

GENERAL GUIDANCE

At the end of Dynamics of Counterterrorism (DOC), you are required to submit the Combating Terrorism Plan (aka “CT Plan”). It consists of your Strategic Estimate (corrected as per 1st Semester instructor comments) and your Strategic Response. Both come in together, as a single document, as it is impossible to do the Response without the Estimate. Emphasis in grading is upon the Response, but failure to “correct” the Strategic Estimate guarantees that you will have constructed your Response upon a weak foundation.

STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Concept of (Future) Response

Summarize your response to the problem you analyzed in your Estimate from the Fall Semester. In broad terms, describe the type of response you are proposing, keeping in mind the national interests that guide you (e.g., you may be writing a response for your own government or you may be providing assistance as an outside party). Articulate the strategic approach your response will use. Is your response structured around a counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, counter narcotic, counter some other threat, or some hybrid of these approaches? Articulate the broad concept of your proposed response using an Ends-Ways-Means construct. You should direct your response towards the threat group’s strategic center of gravity (normally legitimacy in irregular warfare—especially when countering insurgencies). This requires understanding the threat’s critical vulnerabilities and critical capabilities. Thus, you must further discuss how you are going to achieve legitimacy, which revolves around the political opportunity structure and non-mediation of grievances, “real or imagined.” Present this discussion in two to four paragraphs.

Legal

What is the legal basis of your response? Is it based on international humanitarian law (the law of armed conflict) or is it based on the rule of law (a law enforcement approach) or is it a hybrid of these? While you may have the means to accomplish a variety of responses, your proposed response must adhere to proper legal authorities. On this basis, are the necessary international and domestic legal authorities in place and, if not, can you implement temporary measures? You may find a need for your state’s legislative body to enact specific laws to address the threat. Finally, be aware that legal considerations can be formal—the rule of law—or informal, relating to cultural, social, and religious factors that will constrain your response. Construct this discussion in two to four paragraphs.

Assumptions

State and explain the central assumptions you are making in proposing your strategy. Assumptions are used to make predictions based on current trends or expected norms, to fill in gaps of required information or facts that are necessary to continue planning. Your assumptions may relate to areas of continuity or change, to delineate an environment in which your proposed course of action is relevant. An assumption is different from an anticipated outcome of your

plan. If your assumptions are proved wrong, is there sufficient flexibility in your strategic response? Construct this discussion in two to four paragraphs.

How to Implement Response

This is the actual setting forth of the detailed elements of the plan to address the problem. You must detail how your proposed response counters: (1) the roots of the problem; (2) the threat frame(s) and narrative(s); and (3) the threat strategy as appropriate to your case. There is no set length for this section. Use as many paragraphs with supporting graphics as necessary.

Lead off with a succinct statement of how you intend to “operationalize” the Concept of Response you discussed above. Include geographic and temporal matters. How will your strategic response unfold over time and space? This is your strategic approach, which you introduced in the Concept of Response Section and you now discuss in detail by identifying your strategic objectives (Ends); the Lines of Effort—which exist as bundles of campaigns (Ways); and the allocation of available (or intended) resources (Means) to those specific Lines of Effort with associated campaigns. (Note: Instruments of National Power are not Ways but rather Means; e.g., “military instrument of power” means little if you do not specify just who and what is to execute a task). For articulating the Means, you must provide the details of what government departments or ministries are tasked to accomplish your Lines of Effort with associated campaigns.

To respond adequately requires simultaneous assessment of the strategic importance of the three major elements—roots, frame and narrative, and strategy—as operationalized through strategic unfolding in time and space. E.g., are root causes (at your time of response) a primary or secondary factor? Is threat messaging (frame and narrative) a major component of threat strategy? Is threat strategy vulnerable? You introduced this assessment in Concept of Response, but here you lay out what you intend to do.

Provide maps as necessary to illustrate how the response will unfold. These should include geographic and human terrain — population density, demographic data, religious affiliations, political alliances, natural resources, criminal activity, or whatever variable is most relevant to your case. Provide a timetable for executing your response. Use as many paragraphs, maps, illustrations, charts, tables, etc. as necessary to communicate your response.

The response you detail must be feasible; i.e. you must craft a response that the state can execute. It must be reasonable, i.e. the response must be rational and logical. The response must be acceptable, i.e. within the bounds of relevant law and to the court of public opinion—both domestically and internationally. And it must be sustainable, i.e. the state must have the capability and capacity to execute your proposed response.

Always in your discussion keep in mind that you are *simultaneously* discussing two worlds: the tangible and the intangible. All actions have second- and third-order consequences, both on the ground and in the mind. An act may be intended to create a psychological effect and vice versa.

Phasing and Metrics

Show how the implementation of your plan progresses over time and space to achieve your strategic objectives. What is the timeline involved? Show that your response is *sustainable*: a response is of little use if it is not sustainable until the objectives are accomplished. Bear in mind that phasing is normally both temporal and geographic. Your response may have phases that are sequential or concurrent or a combination of these.

What are the metrics by which you will assess the implementation of your plan and, if appropriate, the shift between the critical phases identified in the timeline? Metrics can be both tangible (concrete) and intangible (perceptions, emotions, trust). How do you intend to capture the data necessary for these metrics? E.g., how do you intend to capture “influence”?

Risk Assessment and Mitigation

Understanding the risks associated with executing your strategic response and ways to mitigate this risk is one of the most overlooked and often difficult elements in strategic planning. Strategic risk is the probability of failure in achieving a strategic objective at an acceptable cost.

There are several questions to consider when assessing the risk associated with your strategic response. What is the risk associated with your response? What is the risk of executing the strategy to your other national interests? Conversely, what is the risk of doing nothing or of continuing with the present strategy? How do you balance these risks? Where do you see the greatest risk for a mismatch or disconnection between your Ends, Ways, and Means? Similarly, where do you see the greatest risk for an invalid assumption?

Beyond assessing risk, you must also develop ways to mitigate the risks you identified. Can you reduce or change your Ends? Are you able to alter your Ways? Can you increase your Means available or create new capabilities? Construct this discussion in two to four paragraphs.

Conclusions

The response is joined to the estimate of the situation to form the Combating Terrorism Plan (aka “Counterterrorism Plan”). In this final section, reiterate the key points of the challenge and response. Construct this discussion in two to four paragraphs.

COMMAND GUIDANCE

The Template for Analysis and Action is a guide to analysis and presentation. The labels on the “boxes” and the brief explanations are neither a checklist nor an outline of linear consideration. They are a guide to help you elaborate upon what you must address in any irregular warfare situation to enable *Mission Command*. Thus, each “box” can be reduced to a question(s) central to functioning in the conflict environment:

ESTIMATE

What is the threat?

Where did it come from?

What does it say it is doing and how does it justify this?

What is it actually doing to accomplish its objectives?

What is the state doing about it now?

RESPONSE

What should the state be doing about it?

How do you intend to counter the roots, frame and narrative, and threat strategy?

How will this unfold in time and space and how will you measure the effectiveness of your response?

What are the risks involved and how will you will mitigate them?

What are your final thoughts before implementation?

