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Toward a Whole-of-Government Approach: Revamping Peru's Strategy Process

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ABSTRACT: This article explains Peru's efforts to develop effective strategies. It discusses the problems created by overlapping authorities. It suggests a more integrated approach to developing national strategy would help resolve the complications associated with high levels of drug trafficking, poverty, and terrorism.

A severe Peruvian security challenge in the valley of the Apurimac, Ene, and Mantaro rivers (VRAEM) has been brought about by a combination of three maladies: drug trafficking, poverty, and terrorism. At the end of 2016, the largest area of coca cultivation (46 percent or 20,304 hectares) and production (70 percent or an estimated 256 metric tons of cocaine) centered in the VRAEM.¹ Poverty, which afflicts 49 percent of the region's population (approximately 650,000 inhabitants), complicates Peru's efforts to counter drug trafficking. Furthermore, low levels of education and limited economic opportunities led most of the population to depend on coca cultivation for its survival. Thus, many people in the valley defend this illicit activity.² Since the region is isolated from the major population centers, local governments have little incentive to dedicate resources to the region. Hence, interest in stopping drug trafficking shifts to the national level.

Over the past decade, Peru's national strategy has fallen short of its stated objective of defeating the *Sendero Luminoso*, or Shining Path, a terrorist organization that controls the principal transportation routes into the valley, provides security to the region's drug cartels, and directly funds its operations through drug trafficking. Two temporary organizations created by the Joint Command of the Peruvian Armed Forces—the VRAEM Special Command and the Intelligence and Joint Special Operations Command—experienced some operational success toward this mission. However, the Peruvian Armed Forces and National Police suffered 384 casualties, including 137 deaths, in armed actions with the terrorists from 2005 to 2014.³

Strategic uncertainty in the region results from the absence of a clear national security policy, consistent political objectives, and a stable military objective that spanned several presidential administrations.

1 Oficina de las Naciones Unidas contra la Droga y el Delito (UNODC), *Peru: Monitoreo de Cultivos de Coca 2016* (Lima: UNODC, 2016), 29.

2 Waldo Mendoza and Janneth Leyva, *The Economía del VRAEM: Diagnóstico y Opciones de Política* (Lima, Peru: Agencia de los Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional [USAID] and Consorcio de Investigación Económica y Social [CIES], 2017), 71.

3 "Las Cifras Ocultas de la Guerra," Convoca, accessed December 12, 2017.

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This uncertainty further impedes the formulation of a national military strategy by preventing the Peruvian Armed Forces from supporting other efforts to counter drug trafficking. Furthermore, a lack of prioritization limits the effective allocation of government resources to ministries and departmental agencies that could develop an optimal strategy for achieving the nation's broader strategic objectives.

This article examines the processes and actors involved in developing such strategic plans as well as the impact of these participants on government efforts in the VRAEM. Recommendations for structuring and coordinating state and regional efforts with a whole-of-government approach to address the region's challenges successfully are included.

A Whole-of-Government Approach

The Peruvian national defense system lacks the agility and the flexibility required to achieve the government's objectives in the VRAEM. An inability to recognize threats and vulnerabilities clearly results in slow responses. Furthermore, ministries and government agencies focus on their own immediate tasks, instead of effectively coordinating and cooperating toward shared objectives and a focused vision.⁴ Because of the interrelated military and socioeconomic dimensions affecting the region, close interagency collaboration is necessary to achieve an adequate level of security that will foster economic development, reduce poverty, and further reinforce security. In other words, to address the challenges of the VRAEM adequately, the Peruvian security structure must operate as an effective system instead of a collection of separate components.

Through integrated efforts, the Peruvian government can provide economic development that permits the inhabitants of the VRAEM to remain in the region rather than migrating to other parts of the country, such as the greater Lima area. Such migration would further degrade the nation's security by intensifying other challenges. But a whole-of-government strategy for the VRAEM would address some of these challenges by attracting people who are more likely to participate in legal economic activities and who are less likely to support terrorist activities.

Leadership Authorities

Although responsibilities for the national security policy and the national security strategy are clearly defined by law, responsibilities for the national military strategy, as it impacts the VRAEM, are not. This ambiguity impedes the formulation of a single, coherent document that would establish strategies for achieving military objectives in the region. In this regard, and because of the political nature of the position, the minister of defense usually lacks the military knowledge to formulate the national military strategy optimally. Conversely, the chief of the Joint Command of the Peruvian Armed Forces can expertly formulate

4 Jason L. Percy and Terry A. Fellows Jr., "A Whole of Government Approach for National Strategy" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2009), 3.

the national military strategy. But the resulting document has less authority since the chief has no mandate to do so under Peruvian law. Thus, the national military strategy is formulated in isolation, creating confusion and undermining its importance. This situation has led to competing priorities and approaches that have been counterproductive in the VRAEM over the last decade.

Further complicating the situation, constitutional and legal responsibilities for the minister of defense do not indicate the manner for providing strategic guidance nor the type of strategy that must be formulated. Consequently, the chief of the Joint Command lacks clear strategic guidance to help ensure military actions support the government's objectives in the region. For example, the ministry of defense must direct, coordinate, execute, supervise, and evaluate national security policy, in accordance with presidential decisions.⁵ By contrast, the US secretary of defense provides a national defense strategy based on the national security strategy to ensure military actions support national objectives. The US national defense strategy then prioritizes Department of Defense missions, counter strategies, and a framework to guide prioritizing threats, the force structure, modernization plans, and the military's roles and missions.⁶

By establishing a similar hierarchy for Peruvian strategy, the minister of defense can provide a foundation for other strategic guidance, specifically for military planning, force development, and intelligence.⁷ This clarity would also allow the chief of the Joint Command to compose a military strategy that could be integrated with other government efforts to address the interrelated security, societal, and developmental challenges in the VRAEM as opposed to limiting the focus to the Shining Path. One opportunity for integration exists in relation to a declared state of emergency. In this case, the VRAEM Special Command is tasked with operations against terrorism without any doctrinal responsibility to address the challenges, such as poverty and drug trafficking, that contribute to terrorism.⁸

Even if empowered by the national military strategy to conduct operations against drug trafficking, the Peruvian government does not have an adequate legal framework for the military and police to work together to meet the evolving threat effectively. Thus, the fight against this scourge is legally the principal mission of the National Police, even though the Joint Command of the Peruvian Armed Forces and the VRAEM Special Command have the resources. To overcome this constraint, the VRAEM Special Command has a component of the National Police assigned to it. But the other military components must

5 Ollanta Humala Tasso, Juan F. Jiménez, and Pedro Cateriano Bellido, Decreto Legislativo que Aprueba la Ley de Organización y Funciones del Ministerio de Defensa, Decreto Legislativo 1134 (2012).

6 Secretary of Defense, 10 U.S.C. § 113 (2018).

7 US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), *Joint Planning*, Joint Publication 5-0 (Washington, DC: JCS, 2017), II-4.

8 “¿Por qué existe el VREAM?” Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas (CCFFAA), accessed December 13, 2017.

focus only on defeating the Shining Path. Accordingly, an appropriate ratio of police and military resources cannot be used effectively to counter the interdependent threats of terrorism and drug trafficking.

Beyond the issues raised in the previous paragraphs, the brief duration in which the chief of the Joint Command of the Peruvian Armed Forces is assigned to the position further impedes the development of a holistic approach to provide security in the VRAEM. According to law, the chief holds the position for a period of no more than two years, renewable by exception, only for one additional year.⁹ This situation contrasts with that of the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, which begins with a similar period of two years that may be renewed by the president for two additional terms.¹⁰ Thus, General Joseph Dunford has held the position since 2015, while his predecessor, General Martin E. Dempsey, held the position for four years (2011–15).¹¹ This longer period allows the chairman to develop a deeper understanding of the strategic objectives and formulate a more effective military strategy.

Furthermore, a new chief of the Joint Command must spend a large percentage of his or her term learning about the national military strategy that guides the combatant commands and the key actors in each region, as well as the internal and external factors that affect missions. Unfortunately, commanders often rotate from the position before they acquire enough experience and knowledge needed to address the problems holistically.

Likewise, changes among senior staff officers compound the effects of the short term of the Peruvian joint commander. Because of the lack of a joint culture within the Peruvian Armed Forces, the chief generally assigns members of the same service to the main positions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In 2017, the chief of the Joint Command, for example, was a Navy officer. And not entirely by coincidence, four of the nine division chiefs were also Navy officers.¹² Of the seven autonomous offices of the Joint Command, five were headed by Navy officers.¹³ Of the two combatant commands executing military operations in the VRAEM, a land operations theater, one was commanded by a Navy officer.¹⁴ Despite its experience in countering terrorism *and* drug trafficking, the National Police is not represented within the Joint Command. This situation generates bias that favors the chief's service affiliation.

The necessity of the Joint Command of the Peruvian Armed Forces to attend to its main mission of planning, preparing, coordinating, and conducting military operations, such as those conducted by the VRAEM Special Command and the Intelligence and Joint Special Operations

9 Ollanta Humala Tasso, Juan F. Jiménez Mayor, and Pedro Cateriano Bellido, Decreto Legislativo del Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas, Decreto Legislativo 1136 (2012).

10 Chairman: Appointment; Grade and Rank, 10 U.S.C. § 152 (2018).

11 "Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," JCS, accessed December 17, 2017.

12 "Divisiones Estado Mayor," CCFFAA, accessed December 17, 2017.

13 "Oficinas Autónomas," CCFFAA, accessed December 17, 2017.

14 "Se Reconoció al Comandante del Comando Especial de Inteligencia y Operaciones Especiales Conjuntas (CIOEC)," CCFFAA, October 11, 2016.

Command in the VRAEM, also impedes its ability to conceptualize, design, and assess risks relevant to formulating a national military strategy.¹⁵ The United States manages this complexity by assigning the Joint Chiefs of Staff the role of providing military advice without the competing demand to manage operational campaigns.¹⁶

Strategy Implementation

The insufficient results of the VRAEM Special Command during its first three years led the Joint Command to create the Intelligence and Joint Special Operations Command. This combatant command includes intelligence personnel and special forces from the three military services who execute operations in the region against high-value targets, such as the leaders of the Shining Path.¹⁷ The parallel efforts of these two combatant commands in the same area of responsibility generated friction and competitiveness.

In addition to these overlapping responsibilities, 69 districts of five political regions in the VRAEM formed a more intricate problem when implementing the national military strategy.¹⁸ This vast area of direct intervention and influence hinders the VRAEM Special Command's efforts because actions must be coordinated with the disparate political authorities who have different priorities and resources for each region. Luis Rojas, a former technical secretary of the multisectoral Commission



Map of the Valley of the Rivers Apurimac, Ene, and Mantaro by Pete McPhail

15 "Misión," CCFFAA, accessed December 17, 2017.

16 10 U.S.C. § 152.

17 "Se Reconoció al Comandante," CCFFAA.

18 "Reordenan Ámbitos de Intervención Directa y de Influencia del VRAEM," *Andina* (Lima), June 10, 2016.

for Pacification and Economic and Social Development in the Valley of the Rivers Apurimac, Ene and Mantaro, recognized the need for the VRAEM to become an autonomous region backed by adequate resources that could formulate a coherent plan for its development.¹⁹

The current legal framework, however, is inadequate for the Peruvian Armed Forces to conduct operations in the region beyond the campaign against the Shining Path. In November 2017, the Peruvian Congress approved a bill authorizing military participation in drug trafficking interdiction within zones declared in a state of emergency, which includes jurisdictions of the VRAEM.²⁰ While the approval of this bill will provide a legal framework for a national military strategy to include the fight against drug trafficking, it generates additional risks for the VRAEM Special Command. These risks are magnified due to the lack of training and experience of the Peruvian Armed Forces in carrying out operations against drug trafficking, which is in stark contrast to that of the National Police who currently execute this mission.

Recommendations

To address the challenges identified above, Peru must change its process for formulating and implementing its national military strategy. Peru must develop a whole-of-government approach that unifies the efforts of ministries and agencies to maximize the effectiveness of available resources. Therefore, the national military strategy and the VRAEM Special Command mission should be broadened to orient military forces toward working with other government organizations to solve drug trafficking, poverty, and terrorism in the VRAEM.

In this manner, the national military strategy could focus not only on defeating the Shining Path but also on collaborating with the National Police to fight drug trafficking. The military engineer battalions could also support regional development by constructing roads and schools. These kinds of actions will help the government obtain the support and trust of the population. Such measures will also provide access to information about members of the Shining Path and the drug cartels.

To develop and implement a more coherent and effective military strategy in the VRAEM, the Peruvian congress should establish clearer legal responsibilities regarding who formulates the national defense strategy and the national military strategy. Ideally, the changes should clarify the minister of defense is responsible for the national defense strategy and the chief of the Joint Command for the national military strategy. Regardless, those formulating the national military strategy should address the major problems in the VRAEM and efficiently integrate the area's military and police resources. Similarly, the congress should consider creating a unified political region for the VRAEM based

¹⁹ “¿El VRAEM como una Región para Buscar su Desarrollo?” *El Comercio* (Lima), April 22, 2015.

²⁰ “Congreso Aprobó que Fuerzas Armadas Participen en la Interdicción Contra el Tráfico de Drogas en el VRAEM,” *Correo* (Lima), November 3, 2017.

on the local districts and provinces. Doing so would enable the political authorities and the VRAEM Special Command to coordinate efforts, such as public projects to stimulate development, more effectively.

Beyond such legal changes, attention should be given to military commands. The Peruvian government should lengthen the tenure for the chief of the Joint Command of the Peruvian Armed Forces by at least two years. This extended period would allow the chief to understand the complex issues in the region more deeply, design the military strategy, and make the corresponding adjustments.

Joint commanders should work to ensure equitable distribution of senior assignments among the military services, including the National Police. This diversity would provide an integral joint approach to inform a more comprehensive national military strategy.

The government should also redefine the roles and responsibilities of the Joint Command to eliminate the responsibility of conducting operations, which should be delegated to the combatant commands. This modification would allow the Joint Command to focus on strategic guidance for integrating the police and other elements of national power to achieve the state's objectives. This change would also reduce overlapping authorities such as those between the VRAEM Special Command and the Intelligence and Joint Special Operations Command.

To conduct more effective operations in the VRAEM, the Peruvian Armed Forces should correspondingly increase the training of military personnel assigned to the region. Participants in counterterrorism and counternarcotics operations should be knowledgeable of the policy guidance and legal authorities established by the aforementioned frameworks. Furthermore, joint commanders should leverage the experience of other organizations that have appropriate experience in the operational environment, such as the National Police, to help orient personnel to the complexities of specific missions.

Conclusion

The national military strategy implemented in the VRAEM during the last decade has proven ineffective. The approach has lacked coherence and failed to integrate the efforts of various ministries and agencies. As this article has shown, formulating and implementing an effective policy in the VRAEM requires a series of fundamental changes ranging from specific actions to state and military organization. As noted, security comes from the strength and the application of *all* the instruments of national power. To this end, the Peruvian government must prioritize the urgent issues in the VRAEM and ensure an effective interaction among all the ministries and agencies.

Correspondingly, the Joint Command must assume an advisory role and integrate the capacities of the National Police to unify action in the region. With these changes, the national strategy can address the critical security issues within the VRAEM through strong commitment and common effort from all the actors involved.

