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STRATEGIC ADAPTATION IN THE "LONG WAR"

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The United States is currently engaged in what strategic security documents call the "long war" against terrorism. Also called the Global War on Terrorism, this struggle takes place in an international security environment that has evolved greatly since the end of the Cold War and that now includes many new actors. This new global security environment is more complex than in previous decades as a host of non-state actors, including transnational terrorists and criminal groups, exert their influence in ways that were not possible years earlier. The greatest threat to the United States is no longer a single state with large nuclear weapon stockpiles but, instead, terrorist groups that adhere to a militant branch of Islam that professes hatred for apostate Muslim governments, Israel, and the United States. This branch of Islam, militant Salafism, is gaining in popularity among Islamic populations around the world in both Muslim and Western nations. The United States must strategically adapt to the new security environment and the rise of militant Salafism in order to counter effectively the growing threats. These adaptations include framing the "long war" as a global counterinsurgency and not as a war on terrorism, tempering the doctrine of prevention and the strident promotion of democracy, and recognizing the preeminence of ideology in this struggle.

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UNITED STATES ARMY WAR COLLEGE CIVILIAN RESEARCH PROJECT

STRATEGIC ADAPTATION IN THE "LONG WAR"

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ABSTRACT

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The United States is currently engaged in what strategic security documents call the "long war" against terrorism. Also called the Global War on Terrorism, this struggle takes place in an international security environment that has evolved greatly since the end of the Cold War and that now includes many new actors. This new global security environment is more complex than in previous decades as a host of non-state actors, including transnational terrorists and criminal groups, exert their influence in ways that were not possible years earlier. The greatest threat to the United States is no longer a single state with large nuclear weapon stockpiles but, instead, terrorist groups that adhere to a militant branch of Islam that professes hatred for apostate Muslim governments, Israel, and the United States. This branch of Islam, militant Salafism, is gaining in popularity among Islamic populations around the world in both Muslim and Western nations. The United States must strategically adapt to the new security environment and the rise of militant Salafism in order to counter effectively the growing threats. These adaptations include framing the "long war" as a global counterinsurgency and not as a war on terrorism, tempering the doctrine of prevention and the strident promotion of democracy, and recognizing the preeminence of ideology in this struggle.

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STRATEGIC ADAPTATION IN THE "LONG WAR"

Introduction

This paper examines how one of the most dangerous threats to the United States in the current global security environment, hostile Islamic radicalism, can be best characterized and understood as a global insurgency, requiring the U. S. to pursue strategic adaptation to achieve its security goals. This strategic adaptation must include framing the Global War on Terrorism in a different perspective, tempering the doctrine of prevention and the policy of promotion of democracy as a means to stability and recognizing the preeminence of ideology in the calculus of understanding the global security environment. Strategic adaptation along these lines places the United States in a better position to achieve its ultimate security goals in the "long war" against the type of Islamic radicalism that breeds terrorism amid the dynamic security conditions that characterize the beginning of the 21st century.

The global security environment has been evolving rapidly since the end of the Cold War. The days of relative stability when nations viewed most international security considerations in the context of the superpower struggle have given way to instability and conditions that defy easy definition. New actors on the global stage are wielding influence that would previously have been insignificant. After nearly two decades, these evolving security conditions and their implications are now much clearer, offering nations and international organizations an opportunity to shape guiding strategies for the coming years.

The United States has entered into this new global security environment with a strategy focused on fighting a war on terror and promoting freedom. An analysis of the evolving threats and an assessment of the best means to counter them point to the need for a broader strategic adaptation that balances and leverages political, economic, ideological, and military elements in

a more appropriate combination to achieve the ultimate goal of the National Security Strategy: well-governed states that can meet the needs of its citizens and conduct themselves responsibly.[1] Approaching this new security environment in the context of a war on terror constrains our strategy. Alternatively, approaching it in the context of a global counterinsurgency broadens our strategy, focuses it on the most pressing threat, adapts it to the complexities of the security environment, and illuminates the best measures to counter threats. The sections that follow examine the current global security environment, enumerate the most pressing threats to U. S. security, assess several of the current major strategic security documents, and provide recommendations for strategic adaptation.

The Global Security Environment

After nearly a decade and a half since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the introduction of new actors and influences in international security, the major characteristics of the evolved environment are now much clearer. These characteristics are fundamental to understanding not just what the current conditions are, but how best to address them. The characteristics generally fall into four categories: 1) non-state actors, 2) new patterns of conflict, 3) the preeminence of globalized information, and 4) the countermeasures and "tools" that can best maintain the international security equilibrium. Each of these categories is described below.

The first characteristic is a set of non-state actors that has emerged whose actions have significant national, regional, and global impacts that would not have been possible only a few years earlier. According to Shultz and Dew, these non-state actors are insurgents, terrorists, militias, and criminal organizations.[2] The lessons of operations in Somalia, Haiti, the Balkans,

[1] The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, March 16, 2006, 1.

Afghanistan, and Iraq are replete with the importance of understanding the capabilities, intentions, and interests of these groups. The consequences of misunderstanding have been serious, but the payoff for understanding has been great. In Somalia, a change in the United Nations' and United States' policies concerning nation-building and disarming militias led to a disastrous conclusion. Military forces, led by the United States, simply did not understand the cultural context, interests, and motivations of the warlords and their militias. In contrast, a recognition of the interests of non-state actors in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s, coupled with the appropriate international pressures, eventually led to an end to the violence among various ethnic groups.

The Department of Defense's blueprint for transformation contains a key phrase that puts a finger right on the problem of today's variety of threats. In the last paragraph of the conclusion of "Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach," we find the words, "For it is the United States' continued success in deterring global war and reducing the likelihood of state-on-state war that will allow us to begin tackling the far thornier issues of transnational threats and sub-national conflicts—the battlegrounds on which the global war on terrorism will ultimately be won."[3]

The United States' understanding of these non-state actors and how they impact national, regional, and global affairs has improved greatly but still remains a constant challenge. The complex mix of sectarian, insurgent, terrorist, and criminal entities in Iraq highlights the intricate nature of discerning the players and developing a strategy to defeat them. As the war in Iraq

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[2] Shultz, Richard and Andrea Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 10.

[3] U. S. Department of Defense, *Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach,* Fall 2003, 35 (accessed October 23, 2006); available from http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library_files/ document_297_MT_ Strategy Doc1.pdf.

continues, the nature of non-state armed groups is illuminated, and the body of knowledge and awareness of their capabilities and intentions grows. Certain lessons from Iraq that are applicable to a broader understanding of global security issues are discussed later in this paper.

The second characteristic of the new security environment is the patterns of conflict that have emerged. Direct confrontations between armies in the field have been replaced by forms of conflict that are lethal and indiscriminate, focusing on civilian populations rather than military targets.[4] Fueled by a variety of ethnic, tribal, sectarian, and religious causes and often financed by criminal groups, these conflicts are characterized by violence and extreme hardships imposed by antagonists upon civilian populations.[5] The new patterns of conflict have starkly demonstrated the effectiveness of asymmetry between technologically superior forces and smaller, adaptive threats. Paradoxically, the more effective "smart" weapons have become, the more irrelevant they have become in the irregular forms of conflict seen today.

The third characteristic, the preeminence of globalized information, is a hallmark of the new security environment and a major reason for the apparent success of many non-state actors. The rapid evolution of globalized information has been stunning. The reach and impact of a non-state actor is no longer limited by the coverage of print and broadcast media journalists. In the past, the "CNN factor" could only apply if there was a journalist or other witness to an event feeding information to a media outlet. Today, the time it takes for a non-state actor to post videos or entries to a website following an event can be measured in minutes. Journalists are no longer a required link to wide audiences. Non-state actors engage in a form of "armed theater," where the audience is global and the messages are disseminated to an incalculable number of

[4] Brian Michael Jenkins, *Unconquerable Nation* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation), 14.

[5] Ibid.

recipients.[6] The idea that terrorism has become a "web-directed" phenomenon has been advanced by some.[7]

The fourth characteristic concerns the countermeasures that address threats to the international security equilibrium. The political, economic, informational, and social tools available to policymakers, governments, and international organizations are basically the same as in years past, but the balance among them and the degree to which each is emphasized are different. Discerning the appropriate mix of tools to address the various issues affecting global security is a complex task requiring detailed knowledge and understanding of the setting and conditions surrounding a particular issue. Most importantly, moving too quickly to a military option might be the least successful course to follow, as this might fuel tensions or play into the hands of an astute state or non-state actor seeking to exploit perceptions that military forces are actually attempting to occupy a country or control natural resources. The United States has seen these perceptions played out over the last several years in Iraq and is currently striving to design a strategy that balances the available tools.

The Most Dangerous Threats

In the context of the changes in the current global security environment described above, the most pressing question is just who and what are the most dangerous threats to the United States. In the new security environment, the answer falls into the two major categories of threats from other nations and transnational threats.

[6] Steven Metz, *Learning from Iraq – Counterinsurgency in American Strategy* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U. S. Army War College, 2007), 77.

[7] Raphael Perl, *Trends in Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2006), 5.

Threats from other nations against the U. S. and other nations can be assessed and understood through the lens of many of the traditional analytical security frameworks. In this traditional analysis, several nations in the current security environment can be seen as potential threats with their interests tied to a variety of motivations, including security relative to other nations in a region, international prestige, and a desire to assert economic advantages. Many point to China as an emerging threat and a "peer competitor," but this assessment is widely debated given the cost in lives of a major war to both nations, the impact on their economies, and greater regional and global instability that would result. Iran poses a more probable threat because of the increased regional instability that would result if it successfully develops nuclear weapons. North Korea, the newest member of the threshold nuclear nations, is a regional threat that is somewhat difficult to predict, requiring close monitoring by the international community. The war in Iraq, the Israeli conflict with the Palestinians, and Hezbollah continue to be possible precipitants of wider regional conflict that could result in a significant increase in threats to the United States. All of these troublesome areas will require significant attention by governments, and a range of diplomatic and deterrent options will likely continue to keep these potential flashpoints under control in the near term.

The second category, transnational threats, poses a much more complicated and pressing security dilemma in the near term. Unlike threats posed by individual nations pursuing their interests, analysis of the current transnational threats is more complex. An assessment of transnational threats yields an intricate combination of ideological, political, security, and economic factors that vary among the threat groups, from region to region, from state to state, and even among like-minded groups within a state. Acquiring intelligence and information concerning these groups is complicated by the cellular structure and fragmentation of many

groups. Exacerbating the analytical challenge of assessing these groups is their ability to adapt, rendering many emerging assessments ineffective in terms of devising effective strategies.

One method for analyzing transnational threats is to view them in the framework of active and supporting threats. The first category includes those transnational threats that are actively seeking to attack the U. S. and other nations either through a spectacular event on the magnitude of the 9/11 World Trade Center attack or through actions against embassies, military personnel, U. S. government employees or contractors abroad, and other targets. The second category are those nations, sub-national groups, criminal entities, and others that do not actively seek to conduct attacks but provide a range of support in the form of sanctuary, financing, armaments, equipment, and recruiting. Each of these threats is described below.

The primary active threat is posed by those who belong to hostile Islamic extremist organizations, most notably Al Qaeda and those groups that associate themselves closely with the Al Qaeda ideology. According to Scheuer, Al Qaeda is "a worldwide, religiously inspired, and professionally guided Islamist insurgency against 'Christian Crusaders and Jews,' which is being waged by groups bin Laden has controlled, directed, and inspired."[8] Al Qaeda and its associated movements are ideologically rooted in their hatred for the United States, and their pronouncements have found sympathetic ears in the Muslim world.[9] The number of micro-actors adhering to Al Qaeda's militant posture is increasing, largely due to the widespread use of the internet.[10] Although the ability of senior Al Qaeda leaders to operationally direct activities outside their purported sanctuary in western border areas of Pakistan is in question, there is

[8] Michael Scheuer, *Through Our Enemies Eyes: Osama Bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America* (Washington, D. C.: Potomac Books, 2006), xxiii.

[9] Ibid, 20.

[10] Perl, 5.

evidence that Al Qaeda remains operationally viable and, at a minimum, maintains an ability to influence associated movements.[11]

The extent to which Al Qaeda has influenced associated movements is enumerated in a 2006 RAND study. The study rated eighteen jihadist "clusters," including Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia, Al-Itihaad al-Islami in Somalia, Laskar-e-Taiba in Kashmir, and the Saudi Jihadists, in terms of their interaction and connection with Al Qaeda. Of the eighteen groups, the report assessed fifteen as "probable" and nine as "confirmed" that they coordinated or conducted joint operations with Al Qaeda or Al Qaeda operatives, received Al Qaeda funding, and internalized the Al Qaeda world view of global jihad.[12] In short, Al Qaeda and its like-minded ideological adherents continue to pose a long-term threat to the U. S. homeland and to U. S. facilities and personnel abroad.

The extent to which Al Qaeda and associated movements have access to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or technology and equipment related to WMD poses the gravest threat. It is this link between extremists who have an avowed desire to attack the United States and a means to inflict a massive number of casualties that has become a central aspect of national security strategies. There are those who believe that "acquisition equals employment," meaning that as soon as Al Qaeda, or an associated movement inclined to support Al Qaeda in a WMD effort, has a weapon in its possession, they will use it. Others believe that such a weapon would cause Al Qaeda to make a strategic assessment that the backlash following use of a WMD would be disadvantageous to its ideological recruiting efforts.[13] In either case, the open-source

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[11] Perl, 11.

[12] Angel Rabasa, Peter Chalk, Kim Cragin, Sara A. Daly, Heather S. Gregg, Theodore W. Karasik, Kevin A. O'Brien, William Rosenau, *Beyond Al Qaeda: The Global Jihadist Movement* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), XXII.

information provides evidence that Al Qaeda has already acquired WMD (see table below), although limitations in the technology and knowledge of weaponized delivery means could render some WMD much less effective. In terms of psychological impact, however, the result would likely be severe despite any technical limitations of a WMD event.[14] The implications of WMD on security strategy is clear: the threat posed by extremists has changed the dynamics of the security environment and will remain a central focus of strategy. The old frameworks for assessing WMD use based upon rational cost-benefit analysis, deterrence, and threat of retaliation are not nearly as valid as during or immediately following the Cold War.

	Nuclear	**Biological**	**Chemical**
Reports and Allegations	Attempted or successful purchase of suitcase bomb (1998, 2001, 2002)	Successful purchase of anthrax, plague, other (1999, 2000, 2001, 2002)	Attempted or successful successful purchase of chemical agents (1997, 1998, 1999, 2002)
	Attempted purchase of Nuclear materials (1998, 2000, 2001)	Afghanistan, Iraq training, experiments by Ansar al-Islam (2002, 2002)	Sudan or Afghanistan production (1997, 1998, 1999, 2002)
Hard Evidence	Contact with Pakistani nuclear scientists (2001)	Seized training manuals, files, labs in Afghanistan (2001, 2002)	Seized training manuals files, labs in Afghanistan (2001, 2002)
	Arrests, interrogations, and detainee testimony (1998, 2000 - 2004)	Arrests, interrogations, and detainee testimony (2002, 2003, 2004)	Arrests, interrogations, and detainee testimony (2002)

Al Qaeda's WMD Capabilities.[15]

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[13] Lewis A. Dunn, *Can Al Qaeda be Deterred from Using Nuclear Weapons* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction, Occasional Paper, 2005) 2.

[14] Ibid., 4.

[15] Dunn, 4.

The second category of threats are those nations, sub-national groups, criminal entities, and others that provide a range of support to the transnational groups that are actively pursuing attacking U. S. interests. These groups are another unique feature of the new security environment, one that is receiving increased recognition by many nations for the role they play in destabilizing the security equilibrium.

A very significant source of support is the physical safe haven provided by some nations for individuals and groups. Safe havens are relatively secure areas used by terrorists to indoctrinate, recruit, train, prepare for and support operations. According to the State Department's most recent Country Reports on Terrorism, there are fifteen areas identified as safe havens, including the Trans-Saharan area of Mali and Mauritania, Somalia, the Southern Philippines, Indonesia, the Caucasus, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, the Colombia border region, and Venezuela.[16] According to the report, not all these areas imply state sponsorship of terrorist activities, and in some cases nations are actively seeking to eradicate safe havens. The number of areas and geographic dispersion represents a valuable resource for transnational groups seeking to protect its physical activities.

An emerging source of safe haven is found in the virtual realm of the internet. There are several thousand radical or extremist websites worldwide, many used for the same activities that a physical safe haven can provide.[17] Websites provide a highly effective means for reaching millions of people for the purpose of recruiting, fundraising, disseminating ideological beliefs, spreading technical weapons knowledge, and informing audiences of tactics and procedures for conducting a variety of attacks. Virtual safe haven can also be used to plan and coordinate

[16] U. S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2005*, Chapter 3 (accessed February 6, 2007); available from http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2005/64333.htm.

[17] Ibid.

operations transnationally through e-mail, chat rooms, and other messaging means.[18] Recently, terrorists have increased their capability to secure their internet activities. The pro-terrorist Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) announced in January, 2007, the release of software that contains an encryption program that cannot be traced to individual computers. The Arabic language software is apparently easy to use and is proliferating on jihadi websites.[19] Virtual safe haven will continue to expand as a valuable resource for extremist groups.

Another resource for extremist activities is the support provided by those involved in international crime. The nexus between terrorists and organized crime is broad and includes supplying weapons, ammunition, transportation of equipment, financing, and likely also includes supplying nuclear materials. The links between Osama bin Laden and the tremendous financial resources provided by the huge opium production and trafficking operations in Afghanistan are widely suspected.[20] Al Qaeda's use of the Ibrahim brothers' narcotrafficking network based out of India for the purpose of moving fighters and explosives is also believed to exist. This extensive network reaches Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Thailand, and countries in eastern and southern Africa.[21] Criminal activity also reportedly financed, at least in part, the 2004 Madrid bombings and the 2005 London bombings.[22] A further link between terrorists and criminal networks concerns nuclear materials. In a case study of a closed city in Russia where weapons of mass destruction are researched and produced, researchers determined

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[18] Shultz, *Global Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: United States Plans and Strategy for the "Long War,"* unpublished paper, 30.

[19] Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Transnational Threats Update* 4, no. 6 (2007): 2.

[20] Scheuer, 42-43.

[21] Ibid., 44.

[22] Perl, 6.

that there are increasing threats that terrorist groups could use criminal networks to steal nuclear material and that ethnic groups surrounding the closed facilities are Muslims targeted by extremist recruiters.[23] The examples listed here highlight a growing link between terrorism and criminal activity that will likely become more effective and widespread over time.

The First Adaptation: From Global War on Terror to Global Counterinsurgency

The first strategic adaptation is placing the Global War on Terrorism in the new framework of a global counterinsurgency. Viewing the fundamental changes in the global security environment and the transnational threats described above through a global counterinsurgency lens clarifies complex conditions and leads to an effective strategy. Viewed as a global war on terrorism, however, the view becomes narrower and focused mainly on terrorists, missing the full range of non-state actors that are now influencing the United States and other nations with their actions. This constrained view focuses on the *tactic* of terrorism versus the broader insurgent *strategy* of which terrorism is a part. A brief review of key U. S. strategic documents as they pertain to terrorism establishes a basis from which adaptations can follow.

Current U. S. Strategy

The United States published its most recent National Security Strategy (NSS) in March, 2006. The cover letter begins with the words, "America is at war," and identifies terrorism as the grave challenge facing the United States. The cover letter lists two priorities that have guided American foreign policy: fighting and winning the war on terror and promoting freedom as an

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[23] Robert Orttung and Louise Shelley, *Linkages Between Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in Nuclear Smuggling: A Case Study of Chelyabinsk Oblast* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, PONARS Policy Memo No. 392, 2005) (accessed January 20, 2007); available from http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/pm_0392.pdf.

alternative to tyranny and despair.[24] On the first page following the cover letter, the strategy states that "the United States is in the early years of a long struggle, similar to what our country faced in the early years of the Cold War," and that a "new totalitarian ideology now threatens."[25] The strategy conveys a comprehensive approach to counter security threats, including: the full range of national "tools" to achieve the goals; the necessity of improving the capacity of agencies and departments to plan, prepare, integrate and execute; international cooperation and meaningful reforms in the United Nations; and transformation of the military to better balance its capabilities.

Published in February, 2006, the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) is a key periodic document that outlines what the Department of Defense is currently doing and what it needs to do to fulfill its responsibilities to the American people. It is an important document that drives the doctrine, equipping, and modernization of the U. S. armed forces. The QDR contains several references to the contemporary global security environment and captures many of the salient features: multiple, complex challenges, tailored deterrence for rogue powers; integrated approaches to counter threats; asymmetric warfare; a focus on information; and irregular armed groups. The QDR identifies the primary threat to the U. S. as dispersed non-state networks of violent extremists and describes the conflict as a "long war" that will last for years.[26] It clearly states that this is not a conventional war, characterizes it as irregular in its nature, and calls for the United States military to adopt unconventional and indirect approaches.

In September of 2006, the United States published the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism. This document, which builds upon the National Security Strategy and an earlier

[24] *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 1 (cover memo).

[25] Ibid.

version of the combating terrorism strategy, contains the realization that the terrorist threat has evolved and that refinements to the strategy must therefore follow. The two-pronged vision for the War on Terror includes "defeating violent extremism as a threat to our way of life as a free and open society and the creation of a global environment inhospitable to violent extremists and all who support them."[27] The strategy is based upon four short term priorities of action: 1) prevent attacks by terrorist networks; 2) deny weapons of mass destruction to rogue states and terrorist allies who seek to use them; 3) deny terrorists the support and sanctuary of rogue states; and, 4) deny terrorists control of any nation they would use as a base and launching pad for terror. The document lists denying terrorist the use of cyber safe havens in addition to physical ones.

Analysis and Adaptation

The national strategic documents described above are comprehensive and convey an understanding of the complex global security environment. To better achieve the goals set forth by these documents, however, the "war on terror" should be approached as a global counterinsurgency. Although the QDR does emphasize irregular warfare and includes among its components long-duration unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and military support for stabilization and reconstruction, this emphasis on irregular warfare versus counterinsurgency as a framework for viewing the long war has a limiting effect. As Metz states, "By making insurgency part of irregular warfare rather then the other way around, the Department of Defense kept its focus on armed violence, thus lessening the attention given to

[26] U. S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Report*, 2006, 9.

[27] The White House, *The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 7.

insurgency's more important political and psychological components."[28] Thus, the QDR contains all the right words to convey the global security environment and the measures to maintain stability, but the emphasis leans toward military action. A fundamental shift away from the primacy of military action and toward a global counterinsurgency strategy must begin with an understanding of exactly what an insurgency is, whether or not a global insurgency exists, and the best measures to counter such an insurgency.

A clear focus on the full range of contemporary actors on the international security stage is found in the following emerging definition of insurgency: "Insurgency is best described as a struggle to control a contested political space, between a state (or group of states or occupying powers), and one or more popularly based, non-state challengers."[29] This definition is a solid departure point for development of comprehensive strategies to defeat terrorism and other nascent threats that can lead to failed states, regional conflict and instability, and a host of other security issues.

A narrow focus on terrorism versus a broader focus on insurgency as in the definition above can lead to a narrower list of alternatives for countering the threat. The body of literature and the history of insurgency are replete with references to the broad political, economic, social, and informational aspects of counterinsurgency. In testimony before Congress in July, 2006, Dr. Bruce Hoffman of the RAND Corporation addressed the issue of such a comprehensive strategy:

> "At the foundation of such a dynamic and adaptive strategy must be the ineluctable axiom that effectively and successfully countering terrorism as well as insurgency is not exclusively a military endeavor but also involves fundamental parallel political, social, economic, and ideological activities…. Accordingly, rather than viewing the fundamental organizing principle of American national defense strategy in this unconventional realm as a Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), it may be more useful to re-conceptualize it in terms of a global counterinsurgency (GCOIN). Such an approach would a priori knit

[28] Metz, 63.

[29] David J. Kilcullen, "Counter-Insurgency Redux," *Survival* 48, no. 4 (Winter 2006-2007): 112.

> together the equally critical political, economic, diplomatic, and developmental sides inherent to the successful prosecution of counterinsurgency to the existing dominant military side of the equation."[30]

There are others who see this current struggle less as a global war on terrorism and more as a global counterinsurgency requiring comprehensive measures to counter it. General (Ret.) Wayne Downing sees it as a counterinsurgency campaign that requires the United States not just to eliminate insurgents, but to achieve much broader, comprehensive goals. These goals include not only driving a wedge between extremists and their supporters, but also connecting populations to their legitimate governments.[31] In terms of al-Qaeda and associated groups, Dr. David Kilcullen, the Chief Strategist in the State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, sees them as a loose confederation of extremist networks targeting the United States, its allies and interests, and the broader international system. Its aim is to overthrow the existing international system, replacing it with a radical pan-Islamic caliphate.[32] He describes the environment in terms of a "conflict ecosystem" with multiple independent and interlinked actors seeking to maximize their own advantages. Countering these actors involves security, economic, and political "pillars" resting upon a foundation of information that transcends all measures.[33]

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[30] Testimony by Bruce Hoffman before the U. S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, contained in *Islam and the West: Searching for Common Ground* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), 15.

[31] Wayne A. Downing, "The Global War on Terrorism: Re-focusing the National Strategy," in *Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding the New Security Environment*, Russell D. Howard and Reid L. Sawyer, eds. (New York: McGraw Hill/Dushkin, 2006), 439.

[32] Kilcullen, as quoted by Ambassador Henry Crumpton during remarks delivered at the U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Conference, Washington D.C., September 28, 2006 (accessed November 15, 2006); available from http://www.usgcoin.org/docs1/3PillarsOfCounterinsurgency.pdf.

[33] Kilcullen, "The Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency," remarks delivered at the U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Conference, Washington D.C., September 28, 2006 (accessed November 15, 2006); available from http://www.usgcoin.org/docs1/3PillarsOfCounterinsurgency.pdf.

In terms of a detailed analysis of the framework for a global insurgency, Shultz enumerates five requirements or conditions that must apply to an ideological movement that attracts its members to the insurgent beliefs. This framework, shown below, refers to the Salafi jihad movement, a militant brand of Islamic ideology that will be discussed later in this paper.

> 1. Conceptualize an ideology that performs the same functions as those adopted by high risk social movements. This entails developing a series of frames to: 1) describe the social and political problems requiring immediate and drastic action; 2) propose a new idealized system to replace the depraved one that resonated with the population; and 3) identify steps to bring this to fruition.
>
> 2. An innovative leadership that can conceptualize that ideology and establish an embryonic organization capable of operationalizing it to begin to attract and recruit a critical mass of supporters.
>
> 3. Establish a complex infrastructure capable of fighting a protracted global insurgency.
>
> 4. As the incipient stage proceeds, a global insurgency enters a period of protracted or "long war." In doing so, it has to set out for itself 1) where it intends to fight, and 2) how it intends to do so.
>
> 5. To execute a global insurgency, the Salafi Jihadists would have to employ an array of political, psychological, guerrilla warfare, and other paramilitary methods within its areas of operation that target both "near" and "far" enemies.[34]

These five requirements and conditions apply to the Salafi Jihadists, demonstrating that their movement is global and not limited to a localized national or regional type of insurgency.

Lessons from Iraq

A strong indicator of the need to approach the global security environment as a counterinsurgency comes from the lessons in Iraq. Although caution must be exercised when projecting the lessons of that war on a global scale, certain aspects serve to inform the question of whether to approach global security issues in the framework of a counterinsurgency or counterterrorism.

[34] Shultz, *Global Insurgency Strategy and the Salafi Jihad Movement*, unpublished paper, 43.

One important lesson is the necessity to disaggregate the enemy. Initially, units in Iraq tended to aggregate the enemy, grouping all threats into the categories of regime loyalists and former Iraqi security forces.[35] Over time, commanders realized that there was an insurgency taking place and that the threat groups must be individually identified in order to devise appropriate countermeasures. Currently, U. S. forces are tracking multiple threat groups, including armed militias, criminals, security forces loyal to sectarian leaders, Al Qaeda, groups associated with Al Qaeda, foreign jihadists, and former regime loyalists. This disaggregation yields tailored responses to counter each specific threat. These tailored responses now include the full range of tools, with the military option reserved for specific purposes.

Projecting this concept of disaggregation on a global scale is essential as well. As Kilcullen points out, a war on terror suggests an aggregated enemy and misses the nuances and appropriate tailored responses for differentiated groups. In an example he offers, addressing the grievances of tribes along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border should not be influenced by the ambitions of global jihad.[36] The issues connected with these tribes are best understood by a refined analysis of local conditions in the context of Afghanistan-Pakistan relations and not overshadowed by the larger global jihad issues. Similarly, the aggregation of the ideological threat in the War on Terrorism as a radical Islamic militant issue obscures the focus on the differences among threat groups and the tailored responses each requires.

A second lesson that will have global implications is the question of whether to use military force or pursue alternative measures. One of the major criticisms of the Iraq war is the perceived

[35] Metz, 20.

[36] As recounted by George Packer in "Knowing the Enemy," *New Yorker Magazine*, Dec 16, 2006 (accessed December 10, 2006); available from http://www.newyorker.com/printables/fact/ 061218fa_fact2.

heavy-handedness of many American units in the conduct of their operations. Although the extent of this heavy-handedness is debated, the criticism revolves around the impact upon the Iraqi population of large, conventional military "sweeps" to capture insurgents, ensnaring innocent civilians and frightening people in the process. Military forces, following force protection measures, bound the hands of male detainees and made them assume a kneeling or prone position in front of family members. Although these might be prudent measures to protect soldiers, these actions caused Iraqi men to believe they had lost their dignity and served to anger the Iraqi population. By the summer of 2003, U. S. forces found themselves in a cycle where the people were turning against the military, and the military began seeing more of the people as the enemy.[37] The implication of this for a global insurgency approach is clear: the use of military force must be very discriminate and not result in exacerbating and enflaming conditions. According to Metz, "Ultimately, counterinsurgency is determined less by which side the public prefers to rule it than by which side they blame for their suffering."[38]

The full effects of military force, including second-order effects that are not readily apparent, must be weighed against the efficacy of other non-military measures. These alternative measures include, first and foremost, political initiatives that attempt to recognize the interests of competing factions and apply pressure, coercion, and incentives as appropriate. Another powerful measure is an infusion of funding to support the reconstruction or rehabilitation of basic services, such as electricity, water, trash removal, education, and health care. Provisions for funding and training to build strong civic governance and a system of law and order are also essential alternative measures that should be integrated with other actions.

[37] Metz, 29.

[38] Ibid, 31.

A third and very nuanced lesson concerns the rising expectations that an intervention or other activity in a nation, whether through military or non-military means, sets in motion. Once set in motion, progress in achieving expectations must be perceived by a population or negative consequences will result. In Iraq, the initial sentiment among many Baghdad residents was that the United States' intervention was good for the people of Iraq. However, within just a few weeks after U. S. forces arrived in Baghdad, the people's expectations of improved electricity, employment opportunities, food distribution, and other basic necessities for a decent standard of living in the city were not being fulfilled.[39] Although military forces endeavored to do the best they could to improve basic services and curb the expectations shortfall, the battle for the confidence of the people did not progress favorably. The military uses the phrase "expectation management" to describe the actions taken to shape people's perceptions, but this approach has its limitations. There is a certain amount of automatic escalation in people's expectations as they wait for the benefits of an armed intervention. This was evident in the cases of military intervention in Somalia, Haiti, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Attempts at limiting these rising expectations might be temporarily successful; but in the end, people must see progress or their attitudes toward those promising something better will inevitably change.[40]

These lessons from Iraq—disaggregating the threats, using all the tools available and not selecting a heavy hammer too precipitously, and meeting people's expectations—are applicable to the global security environment. National, regional, and transnational threats must be disaggregated or threats will continue to mature untouched. Countermeasures to threats might best fall in the categories of economic aid, political coercion, improving civic governmental

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[39] Author's perception based upon personal observations during operations in Baghdad during this period.

[40] Author's views from personal observations during operations in those countries.

structures, and training for local police forces versus military force. Realistic expectations must be cultivated not only through words but through visible progress, however incremental that progress might be. Viewing these lessons through the lens of counterinsurgency seems to place threats and countermeasures in focus. Viewed through the counterterrorism lens limits the problems and potential solutions.

The Second Adaptation: Tempering the Strategies of Military Prevention and the Promotion of Democracy

The second strategic adaptation concerns two key features of U. S. security strategies: the doctrine of prevention and the promotion of democracy. The focus on these two strategic elements, in the context of the new global security environment, has had unintended consequences that point to the necessity for an adaptation in how the U. S. pursues these aspects. This strategic adaptation does not focus on eliminating these elements of the strategy, but instead concentrates on the method and means for executing them.

Current Strategy

The so-called "preventive doctrine" and the promotion of democracy are fundamental elements of the 2006 NSS. The document explicitly states the United States will act preemptively to forestall or prevent hostile attacks, a reiteration of the preemption doctrine outlined in the 2002 NSS.[41] The strategy is founded upon two pillars: 1) the promotion of freedom, justice, and human dignity, and 2) confronting challenges by leading a growing community of democracies. In describing the way ahead, the NSS states that the "United States seeks to extend freedom across the globe by leading an international effort to end tyranny and to

[41] National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 18.

promote effective democracy."[42] The strategy acknowledges that the form that freedom and democracy take in various places will reflect the particular history, culture, and habits of the people.[43]

Like the NSS, the 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terror emphasizes the advancement of freedom and human dignity through effective democracy as the long-term solution for winning the War on Terror. The document includes a comprehensive discussion of the benefits and rights that a democratic society affords its people and how democracy counters political alienation, grievances, distortions of information, and ideologies that support killing of innocent people.[44] For the short-term, the NSS lists among its four priorities of action the prevention of attacks by terrorist networks through the use of a broad range of tools to "take the fight to the terrorists."[45]

Analysis and Adaptation

In terms of adapting the "preventive doctrine" and the promotion of freedom and human dignity, the fundamental issue is not eliminating the need for these elements of strategy but, rather, recognizing the impact they have had on global perceptions and actions.[46] The United States, or any other nation, should not abandon its right to act preventively against known threats to its people, including the use of force if this is the appropriate tool. Likewise, no nation should forego the pursuit of freedoms and human rights. Despite the appropriateness of these pursuits,

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[42] Ibid, 3.

[43] Ibid, 5.

[44] National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, 9-10.

[45] Ibid, 11.

[46] For a comprehensive discussion of preventive attack and preemption, see Karl P. Mueller, Jasen J. Castillo, Forrest E. Morgan, Negeen Pegahi, and Brian Rosen, *Striking First: Preemptive and Preventive Attack in U.S. National Security Policy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006).

the impact of global perceptions of the U. S. efforts toward prevention and promotion of democracy point to the need for a strategic adaptation that modifies the way these two approaches are received and accepted by governments and people around the world.

In Europe, one perception is that Americans are engaged in a futile quest to defend against every conceivable threat and are losing the real ideological struggle in the Islamic world.[47] The European Union Counterterrorism Coordinator has leveled the criticism that the U.S. reliance on a military response has had the consequences of increasing terrorist recruitment and alienating allies.[48] The prevention and preemption doctrine has increased the European perception that the U.S. is inclined to act unilaterally and is departing from its allies' strategies.[49]

In the Middle East, favorable perceptions of the U.S. have been declining.[50] The causes for negative perceptions can be traced to U.S. actions in the region and the exploitation of these actions by Islamic extremists. To a Muslim in the region, the presence of U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq could be viewed as the occupation of Muslim nations by the West. This affords legitimacy to the rhetoric proclaimed by the extremists, facilitates anti-U.S. sentiments, and enhances extremist recruiting. The unintended result of the prevention and preemption doctrine and its perceived overtones of unilateralism is the possibility that U. S. national security

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[47] Jeremy Shapiro and Daniel Byman, "Bridging the Transatlantic Gap," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2006): 45.

[48] Ibid., 45.

[49] François Heisbourg, "A Work in Progress: The Bush Doctrine and Its Consequences," *The Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (2003): 81-82.

[50] Colin W. Sims, "Changing America's Image: Rethinking U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East," *International Affairs Journal*, 2006 (accessed February 28, 2007); available from http://davisiaj.com/content/view/188/51/.

could be weaker, not stronger. Hegemony and an assertive global policy might increase terrorist attacks against the U. S. as extremists see it as the source of the world's tensions.[51]

Polling of greater Middle East nations since 2000 has produced fairly consistent results concerning the perception of the United States. The Pew Global Attitudes Project in 2002 showed that there is a backlash against the War on Terror in several Muslim nations. The results revealed that the war on terrorism is opposed by majorities in 10 of the 11 predominantly Muslim countries surveyed by the Pew project.[52] The prevailing opinion among those surveyed in Jordan, Pakistan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Turkey is that the U. S. ignores the interests of their countries in deciding its international policies.[53] In a broader rejection of the U. S., overwhelming majorities of the Arab nations surveyed had a negative impression of the spread of American ideas and customs.[54]

Many of these same sentiments surfaced during the 2006 U.S.–Islamic World Forum as part of the Brookings Institution Project on U. S. relations with the Islamic World. The results of a 2005 poll conducted by Zogby International in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Lebanon, show that there continue to be huge challenges for relations between the United States and the Arab world. Over 70% of those surveyed listed the United States as one of the two biggest threats to them personally.[55] The vast majority do not believe

[51] Robert Jervis, "Why the Bush Doctrine Cannot be Sustained," *Political Science Quarterly* 120, no. 3 (2005): 353.

[52] Remarks of Andrew Kohut to The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *American Public Diplomacy in the Islamic World*, February 27, 2003 (accessed February 7, 2007); available from http://pewglobal/org/commentary/display.php?AnalysisID=63.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Report from the 2006 U. S. – Islamic World Forum sponsored by the Brookings Project on U. S. Relations with the Islamic World, February 18, 2006, 51 (accessed January 10, 2007); available from http://www.brookings.edu/fp/saban/events/20060218proceedings.pdf.

that the U. S. policy toward Iraq is based upon a desire to promote democracy and human rights but is driven by a desire to weaken the Muslim world and by economic oil interests.[56] The polling showed that U. S. actions and efforts with respect to Iraq and Israel have heavily influenced perceptions and attitudes in the Arab world.[57]

Although the U. S. strategy as articulated by the NSS recognizes that freedom and democracy can take many forms reflecting the history, culture, and habits of different peoples, some have the perception that a unique "American democracy" is the goal of the United States.[58] Although many Muslim publics have an enduring belief in democracy and believe it can take root in their country, they attribute their doubts about its success in part because of the foreign policies of the United States.[59] In addition to skepticism concerning the style of democracy espoused by the U. S., a rush to establish a democracy before an appropriate political foundation exists can result in a faltering attempt. As events in Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, the Palestinian Authority, and Saudi Arabia have shown, elections without a stable political environment in which various parties and interests are reasonably addressed can serve to foster instability.[60]

There are some indications that the U. S. is aware of the so-called "backlash" against the promotion of democracy. In a January 2007 visit to Egypt, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice avoided strong pronouncements concerning democracy and the rule of law similar to those she

[56] Ibid., 52.

[57] Ibid, 52.

[58] Sims, 4.

[59] Ibid., 2.

[60] Anthony Cordesman, *Winning the "War on Terrorism": The Need for a Fundamentally Different Strategy*, 4 (accessed October 12, 2006); available at http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis pubs/task,view/id,3490/type,1/.

made on a previous visit.[61] It is not clear, however, if this was because of the democracy "backlash" or because of the need to maintain Egypt as a partner for regional stability. A more tangible indicator of the U. S. recognition of the possible negative consequences of promoting democracy too strongly is found in the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), an element of the U. S. "Freedom Agenda" for the Middle East region. This initiative supports a broad effort at reform in a variety of economic and social functions versus a singular focus on political activities that directly to fostering democracy. This multifaceted effort seeks to address multiple sources of frustrations in Arab societies, contributing to a gradual improvement in democratic norms.[62]

Given these attitudes and perceptions of U. S. preventive actions and promotion of democracy, what strategic adaptations should be made? Below are five recommendations that continue to recognize the important of prevention of threats and promotion of democracy but modify the way in which these strategic elements are implemented:

- Recognize the strong impact that U. S. "doctrine of prevention" and promotion of democracy has had on the perceptions of Western allies and in the minds of Arab nations.
- Temper the rhetoric of prevention to clearly convey the United States' and, indeed, any nation's right to act preventively and preemptively for the sake of self-defense against proven threats, and that any military action would be done only if no other measures would be effective.

[61] Michael Slackman, "Rice Speaks Softly in Egypt, Avoiding Strong Democracy Push," *New York Times*, January 16, 2007 (accessed April 3, 2007); available from http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/16/world/middleeast/16egypt.html?ex=1326603600&en=29ff19cfcc0b77a0&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss

[62] Tamara Cofman Wittes and Sarah E. Yerkes, "The Middle East Freedom Agenda: An Update," *Current History*, January 2007: 31-38.

- Temper the rhetoric concerning democracy while still conveying the respect all nations must have for basic freedoms and human rights. Avoid using the word "democracy" and focus on the fundamental rights and liberties all citizens of any nation should enjoy. Do not focus on mechanisms of democracy, such as elections, in countries where these mechanisms are premature. Tailor efforts according to the particular circumstances in various countries and how far along they are in developing liberal republics.
- Place renewed emphasis on achieving peace in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Approach both parties with an even-handedness that will not reflect any biases. Use this seemingly intransigent conflict as a cornerstone of the U. S. desire to achieve peace in the region without any negatively perceived hidden self-interests.
- Clearly articulate to the Arab world the U. S. intentions in Iraq and Afghanistan as helping those nations develop their governance, security, and economic potential over time, recognizing their specific cultural and historical context, with no limitations based upon Western ideals of democracy other than the fundamentals of human rights and the rights of individuals in a society. Continue to gradually foster liberal democracy as the conditions for progress become evident.
- Emphasize the efficacy of enhancing other nations' internal capacity for security and development through the program of Foreign Internal Defense (FID). The FID program, a centerpiece of the U. S. efforts to counter insurgencies during the Cold War, focuses on employing a variety of diplomatic, economic, informational, and military instruments in support of a nation's own Internal Defense and Development program. This same comprehensive approach, working with and through a host

nation, mitigates the appearance of U. S. dominance in the effort and can be very effective in the current global security environment.

The Third Adaptation: Recognizing the Preeminence of Ideology

The third strategic adaptation is recognizing the preeminent role of ideology in the current global security environment. There is no greater impediment to developing effective national security strategies in today's world than not understanding the ideologies of the various Islamic actors. There is much at stake, including missed opportunities to marginalize certain Islamic extremist groups, strengthening moderate Muslims, leveraging the influence of prominent secular and religious Islamic leaders, and properly scoping the true extent of the international militant Islamic threat. Absent an understanding of the ideologies at work in this current struggle, the threat appears to many Westerners as monolithic and includes many in Islam who harbor no ill will toward the United States and other nations. Recognizing the preeminence of ideology and using it as a prism to view issues and conflicts must be the fundamental basis for any security strategy.

Current Strategy

The security strategies of the United States clearly convey the importance of ideology, but do not place it in a preeminent position. In its articulation of the way ahead for defeating global terrorism and preventing attacks, the NSS emphasizes "in the short run, using military force and other instruments of national power to kill or capture terrorists; deny them safe haven or control of any nation; prevent them from gaining access to WMD; and cut off their sources of support."[63] The NSS continues to state that winning the war on terror "in the long run" means winning the battle of ideas and engaging responsible Islamic leaders to denounce the extremist

[63] The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 9.

ideology.[64] In the section discussing agendas for cooperative action, the NSS describes the struggle against militant Islamic radicalism as the "great ideological conflict of the early years of the 21st century" that finds all of the great powers on the same side.[65]

The Quadrennial Defense Review also contains many references to the importance of ideology but does not frame it as a preeminent consideration. The QDR highlights the necessity for the use of a broad array of tools and measures in the current struggle, as indicated by the statement, "Unlike the image many have of war, this struggle cannot be won by military force alone, or even principally."[66] The document gives examples of an indirect approach versus the direct approach represented by the use of force, manifested through security training, working through partners, and supporting public works projects. The QDR also states, "This war is both a war of arms and a war of ideas—a fight against terrorist networks and against their murderous ideology. The Department of Defense fully supports efforts to counter the ideology of terrorism, although most of the U. S. Government's capabilities for this activity reside in other U. S. Government agencies and in the private sector."[67] Thus, the QDR recognizes that military force is not the primary answer to the terrorist threat, but also includes a caveat that the Department of Defense is limited in its ability to use certain measures to counter Islamic extremist ideology.

The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism also recognizes the ideological component of the War on Terror, stating that "from the beginning, it has been both a battle of arms and a

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[64] Ibid, 9.

[65] Ibid, 36.

[66] Quadrennial Defense Review, 9.

[67] Ibid., 22.

battle of ideas."[68] This strategy illuminates the ideological foundations of today's transnational terrorist enemy, but mirrors the NSS by indicating that the winning of the battle of ideas is an action to be taken "in the long run." In the "short run," the strategic focus is on applying all instruments of national power and influence to kill or capture terrorists, deny them safe haven and control of any nation, prevent them from gaining access to WMD, rendering potential targets less attractive by strengthening security and cutting off terrorists' sources of funding and other resources.[69] According to the document, democracies "are the antidote to the ideology of terrorism today."[70]

Analysis and Adaptation

Recognizing the primacy of the ideological dimension of the war on terrorism is the strategic key. Ideology is the glue that binds transnational terrorist networks together to some degree, and disrupting or discrediting this ideology will break the linkages that empower terrorists. Ideology is also a critical element in understanding why certain people are attracted to extremist Islamic organizations. Disrupting this aspect of ideology will interfere with the recruiting and reconstitution of terrorist cells and networks after being attacked.

The importance of the ideological dimension is captured in Daniel Benjamin's testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is June 2006:

> Today, the United States faces an unnerving paradox: For all the tactical successes – the terrorists arrested, plots foiled, networks disrupted – that have been achieved, our strategic position continues to slip. The ideology of jihad is spreading: a new generation of terrorists is emerging with few ties to al Qaeda but a world-view soaked in Osama bin

[68] National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, 1.

[69] Ibid, 7.

[70] Ibid., 9.

> Laden's hatred of the West, and new areas of the globe are increasingly falling under the shadow of this growing threat.[71]

Cordesman articulates his views of the ideological dimension of this struggle and the limits of western military intervention. He states, "The struggle is religious and ideological, not military or driven by secular values. It is a struggle for the future of Islam, and it is not generic, global, or focused on political or economic systems."[72] He concludes that the real war on terrorism can only be won within Islam and at a religious and ideological level and adds the caution that the memories of colonialism and the Arab anger surrounding the Israeli conflict make the use of Western forces in the war on terror very problematic.[73]

The realization that the ideological struggle within Islam can only be addressed by the Islamic world is essential to creating any opportunities for a peaceful resolution to the current struggle. The roots of the struggle within Islam are deep and not fully understood by many outside the Muslim faith, placing the West in a poor position to grasp the scope of the ideological dimension. Defining the War on Terror as the "great ideological conflict in the early years of the 21st century" as articulated by the NSS casts the conflict as a monumental struggle between the West and Islam. The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism's statement that democracies "are the long-term antidote to the ideology of terrorism today" fosters this perception. A brief analysis of today's radical Islam sheds light on the true nature, extent, and complexity of the ideological struggle.

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[71] Testimony by Daniel Benjamin before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *The Changing Face of Terror – A Post 9-11 Assessment*, June 13, 2006 (accessed November 12, 2006); available from http://www.csis.org/media/csis/congress/ts060613benjamin.pdf.

[72] Cordesman, 2.

[73] Ibid.

The religion of Islam has experienced many divisions and branches in its basic teachings. Fundamentally, all Muslims follow the Qu'ran and the teachings of Muhammad. From this basic commonality, Muslims split into the followers of Sunni Islam (people who follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad) and Shi'is (those who follow the example of the Prophet and his descendents through his son-in-law Ali). Sunnis and Shi'is further divide themselves into those who believe in a secular version of Islam and those who pursue a fundamental version of Islam based closely on literal interpretations of the Qu'ran and the laws that derive from it.[74]

From these basic ideological variations in Islam, many branches have emerged throughout history that have shaped the modern complex fabric of the Muslim World. The particular branch that is the antecedent of militant Islamic ideology is Salafism, born from the 19th century founders of modernist reform in Sunnism. The reformers of Sunnism espoused the notion of a return to the beliefs of the *aslaf*, or uncorrupted early Muslim predecessors. Beginning in the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century, influential reformers living in Egypt developed radical versions of Salafism. The teachings and writings of Al-Afghani (1839-1897), Muhammed 'Abduh (1849-1905), Hassan Al-Banna (1906-1949), and Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) sought to unite Muslims against the cultural and political domination of the West and against secular regimes of the Muslim world. In the 1970s and early 1980s, Abd al-Salam Faraj, a self-taught theologian, spread the teachings of Qutb. These teachings included theological justifications for violence and the need for a strategy to attack the "near enemy" (apostate Muslim regimes) before the "far enemy" (Israel, the United States, and other Western powers

[74] William McCants, ed., *Militant Ideology Atlas – Executive Report*, (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006) 5.

interfering in the Muslim world). Faraj was eventually executed for his role in the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981.[75]

A further subset of Islam that relates to the War on Terror are those Muslims who believe in *jihad*, or holy war. The pursuit of *jihad* is described in the Qur'an in several different contexts, including recognizing and loving the Creator, staying on the straight path, defending Islam and the community, removing treacherous rulers from power, defending through preemptive strikes, and freeing people from tyranny.[76] It is notable that the Qur'an forbids terrorism and the killing of noncombatants.[77] Osama bin Laden seized upon the notion of *jihad* and modified it to include a justification for the killing of noncombatants. Beginning in 1996, he issued a series of *fatawa*, or statements designed to provide guidance and clarify points of Islamic law, that denounced apostate regimes and declared *jihad* against the United States. It is this jihadist ideology that fuels the terrorist threat against the West, Israel, and secular Muslim regimes.

This tracing of the militant Salafist ideology highlights an important distinction that can be lost when the War on Terror is framed as a major ideological struggle. It is necessary to distinguish those *jihadis* that have a militant regional or global agenda versus those that are focused solely on interests within a certain nation. Certainly not all Islamists, those who want Islamic law to be the primary source of law and cultural identity in a state, are global or even national jihadists who want to attack the United States or their own countries to advance their

[75] Christopher Henzel, "The Origins of Al Qaeda's Ideology: Implications for U. S. Strategy," *Parameters* 35, no.1 (2005): 1-6.

[76] Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda* (New York: Berkley Books, 2003), 113.

[77] Ibid., 113.

ideology. Similarly, not all Salafists harbor global militant beliefs, pursuing instead a return to an Islamic state as existed in the first generations of Muslims close to Muhammad.[78]

The real immediate threat, then, is only a very small percentage of adherents to the militant ideologies espoused by groups like Al Qaeda and movements that are associated with it. Even though the actual number of active fighters engaged in this struggle is small, this must not obscure their very real capability for executing well-coordinated and massive attacks as has already been demonstrated. It is also very important to consider the extensive recruiting pools for extremists among the Muslim populations of all nations, including those in the West. The current militant Salafist strategy articulated by Ayman al Zawahiri, bin Laden's number two in the Al Qaeda leadership, is aimed at the Sunni masses worldwide. This strategy attempts to provoke on an international scale a cycle of violence and repression that will mobilize the Sunni masses, a goal that has had its appeal enhanced by the U. S. operations in Iraq and its support for Israel.[79]

There are several strategic adaptations concerning the ideological dimension of the current global security environment that could better posture the United States to counter the threat of militant Islamic extremism:

- Place the focus *in the short run* on the ideological aspects, supported by a robust informational campaign generated by Western and Islamic nations. Under this framework, military force maintains a critical role in both the short and long run, but is reserved for those situations where an imminent threat must be thwarted preemptively.

[78] McCants, 6.

[79] Henzel, 9.

- Recognize the historical and deep-rooted context of Salafism, accounting for the variations between global extremist Salafists and other Salafists who might be a countervailing influence against them. Support efforts in the Muslim world to isolate and discredit the jihadists who have modified the interpretation of *jihad* to include the killing of innocent people, including other Muslims.
- Change the antidote for militant extremism from the spreading of democracy to the support of Islamic scholars, clerics, and political leaders who better understand the particular brand of Salafism that is gaining popularity and drawing Muslims to extremism. As noted earlier, the attempts to spread democracy could be a catalyst for recruitment versus an effective countermeasure.[80]

Conclusion

The United States is among many nations refining its security strategy to account for the changed global environment and the evolving prominence of new non-state actors. The complexity of the contemporary security environment requires nations constantly to review and adapt their strategies if they hope to keep pace with new dynamics. The most immediate threat to the United States, Al Qaeda and its ideologically associated groups, are adapting quickly and leveraging any advantages they gain from their changed modes of operation.

As the United States continues to review its security strategies, three key adaptations should be considered. First, approaching the Global War on Terror as a global counterinsurgency will better focus all the instruments of national power and international cooperation against the full range of global threats. Second, tempering what is perceived by many foreign audiences,

especially Muslim populations already sensitive to U. S. actions, as strident policies of military prevention and promotion of democracy will inhibit their deleterious effects. Third, placing the role of ideology as a preeminent aspect of national security strategy will concentrate on reducing and neutralizing the fundamental basis for radical Islamic terrorism. Attempting to kill or capture all terrorists, disrupting all terrorist financing, or preventing any acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists is impossible. Attacking the cycle of terrorism where it originates, at the ideological start point where recruits adhere to an ideological cause, must be the focus.

In order to effectively implement these adaptations, a strong U. S. interagency and international approach is necessary. The complementary political, economic, military, informational, and ideological efforts required to operate effectively in the current global security environment must be based upon unprecedented cooperation and information sharing among different U. S. agencies and among international partners. Although there have been tremendous strides toward this endeavor, much remains to be done and old temptations to view issues and problems through the traditional lenses remains.

The prospects for countering the growth of the terrorist ideology are not good. The militant Salafist appeal is growing, as seen in the Mahgreb areas of North Africa, the Muslim populations of Europe, in the interaction between Al Qaeda and terrorist organizations in Southeast Asia, in the reemergence of Al Qaeda in Pakistan, and in the continued attraction of jihadists from many countries to the war in Iraq. In Afghanistan, a resurgent Taliban has threatened stability and security in that country, creating another opportunity for jihadists to operate, train, and gather

[80] Two excellent sources for the topic of ideology in the War on Terrorism are Cordesman, ""Winning the War on Terrorism: The Need for a Fundamentally Different Strategy" and the United States Military Academy at West Point's Combating Terrorism Center publication "Militant Ideology Atlas."

experience to continue fighting their view of *jihad* elsewhere. Many point to the lack of terrorist attacks in the United States as a sign of success of the current strategy. This could be true, but more likely is only partially true. There have been tremendous successes in thwarting terrorist attacks, disrupting terrorist finances, preventing the movement of WMD materials, and identifying nascent terrorist organizations and cells. These successes should not obscure the serious security challenges posed by a growing terrorist ideology, increasing virtual and real safe havens, links with international crime organizations, and ever more complex transnational terrorist networks. Additionally, the Western view of time should not be projected onto the terrorists' view of time. Five years since a major attack seems like a long time in the Western view, but could be minimal in the view of a terrorist waging a broad, extended global fight against near and far enemies, shifting its focus of effort from region to region, country to country.

The United States and its allies are capable of rapid adaptation but must assess how this can be accomplished. Streamlining governmental processes and sharing information among many national agencies and departments in the U. S. is improving, but perhaps not at the pace needed. Nations have produced many multilateral and bilateral security agreements to counter terrorism, but a common understanding of the threat and a common view of the best countermeasures has not been agreed to by all. The various groups that comprise the global threats are quick to adapt, exploiting any delays in action or any seams in security agreements. The United States and its partners in this long struggle must be equally as adaptive.

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