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From Winning Hearts and Minds to Shaping Behaviors: Nation-Building as a New Psychology of Antiterrorism

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Abstract. This article describes a qualitative change in the psychology of antiterrorism through nation-building activities.

Nation-building activities brought to the Third World by the United States Government (USG) have long been thought to psychologically contribute to antiterrorism. As socioeconomic disparities and poverty would decrease, as opportunities for a better life would increase, as national identity and cohesiveness coalesced, and as positive attitudes towards the USG strengthened, terrorist groups would be less likely to form. So, too, existing terrorist groups would be less likely to find recruits for operational and support activities. As well, the sea of the people in which terrorists might swim would dry up--or at least provide less cover and less nutrition.

In today's security environment of globalization, however, a political entity may present still other opportunities beyond the above that can be exploited by terrorists. Even if terrorist groups do not form, even if recruitment does not occur, and even if there is no sea in which to swim, inadequate and dysfunctional governance can lead to (1) porous border controls; (2) inconsistent, incompetent, and corrupt internal policing; (3) sieve-like and corrupt customs control; and (4) contentious, corrupt, and unaccountable loci of political power backed by physical force. These opportunities can facilitate the ingress and egress of terrorists; the maintenance of terrorist safe havens; and trafficking in money, weapons, drugs, people, and other commodities. The fourth opportunity also facilitates terrorist operations, because there is no functional and viable central authority with which representatives of the USG can negotiate and seek approval for antiterrorist and counterterrorist operations. Such has been the case in Somalia and may be the case in the Congo if the latter breaks up as a result of current fighting involving government forces, so-called rebels, and operational and support activities involving Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, and Zimbabwe. (On the other hand, the USG-sponsored apprehension of terrorists in Albania and bombing of terrorist training sites in Afghanistan suggests that a new antiterrorist/counterterrorist policy may begin to vitiate the above opportunities.)

Attempts at nation-building as shaping the behaviors of governance also can be exploited by terrorist-supported mass media. Through these media nation-building becomes a violation of sovereignty, political and cultural imperialism, even sacrilege. The very contact between representatives of the USG engaged in nation-building and residents of the host nation can be explicated to support the most dastardly of intentions and deeds. Host nation representatives that are being cultivated by the nation-builders can be attacked as inauthentic, coopted, unwitting fools, and as spies. Real and apocryphal acts--e.g., fatal accidents, logistical miscalculations, inflated promises or expectations of nation-building--can be communicated as showing the "true nature" of the nation-builders that belies any sincere humaneness. Often, vested interests in the host country that benefit from inadequate governance will knowingly work with terrorist representatives against the nation-builders.

Based on these phenomena, calculations of nation-building planners must encompass not only cost-benefit analyses but the likelihood that the costs may fund consequences benefiting terrorism. In fact,

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the nation being built may be one without boundaries and overt cohesion--one that nevertheless may force conflict on its own terms and significantly threaten the nation-builder's own foundations. (See Aaker, J.L., & Maheswaran, D. (1997). The effect of cultural orientation on persuasion. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24, 315-328; Pratkanis, A.R., & Turner, M.E. (1996). Persuasion and democracy: Strategies for increasing deliberative participation and enacting social change. *Journal of Social Issues*, 52, 187-205; Rosen, J., & Haaga, D.A.F. (1998). Facilitating cooperation in a social dilemma: A persuasion approach. *Journal of Psychology*, 132, 143-153; Roskos-Ewoldsen, D.R. (1997). Implicit theories of persuasion. *Human Communication Research*, 24, 31-63; Schwartz, B. (1996). Memory as a cultural system: Abraham Lincoln in World War II. *American Sociological Review*, 61, 908-927.) (Keywords: Antiterrorism, Counterterrorism, Nation-building, Perception Management, Terrorism.)