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Multi-Layered Assessment: Lessons from Measuring Progress in Afghanistan

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27 ISMOR, 31 Aug-3Sep 2010



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Outline

- Background
- Topology of Assessment
- Measures of Effectiveness and Performance
- Village Assessment
- District Assessment
- From District to National Assessment
- Summary and Conclusions



Purpose

- To provide an overview of the assessment process for Afghanistan from Canadian perspective and to outline some general lessons learned



Background: Canadians and Assessment

- Canadian Assessment in Afghanistan
 - Task Force Kandahar since 2006 (TFK)
 - Strategic Advisory Team in Kabul
- CEFCOM assessment requirements 2006-2008
- OR&A support to the assessment process
- TFK 2009 – KANTOLO → requirement for Village Assessment
- Current USCENTCOM work: District Assessment Model, Transition



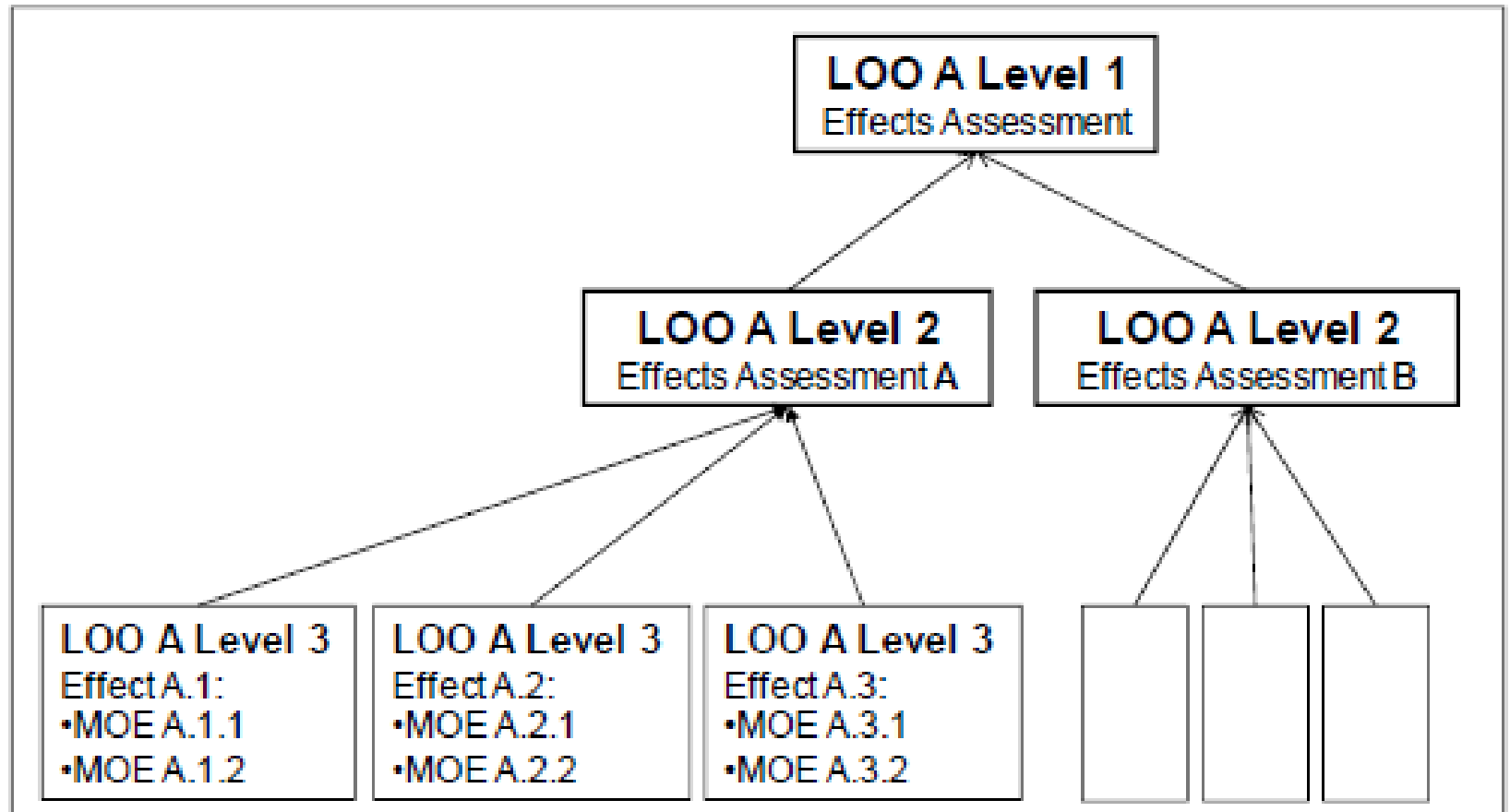
Topology of Assessment

- Assessing at different command / geographical / organizational levels:
 - Same organizational/geographical; different command level
 - Same command level; different organizational level
 - Different command level; different organizational level
- Roll-up of the assessment: considering information at the appropriate level:
 - Include additional information if required
 - Eliminate information if not relevant



Topology of Assessment

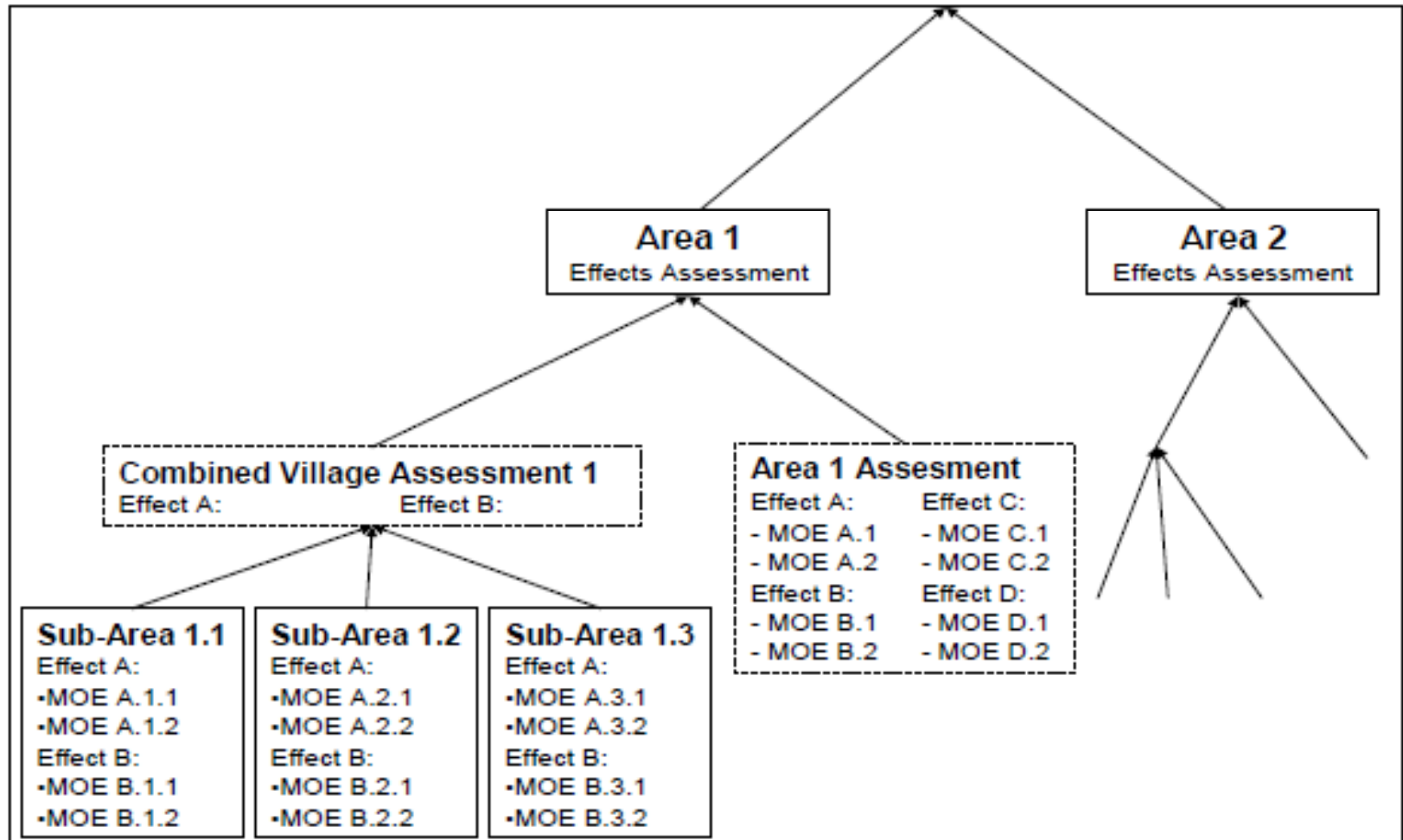
- Option 1: Self-similar picture: Assessment of the same geographical/organizational structure by different levels of command





Topology of Assessment

- Non-self-similar picture: Assessment of different structures at the same or different command levels





Measures of Effectiveness

“Are we doing the right thing?” vs. “Are we doing things right”

- Quantitative and Qualitative measures:
 - Objective facts
 - Context to interpret facts
 - Minimize subjectivity: indicators/grading scales
- Quality of performed tasks: implicit assumption that the tasks lead to desired objectives
- Indicators independent of tasks: reevaluating assumptions



Selections of Measures

- How many measures are too many?
 - Practical considerations:
 - Too labour intensive
 - Drain on resources
 - Too much information for a particular level
- Errors of measurement
 - Each measure carries an error: more measures
→ more measures means greater uncertainty
- Measures must be relevant, consistent in time, provide sufficient context



Local Assessment: Human Behaviour

- Village or community level: limited options of assessment
 - SIGACTS – too few
 - Surveys – typically inadequate representation, too infrequent
- Assessing actual behaviour vs. “stated” perceptions





Local Assessment: Human Behaviour

- The assessors living among the people
- Daily observation of POL and its changes
- How do people behave vs. what they say they think
 - Will they interact openly with ISAF?
 - Will they report INS activity?
 - Do they go to markets?
 - Are their basic needs met?



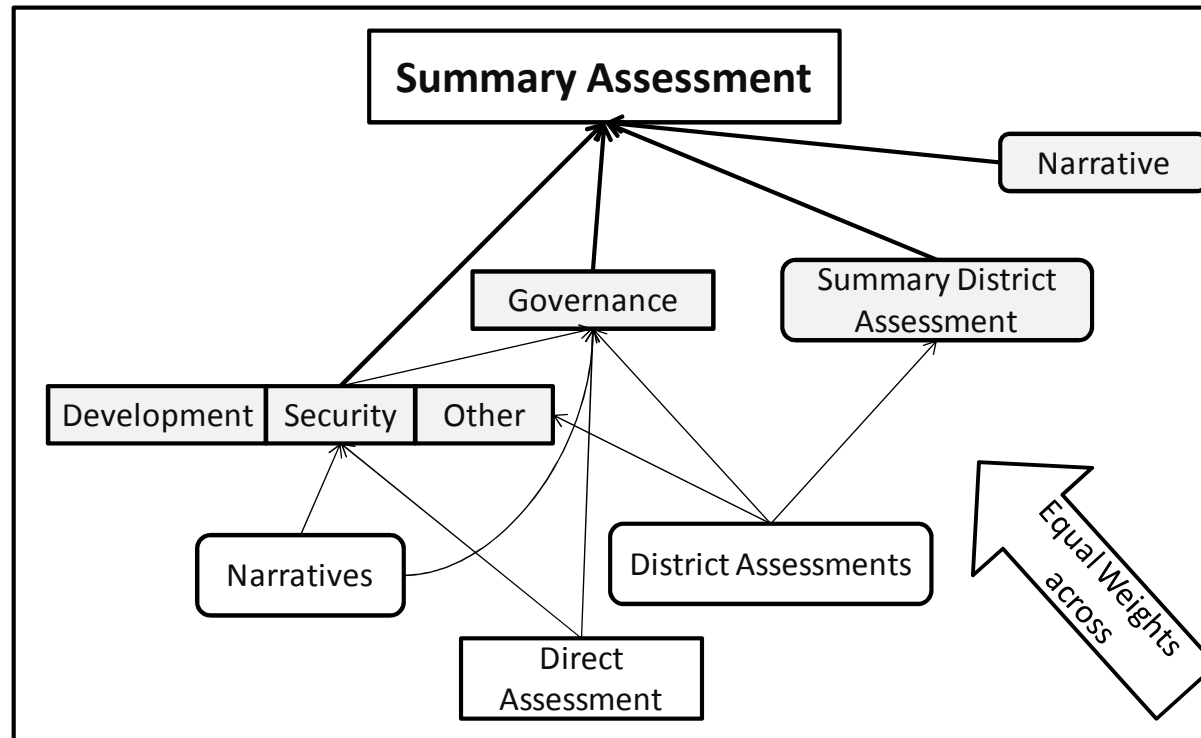
District Assessment: What We Do Not See?

- IJC developed district assessment model: only good for the districts with persistent ISAF presence
- CENTCOM AFG-PAK COE supports the assessment for non-IJC districts using alternative information sources
- The two assessments are compatible and complement each other
- COE assessment enables filling white spaces, provides country-wide information

How can the information be combined to provide a simple, strategic, country-wide assessment?



Roll-Up: National Assessment



Some considerations

- Relative importance of different assessment focus areas (lines of operations)
- Capturing additional information when moving up the assessment levels, omitting information that is not relevant



Current Status

- Provincial assessment supporting TOA process
 - Starting from districts, moving up
 - Combining multi-source information
 - Considering governance, security and development
 - Many stakeholders, competing interests
- Assessing success of the current COIN strategy
 - Can we make progress in 18 months



Summary

- Assessment is a challenging area under the best of circumstances
- In Afghanistan:
 - Complex environment
 - Competing interests
- Key considerations:
 - Purpose of the assessment
 - Scope/command level
 - What information is available/relevant?
- Supporting assessment can be a stressful and yet very rewarding experience

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