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Participant organization: Former MOD Strategic Effects

* How can you get a balanced strategy that can actually deliver. We aren’t in the business of competing with Wagner. Let’s ask the French how can we help – French will be like, well I don’t know it is kind of tricky. Not sure there is anything you can do to help besides say supportive things. Bring influence to bear with UN and AU, but in terms of physically getting involved.
* Two operations in Mali for years – UN and French (CT) – but was always those three things. Our partner is struggling but it is hard to see how we can help, or even if they can answer the question of how can we help.
* Organization – blend of people who do topics (like strat comm), and then the effects team – and then things that are a little more sensitive like info ops. Effects Teams (NSC) – four strategic effects teams. Blend of Atlantic security (Russia), China/Indo Pacific, Middle East/Iran, and then Africa. What to be looking where our principal adversaries or allies are operating. Big place – grand strategic national strategy combined with specific nation strategies. Russia really important, China, Russia, really important – need to shove a lot of resources there – while also watching where emerging things are happening. Limited resources in Africa, have to look at where can we still have meaningful impact. And if you stop the rocks, the creeping and not so creeping influence, as we see across the Sahel, if effectively western democracy is out of favor and autocrats and juntas are in – there’s a kind of stop loss – lets have a look at the timeline on how the French were kicked out of these countries. And they had had quite a bit of influence there as part of the P3, . And now these autocrats want to seize power and be supported and Russisa is up for that kind of unconditional support. And even if they didn’t it is undermining the credibility of democracies.
* Turks and different actors in Libya – Qatar, Emirates – everyone wants a piece – those middle power Middle East countries. Aftermath of Qadafi’s fall. Not a runaway success, it all just kind of fell away. Libya is problematic, but these other countries, some of them we have good western relationships as well so trying to figure out how to maintain them. But we have limited resources. But so if we work with allies you can do a reasonable amount.
* What would have been pretty to predict and extrapolate is what has happened in Syria. And as the country collapses, Russia can come in and supplant us. But they did this with minimal western influence. But it isn’t easy for Russia. So what can we learn from that. Who would have thought that Russia -those bases they established to project power – but a bit of parallel with Afghanistan. Things can turn on a dime. There’s got to be some similarities between rebels in Syria on the march and taking Damascus, and that regimes can collapse if they stay recognizably corrupt. So some people might want to take another look at those countries we have parked (like Mali, Niger, etc) because there might be a chance for things to be reversed there as well.
* It looks a little Belt and Road (Nigeria and Kenya), but it is going to be Chinese dudes building it not your guys and we are alos going to take all of your resources and minerals and in 20 years whne we leave we aren’t going to tell you how to operate it.
* So lets go with good relationships and good democracies we can work with. Also a consideration of diaspora populations that are large in UK. There are some foundational things you could work with to develop a strategy. You can work on understanding the communications ecosystems – ok how can we start to bring information to the fight more effectively and consistently over a long set of time. Phoenix Challenge – for the 5EYES folks. What are things we care about to measures in terms of where relations are, how much we can and support them, how much resources. Gulf of Guinea, lots of – Ghana at the time – but having a lot of problems with Chinese – fishing fleets. Can we go down there and train their Coast Guard to help them report and take it to the UN. Adding some security capability and capacity building there, because you really want to leave politics and diplomacy through the UN because we aren’t going to be sending gun boats down there.
* Did a bit of work on Ghana about that. The Ghanaians. Don’t know if this is true, but if democracy is not really deliverable in some areas, should we maybe just come to relations with the Chinese. So it isn’t so much about keeping the Russians out and keeping a democracy, but managing the legitimacy. Like with the Chinese, are these illegal fishing boats or. We need some sorts of guiding policies around which we can arrange a strategy. Whether it as around West Africa, or however we decide to break it down. It just needs some focus, because you don’t really need to have hugely classified or technical intelligence insights, but have to have a fuller understanding of pol/econ contexts and histories. Because you could quite easily have a P3 in Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana (Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya are the big ones for the UK). There is some UK baggage there but a lot of insight. Less US baggage, so working together.
* Will we have a theory of success? His relationship was about the relationship between theory of success and big strategy. You need a strategic narrative and you need a theory of success to have a successful strat comm strategy.
* Strategy always has to be adaptive, so if you have your framework (what he did next door, how you develop the theory of change, theory of success) because then you have a framework to hang things on. Strategic and big policy, guiding policy, that represents the national strategy. It isn’t an outcome at that stage. So you might have a bit of your outcome. But in big statements, “we are going to put a man on the moon in 10 years.” So then we can arrange the 10 smaller things around it. So the first bit of DNA that will drive your strategy and that will help you deliver a strategic narrative. So in your lefthand colunn you have this is the challenge/problem we have to overcome. This is what it looks like when we’ve done it. And the impact. (Challenge get ahead of the Soviets and prop up democracy), so by putting a man on the moon it will show people how democracies are better for humanity. The impact. So what needs to be true for that center thing to be true. Propulsion, navigation, ability to sustain life. So these are the intermediate outcomes – can accomplish the propulsion, navigation, and keeping human alive. And then what has to be true to do those things. And then you have intermediate and initial outcomes. But to do them, you have to achieve effects. Trying to enable the effects. Small and medium sized UK company that makes pipes, you would still want to achieve effects. On the final right hand – what are the resources you are going to put in. Time, money, effort. This is the theory of. If we want to have this outcome, we need this many resources. But if we don’t, who does. So have to work out what we need to do to get the resources to enable it. Causal pathways, to put a man on the moon it needs to be true to have navigation, propulsions, life support. And what needs to be true to achieve those things, and then you work out what the resource bill is like for that. Or you readjust your plan.
* And this is the problem with West Africa. Who is going to pony up resources. Theory of success/change/victory – whether strat comms or strategy.
* Pipe company example – strategy and checking in. In no more than 10 minutes paint a landscape picture of where you are on the strategy. Understand the context in which the operate. The key to strategic success and cornering the market is narrowing the product range. Got to get them to go all in on something. If it can’t be captured in two sentences it is too complicated to be communicated or we don’t understand the problem ourselves. Narrow focus, be absolutely clear on what you are doing. And then every single person in the organization should be able to describe it. At the end, have this is the context, this is what our environment is like right now, and this our impact in X years. And these are things that need to happen for that to be true.
* Try to guide the conversation towards the main challenges. If you don’t have all of this, how do you write a strategic narrative.
* Need to articulate what the goal should be. Dealing with resource constrained environment. Issues where some countries are too far going. Strategically thinking about what the goals should be, given the resource constraints, and given the political realities.
* Would take a morning to formulate this, but it would only take a morning. But this only works with the C Suite. How can you write a strategic narrative if you don’t have this. And the answer is, well when you have to, but you should still be doing it. Even if it is reverse engineering it from a different level.
* He thinks we could do that strategy. Doing it on the staff was slightly clunky. But if you have the right people around you and the right accesses.
* If something is not viable, it is not viable. You can start that quite early. If you want a man on the moon, navigation is not discretionary. Need to be thinking along those lines.
* The strategic level effects, strategy should be able to be tracked on an A3 piece of paper. A high level tool. Will share the blank outline of this with us.
* For SETAF-AF want to maintain placement (basing) and access. While DOS would have broader set of goals, as well as AFRICOM, etc. So these goals need to be subsumed into this statement? Yes, or cut away. If something has to be true. If something doesn’t need to be true to reach out end state, they can be cut away. Possibly different documents for different agencies, support departments.
* So SETAF would have a narrower set of goals, that would be supporting say a broader DOS policy – should be nested within it.
* Things that are self-evident at one level still need to be resolved. They might fit into just one thing like propulsion, and all USG agencies have to reach their goals/effects to reach the propulsion thing. This is just a lower level.
* Final outcomes, intermediate outcomes, initial outcomes (two more columns) he will send to us. Has to be accessible, otherwise people just don’t do it.
* How might questions. As well as, what are your goals, how important are they relatively to other things – what would it look like. How viable are these. What do they look like – outcomes?