Global Counterinsurgency: Strategic Clarity for the Long War

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Though policy initiatives since the attacks of 11 September 2001 have positively influenced certain agencies and processes within the US government in their efforts to secure America, some steps have worked at cross purposes and limited the nation's effectiveness in countering the threats it faces.[1] One entrenched policy that inhibits clear analysis and understanding of the threat is the continued framing of this global struggle as a "War on Terrorism" (WOT). Words have consequences in shaping understanding and framing potential courses of action. The broad use and narrow connotations of the term WOT have cultivated a widespread, erroneous intellectual paradigm for dealing with both terrorism and insurgencies. This false strategy conflates a single tactic into the overall characteristic of a diverse number of enemy organizations, who exercise terrorism as just one tool. Continuing to frame the conflict as a war against terrorism alone serves to mischaracterize the enemy, obscures an understanding of the techniques they employ, distorts the challenges posed, and impedes the development and implementation of a strategy for countering their impact.[2]

A 2008 RAND Corporation study made a similar observation, noting that "apart from the oddity of waging war on a tactic, this expression sidesteps the causes, dynamics, and shades of Islamic militancy, with unfortunate consequences for strategy, resources, and results."[3] Elsewhere, in *Bounding the Global War on Terrorism*, Jeffrey Record observed that the George W. Bush Administration, by fusing its challenges and enemies into a single monolithic threat, "has subordinated strategic clarity to the moral clarity it strives for in foreign policy and may have set the United States on a course of

open-ended and gratuitous conflict with states and nonstate entities that pose no serious threat to the United States."[4] Record notes that "to the extent that the GWOT (Global War on Terrorism) is directed at the phenomenon of terrorism, as opposed to flesh-and-blood terrorist organizations, it sets itself up for strategic failure."[5] To use a medical analogy, under the pale of WOT, the US effort focused on defeating terrorism has translated into expending significant resources trying to cure a symptom rather than the causes of the disease. The United States needs to refocus its strategic frame of reference in its effort to effectively address remediating symptoms while simultaneously mitigating the deeper causes.

One step to effect the needed change in perspective would be to recast the enemy as "global insurgents." This redefinition is more than simply changing a label. A change in terms of reference will portray the activities of transnational terrorists such as Osama bin Laden as supporting a much broader program of activity better understood as a "global insurgency" rather than just global terrorism. Moreover, focusing the intellectual paradigm on describing the range of activities of the extremist groups gravitating to the Salafist-inspired cause provides a more exact strategic framework with which to conceptualize measures to defeat, disrupt, or neutralize their activities. An example of a term that would improve clarity is "hirabah," an Arabic word that describes the forbidden killing of innocents, noncombatants, and dissenting Muslims.[6] This term recasts the enemy as a "global hirabahist insurgency," allowing for a more precise frame of reference as to who the enemy is, what they do and why, and what should be done to neutralize their influence; as opposed to the current strategically anemic "war-against-a-tactic" paradigm.

Additionally, the continued misuse of the term "jihadist" to describe Islamic extremists engaged in terrorist activity is both inaccurate and counterproductive. It does not accurately describe the motivation or activities of the enemy, and burnishes the reputation of those engaged in such acts. This dichotomy results from the fact that jihad is not "holy war" or terrorism as it is often rendered in common discourse, but the legitimate intense devotion and struggle to do good works in accordance with Islam. Holy war as one aspect of jihad is only justified according to strict rules as rendered by respected Is-

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lamic scholars. This connotation is similar to sentiments expressed in English to describe extreme devotion to a cause with the compliment, "he is a person with a mission." Within the Islamic faith, a jihad is regarded as a good thing that devout Muslims endorse. Consequently, the extensive use of the term by westerners is widely interpreted in the Islamic world as de facto admission of the pious religious devotion behind the acts of insurgents and terrorists. In contrast, the word hirabah gives semantic precision as to the brutal and inhumane character of the Islamic extremists engaged in the conflict.[7]

Why not a "war on terrorism?" Terrorism is a tactic employed by a broad range of parties on behalf of diverse causes, yet defining it to an appropriate degree of acceptance has been problematic. Setting aside the many varieties of domestic terrorism, this article examines only the characteristics of terrorist-violence directed against noncombatants by transnational actors, such as the al Qaeda-inspired global hirabahist movement. This article will highlight the relationship between terrorism and insurgency, while examining the effectiveness of key strategic policies included in the *National Security Strategy of the United States*, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism*, and *Counterinsurgency for U.S. Government Policy Makers: A Work in Progress*.[8] A brief review of the challenges inherent in defining "terrorism" makes the need for this approach clear.

Terrorism or Insurgency?

According to the 2003 State Department report *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, the distinction between terrorism and insurgency is blurred.[9] As a consequence, significant misunderstanding exists in the relationship between the concepts of terrorism and insurgency, terms often used interchangeably by policymakers and the media. The terms are not interchangeable. As one RAND study states,

> Not all insurgencies employ terror, and not all terrorists are insurgents. Insurgencies have an alternative vision of how to organize society, and they use various instruments, ranging from public service to terror, to realize that vision. Terrorism may be embedded in and subordinate to insurgency. But terrorism may also exist outside of insurgency, animated by sheer revulsion toward the status quo, without offering or striving for an alternative.[10]

Confusion is evident in a number of official US policy documents, where there are several definitions of terrorism. The State Department defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."[11] The Defense Department de-

fines it as "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological."[12] The Federal Bureau of Investigation has a third definition, and the Department of Homeland Security has yet another. To put the issue in perspective, in a comprehensive 1984 survey of terrorism, *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide*, Alex Schmid found more than 100 different interpretations of the term "terrorism" (none of which he judged to be adequate).[13] This lack of agreement, when coupled with differing perspectives, suggests that reaching a common understanding regarding what constitutes terrorist activity, when applied to a given conflict, is a chimera.[14] For example, the conviction that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" as espoused by Yasser Arafat (a terrorist and supporter of terrorism by most any definition) in his 1974 address to the United Nations General Assembly has continuing saliency in the international community. The sentiments behind Arafat's statement that "the difference between the revolutionary and the terrorist lies in the reason for which each fights" have wide appeal, and despite the United Nations' passage of 12 antiterrorism conventions, the UN and its members still have not agreed upon a definition of terrorism.[15]

Bruce Hoffman provides clarity to the issue in his seminal study, *Inside Terrorism*. He stresses that terrorism is a "political concept" and that this characteristic "is absolutely paramount to understanding its aims, motivations, and purposes and critical in distinguishing it from other forms of violence."[16] Terrorism is "ineluctably about power" and "is thus violence—or equally important, the threat of violence—used and directed in pursuit of, or in service of, a political aim."[17] Terrorism is characteristically conducted by an organization, possibly a subnational or nonstate entity, and is intended to have far-reaching psychological repercussions.[18]

The clarity Hoffman provides helps form a broader approach to dealing with this phenomenon, one that enables the student of counterinsurgency (COIN) to move from a metaphorical view of violent terrorist activity up to a much broader view of its relationship to other forms of political activity, including insurgency. Reframing the war on terrorism as a war on global hirabahist insurgency or simply a global transnational counterinsurgency provides for strategic clarity and a more effective plan for action.[19]

Political Activity—The Nexus of Insurgency and Terrorism

Insurgency, like terrorism, is inherently political in nature. Although not policy, the 2007 publication *Counterinsurgency for U.S. Government Policy Makers: A Work in Progress* accurately describes its political character. It defines an insurgency as "a protracted political-military activity

conducted by an organized movement seeking to subvert or displace the government and completely or partially control the resources and population of a country through the use of force and alternative political organizations." The guide describes how insurgent activity is designed to weaken government control and legitimacy using guerrilla warfare, terrorism, political mobilization, propaganda, front and covert party organizations, and international activity. Significantly, it also states:

> A common characteristic of insurgent groups is the intent to control a particular area and/or population. This objective differentiates insurgents from terrorists, whose objectives do not necessarily include the creation of an alternative governing authority capable of controlling a given area or country.

Thus, an insurgency is a contest with the government for support of the people and control over resources and territory.[20]

This definition highlights attributes common to both classic regional insurgent movements and those on a global scale. Regional and global insurgents have the mutual goal of desiring to gain influence over the population. Global insurgents seek weak or failed states to dominate as is the case with al Qaeda in its attempt to first dominate the Sudan and then Afghanistan. Insurgents exploit and manipulate societal trends and populations through nonviolent as well as violent means. They often use propaganda to raise funds, recruit, and promote their cause among potential supporters, opinion-leaders, and opponents. They seek to infiltrate, manipulate, and disrupt or discredit governments and societal institutions in their effort to gain control. Most insurgent strategies involve attempts to provoke over-reaction by security forces, exacerbate ethnic or sectarian divides, and engender violence.[21]

Insurgents may use terrorist tactics to coerce and intimidate a populace, eliminate opponents, publicize their cause, and provoke over-reaction on the government's part. Understanding the relationship between terrorism and insurgency helps explain why some insurgent movements use premeditated, politically motivated violence against noncombatants.[22] As Walter Laqueur posits, "Terrorism is no more than one of several strategies, and usually a subordinate one."[23] Other analysts suggest:

> As long as irregular warfare, including terrorism, remains the only avenue of action open to the politically despondent and the militarily impotent, it will continue to be practiced regardless of how many governments view it as illegitimate. Terrorism can be a logical strategic choice for those who have no attractive alternatives.[24]

In *Terrorists' Target Selection*, C. J. M. Drake provides insight on terroristic thinking. "The strategy of the group is based on an assessment of the

reaction which the terrorists wish to invoke in certain psychological targets in order to promote their political objectives."[25] Their goal is to delegitimize a government and legitimize their own cause. Unlike conventional warfare where the destruction of the enemy may be an end in itself, "a successful terrorist operation is one which, whilst it may result in destruction of a physical target, is primarily intended to force a psychological target to react in a certain way."[26] Those organizations that master terrorist techniques become adept inducing either under-reaction (for example, the American response to the 1983 Marine Corps barracks bombing in Beirut) or over-reaction (the Israeli response to the 2006 Hezbollah kidnapping of two soldiers) from target governments—either outcome serves the terrorist group's purposes by undermining the government's legitimacy and supporting the terrorist's public narrative. Ayman al Zawahiri, deputy to Osama bin Laden, hints at the essence of global insurgency, in which terrorism is just one tactic, in his 2001 pronouncement, *Knights under the Prophet's Banner*. He stresses that "the targets as well as the type and methods of weapons used must be chosen to have an impact on the structure of the enemy and deter it enough to stop its brutality, arrogance, and disregard for all taboos and customs."[27] In "Terrorism and Global Security," Martha Crenshaw highlights a key facet of the threat of terrorist activity: "The subjective aspect of the threat is as important as the objective aspect."[28]

Insurgencies are not necessarily dependent on terrorism but almost all depend on external support. The global transnational insurgency inspired by Islamic extremism is dependent on sponsorship from a broad insurgent movement. It could not exist without support from organized Muslim "resistance" to perceived western encroachment into the Islamic world. Such support may take the form of safe passage across borders, sanctuary, acquisition of weapons, and operational planning and execution. Nations that pursue counterterrorism goals need to understand that transnational "terrorism cannot be defeated unless the insurgencies in which it is embedded are successfully countered."[29]

Understanding terrorism as an activity subsumed under a wide variety of activities employed by an insurgent movement provides the intellectual clarity required to identify the real enemy and formulate effective countermeasures. It is, therefore, inaccurate to semantically equate terrorism and insurgency. In *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, Bard O'Neill describes three forms of warfare within insurgent conflicts: conventional warfare, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism.[30] "Invoking insurgency as the diagnosis of organized Islamic violence, and thus COIN as the prescription, enlarges the scope of our comprehension and therefore of our response to the general problem of Muslim animosity toward the West and the Muslim regimes allied with it."[31] If the War on Terrorism or Long War is in

fact a global transnational insurgency, then global counterinsurgency is a more prudent approach than traditional counterterrorism.[32] Casting the strategic frame of reference as a global insurgency—an integrated political, violent, and subversive effort to alter the existing political order—serves as a better predictor or analytical tool than trying to defeat those groups regarded as terrorists who are engaging in spectacular acts of violence.

Countering the Global Hirabahist Insurgency

Classic counterinsurgency theory tends to assume a binary struggle between insurgent and counterinsurgent, yet insurgencies today may incorporate many diffuse, competing insurgent movements. In contrast to revolutionary war theory, these conflicts often lack a "united front." Likewise, classic insurgency theory typically regards insurgency as between an internal nonstate actor and a single government. Today, however, there is real-time informal cooperation and cross-pollination between insurgents in many countries, often accomplished without a central controlling authority. The *National Security Strategy of the United States* describes terrorist networks as being more decentralized than traditional terrorist organizations; less dependent upon a central command structure; and more reliant upon inspiration from a common ideology.[33] Although parallels—such as the need for contextually specific solutions—exist with the ideologically motivated Communist insurgencies of the mid- to late twentieth century, the franchise-like character of modern transnational insurgencies fueled by religious fanaticism is new.[34]

Counterinsurgency planning in this environment needs to adapt to changes in the insurgency it seeks to counter, always being cognizant of the fact that effective counterinsurgency is not primarily military in character, but fundamentally political. Consequently, any effective counterinsurgency strategy employs an integrated array of measures to defeat an insurgency, applying all elements of power in a coordinated effort to achieve specific political objectives.[35] These may include "synchronized political, security, economic, and informational components reinforcing governmental legitimacy while reducing the insurgent's influence over the population." Counterinsurgency strategy is designed to protect the population against insurgent violence; strengthen government institutions; and marginalize the insurgents politically, socially, and militarily.[36] As *Counterinsurgency for U.S. Government Policy Makers: A Work in Progress* stresses, "Effective COIN requires deep and detailed context- and culture-specific understanding of local and regional conditions, and ultimately must enable the affected government to gain the support of its population, rendering ineffective the insurgents and their tactics."[37]

Theorists have described the counterinsurgent's challenge as a "struggle for legitimacy" or "competition for government." Bernard Fall expressed

this in 1965, writing about the Vietnam War, observing that a government losing to an insurgency "is not being out-fought; it is being out-administered."[38] Counterinsurgents are most effective when they comprehend the perspective and goals of the insurgents and the population among whom they circulate. Those who dismiss the insurgents as irrational zealots acting without a calculated purpose are unlikely to develop effective countermeasures.

The global insurgency described in the *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* is a transnational movement of extremist organizations, networks, and individuals—their state and nonstate supporters— those who would exploit Islam and use terrorism for ideological ends. It "comprises a loosely aligned confederation of independent networks and movements, not a single unified organization."[39] Among these, the movement comprised of al Qaeda and affiliated extremists is the most dangerous. It emerged out of the Afghan-Soviet war in the 1980s, fueled by social, political, and ideological trends affecting Muslim populations around the globe, especially fear of encroachment of western influence. This produced a struggle of ideas within the Muslim world between moderates, who saw the need for modernization, tolerance, and cooperation with the West, and extremists who asserted that violence was necessary to defend Islam from aggression and subjugation including against Islamic moderates.[40]

The phenomenon of an al Qaeda-enabled global insurgent movement has expanded the traditional playing field while reflecting the characteristics of a classic insurgency. First, though rooted in religious ideology, its goals are principally political. Its statements overtly declare that its goal is global political change. Although some of these stated objectives may be inflated rhetoric, significant evidence exists that the message of restoring Islamic institutions to positions of international power and prestige has been a powerful rallying cry for would-be insurgents.[41] The goal of the self-proclaimed global jihad is not simply to topple a government but to demolish the nation-state order in the Muslim world and build upon its rubble a new caliphate of Islamic piety and power.[42] The twenty-first century phenomenon that has emerged is an evolved form of insurgency with the political objective having broad appeal among the global Muslim community.

Second, though the movement does not resemble a traditional centrally controlled insurgent organization, it exhibits other characteristics of classic insurgencies, combining in a systematic manner violence, political action, subversion, and propaganda in its effort to discredit governments and change existing political order.[43] Through its creative and aggressive use of technology, especially the Internet, it has created a global virtual community and support base. Ominously, it makes no secret of its intent to make a quantum leap in the ability to intimidate and destroy through the acquisition and use of weapons of mass de-

struction. These ambitions coupled with increased capabilities provide the modern insurgent with an unprecedented ability to influence world events.[44]

Not a traditional organization, al Qaeda resembles a criminal parasite that attaches itself to ongoing insurgencies.[45] An example of this is the relationship between al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Elsewhere, it is very much a franchise organization, a "loosely knit framework of radical co-religionists spreading jihad" internationally, motivated by a collective vision to reestablish the caliphate.[46] World leaders assert that terrorists in as many as 30 countries are developing plans linked to this ideology—acts of terrorism that are not isolated incidents, but rather, part of a coordinated movement.[47]

To accomplish al Qaeda's objectives, bin Laden has declared his intent to "provoke and bait" the United States into "bleeding wars" throughout the Muslim world, eventually forcing it to withdraw, and enabling al Qaeda to refocus on the "near enemy," the apostate regimes in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and Pakistan. The strategy is to "incite, join, radicalize, and hijack local insurgencies in the Muslim world, while at the same time mounting terrorist attacks in the West designed to weaken any support for intervention in the region where those insurgencies are underway."[48]

A Dimension of Global Counterinsurgency

Paul Pillar offers a useful analysis of a governmental approach toward the global phenomenon. "Sound counterterrorism policy does not focus solely on terrorism itself (however defined) but instead takes into account that terrorists have a menu of other tactics and behaviors from which to choose, and that the conflicts underlying terrorism invariably have other dimensions that also affect US interests."[49] Researchers at RAND corroborate that thought.

> If the United States were to treat Islamic violence not as terror but as insurgency that uses terror, it might understand its attraction to Muslim youth. The United States might then reconsider the efficacy of large-scale direct use of military force in the Muslim world, which can alienate populations, increase extremist appeal, and swell jihadist ranks.[50]

In order to identify root causes and successfully address the threat, it is necessary to consider multiple perspectives. In *What Makes a Terrorist? Economics and the Roots of Terrorism*, Alan Krueger offers a viewpoint that enhances understanding of those labeled terrorists. "Instead of being drawn from the ranks of the poor . . . terrorists tend to be drawn from well-educated, middle-class or high-income families."[51] They respond to geopolitical issues, and misperception of their motivation can obfuscate the roots of the prob-

lem.[52] Krueger would avoid the label terrorism altogether and advocates a more neutral descriptor such as "politically motivated violence."[53] He takes this position because terrorism is a "violent and inappropriate form of political expression"[54] that "arises when there are few effective alternative means for an extremist group to pursue its aims."[55] Terrorist activity is not a function of economics but rather a government's connection with its population. It is the enhancement of this connection that should be the primary focus of the government.

Joseph Nye, a leading advocate of soft power, contends that "in this conflict, the democracies cannot win unless the moderates prevail in the Muslim world. Hard power may be important for dealing with the irreconcilable extremists, but soft power will be essential for determining the larger outcome of the conflict."[56] Former Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom counsels:

> The challenge now is to ensure that the agenda is not limited to security alone. There is a danger of division of global politics into "hard" and "soft," with the "hard" efforts going after the terrorists whereas the "soft" campaign focuses on poverty and injustice. That divide is dangerous because interdependence makes all these issues just that: interdependent.[57]

The interaction between hard and soft power can involve actions ranging from coercion to economic inducement, to agenda setting, to simple attraction.[58] The *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* recognizes the need for integrated use of hard and soft power and stresses that any successful strategy requires all the instruments of national power: diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement.[59]

US Strategy for the Long War

The US strategic goal in the Long War is to preserve and promote the way of life of free and open societies based on the rule of law, defeat terrorist extremism, and create a global environment inhospitable to extremists. American strategy to achieve this goal is based on an international effort to deny terrorists resources. This strategy is comprised of three elements: protect the homeland; disrupt and attack terrorist networks; and counter ideological support for terrorism. Protecting the homeland is the defensive aspect of the strategy, but defense in and of itself is not enough. A successful strategy requires attacking the terrorists and their ability to operate, to include their leadership, funding, and communications. The most important component of the strategy is countering ideological support for terrorism—the "decisive effort."[60] It should be self-evident that countering ideological support for those

who commit terrorist acts is as much a social, societal, and psychological issue as it is a physical one.

The 2006 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* states that America is at war with a transnational terrorist movement fueled by a radical ideology of hatred, oppression, and murder. It "recognizes that the War on Terror is a different kind of war" and asserts that "the paradigm for combating terrorism now involves the application of all elements of our national power and influence." While this philosophy may account for the dynamics and complexity inherent in combating a global hirabahist insurgent movement, the *Strategy* often reverts to the emotionally charged rallying cry of "Win the War on Terror," ignoring the fact that while waging a war against a tactic may be emotionally appealing it is strategically dysfunctional.

> Not only do we employ military power, we use diplomatic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement activities to protect the homeland and extend our defenses, disrupt terrorist operations, and deprive our enemies of what they need to operate and survive . . . . This updated strategy sets the course for winning the War on Terror.[61]

While it is not feasible to assess the impact of this approach on the thinking of leaders and national security decisionmakers, there is little doubt that the mantra has been pervasive.

The *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* takes a somewhat mechanistic approach toward fighting terrorism. It views the enemy as a network relying on key functions, processes, and resources to operate and survive. These three elements are an important basis for counternetwork strategies. (A function is a specific occupation, role, or purpose. A process is a series of actions or operations that bring about results. A resource is a person, organization, place, or thing and its attributes. A resource may be referred to as a node, and the interaction or relationship between nodes is a linkage.) Specific functions, processes, and resources vary from group to group, network to network, and over time as part of the analytic framework used to identify and describe elements within the enemy's ever-shifting network of networks. The *Strategic Plan* organizes the terrorist network of networks into nine basic components to assist in coordination of effort: leadership, safe havens, finance, communications, movement, intelligence, weapons, personnel, and ideology.[62] While it is important to recognize these components, they may not fully account for the root cause of grievances. One researcher cautions against this conventional approach:

> Traditional wars also provided clear standards of measuring success in the form of territory gained and enemy forces destroyed or otherwise removed from

combat. But these standards were always of limited utility against irregular enemies that fought to different standards of success, and they are of practically no use in gauging success against a terrorist threat like al Qaeda.[63]

This caution should not suggest there is little value in using the network model to describe a transnational insurgency, but there are limitations in modeling and assessing a dynamic and decentralized movement that is connected more by ideology than hierarchy.[64]

The United States has implemented numerous initiatives to address the challenges it faces from transnational insurgency, yet often many of these actions have been reactive and piecemeal. If historical evidence regarding counterinsurgency offers any lesson, it is the need for a comprehensive approach and unity of effort. The reality is that, in spite of the numerous strategic-level policies, the United States has yet to undertake the organizational changes required to increase its ability to conduct a coherent counterinsurgency strategy on a global scale.[65] Such changes are vital if we are to be successful in countering insurgent movements that are not only complex but dynamic. Adding to the complexity is the fact globalization enables these movements to behave as "complex and dynamic systems" continuously changing with the environment. "They adapt to whatever capabilities are arrayed against them, and can therefore be expected to adjust to new and better COIN capabilities."[66]

Global Counterinsurgency

Although the US Army and Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, is designed for use by American military land forces, it has broader utility in a global counterinsurgency. While not directly focused on the symptoms of terrorism, it outlines an effective approach to diminish and defeat politically motivated violence in general. The manual states that the violent activities of insurgents primarily fall into three categories: terrorist, guerrilla, and conventional. "Terrorist tactics employ violence primarily at noncombatants and generally require fewer personnel than either guerrilla or conventional techniques. Terrorist targets do not involve mindless destruction . . . . Insurgents choose targets that produce the maximum informational and political effects. Terrorist tactics can be effective for generating popular support and altering the behavior of governments."[67] The manual's limited examination of terrorism does not diminish the utility of the work, since it spends significant intellectual energy on militating against the insurgent's use of terroristic violence directed at noncombatants.

The director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University, Dr. Sarah Sewall, posits the Army and Marine Corps counterin-

surgency doctrine offers the most strategic approach to terrorism currently available within the US government[68] and suggests this doctrine should be central to a broader national security strategy.[69] In outlining a practice of the good fight, the Army/Marine Corps collaboration provides more than military doctrine. It suggests how to fight and win the "ideological struggle" by enshrining civilian protection, restraining the use of military power, and recognizing the primacy of politics. The strategy offers the rest of the government an opportunity to recalibrate its approach to terrorism and its national security strategy. Sewall calls on the President and Congress to establish a bipartisan commission with the objective of crafting a national counterinsurgency policy because the battle against terrorism is part of a broader struggle to sustain the international system and states within it.[70]

Counterinsurgency doctrine stresses a number of principles underscoring the requirement for governments to integrate hard and soft power while focusing on political objectives. These principles are: Legitimacy is the main objective; unity of effort is essential; political factors are primary; understand the environment; intelligence drives operations; isolate insurgents from their cause and support; establish security under the rule of law; and prepare for long-term commitment. The doctrine goes even further by providing several imperatives for successful COIN. These additional imperatives—management of information and expectations; use of measured force; learning and adapting; empowerment at the lowest levels; and support of the host nation—are key to any successful COIN strategy.[71] All of these principles and imperatives for a successful counterinsurgency emphasize that soft power is ultimately decisive.[72]

Implications and Policy Considerations

The United States needs to reframe its strategic approach for the Long War against the hirabahist insurgency that attacked it. This approach needs to be capable of dealing with multiple challenges and threats in order to alleviate the insurgency's symptoms and neutralize its underlying causes. The strategy should be clearly focused on the conduct of a global counterinsurgency. This shift in focus requires increased emphasis on actions to better understand and frame the challenges and threats resident in the strategic environment; the organization and integration of diverse sources of power and influence; and decisive action in accordance with the nation's values and interests.

Any enhanced understanding of the environment from which the global parasitic insurgency emerged requires a more accurate assessment and characterization of those responsible for and inspired by the attacks of 11 September. This new methodology is essential to the development of a na-

tional counterinsurgency capability built on a transdisciplinary understanding and approach to problem-framing and resolution.

Creative reorganization and integration of all the elements of the nation's power in coordination with international partners, private enterprise, the media, and nongovernmental organizations will permit a more effective prosecution of national security objectives. This concept may include a reincarnation of the twenty-first century version of the US Information Agency designed to develop and convey a counternarrative to the extremists' message of hate, countering any ideological support for terrorism.[73] Reorganization will place new emphasis on those federal entities (specifically the US Agency for International Development and the State Department's foreign service officer corps) that currently lack the capacity to adequately wield America's soft power. The reconfiguration will help harness disparate capabilities and assist in conveying a compelling narrative to relevant populations.[74]

A successful counterinsurgency strategy requires effective and efficient integration of hard and soft power, enabled by a whole-of-government approach in collaboration with multinational partners, businesses, and the media. This point is underscored in the June 2008 US *National Defense Strategy* that stresses the need for "institutional agility and flexibility to plan early and respond effectively alongside interdepartmental, nongovernmental, and international partners."[75] This strategy enhances the nation's ability to accommodate the global, transnational, and subnational dynamics bearing on US interests. America can use creative partnerships and processes to establish critical relationships in its drive to achieve unity of effort harnessing the tangible and intangible influences required for success. Critical among these influences are those that enhance a partner nation's ability to deal with myriad challenges without direct US involvement.

Conclusion

In February 2007, British Prime Minister Tony Blair stressed "the situation we face is indeed war, but a completely unconventional kind, one that cannot be won in a conventional way."[76] Al Qaeda, according to Daniel Byman of Georgetown University, is "not just a distinct terrorist organization; it is a movement that seeks to inspire and coordinate other groups and individuals . . . . The conceptual key is this: Al Qaeda is not a single terrorist group but a global insurgency."[77] The distinguishing feature of this hirabahist movement is not its simple use of terrorism as a tactic, but rather, the fact that it "represent(s) a global insurgency utilizing all the tactics and techniques inherent in terrorism, subversion, propaganda, and open warfare."[78] Prime Minister Blair further advised that "in any struggle, the first challenge is to

accurately perceive the nature of what is being fought over, and here, we have a long way to go . . . . For a start, the terror is truly global,"[79] and "if we recognized this struggle for what it truly is, we would at least be on the first steps of the path toward winning it."[80] His comments reflect the wisdom from the Prussian war theorist, Carl von Clausewitz, who cautioned:

> The first, the supreme, most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and the commander have to make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking, neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its true nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.[81]

The United States needs to refocus its efforts and resources to more effectively deal with the current global threat. Clear thinking supported by clear language will assist in this endeavor. American policy should focus more on denying support for those organizations with political goals inimical to US interests, rather than emphasizing the apprehension of individual terrorists. Removing the "war on terrorism" from the official lexicon and replacing it with more precise and descriptive terms such as "war on global hirabahist insurgency" or "global counterinsurgency" would be an important step in identifying the real nature of the enemy, the security challenges posed, and the array of techniques the enemy may employ. More importantly, the change in descriptor will help focus the intellectual framework required to develop a successful US strategy for dealing with this complex and lethal problem.

NOTES

1. Yonah Alexander, *Counterterrorism Strategies: Successes and Failures of Six Nations* (Dulles, Va.: Potomac Books, 2006), 32-43.

2. Jeffrey Record, *Bounding the Global War on Terrorism* (Carlisle, Pa.: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), and Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2006), 19.

3. David C. Gompert and John Gordon IV, *War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2008), 6.

4. Record, v.

5. Ibid., 1-2.

6. Jim Guirard, "It's Not Jihad. It's Unholy Hirabah (Forbidden War Against Society)," TrueSpeak Institute, http://www.truespeak.org/content.php?id=itsnotjihad.

7. "Federal agencies, including the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security and the National Counter Terrorism Center, are telling their people not to describe Islamic extremists as 'jihadists' or 'mujahedeen,' according to documents obtained by the Associated Press. Lingo like 'Islamo-fascism' is out, too . . . . Such words may actually boost support for radicals among Arab and Muslim audiences by giving them a veneer of religious credibility or by causing offense to moderates. For example, while Americans may understand 'jihad' to mean 'holy war,' it is in fact a broader Islamic concept of the struggle to do good . . . . Similarly, 'mujahedeen,' which means those engaged in jihad, must be seen in its broader context. U.S. officials may be 'unintentionally portraying terrorists, who lack moral and religious legitimacy, as brave fighters, legitimate soldiers or spokesmen for ordinary Muslims,' says a Homeland Security report entitled *Terminology to Define the Terrorists: Recommendations from American Muslims*. Regarding 'jihad,' even if it is accurate to reference the term, it may not be strategic because it glamorizes terrorism, imbues terrorists with religious authority they

do not have and damages relations with Muslims around the world," the report says. Matthew Lee, "'Jihadist' Booted from Government Lexicon," *Associated Press*, 24 April 2008.

8. George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington: The White House, March 2006); *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington: The White House, September 2006); Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 2006); Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, *Counterinsurgency for U.S. Government Policy Makers: A Work in Progress* (Washington: Department of State, October 2007), http://www.usgcoin.org/library/USGDocuments/InterimCounterinsurgencyGuide(Oct2007).pdf.

9. Hoffman, 36.

10. Gompert and Gordon, 7.

11. Title 22, United States Code, section 2656f(d), and Hoffman, 31.

12. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 37.

13. Alex P. Schmid, *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases, and Literature* (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Books, 1984), x.

14. Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse* (2d ed.; Dulles, Va.: Potomac, 2005), 37, and Hoffman, 16.

15. Martha Crenshaw, "Terrorism and Global Security," in *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World*, Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds. (Washington: US Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 68.

16. Hoffman, 2.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., 40.

19. Ibid., 350.

20. Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 9.

21. Ibid., 11.

22. Paul R. Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 28.

23. Hoffman, 7.

24. Record, 25, and Martha Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice," in Russell D. Howard and Reid L. Sawyer, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding the New Security Environment, Readings, and Interpretations* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 55-67.

25. C. J. M. Drake, *Terrorists' Target Selection* (New York: Macmillan, 1998), 176.

26. Ibid., 181.

27. Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 23.

28. Crenshaw, "Terrorism and Global Security," 77.

29. Ibid.

30. O'Neill, 33-34.

31. Gompert and Gordon, 5.

32. David J. Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28 (August 2005), 606.

33. Bush, 9.

34. David J. Kilcullen, "Counter-insurgency *Redux*," *Survival*, 48 (December 2006), 114; and conversation with Daniel Marston, Research Fellow, Strategic and Defense Studies Center, Australian National Univ., Fort Leavenworth, Kans., 28 August 2008.

35. Ibid., 112.

36. Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 12.

37. Ibid., 7.

38. Bernard B. Fall, "The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Naval War College Review* (Winter 1998).

39. Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency," 602.

40. Joint Staff, J-5 briefing, "Combating Terrorism: The Long War," December 2007.

41. Hoffman, 96.

42. Gompert and Gordon, 2.

43. Hoffman, 282.

44. Bill Sullivan, "Fighting the Long War—Military Strategy for the War on Terrorism" (Starkville: Mississippi State Univ., Executive Lecture Forum to Radvanyi Chair in International Security Studies, 12 January 2006).

45. Conversation with Ambassador Jim Dobbins at RAND, Washington, D.C., 19 June 2007.

46. Alexander, 4.

47. Tony Blair, "A Battle for Global Values," *Foreign Affairs*, 86 (January/February 2007), 81.

48. Gompert and Gordon, 3.

49. Pillar, 28.

50. Gompert and Gordon, 13.

51. Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist? Economics and the Roots of Terrorism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007), 3.

52. Ibid., 4.

53. Ibid., 14.

54. Ibid., 146.

55. Ibid., 154.

56. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Place of Soft Power in State-Based Conflict Management," in Crocker, Hampson, and Aall, 391.

57. Blair, 88-89.

58. Nye, 392.

59. Joint Staff.

60. Ibid. In addition to the strategic elements, there are three critical cross-cutting enablers: expanding foreign partnerships and partnership capacity; strengthening capacity to prevent terrorist acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction; and institutionalizing domestically and internationally the strategy against violent extremists.

61. *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 1. The steps in this strategy include: advance effective democracies as the long-term antidote to the ideology of terrorism; prevent attacks by terrorist networks; deny weapons of mass destruction to rogue states and terrorist allies who seek to use them; deny terrorists the support and sanctuary of rogue states; deny terrorists control of any nation they would use as a base and launching pad for terror; and lay the foundations and build the institutions and structures needed to carry the fight forward against terror and ensure ultimate success.

62. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 4-5.

63. Record, 4.

64. Other unclassified policies such as the 2003 Department of Defense Directive 2000.12, *DoD Antiterrorism (AT) Program*, are even more mechanistic. This directive states that combating terrorism encompasses all actions, including antiterrorism (defensive measures taken to reduce vulnerability to terrorist acts), counterterrorism (offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, disrupt, and respond to terrorism), terrorism consequence management (preparation for and response to the consequences of a terrorist incident/event), and intelligence support (collection and dissemination of terrorism-related information), taken to oppose terrorism throughout the entire threat spectrum.

65. Alexander, 193. The Department of Homeland Security was established in July 2003, but its focus is on domestic security which is beyond the scope of this investigation. The Director of National Intelligence was created by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2005. The impact and effectiveness of this act is as of yet undetermined.

66. Gompert and Gordon, 18.

67. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington: Headquarters Department of the Army, 2006), 3-18 to 3-24.

68. Sarah Sewall, "Crafting a New Counterinsurgency Doctrine," *Foreign Service Journal*, 84 (September 2007), 34.

69. Ibid., 35.

70. Ibid., 33-40.

71. FM 3-24, 1-20 to 1-26.

72. Daniel S. Roper, "Iraq Counterinsurgency Observations: August – November 2007" (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center, 2007).

73. Joint Staff.

74. This is a more forceful approach than the 2005 statement of then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's strategy in terms of five "D's": dissuading the dissatisfied from resorting to terrorism, denying them means to act, deterring state support of terrorism, developing states' capacity to deal with terrorism, and defending human rights (Kofi Annan, speech at International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism, and Security, Madrid, 10 March 2005).

75. Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy,* June 2008, 5.

76. Blair, 79.

77. Daniel Byman, "Scoring the War on Terrorism," *The National Interest*, No. 72 (Summer 2003), 79-80. Also see John Arquilla, David Ronfeldt, and Michele Zanini, "Networks, Netwar, and Information-Age Terrorism," in Howard and Sawyer, 96-119.

78. Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency," 604.

79. Blair, 82.

80. Ibid., 84.

81. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds. and trans. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), 88.