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Measuring Effectiveness in Complex Operations: What is Good Enough

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Effectiveness has become the meta-narrative of complex operations. Humanitarian agencies, civilian police, academics, as well as the military and defence, diplomacy, and development sectors are engaging in new and better ways to measure and achieve operational effectiveness. This is partially motivated by a need to calculate the growing costs of these very expensive ventures for tax paying constituencies, but also because the panoply of activities intended to create long term peace and security have not yet achieved their intended aims. This has cast them as *ineffective*, both for those intervening and also for those experiencing the interventions, despite much operational success and progress. Failing to meet political expectations and the perceived ineffectiveness of intervention activities has decision-makers considering what is 'good enough' when it comes to complex operations. Notions of what is feasible to achieve in operations are replacing what is desirable.

This paper considers these issues by examining the following themes: 1) definitions of effectiveness; 2) approaches to increasing effectiveness; 3) measuring effectiveness; and 4) whether the notion of 'good enough' operations is a valid approach to increasing effectiveness. This paper concludes with some options for the international community to increase effectiveness, which can lead towards achieving what is feasible, as well as what is desirable in terms of sustainable peace and security.

SOMMAIRE

L'efficacité est devenue la méta-narration des opérations complexes. Les organismes humanitaires, la police civile, les universitaires, ainsi que les secteurs de l'armée et de la défense, de la diplomatie et du développement s'engagent présentement dans de nouvelles façons, meilleures, de mesurer l'efficacité opérationnelle et de l'atteindre. Ce mouvement est en partie motivé par le besoin de calculer les coûts croissants de ces entreprises très coûteuses pour les circonscriptions contribuables, mais également parce que la panoplie d'activités qui ont pour but de créer une paix et une sécurité à long terme n'ont pas encore atteint leurs objectifs. Cette situation leur a plaqué un masque d'inefficacité, à la fois pour ceux qui font les interventions et pour ceux qui les subissent, malgré le grand nombre de succès et de progrès opérationnels. L'incapacité de répondre aux attentes politiques et la perception d'inefficacité des activités d'intervention ont fait que, quand il s'agit d'opérations complexes, les décideurs considèrent ce qui est « assez bon ». La notion du faisable remplace le désirable dans les opérations.

Cet article se penche sur ces questions à travers l'examen des thèmes suivants : 1) les définitions de l'efficacité, 2) les façons d'aborder l'amélioration de l'efficacité, 3) la mesure de l'efficacité et 4) la question de savoir si la notion d'opérations « assez bonnes » est une approche valide quand il s'agit de traiter de l'amélioration de l'efficacité. L'article conclut sur quelques options qui s'offrent à la communauté internationale pour augmenter l'efficacité et qui peuvent l'amener à atteindre ce qui est faisable, *aussi bien que* ce qui est désirable en termes de paix et de sécurité durables.

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INTRODUCTION

The international community is seized with understanding the effectiveness of its interventions in places like Afghanistan. Effectiveness has become the meta-narrative of complex operations and the evaluation of which has captured the imaginations of most stakeholders involved in such activities, including the Government of Canada and Canadian non-state actors. Humanitarian agencies, and the sectors of civilian police, military and defence, diplomacy, and development are engaging in new approaches to increase effectiveness. This is partially motivated by a need to calculate the growing costs of these very expensive ventures for tax paying constituencies, but also because the panoply of activities intended to create long term peace and security have not yet achieved their intended aims against the criteria with which they are measured. This has cast them as ineffective, both for those intervening and also for those experiencing the interventions, despite some operational successes and progress. Due to failures to meet many political expectations, and apparent ineffectiveness of intervention activities, revisionists are considering what is 'good enough' when it comes to complex operations. Notions of what is feasible to achieve are replacing those of desirability, yet parties in support of intervention suggest that cooperative approaches to complex operations could be a solution to increasing effectiveness in order to move beyond what is feasible to achieve what is desirable.

The international community's ability to contribute to tenable peace and security depends on an ability to work cooperatively – to do the *right* things, at the *right* times, in the *right* ways, using the *right* means – and to accurately assess effectiveness of complex operations. The challenge is that effectiveness must first be measured in order to inform decisions regarding these right methods; however, there is little agreement as to what projects, aims, objectives, and outcomes make up the right methods to intervene. Deciding upon the right things in complex operations and accurately measuring their effectiveness within recipient populations may yet be a long way off due to deep ontological divides between the sectors involved in complex operations.

This is where a significant obstacle lies in measuring complex operations. How exactly does the international community of stakeholders define effectiveness? How does the Government of Canada define its effectiveness in complex operations? Moreover, what types of options are available to the Government of Canada to increase its effectiveness? A working definition of effectiveness must be achieved before a robust dialogue occurs regarding understanding and measuring effectiveness. There is no clear definition of effectiveness among and between Canadian stakeholders involved in complex operations, nor is there agreement on how to apply an improved cooperative approach to achieve increased effectiveness.

This paper considers these questions by examining the following themes: 1) definitions of effectiveness; 2) approaches to increasing effectiveness; 3) measuring effectiveness; and 4) whether the notion of 'good enough' operations is a valid approach to increasing effectiveness. This paper concludes with some options for the international community to increase effectiveness, which can lead towards achieving what is feasible, as well as what is desirable in terms of sustainable peace and security.

WHAT IS EFFECTIVENESS?

Effectiveness is the term commonly used to refer to the goal-attainment of a measure, thus relating the outcome of a process to its original goals. In other words, an intervention is said to be effective if the outcomes match with the goals.² Measuring the effectiveness of an

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¹ Sherman, 2009.

² Ibid, 25.

intervention requires clear, explicit and quantified objectives.³ Many things can be measured against effectiveness, such as time, *materiel*, personnel, resources, and funding. It can be examined in terms of outputs, outcomes, effectivity, goal attainment, cost-effectiveness and macro impact.⁴ Effectiveness includes not only the extent to which an intervention objective has been achieved, but also the unintended and unplanned consequences of such activities.

The term effectiveness is ubiquitous in international humanitarian aid, diplomacy, development, and defence and security, and although it has many technical meanings as described above, it remains without an agreed-upon definition, nor a common understanding of its impact related to complex operations. Effectiveness defined by whom? It appears that international stakeholders are keenly interested in the effectiveness of operations, yet each considers effectiveness from a distinctly different perspective. Other international stakeholders may even find benefit in muddying the waters regarding measuring effectiveness because of accountability and transparency concerns. Moreover, and beyond the technical meanings of effectiveness, the very nature of the concept is tightly linked with domestic and foreign political considerations.

Significant questions remain whether the international community's complex operations are contributing to or taking away from progress in places like Iraq, Haiti, and Afghanistan. Moreover, areas of operations are not homogenous entities so it becomes critical to understand for whom intervention is making a difference, and which segments of a population are experiencing positive results attributed to intervention activities. Other discourse suggests that interventions can actually do more harm than good and cause unintended negative consequences among conflict-affected populations. For example, interventions have been shown to exacerbate social, economic and religious/ethnic tensions and gaps between segments of societies. Further adding to the debate is the technical aspect of measuring the effectiveness of interventions, and whether there are ways to better measure activities to help improve effectiveness.

Measuring the effectiveness of interventions is challenged by political obstacles. From a political perspective, it is a relatively simple task to determine short-term progress (and regression) of tangible complex operations. The tenets of intervention (providing security that saves lives, delivering food aid, establishing a level of stability and security for civilian populations) are often distilled into absolute, binary terms by the media and politicians seeking the short-term 'output headline.' Lives are being saved, or they are not. Stability is either present, or it is not. Food aid is either being delivered, or it is not. On the other hand, measuring intangible intervention effectiveness from a long-term perspective is more difficult and tends to be over simplified in the same way that short-term achievements are. Behavioural and attitudinal changes in recipient populations occur over the long-term; however, these are difficult to identify and even more difficult to attribute to specific complex operational outcomes. Many countries and military forces have a tendency to claim early success in post-conflict reconstruction activities only to be "found out" later by external agencies, theorists, and development organizations. Without appropriate measuring frameworks, countries like the U.S. have been placed in compromising positions in which the government was forced to retract earlier claims of success and admit multiple widespread failures. This miscommunication of misinformation, specifically concerning the reality of mission failure, has had a tremendous negative impact on troop moral and public opinion of interventions in places like Iraq and Afghanistan.

³ Sherman, 23.

⁴ Mosselman and Prince, 2004: 45.

⁵ Measuring Progress. 2007, http://www.afghanistan.gc.ca/canada-afghanistan/media/documents/cmamp-mcamp.aspx.

⁶ Aoi, Chiyuki, Cedric de Coning, and Ramesh Thakur (Eds), 2007.

⁷ Center for International Cooperation, 2006.

This has created more impetus to overcoming the domestic and foreign political obstacles impeding definitions of effectiveness. For example, in September 2007, Canada's General Ray Henault hosted the NATO Military Committee Conference that provided an opportunity to exchange ideas on sustaining and improving the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) high readiness forces, as well as developing better criteria to measure effectiveness for operations, including Afghanistan. One month later, Canada's Defence Minister Peter McKay announced that Canada's commitment to NATO required the development of better criteria to measure progress and effectiveness for operations, especially in Afghanistan. Echoed in the Government of Canada's Manley Report on Afghanistan (2008), it was suggested that to achieve success in theatre, the Canadian government needed to elevate coordination in Ottawa among Canadian departments and agencies engaged in Afghanistan for better efficiency and effectiveness.8 International stakeholders have also been aware of the significance of increasing effectiveness in security operations. On 29 February 2008, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer suggested that continued discussions must be had on the effectiveness of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operation in Afghanistan, and what is required to achieve success for NATO and the international community as a whole.9

Linking cooperative operational approaches with increased effectiveness is increasing. In 2008, Canadian Forces Major General Marc Lessard became the commander to NATO's Regional Command South (RC-S) in Kandahar, Afghanistan. He suggested that his priorities would be coordinating, or harmonizing, operational aspects of governance and development within the overall security framework to increase the effectiveness of operations. ¹⁰ Moreover. a 2008 presentation offered by Colonel Denis Thompson before he was to lead the CF in Kandahar clearly iterated that measures of effectiveness were an effective military command tool hinged to cooperative operational approaches. H also stated his intentions to use them to address local perceptions, security incidents, and results of useful reconstruction From his presentation, Col Thompson was confident that measuring effectiveness would offer him a useful command tool to make alterations to operations as required in order to increase the effectiveness for both Afghans and Canadians. 1

Such statements indicate that politicians and practitioners alike are interested in: a) understanding effectiveness; and b) methods to increase effectiveness.

APPROACHES TO INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS

The maturation of stakeholder operational approaches are an indication of the growing interest in increasing effectiveness with the broadly shared intention to eventually enhance the efficacy of complex operations within a shared operational space.

Stakeholders are increasingly aware of the salience of effectiveness to their constituencies, donors, and conflict-affected recipient populations and are beginning to develop new collaborative approaches to increase effectiveness. Approaches vary depending on political will, the nature and number of actors involved, the level of integration or coherence among them, intervention/mission aims, as well as the environment in which interventions/missions are deployed. In recent years, a number of approaches have emerged to accommodate these variations. The approaches address the integration of cooperation within operational environments that require the utmost sophistication in planning and management in order to

¹² Meharg, 2009: 36.

⁸ Peace and Conflict Planners Canada, Measures of Effectiveness Framework for Stability Operations, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Crisis Emergency Environments, 2008: 2-3. Ibid. 3.

¹⁰ Ibid, 3.

¹¹ Colonel Thompson was promoted to General upon returning from Afghanistan.

achieve increased effectiveness. There are at least 11 approaches which have been accepted at the strategic level and operationalized in the field. They are: 3-D; Whole of Government; Joined-up; Interagency; Unity of Effort; One UN; Humanitarian Clusters; Comprehensive; Integrated Missions; Hybrid/Joint Operations; and Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

Although many of these approaches are applied in Canada at various governmental and non-governmental levels, of interest to this paper is the Whole of Government (WoG) approach that implies a total government effort in which staff, resources and *materiel* are coordinated towards achieving a national objective in an international intervention. The WoG approach to international interventions brings together military and civilian resources in a focused and coherent fashion, where the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Forces (CF) work closely with government departments and agencies, including the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The Whole of Government approach is inclusive of all governmental departments and agencies fulfilling national interests in complex interventions primarily through focusing all available tools and resources of intervention in a defined geographical area of responsibility. This approach has been popularized in Canada and Australia.

Not only is there a 'joining up' of governmental responses, so too are countries continuing to intervene cooperatively in multi-national integrated operations. ¹⁵ Ongoing cooperation, although political in nature, is spurred by the growing costs of complex operations and a need to mitigate such costs with the effectiveness of such spending.¹⁶ Multinational integrated operations are increasingly multi-functional, encouraging stakeholders to provide services across sectors through a spectrum of tasks and activities, including security, democratic governance and participation, humanitarian assistance and social well-being, economic stabilization and infrastructure, and justice and reconciliation. The desirability of achieving long-term peace and security in fragile states is now weighed against the feasibility of achieving such lofty aims. Achieving 'just enough' in an operation, or what is now referred to as 'good enough' operations, is now compared against achieving the most desirable outcomes: long-term peace and security. Desirable outcomes are very expensive ventures for an international public with growing economic pressures, and it is not yet certain why the high price tag (in both blood and treasure) has not yet achieved its intended aims. Perceived under-achievement has cast the activities of complex operations as ineffective, both for those intervening and also for those experiencing the interventions. Adopting a cooperative approach forces the international community to work together to forward the global peace and security agenda, with the intention of jointly improving the efficacy of interventions during the process.¹⁷ One of the ways to improve operational effectiveness is by applying appropriate measuring frameworks and to measure effectiveness in a cooperative and coordinated process.

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¹³ The whole of government approach is also referred to as WGA as well as whole-of-government (WoG).

¹⁴ DFAIT, 2003; DND, 2005; Jorgensen, 2008.

¹⁵ Hunt, 2006; Stewart and Brown, 2007.

¹⁶ Government of Canada, 2008.

This paper uses the term 'cooperative approach' rather than the generally used term 'coordinated approach' in order to reinforce the collaborative underpinnings of these new approaches as well as to depoliticize the phrase for readers. Unfortunately, most of the phrases used to frame this approach have been co-opted by political parties and hence, have fallen from favour over time. By employing the cooperative approach phrase to generally frame this approach throughout this paper, it is hoped that stakeholders can engage in thinking through the broader issues without becoming stymied by the phrase *du jour*.

Despite objective indicators of progress in many operations, competing interests involved in complex operations and in domestic political debates can privilege a focus on failures. Highlighting failures can carry more political weight for critics than successes carry for proponents of an intervention. Often national and international media is complicit in focusing on failures and regressions, rather than successes and progress. Moreover, the international community has a penchant for understanding what is *not* successful when it comes to complex operations, and is able to identify what *does not work* much more easily than *what does work*.

MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

Similar to the evaluation of scientific experimentation, only a small aspect of a problem is examined when conducting evaluations of complex operations. This, as most scientists suggest, can lead to a fictitious but well-structured representation of the problem under examination. It is not possible to measure all aspects of an intervention activity because not all outcomes, impacts, and effects can be identified during the planning stages of an intervention. There is widespread acknowledgement that it is improbable to be able to measure the *actual* longer-term effectiveness of activities in complex operations due to the inability to examine the whole, resulting in a recalibration towards readiness and capacity, rather than effectiveness. In

There are no agreed-upon metrics, benchmarks or indicators between stakeholders, and each group employs a vastly different set of mechanisms and tools to measure what matters to them. Although tensions regarding choice of metrics, measures, benchmarks, and indicators are noted between stakeholders involved in the same operational space, it is important to examine why these tensions arise. Typically, military and humanitarian stakeholders working in the same operational space do not use the same metrics for measuring the effectiveness of their activities, yet there is pressure to do so. Each group seeks to understand their operational environment, their recipients, and beneficiaries in different ways, therefore, to employ the same set of metrics may not be appropriate.

To some humanitarians, effectiveness is achieved when the total number of kilos of food aid has been delivered in a war-torn environment. To some development experts, effectiveness is achieved when local sustainable livelihoods empower people to feed themselves. In some military and defence organizations, the delivery of food aid in exchange for operational information is an effective activity. Despite these differences, common over-arching goals may be shared among stakeholders, including the aim to improve success, progress and effectiveness, and reduce macro-failures of operations writ-large.

Mechanisms for measuring effectiveness have not kept ahead of day-to-day operational imperatives within the context of complex operations. *Ad hoc* and under-funded measuring mechanisms are the norm among most stakeholders. Moreover, there is no clear understanding between and among stakeholders of what can be considered to be effective operations. Most sectors have been slow to acknowledge the importance of the views and opinions of its clients – the populations affected by conflicts and natural disasters. Yet, there have been shifts in some sectors that move the recipient populations to the centre of the decision-making and implementation process to increase effectiveness.

According to Colonel Brad Bergstrand, Canadian Forces, there are ways in which mechanisms for measuring effectiveness can be examined for applications in complex operations. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Multi-National Experimentation (MNE)

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¹⁸ Curtis et al., quoted in Meharg, 2009: 250.

¹⁹ Emery Brusset, personal communication, 2008, quoted in Meharg, 2009: 250.

process, a coordinated and thematic bi-annual experiment among NATO member states, is demonstrating that it can provide some solutions to this challenge. Multinational Experiment 6 is examining the theme *The Irregular Challenge: A comprehensive approach to a complex problem.* According to MNE 6, to establish and ensure a safe and secure environment, coalition forces require the ability to share information, establish a common situational understanding, synchronize efforts and assess progress. This must be done in concert with interagency partners, international organizations, and other stakeholders when operating in an irregular threat environment.²⁰

MNE 6 is a two-year multinational and interagency effort to improve coalition capabilities, to counter irregular adversaries and to prevent non-compliant actors from becoming adversaries through application of the comprehensive approach to operations. The intention is also to identify better ways to measure effectiveness in complex operations. ²¹ This effort is defense-focused, but involves other interagency organizations from participating nations. Although the United States Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) leads MNE 6, the experiment's strength comes from NATO member states that contribute to and lead specific objective areas during the duration of each experiment process.

There are four major outcomes for MNE 6, of which one is particularly salient to this paper: Assessment of Progress. The primary issues studied under this theme are: 1) what civilian monitoring and evaluation techniques and processes are appropriate for military assessments of progress in stability operations and efforts to counter irregular threats?; 2) how should coalition commanders ensure consistency between the comprehensive operational design/planning and the campaign assessment?; and 3) how can coalition commanders best report/communicate the overall progress of the campaign against irregular threats and put into perspective the key non-military actions that directly or indirectly support the overall strategy to counter irregular threats? The MNE 6 process is attempting to put existing civilian mechanisms and tools for measuring effectiveness in the hands of the defence and security stakeholders to apply better practices for understanding effectiveness and measuring it.

Recent experiences with MNE 6 suggested that this process is not as simple as it appears. Military representatives are wary of civilian methods – such as Rapid Rural Appraisals, Results-Based Measurement, and Logical Frameworks – in that they are often based on narratives, not numbers. A dominant debate is that narratives do not suffice in measuring effectiveness, while numbers and scores do not suffice in capturing ground truth. It is difficult to convert the experience of people into numbers and scores, yet this is made easier through narratives and descriptions. There is much political pressure on organizations who report to their donors, governments, and constituencies to have strong arguments supporting effectiveness. When politicians have the choice between using statistics or narratives, they expound the numbers when related to short-term effectiveness (30 insurgents killed; three wells dug; 243 girl children attending school; 1.5 million immunized against polio). As Stuart Gordon, academic in the Department of Defence and International Affairs at the Royal Military Academy, UK, suggests "we need to attempt to educate bureaucracies to look beyond the 'headlines of the output'" regarding complex operations.

There is deep distrust between the schools of thought that agree with the omnipotence of statistics and discount narratives, opinions and experiences as irrelevant, and the proponents that think words capture reality and that numbers, scores, and measures can

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²⁰ U.S. Joint Forces Command, Multi-National Experimentation 6, https://jecs.jfcom.mil/j9/projects/mne/6/out3/1.aspx, accessed 10 June 2009.

²¹ Ibid, accessed 10 June 2009.

²² Meharg, 2009: 83.

²³ Stuart Gordon, personal communication, 2008.

only superficially convey ground truth. This debate further informs the notion of 'good enough' operations in that numbers, scores and measures appear to be more easily obtained and reported to national governments and donors. Most sectors involved in complex operations have a more developed ability to measure operational effectiveness through quantitative methods because it is easier to report numbers, scores and measures than lengthy narratives:

We are most likely going to slide back into measuring the easy stuff. When we go to ask for more money, [quantitative] indicators are the easy numbers to support our requests. In a way we get stuck, because we have to present a case for funding (with aims and objectives for our activities) before we are on the ground. The up-front plan is based on the best information that we have access to at the time to justify expenditure of resources. However, this plan may not relate to the realities on the ground.²⁴

Based on an interview with a high-ranking European Council representative,

Honest measuring can lead to improving situations and overall effectiveness - and less-than-honest measuring may lead to increased funding or budget allocations. Indicators can be misleading or be falsely set up to make complex operations appear to be successful. The proper use of statistics is a real issue in measuring success; measuring without a proper interpretation of results risks leading to black and white conclusions. To avoid this, a measuring system is required that is scientific but has human intuition built into it. There must be a balance between science and intuition.²⁵

Mary Ann Zimmerman, a training advisor with the U.S. Department of State's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, further argues that the development world has a tendency to "tick boxes" when reporting and measuring effectiveness. Their system is output oriented and based on report writing. What is harder is the analysis of the data that is gathered. Data analysis is not fed into the management of activities; rather, it is fed up the food chain in the form of reporting. Analysis is not linked to management of projects and there is a dependency on "near-term outputs."²⁶

These statements suggest that numbers, scores, and measures may be more easily manipulated than narratives, and the pressure remains high to deliver finite indications of operational success to feed the political nature of these activities.

Western militaries have a decidedly developed capacity in the area of measuring effectiveness, especially in relation to performance management. Enormous funding disparities exist between the development of organizations such as NATO and U.S. and UK militaries, and the rest of the stakeholders of complex operations. With trillions of dollars spent in the last fifty years on improving the systems of command, control, communication, coordination, and information technology, it is not surprising that other sectors have fallen behind the defence sector in terms of planning and measuring effectiveness. Militaries' ability to measure effectiveness is for the most part far superior precisely because of the funds spent on development and multinational experimentation. In fact, funds spent, in theory, put Western militaries at a superior advantage when compared to other stakeholders, such as civilian police or international organizations, even though all are considered equally

²⁴ Brad Bergstrand, personal communication, 2008, quoted in Meharg, 2009: 248. Interestingly, Canada no longer plays a key role as a contributing nation to the MNE process. Although Canada was heavily engaged in previous MNE processes, it remains with observer status for MNE6. ²⁵ Anonymous, personal communication, 2008, quoted in Meharg, 2009: 249.

²⁶ Mary Ann Zimmerman, personal communication, 2008, quoted in Meharg, 2009: 249.

involved in complex operations. Yet, despite the time and funds invested, militaries are not much more able to accurately measure effectiveness in complex operations – especially concerning changes in the human condition – than other stakeholders.

The *human condition* is virtually impossible to measure, and therefore, attributing intervention activity outcomes to the effectiveness of complex operations is a challenge. Typically referred to in humanitarian and development literature as *human development and well-being*, the human condition is the state of socially constructed influences construed from cultural, physical, economic, spiritual/religious, psychological, ideological, and political elements. The Human Development Index (HDI) is often the touchstone index measuring changes in the human condition in conflict-affected regions or developing countries. The HDI brings together three dimensions of progress: 1) life expectancy at birth as an index of population health and longevity; 2) knowledge and education measured by literacy rates; and 3) standard of living measured by gross domestic product per capita. These indicators can inform development activities; however, the HDI is considered outdated, limited in its scope, and unable to convey actual progress in the human condition in complex operations. Yet, it is one of the only indices available that sheds light on the human condition, whether it is worsening or improving.²⁷

Military planners could expand their thinking regarding the social and cultural effects of complex operations on the human condition, because the operational environment is rapidly changing and developments are moving faster than ever before. One of the most effective measuring methodologies available to the military and defence sector is effects-based thinking. In an *Effects-Based Approach to Operations* (EBAO), all elements that military planners input into their framework model have primary effects, as well as knock-on effects. The significance of these effects, however, is not necessarily captured using EBAO, but the Approach creates a map of potential impacts of an activity across the spectrum of complex operations. If other sectors began using the same sort of framework, this could result in the ability to map the wider effectiveness of complex operations.

What is needed is an integrated way of thinking about measuring the whole rather than the parts, and considering effectiveness across the spectrum of conflict and intervention.³⁰

IS "GOOD ENOUGH" EFFECTIVE?

Despite the upsurge of interest in adopting wider mandates and increasing effectiveness, alternative discourse persists. Peace operations missions are trying to achieve too much. Missions have been asked to be *omnipotent* in that they are expected to include all scales, activities and elements of security and state building; yet, rarely are there enough *means* contributed by member states to meet political objectives, and the ways to achieve these objectives are often misdirected or misapplied. Although the *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, released in 2000 and dubbed the "Brahimi Report," represents a positive shift in thinking regarding linking up means and ends of peacekeeping missions, it remains difficult to operationalize in terms of recommendations, let alone measure them. David Chuter, security analyst, argues: "Mission objectives must always be agreed upon at the political level and linkages made between the political end-state and the mission means. We may be at the point where the pendulum is swinging back towards simpler operations, and the activities that are difficult to measure will be dropped from the mandate."³¹

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²⁷ Meharg, 2009: 5.

²⁸ Ibid. quoted in Meharg, 2009: 250.

²⁹ Smith, 2002; Grossman-Vermaas, 2003; Ho How Hoang, 2004; Lowe and Ng. 2004.

³⁰ Steve Flemming, personal communication, 2008, quoted in Meharg, 2009: 250.

³¹ David Chuter, personal communication, 2008, quoted in Meharg, 2009: 248.

Chuter may be right. The goals of complex operations are recalibrating, from the desirable, back to the feasible. "As the option of reinvestment or staying the course has declined in appeal, those counselling disengagement and those recommending a revised engagement with fragile and failed states increasingly dominate debate over state building goals and strategies." Fatigue is prevalent among the international community involved in operations in Afghanistan, some countries in Africa, and Haiti, in particular. Fatigue is building based on the cost and lack of progress of operations, as well as the wide remit operations have adopted in order to 'fix' the entire spectrum of a failed state including the economic, security, social, cultural, and governance challenges in post-conflict states. Stakeholders may be tiring of doing too much with little gain for their organizations, or for the host nation and the recipient populations with which they work.

While the UN and other peace operation missions continue to attempt to do too much through wide-lens mandates, other stakeholders are adopting the "do-more" approach in the ever-competing space of peace operations and crisis management. Crisis-affected environments blur the boundaries between stakeholders and their roles: soldiers are humanitarians; developers are conducting post-conflict reconstruction; and diplomats are working in development. David Chuter uses a Christmas tree analogy to describe the effects of this growing competition and overlap: "Everyone wants to put an ornament on the Christmas tree. This becomes lethally dangerous when it happens all at the same time. This causes fratricide between the various mission elements because there is too much competition all at once, and the tendency [is] to kill the other rather than work with the other. In effect, the attempt to do more with fewer resources at hand can only reduce the overall effectiveness of interventions.

Collectively, there is an expectation to establish tenable peace and security in conflict-affected environments, yet these expectations may be too high. Rarely, if ever, has the international community achieved peace writ large through complex operations. This remains a challenge in the new complex operations.

In 2004, the idea of "good enough governance" was conceptualized in relation to state building and the challenges therein.³⁶ The idea stemmed from intervention revisionism in support of disengagement. The notion of "good enough" began to apply to other areas of state building other than governance, with the interest in making international intervention more effective and less self-defeating over time.³⁷ Good enough is a lowering of expectations regarding the ability of the international community to be at cause for political, social, security, and economic change in a host nation and its regions.

Since 2004, the notion of "good enough" has permeated U.S. workshops, seminars and conferences on complex operations. Government representatives ask the question: "What is good enough in Iraq? Afghanistan? Haiti? How much must we collectively accomplish before we can leave?" While there are no answers to these salient questions, there is widespread support among U.S. stakeholders when the question arises. Most people agree that there must be a point when an intervention has done *just enough* for complex operations to have gained traction in a host nation and for the intervening power to be able to transfer authority and depart.

³⁴ Fraser, 2006; Suhrke, 2006; United Nations, 2006.

³² Mile Kahler in Paris and Sisk, 2009: 296.

³³ Klotzle, 2006.

³⁵ David Chuter, personal communication, 2008, quoted in Meharg, 2009: 249.

³⁶ Grindle, 2004, 2007.

³⁷ Mile Kahler in Paris and Sisk, 2009: 296.

Recent experiences with the U.S. Army at the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI) in Carlisle, PA, as well as at the Center for Naval Analysis (CAN) in Arlington, VA, point towards the U.S. government becoming more interested in examining what "good enough" looks like in complex operations in order to claim some semblance of success and exit an area of operations.³⁸ So far, the notion of "good enough" remains somewhat U.S.-centric and has not yet formally entered NATO or other regional and national dialogues on complex operations.

Nevertheless, the idea of what is good enough may be worth consideration by the Government of Canada departments involved in international intervention as complex operations become increasingly resource-intensive in achieving the high standards set by the international community. If the U.S. begins to adopt "good enough" policies for international interventions, will Canada follow suit? Perhaps it is easier to perform to this standard rather than focus on achieving high expectations and more desirable long-term outcomes in fragile states. If the Government of Canada wants to improve the effectiveness of its operations — moving from the feasible towards the desirable — it will need to define effectiveness and apply improved technical systems for measuring the effectiveness of its intervention activities.

OPTIONS FOR INCREASING CAPACITIES FOR MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

The following section identifies some options to improve Canadian capacities for measuring effectiveness, which can lead to better practices to achieve not only what is feasible, but also what is desirable in terms of sustainable peace and security. The options are to: 1) define operational effectiveness to support cooperative mandates; 2) understand effectiveness through cooperative intervention approaches; and 3) adopt a framework that measures effectiveness across the spectrum of complex operation activities.

Options: Define Operational Effectiveness

A working definition of effectiveness must be achieved before a robust dialogue occurs regarding understanding and measuring effectiveness. There is no clear definition of effectiveness among and between Canadian stakeholders involved in complex operations, nor is there agreement on how to apply an improved cooperative approach to achieve increased effectiveness. The notion of effectiveness is rife with national and foreign political agendas; however, a process to define effectiveness can be initiated among national stakeholders to answer the following questions:

- What is effectiveness? Effectiveness for whom? Where? For how long? Who/what is left out of this understanding?
- What is macro effectiveness for Canadian stakeholders involved in complex operations?
- What are the common elements of this understanding?
- Could these common elements inform an overall definition of effectiveness for the Government of Canada departments involved in complex operations?
- Are there equally important micro-level definitions of effectiveness used by Canadian stakeholders/sectors involved in complex operations? What are they? Are these important for other stakeholders to understand?

As a definition of effectiveness between and among stakeholders is more clearly formulated and communicated, a way forward can be based on understanding rather than historical, ideological, political or cultural agendas between stakeholders and sectors.

³⁸ This change may be directly related to perceived mistakes made in Iraqi operations.

Option: Understand Effectiveness through Cooperative Approaches

The understanding and acceptance of stakeholder perspectives regarding effectiveness – even if they are counter-intuitive or considered as *wrong* – allows the further development and maturation of a cooperative approach to complex operations, and eventually, the measuring of the effectiveness of such operations. The effectiveness achieved in areas of operation is predicated upon attitudinal shifts to know and accept the *other* within cooperative approaches to interventions. The cooperative approach can lead to understanding effectiveness if a maturation of the frameworks for measuring effectiveness occurs, as well as the ways in which policies, strategies, and guidance direct the process of coordination towards effectiveness.

Option: Frameworks for Measuring Effectiveness

Each sector involved in complex operations measures feasibility and progress with a distinct scope and scale operationalized with a different spectrum of activities. The fulfillment of a mandate and related resource commitments differ greatly between sectors and impede the capacity to measure effectiveness across sectors.

These differing notions of feasibility and progress, and mandates and resource allocations, impact the ways in which effectiveness is measured, compared, and understood within the defence, diplomacy, and development sectors. It has become critical that effectiveness become coordinated concepts between defence, diplomacy, and development activities in intervention operations at national levels and between international agencies and actors.

Frameworks for accurately and consistently measuring effectiveness could contribute to stronger reporting to donors, home governments, and constituencies. As information is shared, stakeholders gain an understanding of the perspectives of intervention partners. When information such as this is shared and understanding increases, more coordination and cooperation may result. Increases in coordination and cooperation have been shown to improve the effectiveness of complex operations.

Most of the sectors involved in complex operations, in particular the diverse humanitarian sector and civilian policing sector, have not employed appropriate frameworks for measuring effectiveness. This has resulted in a lack of information in several sectors, decreasing the ability to measure overall impact, success, and operational progress.

The international community's ability to contribute to tenable peace around the world depends on an ability to accurately assess effectiveness in complex operations. A framework for measuring effectiveness should capture criteria by which intervention progress can be systematically documented and communicated among stakeholders. Such a system could offer a state of the art technological information framework that underpins real-time command, control, and network-centric coordination of such activities with Effects-Based Approach to Operations (EBAO) logic.

This type of solution could be customizable and sophisticated, yet user-friendly to replace the *ad hoc* measures of effectiveness employed within the defence, diplomacy, and development sectors. Measuring effectiveness is best completed at the strategic and operational levels, but needs to be rigorous enough to inform intervention decision-makers so that midcourse corrections can be made if necessary. A framework for measuring effectiveness could focus on the relationship between costs, time, activities, and impacts.

A framework that appropriately measures and reports on effectiveness – from the perspective of the interveners as well as the recipient populations that must live with the effects of interventions in the long-term – is required in the emerging inter-operable and inter-departmental environments in which governments, stakeholders, and sectors are working.

The rapidly changing context of failed and failing states suggests that actors need to quickly communicate measures of effectiveness information through an interoperable framework. Centralizing "effectiveness" data could inform intervention operations at many levels and provide the much needed baseline data to measure effectiveness in the longer-term, something that the international community is not yet capable of. With consistent use over a multi-year period, a framework for measuring effectiveness could substantially underwrite the progress of effectiveness of cooperative intervention operations.

CONCLUSION

Since 2004, the notion of effectiveness has become ubiquitous and has guided the interpretation of successes achieved by complex operation activities. Humanitarian agencies, civilian police, military and defence, as well as the development sector, have engaged in new and better cooperative approaches to achieve effectiveness, among their sectors, and also between sectors, a concept bred from both interest and necessity of improving activities to generate long-term democratic peace and security. The international community, as well as the Government of Canada, continues to intervene in conflict-affected regions with poorly crafted definitions of effectiveness, a general lack of understanding between stakeholders working in the same operational space, and few standardized frameworks for capturing progress and regression. These weaknesses make it increasingly difficult to understand when feasible or desirable outcomes have been achieved. By clearly defining that which is to be measured (effectiveness), and overcoming national and foreign political agendas informing effectiveness, the international community of stakeholders may yet reach their intervention expectations. Canada has a strong role to play in the ongoing effectiveness dialogue if it can accommodate a working definition of operational effectiveness and apply this definition to understanding and measuring outcomes. This could ensure operational outcomes that are more desirable, rather than those that are merely 'good enough.'

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