Project Proposal

USG Agency Roles in Off-Shore/On-Shore Balancing

This project will prepare by December 31, 2010, a proposal defining in practical terms the contributions of U.S. Government agencies to a security strategy of off-shore military and on-shore political-economic balancing.

An Alternative Security Strategy. Off-shore/on-shore balancing seeks to achieve America's core national security objectives through a combination of over-the-horizon ("off-shore") military power and in-region ("on-shore") economic and political power. Off-shore/on-shore balancing is an alternative to advancing U.S. security goals through the deployment of large ground forces overseas, already problematic and likely to become even more so as economic challenges continue and chronic resentment deepens. Off-shore/on-shore balancing relies on naval, air, and rapidly deployable ground forces in combination with on-site economic and political support for local partners to secure America's interests in combating terrorism and achieving other key national security goals, particularly in the Middle East and Asia.

Afghanistan Case Study. To explore the strategy in practice, the project will consider a three-year transition to off-shore/on-shore balancing in Afghanistan. In the first, USG agencies would empower Pashtun groups through political and economic programs to achieve greater autonomy and create local opposition to the Taliban. U.S. and NATO troops on the ground would provide security. In the second year, U.S. and NATO troops would continue to provide security for political and economic programs and deliver lethal effects against terrorist groups, but they would operate with from a shrinking footprint as they redeployed to less sensitive parts of the country. In the third year, U.S. and NATO would remove troops and rely on air, naval, and rapidly deployable ground forces to deliver over-the-horizon effects.

Talking to the Practitioners. The project aims to define the contributions from key agencies, starting with the State Department and then moving on to the intelligence community and the military services.

The project will solicit agencies' views on how current and future programs might contribute to the strategy, identify inter-agency processes that might facilitate the coordination of the strategy, and anticipate issues that would arise in a transition to the strategy.