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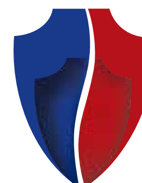
Beyond Borders

Developing Comprehensive National Security Policies to Address Complex Regional Challenges

By Patrick M. Cronin and Brian M. Burton



Center for a New American Security

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Cover Image

U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala Stephen G. McFarland, center, greets members of a U.S. humanitarian assistance team upon arriving in Guatemala, June 1, 2010. The team is part of a military deployment to the Central American nation to assist with relief efforts after Tropical Storm Agatha caused widespread flooding and mudslides.

(Michael Wimbish/U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE)

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To confront many of the national security challenges facing the United States and its allies today, the U.S. government must adopt new comprehensive approaches that transcend borders and government agencies. These comprehensive approaches require four major changes. First, U.S. policymakers consistently must think beyond borders to develop coordinated regional strategies and plans across government agencies. Second, the U.S. government should develop more effective means of implementing these coordinated regional strategies, building on the ready-made platform of the military's combatant commands (COCOMs). Third, the U.S. government should strengthen the role of country teams within individual countries. Finally, given continued U.S. dependence on partner countries to achieve shared policy objectives, strengthening the U.S. capacity for security sector assistance and conflict prevention is essential.

Many emerging threats to U.S. national security are increasingly taking on a networked, transnational character. Seldom confined to single countries, they can subtly subvert borders and undermine governments and laws in ways not previously possible, or at least not previously appreciated by the national security community. They are becoming widespread in regions that are not at the top of the U.S. foreign policy agenda, such as the Horn of Africa and, closer to home, Central and South America. For example, the destabilizing spread of transnational crime in Latin America – marked increasingly by insurgent and terrorist methods and possible rogue-state support from Venezuela – has spilled across U.S. borders. This is a problem that spreads insecurity across several countries in the region, corrupting governments and hindering legitimate economic development and the development of stable political systems.[1] The nexus between drug trafficking and terrorism in northwest Africa is another case of what might be called a hybrid regional challenge where crime, conflict and state weakness form a "wicked problem" in which elements combine to form an interdependent and seemingly intractable dilemma highly resistant to simple solutions that rely on force, diplomacy or development alone.

In such complex circumstances, military forces are seldom if ever sufficient to achieve overarching political objectives, even where they play a leading role. Instead, police officers, prosecutors, drug enforcement agents, development specialists and other specialized professionals may be more appropriate and efficient for the task. Comprehensive approaches must combine all elements of power – usually simplified into the "3 Ds" of diplomacy, development and defense – along with every other relevant tool that the United States can bring to bear, from law enforcement to economic pressure, as well as the support of international and nongovernmental partners.[2]

To examine these issues, the Center for a New American Security led a workshop of government officials, military personnel and regional experts at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Participants focused on defining these new threats to national security and developing recommendations for how the United States can address them.

Defining the New Set of Challenges

The amorphous set of interconnected threats described above can be described as "hybrid regional challenges," a term for problems that blend traditional and non-traditional security

risks and require more joint government agency responses, and in particular greater civilian capacity. Hybrid regional challenges often incorporate networks of many actors. They may involve non-state actors, such as cartels, that may also have some degree of state support, whether from corrupt officials within a state where they are operating, or from foreign states wishing to rent their services. Even when they are based in states, these non-state actors may be networked with other transnational organizations with complementary interests or capabilities that make collaboration profitable. They pose a broad range of threats, potentially undermining good and effective governance region-wide, and even penetrating the American homeland itself, whether through gang violence or much more lethal transnational terrorism.[3] What starts as a seemingly isolated or relatively simple problem can become far more intractable if it involves an array, loose or fixed, of non-state and state actors and organizations.

In most cases, these challenges must be addressed regionally. Indeed, rare is the problem the United States has faced over the past decade where a "regional solution" has not been suggested. Most international crises, such as insurgency and civil strife in Afghanistan and Pakistan or nuclear proliferation by North Korea, affect the security and prosperity of multiple other countries even more acutely than the United States. Confronting threats that transcend national borders requires that the United States engage regional partners, including national government, international organizations and nongovernmental organizations on the basis of common interests, and that it holistically address broader political and security issues that transcend borders.

Looking at these hybrid challenges inductively, one can identify from specific cases a generalized set of risks. One such hybrid challenge is presented by the growing violence, corruption and destruction resulting from narco-violence centered in Mexico. Most visible to the United States is the extent to which drug cartels are destabilizing Mexico and penetrating the U.S. homeland with their contraband. However, it is then necessary to widen the aperture to see a region-wide network that supports cartel operations and the potential for that network to suddenly and significantly strengthen. The Mexican drug cartels look even more pernicious in light of their relationships with outside actors, from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and its state supporters, such as Venezuela, to criminal gangs in the United States. Thus, it is impossible to consider a strategy for stemming the drug wars in Mexico without thinking both holistically and regionally about these broader issues.[4]

The following sections recommend concrete steps to plan for and to implement whole-of-government national security policies so that the United States can better address such hybrid regional challenges.

The Regional Strategy and Planning Gap

Coordinated regional-level approaches are a missing link in U.S. national security planning. Whether or not regional challenges can be definitively resolved or even just managed and mitigated over the long term, the U.S. government is not particularly good at developing and implementing comprehensive regional strategies to deal with them. Even when interagency cooperation is strong, that cooperation tends to be tightly bounded within a single nation's borders. Despite rhetorical commitments by policymakers to whole-of-government approaches, interagency strategy formulation to address regional issues is too often the exception rather than the rule. While there may be highly effective country teams, there is no unified platform for implementing and overseeing government-wide regional strategies. Confronting complex regional challenges will require significant changes in the way the U.S. government views problems and develops ways to counter them. More effective country teams, combined with stronger regional planning and execution, will be crucial to strategic and coherent policies.

The United States can improve its chances of success if it enhances its ability to develop regional strategies that set clear priorities and make tradeoffs among competing objectives, authorities and resources. Ameliorating this regional strategy gap should be a primary objective for institutional reformers, particularly at the National Security Council (NSC), State, and the Department of Defense (DOD).

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Strategic reviews conducted by the National Security Council and to some degree the Department of Defense's 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review identify specific countries or regions as concerns. However, significant detail is lacking on the nature of the challenges in specific regions, the desired end-states that U.S. strategy should seek to achieve in these regions, and how to balance among competing priorities in different regions. Country-specific strategies, such as the Mission Strategic Plans developed by country teams in the field, may be very detailed with respect to a single country but they do not extend beyond it. Many of the challenges of today and tomorrow will require prolonged U.S. attention to manage and mitigate, but no agency controls country strategies that examine details over the long-term, 10 or more years. These country-level strategies are also limited by their lack of connection to national-level political, strategic and resource decisions. Country team plans are adjudicated at the State Department based on resource-allocation rather than strategic considerations all too often. Budgets sometimes take priority over intended effects. Good country-level planning can be and sometimes is overruled in Washington by national and subsequent department-level decisions. For example, the country team at an embassy may develop a strategic plan to address governance and economic challenges within the host nation, only to find that the majority of its programmatic funding is already allotted for specific counterterrorism or counternarcotics ends, thereby inhibiting creative and potentially more effective holistic strategies.[5]

Regional-level strategy takes place at U.S. military combatant commands and in the State Department's bureaus. However, integration of such efforts is needed in both mid-level and high-level decision-making to form a comprehensive approach to address a commonly-defined set of priority issues. At present combatant commands and State Department bureaus do not often coordinate their plans and often find themselves at odds over how to manage specific problems. Additionally, a proliferation of niche foreign-assistance programs aimed at very specific issues, from AIDS relief to counternarcotics, makes it difficult to coordinate, respond with agility, or set realistic and durable priorities among the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of Defense.[6]

What this means to the rest of the interagency community is that a new layer of civilian coordination and control at the regional level must be accompanied by a shift at the national level of the U.S. government. The current civilian U.S. government paradigm, with highly centralized bureaucracies overseeing field operations from

the United States without a regional presence in between, is about making Washington successful more than it is about enabling success by country or regional teams. This paradigm tends to result in a lack of strategy because the various levels, from the country team to the regional bureau to the central resource managers, do not agree on a definition of the problem.

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A COCOM-like framework offers a model for change, incorporating the concept of a commander's intent, which sets general guidelines within which lower echelons should operate, while giving them flexibility to react to changes they perceive. In another change based on the COCOM model, the U.S. government should assign responsibility for ensuring coordination of regional interagency strategy development and resources to the Senior Director for Strategic Planning and Institutional Reform of the National Security Staff (NSS), and should provide for the necessary additional staffing. This directorate in the National Security Staff should lead and coordinate the development of an interagency equivalent of DOD's Guidance for the Employment of the Force (GEF), a biannual planning document that directs the high-level goals and processes for regional planning at COCOMs. With an interagency "GEF," the NSS could also be the oversight body for reviewing and coordinating the formulation of regional strategies and work closely with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to orchestrate interagency resource allocation for translating regional policy objectives to reality on the ground. These changes would enhance the focus and influence of this still nascent and underutilized NSS directorate.

THE COMBATANT COMMAND PLATFORM

Notwithstanding the U.S. desire to deemphasize the military role in foreign policy in the long run (which will require sustained investment in State and USAID capacity), the best way to address this shortfall in the near term is by leveraging and learning from nascent efforts at COCOMs, which are institutionalizing their efforts to collaborate with other U.S. government agencies and in the process developing platforms for integrated regional strategies.

The U.S. government should explore ways to build an interagency task force or hub at each COCOM as a stepping stone toward long-term development of regional "country team" equivalents. Larger and more influential regional interagency teams, perhaps located at one of the larger U.S. embassies in a region, could perform the type of planning and harmonization functions that COCOMs perform in the military realm (described in more detail below). However, as desirable as it might be to build up civilian capacities, the constraints imposed by the current fiscal environment or other bureaucratic impediments might make this difficult if not impossible. Therefore, some COCOM resources, particularly transportation, logistics, communications and possibly intelligence, could be made available for use by State, USAID, and other necessary interagency task groupings such as

counternarcotics teams including Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) personnel, to the extent that they do not impinge on essential combat activities. This should not be much of a burden for certain COCOMs, particularly U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), whose primary function at this time is capacity-building with partner governments and security forces.

To be sure, there are problems with building on COCOMs as the primary platform for U.S. regional strategies. It nearly ensures that the U.S. government's face to the world is predominantly a military one, a fact likely to confirm foreign populations' worst suspicions (even if erroneous) that the United States is only interested in pursuing its own strategic advantage and in spreading a kind of "neo-imperial" domain across the globe. A military lead in foreign policy goes against many traditional U.S. values, including the desire to see other countries adopt strong civilian control over their security forces and to focus as much as possible on peaceful relationships based on commerce. The perception that the military is driving foreign policy is also widespread within U.S. civilian agencies, which justifiably view some DOD initiatives as crowding out initiatives from and resources for State and USAID that would enable the civilians to take back these responsibilities from a Defense Department that claims not to want them. An additional problem is that the advances in interagency cooperation initiated by some COCOMs are driven mostly by the commander's personal recognition of the regional strategy gap and have not been institutionalized, and thus advances made under one commander might easily be rolled back by his or her successor a few short years later. Finally, even the most promising efforts at interagency regional strategy formulation and implementation can run into significant hurdles in practice.[7] However, some promising progress has been made and should be encouraged and analyzed rather than reflexively condemned as a further extension of military control over U.S. foreign policy.

The COCOMs provide a useful framework around which the State Department and other civilian agencies can position their capabilities, and DOD has expressed a desire for the State Department to take a leading role in producing regional strategies that the COCOMs and other DOD initiatives can "plug into." The key challenge for State, USAID and the National Security Staff is to develop their own capacities to conduct regional strategic assessments with DOD that produce common identifications of threats and opportunities. The process of building up capacity through greater investment is a long-term effort, but certain intermediate steps could help jump-start U.S. regional strategy development by building on existing progress.

First, however, it is helpful to review how combatant commands develop regional or theater strategies, defined as "strategic concepts and courses of action directed toward securing the objectives of national and multinational policies and strategies through the synchronized and integrated employment of military forces and other instruments of national power."[8] The primary strength of COCOMs is in connecting national-level strategic guidance into regional or theater-level campaign plans that identify key challenges affecting U.S. interests and recommend ways to address them.[9]

The role of the COCOMs in regional strategy has steadily expanded since the Goldwater-Nichols reforms of 1986 fostered the development and implementation of joint theater plans, as described by the Project for National Security Reform:

> These regional commands exercise independent influence abroad and were given a hefty amount of political authority by both the White

> House and the Pentagon. They have large staffs that spend their time preparing and executing peacekeeping deployments, humanitarian interventions, emergency relief for natural disasters and coordinating hundreds of large and small training exchanges with newly independent nations and old allies. They control resources and have a clear mandate to independently engage with countries that may seem far outside the U.S. sphere of influence or concern. Commanders are able to influence policy decisions in Washington, primarily attributable to their proximity to regional problems and personalities.[10]

The COCOMs possess comparatively vast resources and equipment – money, personnel, aircraft – and forward-based assets, all under a unitary military command structure that enables them to act more quickly and decisively, when needed, than State and USAID regional offices based in Washington. For these reasons, COCOMs are often in the position of being the *de facto* senior regional representatives of the United States to the rest of the world. Since the 1990s, COCOMs have been directed to shape their environments, meaning to undertake foundational activities such as security cooperation, partner capacity building and humanitarian missions intended to prevent conflict and advance U.S. interests in the region without the use of force. As a result, "they often end up concerned about the same issues that demand the attention of their civilian colleagues," issues that are political, economic and social rather than military in nature.[11]

This has led COCOMs to produce some of the more comprehensive regional strategies that the United States possesses. Although the defense-dominated planning documents often do not adequately integrate civilian expertise and viewpoints, they frequently offer diverse diagnoses of regional challenges. They pinpoint the need for nonmilitary approaches in their posture statements and theater campaign plans (TCPs). The Posture Statement for AFRICOM, for example, emphasizes how "public health, economic development, and democratization challenges continue to significantly impact the security environment in Africa," and argues that "the United States has a vested interest in countering the destabilizing impacts of drug trafficking on security, stability, and development in Africa."[12] It notes, "Africa's challenges require a holistic view of security that includes defense, law enforcement, and customs and border security. Addressing defense related challenges must be pursued in concert with other USG and partner security-related endeavors to sustain unity of effort."[13]

Similarly, the 2010 posture statement of SOUTHCOM asserts that:

> [Security] challenges [in the SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility] are multiple and complex and include a broad and growing spectrum of public security threats, the possibility of natural and man-made disasters, and an emerging class of issues, such as those relating to the environment. More specifically, illicit trafficking, transnational terrorism, crime, gangs and the potential spread of WMD [weapons of mass destruction] pose the principal security challenges within the region, none of which fall to DoD to take the lead in confronting. Most of these issues, in turn, are fueled by the endemic and underlying conditions of poverty, income inequality and corruption. Thus, our primary focus is on doing what we can to support other agencies of our government and our partner nations as they confront these problems and try to prevent them from becoming issues that require the military to address.[14]

Such analyses have spurred the COCOMs to seek more active cooperation with the State Department, USAID and other agencies. The COCOM model is increasingly becoming a hub for broader U.S. regional strategy by integrating nonmilitary instruments of power. Admiral James Stavridis (now Supreme Allied Commander–Europe), as commander of SOUTHCOM, was a prime example of a combatant commander attempting to integrate

interagency partners more closely with DOD in regional strategy. As Admiral Stavridis put it, he hoped that State and USAID would use his command structure and resources as a "Velcro cube" to which they could attach themselves while carrying out their own operations. He also sought to establish broad-ranging relationships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector within his command's area of operations to help foster shared understanding of challenges and possible solutions.[15]

Other combatant commands have also sought to enhance their interagency character. For instance, the U.S. Africa Command places a U.S. ambassador in the role of "Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities." Many COCOMs have benefited from the presence of senior State Department officials, known as Political Advisors or POLADs, assigned to the a commander's personal staff in part to help improve coordination of military activities with diplomatic efforts in a region. A few COCOMs – such as AFRICOM and SOUTHCOM – have also added senior development advisors to perform similar planning harmonization roles between development efforts and military activities. Some COCOMs have added representatives or liaisons from FBI, DEA, Justice, Energy and other federal and state government agencies and law enforcement organizations, seeking to bridge the gap between military planning and operations and those on the civilian side of U.S. government regional activities. Many of these relationships grew out of previous and more modest efforts to improve interagency connectivity via Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACGs) at the combatant commands, which were established roughly a decade ago by order of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Representatives of each COCOM are present at USAID in Washington to foster better understanding of what capabilities each can bring to specific challenges and how to incorporate those strengths into their respective plans. Most recently, COCOMs have sought to strengthen their outreach through strengthened "J-9" directorates that seek to coordinate with both interagency and nongovernmental partners such as aid organizations.[16]

More robust liaison offices comprising State and USAID officers should be given a presence at the COCOM level, and should have more input into the diagnosis of threats and opportunities and the formulation of regional strategy and theater plans. For example, State Department strategy and policy offices at the level of deputy assistant secretary could embed their own personnel with their COCOM counterparts in regional bureaus, and could draw on these COCOMs for military planner detailees to improve a civilian-led planning process. A balance will have to be struck between retaining the definitive decision-making authority back in Washington while deploying essential knowledge and skill sets in a forward-based command structure. The way to achieve this balance is by developing a "commander's intent" culture, in which higher level leadership in State and USAID focus on setting parameters for field operators to work within while allowing them to adapt to local circumstances as they see fit. The COCOM level oversight will be better able to support and coordinate country team activities by virtue of being based closer to the scene of a crisis or at least outside of the distractions of Washington and more attuned to regional political dynamics.

Implementing Regional Strategies

These changes in the strategy formulation process will not achieve much unless the means of implementing the strategy also improve. The United States should, therefore, reexamine the way it designs country-level representation and policy implementation – the "country team" – and should enhance the country teams' ability to work with partners, especially by making security-sector assistance and conflict prevention and mitigation capabilities more flexible.

STRENGTHENING COUNTRY TEAMS

Somewhat paradoxically, better regional approaches require stronger country approaches. Well-crafted regional strategies are useless unless they are implemented effectively and flexibly by integrated interagency country teams assembled in a systematic rather than ad hoc fashion. To ensure that country teams function as an element of a broader regional approach, each country team must be accountable as a whole to a clear line of authority, rather than to disparate agencies. Each team must also be empowered by the regional-level oversight to advance U.S. interests in the way it sees fit, within a "commander's intent" framework as defined by the national and regional-level policymakers. In this Department of Defense management paradigm, each higher layer of authority exists to empower the next lower layer; it, too, has much to recommend it for devising responses to complex regional problems. The COCOM does not do the Joint Task Force's job; it exists to provide the Joint Task Force (JTF) with the environment for success, politically, strategically and with the right resources. This approach underpins the DOD concepts of decentralization and empowering progressively lower echelons within the framework of commander's intent; these concepts help make the U.S. military a more effective global organization.

To develop more effective country teams, the State Department should ensure that interagency representatives to country teams receive sufficient high-quality training for security assistance and conflict prevention roles before deploying; training country team members together before deploying to build more cohesive teamwork; providing more advanced and deeper interagency training for ambassadors prior to assignment; and holding ambassadors accountable for orchestrating interagency results on the ground (and visibly replacing them if they are unable to perform this function). While ambassadors may be designated as the president's personal representatives, for organizational purposes the country teams must be answerable to a clear chain of command in order to coordinate responses to complex regional problems, and to ensure that country-team strategy aligns with broader regional objectives. Country teams should, therefore, answer to forward-positioned State Department regional bureau staff co-located with the COCOMs; these regional teams should coordinate country teams and report to Washington.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

In all of its strategies to deal with hybrid regional challenges, the United States will to work by, with, and through partner governments and international or nongovernmental organizations. These partners will also have their own interests, and their capacity and political will to carry out U.S. goals may not be particularly robust, nor might their perceptions of threat and of what response is in their best interests be perfectly aligned with those of the United States. This poses a challenge for U.S. policymakers, but the need to work with partners is unavoidable since many of the elements of regional challenges can only be addressed effectively by host nations or organizations. A careful understanding of the situation, a longer-term strategic approach with judicious and realistic goals, and a capacity for better integrating and implementing appropriate instruments of power are essential if the United States and its partner governments are to prevent escalating violence and to contain, manage or even thwart and defeat hybrid regional challenges.

Many of the problems of today, from insurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan to "crime wars" in Latin America, are linked to the political, economic and social conditions within the countries of the region, which the United States has a very limited ability to address. To paraphrase Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' 2008 defense strategy, the most crucial element of the U.S. response to regional challenges is less what America does itself than how well it empowers and supports local actors to deal with the problems themselves. But the U.S. government will

also need to address its own shortfalls in capacity. Even while the Obama administration seeks to continue building the civilian work force at State and USAID, these incremental improvements will not fundamentally relieve the constraints on what can be achieved abroad. While the United States is able to devote tremendous resources to a problem when it wants to, it lacks adequate ability to select and integrate the best tools for the problem from a portfolio of defense, diplomacy, development and law enforcement capabilities, rather than simply coordinating the limited capabilities that may be on hand.

Two key capacities central to dealing with partners warrant special attention: security sector assistance and conflict prevention and mitigation.

Security Sector Assistance

Addressing the problem of transnational criminal organizations or terrorist groups operating within unwilling host countries, as is the case in parts of Latin America and Africa today, puts a premium on law enforcement and justice systems. While an outside military force could eliminate particular target individuals and impose martial order, the more sustainable long-term solution requires effective police and judicial systems in the host countries that enforce the rule of law. U.S. support for such systems is scarce: Expeditionary civilian capabilities and capacity, particularly in the justice sector, are severely lacking.

Current U.S. security assistance emphasizes partner military forces, in programs like the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), that trains foreign troops to serve as peacekeepers on U.N. missions. Security assistance conducted by the U.S. military overlooks the problem of transnational crime and terrorism, based on the sound argument that police and justice functions are fundamentally civilian. However, the lack of capacity at State, USAID or the Department of Justice has led the United States to call upon its military to perform these functions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Current State Department programs funded through the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement are too limited in scope to address the challenge in large countries like Mexico and Nigeria, which are afflicted by serious transnational crime problems. Alternative models, such as the DEA's Vetted Officer program, which assists countries afflicted by transnational narcotics trafficking to counter the corruption of law enforcement organizations, may warrant additional State or DOD funds. This would expand an already successful program, rather than forcing State or DOD to try to develop a new one from scratch. It would also address the issue of recruiting "bad apples" into host-nation security forces, a common problem when a society has been penetrated by criminal or militant networks. Allowing for more flexible funding of a broader array of security sector assistance programs to include judicial and rule-of-law issues, rather than just military support, is a reform that should be adopted in the course of ongoing NSC, State and DOD policy reviews.[17]

The United States should fast-track whole-of-government security sector assistance reform that focuses on internal security under the rule of law. With a major DOD review of security cooperation underway, the ability to transfer matériel and impart training to foreign militaries seems poised to become easier. Yet this effort is hindered by lagging State and USAID reviews of security assistance, which often look at the issue more holistically as "security sector assistance," and by a lack of clarity from the NSC regarding where the administration stands on this issue. However, relying only on the DOD approach, which largely does not address the critical issue of police and judicial sector assistance, creates a critical vacuum. In unstable countries facing hybrid regional challenges, a lack of police and judicial capacity is often a more critical problem than a lack of military

capability, yet U.S. law enforcement assistance is extraordinarily underdeveloped or even nonexistent. In Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. troops had to fill this role, which led rather predictably to the police being trained as a paramilitary force with limited ability to conduct community policing. While it is not necessary or even possible for the United States to deploy the full panoply of security sector governance assistance programs that may be needed, understanding what is required and what capacity might be offered by the United States and its international partners should be part of any thorough needs assessment and strategic plan.

As U.S. forces continue to be thrust into the position of training police, the NSC should direct State and USAID to work with the Department of Justice, particularly the FBI and DEA, to develop law enforcement training doctrine and mechanisms by which State and DOD can call upon Department of Justice personnel to direct capacity-building efforts in at-risk states. Congress should consider changes in legal authorities to allow the Department of Defense to more readily support this mission of the Departments of State and Justice.

An additional security assistance program to help address these challenges would be for the State and Defense Department to expand their support for the establishment of new regional training and threat analysis centers hosted by partner nations. These regional centers would include personnel from any country in the region to share information and techniques to address common security challenges. The advantage of such centers is that they can help American partners develop relationships with each other, enabling the development of coordinated diagnoses of and approaches to transnational problems and reducing lingering mistrust between neighboring countries. They can also encourage the implementation of regional approaches to problems that are organized and owned by the local governments rather than pushed by the United States.

Conflict Prevention and Mitigation

More flexible funding from State and DOD could also support conflict prevention programs. Such programs have demonstrated promise, but have rarely been provided with significant resources. The State Department's Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) has provided the beginnings of a civilian conflict and crisis assessment and response capability. That structure and its mission requires further refinement, especially a shift in focus from stabilization missions to a more balanced emphasis on reinforcing conflict prevention and buttressing the security sector of partner states. However an administration tinkers with the specific organization and its nomenclature, the functions that S/CRS conducts and for which it has begun building capabilities should be maintained and better integrated into regional strategic planning.

The State Department's challenge is to ensure that conflict prevention, mitigation and response is woven into the fabric of the regional bureaus. Improving expertise with hybrid challenges and conflicts (as well as related planning capacity) within State regional bureaus could be achieved by designating a senior official within each regional bureau at State and USAID to take personal responsibility for advancing these issues, and assuring that S/CRS capabilities are better integrated with mainline State Department policy and operations. All too often, issues involving major conflicts are tasked out to special envoys, creating further difficulties in coordination because they operate outside normal lines of authority and divert resources that might otherwise be used to build State and USAID institutional capacity to deal with such problems more consistently and sustainably. An alternative would be to establish within each regional bureau a new strategy and planning deputy assistant secretary position with associated staff. These new offices could explicitly focus on orchestrating interagency cooperation on regional security and on tackling hybrid

challenges, specializing in both response and prevention efforts. The staff could include S/CRS civil-military planners and seconded military and law enforcement agency representatives, and should also have USAID detailees (perhaps out of USAID's Civilian Response Corps active component). These regional strategy offices would thus be better positioned to leverage existing S/CRS capabilities for expeditionary operations and planning, to generate more consistent and credible regional strategies. By being located within the regional bureaus, these offices would be better positioned to help the Secretary of State link regional strategy planning to policy implementation by State Department country desk officers and country teams.

Conclusion

The United States should further sharpen its understanding of emerging hybrid regional challenges; improve governmental capacity for regional decision-making and strategy-making by building on a regional COCOM platform; and enhance its ability to build partners' capacity, especially in the areas of security sector assistance and crisis prevention.

Thinking beyond borders does not automatically lead to more effective action beyond borders. Even with enhanced capacity within the United States and partner governments, U.S. approaches will be imperfect when it comes to the implementation of policy for grappling with complex challenges. The recommendations provided here may not completely bridge the gap between U.S. regional strategic formulation and execution. However, they have the virtue of being actionable in the short term and they have the potential to catalyze more effective U.S. approaches to these complex regional challenges in the long term as well.

ENDNOTES

1. For instance, see George W. Grayson, *Mexico: Narco-Violence and a Failed State?* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2009); and William Finnegan, "Silver or Lead," *The New Yorker* (31 May 2010).

2. This definition of "comprehensive approach" is utilized in policy documents such as Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review* (February 2010), http://www.defense.gov/qdr/qdr%20as%20of%2029jan10%201600.pdf; and Stephen J. Hadley and William J. Perry, co-chairs, *The QDR In Perspective: Meeting America's National Security Needs in the 21st Century*, Final Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review Independent Panel, http://www.usip.org/files/qdr/qdrreport.pdf: 31–32.

3. See Robert Killebrew and Jennifer Bernal, "Crime Wars: Gangs, Cartels, and U.S. National Security" (Washington: Center for a New American Security, September 2010).

4. Ibid.

5. CNAS workshop, Naval War College (8-9 September 2010).

6. See Gordon Adams and Cindy Williams, *Buying National Security: How America Plans and Pays for its Global Role and Safety at Home* (New York: Routledge, 2010): 32–92.

7. Various reports by the General Accounting Office to Congress have identified such hurdles. For instance, see, *Government Accountability Office, National Security: Interagency Collaboration Practices and Challenges at DOD's Southern and Africa Commands*, GAO-10-962T (28 July 2010), http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d10962t.pdf.

8. Joint Publications (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (17 September 2006), I-3.

9. See Derek S. Reveron and James L. Cook, "Developing Strategists: Translating National Strategy into Theater Strategy," *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 55 (4th Quarter 2009): 21–28.

10. Project on National Security Reform, *Forging a New Shield* (Arlington, VA: Project on National Security Reform, November 2008): 493.

11. Ibid., 494.

12. U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), 2010 Posture Statement, http://www.africom.mil/pdfFiles/USAFRICOM2010PostureStatement.pdf: 8.

13. Ibid., 11.

14. U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), 2010 Posture Statement, http://www.southcom.mil/AppsSC/files/634038960550937500.pdf: 6–7.

15. C. Spencer Abbot, "Educate to Cooperate: Leveraging the New Definition of 'Joint' to Build Partnering Capacity," *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 57 (2nd Quarter 2010): 21.

16. J-9 refers to the Joint Concept Development and Experimentation (JCD&E) Directorate of the Joint Forces Command.

17. See Gregory A. Hermsmeyer, "Institutionalizing Security Sector Reform: Options for the U.S. Government," United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Special Report 255 (October 2010), http://www.usip.org/resources/institutionalizing-security-sector-reform.

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