



NEWPORT PAPERS

A Series of Point Papers
from the Naval War College and the
Navy Warfare Development Command
For Senior Leadership
In Response to Critical Issues

Strategy / CONOPS / Doctrine / Decision

United States Naval War College
Navy Warfare Development Command
Newport, Rhode Island

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GRAND STRATEGY FOR THE TERROR WAR

Purpose: To contribute to the continuing development of a grand strategy for engaging and defeating terrorist organizations with global reach and their state supporters.

Background: Grand strategy is the highest level of strategic vision. It encompasses and integrates all elements of statecraft and provides the framework for establishing priorities, developing coherent strategic decisions, and allocating the resources necessary to implement the chosen strategies. In the absence of such a framework, strategic choices are too often incoherent and reactive, and resources are allocated on the basis of short-term, parochial interests rather than long-term, national interests. Historically, the failure to develop a coherent grand strategy has resulted in an inability to achieve objectives or in unnecessary loss of blood or treasure.

Previous *Newport Papers* have identified U.S. objectives in the current war as well as those of our enemies. Our adversaries include the terrorist groups with global reach as well as the states that support and/or give them sanctuary. While a major component of our grand strategy must focus on the destruction of the current enemy, it must also address long term political and economic factors that contribute to the rise of terrorism as an instrument of those disenchanted with or disenfranchised by the current world order.

Discussion: A grand strategy essentially lays out a plan for integrating and employing the instruments of national power. It can be envisioned as the answer to a series of interrelated questions:

- 1) What conditions do policymakers wish to prevail in the world? What security environment is most in accord with the interests of the United States?
- 2) What steps should be taken in order to achieve those conditions? What plan of action is most likely to bring about the desired conditions?
- 3) Given the security environment and resource constraints, what combination of the instruments of power best supports the chosen strategic alternative?
- 4) What are the opportunity costs and risks associated with the preferred strategic alternative?

As policymakers develop a U.S. grand strategy for the continuing global war on terror, the following focal points must be considered in detail.

The Goal. The overarching goal of U.S. foreign policy and grand strategy is the creation and maintenance of an open political and economic order that maximizes liberty, prosperity, and peace. Terrorism is at odds with this order.

The Objective. The grand strategy objective in the ongoing war is to disrupt and destroy the networks of terrorists with global reach and terminate state support for terrorists.

The Security Environment. Real strategies must be implemented in time and geographic space. Thus a strategy must take account of the security environment. Part of a grand strategy may be directed toward the goal of changing the security environment if it is at odds with U.S. interests or maintaining it if it is in accord with our interests. A dominant feature of the international political system today is globalization. Globalization has increased prosperity in many parts of the world and aggravated tensions and stresses in others. A successful grand strategy should aim to maximize the positive aspects of U.S. led globalization such as increasing interdependence, cooperation, prosperity, and peace while at the same time minimizing or mitigating negative aspects such as the disruption arising from the rapid destruction of traditional societies, uneven development, and the continuing unequal distribution of resources.

Resources. The defense budget has been increased substantially as a result of 11 September; however, critical choices must still be made. Policymakers must determine the appropriate mix of offensive and defensive capabilities. The danger is that DoD's resources will be spent on a variety of "wish lists" that have little or nothing to do with the global war on terror. Policymakers must also determine whether significant additional resources must be allocated to such non-military areas such as foreign aid, educational reform, and debt relief.

The Means: Instruments of Statecraft. A grand strategy for defeating terrorists with global reach and their supporters will require the patient and flexible application of all available tools of statecraft. In addition to the military instrument, these tools will include traditional diplomacy, economic statecraft, intelligence operations, law enforcement, and public diplomacy/information operations.

Grand Strategy. Terrorism is an "asymmetric" form of warfare. A U.S. grand strategy for attacking terrorist networks should be asymmetric as well. It should pit U.S. and allied strength against the terrorists' weaknesses. Terrorists must rely for sanctuary on either supportive governments—e.g., Iraq and Iran; governments that look the other way—e.g., Yemen (until recently); or failed states—e.g., Somalia, Afghanistan, and Lebanon. A grand strategy designed to attack terrorist networks must focus not only on the networks themselves, but also on those states or governments that provide sanctuary to terrorists, either intentionally or as the result of weakness. The campaign against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan provides a model for this approach.

This grand strategy must be global in focus and multifaceted in terms of the instruments of power. The idea is to apply relentless pressure on the terrorist's network, denying

them sanctuary, the time to plan attacks, and material support by attacking their finances, recruitment, and training facilities.

Diplomacy and Statecraft. Diplomacy will likely be the cornerstone of our grand strategy for the global war on terror. To defeat the terrorist network, it will be necessary to maintain a coalition of states that will cooperate with the United States. This goal is best achieved by creating and securing a commonality of interests among a broad array of states, while deterring the use of force by potential aggressors. As the war so far has illustrated, diplomacy under such conditions can be difficult. The interests of allies and friends will diverge. The key is to focus on shared interests.

International institutions such as the United Nations can be used to secure common interests. The open international order created under U.S. leadership is based on the principles of economic openness, political reciprocity, and the management of conflict as much as possible through multilateral institutions. International institutions can help overcome and integrate diverse and competing interests. They help concentrate resources while spreading the burdens, habituating other states to American leadership, and helping avert political backlashes that might otherwise be triggered by unilateral U.S. actions. International institutions also create incentives for states to cooperate in mutually beneficial ways by reducing the “transaction costs” of making and enforcing agreements. Because of reciprocity, which serves to enhance predictability in the international system, even the most powerful states have an incentive to follow the rules and conform to norms. Such institutions in principle support U.S. objectives because when states join, they are in effect agreeing to a process that shapes, constrains, and channels their actions. DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM illustrate the benefits of achieving U.S. interests within the framework of multilateral cooperation.

Economic Statecraft. Even in a time of war, the goal of U.S. economic policy should be to maintain an open international economic order. But the United States should not shrink from applying economic pressure against both terrorists and their supporters. The key to an economic strategy against a terrorist network is to dry up its funds and disrupt its system of economic support while compelling supporters of the network to withdraw support. Many of the tools that the United States deployed against the Soviet Union in the 1980s can be used to this end in the current war. These include economic sanctions, strategic trade policies, export controls, financial controls and the like. It must be made clear that the cost of supporting terrorism far exceeds the benefits.

Intelligence. Terrorism is “war in the shadows.” Effective intelligence is the key to preventing terrorist attacks, keeping terrorists on the run, and ultimately destroying terrorist networks. The United States must fully mobilize its intelligence community if it is to succeed in this war. Human intelligence assets may well prove critical.

Law Enforcement. Law enforcement is a major instrument in this war. While the military component of the current war has received the most publicity, the law enforcement component may be equally important in the long run. Law enforcement organizations should work more closely with intelligence agencies and the military. The

use of special operations forces (SOF) in support of foreign anti-terrorism efforts is an example of the sort of foreign law enforcement operations that will loom large in this war.

Information and Public Diplomacy. All war has an informational aspect. Deception may be involved. But just as important is making sure that one's own point of view is disseminated in such a way that it cannot be distorted by the enemy.

The United States has paid insufficient attention to this aspect of national power. This lack of attention is based on the assumption that the Western way of life will sell itself. But clearly this is not the case. A grand strategy against the terrorist network should include the creation of such instruments as the Cold War's Voice of America and Radio Free Europe.

Making a positive case for the United States and the Western way of life is only part of the information equation. The other part is to stress that Al Qaeda represents a distortion of Islam, and of religion generally. Public diplomacy and informational campaigns should play an expanded role in this war.

The Military Instrument. The military instrument necessary to execute this grand strategy must be flexible, agile, and multifaceted. It must be joint in the sense that it provides the unified commander with the complete array of tools needed to accomplish the mission.

During the early part of the campaign in Afghanistan, the combination of air power and SOF-supported anti-Taliban Afghan fighters seems to have been very effective in dislocating the Taliban and rooting out Al Qaeda. Some concluded that this combination constitutes the wave of the future in military operations, and that many of the other parts of the military will be of declining importance. Others criticized this approach, arguing that relying so heavily on our Afghan allies had permitted high-ranking members of Al Qaeda to escape. The strategy was later modified to include more direct action by both SOF and conventional ground forces. This illustrates exactly the sort of flexibility and ability to learn that the military will have to demonstrate in order to cope with a terrorist threat while still maintaining the capability for carrying out the other tasks it might be assigned.

Recommendation/Actions: Policymakers must ensure that the U.S. grand strategy for the global war on terror provides a focused and coherent plan for effectively integrating and employing all of the instruments of national power.