



Tracking the Insurgency: measuring political effects in Counterinsurgency games.

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Introduction.

Contents

- Bio.
- COIN Games.
- Use of Trackers.
- How they can be improved.
- Where to go next.

Counterinsurgency Warfare.

- Most of the twentieth and early twenty first century saw an insurgency being fought somewhere.
- Whilst armies (rightly) train for kinetic engagements historically they have spent most of their time fighting insurgencies.
- Will still be relevant going forward into the future. It is just one aspect of hybrid warfare.

Bio

Academic.

- Currently a PhD student at Bath Spa University.
- MA in Military History.
- BA in History.

Gaming.

- Gaming for over 30 years.
- Designed and run two megagames.
- Had a series of scenarios published.
- Recent explorations of matrix games.

COIN Games

Characteristics.

- Mixture of kinetic and non- kinetic gameplay.
- Role of security in the game.
- Tactical actions are rarely COIN games.
- Political ramifications of violence.

Examples.

- *Insurgency* (1979)
- *Vietnam 1965- 1975* (1984)
- *Nicaragua* (1988)
- GMT *COIN* Series (2012+)
- *District Commander* Series (2019+)

The Use of Trackers.

Trackers.

- Support for a faction goes up and down depending on players' actions.
- Often multiplied by the population rating of an area.
- Result used to generate victory points of to keep score

What does it mean?

- Arbitrary/ abstracted values are fine in a hobby game.
- What more is needed in a serious game?

Trackers in Serious Games

Abstract.

- Is it enough to just show the direction of the effects of a player's actions?
- Is this simple link between cause-and-effect sufficient for most games?

Absolute.

- Should there be a proper statistical underpinning behind the numbers?
- Can this be achieved?
- Look towards social science research/methodologies.

COIN Theorists on the Nature of Support.

Population support.

- Mao “The insurgent must move among the people as the fish swims in the sea.”
- Population –centric versus Enemy- centric counterinsurgency.
- What is ‘support’, ‘hostility’, ‘neutrality’

Theorists.

- Kitson.
- Galula.
- Trinquair.
- Nagl.
- Kilcullen.

- Cf. ‘Brutalization’ COIN

Focus of the Game.

Levels of Game.

- Strategic:
 - Acceptance of Government
 - Voting/ Elections

Different effects.

- Operational/ Tactical:
 - Decreasing support (food/ shelter) to the insurgent
 - Intelligence being volunteered to the counterinsurgent
 - Actionable intelligence on future insurgent plans is the desired outcome
- Different ways of achieving these aims.

Where to Go Next?

Social Science.

- Different methodologies and the inherent difficulty of qualitative research.
- Micro/ macro level of focus.
- Case studies- are they suitable to be extrapolated from?
- Polls- are they reliable enough?

Gaming psychology.

- Utility of roleplaying factions.
- Red Teaming- cultural biases.
- Megagames- inherent problems.

Better Trackers.

Political Compass.

- Two axis tracker.
- Political left/ right and the x axis and totalitarian to libertarian on the y axis.
- Can use its questionnaires as a way of modelling the position.

- Possibility to overlay with a moving Overton window to track a population's current stance.

Track from both ends.

- Two factions counts in from either end. The space in the middle represents the population that remains neutral.

S-CIN-S.

My own attempt.

- Tactical level.
- Trackers for support and hostility for both the insurgent and the counterinsurgent.
- Can use the level of support to gain intel that can be spent to set ambushes.

Progress.

- Rough prototype stage.
- Tool- box approach to player'[s actions so will be adaptable to many historical periods.

Use of Historical Case Studies.

Validation.

- If a counterinsurgency model/ simulation/ game can replicate history, can it be modified to represent a current or predicted situation where the end state is unknown?
- Minimum of variables to be changed.

Limits.

- Remember- “All models are wrong, some are useful”, George Box 1976.

Thank You

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