

PART FOUR

Nontraditional Security Approaches



ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES TO BOLSTER REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION?

The United States is a global power with security interests and commitments in every region of the world. The current defense strategy of the United States calls for increased engagement and investment in the Asia-Pacific region, while maintaining peace and security in cooperation with its allies and partners in the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Senior Fellow Samuel Brannen sat down with Europe Director Heather A. Conley, Africa Director Jennifer G. Cooke, Americas Director Carl Meacham, Pacific Forum President Ralph A. Cossa, and Burke Chair Senior Fellow Aram Nerguizian to discuss whether the United States is well positioned to meet this objective in five critical regions.

SAM BRANNEN: Does the United States' current architecture of alliances and partnerships meet emerging security needs in your region of study?

RALPH A. COSSA (ASIA PACIFIC): Yes. The alliances have long been the foundation upon which U.S. security strategy and commitment are based in the Asia-Pacific, and building new partnerships to augment—not replace—them has been the focus of every U.S. administration since the end of the Cold War. The catch phrase changes with each administration but the focus remains. The goal is to reassure allies and friends, and you can never have too much reassurance.

HEATHER CONLEY (EUROPE): Yes and no. NATO has successfully met transatlantic security challenges when tested. Yet, as NATO's operational role in Afghanistan comes to an



end, important questions are being raised about the Alliance's future relevance and how its 28 members will meet security challenges in coming decades. While instability in North Africa and the Middle East as well as a revanchist Russia pose immediate external challenges to European security, Europe's prolonged economic crisis has fueled nationalistic and xenophobic sentiment that has created internal challenges to Europe's political willingness and ability to address these emerging threats.

ARAM NERGUIZIAN (MIDDLE EAST): Decades of bilateral and multilateral effort have led to U.S. successes in shaping relationships with the Gulf Cooperation Council states. However, should the United States scale back regional commitment levels, doubts remain as to whether the Gulf states can adapt to

future threats from Iran or find ways to integrate Iraq into the regional security architecture. In the Levant, strong bilateral ties with Israel, Egypt and Jordan have been the bedrock of U.S. efforts since the Camp David Accords. However, that structure is struggling to adapt to regional instability, intrastate violence in Syria and Egypt, subnational security actors including Hezbollah in Lebanon and Al-Qaeda affiliates in Syria, and the need to end the Arab-Israeli conflict.

CARL MEACHAM (AMERICAS): The existing approach supports U.S. defenses against terrorism, but has yet to fully address the challenges posed by transnational crime and narcotics trafficking. The United States currently relies on collaboration with Mexico, Colombia and Central American militaries

to stem the traffic of drugs. U.S. Southern Command has focused its training efforts on Central American militaries and maintained a base in Soto Cano, Honduras. Canada remains a close NATO ally with strong bilateral cooperation on counter-terrorism.

JENNIFER COOKE (AFRICA): Not yet. Africa's conflict zones are covered by a patchwork of stabilization missions from the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union and the United Nations, often overlapping in the same country. These interventions can stanch the bleeding, but they can be slow to deploy, are ill-equipped to effectively neutralize security threats, and remain overwhelmingly reliant on external support. The African Union's proposed regional stand-by forces are not yet operational, and African national and regional security forces lack the basic capacities to prevent and serve as first responders to a proliferating array of transnational threats that are growing in sophistication and impinge more and more on U.S. as well as African interests.

BRANNEN: What are recent examples of successful U.S.-led security cooperation in each region?

COOKE: The support the United States has provided to the French and the multinational stabilization force in Mali has been effective. French forces deployed in significant numbers as part of Operation Serval in Mali in 2013, and the United States provided critical strategic airlift into Mali and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance that allowed France and its allies to strike swiftly and with deadly effect throughout the battle space. The United States also provided vital life support to some 6,000 African soldiers that moved in behind the French to hold ground.

MEACHAM: Plan Colombia is probably the most successful recent example of U.S. security cooperation in the Americas. Through Plan Colombia, the United States has learned lessons that can be applied to the newest security initiative in the region: the Mérida Initiative. Through Mérida, Mexico and the United States have partnered to combat transnational crime and narcotics trafficking since 2007.

NERGUIZIAN: Examples of successful U.S.-led security cooperation in the Levant include coproduction and training partnerships with Egypt and Jordan, U.S.-Israeli codevelopment of multitier missile defense and U.S.-led exercises such as Bright Star and Eager Lion. Key successes to date in the Gulf include joint U.S.-GCC military exercises such as Eagle Resolve and making the GCC states partners in the U.S. Combined Air Operations Center in Qatar. The United States has also been key to developing regional counter-terrorism capabilities, ground-based air defenses, missile defense and counteracting shortcomings in regional integration on command and control.

COSSA: The Bush administration's global Proliferation Security Initiative and Six-Party Talks—currently in limbo—have both been endorsed by the Obama administration and provide examples of productive multilateral security cooperation. The United States has played a leading role, sometimes directly and sometimes behind the scenes, in moving the ASEAN Regional Forum in the direction of deeper security cooperation on nontraditional security issues such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The ASEAN Defense Ministers recently accepted Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel's invitation to meet in Honolulu in 2014 to discuss broader defense cooperation—the first meeting ever outside Southeast Asia for the organization.

CONLEY: NATO is the ultimate, 64-year-old example of American-led success in security cooperation. It maintained stability during the Cold War, stopped conflict in Bosnia and Kosovo, responded to the September 11, 2001, attacks by operationally engaging in Afghanistan for the past twelve years, and implemented an air campaign to protect the Libyan people.

BRANNEN: How would you recommend that the United States improve security cooperation? What are the greatest opportunities?

COSSA: First, we need to get our own house in order. We cannot provide an American model for others when our political process comes across to the rest of the world as dysfunctional. Asians believe the

“pivot” is real but question if it is sustainable, given U.S. budget problems. We also need to better articulate our overall Asia strategy and how basing issues in Korea, Japan, and elsewhere, and our engagement policy toward China, all fit into this broader strategic vision.

THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE MUST FUNDAMENTALLY RETHINK THEIR FUTURE SECURITY RELATIONSHIP, A TASK THAT WAS NOT FULLY COMPLETED AT THE END OF THE COLD WAR, AND THEN DRAMATICALLY REDIRECTED FOLLOWING THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS.

CONLEY: The United States and Europe must fundamentally rethink their future security relationship, a task that was not fully completed at the end of the Cold War, and then dramatically redirected following the September 11 attacks. Traditionally, American security leadership in Europe has been an “either-or” proposition: either the Americans lead it or they leave it to the Europeans to sort the problem out. A third way must be found that retains American investment in Europe’s security (but at reduced financial cost) and convinces Europe to invest more in its own defense. This new compact should refocus on NATO’s core task—twenty-first-century collective defense while ensuring at least limited European power projection capabilities and a more meaningful and operational relationship with non-European partners.

MEACHAM: The primary security threat in the region is narcotics production and trafficking and organized crime. North American countries are similarly affected by transnational crime through Central America and the Caribbean. These transit points are the pathway for 95 percent of South American cocaine destined for the United States. The United States, Canada, and Mexico therefore need to build on previous agreements such as Plan Colombia and apply those lessons to the Mérida Initiative to collaboratively strengthen security throughout the Americas.

NERGUIZIAN: In the Levant, the United States must show pragmatism and strategic patience with partners that are struggling to find internal stability, contain the destabilizing effects of the Syria crisis and work to address the Arab-Israeli conflict as a source of discord. Despite real setbacks in terms of politics and governance, the United States should resist pressures to disengage with the Egyptian military. The United States should also be ready to take a long-term view on aiding Jordanian and Lebanese security forces deal with the destabilizing effects of the Syrian civil war. In the Gulf, the United States will be challenged by growing GCC suspicion of U.S. efforts to deal with Iran, the possible effects of the “pivot to Asia” and the future of U.S. military resourcing challenges. The United States must help these regional partners to build their capacity to work together in pursuit of common security interests despite their growing concerns about U.S. commitments to them.

COOKE: There is no substitute for the long, hard slog of building the capacity, competence, and professionalism of African military, police, and intelligence forces and strengthening the civilian institutions that govern them. The rationale for the U.S. Africa Command—to bring more focused, consistent, and nuanced engagement to that end—remains fundamentally valid. The Command can accomplish this even while keeping a light footprint and investing strategically. Failure to build those basic capabilities will likely mean more costly interventions well into the future. The United States should continue to work with France and other European partners in building those capacities and in coordinating and sharing the burden of more direct interventions, when national interests warrant. ►