National Strategy for Combating Terrorism: Background and Issues for Congress

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Summary

On September 5, 2006, the White House released the *2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*. This report examines the Strategy in the context of its predecessor, released in 2003, and identifies issues and options for consideration by Congress.

The *2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* provides a framework for protecting the United States and its allies from terrorist attacks. Core components of the Strategy are to disrupt and disable terrorist networks across the globe, and foster international cooperation in these efforts. Creating a global intolerance of terrorism is central as well.

The 2006 Strategy differs from the 2003 version primarily in that it sets different priorities for the strategic elements designed to achieve its goals. Perhaps most significant of these differences is a major increase in emphasis on democratization as a method of combating terrorism. Additionally, the 2006 strategy places greater emphasis on denying terrorists sanctuary in underdeveloped, failed, and rogue states. The use of economic and political tools to strengthen nations vulnerable to the spread of terrorist influence appears to receive less emphasis in the 2006 Strategy than in the 2003 version.

Inherent in the National Strategy are a number of issues for Congress. These include (1) democratization as a counterterrorism strategy; (2) the validity of the Strategy's assumptions about terrorists; (3) whether the Strategy adequately addresses the situation in Iraq including the U.S. presence there as a catalyst for international terrorism; (4) the Strategy's effectiveness against rogue states; (5) the degree to which the Strategy addresses threats reflected in recent National Intelligence Estimates; (6) mitigating extremist indoctrination of the young; and (7) the efficacy of public diplomacy. To the degree that the *2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* may not adequately address the importance of these and other relevant factors, some adjustment of the strategy and its implementation may be warranted.

This report will not be updated.

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Introduction

In the national security field, publication of strategies serves a number of purposes. Strategies alert Congress, government agencies, the public, and foreign nations to the general direction of policy in a specific arena, and help clarify policy goals, objectives, and threat perception. They also assist Congress in identifying and prioritizing funding priorities, any potential need for legislative changes to reflect policy direction, and issues for oversight activity.

On September 5, 2006, the White House released the 2006 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (NSCT or "Strategy").[1] The 2006 NSCT complements the *National Security Strategy of the United States*, released by the White House in March 2006.[2] Subsequently, on May 31, 2007, the Bush Administration released a public diplomacy strategy that addressed the issue of counterterrorism and set up a rapid response counterterrorism communications center.[3] In June 2007, the Administration released a *National Implementation Plan* (NIP). The document, according to press reports, designates lead and subordinate agencies to carry out a multitude of tasks to include destroying Al Qaeda; enlisting support from allies; and training experts in foreign languages and cultures with emphasis on gaining a better understanding of Islam. Its overarching goals reportedly are to (1) defeat terrorism as a threat to America's way of life as a free and open society, and (2) create an environment inhospitable to terrorism worldwide.[4]

The White House subsequently released an updated (second) *National Strategy for Homeland Security* on October 9, 2007. It is described as "a companion to the [2006] National Strategy for Combating Terrorism," since both strategies include sections on preventing and disrupting terrorist attacks that are complementary and reinforcing.[5] In addition, unclassified key judgments of National Intelligence Estimates that address issues relevant to counterterrrorism strategy, were released by the Administration in April 2006,[6] January 2007[7] and July 2007.[8]

The 2006 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* Strategy follows on an earlier strategy released by the Bush Administration in 2003.[9] The 2006 Strategy differs from the 2003 document in a number of strategic and tactical areas. This report examines the 2006 National Strategy in the

[1] http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/.

[2] http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/.

[3] *U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication*, at http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/87427.pdf.

[4] At the writing of this report the 2007 implementation plan remains a classified document.

[5] *National Strategy for Homeland Security: A Comprehensive Guide for Securing the Homeland. October 2007*, http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/homeland/nshs/NSHS.pdf. Beyond the scope of this report, and arguably a topic timely for analysis, is the degree to which the Homeland Security Strategy incorporates core elements of, and dovetails with, the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism.

[6] *Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate: Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States.* April 2006. http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf.

[7] *Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate: Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead*. January 2007. http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/national/Iraq_NIE.pdf.

[8] *Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate: The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland.* July 2007. http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070717_release.pdf.

[9] *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*. February 2003. https://www.cia.gov/news-information/cia-the-war-on-terrorism/Counter_Terrorism_Strategy.pdf.

context of its predecessor in 2003, and identifies issues and options for consideration by Congress.

The *2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*:

- provides a framework for protecting the United States and its allies from terrorist attacks. Core components of the Strategy include disrupting and disabling terrorist networks across the globe and fostering international cooperation. Creating a global environment intolerant of terrorism is central as well.
- emphasizes the need to engage actively in the "War of Ideas" (i.e., to combat and counter the dissemination of terrorist ideology and to promote international intolerance of terrorists and of terrorism as a tactic). International cooperation and support to bring about such a worldwide ideological shift are seen as crucial to the success of such efforts.
- shares the same major goals as its 2003 predecessor: protecting the Homeland, disabling terrorist networks, and creating an international community intolerant of violent extremism.
- like its 2003 edition, calls for utilization of all elements of U.S. power to combat international terrorism: diplomatic, economic, law enforcement, financial, intelligence, military, and information dissemination. It also reiterates the importance of preemptive action against terrorist groups and their sponsors in conjunction with measures which seek to deny sanctuary, funding, and arms to terrorists.

However, the 2006 Strategy differs from the 2003 version primarily in that it sets different priorities for the strategic elements designed to achieve those ultimate goals. Perhaps the most significant of these differences is a major increase in emphasis in the 2006 document on democratization as a method of combating terrorism. Additionally, the 2006 Strategy places greater emphasis on denying terrorists sanctuary in underdeveloped, failed, and rogue states. The use of economic and political tools to strengthen nations vulnerable to the spread of terrorist influence appears to receive less emphasis in the 2006 Strategy than in the 2003 version.

Strategy Components

The 2006 Strategy is broadly divided into short-term and long-term objectives. The short-term objectives address the immediate problem of violent extremism; whereas the long-term objectives concern the eradication of terrorism in the future.

Short-Term Objectives

The Strategy's short-term objectives include (1) preventing attacks by terrorist networks; (2) denying weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to terrorists and rogue states; (3) denying terrorists the support and sanctuary of rogue states; and (4) denying terrorists control of any nation.

Preventing Attacks by Terrorist Networks

Important to this objective are sustained, relentless—often preemptive—attacks on the personnel and infrastructures of terrorist networks. Emphasis is placed on:

- Attacking and targeting leaders in the hopes of weakening the cohesiveness, strategic guidance, and morale of terrorist groups.
- Targeting the foot soldiers of terrorist groups by law enforcement and military means.
- Disrupting the recruitment of foot soldiers by terrorist organizations.
- Targeting the communications centers and propaganda operations of terrorist groups.
- Disrupting the flow of funding and weapons to terrorist organizations.

Denying WMD to Terrorists and Rogue States [10]

This component of the Strategy seeks to deny terrorists WMD and WMD-related material. It includes elements of both prevention and response (i.e., enhancing U.S. ability to determine terrorist intentions and capabilities regarding WMD), as well as U.S. ability to prevent and respond to a WMD attack, should such an attack take place.

Denying Terrorists the Support and Sanctuary of Rogue States

This component of the Strategy places emphasis on discouraging state sponsorship of terrorism through imposing economic and political sanctions on states that support, harbor or fund groups that use terrorism as a tactic.

Denying Terrorists Control of Any Nation

This component of the strategy seeks reduction and eventual elimination of safe havens overseas by combining military assistance and nation building to support governments that are effectively unable to combat terrorist activity on their own. Support is envisioned in the form of measures to facilitate economic development, foster creation or extension of the rule of law, and strengthen law enforcement. Included in the concept of terrorist safe havens are physical and legal (extradition-proof) safe havens, cyber safe havens, and financial safe havens.

Long-Term Objectives

The long-term objectives of the Strategy include (1) winning the War of Ideas by advancing effective democracy; (2) promoting international coalitions and partnerships; and (3) enhancing government counterterrorism infrastructure and capabilities.

[10] Note that the term “rogue” states is not defined, although rogue is implied in terms of a nation’s support for terrorism or inclination thereto.

Winning the War of Ideas by Advancing Effective Democracy

Important here is the promotion and support of democracies that not only hold free elections but also uphold democratic rights such as freedom of religion, conscience, speech, assembly, association, and the press. The assumption is that establishing and strengthening democratic institutions, principles and practices will, in turn, reduce the four major causes of the spread of terrorist ideology outlined by the Strategy:

- Political alienation,
- Grievances and perceived injustices that can be blamed on others,
- Subcultures of conspiracy and misinformation, and
- An ideology that justifies murder.

Promoting International Coalitions and Partnerships

The Strategy calls for assisting allies in their efforts to strengthen their counterterrorism capabilities, so these can be used more effectively to combat terror. Recognizing the need for broad based international cooperation in fighting the war on terror is key.

Enhancing Government Counterterror Infrastructure and Capabilities

This component of the Strategy emphasizes strengthening and restructuring U.S. government mechanisms to promote inter-agency collaboration and to formulate clear national priorities. Also key is developing a community of counterterrorism experts with enhanced knowledge and capabilities to address more comprehensively the growing problems of terrorism and violent extremism.

Issues for Congress

Overview

The 2006 National Strategy raises a number of challenging issues for Congress. These include (1) effectiveness of democratization as a counterterrorism strategy; (2) the underlying factors fueling the spread of terrorism and the motives of terrorists; (3) implications of the war in Iraq for U.S. counterterrorism strategy; (4) effectiveness of the policy of U.S. non-engagement with states that support or harbor terrorists (i.e., rogue states), as well as select terrorist groups; (5) alignment of the Strategy with recent National Intelligence Estimates; (6) mitigation of extremist indoctrination of the young, disenfranchised, and economically marginal; and (7) efficacy of public diplomacy. Important as well, but difficult to ascertain, is the degree to which current funding follows the priorities of the 2003 Strategy in contrast to those of the 2006 document.

The focus of the Strategy is primarily the terrorist threat from radical Islam. However, there may be potential threats from groups or individuals aligned with other extremist causes or ideologies. Some wonder whether the emphasis on a single front in the war on terror might leave the country vulnerable to surprise attacks from groups that have been overlooked.

There is a tacit presumption in the Strategy and its goals that meaningful data exist on which to base and implement policy decisions. These data might include results on issues relating to terrorism from: attitude surveys in various populations; interrogations or profiles of known terrorists; demographic and socioeconomic trend analyses; risk analyses; cost-benefit and funding studies; and other sources. The nature and extent of data actually available, the interpretation and implications of this data, and the degree to which the Strategy reflects the data, are open questions.

Another unresolved question is the need, if any, for periodic—if not ongoing—review of strategy components and for appropriate institutional mechanisms and resources to implement such review. The issue of coordinating strategy with key allies may warrant examination by Congress as well. To what degree was such coordination accomplished? To what degree were allies on whose support the United States relies in combating international terrorism simply presented with a *fait accompli*? What are the overall pro's and con's of advance coordination of strategy and its formulation with important counterterror allies?

The Strategy does not include a discussion and contingency plan for a scenario in which one does not "win." In such a scenario, one might choose to opt to measure "victory"—or progress—in terms of acceptable losses rather than triumph. Few would contend that there has been complete triumph in the war on drugs or the war on crime, for example, despite decades of effort and countless billions of dollars spent. It is therefore possible, perhaps even likely, that the war on terror may have a similar long-term outcome: stalemate—whether against decentralized, well-funded terrorist adversaries with formidable resources and weaponry or against isolated cells of homegrown extremists.

More than six years after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, there are few agreed-upon criteria for measuring the success or failure of U.S. strategy for combating terrorism. Therefore, while the Strategy can be analyzed, discussed and critiqued, its results and effectiveness are difficult to evaluate reliably.[11]

Democratization as a Counterterrorism Strategy

The 2006 National Strategy bases much of its long-term approach on the premise that effective democracy combats the conditions and circumstances that legitimize and spread terrorism. Indeed, the Strategy asserts that "the long-term solution for winning the war on terror is the advancement of human freedom and human dignity through effective democracy." According to the Strategy, democratic institutions that support human rights counter the four factors identified as major contributors to the rise of terrorism:

1. Political Alienation
2. Grievances and perceived injustices that can be blamed on others
3. Subcultures of conspiracy and misinformation
4. An ideology that justifies murder

[11] See CRS Report RL33160, *Combating Terrorism: The Challenge of Measuring Effectiveness*, by (name redacted).

Some, however, see efforts to promote democracy as a sign of unrestrained U.S. imperialism, which can contribute to the spread of terrorism.[12] In this camp are also those who suggest that western democracies are increasingly becoming morally bankrupt—societies where materialism and money-worship reign, where drug use, pornography, and violent crime are widespread, and where the traditional family and traditional values are disintegrating with little substance to replace them.

In this regard the 2006 Strategy appears to make a major assumption that the 2003 Strategy does not, namely that democratization is, in and of itself, an effective means of combating terrorism in the long-term. However, the 2006 Strategy is silent on when and how democracy promotion should be implemented vis-a-vis the various other counterterrorism tactics and objectives, both long-and short-term.

The 2006 Strategy implies that effectively implementing democracy in a community promotes conditions that deter terrorist recruitment and activity. In contrast, the 2003 Strategy suggests the converse—that by combating terrorism in conjunction with stabilizing areas vulnerable to terrorist recruitment effective democracy could eventually come into existence.

There is heavy emphasis in the 2006 Strategy on democratization as a means of countering terrorism. Viewed in the context of the mixed success of fledgling democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan and the persistence of autocratic regimes among U.S. allies in the Middle East, the credibility and effectiveness of this strategic thrust may merit scrutiny.

Supporters of democratization as a pillar of U.S. counterterrorism policy argue that the history of the past century is replete with examples demonstrating that advancing effective democracy and human rights over the long-term contributes to the legitimacy and stability of governments, and to the economic prosperity of nations. They see implementing democracy as a tool of U.S. foreign policy as an effective deterrent to violent internal anti-systemic activities, including terrorism.[13] In effect, they suggest that where effective democracy is achieved, higher degrees of political stability and economic prosperity evolve, and terrorism, if it emerges at all, is short-lived or marginalized.

Proponents of the 2006 Strategy contend that spreading democracy is important to the long-term stability of the Middle East and South Asia. They assert that promoting democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan is an important aspect of creating a democratic environment throughout the region, which could reduce the threat of terrorism in the long-term.

Skeptics caution that there is often a trade-off between the idealistic goals of democratization and U.S. security interests. Democratization, under certain circumstances, may actually undermine U.S. security interests and exacerbate the terrorism problem. Recent experience in the Middle East and South Asia has shown that democratic elections can bring to power governments that show little interest in the principles and practices of liberal democracy; possess insufficient power or legitimacy to counter or prevent terrorism within their borders; support or condone terrorist activity within or beyond their borders; and/or are hostile to U.S. national interests. As examples

[12] See for example: *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror* by Michael Scheuer. Brassey's, 2004, 309 p.

[13] Francis Fukuyama and Michael McFaul, *Should Democracy be Promoted or Demoted?* The Stanley Foundation, June 2007.

they cite: Iraqi Shiites voting in 2005 elections for an Iranian-style Islamic republic in areas under their control; terror-linked organizations winning democratic elections in the Middle East (e.g., Hamas in Gaza and Hizbollah in Lebanon); and popular election of a radical Islamic government. The election of Pakistani President Musharraf is cited as well.

Also at issue is the question of whether democracy, in and of itself, can stabilize a nation, given the troubling growth in numbers and influence of radical groups in some democratic countries. Skeptics argue that the burgeoning popularity of extremist and terror-linked groups, such as the Mujaheddin Council in Indonesia, the Party Islam in Malaysia, the Islamic Courts Union in Somalia, Hizballah in Lebanon and the democratically elected Hamas party in Gaza, would seem to indicate that democracy *per se* does not entirely dissuade or discourage the ideology of terrorism. The rise of these parties in democratic societies presents a major foreign policy dilemma for the United States, since it pits U.S. support for democracy directly against U.S. commitment to combat terrorism aggressively.[14]

Given these examples, some observers fear that democratization of some of America's closest allies in the Middle East—the autocracies of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco—may, at least in the short—term, result in democratically elected governments that are less supportive of the war on terrorism than those they replace, if not actively hostile to U.S. security interests in the region.

Others argue that making democratization a pillar of U.S. counterterrorism strategy while pursuing regime change only selectively in the region (aggressively pursued with respect to Syria and Iran; not so with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan or Morocco) generates cynicism and distrust throughout the region—and the world—regarding U.S. motives. This, in turn, may undermine support for democratization efforts, if not directly provoke increased support for terrorist activity in nations such as Iraq, Afghanistan or other states tenuously allied with the United States. Moreover, emphasis on democratization in Afghanistan and Iraq, some suggest, may reflect a tendency to underestimate the many political and cultural barriers to effective democracy in these countries, diverting resources from other critical elements of a long term stabilization effort, such as economic development.

Those who question the efficacy of democratization as a means of countering terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan point out that the democratic governments that were hastily erected in these countries, to replace the regimes ousted by the United States and its allies, remain only marginally effective. They note that sectarian conflict and terrorist activities in Iraq continue to limit severely the effectiveness of the central government,[15] and that in Afghanistan the power of the elected government does not extend much beyond the capital city. In both countries the democratic governments appear to exert effective influence over a limited portion of their territories and populations, while the rest remain heavily influenced by insurgents and more traditional forms of tribal or sectarian leadership.

[14] See CRS Report RL33555, *Trends in Terrorism: 2006*, by (name redacted).

[15] Baker, James A., Hamilton, Lee H. The Iraq Study Group Report. Vintage Books 2006. Online at http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/iraq_study_group_report.pdf.

Validity of Strategy Perceptions about Terrorism

The 2006 Strategy predicates many of its objectives on a set of perceptions about terrorism and terrorists that some would argue is incomplete, if not flawed. Emphasizing the need to win the long-term "War of Ideas," the 2006 Strategy, for example, argues explicitly that the terrorism we confront today springs primarily from four factors:

- political alienation,
- grievances and perceived injustices that can be blamed on others,
- subcultures of conspiracy and misinformation, and
- an ideology that justifies murder

The first three factors clearly have been exploited by terrorists in many different countries and contexts in their efforts to advance various social, political or religious objectives. The 2006 Strategy's elaboration of the fourth well-spring of terrorist activity, "an ideology that justifies murder,"[16] offers a perspective on terrorist motives and objectives that some observers consider simplistic and inaccurately villifying of Islam. However, others contend that actively confronting terrorist ideology and radical religious doctrine is long overdue, delayed by political correctness.

While acknowledging that the transnational movement of terrorist organizations, networks and individuals is not monolithic, the 2006 Strategy observes that the movement is united by an "ideology of oppression, violence and hate" and the shared pursuit of "a world vision darkened by hate, fear, and oppression." Skeptics argue that this portrayal of transnational terrorism mischaracterizes and thereby obscures other, different goals and motives of terrorists, along with their motivational appeal, which the United States seeks to counter. They contend that terrorists rally their supporters around specific social, religious, or political agendas urging retaliation for real or perceived injustices, not around a world vision of hate, fear and oppression.

Critics also argue that the Strategy's portrayal of terrorist motives and objectives is overly simplistic and unidimensional perhaps intended to draw clear battle lines in the War of Ideas, erodes U.S. credibility and diverts attention away from specific terrorist grievances and objectives that might be addressed or resolved through diplomacy, negotiations, or other non-violent means. On the other hand, as a high level policy document, the Strategy must simplify certain complex topics in the interests of brevity. More detailed treatment may appear in other reports or plans.

The 2006 Strategy also invites questions about the interpretation of the underlying causes of terrorism by explicitly downplaying the importance of a number of factors that many view as major contributors to the recent spread of terrorist ideology and activity: (1) U.S. policy in Iraq; (2) U.S. efforts to prevent terrorist attacks; (3) poverty; (4) Israeli-Arab issues.

Impact of U.S. Policy in Iraq

The Strategy states prominently that "Terrorism is not simply a result of hostility to U.S. policy in Iraq."[17] However, many would argue that U.S. policy in Iraq has become a major focal point of

[16] U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication, Page 5. http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/87427.pdf.

[17] *2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, p. 6.

terrorist activity and related rhetoric and has perhaps even become a cause celebre for terrorist recruitment. The Iraq Study Group Report of 2006 states:

> The challenges in Iraq are complex. Violence is increasing in scope and lethality. It is fed by a Sunni Arab insurgency, Shiite militias and death squads, al Qaeda, and widespread criminality. Sectarian conflict is the principal challenge to stability. The Iraqi people have a democratically elected government, yet it is not adequately advancing national reconciliation, providing basic security, or delivering essential services. Pessimism is pervasive.
>
> If the situation continues to deteriorate, the consequences could be severe. A slide toward chaos could trigger the collapse of Iraq's government and a humanitarian catastrophe. Neighboring countries could intervene. Sunni-Shia clashes could spread. Al Qaeda could win a propaganda victory and expand its base of operations. The global standing of the United States could be diminished. Americans could become more polarized.[18]

Impact of U.S. Efforts to Prevent Terrorist Attacks

Many argue that U.S. counterterrorism efforts in the Middle East and South Asia, primarily U.S. military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as what many consider U.S. political favoritism towards regimes in Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, plus policies avoiding active engagement of nations such as Iran and Syria, have been important factors fueling the spread of global jihad. Critics of the 2006 Strategy argue that failure to recognize the full impact of this phenomenon limits the Strategy's effectiveness. Others however, see recognizing such factors as a given which is inherently incorporated into the Strategy and its component parts.

Perception of Poverty Issues

The Strategy downplays poverty as a contributing factor to terrorism, citing the fact that the 9/11 hijackers were from the middle class. While acknowledging that the leaders of major terrorist groups and their front-line operatives in advanced industrialized nations come mostly from more educated middle class, skeptics point out that impoverished communities with Islamic backgrounds, in Iraq, the West Bank, Gaza and other parts of the Middle East and South Asia, have proven to be fertile spawning grounds of terrorist activity, recruitment, and support. Well-funded terrorist organizations often provide social services that host governments do not, winning popular approval. Moreover, the level of corruption in such terrorist charitable endeavors is widely perceived to be minimal.

[18] Baker, James A., Hamilton, Lee H. *The Iraq Study Group Report*. Vintage Book, 2006.

The Iraq Study Group (ISG) Report, released December 6, 2006, was the result a bipartisan, independent, forward-looking "fresh-eyes" assessment of Iraq undertaken by a bipartisan group of individuals with distinguished careers in public service at the urging of several Members of Congress with agreement of the White House. The ISG was co-chaired by former Secretary of State James A. Baker, III (R) and former chairman of the House International Relations Committee Lee Hamilton (D). The U.S. Institute of Peace acted as the facilitating agency for the ISG, with the support of the Center for the Study of the Presidency, the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University.

Perception of Importance of Arab-Israeli Peace Settlement

Critics suggest that the Strategy fails to address the importance of a peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict as an overall tool to reducing terrorism. In support of their linkage of progress against terrorism to Arab-Israeli peace they note that the Iraq Study Group Report of 2006 states:

> The United States will not be able to achieve its goals in the Middle East unless the United States deals directly with the Arab-Israeli conflict.[19]

Others, however, while recognizing that the Arab-Israeli conflict is important to consider, emphasize that the multifacated conflict is only one of many issues that terrorists seek to exploit and suggest that, should aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict be peacefully resolved, terrorists will simply move on to other causes celebres.

Adequacy of Strategy's Treatment of Situation in Iraq

Skeptics argue that a major shortcoming of the Strategy is its failure to address adequately the importance of the ongoing conflict in Iraq. According to the 2006 National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC) data on incidents of terrorism, approximately 45% of all terrorist attacks worldwide occurred in Iraq, resulting in almost 65% of global terrorism-related fatalities. The same data show that the number of acts of terrorism in Iraq nearly doubled from 2005 to 2006. However, it is often not fully clear whether such data reflect "terrorist" incidents that could be considered the product of casualties of a civil war.

Moreover, the April 2006 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) "Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States" notes as one of its key judgments:

> The Iraq conflict has become the "cause celebre" for jihadists, breeding a deep resentment of U.S. involvement in the Muslim world and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement.[20]

These data and judgments, to the degree that one accepts them, indicate that Iraq is currently both a major source of terrorists and terrorist activity and a major global catalyst for the spread of violent extremism. However, the 2006 Strategy makes no specific recommendations for U.S. policy in Iraq, leaving many issues unaddressed. For example, what is the long-term strategy for continued troop presence in Iraq? Is it to be increased or reduced, and for what purpose? What steps are being taken to address the perception of Iraq as a rallying point for terrorists? What are the anticipated steps to be taken to strengthen the fledgling Iraqi democracy?

Iraq is increasingly perceived as both the current center of terrorist attacks worldwide and one of the most important negative elements in winning hearts and minds, arguably necessitating some means of addressing these concerns directly. It is widely believed that a stable and democratic Iraq would be an invaluable asset to U.S. interests in the Middle East. However, many believe that if Iraq's disintegration into terrorism and sectarian violence continues, America's standing and influence in the region will be further reduced, and other nations may increasingly fall prey to

[19] *2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, p. 54.

[20] http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/library/reports/2006/nie_global-terror-trends_apr2006.htm.

radical Islamist attempts at incitement and destabilization. The 2007 troop surge in Iraq also has some impact on the current Strategy. The degree of success or failure of the U.S. troop surge may serve as a model for counter-terror related policy in Afghanistan and other areas, such as Southeast Asia.

Strategy's Effectiveness Against Rogue States and Groups

Engaging Rogue States

It is difficult to determine if the 2006 Strategy adequately addresses rogue states. The Strategy states: "The United States and its allies and partners in the War on Terror make no distinction between those who commit acts of terror and those who support and harbor terrorists."[21] Accordingly, the Strategy recommends a policy of isolating and sanctioning rogue states until they renounce terrorism and their support of terrorist groups.

In 2007, however, diplomatic channels were used with Syria and Iran,[22] with the goal of acquiring their support in stabilizing Iraq. Some view this approach as visionary, arguing that isolation and sanctions appear to have had little effect on either government's willingness to sponsor terrorism, and that cautious dialogue with these regimes may at least provide opportunities to explore directions of potential mutual benefit. However, opponents of relaxing the policy of non-negotiation with rogue states warn that such overtures will be seen as a sign of weakness and will only serve to legitimize terrorism and its sponsorship. Moreover, concern exists as well that current leaders of nation's such as Iran simply might not be trusted to keep their word.

Others maintain that the reopening of negotiations with rogue states will be ineffective without an overall adjustment on the part of the United States of its stance towards the regimes in question. The United States has repeatedly stated a desire for regime change in both Syria and Iran, adding to these regimes' mistrust of U.S. motives and actions. Many contend that near-term regime change in Iran or Syria is unlikely, and that under current conditions the disintegration of either regime would have major destabilizing effects on the region as a whole. Considering the effect a destabilized Iraq has already had on the region (refugee flows, cross-border ethnic tensions), destabilization of another nearby nation could potentially threaten the stability of the region as a whole. Iran and Syria will not likely accede to U.S. demands without incentives or inducements, so proponents of negotiation could perhaps consider what incentives the United States can offer to either nation without compromising the U.S. overall interests in the region.

Selective Engagement of Terrorist Groups

If there is merit in negotiating with state sponsors of terrorism under certain circumstances, the question arises whether in select instances there may also be merit in negotiation with terrorist groups or individuals. Neither Hamas nor Hizballah is itself a nation; however both are powerful entities with abundant political influence in the Middle East. To date, the United States has yet to make substantive overtures to either group, continuing to adhere to the policy of non-negotiation with terrorist organizations. However, some argue that this policy should be reexamined in light

[21] *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 2006, p. 15.

[22] Considered by the State Department to be the two most prominent state sponsors of terrorism.

of current circumstances. Complicating U.S. policies supporting non-engagement of such groups is the increasing role of many such groups in democratic processes and lack of consensus with allies as to the terrorist nature of some of these groups.

Considering the significant and growing influence of such groups, one might ask whether reluctance to engage them is effective policy or simply a matter of principal at variance with *realpolitik*. Supporters of the current policy of non-negotiation argue that any relaxation of this policy will lend legitimacy to terrorism and the organizations that perpetrate or otherwise support terrorist activities. Proponents of selective engagement, on the other hand, argue that the current policy of isolation leaves the United States with too few tools—only sanctions and military options—to combat terrorist activity effectively, whereas cautious dialogue with selected terrorist organizations may yield opportunities to redirect the political agendas of these organizations away from terrorist activity and towards non-violent strategies for achieving their objectives.

A factor of interest is whether other major governments are negotiating with these organizations, which may put the United States at a disadvantage politically if it refrains. This underscores the importance of international cooperation on terrorism policy.

As is the case with state sponsors of terrorism, the question of potential incentives arises vis-a-vis a terrorist group; that is, what, if any, incentives can the United States offer to groups such as Hamas and Hizballah to facilitate and/or reduce their involvement and support of terrorism without fundamentally compromising U.S. goals and interests in the region? Given the stated commitment of both Hamas and Hizbollah to bring about the destruction of Israel, America's longstanding ally in the Middle East, this is indeed a difficult challenge.

Negotiations with rogue governments or terrorist groups bring different cultures, methods, goals and agendas from the various parties involved. Under such circumstances, one party may seek compromise and resolution, while another party's goal may be delay, deceit, publicity, or other tactical advantage, without the desire for peaceful resolution.[23] Duplicity, misdirection and sabotage of the negotiation process itself can be the goals of a recalcitrant party. However, without negotiation at some level it is difficult to identify a leadership structure and to establish criteria and objectives for each side.

Increasingly the viewpoint is advanced that too little has been done to determine the specific goals of various terrorist groups and to understand whether acceptable compromises are possible. History shows that highly disparate positions can often be resolved. Moreover, even if the pervasive terrorist doctrine of a group is simply to destroy the West or impose another culture upon it by force, knowing this early can help improve subsequent policy decisions—or target selection, if military force must be used.

[23] Knowledge of the culture and language of one's interlocutors during negotiations may enhance precision in understanding what, if anything, has actually been achieved. For example, the Arabic word "hodna," or "hudna", which translates as truce, armistice, or ceasefire, often connotes a negotiated agreement which is breakable. For a literal translation see *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, by Hans Wehr (Fourth Edition), edited by Milton Cowan, Spoken Language Services, Inc, Ithaca, N.Y.

Degree to Which Strategy Addresses Threats Reflected in Recent NIE

Some suggest that there is a disconnect between the 2006 National Strategy and key judgments contained in the unclassified April 2006 and January and July 2007 National Intelligence Estimates. They observe that in many cases the 2006 Strategy does not address concerns or recommendations raised by NIE's, and that in certain instances the 2006 Strategy and the NIE judgments seemingly contradict each other. For example, the April 2006 NIE states

> Four underlying factors are fueling the spread of the jihadist movement: (1) Entrenched grievances, such as corruption, injustice, and fear of Western domination, leading to anger, humiliation, and a sense of powerlessness; (2) the Iraq jihad; (3) the slow pace of real and sustained economic, social, and political reforms in many Muslim majority nations; and (4) pervasive anti-US sentiment among most Muslims all of which jihadists exploit.[24]

In the 2006 Strategy's declaration of four factors contributing to the spread of terrorist ideology only one is shared with the NIE: that entrenched grievances are a significant contributing factor. However, the Strategy does not specifically flag the importance of stagnant economic conditions or the need for social and political reforms, and does not address the pervasive anti-US sentiment in many Muslim countries.

The Strategy also seemingly does not give full import to the degree to which conditions and events in Iraq are a contributing factor in spreading terrorism, an issue strongly emphasized in the April 2006 NIE. The Strategy states:

> Terrorism is not simply a result of hostility to US policy in Iraq. The United States was attacked on September 11 and many years earlier, well before we toppled the Saddam Hussein regime.[25]

In contrast, the released key judgments of the April 2006 NIE immediately preceding the release of the 2006 Strategy consider the situation in Iraq one of the four most important catalysts for the spread of violent extremism.

Mitigating Terrorist Indoctrination of the Young

Indoctrination of the young over an extended period is seen by many as an effective means of solidly inculcating extremist attitudes and predispositions, thereby influencing decisions made in later life concerning terrorist recruitment or support of terrorist causes. Hence, an increasing cause for concern which may merit consideration in the Strategy is the growing indoctrination of the young into extremist ideology. The U.S. experience with segregation and also with the Cold War would appear to suggest that indoctrinated hostility for target groups, whether ethnic minorities, specific nations or alternative forms of government, comes in large part from the childhood educational environment.

[24] Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate. *Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States.* April 2006.

[25] *2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, p. 9.

Some suggest therefore that it is important to focus more attention on mitigating extremism in educational systems. In situations where negative attitudes and values are deeply entrenched, reducing bigotry and hatred may take a significant transformation in the educational curriculum and a generation or more to achieve desired results. However, if this process is not initiated, it may be more difficult—perhaps impossible—to achieve related goals, such as democratization.[26]

Most experts tend to agree that benign neglect has not been a viable approach to the threat of terrorism or indoctrination for terrorism. For decades the United States avoided confrontation over the increasing number of Islamic schools (madrasas) and mosques espousing radical Islamist ideology funded largely by vast oil wealth and the mandatory charitable contributions of faithful Muslims. Similarly, the international community has failed to resolve the problem of Palestinian refugees living in camps for over three generations. These delays have provided enormous opportunities, and some would say compelling justification, for extremists to expand their influence.

Increasingly, analysts view terrorism as a process. Once it gains a foothold, it can become self-perpetuating, with vested interests, funding sources, a micro-economy, recruitment, training, social outreach and the means to expand. Thus, a process of terrorism that could potentially have been dislodged at an earlier stage with relative ease often becomes increasingly robust if left unchecked, particularly with respect to indoctrination of the young.

Efficacy of Public Diplomacy

The Strategy addresses winning the "War of Ideas" through democratization. However, other elements of public diplomacy do not receive equally high priority in the Strategy.[27]

Some might assert that this prioritization is appropriate, because it may be an ineffective use of resources to attempt to persuade indoctrinated populations to change their views, when such resources would be better directed towards other areas, such as economic transformation. However, many would disagree, pointing to the popularity of Al Jazeera and other media organizations as confirmation of the importance of appropriately tailored broadcasts and repetition of viewpoints to target audiences.

Since the consolidation of the United States Information Agency—a cornerstone of U.S. public diplomacy—into the Department of State on October 1, 1999, [28] public diplomacy has had to compete against a variety of other Department of State interests for funding and management support. Some, therefore, feel that the consolidation was ill-advised and reduced the efficacy of our public diplomacy, while others applaud the savings resulting from merged administrative functions and the closer coordination of policy.[29]

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[26] See generally: *America on Notice: Stemming the Tide of Anti-Americanism,* by Glenn and Carolyn Schweitzer (Prometheus, 2006).

[27] Note that subsequently, on May 31, 2007 the Secretary of State released a public diplomacy strategy that addressed counterterrorism as an important component of public diplomacy and set up a rapid response counterterrorism communications center in the State Department. http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/87427.pdf.

[28] As part of P.L. 105-277 of October 21, 1998.

[29] Pachios, Harold C., Chairman; et. al. *Consolidation of USIA Into The State Department: An Assessment After One Year*. United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. October, 2000. The report states that "the consolidation of the United States Information Agency (USIA) into the State Department has to date produced a mixed (continued...)

Conclusion

Reasonable minds can differ on the approaches to countering terror including the role for democratization in a counterterrorism strategy, and how to effectively deal with rogue states. However, a central question remains: to what degree does the Strategy's approach adequately characterize and respond to the terrorist threat and the current forces driving it? Congress may wish to further examine this issue, to determine whether possible adjustments to the Strategy, its funding, and its implementation are warranted.

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record...." The report goes on to present a wide ranging analysis. http://www.state.gov/www/policy/pdadcom/acpdreport.pdf. See CRS Report RL32607, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and the 9/11 Commission Recommendations*, by (name redacted), and CRS Report 97-960, *Terrorism, the Media, and the Government: Perspectives, Trends, and Options for Policymakers*, by Raphael Perl.