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A TEMPLE OF ANTITERRORISM STRATEGY

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A TEMPLE OF ANTITERRORISM STRATEGY

In its report of 15 December 2000, the Gilmore Commission¹ recommends that the next President “*develop and present to Congress a national strategy to address the threat of domestic terrorism – conventional, cyber, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear – from the perspectives of deterrence, prevention, preparedness and response within one year of assuming office.*” Similar calls for a comprehensive, fully coordinated antiterrorism strategy have been made recently.² The events of September 11 have in an extremely sad way emphasized this need.

In this essay I will present a framework for conceptualizing a possible national counterterrorism strategy. To develop this model, I have used a framework elaborated by RAND³, which treats the possible objectives of such a strategy and the means to reach them. In a first step I analyze the RAND framework and I propose some adjustments before using it. In a second step I propose the construction of a “**Temple of Antiterrorism strategy**” as an integrated model, taking into account the strategic context, assumptions about the terrorist threats, the objectives of such a strategy and the tools to achieve them as well as the key factors for success and the environmental enablers.

¹ The Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities For Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, *II. Towards a National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, December 15, 2000, p.3., <http://www.rand.org/nsrd/terrpanel/terror2.pdf>, September 16,2001.

² Bruce **Hoffman**, “*Combating Terrorism : In Search of a National Strategy*”, Testimony presented to the Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans Affairs, and International Relations, House Committee on Government Reform, March 27, 2001, <http://www.rand.org/publications/CT/CT175/CT175.pdf>, September 16,2001.

³ Ian O. **Lesser**, Bruce **Hoffman**, John **Arquilla**, David F. **Ronfeldt**, Michele **Zanini**, and Brian M. **Jenkins**, “*Countering the New Terrorism*”, RAND, Report MR-989-AF, 1999, pp.126-140, <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR989>, September 16, 2001.

The RAND framework - Analysis and comments

According to the RAND model, a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy should have *core*, *environment shaping* and *hedging* components. Treating terrorism as a national security challenge requires a multidimensional approach.

The core component

The core objectives outlined by RAND clearly address the long-term terrorist risks to America's vital, very important and important national security interests⁴ (e.g. the threat of WMD to and the need for homeland defense to protect the lives and well-being of American citizens) as well as broader US security interests (e.g. the well-being of allies and friends, the viability and stability of major global systems - trade, financial markets and the promotion of American values).

The first objective, **ameliorating the origins of political violence** by promoting political and economic reform in unstable countries and regions to reduce the body of grievances that produces terrorists, requires a broader National Security Strategy of *engagement*. Depending on the situation in the concerned country, both conditional engagement focused on the leadership and an unconditional approach focused on the people can be used to reform the society. As the first approach requires a well-delineated road-map with precise conditions and benefits, including incentives, Congressional support as well as the cooperation of our allies is needed. This requirement for broad support shows the difficulties that face this policy. Especially in the aftermath of the September 11th tragedy, Congress and the general public may not be very

⁴ As defined in “*America’s National Interests*” – The Commission on America’s National Interests, July 2000.

willing to support positive diplomatic and economic efforts directed at countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan or in the Caucasian region (Chechnya, Georgia). Moreover, there is the problem of how to reach the population in countries that live in very closed societies from the infrastructural, social as well the cultural point of view. Even an unconditional engagement approach might be difficult as it requires a certain level of development of the concerned country. I, therefore, would not consider reducing the systematic causes as being a critical objective and I would rather classify it as an “environment shaping” condition of lesser immediate priority, but, nonetheless, important in the long-term.

A second core objective of counterterrorism strategy outlined by RAND is to **strengthen and deepen deterrence**. *Deterrence* is the concept of the diplomacy of violence. According to *Thomas Schelling*, it is most of all a bargaining process and supposes the presence of a common interest, if only the avoidance of mutual damage. Unfortunately, more generalized diplomatic, economic, or military initiatives aimed at isolation or inflicting harm face serious obstacles when the sponsor is a totalitarian or rogue regime. With rogues states, such as Libya or Iraq, there is a deeper question of whether their behavior, including the sponsorship of terrorism, can be deterred at all. In this context, deterrence cannot be subtle and should threaten massive damage to the targets of value to the regime in the most direct sense, including the leadership itself. In my opinion, this is the only way to make such a threat credible to such regimes.

For other countries such as Syria and Iran, support for terrorism serves national and regime interests and is considered to be a means of leverage in their relations with other countries. It has rational underpinnings, so a more diverse range of tactics can be useful to deter such support, including political isolation and economic sanctions. The main condition for this approach but at the same time its weakness, is the required international cooperation. However, by widening the

range of options, one increases one's own flexibility and as a consequence, the credibility of the threat may be undermined.

Looking beyond state sponsors, the task of deterrence becomes more difficult given its more diffuse sources. A shorthand for responding to this challenge might be "personalized" deterrence. The targets might be bank accounts, safe-houses or the individuals themselves, including the extraterritorial apprehension of terrorist suspects with or without the cooperation of host countries (covert actions). Although it might seem justified in the present emotional climate, I would nevertheless exclude assassination, for such a policy would negatively affect the relations with the European allies, given the sensitivities about this issue and the related problem of the death penalty.

RAND's third objective is, above all, related to homeland defense and concerns the **reduction of the risk of "superterrorism" involving WMD and hyper-attacks.**⁵ It includes the following actions that are aimed to prevent such incidents :

- Non-proliferation activities that can reduce the risks of WMD availability to terrorists or other US adversaries;
- Intelligence operations and domestic law enforcement operations that can provide warning, thus enhancing the prospects for prevention or consequence mitigation;
- Law enforcement, intelligence, and diplomatic cooperation abroad that can lead to the prevention by US friends and allies of terrorist acts against US targets; and
- Various military operations, including direct action by special operations forces, that may be employed in counterterrorism efforts abroad.

⁵ Definition : Terrorist hyper-attacks are large scale non-WMD incidents, requiring extensive preparation , coordination and funding (cf. September 11th).

The non-proliferation actions are a typical form of *denial*. This kind of policy is fraught with difficulties, as it requires international cooperation for effective implementation. In a highly competitive international environment, such cooperation often proves elusive. Furthermore, a common condition for all these activities is domestic support.

Fourth, the capacity and willingness **to retaliate when deterrence and prevention fail**. This objective concerns mainly the possession of adequate military capabilities. A demonstrated willingness to retaliate makes an obvious contribution to the second goal (deterrence) too, especially in relation to state sponsors. With regard to individuals and nonstate actors, the appropriate response may not be the physical destruction of targets, but rather strikes against information and resources.

Environment shaping

The core dimensions of counterterrorism strategy will need to be supported by a range of policies aimed at containing near-term risks and fostering the conditions for success. RAND proposes five objectives.

The first objective in shaping the environment is to embarrass and isolate the traditional state sponsors by **making their support for terrorism more transparent** to policymakers and their publics. The actions of terrorist organizations and their networks can be monitored from space and by detecting their information flows. The information gathered can help to build the case for coordinated, international responses and to mobilize allied support. It becomes part of a broader tapestry of information that helps to shape events, rather than determine them. As such, this policy aims more at using *influence* than power.

Shrinking the zones of chaos and terrorist sanctuary aims to reduce the root causes of terrorism, by changing the conditions in areas that have offered terrorists safe havens and operating bases. It is similar to the first core objective. In fact, both goals are complementary. While the first one targets the population in unstable countries and regions by using political and economic tools, this policy focuses mainly on governments by using diplomatic means to press them to deny terrorists “safe areas” on their territory. However, this policy should include non-diplomatic actions too, such as the forcible apprehension of terrorist suspects. In my opinion, this should become part of a more extensive *compellence* policy, on condition that a vital interest of the USA is threatened, for example by the presence of chemical or biological capabilities. This requires the presence of a credible (military) force to compel the concerned government to act.

The third objective, **making counterterrorism an integral part of alliance strategies**, is becoming a reality. The reactions of NATO, the European Union, Israel and Japan almost instantly after the events of September 11th, prove that all allies and friends are very well aware of the importance of close cooperation and firm response to the terrorist threat. I am convinced that this cooperation will extend even to Russia and eventually to other countries, because they recognize that they face this danger as well.

The **limitation of US exposure worldwide**, even when it would be consistent with grand strategic objectives and operational requirements, will not be desirable nor feasible in my opinion, certainly not now as it would be seen as giving in to terrorism. This *isolationist* vision would not increase US security. Disengagement would probably make America more secure with regard to a terrorist attack, but less secure for all other threats. The (partial) disappearance of the US from the world stage would likely precipitate a good deal of competition abroad. Without US presence, aspiring regional hegemons would see more opportunities. States allied to

the US would have to look to their own military power and local arms competitions could be expected. Some states would seek WMD because they would be unable to deter their neighbors without US support.⁶ A partial disengagement would also affect in a negative way broader US interests, such as trade relations and the promotion of values abroad.

Fifth, **target terrorist funding and networks**. “Following the money” and cutting off terrorism’s resources is probably the most effective “day-to-day” policy as it will interrupt a major source of support and make the most expensive and lethal technologies more difficult to acquire. The primary condition for achieving this objective is close international cooperation. Similar to the first goal of this component, it means that the main counterterrorism effort needs to be in the information realm.

Hedging component

As the terrorism threat can never be reduced to zero, the US will need to reduce exposure and to mitigate the consequences in anticipation of counterterrorism failures. RAND defines this policy as “hedging” and proposes three objectives.

The first one is **hardening key policies and strategies against terrorist interruption**. As an example, RAND refers to the Middle East peace process. Negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians might be put on a faster track to reduce the opportunity for extremists to disrupt the process through terrorism. Other operations, like for instance peacekeeping deployments, might be timed and configured to reduce the potential for terrorist attacks. This approach seems to me unrealistic and wishful thinking. There are simply too many factors and uncertainties involved in

⁶ Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security*, Winter 1996/97, pp.15-16.

these kind of processes. The protection of deploying forces, mission-critical facilities and systems and higher headquarters against asymmetric attacks is organic to units and their bases and is designed according the threat assessment. In short, I will no longer take this objective into account.

Emphasizing stand-off and space-based capabilities for presence and intervention in the most chaotic and unstable regions is more a way of using resources than a policy objective. Furthermore, it is rather a means of shaping the strategic environment and, when used for intervention, an element of the retaliation capacities required in the core component. I will therefore no longer consider it as a specific goal.

The third objective aims at **the preparedness to mitigate the effects of conventional and unconventional terrorism**. The preparedness programs should include :

- measures to protect the physical security of government facilities and employees in order to assure the continuity of government;
- the physical protection of the national populace and infrastructure;
- research and development activities to search for technologies to deter, prevent, or mitigate terrorist acts; and
- a hostage rescue policy.

Conclusion

Based on this assessment of the RAND study, a counterterrorism strategy must include the following objectives :

The core, longer-term component must make deterrence relevant to nonstate as well as state sponsors, focus on intelligence and law enforcement cooperation, reduce the risk of truly catastrophic terrorism using WMD, and include the capacity and willingness to retaliate.

The environment shaping aspect aims to create conditions for successfully managing terrorist risks : making government support for terrorism more transparent, shrinking “zones of chaos” and addressing the political, economic and social roots of terrorism, harnessing key alliances to the counterterrorism effort, and cutting off terrorism’s resources. Finally, the US must focus on domestic preparedness.

After having defined the objectives, I will propose in the next section a model for developing a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy.

Recommendation : A “Temple of Antiterrorism strategy”

As a framework for developing an overarching national strategy to address the threats of domestic and international terrorism, I propose the construction of a “**Temple of Antiterrorism strategy**”. This model is graphically displayed in [Appendix A](#). Starting with a model for assessing terrorist threats and after considering several basic assumptions to guide this approach, I will describe the key factors and the enablers for a successful strategy using the adjusted objectives and means explained above.

The terrorist threat

A critical prerequisite in developing an effective counterterrorism strategy is a comprehensive assessment of the terrorist threat, both foreign and domestic, today and in the future. The first step is to place terrorism in the *strategic context* by exploring its threat to US interests and future sources of risk in order to assure that the ranges of policies, countermeasures

and defenses we adopt are the most relevant ones. As proposed in the RAND study⁷, it is useful to explore these threats in four key dimensions :

- The most dramatic and proximate source of risk areas arises from **direct terrorist attack** against US citizens and property, on territory or overseas;
- Terrorism aimed at allied states can **indirectly** affect US interests;
- A third perspective focuses on the overall or **systemic consequences** of terrorism, worldwide and domestic, for the international security environment and US global interests. As a global power, America will be affected by instances of large-scale terrorism, even if the effects of this chaos – the breakdown of social and political order – are distant and long term.
- Fourth, terrorism can take the form of an **asymmetric** strategy employed by adversaries in conflict with the US or its allies, as a substitute for more conventional attacks. The perception that the US and the West have developed an unassailable capacity for conventional warfare might invite potential aggressors to use terrorism as a strategy.

Assumptions

Closely related to this risk assessment are the assumptions about how the terrorist threat will evolve in the international and the domestic environment. Here are my assumptions :

- Terrorist risks cannot be eliminated, only contained and managed. The threat is continuous and counterterrorism requires a permanent effort. Consequently, the notions of “end states” and “exit strategies” are not applicable.

⁷ Ibid. , pp 88-96.

- Terrorists have access to the global industrial base and much of the same technology as the American law enforcement agencies and the US military. Increased availability of digital communications and advanced weapon systems give terrorists new capabilities at a relatively low cost.
- Terrorists tend to adapt in an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary manner in their attacks, trying to stay just ahead of countermeasures. They will adapt as our capabilities evolve.
- Terrorists use approaches that avoid US strengths and that exploit potential vulnerabilities (the asymmetric approach).
- Terrorists use WMD.

Domestic support

The main challenge for the Administration to develop and apply an effective antiterrorism strategy is building and especially maintaining the domestic support, both from Congress and the American people. The social impact of the war against terrorism will be enormous. We will have to implement measures whose impacts go well beyond additional delay and inconvenience. We will be looking at intensified forms of surveillance that raise very troubling questions about individual rights to privacy. As observed by Leon Fuerth⁸, we will have to develop new relationships between elements of government from the federal to the local level – relationships that may be unprecedented and in some cases, difficult to reconcile with our constitutional protection of freedom. Looking for this balance between security and public acceptance will be a

⁸ Leon **Fuerth**, “*Digging out*”, The Washington Post, 16 September 2001, sec B, p.7.

very difficult exercise, especially in the long run. Nonetheless, I consider it as the foundation of the Temple, the indispensable enabler.

Instruments

The pillars of the Temple are all the resources available on federal, state, as well local levels. The instruments of power to implement the antiterrorism strategy are : the intelligence community, the law enforcement capacities, diplomacy, economic capacities, military forces and the supporting capacities (rescue services, health & medical, industry - R&D, FEMA,etc.). They include covert operations too.

Objectives and policies

These pillars support the roof of the Temple consisting of the objectives described above (*The RAND framework – Analysis and comments*), but regrouped in a somewhat different way as shown in Appendix A. The hedging dimension is renamed as the **preparedness** component. Before designing the policies to meet these goals, two key questions have to be addressed :

- What level of performance will the nation demand in the national responses to terrorist threats and actions?
- What are the most cost-effective options for providing the capabilities that will address these events?

During the implementation of the strategy, every policy has to be evaluated in a continuous way in view of these two questions.

Keys to success

Intelligence, innovation and cooperation will be the three joists that will keep our Temple of antiterrorism together. They are the indispensable conditions for success.

Intelligence

The evolution of information technology offers the opportunity to integrate the traditional forms of information gathering (including Human Intelligence) with sophisticated all-source intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. A new interagency information concept, based on a network-centric approach connecting ALL INVOLVED ACTORS, has to be developed. It needs to have the capabilities to collect, process, and disseminate an uninterrupted flow of information. It needs to be globally interconnected with other information grids, such as the Interpol one. Its realization requires not only technological efforts, but the continued evolution of organizations and doctrine and the development of relevant training. This brings us to the second factor for success.

Innovation

Although enhancing information and intelligence capabilities is a primary driver of environmental change, it is not the only one. The search for innovation must encompass the entire context of the antiterrorism battle – which means that all involved actors (the complete law enforcement community, armed forces, rescue services, FEMA, etc.) must explore changes in doctrine, organization, training, materiel, education, personnel, and facilities as well as technology. Innovation requires legal initiatives. An effective legal antiterrorism framework has to be created, starting with expanding electronic surveillance capabilities and with improving financial investigation tools. The legal problems to enforce evacuation of private buildings and the deportation of foreigners have to be overcome, penalties related to terrorist actions have to be

reviewed. Innovation means enhancing indications and warning systems. Innovation means also research and development in the medical field to reduce the biowarfare threat, to sharpen the ability to detect infectious disease outbreak, to improve forensic technology, etc.

Cooperation

In view of the magnitude of the terrorist threat, it is obvious that very close international cooperation is of primary importance. The only way to fight terrorism effectively is through international *engagement*. An isolationist strategy will not produce the required outcome. An intense cooperation on every level between all pillars is a prerequisite for success too. A *National Antiterrorism Office* should be created to ensure the overall coordination, to formulate the strategy, to conduct the plan reviews and most of all to conduct an integrated net assessment.

The Temple is three-dimensional to indicate that the war against terrorism requires a long term, sustained effort. Terrorist risks have to be placed in the context of other risks to national security and counterterrorism has to be placed in the context of other international security issues. US counterterrorism strategy needs to be approached with an eye on the broader security environment and is closely linked to the National Security Strategy, as shown in *Appendix A*. Fighting terrorism will require a thorough review of US foreign policy in the Middle East as well as in China and Russia. While the US seeks to build strategic allies in a war against a common foe, it may be forced to compromise on key issues such as NATO enlargement, national missile defense, and human rights. The ultimate success of an antiterrorist strategy will require an intense multinational cooperation. Integrating an effective antiterrorism strategy in the National Security Strategy will need a long-term recasting of US foreign policy, if not a substantial

change in priorities. It will need a foreign policy that is **engaged, proactive, and interventionist**.

Conclusion

The war against terrorism is not a limited war. As pointed out by Walter Russell Mead, it will require every instrument of power and all means available. It will be a war that needs to be fought in the Jacksonian way. No weapons and no enemy sanctuaries should be off limits.⁹ It will require a sustained, holistic and multidimensional effort. The Administration's most demanding challenge will, therefore, come from the tensions between the war on terrorism and the more traditional kinds of war that the US may face in the 21st century, such as regional and ethnic conflicts.

⁹ Walter Russell **Mead**, "*Braced for Jacksonian Ruthlessness*", The Washington Post, 17 September 2001, sec A, p.27.

