



Jihadism and Counterterrorism Strategies

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I. Introduction

Crafting the right response to a threat such as global terrorism requires the development of a coherent strategy that puts to work all the elements of power at a nation's disposal. In pursuit of that endeavor, several theories of counterterrorism have been developed and the strategies stemming from these approaches have given way to lively debates about the best way to confront terrorism, particularly in America because it is the main target of this kind of confrontation. In broad strokes, there are two general approaches to counterterrorism strategy: The military approach versus the law enforcement approach. The application of either one has much to do with the type of enemy nations must confront. The novel case of jihadism has put many police and legal systems under consid-

erable strain, complicating even further the establishment of effective policies and strategies to combat it. This paper explores why the military approach can better help in the fight against a foe that knows no geographical or moral boundaries.

First and foremost, strategy is a blueprint for achieving an objective; it links policy and action melding them into a cohesive whole. Grand strategy combines all instruments that a state has in the military, political and economic realms to achieve a final goal. Before 9/11, analysts and experts in America, e.g., Bruce Hoffman, complained about the lack of a comprehensive, fully-coordinated national strategy to combat terrorism. After 9/11, America saw the emergence of a grand strategic response, the *U.S. National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*. As it is always the case when

making choices, not everyone was satisfied with these approaches, giving rise to alternative versions of grand strategies. Not one single strategy can have the answer to a phenomenon as complex as terrorism; they all have elements that can help accomplish optimal outcomes. Actually, a grand strategy is made of several elements that must be realistic, flexible and dynamic, but most important, it must have specific and tangible goals. The success of strategy development will be determined by the ability of the nation to carry it out and, to that end, many details must match. However, if the goals are overambitious or unrealistic, the strategy is doomed to fail because resources are finite – and they include money, time, and public patience. Strategy implementation must be closely monitored to see if it is working or if it needs further adjustments.

One important aspect that strategy developers must take into account is the nature of the enemy. Our immediate threat is jihadism that, in itself, is a global menace. No national approach can disregard the international component of terrorism today. Jihadists disregard territorial borders; the world at large is a battlefield for a group such as al-Qaeda.¹ Since jihadists see their struggle as global, nations need to plan and join global strategies more than ever to disrupt the terrorist enterprise. All of which brings us to the issue of the enormous disagreements in the international community about what constitutes terrorism, different levels of capabilities

and resources, cost burdens, or the varying perception regarding level of threat and goals to accomplish.

Although terrorism cannot be completely eradicated because it is just the contemporary manifestation of conflict² and conflict is ingrained in human nature, states have far more resources and capabilities to confront terrorism than terrorist groups have to practice it. In spite of the many existing hurdles, the international community should ultimately work towards the goal of discrediting terrorism as a barbaric tool to achieve political objectives. During the days of the Cold War, the allies did not agree on every respect, but key allied leaders saw the big picture, understood the real danger for the Free World, and joined forces against the common enemy leaving aside domestic differences – the same attitude is needed today to defeat jihadism. The need is urgent. Megaterrorism has not yet arrived; even 9/11 was a stage in between old-fashioned terrorism and the specter of things to come: The use of weapons of mass destruction.³ With an enemy who does not believe in deterrence, that practices a thanatophile ideology, and that has an apocalyptic goal, joining forces might be wise because the survival of the civilized world is at stake. Even those who do not share this sense of urgency do understand that terrorism is a lethal danger that cannot go unchecked and they could and should be persuaded to cooperate in the struggle against this threat.

II. Who is This Global Enemy?

The Soviet defeat in Afghanistan, the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist ideology it represented created a vacuum that Islamism seemed ideally qualified to fill.⁴ Islamism has different strands that go from moderate to radical;⁵ its most virulent expression is militant Islamism, better known today as jihadism. Today's standard-bearer of this extreme religion-based ideology is al-Qaeda and its maximum leader is Osama bin Laden.

Bin Laden's ferocious cosmic narrative of the final battle between good and evil has attracted many followers in the Muslim world – with Westerners starring in the evil role. This war against the West is not finite and limited to political grievances – real or imagined – but existential, transcending time and space and deeply rooted in Islamic faith⁶ – actually in a warped interpretation of Islam. Via this radical exegesis, bin Laden finds the justification for murder, terrorism, and suicide, which are strictly forbidden by Islamic law. In general lines, what bin Laden offers to the masses is to restore Islam with a vanguard movement of righteous Muslims so that the righteous order can be created through jihad⁷ and to recreate the caliphate as the Islamic polity. Bin Laden and al-Qaeda see themselves as *the* Righteous, the chosen ones to usher a new beginning on earth and attain salvation in the Hereafter. His cosmic war is a value-laden struggle defending the superiority of Islam and its culture.

The exploitation of socioeconomic disparities has long served terrorism well. The idea that Muslims have been wronged, humiliated, and exploited by the West, particularly by the United States – a concept generously fueled by certain Muslim governments to protect their own particular interests – has provided bin Laden with a platform to present his redeeming vision to a Muslim world seared by frustration at the sight of more successful civilizations. Among other factors, the security threats the Western world faces today have everything to do with the pressures of modernity and globalization.⁸ All of the children of Abraham continue to struggle with modernity; Westerners question its excesses, trying to reassert a faith and values that limit those excesses and Muslims do it too in their own way.⁹ Jihadism exploits this dichotomy since it is an anti-modern ideology and globalization is the contemporary expression of modernity. The clash is obvious, yet jihadists have no qualms to use every modern means to advance their cause. It is completely ironic that they use all what the modern world has to offer in order to send Islamic societies back to the seventh century.

Islam does not observe any separation of mosque and state and bin Laden has manipulated this important aspect in order to accomplish his objectives. The Islamic world is experiencing great upheavals and ideological divisions that jihadism exploits to its favor. Osama bin Laden has become an inspiration for

the disaffected and the disenchanted; his message of restoring the Islamic world to its “rightful place” resonates with the masses, which turns him into a particularly dangerous enemy; however, his methods have sickened many potential adherents. The great majority of Muslims in the world have no desire to join a jihad or to politicize their religion.¹⁰

Beyond the propaganda, the purported religious message, and the jihadist allure, it is necessary to understand the grand strategy of the enemy to counter it effectively. The strategist bin Laden rejects the Westphalian system of states and seeks to reestablish the caliphate as the sole political form of organization, which he would naturally be called to rule. In order to achieve his totalitarian ends, he needs to destroy the competitor and main stumbling block to his success: Western civilization and its contemporary leader, the United States. He deemed necessary to start his plans by attacking Middle East moderate regimes to establish a power base in order to extend his grip on the region. After failing to accomplish this goal, he decided that these regimes would fall easily if their alleged patron, the United States, were to fall first. Bin Laden tried different tactics: *fatwas*, threats, video releases, terrorist attacks, but to no avail; he was considered just one more irritant in global politics, but nothing else. Therefore, he decided to perpetrate an unforgettable and eye-popping strike to provoke a disproportionate reaction that would

surely enrage the Muslim world against the West. He would go for the head, “the head of heresy”, as he calls it – the United States.

September 11, 2001 was an organizational success for bin Laden and his al-Qaeda. 9/11 was a world event planned with different publics in mind, but the most important one probably was the Muslim world: Eager new recruits filled the bin Laden ranks; he succeeded in showing a vulnerable America, weak and exposed. How could America defend its allies if it could not protect itself? Moderate regimes cringed and felt the bin Laden menace too close to home. However, the American reaction was overwhelming; bin Laden thought it could entice the United States into a Soviet-style quagmire in Afghanistan to agitate Muslims against the Western invader in a global jihad.¹¹ Yet America deposed the Taliban government in record time and al-Qaeda lost its Afghan haven – along with its training camps, funds, and freedom of movement – and saw its leadership decimated. The September 11 attacks backfired; bin Laden had made a big strategic mistake.

This failure to ignite a global Muslim revolution should be seen as an important shortcoming in bin Laden’s appeal. The same happened in the 2003 Iraq War where he again tried, successfully for a while, to fan the flames of his jihad, but the counterinsurgency strategy led by American General David Petraeus spelled trouble for bin Laden’s fortunes once more. All indicates today

that the next scenario to test bin Laden's appeal and Western resolve is, one more time, Afghanistan.

III: Law Enforcement versus the Military Approach

Some of jihadism's crudest manifestations have been the suicide bomber as a weapon of terror and destruction and its devotion to the total annihilation of its perceived enemies and their lifestyles - and that includes Muslims who do not agree with bin Laden's purist interpretation of Islam. This explosion of sacred terrorism on a worldwide scale, in which the battle is not a matter of conquest, but of extermination, has put open, liberal democracies under great strain. The question pervading the whole issue of law enforcement vs. military approach is if jihadism should be considered a legal issue to be tried in a civilian court of law or a matter of war to be dealt mainly with military means.

Before 9/11, nations, such as the United States, had mostly used their law enforcement systems to combat terrorism. After 9/11, the need to find a new strategy impelled President George W. Bush and his national security staff to gather some of America's most distinguished legal minds to lay the fundamental legal architecture of what came to be called "The War on Terror." Law enforcement plays a significant role in any successful counterterrorism strategy since it involves police and intelligence work, as well as many government agencies and ultimately

society as a whole; however, civil liberties and individual privacy can somewhat suffer due to the need of implementing strong counterterrorism measures and tightening security. Finding the right balance is the challenge of liberal societies, but it may not be enough to counter the new type of enemy - the jihadist. Renowned terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman considers that limiting our capabilities to the use of the law enforcement approach is problematical, if not dangerously myopic, and deprives the U.S. of a critical advantage in the struggle against terrorism.¹² Opponents to the military approach chosen by the Bush administration were loud in their objections giving way to a series of challenges, protests, and disagreements about the violation of hard-earned civil liberties and the legality of the new approach.¹³

The pressing problem is that using and abusing the liberal tradition of Western European countries, Osama bin Laden's jihadist network has turned these nations into important fund-raising and recruiting grounds, as well as theaters of operations for militant Islamic cells, particularly the United Kingdom.¹⁴ In the case of the United States, homegrown extremists do not yet rise to the numerical level or exhibit the operational tempo or proficiency seen in Western Europe, but there is concern about the potential for homegrown extremists inspired by al-Qaeda's militant ideology to plan attacks inside the United States, Europe, and elsewhere without operational direction from the group

itself¹⁵ as the recent attack at Fort Hood in Texas and other ones on European soil seem to indicate. Regarding Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) weapons, al-Qaeda is the terrorist group that historically has sought the broadest range of CBRN attack capabilities, to use them in an anti-U.S. attack, preferably against the continental U.S.¹⁶

Nations are dealing with terrorists that use these countries' own resources to destroy society, oftentimes the societies in which they live. Many countries use the law enforcement approach because they can still deal with the problem applying the abundant legal tools and procedures they have developed to confront their domestic terrorist groups over a longer period than the United States. However, due to its hegemonic role on the world stage, the United States is much more exposed to terrorism and it is more involved than other nations in fighting directly against terrorists, which means it captures more individuals and must do something with them. Captured terrorists are usually deeply-indoctrinated people, dangerous and destructive individuals that do not fit the average criminal type; others argue that these people are entitled to opportunities for rehabilitation and social reintegration. Since this was uncharted territory, the Bush administration took all terrorist suspects to the Guantanamo Bay Detention Center. This decision generated an enormous controversy that has gone all the way to the U.S. Supreme

Court and has been condemned internationally as an affront to international law and liberal values. Most of the heated debate has centered on whether the status of prisoner of war (POW) applies to members of al-Qaeda and the Taliban. It has also served to highlight the deep disagreement about which is the best approach with this new type of enemy that has total disregard for the laws of war and society. Westerners, all too contented basking in the warm glow of utopian pacifism, seem to be ill-equipped to understand and accept the nature of its latest violent enemy. Thus, they are not prepared to confront it properly, either.

Much has been said about the Geneva Conventions and the right of a nation to detain combatants until the end of the war, which was part of the rationale behind the Guantanamo decision. The "lawful enemy combatant" or "unlawful enemy combatant" denomination pervades every decision because of the question of terrorism as a matter of war or of legal justice. In spite that al-Qaeda combatants have no international law basis to claim prisoner of war status and are not entitled to protections under the Third Geneva Convention, the open-ended nature of the terrorist struggle makes it impossible - and inhuman - to hold prisoners indefinitely. What the international community is facing today is the result of working with tools devised for another era and for another kind of conflict - not to mention a very different kind of enemy. The 1949 Geneva Conventions

need to be updated to deal with these new realities and it should be a top priority in order to design a good international counterterrorism strategy. While the United States has treated the captured members of al-Qaeda and the Taliban since 2003 in ways consistent with the principles of the Geneva Convention,¹⁷ the jury is still out: What to do with those people without jeopardizing their human rights and our own security? The present tools at our disposal are not enough to confront this new type of enemy and new ones are necessary to effectively combat those who pursue the destruction of our way of life.

The United States has a legal system designed to protect the citizen against the crushing power of Government. The framers of the Constitution were very clear in their intent; it was never drafted with the intention of granting rights to foreign enemies of the republic that seek its destruction. Many have appealed to the liberal values of the United States, where due process is a basic right, so that it extends the same civil rights and protections found in the American criminal court system to foreign terrorists arrested in battlefields or attacking the homeland, for example: Miranda rights, burden of proof or hearsay evidence. This kind of approach could become the equivalent of the Trojan Horse saga for America's legal system, which was never engineered for that end. Civilian courts have very strict standards set to protect the citizen such as criminal jurisdiction, rules defining admissible

and inadmissible evidence, the obligation to disclose publicly classified intelligence if used against a defendant, confessions, etc. Military commissions seemed to be the answer to take the new enemy to justice since the standards governing the admissibility of evidence are less demanding in this sort of tribunals; however critics of the commissions argue that the defendants would not stand a fair chance because the commissions lack the basic protections afforded by the American justice system. Just hours after assuming the Presidency of the United States in January 2009, the new president Barack Obama ordered an immediate halt to the Bush administration's military commissions system. The issue still remains an open question: On November 13, 2009, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder announced that five of the 9/11 plotters would be tried in civilian federal court. At the same time, he announced that five other defendants are to face military commission trials, including the detainee who was previously charged in the USS Cole bombing. Holder's announcement is a mixed bag and another clear demonstration that the Western liberal system is under enormous strain for using old tools in dealing with the new enemy. However, jihadist terrorism should not be considered as any other crime. It seems more fitting to classify terrorist deeds as war crimes, particularly when its perpetrators incessantly insist that war is what they are waging against all of us. Holder's announcement suggests that it all depends on the venue: If it

is a military target overseas, a military trial is appropriate, but if the attack was on American soil, terrorists deserve a U.S. civilian trial; however, this sort of reasoning misunderstands that the perpetrators in both cases are unlawful enemy combatants who are accused of war crimes, whatever their targets¹⁸.

Another point of contention has been the right to use preemptive attacks as a legitimate strategy against terrorism. This issue is based on the well-defined concept of anticipatory self-defense in international law. The old policy of deterrence does not work with terrorists determined to harm and many people as possible, including themselves; thus, law enforcement and intelligence activities must aim to preempt terrorists before they strike. The *U.S. National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* clearly explains the will of the country "to enlist the support of the international community," but it also indicates that, "if necessary we will not hesitate to act alone, to exercise our right to self-defense, including acting preemptively against terrorists to prevent them from doing harm to our people and our country."¹⁹ The preemptive approach includes capturing, killing, or disabling suspected terrorists before they can attack as well as interrogation techniques to gain information about possible plans; all of which have produced deep disagreements in the international community about the legality and practice of this approach, particularly for unilateral actions against potentially dangerous rogue

states. However, nations with less democratic credentials can use the same rationale as an excuse to overpower smaller nations in the name of preemption.

The case for preemption is understandable since deterrence is practically impossible in the case of jihadism. It should have a place among the many tools for counterterrorism and national security strategies; yet, with great power comes great responsibility and this tool should be applied with the utmost care and under strict guidelines – yet to be defined. In fairness, all the resources that law enforcement and military approaches have to offer can actually help to combat terrorism if we adjust their use to a particular situation. Other experts more inclined to the law enforcement approach say that the key to defeat terrorists lies in the realms of intelligence and police work, with military forces playing an important but nonetheless supporting role²⁰ – and in the realm of public diplomacy and for the international community, this approach is favored over the military focus.

The West, with America leading the way, will have to decide whether our asymmetric foes are criminals or enemy soldiers.²¹ Whatever the final Obama approach may be, it will be a defining aspect of any new counterterrorism strategy penned by his administration. Terrorism expert Walter Laqueur pinpointed the essence of the asymmetric warfare the West is facing today: Terrorism does not respect laws or rules, whereas

governments are bound by them. Any other behavior on the part of nations would be immediately branded as barbaric, intolerable, a violation of the rule of law. However, if governments accept the principle of asymmetric warfare, they will be severely, possibly fatally, handicapped and the same can be said about granting today's protections of Geneva Conventions to terrorists.²² That is the enormity of the challenge for democratic governments. Whichever way they choose to take will be defining for the history of mankind in the twenty-first century. With nuclear weapons in terrorist hands, there may not be a twenty-second century.

IV. Expansive or Bounded Objectives?

Terrorism has undoubtedly benefited from globalization. Now terrorists can mount operations that are more lethal and more difficult to combat because they have shrewdly exploited the blessings of our technological advances to improve their deadly enterprise. Globalization has enabled them to enjoy improved capabilities at proselytizing, mobility, coordination, organization, funding, and lethality. Geopolitical experts such as Thomas P.M. Barnett conclude that the losers in globalization can have significant impact on international stability and on the potential of successfully combating international terrorism, suggesting that these countries should be attracted into the global system so they can improve their general wel-

fare and help us in the struggle against terrorism. Two competing policies have stemmed from this argument: The expansive and the bounded approach. These views remind of the interventionist and selective engagement approaches that focused more intensely on the military component of strategy. However, in this era of globalization, analytical tools with a more far-reaching *Weltanschauung* are required to meet the new challenges constantly arising in the field of counterterrorism.

Mostly based on the principles of democratic peace theory, the expansive view advocates the need to help restore failed states and pull them from the periphery into the global system. One way to accomplish this feat is to turn them into functioning democracies and the rest of the details will follow right along. According to this approach, democracy is the name of the recipe to reduce the risk of conflict and of the best form of government yet known to man. The problem is that the democratization process is not susceptible to pressures or rush. Democracy takes time; America's experiment has taken over 230 years and it is still in the works "toward a more perfect union." It took France, the birthplace of modern European democracy, more than 150 years and an untold share of infighting and bloodshed to consolidate its experiment with democracy; other prominent democracies in the world went through the same lengthy process. Yet we now expect to accomplish these results within a few years in

places with no democratic tradition and that are usually involved in centuries-old ethnic strife. Trying to hurry democratic solutions can result in disasters such as the election of the terrorist organization Hamas to represent the Palestinian people. Democracy has oftentimes become an end and not a means to achieving peace, freedom and prosperity. Democratization is a painstaking process that should be regarded more as a bottom-up than a top-down endeavor; without people willing to sacrifice for it, it can hardly become a success. Alternative approaches to fast democratization concentrate on larger goals such as building diverse kinds of networks where soft power could have a decisive role in helping failed states make the transition to the global system. Others go beyond that approach and advocate direct intervention in failed states; however, as military scholar Frederick Kagan has wisely pointed out, regime change is inextricably intertwined with nation-building and peacekeeping and those elements must be factored into any such plan from the outset.²³

The expansive view outlined by President Bush's Global War on Terror (GWOT) has been accused of diffuse, unclear goals and parameters. Since sound strategy mandates threat discrimination and reasonable harmonization of ends and means, experts often complain that the GWOT falls short on both counts.²⁴ Traditionally, most wars have also had clear beginnings and endings – the GWOT seems endless – and clear standards of measuring

success,²⁵ which would be hard to establish since its goals are too broad and open-ended. Bush firmly believed that democracy could flourish in the Middle East and worked indefatigably toward that end. Time seems to be proving him right and it could be a contagious affair in the region. Bin Laden also understood it that way and tried to use every mean at al-Qaeda's disposal to prevent it from happening. Iraq became a very important part of the global war on terror, but it was only one part of the more expansive strategy that Bush devised. The Iraq War has redrawn the global geopolitical map, Eurasia in particular, in many unsuspected ways and its repercussions, already felt in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iran, and beyond, will be felt for decades to come. The Bush Doctrine has been heavily criticized from different quarters for many different reasons and it is only fair to say that history will be able to render a more balanced judgment of George W. Bush's successes and failures regarding the war on terrorism and his particular "vision thing." Nonetheless, in his column of successes will always be the fact that he kept America safe for seven long years since the September 11 attacks. *Per se*, that is a tough act to follow that seems to have already been interrupted by the Fort Hood massacre.

The second strategic approach is known as the bounded view. It seeks more defined and moderate goals than the expansive version and puts priorities on the course of action. The bounded view under-

stands that there are regions strategically more important than others and propounds to make realistic assessments of concrete U.S. security interests and to seriously consider the limits of American power in order to accomplish its objectives.²⁶ The crucial aspect of bounding is to accept the fact that resources are limited and policymakers must prioritize. Nevertheless, one of the shortcomings of this policy is that since terrorist groups work and cooperate with one another globally, they can simply move swiftly to areas that attract less attention where they can hone their skills or perpetrate their violent acts without much world reaction to their outrageous attacks. Policymakers must be alert and ready to constantly update their strategies – something that oftentimes is particularly difficult to attain in dealing with bureaucratic agencies. Recognizing our limitations and the constraint of finite resources will help define the right boundaries of our approach. In this globalized world, the terrorist enterprise uses all kinds of tools to defeat us and break national wills; on the other hand, democratic states are bounded by laws and rules and must strike the right balance in their struggle against terrorism – neither too expansive nor too bounded. This balancing act is by no means an easy one; there are no guarantees for success or silver bullets to accomplish it; yet we must persevere in our uphill endeavor.

V. Tools at Hand

Many and abundant are the resources of states in comparison with the ones terrorists can exploit since, ultimately, terrorism is the weakest form of warfare and a recourse of the politically desperate and militarily helpless, and, as such, it is hardly going to disappear.²⁷ Therefore, all instruments of government power, i.e., diplomatic, economic, informational, coercive, and legal means, must count in any successful counterterrorism strategy.

The first and most basic tool is political leadership. An efficient and proactive cadre of leaders to weigh up the dangers to national security and to establish the policies and strategies to counter those dangers is vital for effective counterterrorism. This political leadership must engage the public and the bureaucracy to exercise and maintain the legitimacy of its actions in order to accomplish its goals since the support of these segments of society will be crucial for any successful strategy. It is also in the hands of the leadership to set national priorities and objectives, to amass all the means required to achieve its established goals and to properly manage and allocate these resources. It will also serve the cause if the political and military leadership understands that since we are facing a new kind of enemy, we are also involved in a new kind of war. The days of the Clausewitzian wars are over; we cannot fight a twenty-first century war with a twenty-century mentality. Warfare has also changed and the time for “networks and networks” – as John Arquilla and David

Ronfeldt denominated the conflict – is here and now. In this 4th Generation warfare, the new enemy is a non-state opponent combining all what our modern technology has to offer (Internet, e-mail, chat rooms, cell and sat phones, online banking, and the like) with time-tested insurgent techniques seeking to engage a state opponent in asymmetric warfare. In this new type of conflict, the basic dynamic is one of “hidiers” and “seekers;” today, if you can’t find, you can’t fight.²⁸ Fighting “the last war” will not do. Fresh and bold thinking is also necessary to any successful counterterrorism strategy.

Intelligence is the second most important tool in counterterrorism strategies because all efforts are doomed to fail without good intelligence. Enhanced intelligence capabilities are necessary for both defense and offense²⁹ and as experts such as Jeffrey Record and Colin Gray point out, the cutting edge of the counterterrorist effort is likely to be intelligence, especially multinational cooperation on intelligence.³⁰ We cannot predict specific asymmetric threats, unless we have excellent intelligence.³¹ Proper coordination among agencies is of the utmost essence, as 9/11 painfully revealed. In the case of jihadism, the full support of the authorities and ordinary people in Muslim states is absolutely essential, especially in the fields of intelligence and policing, as it was in many countries during the Cold War.³² The critical importance of intelligence is one of the main reasons why the United States needs

the support of allies in the war on terrorism.³³

A country’s public is often forgotten as a crucial tool in any counterterrorism strategy. As part of the social contract between citizens and the State, a government must provide security and the public must be persuaded that the strategies its leaders are carrying out will serve this protective purpose. If the public is not swayed in favor of government policies, its implementation will be unattainable in the long run. Public diplomacy plays a decisive role and entails explaining all aspects of counterterrorism policies to the people, describing what the enemy is and what it is not. Ultimately, the domestic public foots the bill and must support the different aspects of the effort along the way in order to retain legitimacy. International public opinion is also influential and needs to have an informed opinion about the fight against terrorism.³⁴ The correct use of America’s strategic influence to promote national security is very valuable in counterterrorism strategies and it was never satisfactorily employed by the Bush Administration, hurting the effort to carry out the National Strategy – and, in the process, hurting America’s allies, too. Conducting the global war against terrorism effectively requires our government to dissuade terrorists from attacking the United States and its allies, divert youths from joining terrorist groups, and persuade the leaders of states and non-governmental institutions to withhold support for terrorists.³⁵ In our globalized world,

the war on terrorism is fought not only in the battlefield but also in the court of public opinion.

Diplomacy deserves an important place since it is linked with all the elements of counterterrorism. It enjoys the moral high ground that war almost never inspires and, used in combination with other tools, diplomacy usually enhances a nation's capabilities to fight terrorism. Engaging the cooperation of foreign counterparts helps the general efforts; coalitions are critical for counterterrorism initiatives.³⁶ A clear articulation of objectives and principles while pursuing these objectives provides a necessary framework for more specialized cooperation.³⁷ With al-Qaeda finding tacit and active support from some nation-states, diplomacy will loom larger than military efforts.³⁸

Police and military forces are the ones who directly confront the terrorists and many countries have developed special units for operations to counter domestic terrorism. In the case of international terrorism, allied military and police forces are more appropriate instruments to apprehend terrorists operating within their national borders than any other foreign forces.³⁹ Yet, there will be cases when other nations cooperating and willing to arrest or destroy terrorists in their midst, may lack the capability and need augmentation from the United States.⁴⁰ America has large special operations forces well suited for the job: small groups of highly trained individual fighters from all the ser-

vices, supported by an array of specially designed and expertly piloted helicopters, aircraft, and small watercraft; they also include experts at training and advising foreign allied soldiers.⁴¹ Western and U.S. decision-makers have usually been reluctant to employ these forces because their missions involve a significant risk to the troops⁴² and politicians always fear the backlash at home. Survey research suggests that policymakers and other civilian and military elites may be overestimating the American public's aversion to casualties incurred in military operations.⁴³ In reality, most Americans are willing to tolerate substantial casualties if they believe in the cause for which they are incurred and see visible policy progress;⁴⁴ therefore, bolder plans are of essence given the nature of the terrorist threat and the consequences of inaction – and good communications with the public will only help the effort.

Besides all these tools at hand, disrupting the capabilities of terrorists requires more than traditional approaches and it remains imperative to go after the factors that provide strength and resilience to terrorists: ideology, social networking, popular support, organization, finances, logistics, legitimacy, and sanctuary, among others. And last but not least, an important factor for any successful strategy will always be to have attainable, realistic goals; otherwise the strategy is doomed to failure. It all derives from having very clear ideas about the goal to accomplish.

VI. Conclusion

Just as it was with the Cold War, the war against terrorism will be a very long struggle in which ideological, political, and socioeconomic campaigns will be as important as military campaigns.⁴⁵ America has gone from having no national strategy to having the so-called “Bush Doctrine” to currently having the Obama Administration approach: Nothing really planned other than getting rid of the inherited Bush strategy – as the rushed announcement of closing Guantanamo Bay demonstrated.

It is crucial that governments level with their citizens and explain the situation objectively because they are going to need all the public sup-

port they can muster. The military approach can better help in the fight against the asymmetric enemy without disregarding the usefulness of all the other tools and elements of power that states have. Policymakers must look at the terrorism issue with new eyes because we are facing an unexpected new type of enemy that will stop at nothing to achieve its goals and they should use wisely all the resources available, and create new ones if necessary, to protect us all. This approach will require imagination, determination and faith in our cause. There are no guarantees of success, yet we all must do our best to combat this existential threat. It is a trying moment in history; it's testing the mettle of Western civilization.

Notes

¹Bard E. O'Neill, *From Revolution to Apocalypse: Insurgency and Terrorism*. (Dulles,VA: Potomac Books, 2005), p. 34.

² Walter Laqueur, “The Terrorism to Come,” *Policy Review*, August/ September 2004, Vol. 126, p. 58.

³ *Ibid*, p. 63.

⁴ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. (London: I.B.Tauris, 2006), p. 9.

⁵ International Crisis Group. “Understanding Islamism,” *International Crisis Group* 2 Mar 2005. <<http://merln.ndu.edu/archive/icg/Islamism2Mar05.pdf>>.

⁶ Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader*. (New York: Doubleday, 2007), p. xii.

⁷ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*. (PA: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004), p. 52.

⁸ Michael J. Mazarr, “The Psychological Sources of Islamic Terrorism.” *Policy Review*, June/July 2004, Vol. 125, p. 39.

⁹ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. (New York: Oxford U P, 2003), p. 124.

¹⁰ Shmuel Bar, “The Religious Sources of Islamic Terrorism.” *Policy Review*, June/July 2004, Vol. 125, p. 34.

¹¹ Kepel, p. 19.

¹² Bruce Hoffman, “Combating Terrorism: In Search of a National Strategy.” Testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans Affairs, and International Relations, House Committee on Government Reform. Washington D.C., USA, 7 Mar. 2001. p. 8. <<http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT175/index.html>>.

¹³ Sidney Blumenthal, “The Rule of Law vs the War Paradigm.” *Open Democracy*, 11 July 2006. <http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy/law_war_3731.jsp>.

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