Organizing for War: Overcoming Barriers to Whole-of-Government Strategy in the ISIL Campaign

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Introduction

With much needed emergency operations well underway in Iraq and Syria, many are calling for a more comprehensive strategy to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the long-term. If these calls are heeded, the result will be yet another attempt at an interagency, coalition effort by the United States Government that seeks to integrate a wide array of capabilities to achieve policy objectives, albeit with limited numbers of American boots on the ground. Yet, in recent overseas missions, the U.S. regularly struggled to coordinate the various tools of state power to achieve desired strategic end-states. Post-9/11, civilian and military personnel achieved many tactical and operational gains in several places, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Yemen, and Somalia. But many pitfalls prevented these impressive, often heroic, efforts from leading to strategic success.

Today's national security leaders must understand that these unsatisfactory outcomes were caused less by the shortcomings of U.S. civilian and military personnel, government agencies, or Presidential administrations as is often claimed. Instead, they are more the result of deeply rooted systemic barriers to good strategy within the U.S. national security system that will likely prevent a favorable outcome in the ISIL campaign if left unresolved. Referencing lessons from the past thirteen years of war, this paper argues that in order to prevail against ISIL, leaders, planners, and operators need to overcome three mutually reinforcing institutional deficiencies that plagued the United States in past missions: First, a failure to properly conceptualize the nature of strategy in war; Second, a national security system that is poorly structured for whole-of-government campaign strategy management;[1] and finally, a resulting inability of U.S. Government agencies to coordinate in the field for strategic impact.[2]

Properly Conceptualize the Nature of Strategy in War

Success in the ISIL campaign requires the U.S. Government to conceptualize strategy in a way that it has not in recent missions. Much has been written about how the U.S. regularly struggles to address the political aspects of war, despite centuries of statements to this effect from top military strategists (e.g. Clausewitz).[3] The specific challenge is that the U.S. does not properly address the centrality of human decision making and behavior in its formulation and execution of strategy.[4]

The Nature of Strategy

Effective strategy aligns ends, ways, and means while also nesting the tactical and operational levels of war with the strategic level.[5] Within this broader context, good strategy for a campaign synchronizes lethal and non-lethal actions over time and space to create conditions that drive the decision making and behavior of relevant actors (e.g. militants, host-nation governments, sections of the local populace, regional governments, and any other individuals, groups, and populations that impact mission success) in accordance with U.S. objectives. Thus, strategy is inherently political, which means that it is ultimately about influencing human behavior. More specifically, whether applying lethal force to remove adversaries from the battlefield, conducting negotiations with host-nation and regional governments, freezing an actor's finances, training indigenous military forces, supporting host-nation governance, or conducting economic development, these actions must all be subordinate to a whole-of-government campaign strategy designed to shape relevant actor decision making and behavior in a manner that is in line with (passively or actively) U.S. objectives.

U.S. Approach to Strategy

Over the past decade-plus of war, the U.S. did not always approach strategy in this way. Senior National Defense University Researcher Frank Hoffman explains that "Whether called political warfare or the political dimension of war, accepting this broader definition of war would then require a theory of victory to adequately account for that dimension. Political outcomes would be embraced as a principle and articulated specifically in each case. Winning battles does not ensure victory, and the elegant formulations of Sun Tzu and Clausewitz are often quoted. But the translation of this exhortation into the operative principle in U.S. strategy does not routinely occur."[6] Certainly strategies did exist which focused on politically significant components such as security, governance, economics, and development. In the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, these strategies eventually became fairly robust and detailed, with both clearly articulated campaign end-states and links to national objectives, though political ends and the ways of achieving them were not always well defined.[7] In those conflicts, the U.S. actually did most of what it set out to do with regard to establishing governance structures, improving essential services, and eliminating a large number of adversaries from the battlefield.

Nevertheless, these strategies generally focused on defeating the military capabilities of ill-defined and nebulous adversaries and creating and strengthening institutions of government. It goes without saying that this is not the same thing as ensuring that all such activities were carried out in a politically astute manner that appropriately shaped relevant actor behavior.[8] David Kilcullen identifies this phenomenon in his research of past counterinsurgencies. Kilcullen observes that counterinsurgent forces have a, "tendency to judge success based on progress in creating top-down, state-based institutions, while reposing less value and significance in bottom-up societal indicators."[9] He goes on to note that analysts tend to, "give greater weight to events at the national level, or to elite-level political maneuvering, than to events at the grassroots, civil society level."[10]

The failure to properly address politics has more recently been framed as a neglect of the human domain of war or the human aspects of military operations.[11] For instance, Hoffman and T.X. Hammes note that the U.S. tends to, "overlook human factors," in war and warfare observing that the tendency, "has a long history, and reflects a tension in American strategic culture which values science, technology, and logistics over other strategic dimensions." [12] They observe that the U.S. often emphasizes, "technologically-produced solutions to what are inherently political challenges that can only be resolved in the minds and will of the social community that is challenged."[13] This institutional shortcoming produced many cases where highly successful U.S. military operations did not lead to preferred strategic end-states. Vietnam and Somalia are two leading examples.

The Joint Force and others within the U.S. Department of Defense have recognized these past

shortcomings and are working to address them through several new initiatives.[14] U.S. officials have also noted that the issue extends beyond the military to the performance of U.S. civilian agencies in their diplomacy, governance, and development efforts.[15] Yet, attempts to adapt within both the services and civilian agencies are only in their early stages.

Thus, in the meantime, it is important to recognize what commonly occurs in the absence of sound U.S. strategy. Typically, a President's national security team articulates overarching policy goals for a campaign.[16] These may include things like a free and democratic state that does not serve as a safe haven for terrorists who seek to attack the West. In other cases, as in the case of the ISIL campaign, stated goals may focus more narrowly on degrading and/or destroying an insurgent or terrorist group.[17] Policy goals for war are usually accompanied by a perceived requirement for a combination of military, diplomatic, development, humanitarian assistance, economic, and/or other lines of effort.[18] Contrary to the beliefs of many however, these policy-level focal points do not represent well defined campaign goals and a corresponding whole-of-government campaign strategy. At best, they are components or pillars of a strategy.

Lines of Effort and Strategy

A misuse of the lines of effort concept was particularly debilitating to good whole-of-government strategy in past campaigns because it muddied the waters as to what the strategy was attempting to achieve. True strategy requires the coordination of relevant activities within the lines of effort to achieve agreed upon intermediate goals and end-states, also known as strategic coherence. However, the U.S. and its partners often pushed forward without a clear understanding of how the force would integrate aspects of various lines for strategic impact.[19] Views on what specifically was required to be successful within each line of effort and how actions should be integrated marked the point of departure from a shared theory of change that informed how the force would coordinate efforts in a strategically significant way.[20]

U.S. agencies were regularly assigned to lead particular lines of effort, which further challenged strategy because agencies tended to design stove-piped plans according to line-of-effort specific objectives (e.g. Military plans were routinely developed separately from U.S. Department of State governance strategies, often with minimal integration toward strategic goals). For Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, the lack of integration came to a head in 2009, which prompted the drafting of the United States Government Integrated Civilian Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan.[21] However, despite many similar efforts which generated some improvements, all too often, lines of effort continued to be treated as ends within themselves, as opposed to components of a coherent strategy. In these cases, the force was vulnerable to what LTG H.R. McMaster describes as a tendency to, "confuse activity with progress," meaning that the force was mistakenly seen as successful because of its progress within multiple lines of effort, despite achieving limited progress with regard to the strategy.[22]

Recommendations for Improved Strategy in the ISIL Campaign

Properly Conceptualize the Nature of Strategy: For the U.S. to succeed in the ISIL campaign, it must properly conceptualize the nature of strategy in war. A good strategy requires strategically significant end-states that specifically articulate the conditions in the operational environment that are required to achieve desired behavior of the relevant actors (Note: Relevant actors in the ISIL campaign include at a minimum: all elements of ISIL; al Qaeda linked militants in the region; Shia militias; the Iraqi and Syrian Governments and their security forces; vulnerable Sunni populations; influential Sunni leaders; elements of the Kurdish population and their military forces; and regional governments such as those in Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Syria). Defeating or degrading ISIL, although important, is not a strategically significant end-state because ISIL is a symptom of conditions in the operational environment, which drive

or enable many different actors to behave in unfavorable ways. For instance, in areas of Northern and Western Iraq, as well as parts of Syria, it is seen as a rational pragmatic political act that many Sunni's choose to actively assist, or at least passively acquiesce to, ISIL. This view is rational and pragmatic because most who side with ISIL feel that disenfranchisement by their government and inadequate security has left them no other option but to side with the force that offers them the most physical security and a chance at an improved quality of life. In the absence of a credible alternative, it is perceived by many Sunnis that their only practical choice is to side with ISIL.[23] Therefore, ISIL's (and likely other ambitious groups such as Al Qaeda's affiliates in the region) ability to take territory and gain footholds can only be permanently eroded if conditions are created that offer a credible and enduring alternative. Those conditions are a vital component of the strategic end-states of the campaign and they need to be defined upfront in great detail.

Once viable end-states are established, a strategy for shaping relevant actor behavior to achieve them must be developed. Support to degrading ISIL forces militarily and assistance with security will be the most politically important aspect of the strategy in the near-term. However, a true credible alternative requires a more comprehensive approach to compel (through incentives and/or lethal and non-lethal pressure) all relevant actors to behave in a manner consistent with campaign goals.

Place Lines of Effort in Proper Context: The White House outlined nine lines of effort for a more robust strategy to combat ISIL: Supporting Effective Governance in Iraq; Denying ISIL Safe-Haven; Building Partner Capacity; Enhancing Intelligence Collection on ISIL; Disrupting ISIL's Finances; Exposing ISIL's True Nature; Disrupting the Flow of Foreign Fighters; **Protecting the Homeland**; and Humanitarian Support.[24] The focus of the lines reveal a more sophisticated understanding of the nature of the conflict than was the case in other instances over the last thirteen years, but they are not a strategy. [25] Lines of effort must be treated as capabilities and tools, components of which may be applied (or not) at different points in time and space, as they are specifically required by the strategy. In the words of Major General Hix of U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command, "No physical action should be pursued if it is not tied to a human objective, an outcome where people make a decision."[26] A coherent strategy that aligns aspects of the nine lines to achieve desired behavior among relevant actors is still required as the campaign progresses.[27]

Whole-of-Government Campaign Strategy Management

Management structures that were absent in past missions must be created to ensure proper strategy formulation and implementation for the ISIL campaign. Over the past thirteen years of war, it was certainly recognized at times that the various components of strategy could not exist in isolation and that a fair amount of integration would be required.[28] However, a true management function rarely existed to ensure that whole-of-government participation was coordinated around a unified approach to the mission.

Absence of Whole-of-Government Strategy Management Structures

A common perspective is that the National Security Council (NSC) and its staff should ensure coordinated strategy is formulated and implemented. However, as former NSC director for Afghanistan and Pakistan Paul D. Miller explains, the NSC and broader U.S. Government are not structured to manage whole-of-government strategy:

> "The United States' national security establishment lacks an integrated strategic planning capability. Disparate organizations—such as the State Department's Policy Planning Staff,

> the Joint Staff's J5, United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning, and the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy—carry out strategic planning for their respective organizations with minimal coordination between them."[29]

Administrations have sought to address the issue in the past. For instance, General Doug Lute's role as Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for Iraq and Afghanistan was meant to help resolve the problem. But even General Lute could not overcome the barriers to whole-of-government strategy management because as Miller explains, "the most crucial piece of the national security establishment, the one designed to knit it together and coordinate all its parts, has gone completely untouched by the reforms of the past decade: the National Security Council (NSC) and the interagency system it oversees."[30] Furthermore, Miller notes that, "The NSC and its subordinate committees and supporting staff are supposed to integrate and coordinate interagency efforts—but no regular mechanism for integrating strategic planning has existed in the NSC system since 1961."[31]

Some suggest that it may be beyond the purview of the NSC to reach below higher-level national security strategy and manage coordinated strategy for a specific whole-of-government campaign. Instead, the job would fall to the Country Team, the Combatant Commands, or whatever interagency office or taskforce is designated as the lead. However, managing strategic coordination at lower levels is severely challenged from the start if at the highest levels of government, individual agencies are already given the leeway to create their own separate plans and strategies. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke learned this the hard way during his 2009-2010 where he eventually became a lightning rod for the bureaucratic infighting that occurred in developing coordinated strategy for those two countries.[32] A 2008 Government Accountability Office report on the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) provides another useful example of a typical whole-of-government strategy management breakdown from a counterterrorism perspective:

> "Several factors have hampered the key agencies' implementation of TSCTP activities, in some cases limiting their ability to collaborate in working to combat terrorism. First, the agencies lack a comprehensive, integrated strategy for their TSCTP activities, and the documents used in planning the activities do not prioritize proposed activities or identify milestones needed to measure progress or make improvements. Second, disagreements about whether State should have authority over DOD personnel temporarily assigned to conduct TSCTP activities in partner countries have led to DOD's suspending some activities, for example, in Niger. Third, fluctuation in State's and USAID's distribution of funds for TSCTP resulted in suspension of a peace-building program in Mali. Fourth, although the agencies measure activities' outputs, such as the number of foreign military personnel trained, they do not measure their activities' outcomes in combating terrorism—for instance, any decrease in extremism in the targeted countries."[33]

To the extent coordinated whole-of-government management did occur over the past thirteen years, it usually consisted of different organizations socializing their own agency plans for an area, operation, or particular line of effort, with some sharing of information, resources, and logistics. It was less common to find whole-of-government management approaches that resembled what Cristopher Lamb and Douglas Orton call "cross-functional teams," which they describe as capable of, "rapidly adjusting functional

expertise in coordination with others toward resolving complex problems."**[34]**

Multiple Chains of Command and Parallel Management Structures

In several overseas missions, multiple chains of command took root, which were in essence parallel management structures. Within Afghanistan during the 2009-2011, senior U.S. officials in Kabul sought to address the issue by assigning civilian representatives to serve as peers to military commanders at the district, province, and regional command levels (see Figure 1).
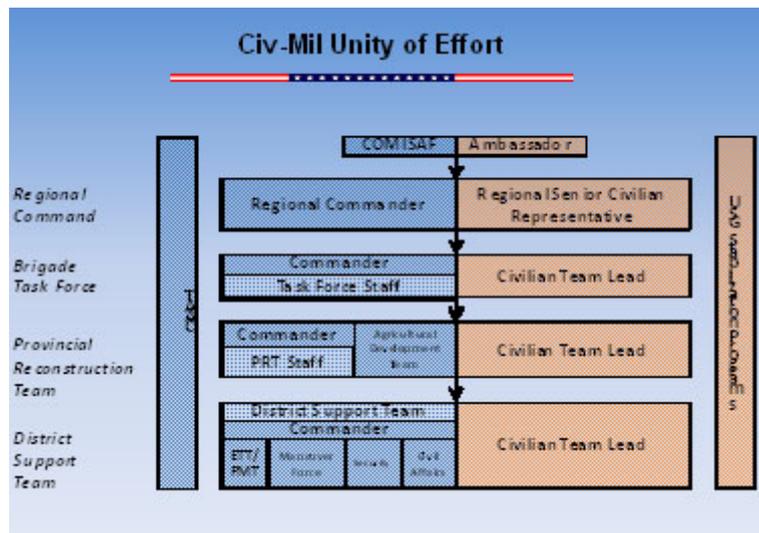
Figure 1: US civil-military chains of command in Afghanistan[35]

To their credit, coordination did improve to some extent, especially in Afghanistan's RC-East.   For the most part however, in Afghanistan and other theaters, separate chains of command were only unified when personalities and agency missions—often accidentally—were such that personnel could be organized toward complimentary objectives. The model in Figure 1 actually more accurately depicts the isolated chains of command that often formed for civilians and the military. Also not shown in Figure 1 are the U.S. Special Operations elements and the intelligence agencies that had separate chains of command and did not fall under the command of battlespace owners. The various defense, development, and diplomacy organizations of coalition countries also had their own chains of command in many instances.

Assumption of Capabilities

Part of the reason why the whole-of-government management deficiency went unaddressed may be rooted in faulty assumptions about the capabilities of U.S. Government agencies. **[36]** One National Defense University Study observes:

> "In Iraq and Afghanistan, civilian agencies [and many DoD elements] were essentially invited to go into conflict zones and execute their core missions under the banner of the much vaunted 'whole-of government' approach, or '3 D' (defense, diplomacy, and development) approach to stabilization. The invitation was apparently based on the untested assumption that by these organizations pushing forward with their own agency core missions, stability and achievement of mission goals would automatically ensue."**[37]**

U.S. civilian and military organizations have significant expertise to pursue activities that coincide with their core missions, but in reality, most agencies of the U.S. Government lack a strong capability to adapt standard agency practice within a coordinated strategy to shape relevant actor behavior. The study found that more often than not, "Individual agencies pursued their own missions in an unintegrated, uncoordinated manner, resulting in activities that were sometimes working at cross purposes and sometimes counterproductive to mission goals."[38] This state of affairs was of course not a first-time occurrence for the U.S. Government interagency community operating in conflict zones. In fact, it closely mirrored the findings of RAND researchers Robert Komer and Brian Jenkins who observed similar institutional issues during the Vietnam War.[39] A significant and deliberate whole-of-government management function would have been required to ensure the agencies were wrestled away from their own core missions and aligned their efforts at the management level.

Recommendations for Strategy Management in the ISIL Campaign

Develop a Campaign Specific Strategy Management Office: Whole of Government strategy management cannot occur without sufficient management structures. As shown above, effective structures do not exist and therefore must be developed in the midst of ongoing operations. It is unrealistic to reform the national security system in time to impact the ISIL campaign. Thus, the solution to managing the development and implementation of a single, coordinated strategy among interagency and international partners lies in standing up a robust whole-of-government ISIL campaign strategy management office.

Properly Structure, Empower, and Resource the Strategy Management Team: To date, no individual or office has been given the proper role, authority, and resources to provide holistic whole-of-government management of the ISIL campaign. It is ultimately less important what office manages the strategy. The key is that such an office is stood up (or a preexisting office is empowered) with the proper mandate, authority, processes, and resources to be successful. At a minimum, the office needs a true campaign strategy manager who is empowered by the President to manage campaign strategy development and implementation across the entire U.S. Government. Such a position is different than the policy development teams, line of effort leads, and coalition coordinators of past campaigns. He/she should be accountable only to the President and the NSC principals, who will ultimately provide higher-level guidance and signoff on the strategy team's approach, while also ensuring that the campaign strategy nests with broader U.S. national security strategy and foreign policy. The strategy manager should have the authority to direct the work of all U.S. civilian and military personnel involved in the campaign, as well as the resources and manpower required to perform the management role (At a minimum, the strategy manager's team should consist of top strategists, regional experts, functional specialists, operators, and intelligence personnel). No U.S. action in the ISIL campaign should take place without direction of the strategy management team or its subordinate structures. Only then will a management function exist that is armed with the job description, capability, and authority needed to successfully formulate and manage a workable strategy to combat ISIL.

Whole-of-Government and Coalition Participation Supports the Strategy: To the extent an operation has to be a whole-of-government, coalition effort, those agencies that are involved should only be included as the strategy requires. In order to apply tools of state power effectively, managers must understand the true capabilities and limitations of interagency and coalition partners. In some instances, where a willing partner is looking to assist but the offer of support may not fit the strategy, it is best to ask for funds or deny the support all together.[40]

Strategic Coherence in the Field

Processes must be put in place to support strategic coherence during strategy execution in the field against

ISIL. Post-9/11, operating processes of the whole-of-government force were much more suitable for individual agencies operating in parallel than they were for strategic coherence. The result was that even as strategy improved and management structures were refined, execution in the field was ineffective. Whole-of-government operations were disjointed as civilian and military personnel on the ground developed their own analysis of the problem, concepts of required solutions, and metrics to measure progress.

Varied Concepts of Mission, Strategy, and End-states

The absence of processes for getting all U.S. Government entities in the field on the same page about goals and approaches for achieving them challenged strategic coherence during strategy execution. Although frequently characterized as a civilian/military coordination challenge, even personnel within the same civilian and military organizations did not always agree on a single way forward. In the case of Libya for example, outside the responsibility to protect mission (R2P), U.S. Government agencies did not share a common understanding of the strategic political end-state for operations. Even the very concept of R2P meant different things to different agency personnel. Therefore, the various organizations involved had a difficult time determining their specific roles. Similar confusion developed during counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan where personnel operating in the same areas routinely held different perspectives about the nature of counterinsurgency and the requirements of the particular counterinsurgency mission at hand.[41]

In such an environment, U.S. Government personnel regularly developed their own views about goals and specific approaches for achieving them, which tended to correspond to agency core missions as opposed to a particular strategy. As such, personnel from the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of State usually prioritized top-down, national-level democracy, development, and human rights agendas, without giving proper consideration to the political impact at the local level.[42] After all, this is how these agencies prioritize their work for their traditional diplomatic and development missions around the world.[43] The Central Intelligence Agency had its own focus early on in the Afghanistan campaign that did not necessarily account for more long-term strategic end-states. As retired operations officer Cofer Black stated in a 2012 interview with *60 Minutes*, "my mission was not to ensure that little girls go to school in Afghanistan. My mission was not to establish, you know, a legal system in Afghanistan. [That] was not my mission. My mission was to destroy al-Qaeda. And to do that, we had to overthrow the Taliban."[44] Many actions by the special operations and intelligence communities (e.g. night raids and drone strikes) in several countries were ordered to meet goals of removing high-value targets from the battlefield as part of a parallel mandate to pursue a counterterrorism mission. Without a whole-of-government process to direct, coordinate, and prioritize the agencies' various activities, agency actions many times had second and third-order effects that negatively impacted progress toward the broader desired end-state for the areas in which the activities took place. As one civilian in Afghanistan argued, "a lot of brilliant people and a lot of brilliant teams are all digging tunnels through the mountain and they are not going to meet in the middle. There needs to be more strategy."[45]

Understanding the Operational Environment and the Nature of the Conflict

Further challenging strategic coherence in the field, interagency partners frequently lacked shared perspectives on the operational environment and the nature of the conflict, also referred to as a common operating picture. Although usually characterized as an intelligence failure, in reality, the issue is a whole of force problem. In fact, a 2012 study conducted on behalf of the Joint Staff by the Center for Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis explains, "In operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, a failure to recognize, acknowledge, and accurately define the operational environment led to a mismatch between forces, capabilities, missions, and goals."[46] As an example, in several cases different weight was given

to the importance of tribes and other so-called "informal governance structures" to conflict resolution. Some officials saw efforts to engage preexisting tribal governance structures among the indigenous population in Iraq as contrary to the mission. They argued that by engaging "informal leaders", the U.S. was delegitimizing the formal government institutions that it was attempting to support. Yet others afforded more weight to the importance of tribes and tribal governance structures.[47] With divergent perspectives among different partners operating in the same area on this issue and a host of others, it is easy to see how resulting confusion occurred during the design and conduct of whole-of-government operations in the field.

Mirror Imaging

Without a common operating picture and a shared sense of strategy, U.S. Government personnel often approached operations through their different individual lenses of what a country needs to be successful. Admiral William H. McRaven, General James F. Amos, and General Raymond T. Odierno reference the issue in their hypothesis that the failure to address human aspects of war may be rooted partially in what they call, "the simplistic idea that other people are like us or, at least, want to be like us."[48] The logic was that if activities in the field were pursued according to Western standards, the desired end-state would eventually be achieved. In executing their own versions of the mission in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. Government agencies mainly focused efforts around preconceived notions of security, governance, and development that did not necessarily synch up. Certainly if coordinated and tailored appropriately, aspects of all these mission-sets could be highly relevant to campaign success.[49] However, they were frequently pursued with limited attention to a strategy for shaping the behavior of relevant actors.[50]

Assessment Practices

The breakdown in the field was made worse by the assessment practices that were employed. Different organizations conducted their assessments of progress independent of each other, and usually according to their own version of metrics. They tended to prioritize measures of performance related statistics of their own organization, as opposed to measuring changes in the operational environment in relation to the successful attainment of the strategic goal. Assessments were often highly politicized at home in the U.S., which meant that individuals in the field were sometimes under pressure to measure things that were deemed important by leaders in Washington, while not necessarily relevant to the mission itself.[51]

Approaching assessment in such a manner had several interrelated problems. First, assessments became overly focused on the actions of the U.S. Government, while missing other developments in the operational environment that occurred irrespective of U.S. actions.[52] Secondly, the focus on measures of performance and measures of effectiveness that were not necessarily linked to a properly conceptualized strategy meant that the metrics were not always relevant to the nature of the conflict at hand.[53] Third, by measuring the wrong things, assessments would show progress, potentially where none existed or where things had even moved in the wrong direction.[54] All of these factors together limited the ability of assessments to measure true progress and inform coordinated adaptation and reallocation of resources for enhanced impact toward agreed upon goals.[55]

Continuity of Effort

Equally devastating to strategy execution was the fact that the U.S. lacks a sufficient mechanism for continuity of whole-of-government operations over time. Continuity of operations is an inevitable friction point in war that was a constant obstacle to good strategy in recent conflicts. In addition to requiring coordination across interagency and coalition partners, strategy execution requires seamless transition during staff turnover. The process is more complex than the traditional military 'right seat ride' approaches and standard civilian agency turnover processes can manage.[56] The common description of

the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts as a series of "one year wars" is a relatively accurate explanation of what took place. However, it is an oversimplification in that what really transpired was actually far more chaotic. Different civilian and military personnel worked various aspects of operations for different periods of time, and not all at once over a single year. Without an agreed upon whole-of-government strategy for replacement personnel to fall in on, there was no forcing function to ensure new personnel continued the work of their predecessors. As a side note, perhaps even more devastating to continuity of operations in the field is the fact that no mechanism is yet in place to insulate strategy execution from the fallout caused by election cycles and resulting policymaker turnover in Washington.

Attempts to Adapt

Over time, many U.S. personnel went to great lengths to improve strategic coherence during strategy execution in the field.[57] In Afghanistan's Regional Command-East (RC-East), civilian and military leaders developed a "Board of Directors" model for interagency planning to facilitate a more unified and targeted approach. In other cases, civilian agency officials broke multiple guidelines established by the U.S. Department of State Regional Security Officers in order to coordinate better with their military counterparts. Within the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Office of Civil Military Coordination, the Office of Transition Initiatives, and the Stabilization Unit in Kabul all made attempts to better coordinate agency efforts with military operations.[58] Military units also made tremendous attempts to coordinate for strategic impact, despite grossly inadequate standard operating procedures, training, incentives, and force structures for irregular warfare, stabilization, and other aspects of the specific missions at hand. The U.S. Special Forces were particularly adaptable, especially once the Village Stability Operations/Afghan Local Police program developed more formally following several smaller scale attempts to develop local defense forces.[59] Some agencies also tried to overcome coordination challenges through extensive liaison networks.[60] In Iraq cases, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were embedded with battlespace owners to improve interagency field coordination.[61] Various new assessment processes were tried in Yemen, Haiti, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and several countries in Africa that were meant to better target U.S. whole-of-government efforts based on shared diagnoses of drivers of instability.[62]

Despite these hard-fought attempts to improve, the barriers to meaningful adaptation for strategic impact were usually insurmountable. Even when personalities were ideal and individuals had the right mindset, inflexibility of agency core missions, insufficient regulations and authorities, as well as inadequate capabilities all combined to limit strategic progress. In the many instances when good coordination toward shared goals did occur, limited mechanisms for continuity of operations over time led to a failure of follow-on units to continue in the right direction.   All of these efforts illustrate that new structures for strategic coherence in the field are needed if future whole-of-government operations are to have any chance of succeeding.

Recommendations for Strategic Coherence in the ISIL Campaign

Regardless of what strategy is ultimately decided upon to combat ISIL in the long-term, strategic coherence in the field toward campaign goals will be greatly improved if U.S. personnel adhere to the following principles:

Articulate a Theory of Change to Guide Strategy Execution: A theory of change serves as a tool for strategic coherence in that it helps get everyone on the same page about how the operation is intended to progress toward the strategic end-states. For the ISIL operation, a theory of change will provide a narrative of how the lethal and non-lethal actions of the U.S.-led coalition will change conditions in the operational environment and lead to the desired behavior by relevant actors. Those operating at all levels

of command must be fully informed with the elements of the theory that are pertinent to their jobs. This will enable them to complete their work in a mission-relevant way, as opposed to in accordance with their agency core missions or according to preconceived notions that are not in line with the strategy.[63] The theory of change must be constantly assessed and adapted as changes occur in the operational environment. It will enable the president, the NSC, and congress to provide mission-relevant oversight, as it will generate assessment briefings that explain how things are progressing (or not) in accordance with the strategy, as opposed to simply reporting on measures of performance and other metrics that may or may not be relevant.

Develop a Shared Understanding of the Operational Environment and Nature of the Conflict: All relevant personnel must develop a common operating picture that consists of a shared understanding of pertinent aspects of the operational environment and the nature of the conflict. It is particularly important to identify and develop as thorough an understanding as possible of all actors relevant to the campaign. A common operating picture helps ensure that the relevant members of the whole-of-government force are armed with the information and mindset they need to do their jobs in a way that effectively supports the strategy.

Manage Continuity of Effort: Personnel turnover must be a planning factor from the beginning. Formalized processes are required to ensure that each new military command or team of civilian agency representatives that enter into an ongoing operation has the ability to seamlessly continue forward with executing the strategy. These mechanisms must also prevent the all-too-common past practice of new commands and civilian agency teams falling in on an ongoing operation, scrapping all past efforts of their predecessors, and starting over fresh with an entirely new approach for the duration of their own assignments.

Conclusion

As the U.S. charts a more comprehensive way forward for the ISIL campaign, it cannot afford to repeat the same recurring mistakes that plagued past whole-of-government operations. In recent overseas missions, American personnel regularly did exactly what was asked of them, often at great risk, and with tremendous skill. But the U.S. approach to strategy, the absence of whole-of-government campaign strategy management structures, and a lack of mechanisms for whole-of-government coordination in the field often ensured that their work did not lead to strategic victory.

Many of the issues described have gone unresolved for decades. Even if they were fixed, there is no certainty that past operations would have ultimately ended in complete success. The recommendations offered are admittedly difficult to implement and will require national security leaders, the military services, and civilian agencies to step out of their comfort zones and approach war in a different way than they have in the past. Nevertheless, as the U.S. formulates and executes a more comprehensive campaign strategy to combat ISIL in the long-term, it is critical that these hard lessons are considered and applied. By learning from the experience of the past thirteen years of war, the country will get the most out of the brave sacrifices of its talented civilian and military personnel and an acceptable resolution to the ISIL crisis will be far more likely.

End Notes

[1]The reference to whole-of-government operations is rooted in the common assumption over the past several decades that success in conflict (especially irregular warfare, disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, and stabilization missions) requires more than simply military and intelligence related

activities. The terminology is closely related to past assumptions by many that a 3D (Defense, Development, Diplomacy) approach to conflict is required to be successful. It typically implies some role for the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development, as well as sometimes agencies like the Departments of Commerce, Treasury, Agriculture, Justice, etc. Whole-of-government is also commonly discussed with regard to the principle of unity of action, which stresses the importance of all interagency and coalition partners coordinating their efforts toward mission success.

[2]Common arguments about OEF and OIF for instance are that the U.S. performed poorly because the goals were vague, there was a lack of strong public and congressional support, there was a failure to apply overwhelming force, and because success was tied to the performance of corrupt and incapable partners. This author would argue that to the extent any of these criticisms are accurate, they were all the product of the three deficiencies in the national security system listed here.

[3] Carl von Clausewitz is the most regularly referenced individual on the relationship of politics to war for his assertion that, "**war is an extension of politics by other means." See Clausewitz, Carl von. "On War."** Also, LTG McMaster explains, "war is still an extension of politics and policy. I think we saw that both in Iraq and Afghanistan; we initially failed to think through a sustainable political outcome that would be consistent with our vital interests, and it complicated both of those wars." See Erdmann, Andrew; "How militaries learn and adapt: An interview with Major General H. R. McMaster" April 2013 McKinsey and Company http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/public_sector/how_militaries_learn_and_adapt LTG H.R.

[4] Linda Robinson, Paul D. Miller, John Gordon IV, Jeffrey Decker, Michael Schwille, Raphael S. Cohen Improving Strategic Competence Lessons from 13 Years of War, RAND 2014. http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR816.html

[5]Hoffman, F.G.; "Grand Strategy: The Fundamental Considerations", Foreign Policy Research Institute, 18 August 2014. Mr. Hoffman referenced the article in response to an inquiry by this author, 21 October, 2014

[6] Linda Robinson, Paul D. Miller, John Gordon IV, Jeffrey Decker, Michael Schwille, Raphael S. Cohen Improving Strategic Competence Lessons from 13 Years of War, RAND 2014.

[7] National Strategy for Victory in Iraq, National Security Council, November 2005 http://www.dod.mil/pubs/iraq_national_strategy_20051130%5B1%5D.pdf

[8] The U.S. was generally prone to misinterpretations of the relationship of politics and strategy in past campaigns. For instance, the political aspects of war were often treated as a separate activity from military operations, as opposed to the central organizing principle through which all lethal and non-lethal actions, to include messaging, are synchronized over time and space. The factor was caused in part by U.S. Government practices such as developing military campaign plans, political/governance approaches, and development plans in isolation of one another. Additionally, political aspects of war were often seen as solely directed at elite-level political figures of a host-nation government and other regional governments, while failing to also recognize the significance of grassroots political dynamics (e.g. the failure of U.S. officials to address the grassroots political fallout of debathification policies in Iraq). A focus on formal governance (e.g. prime ministers and parliamentary leaders), while giving less priority to

the role and influence of informal governance structures (e.g. tribes and sectarian groups that eventually had to be engaged during the Iraq surge) also occurred in many instances. The U.S. preference for advancing models of formal representative democracy without sufficient consideration of the right type of democratic structure to achieve a stabilizing political accommodation in the conflict at hand further challenged strategy. This was made worse by a tendency to prioritize democracy metrics (e.g. holding an election, raising the number of people who vote, filling empty government positions, and avoiding corruption) without paying enough attention to the impact of such activities on the political calculus of relevant actors.

[9]Kilcullen, David ; "Intelligence," in *Understanding Counterinsurgency: Doctrine, Operations and Challenges*, ed. Thomas Rid and Thomas Keany (New York: Routledge, 2010).

[10]Ibid. Kilcullen was speaking mainly about intelligence services, but he explains, "This pathology may not be confined to intelligence services. Rather, it seems to reflect wider Eurocentric attitudes to the process of state formation. Recent research suggests that the international community, including the vast international aid and development bureaucracy and the 'peace industry' associated with international organizations such as the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund, tends to have a strong preference for top-down state formation ('nation building') based on the creation of national-level, 'modern,' Western-style institutions of the central state."

[11] The Joint Staff is currently drafting a Joint Concept for Human Aspect of Military Operations and SOCOM is currently drafting a Future Operating Concept for Operating in the Human Domain. Also see: Admiral McRaven, General Amos, and General Odierno Strategic Land Power Taskforce White Paper "Winning the Clash of Wills", 2013
ttp://www.tradoc.army.mil/FrontPageContent/Docs/Strategic%20Landpower%20White%20Paper.pdf

[12] Hoffman, F.G. and Hammes, T.X., "Joint Force 2020 and Human Dynamics: Time for a new conceptual framework?" Washington, DC, INSS Research Paper, April 2013.

[13] Ibid.

[14] For instance, Admiral McRaven, General Amos, and General Odierno began an initiative in 2013 through the Strategic Land power Taskforce to look at a separate "human domain" of warfare. U.S. Special Operations Command is also developing a Future Concept for Operating in the Human Domain, which is meant to eventually lead to recommendations for SOCOM future capability development. Similarly, the Joint Staff is writing a Joint Concept for the Human Aspects of Military Operations (HAMO), which is meant to drive Joint capability development. U.S. Army Special Operations Command is leading an effort to develop capabilities for engagement in the wake of the Army's designation of engagement as a 7th warfighting function.

[15] Admiral McRaven, General Amos, and General Odierno, include, "the actions of other U.S. government agencies to apply political, informational, and economic power" in their discussion of the need to prioritize the human aspects of conflict. Strategic Land Power Taskforce White Paper "Winning the Clash of Wills" in 2013
http://www.tradoc.army.mil/FrontPageContent/Docs/Strategic%20Landpower%20White%20Paper.pdf

[16] See NSC Memo, signed by Condi Rice, APNSA, SUBJECT: Principals Committee Review of Iraq Policy Paper, October 29, 2002, as reproduced in Feith, pp. 541-43. The desired end state was "an Iraq that:" Does not threaten its neighbors; Renounces support for, and sponsorship of, international terrorism; Continues to be a single, unitary state; Is free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their means of delivery, and associated programs; No longer oppresses or tyrannizes its people; Respects the basic rights of all Iraqis --- including women and minorities; Adheres to the rule of law and respects fundamental human rights, including freedom of speech and worship; and Encourages the building of democratic institutions.

[17] White House Office of the Press Secretary: "FACT SHEET: Strategy to Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)"; September 10, 2014 **http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/fact-sheet-strategy-counter-islamic-state-iraq-and-levant-isil**; Also see National Strategy for Victory in Iraq, National Security Council, November 2005 http://www.dod.mil/pubs/iraq_national_strategy_20051130%5B1%5D.pdf

[18] White House Office of the Press Secretary: "FACT SHEET: Strategy to Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)"; September 10, 2014 http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/fact-sheet-strategy-counter-islamic-state-iraq-and-levant-isil

[19] Erdmann, Andrew; "How militaries learn and adapt: An interview with Major General H. R. McMaster" April 2013 McKinsey and Company **http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/public_sector/how_militaries_learn_and_adapt**

[20] A 2014 Rand publication titled "Assessing Locally Focused Stability Operations" (**Jan Osburg**, Christopher Paul, Lisa Saum-Manning, Dan Madden, Leslie Adrienne Payne) explains that a theory of change is a strategic program management approach. They write, "The Theory of Change for an activity, line of effort, or operation is the underlying logic of how the planners believe the things that will be done in the effort will lead to the desired results. Simply put, a Theory of Change describes the chain of consequences—how one believes one's actions will lead to the objectives one seeks to achieve. A Theory of Change can include assumptions, beliefs, or doctrinal principles, although none of these items in itself constitutes a Theory of Change. In campaign planning, the Theory of Change is typically articulated through a concept of operations, although many assumptions are often left unstated." http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR387.html

[21] Eikenberry, Karl and McChrystal, Stanley United States Government Integrated Civilian Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan, 2009 http://www.politico.com/pdf/PPM130_civ-mil_plan_afghanistan_090907.pdf; It is interesting to note that in the 2011 updated version, annexes to guide implementation were supposed to be written, but according to this author's research in Kabul in 2011 where several military and civilian officials were interviewed, these annexes were never produced. Eikenberry, Karl and Petraeus, David United States Government Integrated Civilian Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan, 2011 **http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB370/docs/Document%209.pdf**;

[22] Erdmann, Andrew; "How militaries learn and adapt: An interview with Major General H. R. McMaster" April 2013 McKinsey and Company **http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/public_sector/how_militaries_learn_and_adapt** LTG McMaster

explains that in war, "... we often start by determining the resources we want to commit or what is palatable from a political standpoint. We confuse activity with progress, and that's always dangerous, especially in war. In reality, we should first define the objective, compare it with the current state, and then work backward: what is the nature of this conflict? What are the obstacles to progress, and how do we overcome them? What are the opportunities, and how do we exploit them? What resources do we need to accomplish our goals? The confusion of activity with progress is one final continuity in the nature of warfare that we must always remember."

[23] Similar conclusions were drawn regarding the initial successes of Al-Qaeda in Iraq in years past.

[24] White House Office of the Press Secretary: "FACT SHEET: Strategy to Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)"; September 10, 2014 http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/fact-sheet-strategy-counter-islamic-state-iraq-and-levant-isil

[25] Lines of effort are merely the categories of ingredients for a good strategy. For instance, with the White House's stated line of effort to "build partner capacity," as part of the ISIL campaign, building such capacity requires more than training and equipping indigenous forces to standard. Those being trained and equipped must also be the right people for the jobs, they must have the will to fight in the right place at the right time, and they must operate in a manner that is consistent with the strategy. As a generic example, Iraqi security forces charged with securing Anbar must not mistreat Sunnis that have yet to side with ISIL. Mistreatment will drive those Sunni's right into ISIL's ranks no-matter how militarily proficient those Iraqi security forces become.

[26]Freedburg, Sydney J.; "Killing Is Not Enough: Special Operators" http://breakingdefense.com/2014/12/killing-is-not-enough-special-operators/

[27]Without it, the U.S. can make progress in all nine lines of effort, while having no strategic impact whatsoever. Although likely too late for the ISIL campaign, the lines of effort construct should be discarded from future campaigns all together due to the destructive impact they have on strategy. They are a product of a military centric conventional war paradigm that is not appropriate for whole-of-government campaigns, especially those involving irregular warfare.

[28] See both the 2009 and 2011 United States Government Integrated Civilian Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan; **http://www.politico.com/pdf/PPM130_civ-mil_plan_afghanistan_090907.pdf http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB370/docs/Document%209.pdf**; and the 2005 National Strategy for Victory in Iraq, National Security Council, November 2005 http://www.dod.mil/pubs/iraq_national_strategy_20051130%5B1%5D.pdf

[29] Miller, Paul D., "Organizing the National Security Council: I Like Ike's"; Presidential Studies Quarterly 43, no. 3 (September 2013) Paul D. Miller previously served as director for Afghanistan and Pakistan on the National Security Council staff from 2007 through 2009

[30] The Project on National Security Reform's "Forging a New Shield" 2008 report highlights five major deficiencies in the national security system that, among other things, impede the management of strategy. It lists the following: "1. The System is grossly imbalanced. It supports strong departmental capabilities at

the expense of integrating mechanisms; 2. Resources allocated to departments and agencies are shaped by their narrowly defined core mandates rather than broader national security missions; 3. The need for presidential integration to compensate for the systemic inability to adequately integrate or resource missions overly centralizes issue management and overburdens the White House; 4. A burdened White House cannot manage the national security system as a whole to be agile and collaborative at any time, but it is particularly vulnerable to breakdown during the protracted transition periods between administrations; 5. Congress provides resources and conducts oversight in ways that reinforce the first four problems and make improving performance extremely difficult." The report goes on to summarize, "taken together, the basic deficiency of the current national security system is that parochial, departmental, and agency interests, reinforced by congress, paralyze cooperation even as the variety, speed, and complexity of emerging security issues prevent the White House from effectively controlling the system…The resulting second and third-tier operational deficiencies that emanate from these five problems are vast…Among the most worrisome is an inability to formulate and implement a coherent strategy."

[31] Miller, Paul D., "Organizing the National Security Council: I Like Ike's"; Presidential Studies Quarterly 43, no. 3 (September 2013)

[32]Chandrasekaran, Rajiv; Little America: Infighting on Obama Team Squandered Chance for Peace in Afghanistan, June 24, 2012

 http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/little-america-infighting-on-obama-team-squandered-chance-for-peace-in-afghanistan/2012/06/24/gJQAbQMB0V_story.html

[33]U.S. Government Accountability Office report on the Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, 2008 http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08860.pdf

[34]Lamb, Christopher and Orton, Doug "The Way Ahead for Rigorous Research on Civil-Military Teams in Complex Contingencies? Also, for a commonly referenced exception to lack of coordination and strategy at JIATFs can be found in Dr. Chris Lamb and Evan Munsing's study of JIATF-South. http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/pdf/strategic-perspectives/Strategic-Perspectives-5.pdf

[35] This chart is from the forthcoming CCO book "Unity of Mission" edited by Jon Gundersen and Melanne Civic, in Chapter 7 "Civilians at War" written by Mr. Bernard Carreau (Winter 2015).

[36] "Civilian Capabilities for Stabilization" Unpublished OSD sponsored study from the Center for Complex Operations on the capabilities of U.S. civilian agencies to contribute to future stabilization missions; 2013

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] See Komer, R.W. Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S. –GVN Performance in Vietnam; RAND; Washington DC; 1972 and Jenkins, Brian; The Unchangeable War, RAND monograph, 1970

[40] Some partners may need to be included for campaign legitimacy and other geopolitical reasons.

[41] A February 2011 Defense Science Board Taskforce study on defense intelligence illustrates this point with regard to counterinsurgency missions. The report states, "different definitions of terms and associated interpretations of their meaning allow the DOD components, including the intelligence components of the military departments and combatant commands and the combat support agencies that are part of the IC, to choose the one(s) they prefer. This, in turn, produces a lack of clarity and causes confusion about what is meant. . ." Counterinsurgency (COIN) Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR); Operations Defense Science Board Task Force on Defense Intelligence, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, (February 2011). **http://www.carlisle.army.mil/dime/documents/Defense%20Science%20Board%20-%20Coin%202011-05-COIN%5B1%5D.pdf**

[42] In a 2011 interview in Kabul with this author, a senior U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) official explained how this situation often played out in the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, "Development people in the field had a lot of leeway to do whatever it was they wanted. All they had to do was get somebody to take them out to a village, pick a few things that they could focus on over the course of their deployment, and hang their ornament on the Afghan Christmas tree."

[43] USAID Office of Transition Initiatives and U.S. Department of State CSO Bureau (formerly SCRS) are notable exceptions, but their role was a tiny portion of the broader missions of State and USAID.

[44] Cofer Black (former CIA official), interview by Lara Logan, *60 Minutes*, 14 May 2012, http://www.cbsnews.com/news/hank-crumpton-life-as-a-spy/2/.

[45] Center for Complex Operations Iraq and Afghanistan interview database.

[46] Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA), *Decade of War*, vol. 1, *Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of War*, Joint Staff J7 publication (Suffolk, VA: JCOA, June 2012), 3.

[47] Author's own experience in Iraq during a 2009 deployment.

[48] Admiral McRaven, General Amos, and General Odierno, Strategic Land Power Taskforce 2013 White Paper "Winning the Clash of Wills" http://www.tradoc.army.mil/FrontPageContent/Docs/Strategic%20Landpower%20White%20Paper.pdf

[49] Fotini Christia and Ruben Enikolopov explain in their Op-ed "Too much of a good thing" that in their Afghanistan research it was not necessarily a pursuit of democratic principles that created a problem. Instead, the issue was the way in which the principles were pursued, with so little consideration of the right type of democracy for the local context. See **http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/12/18/too_much_of_a_good_thing** LTG General McMaster highlights this issue as a deeply engrained doctrinal issue in his critique of the poor U.S. treatment of the centrality of politics in war, "we assume in our doctrine that the challenges associated with developing indigenous security forces are mainly about building capacity, when, in fact, they're

about trying to develop institutions that can survive and that will operate in a way that is at least congruent with our interests." Erdmann, Andrew; "How militaries learn and adapt: An interview with Major General H. R. McMaster" April 2013

http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/public_sector/how_militaries_learn_and_adapt

[50]These assertions are certainly generalizations. It should not be forgotten that many individuals, groups, and units did attempt to pursue efforts that were more tailored to the local context and appropriate for the nature of the conflict. However, their efforts were largely anomalies and their actions alone could not meet the broader requirements for mission success.

[51] For example, women's education statistics were of great interest to many policymakers due to the importance of equal opportunity and human rights in U.S. foreign policy and to most Americans in general (including this author). However, in a place like Kandahar province in 2010, women's education metrics were not statistically relevant to progress on the counterinsurgency and stabilization missions at hand.

[52] e.g. The prominence of politically destabilizing infighting among Libyan factions was not as well captured as was the large-scale statistical success in the coalition military operation.

[53] e.g. Numbers of indigenous security forces trained and equipped that are capable of executing skills to standard vs. assessing whether indigenous security forces are willing to fight and are capable of operating in a manner that supports the strategy. See 2008 GAO report on the Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership which states, "although the agencies measure activities' outputs, such as the number of foreign military personnel trained, they do not measure their activities' outcomes in combating terrorism—for instance, any decrease in extremism in the targeted countries."
http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08860.pdf

[54] e.g. In Iraqi cities where water and electricity shortages were politically destabilizing factors, great weight was given to measurements of electricity output at power plants and water output at water treatment plants. However, these measurements often missed the fact that broken electrical and water grids ensured that minimal improvements to both water and electricity availability were seen by the actual Iraqis whose behavior the U.S. sought to influence.

[55]Although many assessment frameworks were developed to improve, none have been successful and therefore the U.S. still lacks proper assessment capabilities to this day. The Joint Force is currently working to address this gap through updates to Joint Doctrine. For a rich accounting of the assessment practices employed by the U.S. in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Vietnam, see Ben Connable's RAND Study, "Embracing the Fog of War" published in 2011.

[56] Military 'right seat ride' approaches usually focus on putting the new personnel next to the old one for a short period of time before they leave. Standard civilian agency turnover processes, are usually far less developed even than those of the military. Both civilian and military turnover processes for individual replacements have experienced many instances of no turnover and even major gaps (sometimes months long). This is inevitable in war, but the lack of sufficient processes for turnover and limited attention to resolving the issue in general has been highly destructive.

[57]Rajiv Chandrasekaran wrote about one such individual who worked multiple years with the military in Iraq and Afghanistan, learning to speak local languages and facilitating civil-military impact of value at the grassroots level. Chandrasekaran, Rajiv; In Afghanistan's Garmser district, praise for a U.S. official's tireless work, Washington Post, August 13, 2011 http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-afghanistans-garmser-district-praise-for-a-us-officials-tireless-work/2011/07/29/gIQA2Cc0DJ_story.html

[58] However, the resources and manpower devoted to each were minimal compared to those of the less adaptable main USAID development missions.

[59] Long, Austin; Locals Rule: Historical Lessons for Creating Local Defense Forces, RAND 2012 http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2012/RAND_MG1232.pdf

[60] Author meeting with members of the Village Stability Coordination Center (VSCC) in Afghanistan's Regional Command South, Kandahar Afghanistan, 2011. This meeting revealed a massive attempt by the VSCC leadership to improve coordination through an extensive liaison network. However, liaisons didn't necessarily improve coordination. Instead, they tended to be more suitable for reinforcing the socialization of what each agency/organization was doing as referenced in Lamb and Orton's previously mentioned research above.

[61] Embedded PRTs became known as EPRTs

[62] See information about the Yemen monitoring and evaluation project at USAID http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADU532.pdf. Also see information about the District Stability Framework http://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/partnership-opportunities/us-military/training/district-stability-framework; Also see MPICE information at: http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/MPICE_final_complete%20book%20%282%29.pdf

[63] Interestingly, the 2011 Integrated Civil Military Campaign Plan for Afghanistan did include the theory of change concept. However, the document offers a theory of change for each line of effort, which in essence defeats the purpose of a single theory of change that guides the campaign strategy.

About the Author

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Nathan White is a Department of Defense Civilian Research Fellow with the Center for Complex Operations (CCO) at National Defense University and a PhD candidate at King's College London. This paper draws extensively on the author's doctoral research and research conducted by the author and his colleagues within the CCO Lessons Learned program. The paper also benefits from feedback by Dr. Richard Hooker, Dr. Joseph Collins, Mr. Bernie Carreau, Ms. Sara Thannhauser, Mr. Maxwell Kelly, Mr. Michael Davies, COL Joel Rayburn, and others who have asked to go unnamed. The issues discussed continue to be hotly debated and therefore the conclusions drawn are the author's alone and do not necessarily represent the views of the reviewers or the U.S. Department of Defense.

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{12} http://breakingdefense.com/2014/12/killing-is-not-enough-special-operators/
{13} http://www.politico.com/pdf/PPM130_civ-mil_plan_afghanistan_090907.pdf
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{19} http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/12/18/too_much_of_a_good_thing
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