



MULTINATIONAL INTERAGENCY STRATEGIC PLANNING Version 8

Strategic Planning Guide

Foreword

This document is a guide intended to facilitate the development of a comprehensive approach when planning a multinational response to a given crisis or conflict at the political and strategic level.

It describes a possible framework for high level governmental actors to develop a strategy in order to engage in crisis or conflict resolution, based on the following building blocks: (1) a common assessment of the situation, (2) the identification of the desired outcomes and (3) initial considerations regarding the approach, the means and the evaluation methodology to be followed to measure the progress of the intervention. Its analysis relies on the theory of change focusing on the roots of the crisis. The process enables the definition of a crisis resolution concept and an associated strategy that considers which types of instruments of power to favor. The designation of specific actors responsible for implementation remains a national prerogative.

It has been developed as an MNE 5 construct and as such, is dedicated first and foremost to member nations of the MNE group. However, it acknowledges the need to coordinate at the strategic level with other relevant actors outside a core group of concerned nations, such as international organizations (IO), regional organizations, local actors and non-governmental organizations (NGO), in order to achieve a comprehensive approach to a crisis.

This guide is not intended to replace national decision-making processes but to complement them; the processes described in the guide should thus be undertaken in parallel to national ones. For the intervention to be coherent, national and multinational processes must be clearly articulated and iterative.

This strategic planning process is intentionally broad so that it may be easily applied to each individual case. It is not a checklist to be followed in every detail, but going through its various steps should allow the development of a comprehensive multinational strategy, encompassing all aspects of conflict resolution. It should be coordinated at the national and multinational levels, between military as well as civilian actors in an inclusive and collaborative manner, in order to promote unity of effort and maximize the effectiveness of resources without duplication.

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I. GENERAL OVERVIEW

I. 1. Definitions

Conflict: A situation when two or more parties find their interests incompatible, express hostile attitudes, or take action, which damages the other parties' ability to pursue their interests.

Interest: Aspiration from an entity prone to motivate its behavior and to improve its state. Interests can be concurring, diverging, or incompatible.

Conflict of interests: Incompatibility of interests among different entities.

Crisis: Situation where the equilibrium between antagonist forces or interests within or between states is broken, potentially leading to violence.

Strategic Forum: Persons directly involved in and supporting the process described in this document; a notional three-tiered functional structure of the Strategic Forum could be the following:

- A high level policy contact group, including a chairman;
- A strategic working group (civil and military);
- An assessment team.

Strategic Vision: a description in broad terms of the situation as it would fulfill political objectives. This strategic vision provides the long-term perspective for the Coalition effort.

Transition State: The point at which relative, sustainable stability occurs because motivations and sources of violence have been addressed and, as a consequence, have diminished and local capabilities have been reinforced. It is the single, unambiguous purpose towards which the plan is directed, and which will be attained by the achievement of the Strategic Objectives. The transition state must be sufficiently rich in context and content for subordinate levels to be able to use it to conduct their own planning. It will take into account the specificities of the situation and address the symptoms and the causes of the conflict. Whilst coalition engagement may continue beyond the transition state, it marks a fundamental shift in the nature of coalition's engagement.

Strategic Objectives (SOs): A description of the situation in terms of major achievements needed to reach the transition state. SOs are the highest level breakdown of the transition state.

Outcome: Key result to be achieved in order to reach one or several Strategic Objectives. Achieving outcomes may require the involvement of several instruments of power and will have to be agreed and endorsed at the strategic level. These outcomes are elaborated in collaboration with the CIP Forum via its core staff and might be adjusted and refined during the implementation planning with the strategic level approval.

Strategic Roadmaps: Possible sets of coherent outcomes derived from the Strategic Objectives. They each indicate an overarching approach to guide the coalition's efforts. The achievement of all of the outcomes that comprise a Strategic Roadmap marks the attainment of the transition state. It also provides a preliminary idea of the constraints as well as of the possible resources, time frames and synchronization requirements.

Instruments of power: National or organizational means applicable to solve a conflict, including political, diplomatic, economic, informational, developmental, military, law enforcement

activities, state-led/institutional humanitarian assistance and civil administration support.

I.2 Assumptions and rationales

This guide relies on the main following assumptions:

- **Sharing strategic assessments**, within the constraints of national and organizational information sharing regulations, is key to a better understanding of the conflict situation and its root causes.
- A shared **multinational and interagency strategy** is needed to achieve a proper comprehensive approach. The strategic planning should include all government actors necessary to achieve a sustainable solution as early as possible and at the highest level possible. These national and multinational processes are conducted in parallel and feed into each other.
- “Stove piping” is counter-productive at any level. Thus, different levels of collaboration, integration, harmonization or synchronization are necessary at strategic and at theater levels.
- It is necessary for all required national and organizational means to be engaged in a **coherent and coordinated manner**. Indeed, no single instrument of power can solve a complex conflict alone. **Conflict resolution** does not occur simply because the situation is no longer deteriorating or when military operations are completed.
- **IOs other than the UN and field experts** are not fully part of the decision-making process being addressed here. However, their insights and their experience can lead to a better understanding of the situation than any of the coalition’s members would otherwise have. In this case, their contribution will be particularly useful. Whenever possible they ought to be integrated early in the process, at least to develop information exchange procedures. Some of the IOs, United Nations agencies in particular, will have to be taken into account at a very early stage in the planning process, in order to avoid incoherence and redundancies.
- Every effort must be made to take the **host nation perspective** into account. A plan which is not considered locally acceptable will not survive the deployment of the coalition’s assets. Moreover, multinational efforts will necessarily strengthen local ownership of the conflict resolution strategy. The endorsement of the broad lines of the strategic plan by the regional authorities is necessary, and will need to be born in mind throughout the whole process.

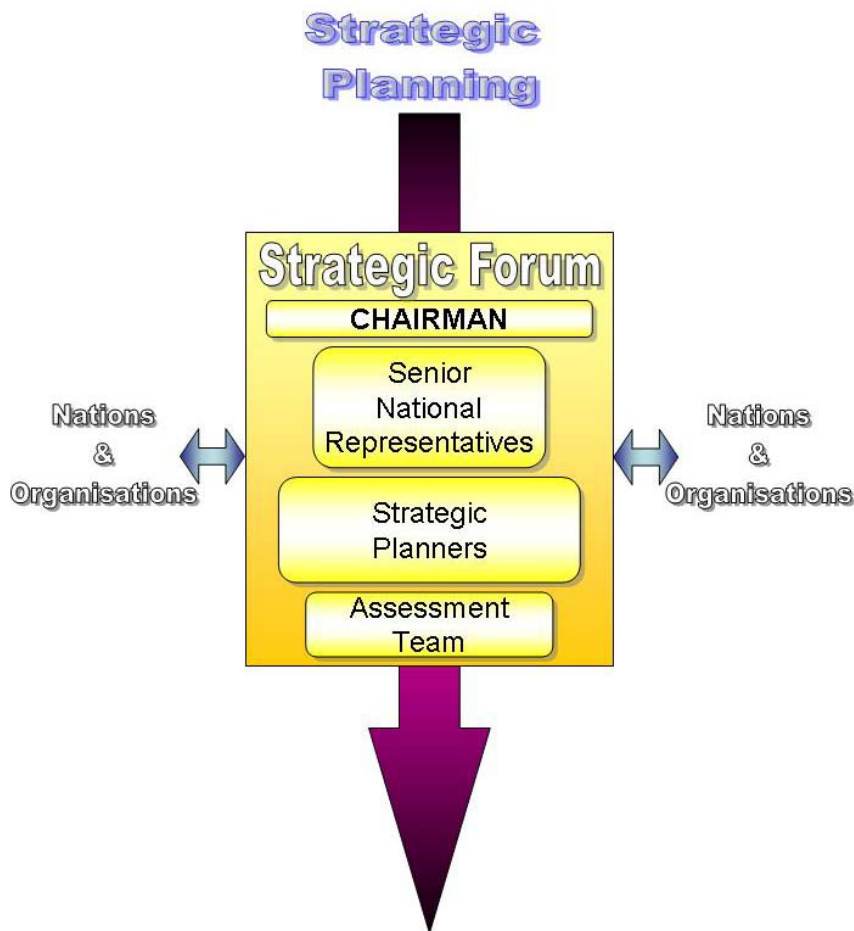
I.3 The Strategic Forum

In most cases, the nations willing to consider intervening in a conflict will engage in high level bilateral and/or multilateral consultations prior to making any decisions. Such consultations will be held by a group of empowered representatives from each nation, with direct links to their respective national political leadership and the appropriate ministries or departments, thereby enabling prompt decision-making.

This assembly will be referred to as the **Strategic Forum**. An agreement among participating nations will empower a **chairman** to manage and run its activities. This forum is constituted of three sub groups:

- the **Senior National Representative** group, whose role is to provide guidance to the forum and make decisions on strategy and planning on behalf of their respective governments, which whom they will liaise as necessary;
- the **Strategic Planners** group, whose role is to elaborate the different options presented to the Senior National Representative and to communicate with their respective national and organizational planning agencies;
- the **Assessment Team**, whose role is to build the coalition strategic assessment, liaise with the national entities involved with assessments, report to the Senior National Representative, assist

the Strategic Planners and monitor the ongoing situation. This team is managed by an **assessment coordinator** who reports to the Strategic Forum's chairman.



I. 4. The strategic planning process: a 3 phase methodology

Strategic planning is likely to be triggered by the identification of an unsatisfactory or deteriorating situation by one or more nations, which have a common interest in a multinational response. The initiating event will most likely lead to:

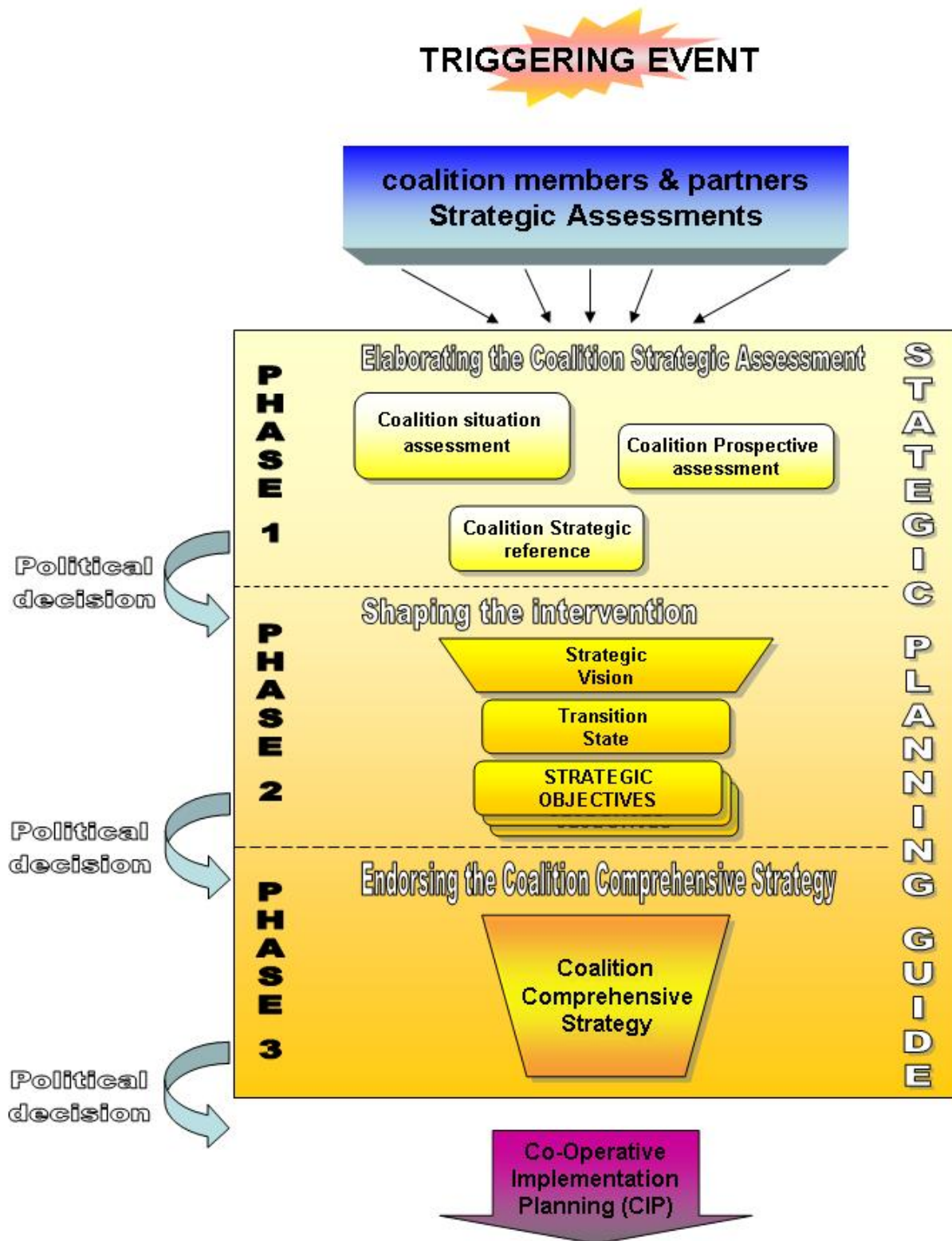
- a UN call for a multinational commitment;
- a proposal by a nation, regional organization or a standing alliance (NATO, EU, African Union...) to try and address the problem in conjunction with other international partners;
- a call from the nation(s) directly facing the situation.

The strategic planning process is based on 3 step process.

- Phase 1: **Strategic assessment** of the situation.
- Phase 2: Determination of a general commitment to achieving a **Transition State** and its associated **Strategic Objectives**.
- Phase 3: Development and endorsement of the **Coalition Comprehensive Strategy** by Senior National Representatives.

Evaluation phase: an evaluation process, not specified in the present guide, will take place during the implementation of the plan.

The following diagram illustrates the **overall strategic planning process**. This is an **iterative** and **flexible** process designed to complement any existing national or organizational processes.



II. PHASE 1: ELABORATING A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION

During the initial phase of the *Multinational Interagency Strategic Planning Process*, potential coalition members will exchange their national or organizational analyses, perspectives, intents and expectations regarding the situation of concern. A **Coalition Strategic Assessment** endorsed by the Seniors Leaders establishing a commonly agreed assessment will be developed and will represent the basis for future planning.

II.1 Development of the Strategic Assessments (SA)

Once a coalition intervention is being considered, all potential coalition members and partners will set up the **Assessment Team** in order to share their Strategic Assessments and to start building the coalition strategic assessment. Although different approaches and models exist to generate national and organizational situational or conflict assessments, it is **highly desirable** that each contribution respect a compatible format to present the assessment in order to facilitate the comparison among national and organizations' assessments.

Thus, nations and/or organizations should come with their own strategic assessment, which should include:

- a **situational assessment**, containing a broad description of the conflict area, and an assessment of the main strategic entities and key actors (goals, intentions, capabilities, weaknesses, etc.);
- a **prospective assessment** of potential foreseen evolutions of the conflict if no action is undertaken;
- a **strategic reference**, which explains respective interests in the conflict area, highlights acceptability thresholds (or at least what is not acceptable from a national perspective in the present or foreseen situation), lists constraints, restraints, and caveats, and contains initial proposals regarding the strategic vision and potential transition state.

Appendix 1 gives in broader details the content of each analysis.

II.2 Elaboration of the Coalition Strategic Assessment

The aim of the **Assessment Team** is to highlight the main points of convergence and divergence which exist among the different national / organizational situational assessments, in order to establish a commonly agreed assessment. Although it may not be possible to reach agreement on a common assessment, highlighting points of convergence and divergence should facilitate a better understanding of the possible strengths and weaknesses of a potential coalition.

This assessment should then be presented to the Senior National Representative's group whose role it is, in accordance with every national political guidance, to endorse a commonly agreed assessment. The result of this agreement is the endorsement of the **Coalition Strategic Assessment**.

It will include:

- a **Coalition Situation Assessment**,
- a **Coalition Prospective Assessment** of potential foreseen evolutions, i.e. an assessment of potential developments without external intervention, identifying those elements of the situation that are not acceptable from the Coalition's perspective; the definition of the conflict, which provides the rationale for the coalition engagement.
- a **Coalition Strategic Reference** (i.e: general characterization of the foreseen intervention, especially in terms of resources and caveats). While national strategic references may

contain initial proposals regarding the strategic vision and transition state, no attempt will be made to consolidate these proposals during the assessment phase.

This **Coalition Strategic Assessment** constitutes the **output of Phase I**.

III. PHASE 2: SHAPING THE INTERVENTION

The aims of phase 2 are to:

- define the desired outcomes for the intervention,
- consider the intervention timeframe,
- receive a commitment and an initial estimate of resources from each nation and organization.

III.1. Strategic Forum's role

To be effective, this decision process should follow an **iterative** process led by the chairman. This representative both chairs the Senior National Representatives group and coordinates with the strategic planners.

Strategic planners are in charge of elaborating:

- the **Strategic Vision**,
- the **Transition State**,
- the **Strategic Objectives**,

ased on the ambition for the area under consideration, on the understanding of what the situation is and could become, on the means which might be committed and at what cost, potential coalition members will have to agree on what they want to achieve. For each hypothesis, strategic planners need to present to the Senior National Representatives group an appraisal of resources required and an estimated timeframe.

The **Senior National Representatives group's** role is, in liaison with their respective nation or organization, to provide guidance to the strategic planners and to endorse at each step of phase 2 the elements developed by the **Strategic Planners' group**. Each national or organization's representative should inform the other members of the forum whether or not they want to commit their nation or organization, with what level of ambition, associated to which transition state and strategic objectives.

III.2. Developing a Strategic Vision, Transition State and Associated Strategic Objectives

After being briefed on the Coalition Strategic Assessment, the strategic planners will develop the **Strategic Vision** and present it for validation to the Senior National Representatives.

Based on guidance from the Senior National Representatives, the Strategic Planners will develop one or various Transition States to be presented to the Senior National Representatives, who will then adjust and adopt one of the possibilities they are given. This **Transition State** is then compared with the unsatisfactory situation. The **main obstacles** to the Transition State will be highlighted ("we will not reach that transition state, if we do not address the problem of..."). This Transition State needs to be validated by the Senior National Representatives before planners pursue the next step of the planning process.

Planners then elaborate the **Strategic Objectives** (SOs), taking into account the obstacles defined previously. The SOs will be presented together with the **timeframe** considered necessary for their realization. They should not be a simple part of the Transition State in some generic domains (policy, economy, etc) but rather provide the working basis to develop comprehensive strategic roadmaps. Most of the time, reaching each strategic objective will require the commitment of resources of several instruments of power.

The aggregate of these 3 first outcomes of the planning process constitute the general approach to the conflict resolution. These elements will represent the foundation for the crisis resolution planning; they might also be used for drafting a UN resolution, or as the basis for setting up a coalition of the willing, or putting in place the conditions for a lead nation to volunteer.

III.3 Phase 2 outputs:

Phase 2, whose aim is to shape the intervention, will be completed when Senior National Representatives have endorsed:

- the **Strategic Vision**;
- the **Transition State**, including a timeframe;
- the selected **Strategic Objectives** associated to the Transition state;
 - a preliminary notion of the resources that nations could offer and
 - the approach that could be followed to use these resources to achieve the Strategic Objectives and the Transition State .

IV. PHASE 3: DEVELOPING THE COALITION COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY

Phase 3 is intended to develop a **Strategic Roadmap** leading to the achievement of the Transition State and the Strategic Objectives determined in phase 2. These roadmaps will cut across a number of domains of activity and will require the involvement of various interagency actors. The aim is to present several options to the Senior National Representatives, describing different ways to achieve the Transition State.

IV.1. Coordination with the Interagency Implementation Forum (IIF)

To optimize the theater-level planning process, it is recommended that the **Coalition Special Representative** and **Core Staff** of the **Interagency Implementation Forum (IIF)** are appointed at the beginning of phase 3. This group, which represents an initial kernel of an interagency implementation forum, will form alongside the strategic planning process in order to support it and gain an in-depth understanding of the strategic level intent and concerns which they will then be able to bring to the theater level.

At this point of the planning process, the implementation level must be fully involved in the development of the **Outcomes**; proposed by the Strategic Forum, these Outcomes must be amended, adjusted and endorsed by both forums during a comprehensive and iterative planning process.

Once the preliminary strategic planning phase has been completed, the **Coalition Special Representative** and **Strategic Forum Chairman** should stay in close contact as subsequent planning efforts are undertaken. Every major change in the content of desired outcomes should be reported and approved by the Strategic Forum.

Once the intervention has started, regular reporting at the strategic level should take place.

Coordination with relevant actors beyond the coalition; i.e., with international and regional organizations, local authorities, governments in the region of concern, NGOs, etc. will be sought whenever possible and feasible from a security perspective. These actors must at times be directly present at the table if they so choose or in other cases make their perspectives known through a member of the planning forum.

IV. 2. Process

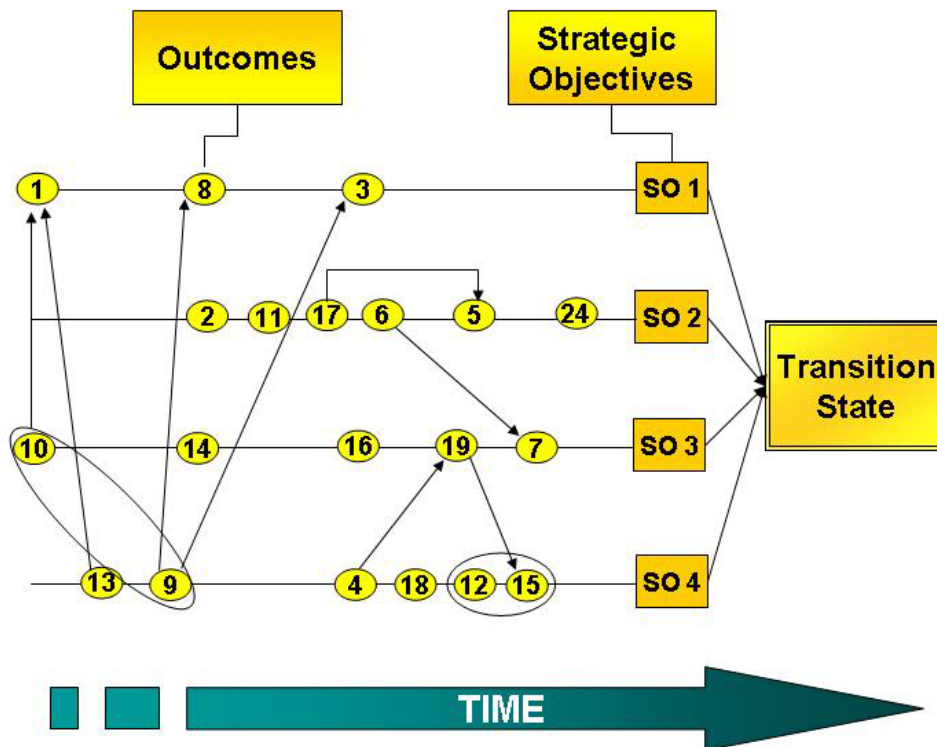
Phase 3 is a four step process.

- First, strategic and implementation planners will develop the assumptions which underpin the development of the roadmap.
- Second, planners will study each strategic objective separately and derive its associated outcomes. A preferred method is to determine key challenges in reaching each strategic objective, then to develop outcomes overcoming the identified challenge. Only a limited number of outcomes should be considered.
- Third, because several outcomes can be combined, contradict one another, equal themselves out or be redundant, planners will then undertake a cross optimization of outcomes leading to the achievement of all strategic objectives. This step could lead to the definition of more than one roadmap.
- Fourth, planners develop and broadly assess the alternative roadmaps of strategic importance for some key outcomes or groups of outcomes. The roadmap(s) are then assessed in terms of

risks, costs, resources, feasibility, coherence, pertinence, political acceptability, reversibility as well as of the consequences and possible evolutions after coalition disengagement.

The final Roadmap endorsed by the Senior National Representatives could be schematized as follow:

RoadMap Exemple



Strategic planners will also develop the **initial assessment guidelines** to evaluate the success or progress towards the strategic objectives and transition state. It is expected that the implementation level planners will report back on progress being made towards the achievement of outcomes, which will in turn allow the strategic level to evaluate overall progress or readjust the strategy if necessary.

While planners from the strategic and implementation forums may be colocated during the earlier part of the process, by the time the implementation forum is fully operational and possibly deployed, it is assumed communication and feedback between levels will continue. This will provide the necessary mechanism to ensure that Senior National Representatives approve of operational decisions with a strategic impact. These loops will also be used to subsequently coordinate possible adaptations of the CCS to significant changes in the situation at hand.

IV.3 Phase 3 Outputs

The phase 3 outputs are included in the **Coalition Comprehensive Strategy (CCS)**. This document will represent the tenets that will support the execution of the cooperative implementation planning process (CIP).

The CCS is not intended as a public document but as an instrument to be used for planning and evaluation purposes inside coalition partners' organizations. The CCS should be precise enough to enable all actors with delegated authority from the coalition partners in the region(s) affected by the conflict to understand clearly their field of responsibility and the required coordination to be established.

It should include:

- the **reasons** justifying an intervention as well as the restraints, constraints and national caveats;
- a summary of key issues within the **Coalition Strategic Assessment**
- the Strategic Vision, the Transition State and the Strategic Objectives;
- the selected **Strategic roadmap** detailing a set of coherent outcomes and constraints the manner in which they are achieved;
- a **risk assessment** associated with the option chosen by the political level.
- a broad indication of the capabilities and resources (e.g. forces available for planning, specific consultation, coordination or command and control mechanisms to be set up);
- the **estimated timeframe** necessary or available to achieve the transition state through its associated strategic objectives;
- a mandate for appointing and defining the responsibilities and authority of a ***Coalition Special Representative*** in region for the intervention and ***Core Staff***, tasked to establish an Interagency Implementation Forum, and establishing other required coordination;
- the Coalition Information Objectives;
- initial assessment guidelines to evaluate the success or progress towards the strategic objectives and transition state.

At later stages, following formal review, the implementation forum will support any further development of the strategy that may be required. Similarly, once the implementation forum has completed the development of a framework plan, it will be submitted to the Senior National Representatives for validation. This is not a one-off process, but rather should be viewed as flexible and iterative, allowing for modifications as implementation takes place and the situation on the ground evolves.

APPENDIX 1

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OUTLINE

DETAILED CONTENT

Each assessment should address each step as well as the headings (in italics) below. The bullet points are possible topics to consider but are purely indicative and should in no way constrain assessments. Other points may also be added as deemed useful by each nation.

Step 1: Situation Assessment***1.1 – Conflict Analysis Overview*** *↓: what is currently happening and why?*

- historical background of conflict or instability (past conflicts or tensions, etc) and its potential consequences locally, regionally or even internationally
- Comprehensive identification and analysis of each cluster of root causes of conflict
 - national context
 - regional or international context

1.2 – Main Actors and Stakeholders (prioritized): who is doing what and why?

- Characterization of the main actors and stakeholders, within and throughout the region of concern : Identification of the main actors and interest or identity groups, their leadership, and brief description of their assumed perspectives and potential attitude regarding the intervention
- Assessment of the role of key external actors, both multilateral and bilateral outside the region. Taking stock of external actors' intervention and priorities, and assessment of the way the degrading situation was addressed.

1.3 – Domestic Dynamics Driving Conflict and/or Instability, Higher and Lower Priority: what is to be addressed in a short and longer term?

- Description of the dynamics of conflict in the country and the region of concern (usually based on the fundamental interests and grievances of key stakeholders)
- key factors relating to present conflict situation and possible inter linkages between them (actors, stakeholders, natural conditions and resources, political and socio-economic issues at stake, etc.)
- Uncertainties/areas for which information is lacking in the present or which could become important later-on

1.4 – External factors (potential key factors to consider for future planning purposes)

- Overview of main security, political, institutional, economic, infrastructural and social factors, as applicable, that could influence the situation
- Relations with neighboring states and/or populations
- Action of the international actors already in the country, their involvement in the crisis and the effect of an intervention on their action, lessons learned from previous engagement, identification of future role for the international community at large.

Step 2: Prospective Assessment***2.1 – Based on the situation analysis***

- Potential impact of the situation in the absence of an intervention
- Events that could aggravate the situation or opportunities that could improve it.
- Can the situation be resolved without intervention from other actors? Is outside intervention desirable, from the local perspective?

- Ability of regional actors to deal satisfactorily with the situation of concern.
- Best and worst case scenarios

2.2 - **Based on the different actors and stakeholders**

- Who is going to benefit from the intervention and what
- Who is going to lose and what
- Consequences of these benefits and losses and their influence in-country and on the coalition action

Step 3: Strategic Reference

3.1 - ***Constraints, restraints and caveats*** (*what are we limited by and what do we want to limit ourselves to?*).

3.2 - ***Views on the potential political aim and approaches*** (*What should be achieved, how and with what?*)

- The broad political aim that should guide multinational action
- A broad idea of a potential approach (direct intervention vs. support to a regional organization, etc)
- Multilateral actors to involve and in what capacity
- Existing on-going planning processes outside the coalition and how they might be influenced by the coalition

3.3- ***Potential level of civil and military contributions*** and *intended national or organizational role within a multinational intervention* (*what could our commitment be and what role do we want to play*).

3.4 – ***Risk assessment***

- Significant risks involved in coalition effort