FUSION A BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH TO COUNTERINSURGENCY

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In this article we will briefly describe the changed nature of the intervention operations the Western world has primarily engaged in over the last decades. Traditionally destroying opponent's military capabilities was sufficient to achieve the primary political strategic goals**.** We will illustrate where our current organisation can be complemented so it can sufficiently support efforts to achieve the more inclusive political strategic goals by blending in the behavioural aspects of all the actors that interacting in the conflict. Finally we will propose an alternative structure that can better support these efforts. Due to the limited space we have in this article to present our views, the main goal is to illustrate, based on the experiences in Afghanistan in 2006, what the fusion approach can add to the current organisational structure during Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. In a follow up article we will expand on the way the alternative structure can be created and what it will look like.

Winning wars but losing the population?

Operation enduring freedom commenced on October 7th 2001 and set out to neutralize Taliban and Al Qaeda forces and support structures. The operation initially deployed bombers operating at high altitudes, bombing suspected Al-Qaeda training

camps and Taliban military targets. In a short period most known targets were destroyed and the campaign focused on C3 targets used to support Taliban forces. During a Q&A with news media on the progress of the war in Afghanistan, U.S Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld was asked of the problem the air force was experiencing finding viable new targets. In essence denying that this was a problem Rumsfeld answered 'we aren't running out of targets; Afghanistan is.'

Now almost six years after the Taliban was 'running out of targets', operations in Afghanistan are still under way. In this sense it seems that despite Rumsfeld's words there *is* a problem because the 'Taliban's lack of targets' has not led to the achievement of the larger political strategic goals. Indeed, given the complex nature of the problems in Afghanistan one cannot expect to achieve these goals in six year's time, however, the approach in operation enduring freedom still seems to be mainly focused on a search and destroy approach, using military means as the main effort to achieve a political strategic goal: creating a stable environment that will exclude the possibility for criminal and terrorist organisations to thrive.

In the last decades the western world – with the U.S. in the lead – has achieved an undeniable superiority in military capabilities. We have seen a situation in Iraq both in 1991 and 2003 where military victory over the Iraqi regular army was won at a ridiculously fast rate. The Russians where confronted with a similar situation in Afghanistan where there was an absence of initial resistance from regular armed forces. Now irregular warfare is being waged in Iraq and the Russians in the end had to withdraw their forces without accomplishing their initial goals. So it seems that powerful nations are confronted with a situation in which this military superiority has rarely led to a satisfactory achievement of the initial political and strategic goals.

One explanation for this situation is that these powerful nations are fighting a different kind of war then their opponents.

Thomas Hammes describes this as a situation in which the U.S. forces are trying to fight a third generation war, which they are good at, against an enemy which is employing fourth generation warfare.[1] This fourth generation warfare is in essence a form of insurgency that uses military means but also a whole range of other means. An often-employed instrument by insurgents is to play to the perceptions of opponent policymakers and audiences, through media, to convince the enemy that their goals are unachievable or too costly.

In this environment there are many factors influencing the outcome of our actions. One thing is clear, that the way in which democratic countries choose to deal with insurgents and terrorists is related to the increase or decrease of support for their policy makers and their troops.[2] One needs to take this into account and try to influence positively the perceptions of the local population thus increasing resilience against insurgents to ensure support for ones own efforts. The same is true for potential supporters of the insurgents abroad, allies and neighbouring countries. Dealing with different actors in a concerted manner requires a balanced approach on how efforts and information flows are to be organised.

If this is not done correctly it will lead to a situation that is prone to producing efforts that are counter productive to the political and strategic goals. Furthermore, efforts can be contradictory to those by other parts of the organisation or partners. We will introduce here the concept of the fusion cell as a way to reduce these

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[1] Thomas X. Hammes (2004), The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century. ISBN: 0760320594. We will continue to speak of insurgency while acknowledging that the 4th generation warfare concept is useful as a way to look at insurgency and the mismatch between regular military operations and irregular operations.
[2] http://www.nisa-intelligence.nl/PDF-bestanden/Inlichtingenops.pdf , Major BC. Rob Sentse

undesirable outcomes by increasing the information and analysis that these different actors have as a common base for planning and action.

Fusion, a synergy of dynamic networks.

The hardest thing in counterinsurgency is to know what's going on; one needs to have a sense of the changes in attitudes of relevant actors. Therefore, a delicate balance must be achieved between perception and reality for the Area of Operations (AO) as a whole as well as for the troops contributing countries. The availability of interactive media on every level of society makes influencing people a key part of the cultural, military, political and economical environment. Influencing perception is an integral part of winning hearts and minds and influencing behaviour both at home and abroad.[3]

In our experience everyone seems to be aware of the fact that people, responsible for deploying instruments of influence (both kinetic and non-kinetic), should see and speak to each other more often. There is awareness that between the actors in the field, there needs to be an exchange of: valuable information; ideas on how to cope with the situation; and the feasibility of effects that are desirable. It is therefore strange to observe that despite this awareness the same people remain comfortably within their own "domain" and area of expertise in the day-to-day work process without including other disciplines. This effectively creates a stove-piped situation within each individual discipline.[4]

However, the effects that are caused due to decisions and actions by each discipline are not limited to an individual stove-pipe. They interact and can be contrary or complementary to each other. This is very much in contrast to the way

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[3] In the 1960s, British COIN expert Sir Robert Thompson wrote in his classic study, *Defeating Communist Insurgency,* "The chief role of the foreign press [in a COIN campaign] will be to condition its own people."

[4] For an overview of actors and disciplines that can be included see Table 1.

linear military comfort zones are nourished. Important information in many cases is not instantly shared and the opportunities of using each others' strengths are therefore missed. So, if we are aware of the fact that effects are not stove-piped why then do we still choose to work in stove-pipes? A rhetorical question, we admit.

Towards a physical fusion cell

Fusion in essence has three components; network fusion; procedural fusion; and, physical fusion.[5] Network fusion connects people and information, for instance through an automated network. Procedural fusion ensures that working procedures of different actors can be connected. Interoperability, collective training and using the same method to catalogue files are examples of this type of fusion.

Physical fusion can be achieved by the creation of a fusion cell. (Elements that were or should be included in a fusion cell based on the experiences in Afghanistan can be found in the table in appendix 1.) The concept of physical fusion is very simple: put people from the relevant organisations together in the same workspace. Everyone who has ever worked in a complex environment or a large organisation will tell you it is important '*to be there'*. But why is this so important?

When people interact with each other or 'get a sense' of things by being physically present, different things are happening then when two people read the same report or have access to the same database. When people interact it is still the best way to exchange *tacit* knowledge, induce learning and gain true

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[5] These three components are in essence the same as what is called spatial proximity, network proximity, and combinatorial proximity. Combinatorial proximity is however to narrow. Procedural fusion goes beyond using the same way of labelling and is linked to for instance interoperability, common training, common working procedures or linking work processes. The initial proximity categories are from Libicki, Martin C. en Pfleeger, Shari L.; Collecting the Dots: Problem Formulation and Solution Elements; Rand Corporation; Arlington VA; January 2004.

understanding.[6] Humans learn best when they interact with each other, and what they learn changes with whom they interact. Human interactions are influenced by such things as education, social-economic relations, tribal/family relations, and religion. This connects people to varying degrees in different circumstances.[7] Because the situation in an AO is so complex and often entirely different from one's own point of reference, there needs to be a variety of interactions in order to create the needed ability to learn and adapt. Apart from this learning element, one reduces the chance that pieces of information in the possession of one person are missed by another who has a need for that information simply because there *is* interaction.

When we view the environment in a behavioural context, we seek to adapt behaviour through our interventions. This is done not only by military means but by media, political, military, cultural, and socio-economic means as well. It is crucial to take into account how the use of these means is perceived both in the operational environment we are guests in (or intervened in) and in countries of influence.[8] All actors are to be looked upon as complex, adaptive, interactive systems-of-systems in a behavioural context.

Too often COIN is made out to be the equivalent of 'search and destroy'. In the discussion about the deployment of Dutch troops to Afghanistan the opposite was the case: COIN was meant to support development and reconstruction. Both these interpretations are too narrow. Using means oblivious to the efforts of others can create a situation in which "the whole of means is less then the root of its parts".

Means of governance, security, diplomacy, development, military and media[9] all need to be considered as part of a well conceived counter insurgency[10] strategy

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[6] The importance of the tacit knowledge dimension is discussed by Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995.
[7] http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/grau.pdf
[8] Countries of influence can be troop providers, allies, neighbouring countries, countries that might support the insurgents, etc..
[9] http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/07summer/hoffman.pdf

in order to reach synergy. This arduous task can only be performed through a fused balanced mix of those responsible for and knowledgeable about these means. Sharing ideas, visions and knowledge creates synergy and is a condition for grounded advice and decision. "Out of the box" thinking will have to be encouraged at the expense of stove-pipes, fenced domains, criticism immunity, and comfort zones.

Visualisation of fusion: the Afghanistan experience.

Our point of departure for explaining the added value of fusion will be the experiences building a fusion cell for the Canadian led Regional Command South (RC-S) HQ in Kandahar in mid-2006.[11] The reason for this initiative was that information within the HQ in many cases was found to be stove-piped. Key people and sections worked in their own offices using telephones and computers for their communication with colleagues mainly within their own organisational unit. Important information was in many cases not instantly shared and the power of using means from other parts of the collective intervention effort was not possible.

Although the experience with the fusion concept was not without its troubles it did have some encouraging results. For instance, an indicator-guided system of measuring effects, monitoring and feedback was created.[12] An advisory group and a decision-making group were created as part of an approach to build a synergetic HQ. The fusion cell functioned as an advisory group to the decision making group.[13] Here dedicated fusion cell members where permanently situated in a synergetic environment to discuss desired effects.

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[10] http://usacac.army.mil/cac/repository/materials/coin-fm3-24.pdf
[11] Major BC. Rob Sentse
[12] http://www.jfcom.mil/about/glossary.htm#PMESII
[13] The latter favourably consisting of the Polad, Legad, Devad, Tribal advisor, heads of Intelligence-Operations and the Commanding Officer. For possible wider staffing of the fusion cell see table 1.

Various forms of analysis where done by this cell: mission analysis; analysis of options on how to achieve desirable effects in a non-kinetic way; analysis on how to integrate the desirable effects in a plan; and, contribution analysis. Contribution analysis considered the contributions that could reasonably be expected, given the fact that the participants are driven by their own national and political agenda.

The first fusion cell meeting was attended by representatives of the branches mentioned in appendix 1. The Multinational HQ was not yet ready to integrate an Afghan Army S2/S3 or the provincial Afghan National Police (ANP) chief in the meetings, nor was it ready to integrate a representative of the Afghan government in the role of Policy Advisor[14]. The first meeting was about sharing and incorporating information. The relevance of combining these disciplines can be illustrated by the multitude of insights and policy recommendations gathered in this first meeting.[15] Below we will describe some of the insights that form a good illustration of how these can be used to deploy the means available into an area that would have a positive effect on the perceptions and long-term goals.

Supporting authority structures and the newly founded Afghan institutions

Information Operations provided the fusion cell with insights from surveys. For instance a Altai [16] survey done for ISAF in 2006, mentioned that in the RC-S area 42% of the interviewees regret the fall of the Taliban and only 53% are happy with the government work (vs. 86% in all Afghanistan). Even within roughly half of the population that support the government, foreign forces are far from being accepted. The survey further mentions that from the supporters of the government only "less

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[14] In a multinational HQ it is all about the fusion of the local governmental policy and not concerning the policy of a troop contributing country which is in the lead. (RNLA officer of the RC-S HQ Effects cell in 2006).
[15] This information was sanitised before publication
[16] http://www.altaiconsulting.com/altai.php

than half (46%) considered foreign forces necessary, while 32% believe that foreign forces endanger ordinary people". Finally, 85% of the population in RC-S consider foreign forces as kafir (unbeliever) (vs. 30% in the rest of Afghanistan). These are important insights into the local perceptions of ISAF and must be addressed and taken into account when acting.

The *Development Advisor*, recommended that Afghan leaders and institutions are to be seen as leading entities, with the International Community (IC) and Coalition Forces (CF) in support. The Afghan leaders and institution were often perceived by the population and others as following "foreign" initiatives. If you combine this with the insight gained from the survey data provided by information operations you can conclude that this effectively undermined its perceived resolve. The cell's conclusions were that every opportunity was to be used to highlight the progress being made within the Regional Command (RC). This should be ascribed when possible to the activities of the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in a way that is visible to the public. A simple example of this is when the ANSF and ISAF troops are collectively patrolling, the ANSF is visibly in the lead. The same should be realised for collective actions with police or local authorities.

Acknowledging and supporting traditional structures and institutions

The Tribal Advisor provided insight into the informal structures within Afghan society. Small villages (Kalay) and large villages (Qaria) are considered as informal institutions contributing to social order through informal processes and the exercise of traditional authority. The local assemblies, Jirga/Shura, operate as the central traditional structures and local mechanisms of collective decision-making and

dispute settlement. Acknowledging and addressing all authority structures can help to achieve more effectively the political goals. Getting these traditional structures involved will increase the support for measures implemented in the AO.

The religious expert noted that religion is a lifeline for most Afghan people, there is however a shortage of truly knowledgeable Imams. Knowledgeable Imams are highly regarded within Afghan society, irrespective of whether they are foreigners.

The nations that provide troops for the task forces, can send their Imam (if available in their army) as part of the Taskforce. The Imam could provide communication with the Afghan *Mullah's* and *Mawlana's* in the AO. In this way a 'we' as foreigners can be perceived as supporting the religion that is so important in Afghan society, reducing the number of times of being perceived as a *kafir* or even hostile towards Islam.

The message that the religious leaders will then spread will be less confined to local contexts and can be done in a way that improves harmony rather than impedes it. Another way to achieve this is to ensure that the salaries of all religious teachers and Imams to be paid by the government through the Minister of Religious Affairs (Director for *Hajj and Awkuf,* which means Pilgrims and Trusts, or Religious Affairs). Payment to these religious key persons is very irregular and badly organised. Ensuring payments would prevent these institutions from becoming tools of insurgents who use them to manipulate a largely illiterate population.

Training Centres could be established to provide ongoing training and education to Imams and religious leaders, with the intent of a yearly upgrade and certification process. Amongst the population there is a strong desire for the establishment of local *Madrahsahs* (religious schools) to counteract the influence of

foreign Madrahsahs. As a result people do not have to send their children to Pakistan anymore. There needs to be a co-ordinated positive reform of the curricula of the high schools, Madrahsahs, as well as the Sharia (Theological) Faculty Departments. In order to progress these positive reforms and elevate the level of education and scholarship in all institutions, the participation of scholars as mentors, supervisors and teachers from moderate international Hanafi [17] institutions is very important. In cooperation with moderate schools throughout the world, scholarship programmes can be developed to allow for the training of religious leaders who would return to serve in the AO.

Professionalising institutions

The Policy Advisor noted that the system to pay the employees of ANP was not functioning. This increases the incentives for these employees to accept alternative sources of income, leading to conflict of interests, or downright demanding bribes from civilians. This system must be fixed if the ANP are to become a respected and professional force. This insight is extremely important because it means that the efforts that we are making elsewhere become money down the drain; after all, there is little sense in training and facilitating the ANP if it cannot be effective due to undermined authority.

CIMIC and the Development Advisor emphasised another important item: education for the children. Most Afghans have a positive impression of educated persons.

Even if age is more important, education is linked with social status. In Southern Afghanistan, however, education has a less immediate priority because

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[17] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanafi

there is a lack of funds for the average Afghan to send their children to school. The annual cost for sending children to school ranges from 350 Afghani for primary education to 1700 Afghani for higher studies. This is a significant proportion of a family budget. There is also an absence of security which leads to education becoming less of a priority. Travelling from house to school is a major issue that prevents parents from sending their children to school.

Here the remarks of the POLAD and the CIMIC representatives were interesting because they made others aware of an opportunity for a deepened cooperation between ANP and the population. If a professional, equipped, dressed, paid and trained ANP would provide security for schools and the route school children travel, this would generate a great amount of support.

Providing security that matters

Security provided by the ISAF forces is often perceived as to irregular to provide a real sense of security among the population living in the AO. Measures implemented under the watchful eyes of ISAF forces are terminated as soon as the ISAF-troops head back to their barracks. Often this is done because the population fear reprisals from Taliban or other spoilers once the ISAF troops are gone. For this reason the J2, J3, UNAMA and CIMIC representatives advised to create integrated "platoon houses" near strategic villages, valleys, chokepoints consisting of members of the Afghan Army, the Afghan Police, the NDS (Afghan Intelligence and Security Service) and Coalition Forces to patrol the area consistently.

They also noted, however, that until now there are nowhere near enough forces in Afghanistan to effectuate this, making it impossible to wage a proper counterinsurgency campaign. Troops, international organisations and non-

governmental organisations on the ground are very limited. The countries that provide them are so casualty conscious, that there is a great reliance on air strikes to deal with real or perceived threats. Limiting the use of force mainly to air strikes was judged to be among the worst ways to fight a counterinsurgency campaign. It was advised that an international media campaign was necessary to balance perception and reality and take the risks needed to achieve the political strategic goals.

InfoOps and the *Polad* made the fusion cell members consider that the visitors' bureau had an important task in achieving this balanced perception. Visiting key leaders and representatives can be informed and engagements can be co-ordinated and synchronized. This will help to convey the situation on the ground in a professional and concerted manner, manage the expectations of the public and policy makers at home, and get a sense of current sentiments of key actors directly.

Conclusions and further realisation of fusion

Although feeling a bit uneasy at first in their new surroundings, the fusion cell members experienced the benefits of meeting a variety of experts who could instantly share opinions and information. As the examples above show, people were criticising each other in a positive way and were thereby encouraged to think "out of the box" and create new ideas and solutions.

In the current complex security environment with a variety of important actors and media coverage, it is extremely important to have a behavioural approach to COIN operations. In order to influence behaviour, the level of knowledge needed is very high and requires a multitude of disciplines to be involved in decision-making. Much information must be available to make correct assessments of the effects of our actions on the attitudes and behaviour of relevant actors in the AO, at home and

in relevant areas abroad. To realise this, an alternative way of organising ourselves must be established in order to fuse disciplines and information. Each discipline represented in a fusion cell must be supported by an effective network which provides the representatives with as much relevant information as possible. To realise this, the different units involved in intelligence must be better connected.

This will make it possible to provide the representatives with analysis based on all insights within the intelligence apparatus.[18]

The first results achieved can be replicated in a more effective and sustainable manner if the above mentioned necessary preconditions are met. The fusion cell will provide a better foundation for a behavioural approach to decision-making during COIN operations.

This current military organisation structure is tailored for symmetric warfare; equally organised elements (brigades, battalions, platoons) engaging each other according to a "military code". Essentially this is an old and symmetric way of thinking in which many of the military find themselves very comfortable. Conservative, dogmatic and stove-piped thinking is not related to rank, age or position.

An adapted way of acting asks for an adapted form of organisation. We have to relate to organisations as a system of systems, visualising synergetic effects by a balanced presence of sensors. An organisation where kinetic and non-kinetic elements are permanently joined together into a module gives input in the ability to learn (training, practising, performing their job) from each other. The effect will be complementary. Brigades, battalions and platoons are residues of the past, they relate to an enemy which we will not find at the coming battlefield in the potential

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[18] Of course sharing intelligence in the fusion cell, especially one including foreign elements must be done in a responsible manner. For instance, the information provided should be abstracted to a level that conceals sources and methods used to obtain the information.

arena of conflict (republics bordering Russia – Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan – Middle East – Northern part of Africa). All these countries have the similarity that they are not able to withhold NATO forces for more than ten days. Up to ten days in the highest level of violence and after that in the dark space between peace-keeping and peace-enforcing with an undefined enemy, fighting in an arena without boundaries.

Appendix 1. Actors involved in a fusion cell[19]

Permanently involved

- Policy Advisor[20] (Polad)

- Project Development Advisor (Devad)

- CIMIC[21]

- UNAMA[22]

19 Major BC. Rob Sentse; 'Fusion is effective'. Unpublished Paper.

21 CIMIC also concerns building up a government, supporting security forces and supporting the execution of relief

- Military operations (J3, J3-7)

- Info Ops / Psy Ops

- ISTAR

- Cultural Advisor

- Legal Advisor (Legad)

- Tribal Advisor

- Religious expert (Imams of the troop contributing nations together with Malawi's of the Afghan Ministry of Religious Affairs)

- Long term plans (J5)

- Others that can be included for certain gatherings and discussions J1/ J4/ J8.

In the case of Afghanistan the following people should also be part of a fusion cell

(rather include then exclude, baring in mind security aspects)

- S2/3 of the Afghan National Army

- In a multinational HQ the Polad (Policy advisor) is a representative of the Afghan Government (*Obviously it is THEIR policy*)

- Provincial Commander of the Afghan National Police

- Member of the NDS

- NGO and IO representatives

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22 http://www.unama-afg.org/