Chapter 9

A Process for Regional Cooperation

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The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism calls for the United States (U.S.) to partner with the international community to strengthen weak states and prevent the emergence or reemergence of terrorism, and win the war of ideas. While this broad *end* is globally applicable, the *ways* and *means* of achieving it may vary greatly from region to region.[1] In other words, there is a need to think globally, but act regionally and, at times, locally. This chapter explains the necessity of having a clear regional plan for enacting the United States combating terrorism policy. It goes on to describe current plans for such a process, and the obstacles to their success. Finally, it provides recommendations for planning and implementing a regional plan that with the promise of success.[2]

The Regional Context

A national strategy for combating terrorism is necessary to establish broad policy guidance, but the application of the elements of power will be very different based on the region under consideration. Thus, a regional approach not only has merit but is essential for effective implementation of that policy.

The broad, global counterterrorism environment requires a focus on the hearts and minds of people. A successful counterterrorism strategy needs to address civil society, education, good governance, and law enforcement—

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[1] The definition of "region" varies among different agencies of the U.S. government. For the purposes of this chapter, a region is a geographic area composed of several nation-states with some mutually applicable interests. These regions may or may not correspond to regions as currently defined by the Departments of State or Defense.

[2] The recommendations in this chapter were developed during a workshop at the U. S. Army War College Symposium, Addressing the Underlying Conditions that Foster Terrorism, which took place at the U. S. Army War College's Center for Strategic Leadership from 8 – 10 June 2005.

a hearts and minds strategy. Of these areas, the application of resources toward improving education is critical. Additionally, facilitating sustainable economic development has an important role in addressing counterterrorism and transnational threats. However, plans to address these problem areas must be tailored to meet the specific needs of local communities and the local and regional private sector or they will meet resistance. For example, local communities in Southeast Asia have been concerned with their well-being since the 1997 Asian financial crisis, particularly since the amount of U.S. investment in the region has been reduced and Japanese and Indian investment has relatively increased. The *war of ideas* is equally based on regional perceptions. Humanitarian support and open diplomatic dialog are particularly important in positively affecting these perceptions, beliefs and attitudes and can significantly impact counterterrorism efforts. Citizens of Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka appreciated the United States tsunami response as an example of such *soft* power. Local communities and regional actors saw the tsunami relief effort as a very positive sign, but will keep watching to ensure this is not an isolated act but a sign of continued engagement. This action was representative of the U.S. ability to remain engaged; such engagement is noted within the region and builds goodwill for the United States. The *diplomatic capital* thus created is necessary in order to stabilize a favorable regional balance of power. This is particularly important since it provides a counterweight against profound disagreement with the U.S. Global War on Terrorism policies among many countries.

Current Planning Processes

Regional planning for combating terrorism occurs in a variety of forms and by multiple USG agencies. Regional bureaus of the Department of State develop Bureau Performance Plans (BPP) and embassies in turn develop annual Mission Performance Plans (MPP). These documents are crafted to support the strategic objectives and goals outlined in the Department of State Strategic Plan. The Department's Strategic Plan outlines a broad counterterrorism objective.[3] U.S. Agency for International Development

[3] U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, "Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2004-2009," (Washington: GPO, August 2003), iv-v.

(USAID) shares a national strategic plan with the State Department and has as its mission many of the elements considered central to addressing underlying conditions of terrorism.[4]

At the local level, where programs are implemented, USAID has substantial experience working with the interagency, international, non-governmental, and military communities and is often at the forefront in implementing regional approaches to addressing the underlying conditions of terrorism. Because of this expertise USAID may have the best understanding of and recommendations for dealing with these conditions. Regional Combatant Commanders have increased their focus on Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) programs. United States European Command's (EUCOM) Director of Plans and Operations recently referred to these programs as "support(ing) the long-term strategic objectives of the Global War on Terrorism by building understanding and consensus on the terrorist threat; laying foundations for future "coalitions of the willing;" and extending our country's security perimeter."[5] Regional Action Plans (RAP) have been developed in an attempt to build cooperative regional implementation efforts among various USG agencies.

All of these planning processes attempt in good faith to coordinate with pertinent regional stakeholders. But while coordination of these disparate efforts is important there are no regional plans that reflect an interagency effort to synchronize and integrate all elements of power. Additionally there is no mechanism to offer overarching regional priorities for planning, to determine if gaps, seams or overlapping efforts are occurring, or to apply regional measures of effectiveness. Embassies attempt to use the MPP as a tool to gain unity of effort. This includes input from the country team, the combatant command and others to develop priorities with the intent to make it an inclusive process. In like manner, combatant commands coordinate their TSC efforts with missions in the region. Relationship building and

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[4] Ibid, i.

[5] Rear Admiral Hamlin B. Tallent, Statement before the House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, Washington, March 10, 2005.

information sharing occur outside the region as well. Examples include combatant commands' involvement during coordination in Washington, particularly with the regional bureaus of State and in the interagency process through their Joint Staff interlocutors. In the end, however, each of the aforementioned plans tends to be stove piped within the specific agency or element of power whose expertise is resident in the organization. The MPPs will always focus on diplomatic efforts; TSC programs consider the military element of power. Consequently the current planning processes by their very nature limit strategic utility. While one may reasonably ask "what is the mechanism to de-conflict MPP, RAP, TSC plans and the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism?"… perhaps it may be better to step back and think about whether there is a better way to conduct regional planning writ large.

Challenges

There are a number of potential obstacles to regional planning and implementation. Among them are funding issues, intelligence sharing, regional and local cultural awareness, and internal organizational staffing levels and cultures. First, there are numerous uncoordinated funding lines across multiple government agencies and, while interagency groups can make recommendations on a desirable mix of funding, the ultimate determinant of funding is Congress. There are a variety of limitations on the use of funds, further exacerbated by individual agendas that are attached to the different pots of money. (Foreign Military Financing and the lack of funding for democracy/governance programs are examples.) This hurdle is significant because an un-resourced or under-resourced regional plan is arguably less effective than the current planning mechanisms. This inflexible funding process is recognized in ongoing studies among the Washington policy study community.[6] Second, there is a persistent lack of information and intelligence exchange due to security classification and internal rule sets that hamper integrated planning efforts. Additionally, authority for

[6] Clark A. Murdock and Michèle A. Flournoy, Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era Phase 2 Report, CSIS, Washington DC, July 2005, 34-37. Also found in Chapter 6 of this publication.

decision-making is retained at too high a level for responsive actions. Often, interagency coordination meetings are attended by action officers who "carry the water" back to their organizations, but cannot make decisions at the table. While consultation in the process is important, there has been a problem with various levels of commitment. Consequently, the decisions are sent back through the bureaucracy at various levels and across various agencies, often lost and rarely acted upon.

Culturally sensitive approaches, combined with an understanding of the interests and positions of other nation-states, are often overlooked. However, such efforts must be employed in order to engender greater international cooperation, from both the public and private sectors. Progress can be made by opening dialogue with regional nation-states and other political forums to address a common set of concerns that is palatable to all. Many countries profoundly disagree with U.S. policy regarding terrorism. Many Southeast Asian countries, for example, view terrorism as a criminal matter requiring better law enforcement, trained police and effective prosecution and judicial systems. So, for example, by addressing all transnational threats rather than terrorism alone the United States is liable to find a more receptive partnership from organizations like ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum. In this example the U.S. would avoid local/state and regional resistance to plan by emphasizing the problems of corruption, poor or weak governance and economic problems to energize local stakeholders. Putting the focus on transnational threats instead of terrorism is a useful enabler. Nations that will not admit that terrorism is a problem in their country are usually willing to admit and address the problems of transnational threats.

Staffing levels and internal organizational cultures are additional hurdles to overcome. Beyond the military most organizations are not structured with an inherent planning capability. Anyone tasked with developing an interagency regional plan outside of the military community would likely take on that task as an additional duty. Furthermore, strategic planning is viewed in different ways by different organizations. Some plans are institutionally based and others are operationally focused. A common understanding of planning methodologies is important. Overcoming these constraints will

contribute to enhanced long-term planning. However, interagency planning for immediate crises may require mechanisms to provide authorities and incentives to rapidly deploy civilian personnel across the U.S. government.

Regional Strategic Planning - A Proposal

In order to overcome these various challenges the United States should adopt a National Security Planning Guidance (NSPG) developed by the Administration and signed by the President.[7] The NSPG would provide broad regional planning guidance. Armed with the NSPG, the new National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) would identify regions requiring specific combating terrorism plans and shape specific strategies (incorporating all elements of national power) designed to address terrorism. The NCTC would oversee the development of specific supporting implementation plans by assigning lead agency responsibilities. Lead agencies, in turn, would emphasize and draw from the interagency collaborative approaches currently employed (interagency working groups within Washington and within the combatant command headquarters and embassy country teams) in developing these plans. The current interagency cooperation efforts to develop Mission Performance Plans (MPP), Regional Action Plans (RAP) and Theater Security Cooperation Plans (TSCP) would serve as a starting point. The NCTC would then monitor the implementation of these plans. This falls squarely within the charter of the NCTC to, "conduct strategic operational planning for counterterrorism activities, integrating all instruments of national power… (and) assign operational responsibilities to lead agencies for counterterrorism activities that are consistent with applicable law and that support strategic plans to counter terrorism."[8]

There are several important positive points to highlight in this proposal. First, issuance of an NSPG ensures guidance that allows a linkage between overarching U.S. values, interests and priorities and the resultant regionally focused plan. Second, the NCTC is an existing structure with directive

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[7] Murdock and Flournoy, 29.

[8] George W. Bush, "Executive Order National Counterterrorism Center," (Washington: August 27, 2004), http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/08/20040827-5.html.

authority within the interagency. It also has resource authorities (both personnel and budgetary) among the various interagency organizations. It also has the authority and requirement to integrate terrorism related intelligence.[9] Finally, by assigning lead agency responsibilities to regional entities the process builds on existing interagency relationships while ensuring an integrated approach in an overarching regional plan. Consequently, many of the challenges mentioned previously are addressed by this model. Still, a parallel, and in some cases, longer term effort at reform and change must take place to ensure successful implementation of such a proposal.

Additional Considerations

Most of the cabinet-level departments of government focus their efforts at two levels—strategic and tactical. (Consider the State Department with strategic planning occurring in Washington and tactical planning and execution occurring in embassies worldwide.) The exception is the Defense Department who adds an "operational" level planning and implementing entity between these two levels, i.e. at the Regional Combatant Command.[10] While ad hoc interagency groups exist at the Combatant Commands (known as Joint Interagency Coordination Groups or JIACG) to deal with regional issues, they are not necessarily robustly structured or manned to conduct detailed planning. (Often DoD pays the personnel costs of other agencies' members.) Consequently, if lead agencies will develop and implement integrated regional plans as directed by the NCTC either the JIACG concept has to be endorsed, strengthened and resourced by all agencies to allow planning within the region…or regional strategic planning must occur in Washington. If the latter, then Combatant Commands should serve as the "primary interlocutor" within the "beltway" for interagency coordination with regard to the use of the military element of power to address terrorism in their regions. Accordingly, the Combatant Commands should be granted equal status to the Joint Staff in interagency forums in Washington.

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[9] Ibid.

[10] There are five regional combatant commands: European Command, Northern Command, Southern Command, Pacific Command and Central Command.

The ingrained cultural norms of organizations must also be addressed in order to make this model work. Broadly the Administration should engender a consistent policy for inculcating interagency collaboration as the default working environment in the U.S. government. This can be accomplished by consistent senior-level emphasis, the incorporation of interagency training and education within all USG organizations and the development and use of methods and instruments to facilitate interagency coordination (e.g. Interagency Working Groups, Joint Interagency Coordination Groups, country teams, collaborative software tools, common security protocols, personnel exchanges, etc.).[11] This is a long-term effort that requires leadership involvement and perseverance.

Finally, since significant resources will be applied to the regional planning model, stakeholders should expect, and will require, measurable outcomes whenever possible. Consequently planning should be effects-based. This is particularly difficult to accomplish in a planning effort that focuses on conflict or terrorism prevention. Despite this challenge, continued resource approval and application will certainly be gauged upon results. The NCTC is currently examining appropriate measures of effectiveness in their plan implementation oversight role.

Conclusion

Addressing the underlying conditions of terrorism requires a global strategy while recognizing regional distinctions that call for implementing plans viewed through a regional and, often, local lens. The United States is currently developing and executing plans in every corner of the world on a historically unprecedented level to deal with that very issue. Embassies conduct diplomatic efforts on a daily basis. USAID spending has nearly tripled in the three years since 9/11.[12] Combatant Commands have renewed their emphasis on Theater Security Cooperation Plan programs. While coordination occurs among the various organizations, these important efforts

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[11] Murdock and Flournoy, 31-34.

[12] David E. Kaplan, "Hearts, Minds and Dollars," U.S. News and World Report, 25 April 2005, 31.

are planned and executed largely in parallel. Thus, they lack the potential synergies of integration in planning and synchronization in their execution. Furthermore, there is no method to establish regional priorities or to check gaps, seams or overlapping efforts. The need for an interagency regional planning mechanism tied to national priorities is necessary to focus U.S. efforts and achieve our goals in an efficient and effective manner. There are numerous challenges to establishing a working model in that regard, but mechanisms currently exist that can, with the appropriate leadership, vision and perseverance, ensure that the fight to counter the underlying conditions of terrorism is successful.

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