

Counterinsurgency – when theory meets reality

Seminar report

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Counterinsurgency (COIN) - when theory meets reality

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English summary

This report is the end-product of a one-day seminar on counterinsurgency (COIN) arranged by the Norwegian MNE-6 Working Group. **Hence, the majority of arguments presented in the report are primarily based on viewpoints expressed by the seminar participants.**

Due to a plethora of different uses and meanings, COIN has become a somewhat elusive concept, hard to handle with analytical rigor. In COIN, military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions are all combined to effectively defeat an insurgency. Therefore COIN is first and foremost a political endeavour. Accordingly, COIN can be defined as a comprehensive strategy to restore or establish political legitimacy, protect political infrastructure, and achieve local political dominance.

The American COIN doctrine, FM 3-24, constitutes the most recent and significant publication on COIN. However, FM 3-24 does not contain any particularly new or groundbreaking thoughts on COIN. Rather it is based on a series of classical COIN publications as well as a long chain of American field manuals addressing challenges met in irregular warfare. In this context, it is not the essence of COIN that has changed, but the strategic context within which current COIN operations are being run. In order to address this new strategic context of COIN operations the British are currently working on a new UK COIN doctrine. The main difference from previous sets of British COIN principles is an added focus on the population in terms of understanding their culture and providing lasting security as a means of gaining and securing their support.

There seems now to be a general acceptance among troop contributing countries in Iraq and Afghanistan that COIN is the most appropriate strategy for managing these conflicts. As a result, elements of COIN are currently being applied consciously by the majority of contingents. Nevertheless, a comprehensive COIN strategy employed consistently across all contingents has yet to materialize. Different contributing countries tend to operate along the same lines of operations, however often with different labels. There are also discrepancies in the concepts of operation of each nation, which obviously reflect the available manpower and resources.

Norwegian experiences from Afghanistan expose a number of challenges that the Norwegian Armed Forces are facing to successfully contribute to larger COIN campaigns. In terms of force contributions, there is a certain degree of ambiguity between the political discourse and its corresponding decision making. In addition, there are problems of civil-military cooperation, interagency planning and lack of doctrinal guidance tools. To substantiate Norwegian strategic thinking about its contribution to Afghanistan, *A strategy for comprehensive Norwegian civilian and military efforts in Faryab province, Afghanistan* was recently published. This document has several points of intersection with current COIN doctrinal thinking. Yet this short document does not point out how its stated objectives can be operationalised into ground activities. Hence, there is still no Norwegian COIN doctrine. Given her military and political caveats, Norway would benefit from having a strategy document, or a set of doctrinal guidelines, addressing COIN operations within the current strategic context, but from a Norwegian perspective.

Sammendrag

Denne rapporten er sluttproduktet av et dagsseminar om counterinsurgency (COIN) i regi av den norske MNE-6 arbeidsgruppa. **Følgelig er brorparten av argumentene presentert i rapporten basert på synspunkter som ble uttrykt av seminardeltakerne.**

På grunn av ulik bruk og mangfoldige betydninger har COIN blitt et utvannet begrep, noe som gjør det vanskelig å analysere på en presis måte. I COIN-operasjoner kombineres militære, paramilitære, politiske, økonomiske, psykologiske og sosiale aktiviteter for å effektivt overvinne et opprør. Derfor er COIN først og fremst en politisk geskjeft. Derav kan COIN defineres som en helhetlig strategi for å gjenetablere eller etablere politisk legitimitet, beskytte politisk infrastruktur og oppnå lokal politisk dominans.

Den amerikanske COIN-doktrinen FM 3-24 er den nyeste og mest signifikante publikasjonen på området. Samtidig inneholder ikke FM 3-24 noen grunnleggende nye eller banebrytende tanker om COIN. Den er basert på noen utvalgte klassiske COIN-publikasjoner samt en rekke amerikanske feltmanualer som adresserer de utfordringer en møter i irregulær krigføring. Slikt sett er det ikke essensen av COIN som har forandret seg, men heller den strategiske konteksten for slike operasjoner. For å ta hensyn til denne nye strategiske konteksten utarbeider britene for tiden en ny COIN-doktrine. Hovedforskjellen fra tidligere britiske COIN-prinsipper ligger i økt fokus på befolkningen i form av å forstå deres kultur samt å sørge for vedvarende sikkerhet for å sikre seg deres støtte.

Det ser ut til at det foreligger en generell overensstemmelse blant land med troppebidrag i Irak og Afghanistan om at COIN er den mest passende strategien for å håndtere disse konfliktene. Dermed blir ulike COIN-elementer nå bevisst anvendt av flertallet av kontingentene, men uten en helhetlig strategi på tvers av kontingentene. Ulike troppebidrag fra ulike nasjoner opererer langs de samme operasjonslinjene, men ofte med ulike betegnelser på disse. Videre er det avvik i ulike land sine operasjonskonsepter, som naturlig nok gjenspeiler tilgjengelig arbeidskraft og ressurser.

Norske erfaringer fra Afghanistan avdekker en rekke utfordringer Forsvaret møter som bidragsyter til større COIN-kampanjer. Når det gjelder styrkebidrag er det en viss grad av tvetydighet mellom den politiske diskursen og den tilsvarende beslutningstakingen. I tillegg er det problemer med sivil-militært samarbeid, helhetlig planlegging samt mangel på relevante doktrineverktøy. For å underbygge norsk strategisk tenkning rundt bidraget til Afghanistan ble det nylig publisert en *Strategi for helhetlig norsk sivil og militær innsats i Faryab-provinsen i Afghanistan*. Dette dokumentet adresserer en rekke elementer som lett kan sees i sammenheng med dagens COIN tankegang. Samtidig gir det korte dokumentet ikke svar på hvordan dets uttalte mål skal operasjonaliseres på bakkenivå. Dermed eksisterer det fremdeles ingen norsk COIN doktrine. Gitt norske militære og politiske begrensninger kunne Norge dratt nytte av et strategidokument eller doktrineverktøy som adresserte COIN-operasjoner i dagen strategiske kontekst, men fra et norsk perspektiv.

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Preface

Multinational Experiment (MNE)

Multinational Experiment is a multinational concept development and experimentation (CD & E) series which started in 2001 on the initiative of the United States. US Joint Forces Command (US JFCOM) is in lead of the overall planning, execution and analysis, in close collaboration with partner nations, as well as NATO ACT.

The current phase, MNE 6, began in 2008 and is a two-year effort focusing on *The Irregular Challenge: A Comprehensive Approach to a Complex Problem*.

Norway is a partner nation to MNE 6. The Norwegian effort is organized through collaboration between the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and the Norwegian Defence Command and Staff College (FSTS) on behalf of the Joint Headquarters Command (FOHK) and the Norwegian Ministry of Defence (FD). This report is part of FFI's contribution to MNE.

Multinational Experiment (MNE)

Multinational Experiment er en flernasjonalt konseptutviklings- og eksperimenteringsserie (CD & E) som ble innledet i 2001 etter initiativ fra USA. Joint Forces Command (US JFCOM) har hovedansvaret for planlegging, gjennomføring og analyser, i nært samarbeid med partnernasjoner, samt NATO ACT.

MNE 6 ble startet opp i 2008, med hovedtema *The Irregular Challenge: A Comprehensive Approach to a Complex Problem*. Norge er en partnernasjon i MNE 6.

Den norske deltakelsen er organisert gjennom et samarbeid mellom Forsvarets forskningsinstitutt (FFI), Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt (NUPI) og Forsvarets stabsskole (FSTS) og blir gjennomført på vegne av Fellesoperativt hovedkvarter (FOHK) og i øverste instans Forsvarsdepartementet (FD).

Denne rapporten er en del av FFIs MNE-bidrag.

Introduction

Counterinsurgency (COIN) has lately reappeared as a buzzword amongst both practitioners and scholars concerned with the challenges met in current areas of operation. In fact, the latest American COIN doctrine, FM 3-24 (2006), is so widely read in the US that it made the New York Times bestsellers list. Yet there is still confusion about what COIN really is and inconsistencies in the way different nations operationalise theoretical concepts on the ground. Furthermore, Norwegian experiences in COIN are limited, and existing concepts are not well reflected in current Norwegian doctrine and training programs. Hence, the time is ripe to consider the relevancy of COIN for Norwegian force contributions, doctrine development, and training.

This situation provided the backdrop for the Norwegian MNE-6 Working Group to invite a group of practitioners and scholars with unique experiences and expertise in COIN to discuss the connection between COIN theory and the realities of current military operations. In addition, representatives from the Norwegian Armed Forces were invited to discuss the relevancy of COIN for Norwegian force contributions to multinational operations. This report presents the highlights and most important arguments put forward during this one-day COIN seminar.¹ **Hence, the majority of arguments presented in the report are primarily based on viewpoints expressed by the seminar participants.**²

The report is organised into three chapters. The first chapter focuses on COIN-theory, and heads off with a short discussion on how to define COIN. Subsequently, recent developments in the strategic context of current COIN operations is outlined, before ten principles of COIN are presented and commented upon, drawn from the forthcoming British Army Field Manual on COIN operations.³ The second chapter of the report examines how COIN theory is reflected in current operational activities. In total, four nations are represented: the US, France, the Netherlands and the UK. Finally, chapter three reflects on the potential implications of recent COIN thinking and experiences for Norwegian force contributions to multinational operations. This chapter considers to what extent COIN theory is present in current Norwegian doctrine and training programs, and asks whether or not Norway is in need of its own COIN strategy document or set of doctrinal guidelines.

¹ The author would like to thank Harald Håvoll for excellent support and feedback during the writing of this report.

² The seminar took place Monday 8 June 2009 at the Norwegian Defence Command and Staff College in Oslo. The seminar was arranged under the Chatham House Rules and seminar participants will therefore not be referred to by name in this report.

³ A consultation draft of the upcoming British field manual was made available for the seminar participants.

1 COIN in theory

COIN theory can be traced back to classical COIN thinkers such as David Galula, Mao Zedong, and T.E. Lawrence. These and other classical COIN scholars have provided a solid theoretical fundament from which current COIN thinkers can be assisted when designing the strategic and operational concepts for modern COIN campaigns. The theory presented in this chapter is based on presentations given by seminar participants engaged in current COIN thinking and concept development, as well as some additional literary sources.

1.1 Defining COIN

A logical first step when discussing COIN is to provide a precise and constructive definition of the phenomenon. However, this has proven difficult because scholars and practitioners operate with shifting definitions and conceptual understandings of COIN. As a result, COIN has become a somewhat elusive concept, hard to handle with analytical rigor. In fact, David Galula, the classical and most widely read author on COIN, argues that COIN “cannot be defined except by reference to its cause” (Galula 1964: 3).

As suggested by its name, the main cause of COIN is to counter an insurgency. Its definition therefore relies on how one chooses to define ‘insurgency’. However, people tend to operate with shifting definitions of ‘insurgency’ as well and sometimes mix ‘insurgency’ with similar but different concepts such as ‘guerrilla warfare’ and ‘terrorism’. While both guerrilla warfare and terrorism may constitute key components of an insurgency, it is important to keep an analytical distinction between these concepts. Guerrilla warfare is simply a *tactic*, used to resist or overthrow a stronger enemy, or employed as an adjunct to regular forces. Terrorism is harder to separate from insurgency insofar as both concepts involve sub-state actors seeking political power in order to gain political ends through armed resistance. The essential difference between the two concepts lies in the way they relate to violence, more specifically to terror: Whereas “pure” terrorists employ terror as the only *logic of action*, insurgents employ terror as one *method of action* amongst several. Moreover, terrorists put little effort into the construction of a counter-state, whereas for the insurgent the creation of a legitimate alternative to the prevailing governmental structures represents an underlying logic which demands a wide range of activities, terror being only one of them. This counter-state logic puts the *civilian population* at the core of the event, thereby making the population a central component also of any counterinsurgency operation. Accordingly, a counterinsurgency, or COIN, can be defined as a *comprehensive strategy to restore political legitimacy, protect political infrastructure and achieve local political dominance*.

This fundamental link to various political aspects implies that COIN is by definition a *political* endeavour that, given the violent nature of insurgencies, must necessarily combine political and military means in order to effectively counter the insurgents:

The objective being the population itself, the operation designed to win it over (for the insurgent) or to keep it at least submissive (for the counterinsurgent) are essentially of a political nature (...) *politics become an active instrument of operation*. And so intricate is the interplay between the political and the military actions that they cannot be tidily separated; on the contrary, every military move has to be weighted with regard to its political effects, and vice versa (Galula 1964: 7)

This recognition places COIN somewhat awkwardly within traditional Western thinking about military operations where political and military affairs are often kept separate, the latter being subjugated to the former. In COIN, however, military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions are all combined to effectively defeat the insurgency. Therefore, people within the military apparatus are in COIN often expected to manage political activities. COIN requires an understanding not only of the military consequences of an operation, but also of the political, economical, societal, and cultural aspects of its corresponding area of operation. Consequently, the training and capabilities required in COIN operations are complex and multidimensional in nature, and contain elements that current military training programs typically do not cover.

Successful training requires relevant and updated doctrines and guidelines to guide the training. In this regard, the most recent and important publication is the American COIN doctrine FM 3-24, published in December 2006. Some argue that this doctrine, with General David H. Petraeus as one of two main authors, has had a decisive influence on recent improvements in Iraq.⁴ Accepting this doctrinal effect on the Iraqi war implies a much gloomier recognition, namely that pre-existing COIN-relevant doctrines and literature was never fully considered or appreciated when designing the initial operational concepts for Iraq, and later for Afghanistan. FM 3-24 does not contain any particularly new or groundbreaking thoughts on COIN. Rather it is the end-product of a series of classical COIN publications as well as a long chain of American field manuals addressing challenges met in small wars, irregular warfare, guerrilla warfare, internal defence and development (IDAD), low intensity conflict, and military operations other than war.⁵ In fact, the Small Wars Manual, first published in 1940, contains much of the same thinking as is found in FM 3-24.

Nonetheless, this line of thinking first came to be systematically employed in Iraq when General Petraeus took over command in 2007. Before that, COIN strategies were not coherently organized and applied by US forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom, not even after US intelligence recognized the Sunni insurgency in 2004 (Nyhamar forthcoming). The reason for this strategic shortcoming remains unknown. However, within some military cultures there seems to be a general discomfort with irregular warfare *per se*. This may be rooted in the simple fact that many irregular wars have been lost on behalf of the dominant or counterrevolutionary part, i.e. the U.S. in Vietnam. The

⁴ The second main author is General James F. Amos

⁵ FM 100-5 (Operations); FM 100-1 (Doctrinal Guidance); FM 31-15 (Ops Against Irregulars); FM 31-16 (Counter-guerrilla Ops); FM 31-20 (Ops Against Guerilla Forces); FM 31-21 (Guerilla Warfare); FM 31-22 (USA COIN Forces); FM 31-23 & FM 31-25 (Stability Ops); FM 100-20 (COIN: 1964, 1967); (IDAD 1972, 1974); FMFM 8-2 (Ops Against Guerilla Units); FM 100-20 (Low Intensity Conflict); Jt Pub 3-07 (Military Operations Other Than War)

paradox is that many of these wars may have been lost partially because the counterrevolutionaries applied strategies and tactics of conventional warfare rather than COIN.

1.2 Changes in the strategic context

Some would argue that we are currently witnessing a new type of warfare, sometimes referred to as Fourth Generation Warfare, Networked Global Insurgency, or the Global War on Terror. However, today's COIN operations are in many ways not so different from the irregular wars fought in Latin America in the 1980s, in Indochina in the 1960s and 1950s, and during the colonial wars of the 1920s. Therefore, others hold that what we are currently experiencing is nothing but old wine in a new glass. In other words, the essence of COIN remains the same, while the strategic context, or conditions within which today's COIN operations are conducted, may have changed.

There are in particular four characteristics that differentiate the strategic context of current COIN operations from that of former irregular wars: globalisation; the revolution in technology and communication; the multinational structure of the counterinsurgent; and the unfamiliarity of current areas of operations.

First, globalisation has had a significant influence on modern insurgencies. Several of today's insurgencies have international linkages and are often joined together through sophisticated and global networks. This has important implications for recruitment strategies and for how modern insurgencies are organized and fought. For example, an insurgent leader does not necessarily have to be in the actual war zone. Instead he may direct his operations from hide-outs anywhere in the world.

Secondly, the revolution in technology and communication has had a significant influence on the insurgents' potential for reaching out to the popular masses through advanced communication and information operations. It has been reported that due to their sophisticated communications apparatus, "the Taliban routinely outperforms the coalition in the contest to dominate public perceptions of the war in Afghanistan" (Naylor 2008: 1). In addition, technological development has provided insurgents with more advanced and deadly weaponry, including chemical weapons, mortars, and anti-aircraft missiles.

Thirdly, it is more than likely that any future COIN operation will be conducted within a coalition of multiple nations in which each nation is only a contributing partner. The multinational structures of these operations have important implications for how they are organized and coordinated. Finding a common end objective is more difficult and operations are going to be more complex due to their fragmented structures. In terms of legitimacy, multinationality has contradictory effects: On

the one side, a coalition of several nations strengthens the legitimacy of an operation because it has a wider support base. On the other side, the complexity introduced by running multinational operations may in some cases undermine effective mission performance, thereby also undermining its perceived legitimacy in the long run.

Finally, whereas many of the former irregular wars were fought in familiar colonial terrains, contemporary operations are of a more expeditionary nature. They are often fought in unknown terrains where coalition partners have not yet set their footprint. The implication is less foreknowledge about local culture and society which are prerequisites for any successful COIN campaign. This makes intelligence capabilities such an important part of all COIN operations.

1.3 Ten UK COIN principles

In order to address this new strategic context of COIN operations, and to retake their position at the forefront of COIN doctrine and thought, the British are currently working on a new UK COIN doctrine. Largely due to their experiences as a colonial power, British COIN doctrine and thought has traditionally been considered state of the art. However, the latest version of a UK COIN doctrine, produced in 2001, draws primarily on their experiences in Northern Ireland and comes across as somewhat outdated in the current strategic context. Therefore, in the absence of anything more up-to-date, the British have been using the American COIN doctrine FM 3-24 to support their operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is held that the FM 3-24 presents a doctrinal approach to COIN which very strongly reflects tried and tested UK principles.

The new UK doctrine is going to be quite similar to FM 3-24, but will also reflect the history and experiences of the British, as well as the realities of scale compared to the US in terms of manpower and resources. With the aim of addressing the strategic context outlined above, the forthcoming UK doctrine carves out ten UK COIN principles intended to guide ongoing and future operations. These ten principles, which to a large extent are based on UK lessons learned, come across as theoretically coherent, well founded, and up-to-date in terms of capturing the latest COIN trends and experiences shared by several contributing countries. The main difference from previous sets of British COIN principles is an added focus on the population in terms of understanding their culture and providing lasting security as a means of gaining and securing their support.

COIN principle 1: Political primacy

In COIN operations politics takes primacy over military matters. Carl von Clausewitz wrote that “war springs from political purpose, so it is natural that the prime cause of its existence will remain the supreme consideration in conducting it” (Clausewitz 2007: 28). The British had forces operating in Afghanistan before any clear policy or political aim was properly articulated to the military. What is more, coalition partners and the host nation itself should in theory agree upon common political objectives. However, in Afghanistan there has been no coordinated international process to that end and different nations have arrived with different views on what they see as the end state.

In theory, this COIN principle has two different meanings depending on whether one considers politics as a means to an end, or as an end in itself. Regrettably, the current British consultation draft is somewhat unclear about this analytical distinction. The reason is an unfortunate mix of two well-known arguments made by Carl von Clausewitz and David Galula respectively. When arguing that war is the continuation of politics, Clausewitz considers political issues as ends and

the military instrument as a means to that end. However, when Galula (1964: 66) argues that “a revolutionary war is 20 per cent military action and 80 per cent political,” he considers politics as a means to one specific end, namely to defeat the insurgency, which is ultimately a political end state. Both arguments are valid in a COIN context, but they have very different implications.

The former “Clausewitzian” argument, which considers politics as an end, is applicable to all armed conflicts (or battles in the language of Clausewitz). This argument simply acknowledges that armed conflicts should always be driven by some sort of political motivation. It is therefore important always to keep that ultimate end in mind when considering what means to employ to the battle. The reason is that in the midst of a fight, one may easily be blinded by the desire to physically defeat the enemy, and employ means that may serve this secondary purpose rather than the primary political end. These ends should be clearly articulated and agreed upon before deciding on what means to employ. Moreover, it is of uttermost importance that the articulated ends can be reached with the available means. If this is not the case, the operation is likely to fail.

The latter “Galulian” argument, which considers politics as a means to an end, concerns the relative importance of political action for effective COIN operations, and is related to the above understanding of COIN as a political endeavour. In this context, political action represents the most important of several means (including military, economic, psychological, etc.) that should be employed to reach the primary (and also political) end: to defeat the insurgency. This second meaning of political primacy, in contrast to the former, is first and foremost valid in COIN operations, and has numerous implications for how these operations should be trained for, planned, and executed.

COIN principle 2: Unity of effort

It follows logically from the variety of means ideally employed to successful COIN operations that a variety of actors should be engaged as a part of any COIN campaign. It is evident that the military itself cannot successfully conduct all types of activities required in COIN operations, some of which lie far from the types of tasks traditionally assigned to the military apparatus. Therefore, a range of different actors must be involved, and what is more, they all have to cooperate. In theory this sounds nice, put in practice it is of course extremely difficult and there is no magic formula as to how this unity of effort can be perfectly arranged.

The challenge of upholding this principle applies to many different levels: between contributing countries; within contributing countries; between state and non-state actors (both sub-state and international); and between military and civilian elements of one or more institutions. A crucial prerequisite for effective cooperation will be that the actors engaged in COIN operations work towards the same end objectives. This is not at all the case in current areas of operation where the participation of contributing countries are based on very different types of motivations (Knutson forthcoming), not to speak of the variance in motivation among NGOs and other key non-military actors present in these areas. Various PRT concepts are meant to address some of these challenges, and a lot of academic work is being done to find creative solutions to the seemingly insurmountable problem of effective civil-military coordination (cf. De Coning 2005, 2007).

Common understanding of the campaign objective, clear division of labour, and mutual respect and cooperation across departments, agencies and actors constitute key elements towards unity of effort. The odd mixture of civilian and military instruments in COIN operations introduces additional challenges as it is hard to focus on development while the security situation is still volatile. A key lesson learnt by the British is that in COIN the military must be prepared to assume roles normally expected to be filled by other government departments until the security situation allows them to fully engage. This argument has also been made by a former Secretary General to the UN when commenting on the nature of peacekeeping: “it is not a soldier’s job but sometimes only a soldier can do it”.

COIN principle 3: Understand the human terrain

With the population as the centre of gravity, which is the case in all COIN operations, it follows that a detailed understanding of the people, or the human terrain, is necessary. This is a broad and complex subject involving elements of sociology, anthropology, political science, geography, regional studies, linguistics and intelligence. Successful COIN operations are dependent on expertise from all of these fields.

Since early 2007, the US Department of Defense has deployed several Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) to Iraq and Afghanistan for COIN work. These five-person teams, which are embedded in military units, include anthropologists and other social scientists. The use of HTTs has caused fierce debate within academic circles and has been criticized by some anthropologists denouncing the program as “mercenary anthropology” (in Rohde 2007) and “militarisation of anthropology” (Gonzalez 2007). Yet other scholars counter the critics, arguing that what we need is an “anthropologisation of the military” because anthropology can be a more effective weapon than artillery (Montgomery in Stannard 2007). Field reports from Afghanistan link decreases in attacks and improved cooperation with local population to advice provided by the HTTs (Munita in Stier 2007).

COIN principle 4: Secure the population

With the population as the centre of gravity, it also follows that the population must feel safe in order to side with the counterinsurgents. Therefore, securing the population is a key element to successful COIN campaigns. Once an area has been secured it must not be abandoned. This has not at all been the case in current areas of operation, where military contingents often barricade themselves within their own camps while the population remains unsecured and exposed to the insurgents. This may lead the population to side with the insurgents because they represent the only option that will guarantee some degree of security. What is more, because human intelligence is such an important element of COIN, it is essential that the population feels safe enough to give out compromising information about the insurgents. This means that the insurgents can not be allowed freedom of movement amongst the population and thereby the opportunity to punish or assassinate whoever gives out sensitive information to the counterinsurgents.

Most contingents in current areas of operation do not have the resources or manpower to uphold this requirement, and even if they did, a security vacuum would break out once they started to withdraw their forces. Therefore, training of local security forces remains the only viable option for upholding this principle in the long term. This recognition can not be underestimated and should always figure amongst the top priorities.

COIN principle 5: Neutralise the insurgent

It is important to underscore that neutralizing does not necessarily mean killing or capturing the insurgent. Neutralisation should be achieved by a blend of physical and psychological means, with the aim of separating the insurgent from his support system and the general population. Whenever possible the insurgent should be neutralised through the use of softer measures such as information operations and development. No more force should be applied than what is absolutely needed to achieve an immediate and necessary military aim. However, using the minimum necessary force does not mean using the minimum necessary forces. A large number of troops at the right time may allow a commander to use less force than he might otherwise have done, or even to avoid using force at all. A key lesson learned from the British is that when use of military force is needed, it is often better delivered by the local forces from the host nation:

When the Coalition takes out a militiaman, he is a martyr. If the Iraqi Army does it, he is a criminal. We need to help them stop us creating more martyrs (Commander UK 4th Armoured Brigade, Bashrah, Iraq, June 8th).

The level of force used is often a decision left to the field commanders. Being able to make the right decision requires a high level of training, trust and discipline among the forces deployed.

COIN principle 6: Gain and maintain popular support

This principle represents the crux of the conflict between the insurgent and the counterinsurgent. The principle primarily concerns maintenance of popular support from the local population. However, when the counterinsurgent is a multinational coalition it is also essential that the people of the contributing countries support their soldiers in what they are doing, as well as the international community in general, and the United Nations in particular.

In this regard we touch upon an issue that lies beyond the scope of this report, but which deserves to be mentioned, namely the ethical corollaries of COIN operations. The majority of COIN doctrines and literature assume the legitimacy of the counterinsurgents and thereby the illegitimacy of the insurgents. It is not difficult, however, to find historical examples of insurgencies that would be labelled as both legitimate and righteous within the Western liberal democratic tradition. These are typically insurgencies against authoritarian and despotic regimes that are deeply rooted in the general population. Consequently, COIN must not be viewed as legitimate by definition. Rather one should always question whether or not an insurgency can be considered legitimate and righteous, or not, before considering to either support or initiate a counterinsurgency operation.

To gain and maintain popular support one must ensure that the insurgents do not win the war for the minds of the people. Therefore, effective communication and delivery of messages is essential. Effective communication requires instant access to media sources, reporting via internet and creative use of communication technology such as satellite television, mobile networks, radio, etc. All these technologies are low-cost weapons of mass-communication used by the insurgents. As a result, strategic communication has become a central element of current insurgencies, and thereby also of COIN operations.

To effectively counter strategic insurgent communication one needs to understand how people communicate amongst themselves, and how the insurgents use that system to get their messages across. One also needs to understand the local culture of communication in order to get the message through, including its intended meaning. This is one area where expertise from anthropologists may be of great value. Moreover, it is important to remember that communication can be much more than the Internet, TV and radio. For example, urban graffiti may have important effects and is a communication device that is often used by insurgents, less often by counterinsurgents.

COIN principle 7: Operate in accordance with the law

For the military force to remain credible and legitimate in the eyes of the people, both locally and internationally, they must operate in accordance with the law, both national and international. This principle is somewhat surprisingly a new addition to the British doctrine, although it has always been a major theme in earlier versions. Experiences from both Iraq and Afghanistan reveal how devastating it can be when foreign soldiers are recorded while undertaking illegal and sometimes inhuman activities against local population or prisoners of war. Failing to abide by the law is always counterproductive and usually undermines the position of the military forces and governments involved. For example, the serious abuse and unlawful killings of civilians by British troops in Iraq in 2003 and early 2004 had profound implications for the standing of British forces both in Iraq and internationally. Another grim example is the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers at the Abu Ghraib detention facility in Iraq.

Today the focus has shifted from the insurgents to the people. Before, the people were used as a means to the end, which was to defeat the insurgents. Now, the minds of the people are the end in itself and the provision of security is viewed as a means to reach this end.

COIN principle 8: Integrate intelligence

In COIN operations, information is usually a more efficient weapon than firepower. The success of an operation depends to a large degree on the quality of the intelligence. Some may argue that all operations are driven by intelligence. However, what is different in COIN operations is that the top-down flow of intelligence is reversed. In COIN, the intelligence system is built bottom-up, from information gathered by surveillance, patrol reports, tactical security operations and from contact with the local population.

This implies that in COIN, the tactical level commander has a crucial role to play in developing the intelligence picture. British experiences reveal that technical solutions for gathering intelligence and building up situational awareness contribute significantly, in particular SIGINT and UAVs. Nevertheless, there is really no substitute in a COIN campaign for getting out on the ground and interacting with the people. HUMINT is therefore the most effective way of gathering intelligence. Therefore, every soldier should be trained and prepared to look out for potential sources of information of all kinds.

COIN principle 9: Prepare for the longer term

This principle holds the key to the effective application of the other principles. Past experiences reveal that countering an insurgency takes time and it is not going to be won in a few months. Because COIN takes time, maintaining a consistent and coherent approach to the operation is crucial. Everything that is done must lead towards the end-state, defeating the insurgency and leaving behind a stable society. In the case of Iraq, political leaders did not really prepare or even think long-term when they planned the intervention. It now seems evident that the same political leaders should have expected the major combat operations in Iraq to lead to a longer-term stabilisation operation, or an insurgency of some form.

Long term plans are required at every level of government and are likely to cover the following areas: security sector reform; the development of the rule of law and the justice system; the development of further government capacity; economic development, for example financial sector reform and commercial improvements; and social development programmes, such as education and housing. The British Army is currently looking at developing specialist units to conduct the training, mentoring, monitoring, and if necessary the enabling of local forces and government. The same types of tasks are currently conducted by Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) in Afghanistan, but with a primary focus on military mentoring to support the Afghan National Army (ANA).

COIN principle 10: Learn and adapt

History reveals that insurgents will seek to obtain, use, and exploit technology quickly to take advantage of what they learn about the tactics, techniques, procedures, and equipment of the counterinsurgents. They will continually change their strategy and tactics as the campaign progresses and as the situation changes. Outpacing the decision cycle, or OODA-loop (observe-orient-decide-act), of the enemy is less relevant in COIN than in high intensity warfare. More relevant in COIN is outpacing the 'learning cycle' of the insurgent (Håvoll 2008). Fast-learning organizations that can rapidly implement changes in strategy, organization and tactics are likely to have a comparative advantage in COIN operations. The counterinsurgents must therefore ensure that they learn and adapt faster than the insurgents.

2 COIN in reality

Many of the classical COIN thinkers, such as David Galula, Robert Thompson and Roger Trinquier, learned their COIN lessons from their own experiences in various COIN operations. This chapter is based on presentations of four different national approaches to COIN and their current operational activities in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have protracted, COIN-thinking has increasingly gained momentum. There seems now to be a general acceptance among most troop contributing countries in Iraq and Afghanistan that COIN is the most appropriate strategy for managing these conflicts. As a result, elements of COIN are currently being applied consciously by the majority of contingents. Nevertheless, a comprehensive COIN strategy employed consistently across all contingents has yet to materialize. This is reflected in the following four national approaches.⁶

2.1 American COIN: Clear-Hold-Build

While the new American COIN strategy in Operation Iraqi Freedom has had a significant influence on how the operation is being run today, the main military focus in the field remains “to kill or capture bad guys”. Yet it is remarkable how fast American troops managed to transform operational activities into a COINish approach across the whole spectrum of the operation. An important element of the American COIN approach is the so-called Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team (EPRT). The EPRT is made up of both civilian and military personnel that together with local authorities work out a Joint Common Plan intended to assist the host nation in developing solid governmental institutions.

The operational implementation of the Joint Common Plan in Al Anbar province was structured along eight lines of operation: security; transition; communication; governance/tribal engagement; essential services; rule of law; and economy. Brokering of deals with local Sheiks and empowering and training of local Iraqi Security Forces are emphasized as COIN activities which contributed substantially to recent improvements. Moreover, cultural awareness and interaction with the local population are viewed as essential elements for effective intelligence gathering, a prerequisite for identifying and subsequently killing or capturing insurgents. In other words, the local population was first and foremost viewed as a local resource that could be exploited in order to target the insurgents, which remained the primary objective of the operation.

Some would argue that this understanding of COIN is outdated and that the FM 3-24 teaches a different understanding, namely that the population is the end and not a means. It is true that FM 3-24 contradicts the emphasis on killing and capturing insurgents. However, having a soldier shift his main focus away from the enemy and towards the population seems like a subtle task that will take some time. Therefore, it is important to underscore the substantial shift in American

⁶ Note that this chapter is based on single hand accounts only, and should therefore not be read as the official policy of each nation.

operational activities in Iraq as a result of the implementation of FM 3-24 and its effect on regional stability. It is captivating how fast the new approach of General Petraeus spread out across the American forces and materialized into actual ground activities. One reason may be that before the arrival of General Petraeus in 2007, the Americans were already on the verge of a total failure and therefore willing to try almost anything that could work. In addition, COIN was already being practised by many, although in a more sporadic fashion. Whatever the cause, regional stability has improved, and American fatalities decreased significantly over the past two years (Nyhamar forthcoming). Yet, in Afghanistan the number of fatalities is currently on a rise.

2.2 French COIN: “Inherited”

The French Battle Group in Afghanistan operates in areas east of Kabul and in 2008 they took over the Kabul regional command from Italy. To date, the French do not have their own COIN doctrine, but it is held that the French approach to COIN is much in line with the writings of the French author David Galula as well as the American FM 3-24. It is also held that COIN is an integral part of French military culture and that the need for a formal COIN doctrine may therefore be less pressing. Thus, in their “inherent” approach to COIN, the French underscore the importance of understanding the insurgent as a complex but logical actor who does not necessarily need a conventional victory in order to be perceived as successful. Rather he looks for a “locally favourable strength ratio” and “high mediatic value” targets. In other words, the insurgent should be perceived as a rational actor regardless of how different his priorities may be from Western logic. Because he thinks strategically about his actions and potential targets it is imperative to understand how his preferences are formed. Therefore, a contextual understanding of local culture and society is a prerequisite to successful COIN operations.

The mission statement given to the French Battle Group in Afghanistan is “to conduct security and stability operations in order to create a safe and secure environment in order to allow actions of reconstruction and development”. This mission statement corresponds well with COIN logic where the safety and prosperity of the local population represents the key to success, however challenging this task may be. The sometimes overwhelming nature of the task is reflected in one French officer’s interpretation of his own mission statement: do your best with every means available.

A central element of the French approach to COIN is cooperation with local security forces, in this case the Afghan National Army (ANA). All significant missions are to be planned and conducted with the ANA and for the benefit of ANA. French experiences reveal that once local security forces are involved in operational activities, interaction with the local population runs much more smoothly and become far more rewarding in terms of local support and intelligence gathering. Accordingly, the French do not only train ANA in conducting security operations, they also focus on developing a trusting and productive relationship between ANA and local villages in the area of operation. To support this development, the French has it as a rule to always put ANA in the frontline when humanitarian aid and services are provided to the population. These dynamics are supposed to facilitate access to detailed knowledge of the physical, human, and

cultural terrain, which contributes positively to other elements of the COIN spectrum, such as targeting insurgents.

Furthermore, the French emphasize not only gathering of intelligence, primarily through HUMINT, but also sharing of intelligence with “friends,” including unofficial contacts. Consequently, there lies a responsibility within the Battle Group that the intelligence products come forward as both digestible and exploitable to their partners. Additional characteristics of the French COIN approach include avoidance of collateral damage; respect of the population way of life; communicating with local leaders (both institutional and traditional); civil-military coordination; and conduct of psychological and communication operations. Resource development in areas such as agriculture, water networks, health, education, and infrastructure are also singled out as important elements of the French approach to COIN operations.

Three specific caveats are given based on French experiences with the sometimes counterintuitive nature of COIN: First, there is often a temptation to strike whenever possible. However, a tactical success on the field may be a strategic failure in the COIN context. One should therefore always consider the possible strategic consequences of one’s actions in the field. Second, one should strike a balance between “bunkerisation,” which ensures the safety of the troops, and “living amongst the population,” which involves security risks but is rewarding in terms of popular support. Third, winning the hearts of the population may be an intangible task. Therefore, focusing on winning the minds of the population may serve as a more realistic strategic objective to aim towards.

The French report of relative success in terms of strengthening the position of the ANA and retaking the initiative and moral supremacy in the area of operation. They also report of significant casualties within enemy ranks, which currently have only limited freedom of movement in the French area of operation. There has been a significant rise in the level of confidence between the French and the local population, and very high levels of cooperation and confidence with the ANA. However, there is still a need for a more determined interagency approach, the development must be directed even more towards the local population, and the governance pillar remains to be developed.

2.3 Dutch COIN: Understand/Shape-Engage-Consolidate-Transfer

The Dutch Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan operates in the province of Uruzgan, situated southeast of Kabul. The Dutch approach to COIN has resemblance to the French approach in terms of emphasizing issues such as prevention of collateral damage, training of local Afghan security forces, and that “COIN is more than just fighting”. The Dutch mission statement is “to assist the local governance in building its capacity, authority and influence, in order to set the conditions for a secure and stable Uruzgan province”. What is unique about the

Dutch PRT is the high representation of civilian personnel which constitutes half of the team. What is more, the Dutch PRT is commanded by a civilian.⁷

The Dutch PRT operates along three lines of operation, or the three D's: Defence, Diplomacy, and Development. The core of the defence element is to train and educate the Afghan Army and police. The diplomacy element focuses on improving local, regional, and central government, and is primarily assigned to civilian experts from various Dutch ministries. In this regard, the Dutch underscore the importance of bringing external expertise from a range of home ministries into the operation. The development element focuses on improving local economy and on countering the drugs growth in the area of operation. Expertise from other ministries is called in to develop a more comprehensive effort. For example, the Dutch used agriculture experts to assist local farmers in growing potatoes instead of poppies, and they managed to develop a system where the income from growing potatoes was equally good as their previous income from poppy cultivation.

Given the small size of the Dutch contingent, they have had to develop a concept of operations which reflects their own capacities: understand/shape-engage-consolidate-transfer. This concept is designed to be flexible in order to more effectively allocate resources across the area of operation, according to which step of the concept a given locality has reached. For example, 'engagements' require a high level of military resources in terms of equipment and manpower, but are likely to be infrequent, take place within a relatively short time span and only in concentrated areas. 'Transfers', on the other side, might require a lot of time, a larger degree of civilian expertise, but less manpower, given that the security situation is stable. Therefore, available resources should be allocated in accordance with the requirements of specific localities. Most importantly, the end objective is to transfer authority and responsibility to the host nation.

Key lessons learned from the Dutch experiences include: to always involve local security forces and local authorities in the operation; never underestimate information operations; and stay in touch with the locals but do not project your values on them. In addition, intelligence and patience are singled out as important elements of COIN.

2.4 British COIN: Engage-Secure-Develop

In 2008 the British were conducting COIN operations on two fronts simultaneously: in Iraq and Afghanistan. Having largely withdrawn the majority of troops from Iraq, the British are currently employing a broad concept of operations in Afghanistan based on three key pillars: Engage-Secure-Develop. The British emphasize that this framework is intended as a way of thinking about COIN which not necessarily have to be applied in sequence. In fact, it is more likely that these pillars will be unfolding simultaneously across a theatre, rather than one after the other. More importantly, this approach places the security of the population at the centre of operations. To be effective, the concept relies on unified effort by all those involved, or at the very least,

⁷ Interestingly, David Galula recommended civilian command of COIN operations, but the FM 3-24 does not.

coordinated cross-governmental activity. The approach is similar to the American Clear-Hold-Build. However, the British concept is somewhat less kinetic and recognizes that the British are not necessarily going to have the money, manpower, and resources to clear, hold, and build as they go, as perhaps the US will be able to do.

The first pillar, engage, is directed towards the population and represents a key building block of the British COIN approach. It requires a high level of cultural awareness and continuity. To achieve cultural awareness, the British have recently started to educate and employ cultural advisors which are officers who learn the local language in order to more effectively apprehend and communicate with locals in the area of operation, both friendly and hostile. In order to uphold continuity, many of the key British staff are now deploying for 12 months rather than for 6.

The second pillar, secure, is also directed towards the population and involves both physical and psychological security. It is seen as essential that the host nation security forces take the lead in security operations. Moreover, you must not clear if you cannot hold. The population must be convinced that they will not be abandoned and that promises of security will be upheld. Otherwise, there will be no trust, and support will swing to the insurgents. This pillar requires both a lot of time and resources and a significant intelligence effort.

The third pillar, develop, is directed towards governance in all its aspects: economy, security, justice and diplomacy. Development should not be a military activity and the key is therefore coordinated governmental action. Ideally, this pillar should also be seen to be led by the host nation government. Any action must be supported by an effective communications strategy and information campaign in order to fully explain to the locals the benefits of the development strategy and of future programmes. Principal development activities include: military capacity building, establishment or restoration of essential services, developing better governance and economic development. Quick impact projects are singled out as useful, provided that they form part of an overall development strategy.

These three pillars should ideally lead to transfers of both security sector responsibilities and of governmental responsibilities. The objective is to provide the conditions from which intervening forces may be withdrawn, and in time, also the civilian support elements of a COIN campaign.

2.5 Summing up

What can we make of these accounts? COIN is evidently a hot topic these days, and there is a general agreement about some of its core principles, such as building local capacity, inter-governmental cooperation, and the importance of gaining confidence from the population and receiving intelligence as a result of that confidence. A second observation is that different countries tend to operate along the same lines of operations, however often with different labels. One would think that operations would run more smoothly if one could at least agree on the same names for the same concepts. A third observation is that there is also some discrepancy in the way these countries have designed their concepts of operations. These designs are typically limited by the resources available to each nation, and the configuration of each contingent. Also, while both

the Dutch and the British have civilian leaders of their PRTs, and are apparently satisfied with this arrangement, the Americans do not approve of that idea. A fourth observation is that field manuals or doctrines do in fact make a difference. All four countries identified to some degree with the FM 3-24, while at the same time emphasizing that it demanded more resources than what most countries possess. FM 3-24 is first and foremost written for the US Armed Forces. Most armed forces are very different from the US armed forces, both quantitatively and qualitatively. FM 3-24 is therefore not an ideal COIN doctrine for nations other than the US.

Multinational coalitions would profit from designing unified concepts of operations, where each nation contributes with the types of resources it manages best. This does not seem to be the case in Iraq or Afghanistan where the focus of each nation is limited to their corresponding area of operation, and less on the operation as a whole. This leaves each and every nation responsible for managing all elements of a comprehensive COIN strategy, instead of pooling their resources for a truly unified effort across the whole geographical space targeted by the insurgents.

3 Norwegian COIN?

This final chapter considers to what extent contemporary COIN thinking is present in Norwegian doctrine and practise, and asks whether or not Norway is in need of its own COIN strategy document or set of doctrinal guidelines. The chapter is based on presentations of Norwegian experiences from Afghanistan as well as relevant Norwegian doctrinal publications and strategy documents. The Norwegian PRT in Afghanistan is responsible for the province of Faryab in the north-western corner of the country. In addition, Norway recently deployed her second OMLT to Afghanistan to support the ANA.

Norwegian experiences from Afghanistan expose a number of challenges that the Norwegian Armed Forces are facing to successfully contribute to larger COIN campaigns. Concerning Norwegian participation in multinational operations such as ISAF, there is a certain degree of ambiguity between the political discourse and its corresponding decision making. This confuses the Norwegian notion of strategy and has consequences for how Norwegian contributions are being planned for. As a result, the Norwegian planning process takes place within a military vacuum dominated by military intelligence, rather than within a comprehensive interagency framework, a necessary prerequisite for successful COIN operations.

Recent experiences tell of an urgent need for much closer coordination between uniformed and non-uniformed personnel. Major reinforcements are needed on the civil side in order to change focus from security to governance. Furthermore, a greater focus is needed to work through the Afghans in order to find Afghan solutions to Afghan problems. There have been positive experiences with mentoring and partnering with the ANA. Therefore, the same methods could be applied to Afghan National Police and within the governance pillar. However, recruitment of both Norwegian police and civilian manpower to service in Afghanistan has proven difficult.

The Norwegian humanitarian apparatus is working rather independently from the state apparatus, which makes coordination and cooperation between Norwegian humanitarian agencies and the Norwegian military even more difficult. For example, Norway has stated that state building and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan are not military tasks. In practise, this has meant that the Norwegian PRT, which is heavily dominated by the military, has not been able to focus on sustainable development. Thus, some believe that the window of opportunity to actually create a success story in northern Afghanistan is about to close.

It is also held that there is a predominating conception within the Norwegian military that if you can address conventional war, then you are definitely able to address an insurgency. Consequently, the doctrinal document that has been used frequently to prepare Norwegian forces before deploying to foreign territories, the Doctrine for Land Operations (Norwegian Defence Staff 2004) does not address challenges met in current areas of operations that are not integral parts of major combat operations. This shortcoming has been somewhat corrected by the recent Joint Operational Doctrine, published by the Defence Staff in 2007. This document addresses issues of peace support operations, stabilisation operations, low intensity conflicts and irregular warfare (Norwegian Defence Staff 2007: 23-28). COIN, however, is only mentioned in one sentence where it is described as operations that “combine military, diplomatic and economic measures designed to combat the movement, its external support and support from the local inhabitants”(Norwegian Defence Staff 2007: 42). It is noteworthy that the doctrine fails to list political measures as a key component of COIN operations, given its relative importance over other COIN measures.

To substantiate Norwegian strategic thinking about its contribution to Afghanistan, *A strategy for comprehensive Norwegian civilian and military efforts in Faryab province, Afghanistan*, was recently published.⁸ This short document stems from a joint venture of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Norwegian Ministry of Defence and the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Police. The most striking feature of this document is its brevity. However, within its limited scope, the document touches upon many aspects that can easily be placed within a COIN line of thinking, without it being explicitly stated. The document has been criticized for not representing a real strategy in the traditional Clausewitzian sense and for having a too simplistic and naive wording (Matlary 2009). However, one has to acknowledge that considering recent developments in the strategic context of current COIN operations, the document is at the very least updated. One may even dare to call it cutting edge in terms of actually addressing the implications of a strategic context where the security situation allows a withdrawal of military elements, and where civilian elements can enter the area of operations and do what they do best: governance and development. The strategy-document for comprehensive Norwegian civilian and military efforts in Faryab is evidently not written as a policy directive for practitioners, or a doctrine for the military. Rather it comes across as a well-founded and informative overview of

⁸ The document is available electronically at:
www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/Sikkerhetspol/faryab_strategy0906.pdf

the current strategic situation in Faryab, and the corresponding Norwegian efforts to best deal with that situation.

Nonetheless, there is still no Norwegian COIN doctrine. This is confirmed by a recent study on Norwegian doctrines and guidelines for COIN (Reinaas 2008). This study holds that COIN literature and theory is largely absent in the leaflets and guideline documents provided to Norwegian companies in their pre-deployment training to Afghanistan.

Should Norway develop her own COIN doctrine? There is evidently a lack of COIN thinking in current Norwegian doctrinal guidance documents and training programs. As a result, Norwegian commanders must resolve to foreign doctrines written for armies that are qualitatively and quantitatively different from the Norwegian army. The FM 3-24 covers many general aspects of COIN, but does not correspond well with Norwegian recourses, political caveats, and operational mandates. The upcoming UK doctrine may from a Norwegian perspective be more appropriate than the FM 3-24, however, at its current length it is far too extensive for its main purpose: to be actively used by operational commanders in the field. An ideal field manual should be no longer than 50 pages and should be updated continually as the strategic context changes.

A great example of a short text that captures the essence of COIN is David Galula's *Counterinsurgency warfare: theory and practice* from 1964. This book should work as a blueprint for any COIN doctrine author because the essence of COIN lies in understanding its sometimes counterintuitive logic, which is eloquently explained by Galula. The ideal COIN doctrine does not provide explicit advice on how to do COIN, but explains briefly what COIN is, when it can be used, and most importantly: how its logic works. Add to this an updated consideration of the current strategic context and you may *suggest* how the concept may be operationalized into ground activities.

Norway does not have enough resources to conduct COIN operations on her own, and will most likely never obtain such resources. Therefore, Norway will have to focus on elements of COIN that reflect Norwegian capabilities, resources and interests. Yet, understanding the whole spectrum of COIN activities is a necessary premise for successful participation in a larger COIN campaign. Norway would benefit from thinking about how she may best fit into a larger COIN campaign conducted by a multinational coalition, most likely within a NATO or UN context. On this note, NATO does not have its own COIN doctrine. Consequently, commanders in ISAF HQ are using the FM 3-24 to guide their COIN planning. It is not unlikely that the forthcoming UK doctrine will be used by NATO, nor is it unlikely that NATO develops a COIN doctrine for its own use in the future.

There are no silver bullets as to how to do COIN. However, a key issue will always be the well-being of the population. Moreover, it is essential that a COIN strategy reflects the means available to whoever that is going to operationalize that strategy in the field. Given her military and political caveats, Norway would benefit from having a strategy document, or a set of doctrinal guidelines, that addressed COIN operations within the current strategic context, but from a

Norwegian perspective. That would help Norwegian political decision-makers, commanders and soldiers to be more aware of their purpose and role in the operational theatre, and also provide a clearer rationale for Norwegian presence there, insofar as the counterinsurgency is perceived as a legitimate one.

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