

# Comments

Dan (not verified)

Fri, 12/18/2009 - 12:45pm

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The problem is that the undefined concept of "hearts and minds" is entirely subjective, and means something different to everyone. Some people assume that if you're not "winning hearts and minds," you're kicking in doors and dropping bombs in the middle of civilian areas. Others take hearts and minds to mean building schools and inoculating children and animals. They argue that this is not the most important thing that needs to be done, and instead we should be focusing on protecting the population. But in protecting the population, while all care should be taken to treat locals with respect and keep them safe, might involve inconveniences like curfews and cordon and search, and might involve shooting and clearing insurgents out of a village.

So someone might consider this to be a hearts and minds approach, b/c what better way to win hearts and minds than protecting people from the insurgents? Others might not consider it to be hearts and minds b/c it involves the use of a gun.

See what I mean? It is a useless term. We're better off throwing it out and explaining (in words) exactly what we mean, even if that involves writing an extra paragraph that doesn't fit well on a powerpoint slide.

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Jason  
Walters  
(not  
verified)

Thu,  
12/17/2009  
- 4:37pm

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"Heart and Minds" is just one piece to the COIN puzzle and many folks can say it's flawed but you must include it into your plan. Dropping bombs instead of going into the village may have something to do with the good guy to bad guy ratio and not lazy tactics. I did it and it saved the lives of my small ODA and 30 ANA. When you are outnumbered 3:1 as we were in most engagements you have to take the risk of TGO vs. walking in like a hero and getting your butt handed to you. Besides, precision munitions work and a sniper shot from quiet flyer at 10,000 feet evens the odds. I spent many days in the villages asking how can we help and the number one response was stop the bad guys from crossing the river and coming into our villages. This created a win - win relationship and I was not there to win anything except the confidence of the locals and to show that we are willing to provide security indirectly "by, with,

and through" the small number of ANA that we had the privilege of working with. We used our civil affairs team continuously to provide what they could "by, with, and through" our ANA. My men and I put the ANA out front and played the supporting role. That worked my situation and all situations must be approached separately without the "cookie cutter" in hand. The COIN strategy must focus on the people THE Key Terrain. Thanks to all willing to discuss your views, the education is priceless.

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## SJPONeill

Thu,  
12/17/2009 -  
3:21pm

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Hallelujah!! The relief column has punched through the ring of heartsandmindists siege.....!!!!

This was always the problem when COIN was adopted into common parlance as the catch-all term for any campaign against unconventional, irregular, terrorist, criminal, anarchist, nihilist, etc etc threat; and one of the reasons that the UK went for Countering Irregular Activity (another step broader than the Marines' Countering the Irregular Threat) in order to capture the broader range of potential threats we may face today and in the near-to-mid future. Drop 'COIN' into a discussion and key words that will appear on cue are 'hearts and minds', 'Malaya', and Templer - which is all very nice if you want a discussion on the very narrow topic of classic COIN - and even then when you peel back the layers of Malaya you find a super-effective IO campaign that is still working today.

The effects on hearts on minds that may be important to a COIN/CIT/CIA campaign are those that might be measured two to three decades or even generations down the track as a means of confirming that the issues have actually been resolved...

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## Ken White (not verified)

Wed,  
12/02/2009 -  
11:38am

[Permalink](#)

Steve Castner:

Interesting question:<blockquote>"Does DOD have the capability and capacity for such training of the platoon and squad leaders who will be in the forthcoming wave of 30,000?"</blockquote>I know the capability and capacity are there.

I strongly doubt the will or desire to cut through the bureaucracy and just do it exists...

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Steve  
Castner  
(not  
verified)

Wed,  
12/02/2009  
- 3:28am

[Permalink](#)

Ken White was precient in his observation that:

"That method [securing the population] is not problem free, however. It requires a large number of culturally literate reasonably well trained persons with enlightened and competent leadership -- not easy to attain and maintain."

A requirement for a large number of culturally literate reasonably well trained person s exists for any manifestation of COIN. Does DOD have the capability and capacity f or such training of the platoon and squad leaders who will be in the forthcoming wave of 30,000?

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Hamchuck  
(not  
verified)

Tue,  
12/01/2009 -  
3:09pm

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Oldpapa

Concur- it's not about hearts and minds. It's about control, and who has it. Security forces, or insurgents.

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oldpapajoe  
(not  
verified)

Tue,  
12/01/2009 -  
2:58pm

[Permalink](#)

A number of company grade and junior field grade officers with tours in both ITO and ATO have told me that it was/is easier to win some of the hearts and minds of Iraqis than with Afghans. All of them are convinced it is impossible to win the hearts and minds of the Afghans. Why? They think it is merely a reflection of Afghanistan culture and history. While the Afghan may work with Infidels, they simply can't go beyond some pragmatic, "what is in it for me?" approach on specific issues. These officers say anyone, no matter the rank, who think they can win hearts and minds in Afghanistan is a fool. These same officers suggest that in Iraq, it was possible to win the minds of Iraqis. These officers believe that is merely a reflection of history in that Iraq has had a long presence of Infidels and a mish mash of outsiders. While it is possible to win a heart here or there, the typical Iraqi won't risk himself, his family, his tribe to help an outsider, especially an Infidel. They might work with outsiders but that is about it. These officers stress that the key issue is to ensure you don't piss off the Iraqi or Afghan (often unintentionally, such as having a female talk with authority to an Afghan male, especially), and realize that the attitude from the Iraqis, and especially the Afghans, is this: How I can get what I can from this guy today? Finally, all the officers say that any mirror imaging with an Iraqi and especially a rural Afghan along the lines of honesty, being true to one's word, etc is being stupid and leads to the American becoming frustrated. For

what its worth, most thought the movie Lawence of Arabia was not a bad depiction of how an Iraqi or even a Afghan kind of sees himself and interacting with outsiders, especially Infidels.

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J.T.

Tue,  
12/01/2009  
- 8:03am

[Permalink](#)

Bill - I think in general we are saying the same thing.

From my orig post:

"...at the end of the day in places like Anbar, Kandahar, or Paktia, the populace respects tactical competence and persistence. Meaning U.S. forces primarily derive respect in these areas for their ability to respond to violence, deal violence, and deter violence. All other aspects of gaining a populace's respect are secondary to these factors."

The foundation for doing COIN begins with the populace's understanding that the counterinsurgent can and will eliminate a threat...and can do so in such a manner that he is not forced to throw the proverbial 'baby out with the bath water' - i.e. dropping a 2 x 1000Lbs bombs on a village because he is taking SAF.

I still believe the 3 phases extracted from vegetius' essay are accurate for successful COIN. Granted, there is a lot that goes into each phase and the phases are not necessarily linear. This is reflective of the successful COIN done in Anbar in my opinion.

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Bob's  
World

Mon,  
11/30/2009  
- 12:36am

[Permalink](#)

Bill,

Good post. I would only add in regards to your legitimacy points this additional concern: What do you do when not only does the populace perceive its government, the counterinsurgent, to be illegitimate, but also that they perceive that that government draws what legitimacy it does possess from the U.S.?

My theory, and this is the heart of GWOT, they attack that outside source of inappropriate legitimacy. So, when one intervenes in such a situation, ones efforts to make the counterinsurgent more legitimate are likely to produce the opposite effect and also enhance the perceptions of one's own inappropriate role. This is why I think the number one thing that the U.S. must understand and target in such situations are these perceptions of inappropriate legitimacy.

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**Bill  
Moore  
(not  
verified)**

Thu,  
11/26/2009  
- 3:27pm

[Permalink](#)

Gentlemen,

I want to make my position clear, WHAM definitely involves killing bad guys. It isn't building schools and handing out candy just so you can get a photo of a bunch of smiling kids to post in some propaganda magazine, then drive back to your base.

As I posted above, "Winning minds is the process of convincing the populace that the counterinsurgent is going to win in the short and long run." You're probably not going to do that unless you convince the populace that you're militarily superior to the insurgents. However, the art is how you do the killing, and this repeated cowardly act of dropping bombs on villages because someone is shooting at you from the village is playing into the enemy's hands. You have to maneuver to close with and kill the enemy, not the civilians he is hiding among. Once you get this right, then in theory (and there are historical examples) the capturing and killing of insurgents will significantly increase when you're successful with your WHAM approach, because the people will tell you who they are.

I personally non-concur with describing COIN as

1. establish security
2. stand-up indigenous security force
3. transition

My post would be too long to go into all the details, but what is described here is a draft occupation doctrine. In the vast majority of COIN scenarios we'll simply assist the host nation with their security efforts as required (usually equipping, training, and advising). Furthermore, this three step process doesn't address the fatal flaw in our current strategy, which is what if the security forces you're training won't fight? What if the government you're attempting to transition to is illegitimate? We tend to wish away these issues, they're too hard to talk about, yet both are your centers of gravity for success of this proposed strategy. So the question is, what if the government you're attempting to transition to is illegitimate? What is your strategy then?

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**Backwards  
Observer**

Thu,  
11/26/2009 -  
2:10pm

[Permalink](#)

Some Hearts and Minds Literary Trivia (a diversion)

Sir Gerald Templer, widely associated with the coining of the hearts and minds manoeuvre, and George Orwell, author of *Homage to Catalonia*, 1984, *Animal Farm* et al, both attended Wellington College.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerald\\_Templer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerald_Templer)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Orwell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Orwell)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wellington\\_College,\\_Berkshire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wellington_College,_Berkshire)

If English college is anything like English secondary school, the two were probably exposed, as it were, to the Romantic Poets. The fascination of heart and mind are a key feature of English Romanticism. Another key idea is that of Negative Capability, as described in a letter by John Keats:

"I had not a dispute but a disquisition, with Dilke on various subjects; several things dove-tailed in my mind, and at once it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously - I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason-Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetratium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge."

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negative\\_capability](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negative_capability)

<http://www.mrbauld.com/negcap.html>

Coleridge's poem, Kubla Khan, Includes the line:

"A savage place! as holy and enchanted / As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted / By woman wailing for her demon lover!"

[http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/stc/Coleridge/poems/Kubla\\_Khan.html](http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/stc/Coleridge/poems/Kubla_Khan.html)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kubla\\_Khan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kubla_Khan)

The Demon Lover by Robin Morgan is a feminist critique on the roots of terrorism. I only made it about a third of the way through, but on page 76 she ponders this quote from Mao's Little Red Book:

"The immediate object is to destroy the enemy, but at the same time it is self-preservation ... How then do we justify the encouragement of heroic sacrifice in war? ... Is this not in contradiction with 'preserving oneself?' ... In fact, there is no contradiction at all ... sacrifice and self-preservation are both opposite and complementary to each other. For such sacrifice is essential not only for destroying the enemy but also for preserving oneself - partial and temporary 'non-preservation' (sacrifice or paying the price) is necessary for the sake of general and permanent preservation."

The mental moebius hula hoop of non-preservation compares interestingly to Negative Capability, and indeed to teen romance novels.

Thanks for reading.

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Thu,  
11/26/2009  
- 11:51am

[Permalink](#)

Vegetius' article is sound. As highlighted by other posts, I read it more as an effort to explain COIN vs debunking the myth of hearts and minds. Essentially Vegetius argues that there are generally Three Phases you need to execute in COIN:

1. establish security
2. stand-up indigenous security force
3. transition

The first phase is the most important because it sets the foundation for the remaining. An essential implied task for this phase is earning the respect of the populace. Building clinics, holding goat grabs, hiring legions of day labor contribute to this respect -- BUT-- at the end of the day in places like Anbar, Kandahar, or Paktia, the populace respects tactical competence and persistence. Meaning U.S. forces primarily derive respect in these areas for their ability to respond to violence, deal violence, and deter violence. All other aspects of gaining a populace's respect are secondary to these factors.

There are no substitutes for providing presence patrols and continuously interacting with the populace. This is dangerous but an unavoidable step. In Bing West's recent article regarding the USMC's efforts at OP Man-Bear-Pig in Helmand Province, he had a great quote from an Afghan soldier saying something like the Marine squad that operated the OP worked harder and lived worse than the poorest Afghan farmers he knew. It is no surprise that this OP is in Nawa District where the Marines are experiencing some success with the local populace.

This concept is seemingly straight forward but I see many units out there relying on CERP to earn the respect of the populace vs boots on the ground.

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Barry  
(not  
verified)

Thu,  
11/26/2009  
- 10:46am

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vegetius:

"Gian: Because I am doing it...v."

First, could you tell us when and where; second, is there any indication that any results you are achieving will last longer than your actual, local presence on a particular small piece of ground?

S-2: "Didn't McMaster generate an overwhelming kinetic presence when his Cav Regt. stepped into Tal Afar in May 2005. In turn, didn't his decisive approach early-on create the conditions for an expanded interactive relationship with the population?"

I'm running on bad memory, so please forgive me if I'm off, but McMaster's operation involved an incredibly high level of troops to population; the reason that it was at least temporarily successful was that they saturated the city, and walled the city off from the rest of the world.



Second, in the long run, it wasn't a particularly successful operation. My guess would be that it simply failed because there was nothing to take over when local US forces were drawn down.

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S-2 (not verified)

Thu,  
11/26/2009  
- 9:18am

[Permalink](#)

Didn't McMaster generate an overwhelming kinetic presence when his Cav Regt. stepped into Tal Afar in May 2005. In turn, didn't his decisive approach early-on create the conditions for an expanded interactive relationship with the population?

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Steve2

Thu,  
11/26/2009  
- 8:35am

[Permalink](#)

Built into this is the assumption that this will work after some prolonged period of less than optimal interaction with these same peoples. At what point have you lost credibility? How can you be sure that those who appear to be your small working cadre are not just scamming you to get what they can until you leave?

Trust lost takes a long time to be regained. I am thinking this will take 10-20 years with no major mistakes. At \$100 billion per year.

Steve

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Anonymous (not verified)

Thu, 11/26/2009  
- 4:40am

[Permalink](#)

The issue with WHAM is that there is no clear, shared meaning. The posts on this thread all indicate varied ideas or perceptions of what WHAM is. It is much like EBO and design: Whose approach to EBO and whose approach to design are we using for discussion? So I would have to agree with Bill Moore. I would also say that the term "human terrain" is loaded; that's why you won't find it in doctrine. It conjures a nice sentiment and drives home some concepts, but people are not geographic features.

At the risk of being perceived to be in agreement with Gian on anything, you can attempt to shape conditions, not populations. And Ken's right in that one cannot directly shape a population (complex no matter how apparently homogeneous). Can shape conditions in turn shape a population? In some cases.

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Jason  
D (not  
verified)

Thu,  
11/26/2009  
- 2:51am

[Permalink](#)

I agree with Bill Moore. "Hearts and Minds" is just a lazy all encompassing title that can be applied to the concepts of operation for theatre. If you are technical about the title then perhaps they should have more appropriately called it the "Teach nations that they can benefit and find safety by investing and involving themselves in a sense of government and law (Hearts) and (Minds) that they can prosper, gain in wealth and holding, and better teach their families and children the right way to live (whatever way that may be) by doing so, approach". That would work better, but its a little too long. How and why we do that is a large and necessary debate, but the arguing over the name of it seems trivial if we don't get the order of operation correct to begin with.

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[Christian Bleuer](#) (not  
verified)

Wed, 11/25/2009 - 11:12pm

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I'll excerpt Kalyvas's main arguments in regards to fence-sitting:

"...contestation makes it difficult for most people to align with a single political actor."

"...For most people, fence-sitting takes the form of passive neutrality and attentisme: caught in the crossfire between incumbents and insurgents, with their life on the line, they prefer to remain as uninvolved as possible."

But Kalyvas's argument is not absolutist:

"It is important to stress that fence-sitting, though generally presented as a constant feature of civil war is a variable one, closely associated with the level of contestation."

Not absolutist, but still a useful analytical tool, as Kalyvas stresses through about 6 pages in his book.

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Bill  
Moore  
(not  
verified)

Wed,  
11/25/2009  
- 3:44pm

[Permalink](#)

I dislike most buzz phrases such as "hearts and minds" and "through, by and with", etc., because they mislead people into thinking these are strategies, and if we only do this we'll win. We have replaced real strategy and planning with buzz phrases, and we have been struggling ever since.

While I may agree the phrase "hearts and minds" sounds appropriate for a teenage romance model, the intent is that is a rational, not emotional, approach to convince the target population to support the counterinsurgent (we don't need overwhelming support).

rt as you mentioned, but the counterinsurgent needs a level of support to be successful (with current international norms and ROE).

Winning hearts means convincing the populace that their interests will be best served if the counterinsurgent wins. This implies that whoever is providing the governance (the U.S. or the host nation preferably) that they "actually" will govern better than the insurgents. If they won't because they're hopelessly corrupt and don't care about their people, then in IMO the insurgents should win.

Winning minds is the process of convincing the populace that the counterinsurgent is going to win in the short and long run. When the populace does their calculus on who to support, they generally don't want to support the losing team and pay the price for doing so (family's security and job security, etc.).

Despite the girlish phraseology, I think the concepts are sound and can't be disregarded. On the other hand blindly conducting civil-military projects and economic development does not win hearts, they must address real needs/desires and the target audience must believe that the counterinsurgent is going to win, otherwise you'll just get a thank you, and we hope you don't hit our landmine on the way home.

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Ken  
White  
(not  
verified)

Wed,  
11/25/2009  
- 12:02pm

[Permalink](#)

vegetius:

I agree with Gian -- to think you can 'shape' a populace is the height of arrogance IMO. I've watched US and other forces try that a number of places in a number of ways over a great many years, even got to try it a few places myself. I have yet to see it really work beyond a few local and temporary successes...

The idea expressed in Armchair Coin's quote: "<i>Col. Chanson, the commander of French forces in Kapisa, who dismisses the idea of "hearts and minds" and instead pushes the idea that you need to gain the respect of the population by securing them, but not waste time thinking you can win them over."</i>" has in my experience and observation been far more effective than any attempts at social or political improvement of the local population and is better than bribery and cajolery at winning COIN efforts. That method is not problem free, however. It requires a large number of culturally literate reasonably well trained persons with enlightened and competent leadership -- not easy to attain and maintain.

Adventures of this sort are better avoided by nipping the problems early, logically and aggressively -- not forcefully and not militarily.

As you illustrate in your article:<blockquote>"In this phase, a single bad or ill-advised host nation commander can undo months of progress...That single setback won't likely impact the entire Iraqi effort, but it highlights how delicate the shaping of human terrain can be."</blockquote>Which points to the issue of several such failures possibly

or even probably impacting an entire effort; to malicious 'host nation' commanders who may not be what they purport to be; to lesser persons from the host nation causing commanders to fail. Many other impactors can enter the equation...

Fortunately, as you also say:<blockquote>"In counterinsurgencies, not being for us does not necessarily mean being against us."</blockquote>I think you started with a good premise -- "hearts and minds" is / are indeed a myth which we really need discarded before it does even more damage, then you seemingly succumbed to a little hubris:<blockquote>"...Because I am doing it...v."</blockquote>With what degree of permanence over how large an area affecting how many and what percent of the local nations populace to achieve what end -- and will your replacement do as well...

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## Gunslinger

Wed,  
11/25/2009 -  
11:58am

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V - Interesting post. I was a little confused by the title though. Your suggestion is n't that the idea of "hearts and minds" is a myth, but it's that the myth is that the counterinsurgent needs to "win" the preponderance of hearts and minds - emphasis on preponderance? (I'll leave the silliness of "hearts and minds" for a later discussion) And that your experience shows that large neutral populations are okay for interim periods?

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## vegetius (not verified)

Wed,  
11/25/2009  
- 11:28am

[Permalink](#)

Gian: Because I am doing it...v.

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## gian p gentile (not verified)

Wed,  
11/25/2009  
- 11:12am

[Permalink](#)

Sorry about the typos in the above post.

gian

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## gian p gentile (not

Vegitius said this in the piece:

verified)

Wed,  
11/25/2009  
- 11:10am

[Permalink](#)

"In most insurgencies, the bulk of the population is sitting on the fence."

Sorry to say this to you, Vegitius, but this is old-school thinking of counter-maoist, Galula days. Unfortunately this same thinking about populations is a primary pillar in FM 3-24. Populations are not simply so divided into a rectangular box with 10% at the top who hate the incumbent and counterinsurgent, 10% at the bottom who love you, and the mass in the middle who are just sitting on the fence waiting to see which side can provide more security, or to use your word to be "shaped."

Even a cursory reading of political scientist Stathis Kalyvas's work suggests the highly problematic nature of understanding populations in this simplistic way.

Why, Vegitius, do you assume that the "human terrain," or populations, can be "shaped" in the first place at the barrel of a foreign occupiers gun?

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[Armchair  
COIN \(not  
verified\)](#)

Wed, 11/25/2009 -  
10:31am

[Permalink](#)

Sort of linked in to this idea that "hearts and minds" isn't the right approach, those of you who speak French should look at the report of Col. Chanson, the commander of French forces in Kapisa, who dismisses the idea of "hearts and minds" and instead pushes the idea that you need to gain the respect of the population by securing them, but not waste time thinking you can win them over. Here's the link: <http://www.lepoint2.com/sons/pdf/rapport-chanson.pdf>