

A STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES APPROACH TO REGIONAL C-IED ENTERPRISES

By Paul Amoroso, an explosive hazards specialist at Assessed Mitigation Options (AMO) consultancy

INTRODUCTION

In a previous Counter-IED Report article it was outlined how owing to the transnational nature of the networks that facilitate IED use, that strategic approaches coupled with regional coherence are required to achieve appropriate and effective impact in C-IED donor assistance¹ provided to IED affected states. It was also argued that owing to the maturity of Western law enforcement, security and defence architectures and the greater resources available to them coupled with the often-evolutionary nature of their development, attempts to replicate or implement such C-IED enterprises in the provision of C-IED donor assistance are not considered to be best practice. Pursuit of the perceived gold standard of Western C-IED enterprises creates an unachievable end state for an IED affected state requiring C-IED donor assistance. This issue can be addressed by having C-IED strategic guidance written in clear, concise, accurate language which can be employed by IED affected states and donors to serve as a bridge to barriers as well as differences in expectations. A set of C-IED strategic principles can serve to inform such C-IED strategic guidance. This article will outline how C-IED strategic principles are needed to achieve the required impacts and outcomes when providing C-IED donor assistance. The content of this article is informed from research conducted by the author as part of a MA

in strategic studies which examined and identified C-IED strategic principles for East Africa.

A STRATEGIC APPROACH

According to Colin S. Gray, strategy may be considered as the use made of force and the threat of force for the ends of policy. It is the bridge that connects policy with military power. For our needs, the concept of strategy exceeds what may be considered classical military strategy. It reflects what the African Union (AU) states as the need to complement wider security strategies as well as their national security architecture and state interests. A comprehensive national strategy involves more elements than military power to effectively support C-IED efforts. The US DOD definition of national security strategy better fits our needs. It explains that its purpose is for developing, applying, and coordinating the instruments of national power to achieve objectives that contribute to national security. Security in this context can be considered as a condition that results from the establishment and maintenance of protective measures that ensure a state of inviolability from hostile acts or influences. In this case it is security from actual or threatened IED attacks. The strength of this definition lies in a broad approach encompassing the instruments of national power. It is not simply focused on the military and

reflects the need for a strategic whole of government approach to C-IED. It is proposed that an optimally effective strategic approach to C-IED requires all elements of statecraft.² A whole of government approach to C-IED needs to encompass the instruments of national power involving military; information; diplomacy; finance; intelligence; economics; legal; development along with law enforcement, regulatory instruments and civil society organisations.

Lykke's ends-ways-means strategy model³ provides an incomplete approach to strategic C-IED, as it fails to comprehend all the necessary dimensions of C-IED.⁴ Instead it is proposed that strategy can be any higher-level coordinating mechanism that seeks a position of advantage and articulates how this may be achieved by recognising strengths and weaknesses in a given operational environment. Multiple national documents such as policy documents, doctrines, policy statements and action plans can inform national approaches to C-IED. What good strategy looks like can be challenging to define; however, those strategic documents that have proven to be effective typically communicate succinctly its why (what is intended to be done) and who must do what and by when. Just as good strategy does not need to fit the Lykke model, any publication or document that articulates or serves to coordinate C-IED can qualify as an element of strategy.

According to US Presidential Policy Directive 17, issued in 2013 under the Obama Administration, the greatest responsibility of the State is to provide for the safety and security of its citizens while providing an economic environment that promotes opportunity and prosperity. If the use or threatened use of IEDs undermines or impedes the national interests of safety, security and prosperity, then IEDs may be considered a tactical⁵ issue with strategic impacts.⁶ For example, IEDs can disrupt economic life and fragment cohesion within the communities in which they are employed. This will undermine economic development along with governance to the detriment of normally functioning society. National security, safety and prosperity are strategic issues, which IED use undermines, meaning that C-IED enterprises need to be strategic. It is

proposed that efforts to date to counter IED use have not been adequate. This has been acknowledged within the US Army C-IED 2022 strategy which states, the current iteration expands the aperture to more fully provide a cohesive and holistic approach to this evolving challenge and make significant changes to the lines of effort⁷ traditionally associated with C-IED. This US Army C-IED strategy claims that such a line of effort framework aligns with established strategic guidance while allowing for the adaptability that C-IED demands.

C-IED ASSISTANCE DONOR-RECIPIENT DYNAMICS

An East African Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD⁸) meeting in February 2022 on regional C-IED, noted there had been some successes against IED use in the region. According to the IGAD security sector program director, Col Muleneh, despite the challenges in accurately estimating the number of IED events, it appears that the total number recorded in 2019 marks for the first time a slight diminution in comparison to the gradual increase since the beginning of their use in Somalia. One potential reason for this assessed C-IED success within the East African region may be due to C-IED donor assistance to IGAD states. This typically involves an IED affected state receiving donor support, for example in the form of assistance related to inter alia, training, mentoring, advising, accompanying, assisting, technology and equipment provision and intelligence support. This establishes a recipient-donor relationship between the IED affected state and the donor providing C-IED assistance. A recipient state needs such C-IED assistance as they have a deficiency in their C-IED capabilities or the scale of the IED threat faced is beyond their capacity⁹ to at least match but ideally over match the threat. The motivations of a donor to provide C-IED assistance can vary but will typically be captured under some aspect of their foreign policy objectives and be aligned to their national interests. Regardless of the level of altruism espoused by a donor, there will inevitably be vested interests which may or may not be aligned to the national interests of the recipient state.

The deficiencies in at least some element(s) of C-IED of an IED affected state and the provision of C-IED assistance from a donor can lead to a power imbalance in the resulting relationship. A challenge often faced by an IED affected state receiving assistance is the fact that donors may drive the decision making in terms of what C-IED capabilities are invested in and what their priorities are. There is a requirement for the establishment of the appropriate relationship between donors and recipient IED affected states, so the most effective C-IED assistance is provided, in support of the national security and development objectives of the affected state. It is key that a balance is struck between the expectations of the donor(s) supporting C-IED development and the stakeholders within an IED affected state. This will often require initial negotiations between the donor and the stakeholders within the IED affected state whom they support. The recipient state potentially ends up in a submissive position relative to the donor unless the necessary checks and balances are implemented to ensure the recipient nation remains in legitimate control of their own security, safety and stability. At the very least a donor will want accountability and oversight of where and how its money is being expended. For various reasons a donor may stipulate caveats and restrictions on the C-IED assistance it will provide. In extremis, the donor may restrict what C-IED assistance they are willing to provide to such an extent that the recipient nation has no say in the assistance it receives, how it is implemented and even who controls its deployment. Such extremis donor controls over C-IED assistance may even go as far as undermining the independence and sovereignty of the recipient state. This extreme power imbalance is detrimental to developing indigenous capabilities of the recipient nation. Such extreme power imbalances are not considered common but represent a worst-case scenario in C-IED assistance provision.

STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

In many cases when a donor offers C-IED assistance to an IED affected state they will either have their own mature C-IED expertise or alternatively they will

engage an implementing partner e.g. private contractor, to deliver the necessary C-IED assistance. In either case, the personnel delivering the assistance will come with their own paradigm of what the C-IED assistance to be delivered will involve. The fact that a recipient state has a C-IED deficiency, means that they may be unaware of what support they require. This presents the possibility of those delivering C-IED assistance to deliver their paradigm of requirements without considering the needs of the recipient state. These recipient needs can include inter alia, wider national interests, long term needs, indigenous capability¹⁰ development, sustainable capacity development, cultural nuances, environmental factors and theatre specific realities. In the most extreme cases the assistance may not be threat aligned. Without such context specific considerations there can be a misalignment between the C-IED assistance delivered and the wider needs of the IED affected state. Such undesirable recipient and donor dynamics involving power imbalances and misalignment between the assistance provided and the longer term needs of the IED affected state can be mitigated against if recipient nations have C-IED strategic principles to refer to.

C-IED strategic principles refer to fundamental rules and guidelines that serve as a foundation for reasoning and decision making about the longer-term direction in a C-IED enterprise. They can help states and regional organisations in developing and sustaining an effective C-IED enterprise within a given region. An effective C-IED strategic principle needs to be a clear, concise, memorable and actionable phrase that represents a plan for how to effectively allocate resources to contribute to at least matching but ideally over matching the threat posed by IEDs. They should provide a directive broad enough to promote enterprising behaviour, but specific enough to align the C-IED efforts decided upon to complement wider national security or development objectives. A recipient state of C-IED assistance can reference such principles when considering how to engage in a C-IED enterprise, what assistance to be agreed to and how it may be managed. Such empowerment of IED

affected states can allow for optimal indigenous capability investment and in time capacity development to at least match but ideally over match the IED threat faced.

IDENTIFYING STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

To identify strategic principles in support of a regionally coherent C-IED enterprise we need to assess which C-IED efforts should be promoted and those which should be avoided or minimized. Several approaches were considered in developing an analysis framework to facilitate the identification of common themes for a given IED threat under examination. These included:

- Identifying ends, ways and means;
- Considering the situation, task, execution, authority, and support demands;
- The seven planning questions;¹¹
- Why, what, who, where, when and how of the problem (5W+H).

Consideration of the overlap between each of these approaches allowed for the mapping of relationships between them as captured in Table 1.

The first of the seven questions, ‘what is the situation and how does it affect us?’ effectively provides the problem statement that we are attempting to address. In this case, we have the starting assumption that an IED threat exists in a given region, state or locality requiring the IED affected state or number of states to engage in a C-IED enterprise. As this problem statement is known, no such question needs to be included in any analysis to identify C-IED strategic principles.

Referring to Table 1, we see that we are left with seven questions in addition to the problem statement question. These questions are:

- What end-state is desired?
- What actions are to be taken?
- Who are to take the actions?
- Where are actions to be taken?
- When are actions to be taken?
- What risks need to be managed?
- What resources do the actions require?

Applying these seven questions to a given IED threat, allows common themes to emerge in terms of what may be most and least impactful in support of a regionally coherent C-IED enterprise. In considering the question ‘what end state is desired’ there is a requirement to identify detailed realities of the desired end state of a regionally coherent C-IED enterprise. The question of ‘what actions need to be taken’ can be challenging when developing C-IED strategic principles. For a given IED threat, a significant number of specific C-IED actions can invariably be listed; however, these will be context specific. The temptation to list actions needed as part of a C-IED strategy should be resisted. Instead, generic guidance on the most appropriate actions to be taken is required. However, the key fundamental C-IED enabling action of ‘understanding’ both the problem and the C-IED efforts invested in, is deemed essential.

The question of ‘who are to take actions’ is an examination of who the stakeholders are in the C-IED enterprise. This stakeholder analysis has two elements to it, namely, who are the required members of the C-IED enterprise and secondly who is to lead this community of stakeholders. When considering ‘where are actions to be taken’ from a strategic rather than an operational or tactical perspective, this question considers where within a state or its institutions, C-IED efforts should reside. Like the question ‘what actions are to be taken,’ the question ‘when actions are to be taken’ can be challenging to answer from a strategic perspective. This question addresses the challenges in identifying appropriate management structures and practices across any C-IED enterprise, which can be multistakeholder, complex, dynamic and even competitive. Such structures and practices go beyond timing and synchronization to wider cross cutting considerations across all aspects of managing a C-IED enterprise.

The question of ‘what risks need to be managed’ has two aspects to it namely what will optimize the likelihood of success of a national C-IED enterprise and secondly what threats need to be mitigated against. Some recurrent risks typically arise such as

Ends- Ways- Means	Demands	7 Questions	5W + H	Question to Pose
	→ Situation	→ What is the situation and how does it affect us?	→ Why are we taking action?	→ <i>Problem Statement – Answer Known</i>
Ends	→ Mission	→ What have we been told to do and why?	→ What is to be achieved?	→ <i>What end-state is desired?</i>
Ways	→ Execution + Command / Authority	→ What effects do we need to achieve?	→ How are we to achieve what is to be done?	→ <i>What actions are to be taken?</i>
		→ Where can we best accomplish each effect?	→ Who are to take the actions?	→ <i>Who are to take the actions?</i>
		→ When and where do the actions take place in relation to each other?	→ When are actions to be taken?	→ <i>When are actions to be taken?</i>
			→ Where are actions to be taken?	→ <i>Where are actions to be taken?</i>
		→ What control measures do we need to impose?	Additional to 5W + H	
	→ What will optimize the likelihood of success?	→ What threats need to be mitigated against?		
Means	→ Support	→ What resources do we need to accomplish each effect?	→ What resources do the actions require?	→ <i>What resources do the actions require?</i>

Table 1. Process In Development of the Seven Question Framework for C-IED Strategic Principle.

inter alia; lack of understanding; lack of coherence, coordination and cooperation often leading to unnecessary competition and waste of resources amongst stakeholders; lack of power of enforcement to compel stakeholders to engage effectively in the C-IED enterprise; and finally, the risk of some C-IED efforts having negative counterproductive effects which overall damage the C-IED enterprise.

The final question of ‘what resources do we require’ examines how employment of technology and equipment can support a national C-IED enterprise most effectively. Having undertaken this analysis to identify what is considered as most and least impactful in support of a regionally coherent C-IED enterprise, distilling these findings into ‘what good enough may look like’ in terms of strategic C-IED principles is possible.

CONCLUSION

When providing C-IED donor assistance, the importance of a strategic approach has been outlined. C-IED assistance donor-recipient dynamics can be challenging for multiple reasons. C-IED strategic principles can inform C-IED strategic guidance that can in turn be used to optimize such dynamics.

How regionally coherent C-IED enterprises are established is unique and context specific. They do not need to have a specific standalone C-IED strategy. In general, with the United States an exception, most Western nations do not have dedicated C-IED strategies. Instead, their strategic approach to addressing the use of IEDs is embedded within other national security strategies or dealt with as a law enforcement issue and for this reason there is no need to have a standalone national C-IED strategy. In fact any instrument, publication or document that articulates or serves to coordinate national C-IED can qualify as an element of such strategy. However, the merit of a standalone C-IED strategic document should not be dismissed. In the case of some IED affected states or regions requiring C-IED donor assistance, the impact of IED use can be so great and owing to a lack of suitable security force capabilities and capacities, that a standalone national C-IED strategy may be necessary.

One perspective is that policy documents, doctrines, policy statements and action plans which articulate C-IED strategy, should primarily be focused to inform donors where the investment of their money is best served to counter their use. In some cases, C-IED strategy may be developed to appease donors who seek reassurance that the money they are providing is being done under a strategic approach. Such strategies may be ‘paper tigers’ and not have foundation in what is needed or achievable in support of reducing IED use. However, by applying C-IED strategic principles, the risk of such an outcome can be minimized.

Finally, we have provided a framework of seven questions to be used when trying to establish what C-IED strategic principles best suit a given IED affected region to achieve the required impacts and

outcomes from C-IED donor assistance. To employ this framework in identifying optimal C-IED strategic principles, it is necessary to have appropriate key stakeholder engagement and other baseline assessments completed to inform the understanding of the IED threat being countered. The application of this methodology will be the subject of a subsequent article in the Counter-IED Report based on research conducted in East Africa. ■

NOTES

1. Various forms of C-IED support that an IED affected state can receive from a donor which can include inter alia, training, mentoring, advising, accompanying, assisting, technology and equipment provision and intelligence support.
2. Statecraft may be considered as “the skill of governing a country” (Cambridge Dictionary Online) “the art of conducting state affairs” (Merriam Webster Dictionary) or “the skilful management of statesmanship” (Oxford Languages Language.oup.com).
3. According to Harry Yarger in his article in *Toward a Theory of Strategy in Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy published in 2006*, Art Lykke gave coherent form to a theory of strategy with his articulation of the three-legged stool model of strategy which illustrated strategy = ends + ways + means, and if these were not in balance, the assumption of greater risk. In the Lykke model, the ends are “objectives,” the ways are the “concepts” for accomplishing the objectives, and the means are the “resources” for supporting the concepts.
4. There are many who deride the Lykke model for strategy, for example, Jeffrey W. Meisier authored an article in *Parameters* in the Winter 2016-2017 edition entitled “Are Our Strategic Models Flawed? Ends + Ways + Means = (Bad) Strategy.”
5. Tactical is used here in its military context, referring to carefully considered actions intended to achieve a specific aim.
6. Strategic in this context is considered the effects IED use has at theatre, national or international levels.

7. Lines of effort in the context of planning, use the purpose (cause and effect) to focus efforts toward establishing operational and strategic conditions by linking multiple tasks and missions.
8. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in East Africa was created in 1996 to supersede the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) which was founded in 1986 to mitigate the effects of the recurring severe droughts and other natural disasters that resulted in widespread famine, ecological degradation and economic hardship in the region. Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda – acted through the United Nations to establish the intergovernmental body for development and drought control in their region. Eritrea became the seventh member after attaining independence in 1993. With the new emerging political and socio-economic challenges, the assembly of Heads of State and Government, meeting in Addis Ababa in April 1995, resolved to revitalize IGADD and expand areas of cooperation among Member States. The new and revitalized IGAD was launched during the 5th Summit of IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government held on 25-26 November 1996 in Djibouti. The Summit endorsed the decision to enhance regional cooperation in three priority areas of food security and environmental protection, economic cooperation, regional integration and social development peace and security. In 2011 South Sudan joined IGAD as the eighth member state.
9. Capacity refers to the means of an individual / organization to perform assigned duties effectively. This includes human capacity (individual and collective competencies and experience), physical capacity (appropriate assets) and institutional capacity (systems, structures and organisational culture in place).
10. Capability refers to the means of an organization or entity to be proficient in a stated activity from the collective contribution of assets and competency of individuals and groups to undertake it safely, effectively and efficiently.
11. This refers to a generic set of seven questions which may be applied to any planning scenario which is adapted from the military seven question estimate.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Paul Amoroso is an explosive hazards specialist and has extensive experience as an IED Threat Mitigation Policy Advisor working in East and West Africa. He served in the Irish Army as an IED Disposal and CBRNe officer, up to MNT level, and has extensive tactical, operational, and strategic experience in Peacekeeping Operations in Africa and the Middle East. He has experience in the development of doctrine and policy and was one of the key contributors to the United Nations Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Standards and the United Nations Explosive Ordnance Disposal Military Unit Manual. He works at present in the MENA region on SALW control as well as in wider Africa advising on national and regional C-IED strategies. He has a MSc in Explosive Ordnance Engineering and an MA in Strategic Studies. He runs a consultancy, Assessed Mitigation Options (AMO), which provides advice and support in relation to conventional and improvised weapons and explosive hazard risk mitigation. This article reflects his own views and not necessarily those of any organisation he has worked for or with in developing these ideas.

Linkedin profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/paul-amoroso-msc-ma-miexpe-60a63a42/>