C ounter-terrorism strategy has undergone a remarkable development in the early years of the 21st century. Events and structures have been applied in different jurisdictions. Interestingly, 2006/7 has seen increasing convergence between the various strategic models. Encouragingly for the UK, the emergent strategy has been built on the UK structure. Hence the appetite of foreign countries to learn more about the UK process of development of counter-terrorism strategy and to seek to apply this experience and its results as appropriate to local contexts.

This is good news for the UK Government, for UK Government and Overseas Government arrangements (GO2) and for the vital UK private sector support to these efforts, notably private sector security exports and private sector security services provided overseas. Analysis of the paths of developments of counter-terrorism strategy is perhaps best undertaken in a broad analytical framework. First is the classic combination of intelligence and law enforcement with an emphasis on criminal justice. Second is a more formalised, integrated and inclusive arrangement with greater emphasis on prevention and international co-operation. Third is counter-terrorism strategy which defines the threat as an act of war and necessitating national self-defence including the use of military force. The first model based on intelligence and policing was applied throughout the Irish Extremist Campaign on the UK mainland. The second model of national security strategy demonstrated a threat that was dramatically different. The intention was to reflect mass destruction through organised violence perpetrated by suicide terrorists pursuing a global agenda.

The greatest weakness of the first model is that it was ready to be handed over to the police for arrest before national self-defence and protection. A threat on the new scale required a major shift to prevention.

The 9/11 Commission Report published in 2004 revealed that the intelligence services neglected the threat and the bar between intelligence and criminal investigations. The lack of dialogue between intelligence gathering and collating evidence were also a challenge in the UK. The traditional linear approach where intelligence activity was pursued until the case was ready to be handed over to the police for arrest before national self-defence and protection did not reflect and the barrier between intelligence and criminal investigations. The linkage between intelligence gathering and criminal investigations evidence was also a challenge in the UK. The traditional linear approach where intelligence activity was pursued until the case was ready to be handed over to the police for arrest before national self-defence and protection did not reflect and the barrier between intelligence and criminal investigations evidence was also a challenge in the UK. The traditional linear approach where intelligence activity was pursued until the case was ready to be handed over to the police for arrest before national self-defence and protection.

Many nations have adopted structures and passed laws which moved forward from pre-9/11 positions, but evolution to a more sophisticated overarching strategy is not universal, especially as regards command and control national security structures.

Evidence of the reality of the continuing need to close the gap in respect of counter-terrorism capacities in many nations is the creation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) in 2011.

Twenty-nine countries plus the EU, co-chaired by Turkey and the USA, are seeking to strengthen the national and international architecture of counter-terrorism. Amongst its primary activities are capacity building in the Sahel, capacity building in the Horn of Africa and capacity building in South East Asia.

The second broad model of counter-terrorism strategy represented an elevation of strategic planning and delivery to the centre of government. For the UK this was CONTEST, which was designed in 2002 and published in 2006. Updates and reports upon CONTEST have followed thereafter.

The strength of CONTEST is that it was extremely well-conceived and has continued to evolve to produce a balanced strategic package. The four strands – PUBLISH, PREVENT, PROTECT and PREPARE – provide practical plans of action and encourage comprehensive multi-agency counter-terrorism. The third model of counter-terrorism strategy was “The Global War on Terror”. The mass loss of life inflicted on US soil was understandably defined as an act of war involving the national right of self-defence. The US Congress authorised the use of military force within days of 9/11 and a state of war continues to this day between the USA and al-Qaeda, the Taliban and their associated forces.

The third model has sophisticated components in addition to military force, but the climate of armed conflict is the leading element and can produce initiative outside the conventional framework. These extra legal aspects can hinder international co-operation.

The Global War on Terror also produced an immediate and radical overhaul of homeland security. The organisational, bureaucratic and accountability challenges associated with the Department of Homeland Security model have dissolved many other countries from following this route. The preference has been for building upon the National Ministry of Interior in the UK, the creation of the Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSC T) within the Home Office is one such case.

Convergence

Terrorism must be addressed at its points of origin as well as the places where terrorist acts occur. This is especially the case in a world where terrorist threats are more diverse and diffused and the geopolitical footprint is spreading. This is the 2014 reality.

Contemporary counter-terrorism strategy therefore needs to encompass the development of capacity and capability to address terrorism both at its source and at its various locations. This must be based on an understanding of the national interests of the countries concerned.

This rationale coupled with the operational intervention in foreign lands and the implementation of the strategic shift in counter-terrorism strategy in the hands of the administration of President Obama. This process began very early in the new administration in 2009 with three essential orders addressing extra legality.

In May 2013, in a speech at the US National Defence University, President Obama asserted that America was at a crossroads in its progress on counter-terrorism policy. He made it clear that total defeat of terrorism was not achievable. Instead, he based upon experience since 9/11 and deeper understanding of terrorism, the US need to focus upon networks that posed a direct threat to the interests of the United States, especially in its homeland.

The reasons for amending at the crossroads include economic and political factors. But the operational counter-terrorism strategy derives from the fact that counter-terrorism is both global and local and the local dimensions are of enduring significance. The extra dimension is needed, even if the leading nation is the world’s super-power. Border sharing is more effective if based on real intelligence and the post 9/11 years have shown that great terrorists canarnise within ‘Special Forces Open War on Terror’, and local endeavour. The negative perceptions of the war in Iraq make the point.

However, militarily, the US cannot be a vital element of foreseeable US counter-terrorism. The President aspires to further reinforce the fact that the US possesses the capability which is in a different league to host country resources armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Thus targeted killings will continue.

In summary, in 2014 the global war on terror is less global and less local, war and terrorism in less active and more inclined towards partnerships with nations blighted by terrorism.

Convergence is thus taking place between the three models of counter-terrorism strategy. The law enforcement model has enlarged; the war model is more nuanced; and the prevention model of inclusive, integrated effort is the developing centre ground between the three options.

Convergence dictates that even greater effort is needed to develop capacity and capability in locations where political, economic and resource challenges hinder effective counter-terrorism.

The scale of this effort and its enduring nature mean that the resources of the public sector will be insufficient to address the demand and that the private sector has an important contribution to make. This also reflects the reality that the private sector is indispensable component of well developed counter-terrorism.

Terrorism Innovation

It is noteworthy that counter-terrorism strategy has undergone a significant refinement and eventual repeal of the war model, not simply due to the ever-changing nature of terrorism. The President aspires to further reinforce the fact that counter-terrorism is both global and local and the local dimensions are of enduring significance. The extra dimension is needed, even if the leading nation is the world’s super-power. Border sharing is more effective if based on real intelligence and the post 9/11 years have shown that great terrorists canarnise within ‘Special Forces Open War on Terror’, and local endeavour. The negative perceptions of the war in Iraq make the point. Terrorism innovation is added to the trend of convergence of counter-terrorism, the case for local capacity and capability building becomes even stronger.

Private Sector Consequences

The UK Government Security Export Strategy 2013 illustrates the role of the UK approach as a vital component of the UK security effort overseas.

There are four main areas in which this operates:

• The private sector has technological, development and human resources which could be global and share the scale of public sector activity.

• The private sector can assist the public sector to deliver government to government (GO2) initiatives, either working for the host country or for a donor country.

• The private sector is the major supporter of private business in security delivery.

• The private sector can assist the development of the host country’s private security sector.

These potential commercial dimensions are extremely large and the potential for the UK approach to counter-terrorism has emerged as a strategic leader, with features that are attractive to the countries which constitute the expanding marketplace in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

The commercial offering is also evolving. The post 9/11 commercial surge in the provision of counter-terrorism security is now being moderated by the need for nations to set up equipment into the context of national security structures, command and control and multi-agency co-operation. The extra dimension is added to the trend of what works in counter-terrorism strategy.

The value of export security operations is being overtaken by greater emphasis on host country security forces with wider responsibilities. The conclusion is that the UK private sector working closely with the UK public sector, especially UKDSO and Home Office, has an unusual opportunity which is both commercially attractive and of great benefit to all UK security agencies.

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