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TITLE:

PERCEPTIONS OF IDEOLOGICAL IMPERIALISM:  
WHY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN THE  
MIDDLE EAST ALONE WILL NOT DEFEAT ISLAMIST TERRORISM

AUTHOR

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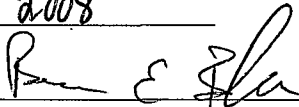
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## *Executive Summary*

**Title:** Perceptions of Ideological Imperialism: Why the Establishment of Democracy in the Middle East Will Not Defeat Islamist Terrorism

**Author:** LCDR Kevin S. Seibel, United States Navy

**Thesis:** The policy outlined by the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America, March 2006*, is that promoting democracy in the Middle East will ultimately defeat Islamist terrorists. In the context of the current war in Iraq, this policy gives the perception of ideological imperialism. Furthermore, bringing about democracy in the Middle East alone will not defeat terrorism.

**Discussion:** The concept of promoting democracy in the Middle East as a means to defeat Islamist terrorism, as outlined in the *National Security Strategy* (NSS), has two basic problems. The first problem is that “promoting” democracy can be viewed as “forcibly establishing” democracy in Iraq. The idea of a modern, colonial-style imperialism from the U.S. has been seized by the very terrorists whom the U.S. seeks to defeat and used as a propaganda tool. The second problem with establishing democracy as a means to defeat terrorism is that it is not a proven solution, and arguments as to why it will not work are compelling.

The analysis of the first problem focuses on the NSS and the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (NSCT 2003 and NSCT 2006 versions). Specific messages in the NSS, when viewed in the context of the current war in Iraq and Afghanistan, send the strategic communication that military action may be the preferred method for “promoting” democracy in the Middle East. Unfortunately, the NSCT 2006 parroted the NSS, in some cases verbatim. The NSCT 2006 completely revamped the well thought out NSCT 2003 from a document that clearly outlined the necessary areas for focus on combating terrorism to a document that mirrored the theories of the NSS 2006.

The analysis of the second problem focuses on the arguments against why establishing democracy in the Middle East will not defeat terrorism. There are five basic points to consider: 1.) Terrorism appears in democratic societies; 2.) Democracy in the Middle East may not be reconcilable with Islamic shari’a law; 3.) There is an underlying assumption in conventional wisdom that democracies in the Middle East would be cooperative and agreeable with the U.S.; 4.) Forcibly establishing democracy in Iraq precludes self determination and weakens the credibility of freedom of choice in democracy; 5.) Establishing democracy in the Middle East may alleviate some grievances of mainstream Muslims, but will not eliminate the motives of terrorist groups like al-Qaeda. In fact, the establishment of democracy in the Middle East will actually fuel al-Qaeda to fight even harder to remove Western influence and restore the totalitarian ideology of their extremist world view.

**Conclusion:** The successful establishment of democracy in the Middle East, if properly achieved, may have long term benefits to the U.S., but it should not be considered as the sole solution or way to defeat terrorism. A concentrated effort, as outlined in the NSCT 2003, is a much more realistic approach to defeating terrorism.

## *Preface*

An excellent discussion of the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America, March 2006* was undertaken by my fellow classmates and I in a seminar early in the 2007-8 academic year at Command and Staff College. An important point that came up was, “How many Americans have actually read the *National Security Strategy*?” A very valid question, since it receives no prominent advertising from the executive branch of government (at least to the best of my knowledge!). It is an incredibly important document, and one that all Americans should be familiar with, since it is formative of our foreign policy. Outside of the ivory tower, many of my peers in the military have neither read it, nor know precisely where to find it without the aid of Google.

The first time I read through the *National Security Strategy 2006*, I was motivated by the strong, passionate language that was artfully written. It moved me. I was in complete agreement with the concept that if we could bring democracy to the Middle East, the root causes of terrorism would be addressed. It felt patriotic to believe all that the world needed to “get well” was a strong dose of democracy. It just made sense to me. However, as I began to expand my knowledge of terrorism, I began to question the idea that simply bringing democracy to the Middle East was the solution. The more I studied and considered the issue, the deeper my doubts became. This led me to take on the immensely difficult topic of this thesis.

My deepest interest, like many others, is to seek out all the knowledge I can find to improve my understanding of terrorists and terrorism, and thereby aid in the fight. The topic of terrorism is certainly not new, but recent history has brought this topic into a renewed focus over the past ten years. It has generated enormous amounts of research, theories, books, experts, and strategies to end the tyranny of terrorists. I knew that I wanted to understand terrorism at a much higher level,

and I began by researching the origins of the modern Islamist terrorist. In the course of my studies at Command and Staff College, I have been exposed to many excellent writings, books, and ideas that were new to me, and I could not help but notice the inter-linkages between many of the topics we were studying and discussing. Particularly, the topic of strategic communication seemed incredibly relevant to me, as well as something the U.S. appears to have let fall by the wayside (particularly with the elimination of the U.S. Information Agency as a stand-alone entity). With this idea in mind, I began reading U.S. government documents with a keen eye towards what was being strategically communicated. The *National Security Strategy 2006* was one of the documents I re-read from a different perspective. When I combined this with what I had been learning about terrorism, I truly began to doubt that the basic premise of the *National Security Strategy 2006* would work: building democracies to defeat terrorism. This contrary thought was a difficult idea to consider, because it simply felt unpatriotic. I really wanted to believe that democracy is the Holy Grail answer, but the more I researched this specific topic, the more I perceived the flaws. These flaws were in the strategic communication of the theory as well as in the democratization theory itself.

As much as I want to write about my ideas on how to defeat terrorism, outlining how to defeat terrorism is not my goal. Rather, I have given my efforts to discussing how the current policy will not defeat terrorism. It is very much intended to show that the democratization policy outlined in the *National Security Strategy* will not defeat terrorism as it claims. This is a bold claim, and I think it is important to further explain where I stand.

I am a strong proponent of fostering democracy and free market enterprise all over the world. I believe that there can be some as yet unknown benefits that could come about. To this end, I agree with the spirit of our *National Security Strategy*. However, I have come to feel strongly that how we communicate our ideals to the world means a great deal, both in words and in actions.

This must be combined with the simple rule of thumb that perception is 90% of the law. In other words, when we communicate to the world that we are fighting in Iraq to bring democracy to the Middle East, it makes sense to the average American. But how is it perceived by the average Muslim in the Middle East who is exposed to our extensive military instrument of national power? Does he perceive that we wage war solely to spread our ideals and democracy, even if it may not be what he desires? I believe that we are unintentionally giving the perception of neo-colonial imperialism, or what I call ideological imperialism.

While writing this thesis, I have had great difficulty trying to illuminate the fact that I do not disagree with encouraging democracy in the Middle East. I realize that this sounds contrary to my thesis, but it is not. I have attempted to make it clear that I believe that the way this “strategy” is communicated – through poorly considered political rhetoric and the mischaracterization of the reasons for U.S. military actions – is a strategic level miscommunication to the world of U.S. intentions. I have also attempted to make it clear that I simply do not think that democracy in the Islamic world will end the terrorism we seek to defeat in the “Global War on Terrorism.” I believe this is simply wishful thinking. Ultimately, I strongly believe that the terrorists need to be neutralized: either killed, captured, marginalized, or otherwise eliminated. I am very distressed when I read or hear of the war in Iraq being associated solely with the concept of bringing democracy to the Middle East, as if spreading democracy was the only reason for war. Surely this is not what America wants to communicate to the world writ large.

I suppose that the topic of this paper will become a moot point shortly after the election this November. A new administration will take office next January, and over time, a review of the *National Security Strategy* is sure to come. Perhaps, even more frighteningly, a precipitous pull out of Iraq is in our future strategic communication. I certainly hope not. I hope America is strong enough to see it through to the end, and is successful in rebuilding Iraq as an ally.

I would like to thank to Dr. Douglas Streusand of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College. As my Faculty Advisor in Cultural and Interagency Operations, many of his seminars directly contributed to my topic. Dr. Streusand's lectures have given me a good deal about which to think, and his strict discipline in usage of the English language has sent me to the dictionary more than once after being corrected for my many abuses. As my Master's Thesis Mentor, his observations and input were both revealing and challenging.

I would be remiss if I did not also thank LTC Dave Major, USA. His guidance and assistance were essential in my efforts – thanks Uncle Davey! Dr. Donald Bittner, the icon of CSC, has also been most helpful in my quest to understand the history behind the current struggles. I would also like to thank the Grey Research Center staff for all the assistance in providing a world class facility to draw upon for knowledge. My peers in Conference Group twelve have also been a great motivational sounding board, as well as a source of support. Particular thanks to Major Mike “Skitzo” Deddens for “telling me like it is.” Additionally, I thank the entire Command and Staff College faculty and staff for their tireless work in putting together a challenging and rewarding curriculum that is timely and yet timeless. CSC is truly a great institution in the Marine Corps, and I am privileged to have been a student.

Finally, and most of all, I would like to thank my wife Nealy for all her support in this time consuming endeavor. She has put up with me being gone every week as a geo-bachelor, and stood her watch at the home front taking care of business. She is a terrific sounding board for my wacky ideas, and a diligent proof reader of countless papers, including several versions of this one. She has done her best counterinsurgency work keeping my two young daughters, Zoe and Aselyn, from undermining my efforts to work on this project. It can be difficult to focus with a two year old on your lap pushing the space bar because she thinks you will not notice her subtle subversion tactics. Win the hearts and minds, indeed!

*“The idea that peace depends above all on promoting democratic institutions has remained a staple of American thought to the present day. Conventional American wisdom has consistently maintained that democracies do not make war on each other. ...disagreements had to do with method. Should America actively promote the spread of free institutions as a principal of its foreign policy? Or should it rely on the impact of its example?” Henry Kissinger<sup>1</sup>*

### **Introduction: War for Democracy**

The “global war on terrorism” is often framed as a war of ideas between the democratic ideology of freedom and the totalitarian ideology of radical Islamist terrorists. As the fundamental basis of President George W. Bush’s *National Security Strategy of the United States of America, March 2006* (hereafter NSS 2006), the foundational solution to defeating the ideology of Islamist extremism and terrorism is through the promotion of democracy. President Bush’s strategic vision is clear: promoting democracy in the Middle East is the way to ultimately defeat Islamist extremism and terrorism. However, there are two basic problems within the theory that a democratic Middle East will defeat terrorism. The first problem with promoting democracy in the Middle East, specifically in Iraq, lies not in the message of democracy, but in the military messenger. Through a “strategy” of regime change in Iraq, the U.S. in essence forcefully *established* democracy, rather than having peacefully promoted democracy. The strategic communication of the NSS 2006, when viewed against the current situation in Iraq, gives the Islamist terrorists highly prized propaganda to exploit against the U.S.: the perception of viable indications of U.S. ideological imperialism. The second problem is that the *theory* that a democratic Middle East will end terrorism is just that: it is only a theory. There is no proof that establishing democracy in the Middle East will or even can end terrorism, but there are several compelling arguments why it will not work.

By analyzing the two problems stated above, this thesis will first show how the strategy of democracy communicated in the NSS 2006 is a strategic communication that does not align with American ideals when it is viewed in the context of the war in Iraq. Although many Americans may consider the establishment of democracy in the Middle East a noble and patriotic endeavor, it becomes evident how the miscommunication of the NSS 2006 strategy aids the terrorists and

extremists in their goals. Next, the compelling arguments that counter the theory of democracy as the solution to ending terrorism in the Middle East will be analyzed. When all are considered together, these arguments demonstrate how democracy alone will not defeat terrorism in the Middle East.

### *Defining Democracy, Extremism, and Terrorism*

Some basic definitions of the terms being used are essential. First, the general definition of democracy used in this thesis is a form of republican government that derives its political power from the people through elected representatives. Democratic governments are mandated by the majority will of the people to protect the equal rights of all the governed people under an accepted body of law, upheld by an independent judiciary. The concept of freedom is closely aligned with democracy, as often democratic countries are referred to as “free” countries. Freedom is a key aspect in democracy; implicit in democracy is the freedom to participate actively in the government. Other freedoms are guaranteed so long as they do not violate the rights of others. The definition of democracy used in this paper is not intended to be all encompassing, but rather to provide a basic definition that includes democracies that are not necessarily mirror images of the U.S.

Extremism, as used in this thesis, refers to the practice of holding rigidly fundamental interpretations of a belief system or politics to the point of advocating violence to achieve the desired end state. An Islamic extremist interprets Islam in a more conservative, rigid manner than the average Muslim. While an Islamist terrorist likely embraces extremist views, an Islamic extremist is not necessarily a terrorist by virtue of his beliefs and by *advocating* violence. By advocating violence, Islamist extremists play a significant role in the creation of the Islamist terrorist, and terrorists are often mislabeled as simply extremists. Truly, terrorists are extremists, but labeling them as such neglects the murderous level to which they are willing to take their radical views: terrorists put extremism into violent action.

Currently, there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism, yet defining terrorism must be the first step in understanding the problem at hand. Since a single definition is not accepted by the U.S. government or academia, it is difficult at best to construct a coordinated strategy to defeat terrorism, much less to measure any strategy's effectiveness. In essence, how can one defeat what one cannot clearly define or understand? A clear definition is reflective of a clear understanding of the issue, and both seem to be missing in the current fight.

Although there are many opinions as to what constitutes terrorism, this author defines terrorism as a radical political means of deliberately targeting, killing, or harming innocent civilians to influence a target government or social group by undermining its popular support, and to further generate support from groups sympathetic to the terrorist cause. Terrorists perpetrate acts of terrorism as either a political strategy or tactic, and can range from individuals, groups, organizations, all the way up to state regimes.

It is of utmost importance to define terrorism clearly; a clear definition will provide the basis from which a solid strategy can be constructed. Appendix A lists several definitions being used by various U.S. Government agencies and popular political scientists to describe and define terrorism. Such an array of definitions leads to confusion about what constitutes a terrorist act, and more importantly, indicates a lack of single point leadership to focus understanding of the problem within the U.S. government and interagency bureaucracy.

### **Background and Context**

After the heinous attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. invaded Afghanistan with strong international support and good will. The mission of destroying al-Qaeda and capturing or killing the terrorist leader Osama bin Laden was clear. In the process of pursuing al-Qaeda, the Coalition toppled the Taliban regime, which was an undeniable supporter of al-Qaeda and terrorism. After the fall of the Taliban regime, the Coalition instituted a democratic form of government in Afghanistan. The establishment of democracy in Afghanistan was not the primary purpose for

military action in Afghanistan, but rather a byproduct of the clear purpose of pursuing al-Qaeda. The Taliban government had been given the opportunity to cooperate by turning over al-Qaeda, and declined to assist the Coalition. As a result, the Coalition removed the Taliban from power as a clear terrorist supporting regime.

When the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, the Bush administration used the justification that Saddam Hussein's regime potentially possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD), which could be supplied to terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda. The stated purpose for invading Iraq was regime change to eliminate Hussein as a *possible* supporter of terrorism. In the context of the "global war on terrorism", the invasion was tenuously justified. Soon the evidence began to show that Hussein's regime did not have WMD, was not actively producing WMD, and was not providing WMD to terrorists. Hussein's external support of al-Qaeda lacked clear, provable evidence. In fact, it seems highly improbable that radical Islamists would deal with the secular regime of Saddam Hussein, and any cooperation between the groups would be difficult to imagine.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of any misguided information, U.S. national intelligence missteps, or miscalculated strategic decisions that led to the invasion of Iraq, the fact remained that the war was now *fait accompli* based on tenuous public justifications. A new explanation for the war in Iraq was necessary. As a result, the rhetoric and rationale for invading Iraq shifted focus from WMD and terrorists to the concept that establishing democracy in place of a destabilizing, cruel dictator was a strategic means of defeating terrorism. This argument became so prominent that the NSS 2006 codified the rhetoric.

### **Problem # 1: Democracy at the Barrel of a Gun.**

#### **The National Security Strategy of 2006**

By shifting the rhetoric justifying the invasion of Iraq from WMD to the establishment of a democratic government, it appeared that the American ideology of democratic government had effectively been *forced* upon Iraq – if not in fact, at least in perception. The Bush administration's rhetoric seemed to be implying a new strategic message: The United States can and will use

military power to establish democracy as a means to an end to the “global war on terrorism.” In essence, a doctrine of preventive warfare to establish democracy justified the reason for invasion of a sovereign state. By March 2006, the strategy of democratization in foreign policy communicated by the new NSS seemed to reinforce the message that America may use military force solely to establish democracy, if necessary. Thus, the “global war on terrorism” in Iraq had in essence become ideological imperialism. The forced implementation of democracy where America sees fit to impose it is nothing less.

The all encompassing theme of the NSS 2006 is the promotion of democracy, freedom, justice, free markets, and peace as the basis for insuring America’s security and ending the threat of terrorism. In the introduction of the NSS 2006, President Bush outlined his goals:

Our national security strategy is founded upon two pillars: The first pillar is *promoting freedom*, justice, and human dignity – *working to end tyranny*, to *promote effective democracies*, and to extend prosperity through free and fair trade and wise development policies. ...Peace and international stability are most reliably built on a foundation of freedom.

The second pillar of our strategy is confronting the challenges of our time by *leading a growing community of democracies*. ...history has shown that only when we do our part will others do theirs.<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis added.)

This policy begins on a slippery slope when “working to end tyranny” involves preventive regime change through military instruments of national power – the obvious “strategy” in Iraq. When this strong arm policy is combined with “promote[ing] effective democracies,” it effectively becomes ideological imperialism. The justness of this strategy is lost in the absence of the exact methodology that democracy will be “promoted,” and the world is left to infer that the military may be the means of choice: “Promoting” thus becomes “establishing.” Non-democratic states such as Saudi Arabia or North Korea must surely be wondering if they are next on the list for the “promotion” of democracy. Perhaps that is the intent of the NSS 2006: to put the world on notice that preventive military actions are not ruled out in pursuit of U.S. national interests.

Unfortunately, as Colonel Daniel Smith, USA (Ret), succinctly points out, “justification of **preemptive** military action rests on objective realities: enemy capability, intent, the imminence of attack. Justification of **preventive** military action rests on fortune telling -- and is as prone to substantial error.”<sup>4</sup> The imminence of attack is a key aspect of preemptive military action: Troops on the border or warships off the coast would indicate imminence of attack. It borders on absurd to consider that any attack by Saddam Hussein’s regime, crippled under crushing sanctions, was imminent. It stands to reason that the invasion of Iraq was preventive rather than preemptive.<sup>5</sup> Since the original arguments for the invasion did not stand up to the test of time, the idea of instituting a democracy in Iraq became the centerpiece rationale. However, if the pursuit of democracy is to be solely through military might, then there is a clear contradiction in the President’s further statement that “free nations tend toward peace.”<sup>6</sup> If free nations tend toward peace, then a *preventive* war approach by the United States would simply not make logical sense: War of aggression based on error prone assumptions. If democracies truly tend toward peace, then the promotion of democracy should be peacefully pursued through instruments of national power other than military force.

The military pursuit of terrorists brought on by the attacks of September 11, 2001, is an absolutely just course of action, and is vitally essential for U.S. national security. When combating terrorists, military capabilities are critical in a comprehensive approach that also includes integrated political and diplomatic actions, along with law enforcement and national intelligence. Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda declared war on the U.S. and brought that war to U.S. soil on 9/11. Beyond any doubt, the U.S. is justified in taking military action in Afghanistan against al-Qaeda and its Taliban supporters. However the justness of the Afghanistan strategy was usurped in the development of the preventive war policy that attempted to bring the war in Iraq under the context of the “global war on terrorism.” The purpose for invading Iraq was sold as a necessary part of the

“global war on terrorism,” whether that was the real purpose or not.<sup>7</sup> By reading the NSS 2006, one is given the impression that Iraq was invaded simply to establish a pro-U.S. democracy.

It therefore stands to reason that the ends to be achieved by invading Iraq are apparently not the same as the ends to be achieved by invading Afghanistan. One invasion was regime change to establish democracy, and one invasion was to pursue and eliminate terrorists. Indeed, the appearance of groping for a justification for the invasion of Iraq “...has become a ‘cause célèbre’ for jihadists.”<sup>8</sup> Ironically, al-Qaeda terrorists did not arrive in Iraq until sometime in early 2004 (well after the invasion) to fight a ‘jihad’ against Western power symbolized by the coalition. Terrorist attacks were now everyday events as the war transformed into an insurgency fueled by the newly arrived terrorists the U.S. sought to defeat in Afghanistan. Sadly, establishing democracy in Iraq has not defeated terrorism, but rather has served as a rallying battlefield that draws new recruits into the radical al-Qaeda ideology. Unfortunately, the jury is still out on whether or not the fledgling democracy in Iraq can survive.

If establishing democracy is the endstate desired, then the promotion of democracy through other instruments of national power (such as diplomatic and economic efforts) is a far superior method of achieving it than by military force. Diplomacy may or may not take longer, but it is certainly a less costly means – both politically and economically. “Overnight democracy” as a primary military mission is an idea that should be removed from foreign policy thinking.

Democracy must be fostered and grown over time; it must be deeply rooted in the desires of the people. The patience for achieving this with instruments other than the military seems to be lost.

#### *The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*

The end to be achieved in combating terrorism is the complete defeat of terrorists. To this end, part of the ways and means will absolutely require military action closely integrated with “political, judicial, administrative, diplomatic, economic, and social policies.”<sup>9</sup> These ways and means were clearly outlined in the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism February 2003*

(NSCT 2003). Not surprisingly, the NSCT 2003 never stated the establishment of democracy as *the* means, or even *a* means, of defeating terrorism. The closest the NSCT 2003 came to the idea of establishing democracy was:

Ongoing U.S. efforts to resolve regional disputes, foster economic, social, and political development, market-based economies, good governance, and the rule of law, while not necessarily focused on combating terrorism, contribute to the campaign by addressing underlying conditions that terrorists often seek to manipulate for their own advantage. Additionally, diminishing these conditions requires the United States, with its friends and allies, to win the “war of ideas,” to support democratic values, and to promote economic freedom.<sup>10</sup>

This paragraph precisely captures the essence of the role for democracy in combating terrorism. Words like “foster,” “promote,” and “support” are not comparable to “establish,” “institute,” or “force.” In fact, pointing to democracy’s inherent vulnerability to terrorism, the NSCT 2003 stated, “Because we are a free, open, and democratic society, we are, and will remain, vulnerable to these dangers.”<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, the NSCT 2003 outlined a very reasonable plan of employing all instruments of national power to defeat terrorism. Much of the NSCT 2003 strategy was well thought out, and consistent with ideas outlined in such works as Bard O’Neill’s *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*. The NSCT 2003 was an excellent starting point for a comprehensive approach to defeating terrorists.

However, the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism September 2006* (NSCT 2006) reflects an abrupt change to the NSCT 2003 strategy: the promotion of democracy is now the central theme for combating terrorism. In fact, much of the verbiage of the new NSCT 2006 is taken directly – verbatim – out of the National Security Strategy of March 2006. The 32 page NSCT 2003 was regressively stripped down to 19 pages that simply restated the NSS 2006. Political expediency, it seems, subordinated a solid strategy for combating terrorism. Unfortunately, the NSCT 2006 reinforces the concept of associating military force as a means of establishing democracy. To be clear, if promoting democracy is to be an instrument for ending terrorism, then the establishing of democracy must be far removed from the use of military force to

“promote” it. The use of force solely to establish democracy in a foreign nation can be accurately compared to physically assaulting a person to get them to vote for a specific candidate; it does not correspond to freedom of choice. Promoting democracy must never be *the sole justification* for war; establishing democracy after an otherwise legitimately justified conflict (i.e., self defense) is an absolutely different endeavor.

The end to be achieved through promoting democracy, according to President Bush, is peace and international stability. However, when the means to promote democracy are aligned with the use of military force, it makes U.S. policy no different than the imperial designs of Soviet Russia’s attempts to establish communism in Afghanistan. In his book *The Utility of Force*, General Sir Rupert Smith accurately captures what now appears to be the essence of modern military interventions:

We do not intervene in order to take or hold territory; in fact, once an intervention has occurred a main preoccupation is how to leave the territory rather than keep it. Instead, we intervened in, or even decide to escalate to, a conflict in order establish a condition in which the political objective can be achieved by other means and in other ways. We seek to created a conceptual space for diplomacy, economic incentives, political pressure, and other measures to create a desired political outcome of stability, and if possible democracy.<sup>12</sup>

This assessment is a worthy analysis of current situation in Iraq when viewed from the perspective of the NSS 2006. Sadly, the conflict in Iraq gives credibility to the appearance that military force will be used to pave the way for the other instruments of national power in a doctrine of prevention.

#### *The Strategic Communication of Promoting Democracy*

In the war of ideas, words are often the weapons. Clearly communicating ideas to multiple audiences, in this case Americans *and* Muslims, is extremely important. At the core of the problem is strategic *miscommunication*. By closely aligning the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with the national policy of promoting democracy, a good policy is improperly communicated. A confusing U.S. policy that claims democracy is peaceful while average Muslims can readily see the U.S. military heavily involved in the Middle East simply exacerbates the problem. A more clearly

thought out strategic communication for fostering homegrown democratic movements can remove the propaganda paradise of forcing regime change to democracy in a so called *preventive* war. If the *preemptive* justification for invading Iraq ends up proving invalid, it is perhaps better from the standpoint of maintaining the moral high ground to admit the error, rather than creating a new justification for going into Iraq that ends up prostituting the noble ideals of democracy.

The reality of the 9/11 attacks is that al-Qaeda desired and needed a massive retaliation from the U.S. in the Middle East to incite Muslims to unite and rise up against a perceived Western invasion to destroy Islam. Following the operations in Afghanistan, the invasion of Iraq played very well into the hands of al-Qaeda in achieving their strategic communication and goals. Osama bin Laden's call to war against the "crusaders" of the Christian West is based on his own strategic communication to Muslims that Americans are at war with Islam, not terrorists.

On 16 September 2001, President Bush said, "This crusade, this war on terrorism is gonna take awhile. And the American people must be patient. I'm gonna be patient."<sup>13</sup> In his address before the joint session of congress on 20 September 2001, President Bush said, "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."<sup>14</sup> These statements were easily twisted by Osama bin Laden to be interpreted for the non-English speaking Muslim world as "either you are with us, or you are with terrorism. Either you are with the Crusade, or you are with Islam."<sup>15</sup> Bin Laden was able to not only wordsmith the concept of a new Christian crusade into his statement, but he also effectively implied that Westerners view terrorism and Islam as the same thing. From the Western point of view, the use of the word "crusade" might sound applicable as a long and zealous fight, but the historic context of the Christian crusades against the Muslims renders the word unusable in a well thought out strategic communication to combat terrorists. Words must be carefully chosen.

The association of the strategic policy of democracy promotion with the war in Iraq is a strategic communication blunder. Perhaps even more disconcerting is that this poorly

communicated foreign policy of “promoting” democracy accords strong credence to the Muslim’s perception of American ideological imperialism. This perception in turn fuels the rationale Islamist extremists and terrorists use to justify actions against the perceived threat from the West. Perhaps more importantly, it also offers radical Islamist extremists a valuable recruiting tool in justifying the established perception of the need for defense of Islam against the “imperial arrogance of America.”<sup>16</sup> The propaganda opportunities that groups like al-Qaeda can exploit are easy pickings from a poorly communicated democratization policy. Assuming this is not the intention of the Bush administration, it should at least be recognized that the U.S. sometimes appears to be offering democracy at the barrel of a gun.

### *Problem # 2: Why Establishing Democracies Will Not Defeat Terrorism*

Clearly outlined in the NSS 2006 is President Bush’s philosophy that establishing democracy in the Middle East will remove the underlying causes of terrorism, and thus defeat terrorism in the long term. This sounds plausible, but there are several problems inherent to this theory. Furthering the problem, of late it would seem that any form of “elections” in government passes as democracy. Examples of corrupt elections in Muslim states in the past twenty years abound: Pakistan, Algeria, and Egypt to name a few. However, the focus on simple elections does not qualify a state as a functional democracy, and simple elections will not necessarily end the grievances that terrorists seek to exploit.

Several more considerations must be examined when considering if establishing democracy can actually defeat terrorism. Following this, a brief discussion on the specific friction between al-Qaeda and democracy will conclude the analysis of the problem.

#### *1.) Terrorism still appears in established democratic societies*

Perhaps the most frequently cited evidence that democracy does not eliminate terrorism is that democratic societies have their own indigenous terrorists. Some notable examples of indigenous terrorism in democracies include Timothy McVeigh in the U.S., Aum Shinrikyo in

Japan, the IRA in Britain and Ireland, the Red Brigade in Italy, and the Red Army Faction in West Germany.<sup>17</sup> In fact, even when some indigenous terrorist groups have had the opportunity to enter elections, they either decline to participate or fail to win the election.<sup>18</sup> This is not surprising, as F. Gregory Gause III keenly points out, "...terrorists, who rarely represent political agendas that could mobilize electoral majorities, would reject the very principles of majority rule and minority rights on which liberal democracy is based."<sup>19</sup> For security purposes, terrorist groups are naturally very secretive and are simply not open to just anyone who wants to join. Gause goes on to point out that terrorist organizations "revolve around strong leaders and a cluster of committed followers," and democracy is simply not a system in which they fit.<sup>20</sup> No matter how successful the democracy, as is the case in the U.S., someone will always feel disenchanting, unrepresented, dispossessed, alienated, or simply left out. That person's anger can then be exploited to violence. Resorting to violence is not out of the question within a free and democratic society; in fact, the very freedoms guaranteed to Americans make terrorist operations within the borders more feasible.

Working through diplomacy to establish democracy in some parts of the world as a method to aid in improving governance, reducing poverty, and creating justice might be entirely appropriate. In this case, democracy, as outlined in the NSS of 2006, can give a voice to the voiceless, and hope to the hopeless. However, this is not a primary method to combat terrorism, but rather another means to assist in eliminating terrorism, as noted above in the NSCT 2003. It is simply the best way Americans know to help poverty stricken people in failed or failing states, by giving them an alternative to radical ideologies. However, the Islamist terrorists will only fight harder to prevent this goal. Islamic terrorists are fighting for the establishment of a totalitarian religious ideology, not a governance method to alleviate dispossession of a voting voice for the masses. Using democracy to remove the popular support base of terrorists simply will not end terrorism.

## 2.) Can democracy be reconciled with Islamic shari'a law?

The assumption that a democracy can be overlaid on an Islamic state, which can be reconciled with Islamic shari'a law, is questionable. This is particularly true when Americans “mirror image” our style of government onto Muslim countries. Certainly al-Qaeda and other Islamist extremists do not see a place for the man made laws of republican democracy in place of Allah's law, or shari'a. Several Muslim states are struggling under barely functioning pseudo-democracies, such as Pakistan. It is true that several Middle Eastern states have moved towards liberal democracy – albeit slowly – and are attempting to find a common ground that can be accepted by conservative Muslims. However, this only fuels the extremist fire.

The democracy of Pakistan is a good example of the problems Islamic countries face when they attempt to succeed as a democracy. A growing portion of Pakistani people appear to be moving more towards the extremist views, seeing the “democracy” of Pakistan as a corrupt farce.<sup>21</sup> Former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was an extremely outspoken proponent of equal rights under liberal democracy. The December 2007 assassination of Bhutto, who was up for election, demonstrates the Islamic fundamentalists' extreme resistance to, and willingness to fight against democracy.

## 3.) The assumption that a Muslim democracy will be cooperative with the U. S.

It is unsafe to simply assume that any democratic government established in an Islamic state will be friendly and cooperative with the U.S. As Kissinger described in the opening quote for this thesis from *Diplomacy*, this is the conventional wisdom of the past and present. However, Kissinger was not arguing the truth of the statement, but rather pointing out that it was simply conventional wisdom. Kissinger goes on to describe how Alexander Hamilton challenged the notion that “democracies tend toward peace.” Somehow, it has been perpetuated that disagreement with the conventional wisdom outlined by Kissinger constitutes a form of unpatriotic thinking, but it is entirely realistic to consider unfavorable governments developing under democracy. Sharing the

same form of government does not, by any stretch of the imagination, automatically insure peace. Hamas is a prime example of a democratically elected militant group.

It would be unwise not to consider the possibility that an extreme faction of Islamists could gain political power through democracy, and perhaps even move to support and harbor terrorists in a fundamentalist controlled “democracy.” The election of Hamas is a strong example of a legitimate election of an unfavorable group to the U.S. The Islamic Republic of Iran is perhaps the closest Muslim state in the Middle East to democracy, yet the Iranian agenda is clearly not pro-U.S. Iranian support in destabilizing Iraq has been a confounding issue for the Bush administration. Compounding this issue is the message of hypocrisy given by the U.S. when refusing to deal with unfavorable democratically elected governments like Iran or Hamas.

4.) *A policy of forced democracy eliminates self determination.*

Using the force of arms solely to remove totalitarian, repressive regimes to replace them with democracy obviously precludes self determination. It is ironic that the freedom of choice embodied by democracy is actually removed when the U.S. embarks on post war nation building. Freedom of choice in government is limited to choosing democracy. The Revolutionary War in the U.S. was incited by a group of men with radical ideas of liberty and equality. Not all colonists supported breaking with Britain, and when the “revolution” is considered from the British side, it was indeed a rebellion led by “radicals” with a distinctly different political world view. No one forced the U.S. to choose democracy; it was deeply desired in the hearts of several great Americans and captured by the momentous efforts of our founding fathers. It is so deeply meaningful to Americans that we will give our lives for its preservation. Similarly, true democracy in the Middle East must come from the will of the people, which should be fostered and aided by the U.S. However, forced regime change to establish democracy in Iraq only serves to amplify anti-U.S. sentiment among Muslims, and exacerbates fears of Western domination.<sup>22</sup>

5.) *Can establishing democracy alleviate the grievances of Muslims?*

Lastly, the conviction that democracy removes the grievances of the Muslim masses suffering from authoritarian or totalitarian regimes is a misdirected notion. Although democracy may certainly help the mainstream Muslim masses, it will not prevent terrorists from seeking out the select few who remain dissatisfied. In other words, religious terrorists like Osama bin Laden and his followers are not disillusioned by their inability to participate in government through suffrage. Osama bin Laden wants to restore a totalitarian Caliphate; his recruits and followers share his desire for a return to a bygone era of strict Islamic asceticism. Democracy in Iraq, Afghanistan, or any Middle East country will not eliminate his goal even if it dries up what little mainstream support he currently has. Through his (and many other) radical interpretations and teachings of Islam, the goal of luring Muslim youths into the perceived fight is achieved because those young Muslims believe and agree with him. These theoretically “disenfranchised” young Muslims are the true aim of democratization, as outlined in the NSS 2006. By giving them fair representation in a democratic government, the source of “holy warriors” will be removed from groups like al-Qaeda. However, it is critical to understand that this does not eliminate al-Qaeda, and al-Qaeda will always be able to recruit new followers from the large group of fundamentalists in the Middle East, whether it is democratic or not. No form of government is acceptable to Osama bin Laden and his followers unless it is the Caliphate of his ideology. Even if all the grievances of the Muslim masses were somehow magically resolved by a completely democratic Middle East, al-Qaeda would simply find a new cause on which to base their violent ideology.

The grievances Osama bin Laden exploits are religiously based and agitated by what he perceives as a Western imperialistic threat to Islamic sovereignty. As mentioned above, it is important to recognize that terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda will simply transform their grievances and mission as necessary to garner popular Muslim support and charity. No amount of Western amelioration of al-Qaeda exploited grievances will remove their ultimate goal of the restoring the Caliphate centered in a Middle Eastern Islamic state. Fundamentally, the grievances

that Islamist terrorists have with the West do not lie in democracy or elected representation (at least originally). Osama bin Laden's early writings show that his chief grievance, well prior to the "global war on terror," was "the invasion by the American and western Crusader forces of the Arabian peninsula and Saudi Arabia, the home of ... the Sacred House of God, the Muslim's direction of prayer."<sup>23</sup> Driving his radical views are his deeply held beliefs that the U.S. led Western nations are crusaders attempting to destroy Islam and that Western values are corrupting Muslims. So, for example, if U.S. military forces were to be completely withdrawn from Saudi Arabia, or even Iraq, al-Qaeda would simply find another suitable grievance to indict perceived American imperialism. Furthermore, this would be an act of giving in to terrorist demands, which would only encourage the terrorists to seek further gains towards their goals. The fact remains that the very basis of democracy – individual rights and liberties – is unequivocally at odds with the core of the extreme religious world view embraced by groups such as Al Qaeda. As James Robbins notes, "...because al-Qaeda is pursuing a universal vision and sanctifies violence, peaceful coexistence is impossible. The group will resist violently the establishment of democracy anywhere in the region for as long as it is able to do so."<sup>24</sup>

### *Understanding al-Qaeda and Democracy*

The April 2006 National Intelligence Estimate determined that, "al-Qa'ida will continue to pose the greatest threat to the Homeland and US interests abroad by a single terrorist group."<sup>25</sup> Although the global war on terrorism is a broad attempt to combat all terrorists groups throughout the world, the focus is primarily on Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and al-Qaeda associated movements as the premier threat to American security.

As the architects of the 9/11 attacks on the U.S., the complete destruction of al-Qaeda should rightfully be the centerpiece of the U.S strategy to combat terrorism. The basis of Osama bin Laden's world view embodies his distaste for secular Western ideals and secular government. Osama bin Laden is very clear about his goals and grievances. He is a prolific writer and a master

of information operations. The very permissiveness of a free and open democratic society not only allows extremists to operate freely to achieve their ends, but is precisely what extremists seek to destroy in order to establish their own totalitarian Islamist regime. The rule of law embodied by the Constitution of the United States is based on individual rights and freedoms, which is not in concordance with Osama bin Laden's extreme Islamist interpretations. By expertly outlining "infidel" Western "transgressions," bin Laden is able to give his followers a cause to believe in and fight for to achieve his ultimate goal: restoration of both the Muslim Caliphate and the world stature of Islam.<sup>26</sup>

In the extreme version of Islam that al-Qaeda embraces, the law is given by God alone. Man does not give the laws, as is the essence of democracy. James Robbins noted that:

...Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Osama Bin Laden's chief lieutenant in Iraq, ...denounced the very principles President Bush has pledged to promote. "We have declared a bitter war against the principle of democracy and all those who seek to enact it," Zarqawi announced. According to him, elections, representative government and popular sovereignty are "the essence of infidelity and deviation from the true path," and any who seek to promote this "malicious ideology," whether in Iraq or elsewhere, will be treated as infidels and put to death.<sup>27</sup>

This effectively communicates where al-Qaeda stands in relation to democracy. Obviously the establishment of democracy is not intended for the terrorists themselves; it is intended to alleviate the grievances of the masses to either head off or eliminate the support of such groups. But it is important to consider how the terrorists perceive democracy to understand how forcibly establishing democracy in Iraq aids the terrorists in their recruiting cause by handing them propaganda to exploit against the U.S.

As described earlier, the terrorist organizations also make excellent use of propaganda to attempt to convince the Muslim world that Westerners view all Muslims as terrorists, and are renewing the crusades against Islam. This propaganda is of utmost importance to the terrorist organization in achieving success. In this regard, the West is being outfought in the information war. Terrorists must have a unifying cause, and the average Muslim must be able to identify with

this cause. The cause, regardless of what it is, is critical to keeping the organization both relevant and profitable from charitable alms. After the defeat of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the end of the Afghan civil war in 1992, the mujahidin had no apparent mission or cause for which to continue fighting. Osama bin Laden was able to provide that cause in the mid 1990s. While in exile in Sudan, bin Laden shifted the focus of his “jihad” onto the U.S. As noted by Marc Sageman, “The creation of the common enemy, the U.S. ‘far enemy’ – the ‘head of the snake’ – redefined the jihad and revitalized al Qaeda. Such a shift to a new mission helps prolong the existence of an organization that has accomplished its goal.”<sup>28</sup> As bin Laden’s latest enemy, the U.S. must closely analyze its policies for defeating his network so as not to inadvertently play into his hands and aid his cause. Establishing democracy in Iraq by “kicking in the front door” is such a policy, and al-Qaeda was quick to jump on it.

### **Conclusion: If Not Democracy, What Next?**

It is certainly possible the peaceful promotion of democracy in the Middle East could have long term benefits for both the people of the Middle East and the U.S. It is not the intent of this thesis to argue that there could be no potential benefit to the spread of democracy, or that the pursuit of promoting democracy in the world should not be undertaken. On the contrary, expanding the freedoms of people everywhere through democracy would create unimaginable possibilities in the world. However, it must be understood that the way America goes about this noble enterprise is critical. It is clear that establishing democracy alone will not defeat terrorism, particularly when it is done primarily by military force. It is indeed a noble undertaking to attempt to bring freedom and individual rights to the world at large; *however, the reality is that no particular form of government is a cure for terrorism.* It is also implausible to think that the complete elimination of terrorism is a victory that could ever even be achieved, by democracy or any other means. Even though history has proven many times that terrorism is a self defeating tactic, terrorists and terrorism will likely always exist.<sup>29</sup>

While it would seemingly be preferable to the U.S. to have democracy flourish around the globe, there is no guarantee that every democratic government would be agreeable to U.S. policy by virtue of being a democracy. Peaceful coexistence depends on compromise, cultural awareness, cooperation, and strong economic and diplomatic ties. The myopic view that democratic governments of free societies will somehow erase terrorism is similar to thinking that establishing democracy will end the illicit drug trade or international crime rings. No matter the form of government, criminal activities will find a way to exist and attempt to grow.

Many Muslims (as polls have shown and many argue) embrace the ideas embodied by freedom and democracy. The U.S. must work carefully to foster this through a well thought out foreign policy that strategically communicates the principles and values held as truths by the vast majority of Americans. U.S. actions must be in line with these values and must be transparent to the world. The internet, television, and radio broadcasts are an important part of a strategic communication plan, but to truly "sell" the idea of democracy to the world, the U.S. must lead by example: embracing the Golden Rule and eliminating hubris in foreign policy. Continued humanitarian aid, led by the military and interagency of government is essential to building good will and friendships.

Renewing economic and diplomatic focus on parts of the world other than the Middle East could provide a public relations coup. Continued singular focus on the Middle East is a highly effective way to show contempt for other parts of the world that lack the essential resources (particularly oil) to which the U.S. finds itself so absorbingly involved in competing for access. The U.S. has a long history of short sightedness and turning its back on parts of the world that have little bearing on current national interests (such as Afghanistan in the 1990's) until a crisis breaks out that threatens vital interests. This cycle must end.

Establishing democracy must come from within a country, and must be a change brought about by the will of the people. U.S. history allows us this lesson to study. Aiding nations that

desperately need U.S. help in bringing about democracy (even if they lack resources crucial to U.S. national interests) is just as important as fostering democracy in places where our perceived national interests are great. Selectively choosing where the U.S. is most interested in fostering democracy is contradictory to giving the altruistic perception that Americans desire to achieve. Much of the world perceives America as a consumer oriented, commercially driven society whose morals are based on profit and exploitation of scarce resources. U.S. actions will speak louder than its words as Americans attempt to change this perception of U.S. national ideals.

The most important factor in promoting democracy around the world is that it must never be associated with the reasoning behind military invasion, nor even associated with a cause for war. America has the right to self defense, but militarily establishing democracy as a preventive form of "defense" is simply bad policy. That is simply ideological imperialism. If the U.S. is to win the war of ideas against terrorism, the idea of democracy must be clearly shown as an achievement to be savored by those who seek it, not an exclusive American export that is backed by force of arms.

The basis of al-Qaeda is nothing less than a world Caliphate, centered in the Middle East, and the means they will use to achieve this end state is force through war and terrorism. The imperialist nature of their goal is clear; the U.S. must expose this imperialist nature for what it is, and tread carefully where the perception of America's own imperialism may be shown. If America is to end the totalitarian imperialism of al-Qaeda, she must hold herself rigidly to the high moral standards laid down by the founding fathers. No terrorist totalitarianism can match that kind of power.

## APPENDIX A:

### *Defining Terrorism: Some Sample Definitions*

It may seem trivial that there is no consensus agreement on a single acceptable definition, but a rigorous definition is essential for sharpening the focus of the problems in combating terrorism. This is evidenced by the distinct lack of concerted effort by federal agencies, and is created by the lack of a clear definition from which all the interagency organizations can be directed to focus their efforts. Perception is everything, and is embodied in the oft heard argument that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.

1.) *The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism 2003* definition:

...premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents. Those who employ terrorism, regardless of their specific secular or religious objectives, strive to subvert the rule of law and effect change through violence and fear. These terrorists also share the misguided belief that killing, kidnapping, extorting, robbing, and wreaking havoc to terrorize people are legitimate forms of political action.<sup>30</sup>

*The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism 2006* makes no effort at a definition.

2.) The National Counterterrorism Center definition:

...terrorism occurs when groups or individuals acting on political motivation deliberately or recklessly attack civilians/non-combatants or their property and the attack does not fall into another special category of political violence, such as crime, rioting, or tribal violence. For further guidance on criteria, please see the Methodology page (on the NCTC.gov website)<sup>31</sup>

Russ Travers, the Deputy Director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) stated in his testimony before Congress, "There are over a hundred definitions of terrorism according to political scientists."<sup>32</sup> The NCTC utilized a new definition to capture the number of terrorist incidents in the 2006 Country Reports on Terrorism. As a result of the NCTC using this broad

definition, it is no small wonder that the number of terrorist incidents recorded by the NCTC in 2006 grew to over 10,000 from just a few hundred in 2005.<sup>33</sup>

From this definition, terrorism is apparently cleanly distinguishable from crime (or vice versa), or terrorism cannot fall into a special category such as crime. If terrorism is not a crime, then how can President Bush vow to “find those killers and bring them to justice”?<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, why would the President report “(t)hrough the U.N., we have changed the international culture with respect to terrorism, seizing and freezing terrorist’s finances, promoting the *criminalization of terrorism* and related acts, and setting forth *frameworks for legal and law enforcement efforts* to combat terrorism and to promote systems that deny safehaven to terrorists.” (Emphasis added)<sup>35</sup>

### 3.) The Federal Bureau of Investigation definition:

...the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a Government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.

The FBI further describes terrorism as either domestic or international, depending on the origin, base, and objectives of the terrorist organization.

- Domestic terrorism involves groups or individuals who are based and operate entirely within the United States and Puerto Rico without foreign direction and whose acts are directed at elements of the U.S. Government or population.
- International terrorism is the unlawful use of force or violence committed by a group or individual, who has some connection to a foreign power or whose activities transcend national boundaries, against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.

The FBI divides terrorist-related activity into three categories:

- a terrorist incident is a violent act or an act dangerous to human life, in violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any state, to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives;
- a suspected terrorist incident is a potential act of terrorism in which responsibility for the act cannot be attributed at the time to a known or suspected terrorist group or individual; and

- a terrorism prevention is a documented instance in which a violent act by a known or suspected terrorist group or individual with the means and a proven propensity for violence is successfully interdicted through investigative activity.<sup>36</sup>

4.) Military historian and author Caleb Carr defines terrorism as:

...the contemporary name given to, and the modern permutation of, warfare deliberately waged against civilians with the purpose of destroying their will to support either leaders or policies that the agents of such violence find objectionable.<sup>37</sup>

5.) Jessica Stern, a recognized terrorism expert and author of *Terror in the Name of God* defines terrorism as:

...an act or threat of violence against noncombatants with the objective of exacting revenge, intimidation, or otherwise influencing an audience.<sup>38</sup>

6.) Marc Sageman, in his book *Leaderless Jihad*, does not define terrorism in his book, but gives an excellent discussion on problems with defining terrorism:

Until recently, a large part of the literature on terrorism concentrated on definitions of terrorism, but without reaching consensus on what that definition is. Thus we have a common refrain that one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist, and the suspicion that, if the word had existed at the time, the British authorities would probably have branded our founding fathers terrorists. Of course, most people know what they mean by terrorism, but it is a little like obscenity: people believe they know it when they see it, but cannot define it. Even the United Nations does not have a definition for terrorism.<sup>39</sup>

## **APPENDIX B**

### ***Terrorist Organizations in the World<sup>40</sup>***

*Authors note:* What is interesting about the following information is that the overwhelming majority of the terrorists listed by the *Country Reports on Terrorism* are Islamist based groups. The importance of this should be a clear indication that the U.S., at a minimum, needs to take dramatic efforts to understand Islam at a much deeper level.

#### **Excerpt from *Country Reports on Terrorism***

Released by the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism

April 30, 2007

#### **Chapter 6 -- Terrorist Organizations**

Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) aliases cited are consistent with and drawn from the Specially Designated Nationals list maintained by the Department of Treasury. The full list can be found at the following website: <http://www.treasury.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/sdn/sdnlist.txt>

Abu Nidal Organization (ANO)  
Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)  
Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade  
Ansar al-Sunna (AS)  
Armed Islamic Group (GIA)  
Asbat al-Ansar  
Aum Shinrikyo (Aum)  
Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA)  
Communist Party of Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA)  
Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA)  
Gama'a al-Islamiyya (IG)  
HAMAS  
Harakat ul-Mujahedin (HUM)  
Hizballah  
Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)  
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)  
Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM)  
Jemaah Islamiya Organization (JI)  
Al-Jihad (AJ)  
Kahane Chai (Kach)  
Kongra-Gel (KGK/PKK)  
Lashkar e-Tayyiba (LT)  
Lashkar i Jhangvi (LJ)  
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)  
Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)  
Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM)  
Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MEK)  
National Liberation Army (ELN)  
Palestine Liberation Front (PLF)

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)  
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)  
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC)  
Al-Qaida (AQ)  
Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI)  
Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) [Formerly Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC)]  
Real IRA (RIRA)  
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)  
Revolutionary Nuclei (RN)  
Revolutionary Organization 17 November  
Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C)  
Shining Path (SL)  
United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC)

## APPENDIX C

### *STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION*

An excellent example of Western leaders improperly choosing words in strategic communication, the label “jihadist” for Islamist terrorists has become more and more common. It reflects a lack of understanding of the Islamic religion. By calling a terrorist a “jihadist” rather than a terrorist, it is implied that there is agreement with the terrorists actions as a valid jihad (struggle) within the context of Islam. The terrorist obviously feels his terrorism is justified if he labels it as jihad. Thus, the tactic of terrorism is validated (in the terrorists mind, at least) as a legitimate religious undertaking, vice the perversion of Islam that it is. The misuse of the term “jihad” and “jihadist” by non Muslim Westerners must be changed by educated leadership in the realm of public diplomacy and strategic communication. The declassified portion of the National Intelligence Estimate dated April 2006, while an excellent assessment in ideas for combating terrorism, uses “jihad” or “jihadist” at least 27 times. Only one usage should be considered correct: “...all source reporting indicates that activists identifying themselves as jihadists, although a small percentage of Muslims, are increasing in both number and geographic dispersion.”<sup>41</sup> This usage outlines that the terrorists may consider themselves jihadists, but the report fails to recognize that not all Muslims consider the terrorist as “jihadists” on a legitimate jihad. If one insists on labeling terrorists as something other than simply “terrorists”, then perhaps *fatim* (someone who brings division to Islam) may be a suitable label for terrorist leadership like Osama bin Laden.

Quranic scholars point out that the Quran does not allow killing of innocent people (infidels or not), particularly women and children. Nor does the Quran allow for suicide. Yet by selectively teaching out of the Quran, extremists may attempt to justify their ideology to the exploitable masses. The idea of proof texting the Quran is common among Islamist extremists.

Through proof texting, the actual text of the Quran is selectively arranged and edited to conform to the terrorist's ideas and desired meanings. Particularly if the audience to this proof texting is illiterate, this is a very effective way of waging the war of ideas by convincing the audience that the Quran says it must be so. If the U.S. desires to show no ill will towards Muslims in the war against terrorists, finding and assisting reputable mainstream Muslim scholars and leaders to expose the hypocrisy in the ideas of al-Qaeda is essential. The National Intelligence Estimate of April 2006 captures this idea: "Exposing the religious and political straitjacket that is implied by the jihadists' propaganda would help to divide them from the audiences they seek to persuade."<sup>42</sup> However, the NIE provides this information, but fails to develop how this knowledge could be leveraged. Gaining the participation of former extremists, respected Muslim clerics, and Muslim scholars to expose the straitjacket would give credibility to the assertion. Muslim leaders in the Middle East can better reach the minds of the average Muslim to convince them of the reality Osama bin Laden is trying to achieve. A confusing U.S. policy communication of peaceful democracy while most average Muslims can readily see the U.S. military in the Middle East simply exacerbates the problem. Giving Muslim scholars and leaders a platform to speak against totalitarian Islam will pay rich dividends in the long run for the war of ideas; we must seize any such opportunity and capitalize on it.

Tenuous links between state sponsors of terrorism and terrorist acts, as in Iraq, might not be clear enough to warrant military regime change to suit a U.S. national policy of establishing democracy. This will not lead to the desired endstate of peacefully cooperative nations, and certainly leads to squandered good will in the world towards America. Peaceful promotion of democracy may be a valid step towards eliminating terrorist sponsors and safe havens, but the merit of peacefully promoting democracy is lost when it is backed by utilizing military force.

The current misalignment of these two different ideas leads to a morass of poorly communicated goals, and the means to achieve them.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 33.

<sup>2</sup> George Friedman, *America's Secret War: Inside the Hidden Worldwide Struggle between America and its Enemies*, (New York: Broadway Books, 2004), 267.

<sup>3</sup> The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America, March 2006*, ii.  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/>

<sup>4</sup> Colonel Daniel Smith, USA (Ret), "Preemption vs. Prevention: A Short Primer on the Bush War Doctrine"  
[http://www.fcni.org/issues/int/sup/iraq\\_bush-war-doctrine.htm](http://www.fcni.org/issues/int/sup/iraq_bush-war-doctrine.htm) (Accessed 23 January 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Friedman, *America's Secret War*. An excellent discussion on the U.S. rationale behind the war in Iraq is captured in Chapter 11. On page 268, Friedman discusses the irrationality of invading Iraq for WMD. In essence, he asserts that if a state really believes they are facing an enemy that possesses WMD and will likely use it, it would not make sense to give a very public countdown to an attack date. You would strike without warning to preclude or minimize the use of WMD. Thus, credibility is given to the argument that the invasion was preventive rather than preemptive.

<sup>6</sup> The White House, *National Security Strategy, 2006*, i.

<sup>7</sup> Friedman, *America's Secret War*, 233-270.

<sup>8</sup> (Author's note: the use of the term "jihadist" in this quote does not equate to approval of the quoted source's usage of the label. See Appendix C) National Intelligence Council, *Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate "Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States"* dated April 2006.  
[http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/Declassified\\_NIE\\_Key\\_Judgments.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*. (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2005) 165.

<sup>10</sup> The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, February 2003*, 24,  
[http://www.cfr.org/publication/9071/national\\_strategy\\_for\\_combating\\_terrorism\\_2003.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/9071/national_strategy_for_combating_terrorism_2003.html).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>12</sup> Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007) 270. Smith goes on to state (p. 271) that "In neither case has the employment of force achieved the strategic objective of a democratic Iraq, nor could it have done since that requires the willing cooperation of the majority of people." The two cases he refers to are the initial military objective of removing Saddam Hussein and defeating his forces and then fighting the insurgency that came about after Saddam's defeat.

<sup>13</sup> Manuel Perez Rivas, "Bush Vows to Rid the World of Evil-doers" CNN.com, September 16, 2001.  
<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/16/gen.bush.terrorism/> (accessed 23 January 2008).

<sup>14</sup> President George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People", September 20, 2001. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/new/release/2001/09/print/20010920-8.html> (accessed 30 October 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Bruce Lawrence, ed., trans. James Howarth, *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, (New York: Verso, 2005), 121-2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 25. This recurring theme from Osama bin Laden is found in his message "A Declaration of Jihad against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Sanctuaries", written in October, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 10, 34-35, 216-217; Malise Ruthven, *A Fury for God: The Islamist Attack on America* (London: Granta Publications, 2002) 127-133.

<sup>18</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 217. "In fact, despite their bravado, groups associated with terrorism have largely shied from politics. They have eschewed elections. When given the opportunity to run for office, they have usually rejected it, as Hamas did in Palestine in 1996 and radical Sikhs did in Punjab in 1992. If they did attempt to win at the polls, as Aum Shinrikyo did in 1990, they failed miserably."

<sup>19</sup> F. Gregory Gause, III, "Can Democracy Stop Terrorism?" *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2005)  
<http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20050901faessay84506/f-gregory-gause-iii/can-democracy-stop-terrorism.html>  
(Accessed October 10, 2007), 4.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> John Ward Anderson, "Looking Beyond Feudal Politics in Pakistan: Ahead of Feb. 18 Vote, Many Denounce Country's Feeble Democratic Tradition", *The Washington Post*, Tuesday, January 22, 2008. p A15.

<sup>22</sup> National Intelligence Council, *Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate "Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States"* dated April 2006, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Bruce Lawrence, *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, 16.

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- <sup>24</sup> James S. Robbins, "Al-Qaeda Versus Democracy." <http://www.securityaffairs.org/issues/2005/09/robbins.php> (accessed 10 January 2008) 7.
- <sup>25</sup> National Intelligence Council, *Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate "Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States"* dated April 2006.
- <sup>26</sup> Bruce Lawrence, ed. *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, 41-42, 121-2.
- <sup>27</sup> James S. Robbins "Al Qaeda Versus Democracy." Footnoted Statement by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, posted to <http://www.alezah.com/vb/>, January 22, 2005.
- <sup>28</sup> Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 149.
- <sup>29</sup> Caleb Carr, *The Lessons of Terror: A History of Warfare against Civilians* (New York: Random House, 2003), 15-22.
- <sup>30</sup> The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 1.
- <sup>31</sup> <http://wits.nctc.gov/> (accessed 12/12/2007).
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> The White House, *President Bush Vows to Bring Terrorists to Justice* <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030516-15.html>
- <sup>35</sup> The White House. *9/11 Five Years Later: Successes and Challenges* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2006) 6.
- <sup>36</sup> Found at <http://denver.fbi.gov/interr.htm> accessed 12/12/2007
- <sup>37</sup> Caleb Carr, *The Lessons of Terrorism*, 6.
- <sup>38</sup> Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), xx.
- <sup>39</sup> Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 15.
- <sup>40</sup> Found at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/cr/2006/82738.htm> (accessed 25 January 2008)
- <sup>41</sup> National Intelligence Council, *Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate "Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States"* dated April 2006.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid, 2.

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