate resources. The problem of assessing progress toward goals in reconstruction is something that is necessary not only at the state level. In particular elements of state reconstruction, there is a similar difficulty in measuring outcomes. The establishment of a functioning security sector is one such example where there is an underdeveloped capacity to understand priorities and measure progress toward establishing an effective security sector.

20. When the problem of ongoing COIN is added to the challenge of state reconstruction, establishing security moves to the top of the agenda. An undoubted consensus exists that state reconstruction in any of its dimensions is not likely to succeed without security. Establishing an effective link between the immediate COIN operations and the longer term effort to build a security sector is critical. Putting in place a functioning justice system including police, courts and prisons is a key ingredient in providing order and stability in any society so that people can go about their daily lives in a predictable and secure environment. The police are important in COIN as they know the local community they serve and can provide intelligence useful to supporting COIN. In both COIN and effective policing, rule of law and respect for human rights is an important factor in winning the support of the local population. At the same time, creating a police force during an insurgency faces a number of hurdles such as the need for vetting to prevent infiltration of the police and the protection of police and their families from intimidation.

21. Elements of state reconstruction can have a major role to play in removing insurgents from the conflict through resettlement and economic incentive. The expertise of IOs and NGOs in reintegrating former combats and providing training can create a path for disengagement of insurgents and their entry into peaceful society.

22. When the international community intervenes in a state, the actors engaged assume to a greater or lesser degree the functions of a state until it can be transferred to local control. Recognising this fact can have a positive impact at early stages of state reconstruction by applying appropriate resources and capabilities. As

the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrate, inadequate planning and resources can have negative impacts and fuel insurgencies. Immediate stabilisation by outside actors through the provision of state capacity, however, is no substitute for transfer of these functions to local actors. Success in COIN and post-conflict reconstruction by international actors cannot succeed without the engagement, support and assumption of responsibility by local actors in running their own affairs.

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